

EVALUATING PEACE EDUCATION IN THE OSLO-INTIFADA GENERATION:  
A LONG-TERM IMPACT STUDY OF SEEDS OF PEACE 1993-2010

By

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2011

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## DEDICATION

In memory of Aseel ‘Asleh, ‘Azzam Al-Jundi, Dan Bar-On and John Wallach;  
For the people they brought together, and the hope that brought all of us together.

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ABSTRACT

Since 1993, several thousand Israeli and Palestinian youth have participated in 12 summer “coexistence” programs in North America. The programs espouse a common theory of change: that an experience of dialogue in an idyllic American setting will inspire youth to return to the Middle East as aspiring peacemakers. This dissertation provides the first large-scale, long-term empirical assessment of that theory, by tracking the peacebuilding activity of all 824 Israeli and Palestinian graduates of SOP's first decade of operation (1993-2003), and complementing this with qualitative research on more than 100 adult graduates (ages 21-30). The longitudinal framework assesses fluctuations in activity over time, highlighting the influence of changing personal, organizational, and political contexts. Key findings include that more than half of alumni engaged in peacebuilding during high school; that compulsory Israeli military service discouraged activity among both Israeli and Palestinian graduates; that nearly one-fifth of alumni engaged in peacebuilding as adults; and that extensive follow-up programming was essential for sustaining long-term commitments to peacebuilding. The study concludes that the international intervention structure embeds an effective educational model in a problematic organizational model. While providing an unprecedented evaluation of a popular peace education approach, this study tells the stories of a pivotal generation: Palestinians and Israelis who entered adolescence at the hopeful dawn of the Oslo peace process, to emerge as adults in an era of *intifada* and “separation.”

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation is the culmination of a journey of eight years of practice, and seven years of research, study and writing. The journey has been informed and inspired by the work of a wide community of peacebuilders and scholars in the Middle East and the United States, and sustained thanks to the generosity and support of colleagues, family and friends. My debts of gratitude extend far beyond those listed in these pages; I hope to acknowledge in person all who contributed, and hope you will find my work worthy of your contributions.

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I hope I can be forgiven for a collective expression of gratitude to hundreds of people – SOP graduates and families from every region, current and former staff and directors – who have given of themselves to build an extraordinary transnational community. In particular, I wish to thank all my interviewees and others who shared their the stories of their lives, their experience and expertise over the course of my research – from Seeds of Peace, as well as the directors and staff of other North American “peace camps,” and our colleagues throughout the field of Israeli-Palestinian peacebuilding. It would take an entire dissertation to do justice to the contributions, efforts and insights of so many dedicated people; it is my hope that this research will, in some small way, do just that.

It is hardest to find words to express my gratitude to the ones I love: To Nahanni and Shalvah, for their patience with my commitment to completing this long journey, and for snapping me out of it for precious moments of human life every day; To our parents, brothers, sisters, families and friends, who have shared the joys of our lives together, comforted us through tragedy and loss, and strengthened us every step of the way.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### *Introduction, Background, Review of the Literature*

At the signing of the Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles in September 1993, US President Bill Clinton made special mention of a group of Egyptian, Israeli and Palestinian teenagers gathered somewhat incongruously among the cavalcade of dignitaries on the White House lawn. “In this entire assembly,” asserted the President, “no one is more important than the Arab and Israeli children seated here.”<sup>1</sup> The few dozen fifteen year-olds to whom he referred, uniformly attired in green t-shirts, were the first graduates of the Seeds of Peace International Camp program (SOP) founded that year by American journalist John Wallach.<sup>2</sup> The youth had spent the preceding summer together at a lakeside retreat in Maine, engaged in an intensive program of dialogue and experiential education, unaware of the clandestine Israeli/Palestinian negotiations simultaneously underway in Norway. At summer’s end, on the White House lawn, these two distant “peace processes” briefly converged. At ceremony’s end, Clinton joined Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres for a photograph with the enthusiastic band of youth. The smiling statesmen all held out SOP’s trademark green t-shirts – an icon of the hopeful heydays of “Oslo.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Full text of President Clinton’s speech available at Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. “Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements.” Accessed June 2, 2011. <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign%20Relations/Israels%20Foreign%20Relations%20since%201947/1992-1994/108%20Dfeclaration%20of%20Principles%20on%20Interim%20Self-Gove>.

<sup>2</sup> John Wallach and Michael Wallach, *The Enemy Has a Face: The Seeds of Peace Experience* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> “Seeds of Peace.” Accessed June 2, 2011. <http://www.seedsofpeace.org>.

Today, the same image is all too easily invoked as a parable of fateful naiveté. The fates of the Oslo Accords and their protagonists are matters of tragic record; the promise of historic negotiations succeeded by the most lethal episodes of Israeli-Palestinian violence since the war of 1948.<sup>4</sup> Yet what has become of the erstwhile “leaders of tomorrow” – Palestinian and Israeli youth participants in Oslo-era peace education programs, raised in the shadows of a diplomatic breakthrough and its devastating collapse? In the absence of authoritative research, media and scholarship commonly conflate the outcomes of this generation of grassroots peacebuilding endeavors with the failure of the “Track One” negotiations.<sup>5</sup> Israeli scholar Jonathan Fox articulated this conventional wisdom at the International Studies Association convention in 2006. Asked if he was aware of interfaith dialogue in the contemporary Middle East, he stated flatly, “Well, that didn’t work.”<sup>6</sup>

The truth is more complex. Despite an increasingly hostile context, Seeds of Peace and a diverse array of Israeli/Palestinian peacebuilding initiatives survived the setbacks of the second *intifada*. While remaining outside the political mainstreams of both societies, joint grassroots and civil society endeavors have endured and evolved through periods of conflict escalation and stalemated negotiations since the turn of the century.<sup>7</sup> Yet even in rare

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<sup>4</sup> On fatalities during the second *intifada*, see “Statistics - Fatalities,” *B’tselem: The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories*, Accessed June 2, 2011, <http://www.btselem.org/english/statistics/casualties.asp>.

<sup>5</sup> The term “Track One” means official inter-governmental negotiations, as opposed to civil society or grassroots negotiation or peacebuilding exercises, which can be called “Track Two,” “Track Three” or “Multi-Track” diplomacy. See Louise Diamond and John W. McDonald, *Multi-Track Diplomacy: A Systems Approach to Peace* (Hartford: Kumarian Press, 1996). See also Hussein Agha, Shai Feldman, Ahmad Khalidi and Ze’ev Schiff, *Track-Two Diplomacy: Lessons from the Middle East* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> Dr. Fox, Professor of International Relations at Bar-Ilan University in Israel, spoke on a panel on “Religion in IR” at the International Studies Association 2006 annual convention. I asked the question.

<sup>7</sup> Avivit Hai and Shira Herzog, *The Power of Possibility: The Role of People-to-People Programs in the Current Israeli-Palestinian Reality* (Herzliya: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2005); Avivit Hai, Interview by author, June 2006, Jerusalem; Mohammed Abu-Nimer, “Education for Coexistence and Arab-Jewish Encounters in Israel” Potential and Challenges,” in *Journal of Social Issues* 60, no. 2 (2004), 405-422; Ifat Maoz, “Peacebuilding in Violent Conflict: Overview of Israeli-Palestinian Post-Oslo People-to-People Activities 1993-2004,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 17, no. 3 (2004), 565-574; Maddy-Weitzman, “Waging Peace,”; Ahsiya Beth

moments of recognition, the perseverance of joint Israeli/Palestinian projects is often treated as a curious anachronism. A 2007 *Economist* article juxtaposes a photo of newly minted SOP campers with the assertion that, “There is still no shortage of Israeli/Palestinian co-existence projects, but *serious activists* are more skeptical of them.”<sup>8</sup>

This study is designed to challenge facile narratives regarding the outcomes of Israeli/Palestinian peace education, by asking a question the *Economist* article fails to consider: whether some participants were themselves inspired to become “serious activists.” Indeed, my findings reveal that hundreds of SOP alumni remained involved in joint peacebuilding activities in the Middle East during substantial periods of their lives, both before and during the *intifada*, as teenagers and as young adults. A core group of adult SOP graduates maintain cross-conflict relationships and networks; more than 100 have worked as adults in diverse forms of peacebuilding, with SOP or other initiatives. At the same time, many of the most active graduates expressed deep disillusionment with aspects of the SOP organization, the peacebuilding field, and their ability to effect meaningful change, particularly at moments of escalation in the conflict. Rather than vindicating advocates or critics of these programs, this study reveals a complex reality of varied outcomes, by creating a comprehensive empirical record where none exists. In this introductory chapter, I will outline popular narratives and scholarly debates on the topic, detail the evolution of my

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Posner, “Teaching Peace While Living War: Obstacles to Effective Peace Education by Non-Governmental Organizations--the Case of Israel/Palestine 2000-2004” (PhD diss., Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, 2006); Michelle Gawerc, “Israeli Palestinian Peacebuilding Partnerships: Stories of Adaptation, Asymmetry, and Survival” (PhD diss., Boston College, 2010); Ifat Maoz, “Does contact work in protracted asymmetrical conflict? Appraising 20 years of reconciliation-aimed encounters between Israeli Jews and Palestinians” *Journal of Peace Research* 48, no. 1 (2011), 115-125; Just Vision, “Visionaries,” Accessed June 2, 2011, <http://www.justvision.org/visionaries>.

<sup>8</sup> “Still Campaigning for Co-existence,” *The Economist*, August 30, 2007, Accessed February 15, 2009, [http://www.economist.com/world/mideast-africa/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=9725474](http://www.economist.com/world/mideast-africa/displaystory.cfm?story_id=9725474). Emphasis mine.

interest in the issue, and review relevant literature on the theory, practice and evaluation of conflict resolution/peacebuilding interventions in contexts of intractable conflict.

*Contending Narratives: “The Leaders of Tomorrow” versus “That Didn’t Work”*

In popular media, two contending narratives dominate discussions of the impact of Israeli/Palestinian peace education programs in general, and Seeds of Peace in specific. A heroic narrative is exemplified by SOP slogans such as “Training Tomorrow’s Leaders” and “Empowering the Children of War to Break the Cycle of Violence,” and echoed in the words of President Clinton and other American and Middle Eastern figures whose endorsements adorn the organization’s website and promotional materials.<sup>9</sup> This narrative articulates the program’s internal understanding of its pedagogical values – empowerment, leadership, peacemaking – and political function – advancing Arab-Israeli reconciliation by providing transformative experiences of peaceful coexistence for “the next generation” of Arab and Israeli leaders. In this vision, SOP recruits outstanding youth who have never before seen “the human face” of “the other side,” and returns them home as confident “ambassadors of peace” striving to resolve the conflict.<sup>10</sup> SOP rhetoric frequently contrasts the promise of a future shaped by the program’s cadre of aspiring peacemakers with the alleged shortcomings of Middle East leaders past and present, who are saddled with a benighted legacy of hatred and violence. As Wallach wrote in his “biography” of Seeds of Peace, *The Enemy Has a Face*, “When [participants] return home, they are on their way to

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<sup>9</sup> “Seeds of Peace.” See also Craig Engstrom, “Promoting Peace, Yet Sustaining Conflict? A Fantasy-Theme Analysis of Seeds of Peace Publications,” *Journal of Peace Education* 6, no. 1 (2009): 19-35.

<sup>10</sup> Wallach used this term repeatedly in exhortations to participants at Seeds of Peace International Camp, and in descriptions of the program to funders, media and visiting dignitaries (author’s personal observation). The phrase also appears in Wallach, *The Enemy Has a Face*.

becoming leaders of a new generation... as committed to fighting for peace as their predecessors were in waging war.”<sup>11</sup> In speeches, Wallach frequently envisioned a future in which Israeli and Palestinian heads of state, both graduates of the program, would use their power to bring a conclusive end to bloodshed between their nations.

A set of critical narratives, by contrast, paints SOP and similar peace education initiatives in a series of negative lights – as corrupt, ineffective, subversive or all of the above. Certain critiques attack peace education for its alleged *impotence*, asserting that any impact of such interventions on participants is ephemeral and quickly erased.<sup>12</sup> Some critics deride what they call a “peace industry,” portraying cross-conflict initiatives as hollow charades in which local participants exploit the naïveté of foreign funders in order to obtain personal benefits and cheap travel abroad.<sup>13</sup> These critiques echo the Arabic phrase which Palestinian and Israeli skeptics employ to dismiss diplomatic initiatives and grassroots dialogues alike: *Kalam Fadi*, or “empty talk”.<sup>14</sup> Other criticisms, by contrast, warn against the alleged *influence* of cross-conflict encounters. Upon return to the Middle East from camp, SOP participants are invariably accused of having been “brainwashed” to accept the humanity or legitimacy of the enemy, thereby “forgetting” their own history and identity.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Wallach, *The Enemy Has a Face*, 13.

<sup>12</sup> See footnote 6 for Dr. Fox’s quote. In this vein see Dan Rabinowitz, “Natives with Jackets and Degrees: Othering, Objectification, and the Co-Existence Field in Israel,” *Social Anthropology* 9, no. 1 (2001): 65-80.

<sup>13</sup> Yossi Alpher, “A Reaction to Palestinian Positions,” *Bitterlemons*, Accessed December 20, 2010, <http://www.bitterlemons.org/previous/bl171207ed46.html#isr1>; Salim Tamari, “Kissing Cousins: A Note of a Romantic Encounter,” *Palestine-Israel Journal* 12, no. 4 (2005), Accessed December 23, 2010, <http://pij.org/details.php?id=396>.

<sup>14</sup> In one example, current Israeli Minister without Portfolio Binyamin Begin condemned the Oslo Accords in a late 1990s campaign speech with the words “The murderers of the PLO will protect us from terror? *Kalam Fadi?*” (Author witnessed speech on television).

<sup>15</sup> Author’s interviews with Seeds of Peace graduates. For examples, in 1999, Egyptian journalist Fahmy Huweidi accused Egyptian SOP participants of having been brainwashed in *Al-Abram* newspaper, to which Egyptian SOP graduate Mona Naggat responded by publishing an op-ed in *Al-Abram* (citation unavailable, author’s conversation with Mona Naggat). In 2000, the pro-Hamas newspaper *Al-Risalla* in Gaza published a description of SOP as a “brainwashing” program (citation unavailable, author’s memory, interviews with SOP

While the content of critiques is distinct and even contradictory, they all evoke the apathy, disappointment and suspicion left in the wake of the failed Track One negotiations – and project it onto cross-conflict encounters of all kinds. A 2008 *San Francisco Chronicle* article, entitled “Few Results Seen from Mideast Peace Camps,” synthesizes these disparate lines of criticism, charging that, “Long-term positive impact, if any, fades,” “Activities expire with the end of the meeting,” “Programs have failed to produce a single prominent peace activist.” It concludes that such endeavors are a “waste of time and money.”<sup>16</sup>

The popular CBS investigative news program *60 Minutes* featured two stories on Seeds of Peace in the span of two years, providing classic examples of both heroic and critical narratives.<sup>17</sup> In the summer of 1998, reporter Morley Safer produced a glowing report from SOP’s summer camp facility in Maine. The story featured in-depth conversations with SOP Founder and President John Wallach, Camp Director Tim Wilson, and charismatic participants, set against colorful footage of green-shirted Arab and Israeli teens joining forces in art and sport. The report concluded with images of participants embracing for tearful goodbyes on the final day of camp, as Safer asserted that, “For a few weeks, in the woods of Maine, history did stand still.”<sup>18</sup> The piece so precisely reflected SOP’s own self-concept that staff began using the story as a promotional video at public presentations.<sup>19</sup>

Two years later, the *intifada* inspired an abrupt shift. Safer traveled to the Middle East in late 2000, just after the outbreak of hostilities, to conduct follow-up interviews with a few

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graduates and staff). See also Breeze, Erin E. and Melodye Feldman. *Building Bridges for Peace: An Intergroup Intervention for Israeli, Palestinian, and American Teens* (Denver: Seeking Common Ground, 2008), 124.

<sup>16</sup> Matthew Kalman, “Few Results from Mideast Peace Camps,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 19, 2008, Accessed June 3, 2010, <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2008/10/19/MNTK133IHH.DTL>.

<sup>17</sup> “Give Peace A Chance,” *60 Minutes* (CBS News October 11, 1998); “To Be Continued,” *60 Minutes* (CBS News October 24, 2000).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Author’s personal experience.

participants he had met at camp in 1998. Like the previous story, this report reduced the complex statements of SOP alumni to simplistic headlines, but to the opposite effect. The SOP graduates expressed anger and disappointment over the deterioration of the conflict; Safer packaged their statements as proof that “when they got off the plane [at home in the Middle East]... they quickly returned to their ancient hatreds.”<sup>20</sup>

Having personally accompanied SOP participants on *and* off planes between Maine and the Middle East, I recognized this portrait as a caricature. I served as SOP’s follow-up program director, based in Jerusalem, from 1996-2004, working with hundreds of young Israelis and Palestinians before, during and for many years after their first trips to camp.<sup>21</sup> In the two years that elapsed between the two *60 Minutes* stories, I witnessed hundreds of SOP graduates repeatedly crossing borders and checkpoints to continue dialogue and understand each other’s realities in the Middle East. The enthusiasm of these graduates led the organization to open a Center for Coexistence in Jerusalem, inaugurated with a 1999 ceremony attended by more than 500 Egyptian, Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian alumni of the program.<sup>22</sup> In the same span, one enthusiastic graduate, Aseel ‘Asleh, brought the predicament of Palestinian citizens of Israel to unprecedented attention inside SOP, and then to international attention after his killing, at age 17, by Israeli police.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> “To Be Continued,” *60 Minutes*.

<sup>21</sup> Overall, I worked as a counselor and facilitator at Seeds of Peace International Camp in Maine during the summers of 1995-1998 and 2002, and as regional program director, based in Jerusalem, from 1996-2004.

<sup>22</sup> Author’s personal experience. See also Jen Marlowe and Sami al-Jundi, *The Hour of Sunlight* (New York: Nation Books, 2011); Wallach, *The Enemy Has a Face*.

<sup>23</sup> SOP graduate Aseel ‘Asleh was shot and killed by Israeli police on October 2, 2000 at the site of a protest that developed into a confrontation between a crowd of Arab youth and police, near his home in the Galilee village of Arabeh. Aseel was one of 12 Arab citizens of Israel and 1 Palestinian killed by police fire during such confrontations at the onset of the second *intifada* (one Israeli Jew was killed in a separate incident by stonethrowing during the same period). An Israeli governmental Commission of Inquiry headed by Supreme Court Justice Theodor Or found no justification for the killing of Aseel, or for the police use of live ammunition in his case and numerous others. Police and eyewitness testimonies to the commission confirmed that Aseel stood alone, far from the crowd, was not personally involved in confrontation with the police at the

After the eruption of the *intifada*, I watched as Aseel's death and other personal and collective tragedies, trauma, anger and despair drove many graduates to "drop out" of the program. Others, however, remained actively connected, and many alternated between periods of activity and alienation. I knew from experience that neither *60 Minutes* story – nor either of the narratives they reflect – does justice to the complexity and diversity of SOP graduates' experiences, or the impacts of this American peace education intervention on their lives in the Middle East. That is precisely the purpose of this dissertation.

Both popular narratives provide portraits that are selective and superficial – yet each succeeds in raising issues central to the study and practice of conflict resolution. The heroic narrative asserts the transformative power of the cross-conflict encounter, a foundational principle underlying not only the SOP program, but the conflict resolution field as a whole. This implicit "theory of change" posits that a process of facilitated dialogue between parties in conflict, conducted outside the constraints of everyday context, can transform mutual perceptions from adversarial to potentially cooperative, thereby enabling mitigation or resolution of previously intractable issues or the conflict altogether.<sup>24</sup>

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scene yet was chased and shot at close range. For information on Aseel's death and the October 2000 clashes, see "Report of the Governmental Commission of Inquiry into Clashes Between the Security Forces and Israeli Citizens in October 2000," *Judicial Authority of the State of Israel*, August 2003, Accessed March 3, 2010, [http://elyon1.court.gov.il/heb/veadot/or/inside\\_index.htm](http://elyon1.court.gov.il/heb/veadot/or/inside_index.htm) (Hebrew). In English, see "Official Summation of the Or Commission Report," *Haaretz*, September 1, 2003, accessed March 3, 2010, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=335594>. See also Khawla Abu-Baker and Dan Rabinowitz, *Coffins on Our Shoulders: The Experience of the Palestinian Citizens of Israel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Ned Lazarus, "For Justice, Please Hold," in *Haaretz*, November 17, 2005; Ned Lazarus, "Jerusalem Diary Part 5" in *Slate*, November 9, 2001, Accessed May 20, 2011, <http://slate.msn.com/id/2058163/entry/2058168/>. In this study, see Chapter Seven, "Self-Determination: The Dilemma of Palestinian Citizens of Israel," and Chapter Eight, "Program Versus Organization."

<sup>24</sup> Ronald J. Fisher, *Interactive Conflict Resolution* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997). On "theories of change," see John Paul Lederach, Reina Neufeldt, and Hal Culbertson, *Reflective Peacebuilding: A Planning, Monitoring and Learning Toolkit* (The Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace, University of Notre Dame, Indiana and Catholic Relief Services Southeast Asia, 2007), 25-36.

The critical narratives counter this claim, among other arguments, by raising what is often called the “re-entry problem.”<sup>25</sup> According to this argument, since such encounters rely on the creation of artificial, mediated settings, detached from the actual conflict context, then any impact will be erased upon participants’ inevitable return to reality. In practical terms, Seeds of Peace aspires to embody the former idea and overcome the latter. In theoretical terms, this dissertation provides an empirical reckoning with both. The next section provides a brief overview of scholarly research and debate regarding the design, efficacy and evaluation of cross-conflict encounters as a medium of conflict resolution, and its relevance to the case at hand.

### Review of the Literature

#### *The Transformative Encounter Model*

In 1965, former Australian diplomat and International Relations scholar John Burton convened the first of a series of experimental “controlled communication” workshops for representatives of the Indonesian and Malaysian governments, whose territorial dispute had escalated into a low-intensity war. According to Burton, these clandestine, facilitated discussions eased tensions, built trust and dispelled mutual misconceptions between the rival parties. Proposals drafted in these workshops eventually generated a negotiated agreement, the 1966 Bangkok Accords, ending three years of fighting that had cost hundreds of lives.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Herbert C. Kelman and Stephen P. Cohen, “The Problem-Solving Workshop: A Social-Psychological Contribution to the Resolution of International Conflicts,” *Journal of Peace Research* 13, no. 2 (1976): 83.

<sup>26</sup> Fisher, *Interactive Conflict Resolution*; see also Christopher Mitchell, “From Controlled Communication to Problem Solving: the Origins of Facilitated Conflict Resolution,” *International Journal of Peace Studies* 6, no. 1 (2001).

Burton's breakthrough inspired a wave of similar scholarly interventions, prominently including the "problem-solving workshops" of social psychologist Herbert Kelman.<sup>27</sup> These workshops brought Israeli and Palestinian academic and political figures together for secret dialogues at Harvard University, decades before such meetings became common (or legal) in the Middle East.<sup>28</sup> Kelman's workshops explicitly prioritized the psychological before the political, requiring the opposing parties to first articulate and listen empathically to each other's "needs and fears" before attempting to negotiate concrete disputes.<sup>29</sup> These structured discussions ideally served to enhance mutual understanding and build a "working trust," ultimately enabling enemies to overcome deep-seated inhibitions and seek mutually acceptable solutions to previously irreconcilable issues.<sup>30</sup> In short, the process of structured discussion and empathic listening served to transform implacable enemies into potential partners in peacemaking. Widely cited today as "founding fathers" of the Conflict Resolution field, Burton and Kelman made the transformative cross-conflict encounter the centerpiece of their research and practice, establishing the field's archetypical model of intervention.<sup>31</sup>

In a disciplinary sense, the early Conflict Resolution field constituted a nexus between International Relations and Psychology, based in the assumption that international

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<sup>27</sup> Kelman, a founding editor of the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, had joined Burton's facilitation team for a "controlled communication" workshop on the Cyprus Problem in 1966. A third "founding father" of the Conflict Resolution field also participated in one of Burton's early workshops: Roger Fisher, founder of the Negotiation Studies field and the Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law School. Herbert C. Kelman, "Interactive Problem-Solving" (lecture presented at Harvard University, November 11, 2009). See also Mitchell, "From Controlled Communication to Problem Solving."

<sup>28</sup> Kelman, "Interactive Problem Solving." See also Fisher, *Interactive Conflict Resolution*.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Burton went on to found the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University, the first university program to grant doctoral degrees in Conflict Resolution. Kelman was a founding editor of the *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (in 1956), and founder and director of the Program on International Conflict Analysis and Resolution at Harvard University's Weatherhead Center for International Affairs. See Fisher, *Interactive Conflict Resolution*; Mitchell, "From Controlled Communication to Problem Solving"; . .

conflicts are driven by underlying psychological imperatives as much as political problems, and that addressing the former is essential to resolving the latter.<sup>32</sup> In theoretical terms, Conflict Resolution distinguished itself from both “realist” power politics and pragmatic negotiation paradigms by emphasizing the centrality of collective identity in the analysis of international disputes.<sup>33</sup> In the 1970s and 80s, conventional International Relations literature theorized war and peacemaking as occurring between *states* or empires, emphasizing “Great Power” conflicts and the US-Soviet confrontation.<sup>34</sup> Conflict Resolution scholars placed unprecedented focus, by contrast, on the dynamics of civil wars, ethnic conflicts, and sub-state struggles for self-determination.<sup>35</sup> Burton and Kelman’s colleague Edward Azar famously changed the unit of analysis in his 1980s studies from “state” to “identity group,” noting that the vast majority of conflicts occur *within* rather than *between* states – anticipating by more than a decade the popular “new wars” paradigm of the post-Cold War era.<sup>36</sup>

Drawing on the work of psychologist Abraham Maslow, Azar, Burton and Kelman framed intergroup conflict as a struggle to satisfy fundamental *human needs*, the expression of collective identity paramount among them.<sup>37</sup> As Kelman explained, “Conflict resolution goes beyond a realist view of national interests. It explores the causes of the conflict, particularly causes in the form of unmet or threatened needs for identity, security, recognition,

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<sup>32</sup> See Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse, and Hugh Miall, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution: The Prevention, Management and Transformation of Deadly Conflicts* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2005), 32-54.

<sup>33</sup> See Edward Azar, *The Management of Protracted Social Conflict: Theory and Cases* (Hanover: Dartmouth, 1990); Ramsbotham et al., *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*. On negotiation, see Roger Fisher and William Ury, *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement without Giving In*, ed. Bruce Patton (New York: Penguin, 1991).

<sup>34</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, “International Relations Theory and the End of the Cold War,” *International Security* 17, No. 3 (Winter 1992/93): 5–58.

<sup>35</sup> Fisher, *Interactive Conflict Resolution*; Ramsbotham et al., *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*.

<sup>36</sup> Azar, *Protracted Social Conflict*; Ramsbotham et al., *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*; Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

<sup>37</sup> John W. Burton, *Conflict: Human Needs Theory* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1993).

autonomy and justice.”<sup>38</sup> In contrast to conventional focus on economic and political aspects of conflict, Burton emphasized identity as primary, asserting that, “people will jeopardize or surrender” their material welfare and civic freedom, “for the sake of defending their identities.”<sup>39</sup> In practice, Burton and Kelman’s models for the cross-conflict encounter crystallized around their assumption of the primacy of identity. Kelman explicitly contrasted his methodology with traditional approaches to international politics: “In contrast to the negotiation of a political settlement, a conflict resolution process... seeks solutions responsive to the needs of both sides through active engagement in joint problem solving... the key element is *mutual acceptance of the other’s identity and humanity*.”<sup>40</sup>

At Seeds of Peace, Kelman’s words echoed in the speeches of John Wallach, who declared on countless occasions that, “the mission of Seeds of Peace is to *humanize* the conflict.”<sup>41</sup> This rhetorical resemblance is no coincidence; Wallach and Kelman themselves shared key aspects of identity. Both were first-generation Jewish-Americans whose families had been driven from Europe by Nazi persecution.<sup>42</sup> As adults, they came to share the controversial distinction of being prominent Jewish advocates of Israeli rapprochement with the PLO. Each of them endured harsh public criticism in the pre-Oslo era for publishing “humanizing” portraits of Palestinian leaders, especially Yasser Arafat, in Western media.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Herbert C. Kelman, “Reconciliation from a Social-Psychological Perspective,” in *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Reconciliation*, ed. Nadler, Malloy & Fisher (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 17.

<sup>39</sup> Richard Rubenstein, “Basic Human Needs: The Next Steps in Theory Development,” *International Journal of Peace Studies* 6, no. 1 (2001).

<sup>40</sup> Kelman, “Reconciliation from a Social-Psychological Perspective,” 17.

<sup>41</sup> Wallach, *The Enemy Has a Face*, 9; also “Give Peace a Chance,” *60 Minutes* 1998.

<sup>42</sup> Kelman’s family fled from Vienna when he was a teenager; Wallach’s parents fled from Cologne. Sources; Author’s personal conversations with Wallach, and observation of multiple speeches by Wallach at Seeds of Peace International Camp; Herbert C. Kelman, “10 Questions on Peace Mediation: Lessons Learned and Shared Experiences of International Mediators,” Interview with Martin Wahlisch, Berlin, Germany, April 4, 2009. Accessed June 7, 2011: [http://www.wcfia.harvard.edu/faculty/hckelman/hck\\_berlininterview.pdf](http://www.wcfia.harvard.edu/faculty/hckelman/hck_berlininterview.pdf).

<sup>43</sup> Herbert C. Kelman, “Talk to Arafat,” *Foreign Policy* 49 (Winter 1982-83), 119-139; Herbert C. Kelman, “Conversations with Arafat: A Social-Psychological Assessment of the Prospects for Peace,” *American*

Yet Wallach's exposure to the rhetoric of Conflict Resolution went beyond his biographical commonalities with Kelman. During his tenure as the foreign affairs editor for the Hearst newspaper chain in the 1970s and 1980s, Wallach accompanied US Secretaries of State to negotiations with Arab, Israeli and Soviet leaders, and became a fixture of the Washington foreign policy scene.<sup>44</sup> During the same period, the ideas and methods of Conflict Resolution achieved increasing recognition in that realm, generating a proliferating network of academic programs and becoming integrated into the foreign policy lexicon as "Unofficial" or "Track Two" Diplomacy.<sup>45</sup> Track Two dialogue processes came to be credited with crucial contributions to official "peace processes" in the Middle East, Northern Ireland, Central Asia, and in disarmament negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union at the twilight of the Cold War.<sup>46</sup> Before founding Seeds of Peace, Wallach shared the Washington social milieu of Harold Saunders, Joseph Montville, John W. McDonald and other US diplomats-turned "Track Two" practitioners.<sup>47</sup> As Wallach's invention, SOP was born of and into that world of ideas. Tellingly, Wallach first declared his

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*Psychologist* 38 (1983), 203-216; John Wallach and Janet Wallach, *Arafat: In the Eye of the Beholder* (New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1990); *Ibid.*, *Still Small Voices* (New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1990); *Ibid.*, *The New Palestinians* (Rocklin: Prima, 1992).

<sup>44</sup> Wallach, *The Enemy Has a Face*, 4-5.

<sup>45</sup> Fisher, *Interactive Conflict Resolution*. See also Joseph V. Montville, "The Arrow and the Olive Branch: The Case for Track-Two Diplomacy," in John W. McDonald, Jr., and Diane B. Bendahmane, eds., *Conflict Resolution: Track Two Diplomacy* (Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Service Institute, Department of State, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1987), 5-20. See also Joseph V. Montville, "Justice and the Burdens of History," in Mohammed Abu-Nimer, ed., *Reconciliation, Coexistence, and Justice in Interethnic Conflict: Theory and Practice* (New York: Lexington Books, 2001), 129-143.

<sup>46</sup> Fisher, *Interactive Conflict Resolution*; Hussein Agha et al., *Track Two Diplomacy: Lessons from the Middle East* (Boston: MIT Press, 2004).

<sup>47</sup> Harold Saunders was a Carter administration official involved in the negotiation of the Egypt-Israel peace treaty, who went on to found The Institute for Sustained Dialogue and lead Track Two efforts in the Middle East and Central Asia. McDonald was a US Ambassador, founder of the Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy. See website, Diamond and McDonald. In his pre-Seeds of Peace career, Wallach was active in US-Soviet "citizen diplomacy" in addition to his Arab/Israeli *oeuvre*. In the 1980s, he founded and edited WE/Mbl, a weekly US/Soviet newspaper in English and Russian, and created the Chautauqua Conference on U.S.-Soviet Relations, for which he received the 1991 Medal of Friendship, the highest civilian award, from Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev. See Wallach, *The Enemy Has a Face*, 4-5. See also Harold Saunders, *A Public Peace Process: Sustained Dialogue to Transform Racial and Ethnic Conflicts* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999).

intention to bring Arab and Israeli teenagers together to summer camp at a dinner party attended by the Washington diplomatic corps.<sup>48</sup>

Although teen-aged Seeds of Peace participants are neither academics nor diplomats, the program faithfully embodies Burton and Kelman’s transformative encounter model, adopting and even amplifying its social-psychological emphasis. Wallach’s co-founder and longtime Vice President of SOP was former social worker Barbara Gottschalk, who envisioned the program in terms of healing and empowering participants – meeting, in Burton’s terms, their “unmet human needs” – as much as transforming their political circumstances.<sup>49</sup> Wallach described the idealized “SOP experience” as a cathartic process, almost a form of “conflict therapy,” an encounter engendering displays of raw emotion unthinkable among foreign policy professionals:

I remember walking into a [dialogue] session [at SOP camp] in which all fourteen participants were sobbing...the scene appeared hopeless. I thought I was at a funeral. And yet that moment gave me hope...they were not embarrassed to be crying in front of each other. They were unafraid to share one of the most intimate moments of our being as humans. The poison and blood shed in decades of violence seemed to flow in their tears. Seeds of Peace, in the final analysis, is a *detoxification* program. It allows the accumulated generations of hatred to pour out.<sup>50</sup>

The image hardly resembles any typical conception of summer camp. Seeds of Peace, in this vision, aimed to inspire authentic, meaningful and enduring changes in participants’ lives by engaging them in dialogue and relationship with “the other side” of the conflict.

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<sup>48</sup> The party was held at the home of Democratic Party activist Esther Coopersmith, in honor of current Israeli President (2006-present) and former Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and Defense Minister Shimon Peres. See Wallach, *The Enemy Has a Face*, 4-6.

<sup>49</sup> Author's personal experience; interview with Barbara Gottschalk, co-founder, Executive Vice President Emeritus and Board member of Seeds of Peace, Washington, DC, January 18, 2008.

<sup>50</sup> Wallach, *The Enemy Has a Face*, 115.

As Wallach summarized for Morley Safer in the first *60 Minutes* piece, “I think they leave [camp] *very* different.”<sup>51</sup> How did the program aim to bring adolescent “enemies” to and through these profound transformations? Wallach himself was neither educator nor psychologist; his speeches never made explicit references to theory. In designing the program, SOP relied on ideas and methods imported from previous approaches to prejudice reduction and cross-conflict communication. SOP did not represent the first attempt, in America or the Middle East, to engage youth from conflicting identity groups in dialogue.<sup>52</sup> In hiring dialogue facilitators, SOP drew on people trained in the methodology of existing programs in the US and Israel. The next section explores the theoretical paradigms that informed the design of encounter programs in general, and SOP in specific.

### *The Contact Hypothesis and Conflict Resolution*

The Middle East conflict was not Kelman’s initial focus in the work of transforming intergroup relations. In the 1950s, Kelman took part in an extended campaign to end segregation in the racially divided city of Baltimore, Maryland.<sup>53</sup> In addition to joining lawsuits and protests, Kelman engaged in ongoing conversations with white real estate and shop owners, gradually persuading the city’s business community to open their premises to African-Americans, “one shop at a time.”<sup>54</sup> As an academic, Kelman published insights inspired by this field experience in early editions of the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, and conferred with like-minded scholars at meetings of the Society for the Psychological Study

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<sup>51</sup> “Give Peace a Chance,” *60 Minutes*.

<sup>52</sup> Mohammed Abu Nimer, *Dialogue, Conflict Resolution and Change: Arab-Jewish Encounters in Israel*, (New York: SUNY Press, 1999).

<sup>53</sup> Kelman, “10 Questions on Peace Mediation,” 4.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

of Social Issues (SPSSI).<sup>55</sup> Among his prominent colleagues there was G.W. Allport, whose 1954 book *The Nature of Prejudice* had established the “Contact Hypothesis” as the theoretical basis for efforts to resolve intergroup conflict by means of interpersonal encounters.<sup>56</sup>

Published in the same year as the US Supreme Court’s revolutionary decision to outlaw racial segregation, Allport’s theory was a distinct product of its historical circumstances.<sup>57</sup> The Contact Hypothesis theorized widespread inter-racial hostility as a product of social segregation, which prevented blacks and whites from knowing each other as individuals, allowing mutual misconceptions and de-humanizing stereotypes to flourish. The theory provided a social psychological model to support the contemporary liberal campaign for racial integration, positing that increasing normalized contact between black and white individuals would serve to reduce prejudice and defuse racial tensions in society. Allport’s theory has inspired generations of subsequent research and debate on the efficacy of what came to be called – after expanding beyond their original American context – “intergroup encounters.”<sup>58</sup> Contact Theory was imported to the Middle East in the 1960s in the form of structured encounters between Israeli Jews of European and Middle Eastern origins, and in later decades in the form of Arab-Jewish “coexistence” programs.<sup>59</sup> In a manner evocative of the “re-entry problem” experienced by SOP graduates, Contact Theory found the transition from American to Middle Eastern contexts particularly problematic.

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<sup>55</sup> Kelman, “Interactive Problem-Solving.” See also “Past SPSSI Council Members,” The Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, Accessed June 7, 2011, <http://www.spssi.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=page.viewpage&pageid=898>.

<sup>56</sup> G.W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (Cambridge: Addison-Wesley, 1954); Maddy-Weitzman, “Waging Peace in the Holy Land.”

<sup>57</sup> Kelman, “10 Questions on Peace Mediation.”

<sup>58</sup> See Eugene Weiner, ed., *The Handbook of Interethnic Coexistence* (New York: Continuum, 1998).

<sup>59</sup> Yehuda Amir, “Contact Hypothesis in Ethnic Relations,” *Psychological Bulletin* 71, no. 5 (1969), 319-42; Abu-Nimer, *Dialogue, Conflict Resolution, and Change*.

Allport, who famously stated that, “It is easier to smash an atom than a prejudice,” never contended that intergroup conflict could be overcome by simply bringing individuals together in a room.<sup>60</sup> In his initial body of work, Allport proposed several ideal conditions for successful encounters, including “equal status contact between majority and minority group members in pursuit of common goals,” “institutional supports” ensuring an atmosphere of societal or governmental support for the participants, and structured activity of “the sort that leads to perception of common interests and common humanity.”<sup>61</sup> Subsequent research redoubled this emphasis, describing equalized status, social support, cooperative activity and “acquaintanceship potential” as *necessary* conditions for successful intergroup contact. Numerous researchers, approaching the issue from a variety of angles and contexts, concluded that contact *alone* is not enough.<sup>62</sup>

Indeed, by the late 1980s, one scholar opined that subsequent research had attached so many stipulations to Contact Theory that it resembled, “a bag lady who is so encumbered with excess baggage that she cannot move.”<sup>63</sup> Longtime SPSSI member Thomas Pettigrew warned in 1998 that, “Allport’s hypothesis risks being an open-ended laundry list of conditions – ever expandable and thus eluding falsification ... The hypothesis would rarely predict positive results from contact, although research typically finds positive results.”<sup>64</sup> Pettigrew proposed a Reformulated Contact Theory, incorporating the insights of research inspired by Allport’s original hypothesis, including aspects of its most trenchant critique.

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<sup>60</sup> Hebert C. Kelman, author's interview, Cambridge, Massachusetts, October 2009.

<sup>61</sup> G.W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*, 281.

<sup>62</sup> Yehuda Amir, “Contact Hypothesis in Ethnic Relations” and “The role of intergroup contact in change of prejudice and ethnic relations,” in *Towards the Elimination of Racism*, ed. P.A. Katz, (New York: Pergamon, 1976); Pettigrew, “Intergroup Contact Theory,”; Maddy-Weitzman, “Waging Peace in the Holy Land.”

<sup>63</sup> Walter G. Stephan, “The Contact Hypothesis in Intergroup Relations,” in *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*, ed. Clyde Hendrick (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1987), 17.

<sup>64</sup> Thomas Pettigrew, “Intergroup Contact Theory,” *Annual Review of Psychology* 49, (1998): 69. Emphasis mine.

*Critiques of Contact: Social Identity Theory and Israeli/Palestinian Encounters*

In 1979, social psychologists Henri Tajfel and John Turner published a critique of Contact Theory's assumption that prejudice results from a lack of properly structured contact between individual members of different groups, and can therefore be remedied by the initiation of such contact. They proposed an alternative framework, Social Identity Theory (SIT), based on the assumption that *collective* identities are the salient factors in situations of intergroup encounter. As Tajfel explained, "Individuals who are members of opposite groups will behave toward each other as a function of their respective group memberships, rather than in terms of their individual characteristics or inter-individual relationships."<sup>65</sup> According to SIT, rather than inherently reducing tensions, intergroup contact triggers an "ingroup/outgroup" dynamic, characterized by exaggerated perceptions of ingroup similarity and outgroup difference, preferential treatment of ingroup members, de-individualized perceptions of outgroup members, and intergroup competition.<sup>66</sup> The proponents of SIT did not argue that intergroup dialogue must inherently exacerbate conflict, but that it must be conceived as dialogue between *identities* rather than individuals.<sup>67</sup>

Beginning in the 1980s, Arab-Jewish dialogue projects in Israel became a leading laboratory for the debate between Contact and Social Identity approaches. "Coexistence" projects rose to prominence in the mid-1980s, when the Israeli Ministry of Education

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<sup>65</sup> Henri Tajfel, and John C. Turner, "The social identity theory of inter-group behavior," in *Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, ed. S. Worchel and L. W. Austin, (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1986): 8.

<sup>66</sup> Marilyn Brewer and W. Gardner, "Who is This "We"? Levels of Collective Identity and Self Representations," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71, (1996): 83-93.

<sup>67</sup> Rabah Halabi, ed., *Israeli and Palestinian Identities in Dialogue: The School for Peace Approach* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004).

created a “Unit for Democracy” (UFD) in response to a documented increase in racist and anti-democratic attitudes among Jewish-Israeli youth.<sup>68</sup> During the decade, several hundred Israeli schools implemented some kind of coexistence component, often including encounters between Arab and Jewish school classes.<sup>69</sup> The increased demand for dialogue spurred a period of growth for a group of recently established coexistence programs, such as *Beit Hagefen*, *Neve Shalom/Wabat Al-Salam*, and *Givat Haviva*, which served to train and provide facilitators and facilities for schools and other groups seeking expertise in leading Arab-Jewish encounters.<sup>70</sup> This surge in activity generated parallel academic interest, evidenced by the publication of numerous studies of the phenomenon.<sup>71</sup>

Many early Arab-Jewish encounter programs were based on “harmony models,” a crude version of the “Contact” approach.<sup>72</sup> Facilitators were often instructed to avoid divisive political discussions, which were seen as harmful to the goal of finding common ground. Studies of this generation of programs found limited impact in terms of participants’

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<sup>68</sup> Abu-Nimer, *Dialogue, Conflict Resolution, and Change*. In previous decades, such encounters had been an entirely marginal phenomenon in Israeli society. Abu-Nimer found that the Israeli Ministry of Education mentioned the issue of Arab-Jewish relations only twice in its Director’s Communiqué from 1961-1976. “Arab-Jewish education for coexistence” appeared as an objective for the first time in the 1984 Director’s Communiqué, which emphasized the goal of “intercultural interaction with respect and equality.” Schools adopted the new curricular goals to varying degrees, with much higher rates of participation among schools in the Arab “sector.” (Abu-Nimer, *Dialogue Conflict Resolution and Change*, 37).

<sup>69</sup> The Israeli educational system is divided into one Arabic-language public school system, which is attended by the overwhelming majority of Palestinian citizens of Israel, and three separate Hebrew-language public school systems, the (secular) National system (Hebrew: *mamlakhti*); National-Religious system (Hebrew: *Mamlakhti-Dati*); and the Ultra-Orthodox religious system (Hebrew: *Kharedi*). The Ministry of Education controls the Arabic, National, and National-Religious systems. The Ultra-Orthodox system is independent but receives government subsidy. Majid Al-Haj and Uri Ben-Eliezer (eds.), *In the Name of Security: The Sociology of Peace and War in Israel in Changing Times* (Haifa: Haifa University Press, 2003) (Hebrew). In English, see Majid Al-Haj, “Multiculturalism in Deeply Divided Societies: The Israeli Case,” *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 26 (2002), 169-183; Majid Al-Haj, “Jewish-Arab Relations and the Education System in Israel.” ed. Yaacov Iram, *Education of Minorities and Peace Education in Pluralistic Societies* (Westport: Praeger, 2003), 213-227.

<sup>70</sup> Abu-Nimer, *Dialogue, Conflict Resolution and Change*.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

attitudes toward “the other side,” particularly for the Arab minority participants.<sup>73</sup>

Researchers linked these disappointing outcomes to the policy of repressing discussion of the actual conflict. In a study of a joint curriculum-building project for Arab and Jewish teachers, Ifat Maoz described repeated efforts by Arab teachers to subvert the official agenda of strictly “professional” discussions by provoking controversial political debates. At project’s end, the majority of teachers on both sides told evaluators that these (officially discouraged) political discussions were the most valuable part of their experience. On the basis of the study, Maoz questioned whether the individualist approach of Contact Theory is appropriate for contexts of collectivist ethno-national conflict such as the Middle East.<sup>74</sup>

Mohammed Abu-Nimer, a veteran facilitator of Arab-Jewish dialogues in the 1980s, introduced the dimension of asymmetric power relations to this critique. In his early 1990s survey of Arab-Jewish encounter programs, he portrayed interpersonal approaches as inappropriate for the Israeli context, given the pervasive *structural* problems of inequality and institutionalized discrimination against Arab citizens of Israel. The asymmetry of power between the Jewish majority and Arab minority in Israeli society, according to Abu-Nimer, led to asymmetrical expectations and results from interpersonally-focused encounters. Most Jewish majority participants sought to establish peaceful relationships with Arabs as individuals, thus validating the democratic nature of Israel without confronting their collective privilege in terms of access, opportunity and power. Most Arab minority participants, by contrast, sought to expose pervasive inequality and discrimination against

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<sup>73</sup> Rachel Hertz-Lazarowitz and Haggai Kuppermintz, “Evaluation of Meetings Project: Beit Hagefen, Research Report,” School of Education, University of Haifa, quoted in “Arab-Jewish Student Encounter: Beit Hagefen Coexistence Programs,” in *The Handbook of Interethnic Coexistence*, ed. Weiner, 565-584 (New York: Continuum, 1998).

<sup>74</sup> Ifat Maoz, “Multiple Conflicts and Competing Agendas: A Framework for Conceptualizing Structured Encounters between Groups in Conflict—The Case of a Coexistence Project of Jews and Palestinians in Israel,” *Journal of Peace Psychology* 6, no. 2 (2000): 135-156.

Arabs, and enlist the Jewish participants in efforts to alter the status quo.<sup>75</sup> This dynamic is not unique to Israel, but reflects studies of majority/minority dialogues conducted in the US and the United Kingdom as well.<sup>76</sup>

Abu-Nimer advocated an alternative model, which he termed the “Conflict Resolution” approach. Echoing the emphases of SIT, Abu-Nimer’s model envisioned intergroup encounters as a mechanism for validating collective identity, confronting the reality of conflict, exposing asymmetries of power between majority and minority, and inspiring participants to act for social and political change.<sup>77</sup> In the 1990s, the School for Peace, a facilitation-training institute based at the Arab-Jewish intentional community of *Neve Shalom/Wabat Al-Salam*, produced a new facilitation methodology along these lines, focused exclusively on validating collective identity, exposing structural asymmetry, and empowering the Arab minority. The goal of the encounter, rather than creating relationships or debunking stereotypes, became a “change in the balance of power between the groups to one of equality.”<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Abu-Nimer, *Dialogue, Conflict Resolution, and Change*.

<sup>76</sup> The asymmetry of power, in each case, is theorized as underlying divergent desires between participants from dominant and dominated groups. In a hybrid conflict such as Israel-Palestine—marked by classic elements of ethno-national identity conflict, postcolonial dynamics and structural asymmetry—both groups seek validation of their identities and narratives by the other, but in the service of different goals. Dominant groups seek to assuage underlying fears that relinquishing control of the other group will lead to violent reprisal—a preoccupation that is often interpreted by the dominated as a duplicitous excuse for preservation of the status quo. Dominated groups, in turn, seek to expose, critique and transform what they experience as inherently unjust and systemic discrimination against them—in terms or tones that can exacerbate the dominant group’s fear and insecurity. See Miles Hewstone and Roger J. Brown, ed., *Contact and Conflict in Intergroup Encounters* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986). On asymmetry in Israeli/Palestinian encounters, see Abu-Nimer, *Dialogue, Conflict Resolution and Change*; see also Ariella Friedman, Rabah Halabi, and Nava Sonnenschein, “Israeli-Palestinian Workshops: Legitimation of National Identity and Change in Power Relationships,” in Weiner, *Handbook of Interethnic Coexistence*, 601-2; Gawerc, “Israeli Palestinian Peacebuilding Partnerships,”; Halabi, *Israeli and Palestinian Identities in Dialogue*; Maoz, “Multiple Conflicts and Competing Agendas.” See also chapters six and seven.

<sup>77</sup> Abu Nimer, *Dialogue, Conflict Resolution and Change*, 1-28. Reference to models advanced by Burton (1991) and Kelman and Cohen (1976) in response to structural critiques of conflict resolution.

<sup>78</sup> School for Peace director Rabah Halabi articulated the new philosophy in classic SIT terms: “Working from a *system* approach, interactions between individuals are examined in their capacity to reflect relationships

Scholars developed a typology of “categorization” to characterize the different approaches generated by Contact Theory and SIT. *De-categorized* approaches emphasized the interpersonal and the individual, in the hope of fostering “acquaintanceship potential,” and “differentiation,” by humanizing and individualizing perceptions of outgroup members. *Categorized* approaches, by contrast, emphasized collective identity, conflict analysis and transforming power relations. A third approach, *Re-categorized Contact*, urged the creation of a super-identity shared by both groups, allowing participants to perceive themselves as members of a common group, rather than reifying ingroup/outgroup divisions. This super-identity could be “human beings,” “teachers,” or, in the case at hand, “Seeds of Peace.”<sup>79</sup>

Over time, studies found advantages and drawbacks to each methodology.<sup>80</sup> De-categorized encounters succeeded in reducing ingroup bias during the period of interaction, but often failed to satisfy minority participants, or to *generalize* individual impressions into altered assumptions about the outgroup as a whole. Categorized encounters allowed substantive engagement with collective conflict, but ran the risk of reinforcing ingroup biases and inflaming tensions. Some practitioners endorsed a synthesis, arguing that participants have multiple individual and group aspects of identity, and that encounters should encourage participants to explore all of these in their full complexity.<sup>81</sup> Such a synthesis was impractical, however, for most local programs, as it demanded a much more lengthy encounter than the typical school-day or weekend workshop would allow.

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between the groups to which they belong rather than being explored for their significance on the personal level,” Friedman, Halabi et al., “Israeli-Palestinian Workshops,” 601-2.

<sup>79</sup> See Maddy-Weitzman, *Waging Peace in the Holy Land*, 13-15.

<sup>80</sup> Maoz, “Does contact work in protracted asymmetrical conflict?”; Maddy-Weitzman, “Coping with Crisis.”

<sup>81</sup> Mohammed Abu-Nimer and Ned Lazarus, “The Peacebuilder’s Paradox and the Dynamics of Dialogue: A Psychosocial Portrait of Israeli/Palestinian Encounters,” in *Beyond Bullets and Bombs: Grassroots Peacebuilding Between Israelis and Palestinians*, ed. Judy Kuriansky (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007). See also Haviva Bar and Elias Eady, “Education to Cope with Conflicts: Encounters between Jews and Palestinian Citizens of Israel,” in *Handbook of Interethnic Coexistence*, 514-534; Maddy-Weitzman, *Waging Peace in the Holy Land*.

SOP's summer camp, on the other hand, lasted several weeks, providing ample opportunities for all categories of contact. Participants interacted on individual and collective levels, and in multiple incarnations of each. In the course of an SOP summer program, participants met as bunkmates, teenagers, artists, athletes, team members, band members, delegation members, Israelis, Palestinians, Arabs, Jews, Muslims, Christians and "Seeds of Peace." The camp program consciously structured every day to include intensive "dialogue between identities" and social interaction between individuals.<sup>82</sup> The surplus of time allowed for the emergence of a hybrid synthesis of Contact Theory and SIT methodologies, what Edie Maddy-Weitzman calls a "mixed model encounter" – embodied by SOP and a number of *international third-party* encounter programs for Israeli and Palestinian youth.<sup>83</sup>

#### *Another Dimension: The International Third-Party Model*

The SOP camp program shares its "mixed" method, extended encounter model with more than a dozen encounter programs for Israeli and Palestinian youth based *outside* the Middle East. At least twelve are located in North America (see Table 2.1), in addition to at least three European encounter programs, numerous interfaith and peace education initiatives that include some Israeli and Palestinian participants, and several North American encounter programs involving youth from other international conflict regions.

These programs differ in numerous aspects. Some take place in idyllic, isolated settings reminiscent of SOP's lakeside retreat; others take place in urban centers, housing participants in college dormitories or arranging homestays with local host families. Some

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<sup>82</sup> See Maddy-Weitzman, *Waging Peace in the Holy Land*; Abu-Nimer and Lazarus, "The Peacebuilder's Paradox."

<sup>83</sup> Maddy-Weitzman, *Waging Peace in the Holy Land*; Maddy-Weitzman, *Coping with Crisis*; Ifat Maoz, "Coexistence is in the eye of the beholder: Evaluating intergroup encounter interventions between Jews and Arabs in Israel," *Journal of Social Issues* 60, no. 2 (2004): 437-452.

have special programmatic emphases: Artsbridge and Creativity for Peace emphasize visual arts; Peace It Together engages participants in filmmaking; New Story Leadership focuses on narrative arts, including speechmaking and storytelling.<sup>84</sup> Some are based in religious organizations (Christian or Jewish); others are explicitly interfaith or officially non-denominational.<sup>85</sup> However, all the programs are founded and directed by Americans or Canadians. All combine facilitated dialogue with experiential education and joint social, cultural and creative activities – aspiring to embody a “mixed model” encounter. The programs’ promotional materials, without exception, list as goals or values “empowerment,” “leadership,” and some aspect of conflict resolution, whether under the heading of “peace,” “coexistence,” “dialogue,” “empathy,” “understanding,” “transformation,” or all of the above.<sup>86</sup> In addition, all share core qualities derived from their non-Middle Eastern origins, leadership and location, which liken them to Burton & Kelman’s original workshops – convened and facilitated by “third-parties” rather than citizens of the countries in conflict.

*Table 2.1: North American Peace Education/Encounter Programs for Israeli and Palestinian Youth*<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Author's interviews with the founders and directors of programs.

<sup>85</sup> Kids4Peace, for example, is sponsored by the Anglican/Episcopal Church, while JITLI is a program of the San Diego Jewish Community Centers. Sources: Author's interview with Henry Carse (Kids4Peace), “JITLI.” Hands for Peace was originally founded as an interfaith project jointly coordinated by a local church, mosque and synagogue in Glenview, Illinois. Source: Author's telephone interview with Hands of Peace Program Director Phillip Hammack, October 12, 2006; interviews with Hands of Peace Facilitation Director Bill Taylor, November 4, 2006.

<sup>86</sup> Traubman, “Camps for Jews and Arabs (Muslims and Christians) in North America.”

<sup>87</sup> There are also numerous North American peace education programs involving Israeli and Palestinian youth participants that are not included in this chart, because the Israelis and Palestinians are not the primary groups involved. These are divided into programs with an explicit focus on the Middle East, but recruiting primarily Arab- and Jewish-American participants (Jewish-Palestinian Family Camp, Abraham’s Vision Vision Program), programs focused on interfaith dialogue (Face-to-Face, Faith-to-Faith, Interfaith Inventions) and international peace education programs (Apple Hill/Playing for Peace, Legacy International). There are also several Israeli/Palestinian peace education programs operating in Europe (Austria, UK). In addition, there are North American peace education programs for youth from other conflict zones (Friends Forever Ireland Project, New Story Leadership Ireland and South Africa Projects, Imagine Conflict Transformation Armenian/Azeri Project), and North American encounter programs conducting facilitated encounters between youth in the

Encounter Program	Year Established	Palestinian & Israeli Graduates <sup>88</sup>	Arab/Jewish or Israeli/Palestinian? <sup>89</sup>	North American Sites
Seeds of Peace <sup>90</sup>	1993	2000+	I/P + USA and 5 Arab countries	Maine, USA
Building Bridges for Peace	1994	600+	I/P + USA	Colorado, USA
JITLI	2000	150+	A/J, USA & MEX <sup>91</sup>	California, USA and Mexico <sup>92</sup>
Kids4Peace	2001	500+	I/P + US/CAN	Five US sites and Toronto, Canada <sup>93</sup>
Hands of Peace	2002	150+	I/P + USA	Illinois, USA
Creativity for Peace	2003	150+	I/P	New Mexico, USA
Peace Camp Ottawa/Canada <sup>94</sup>	2003	100+	I/P + CAN	Ottawa, Canada

USA and the Muslim World via internet (Soliya, Empower Peace, Children of Abraham). See Libby and Len Traubman, "Camps for Jews and Arabs (Muslims and Christians) in North America," Accessed June 7, 2011, <http://traubman.igc.org/camps.htm>.

<sup>88</sup> In most cases, these are estimates based on figures available on the internet. Few programs publish the actual aggregate number of alumni, and indeed few directors know their aggregate number of alumni.

<sup>89</sup> The abbreviation A/J indicates that Middle Eastern participants are all or predominantly Jewish and Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel. The abbreviation I/P indicates that Middle Eastern participants include Israeli Jews, Palestinians from the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT, i.e. East Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip). USA indicates that American youth also participate in the Middle East dialogue program; CAN indicates that Canadian youth also participate in the Middle East dialogue program. MEX indicates that Mexican youth also participate in the Middle East dialogue program. Seeds of Peace also includes smaller delegations from five Arab countries: Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Qatar and Tunisia.

<sup>90</sup> Seeds of Peace International Camp has also hosted programs for youth from the Balkans (nine delegations, 1995 and 2000-2002); Cyprus (four delegations, 1998-2002); South Asia (three delegations, 2002-present); US/Arab World (Jordanian and Saudi Delegations, 2004); local Maine youth (1999-present).

<sup>91</sup> JITLI (Jacobs International Teen Leadership Institute) has included small OPT Palestinian groups from Gaza (2003-5) and East Barta'a, but the vast majority of Middle Eastern participants are Israeli citizens. The program includes American and Mexican Jewish participants. "JITLI," Accessed June 27, 2010, <http://jitli.org/index.html>.

<sup>92</sup> JITLI also includes components in Spain and Israel; see Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Kids4Peace operates annual programs at the following locations: Houston, Texas (beginning in 2002); Atlanta, Georgia (2003); Toronto, Canada (2004); Burlington, VT (2007); Lake Logan, North Carolina (2008); Boston, Massachusetts (expected 2011). Sources Author's telephone interview with Henry Carse, Founder and Director, Kids4Peace, October 23, 2006; "Kids4Peace," Accessed July 7, 2011, <http://kids4peace.ca/>.

<sup>94</sup> The program's name changed from Peace Camp Canada to Peace Camp Ottawa in 2009. "Peace Camp Ottawa," Accessed June 25, 2010, <http://peacecampottawa.com/>.

Peace It Together	2004	<100	I/P + CAN	Vancouver, Canada
Project Triumph	2006	<100	I/P + USA	California, USA
Artsbridge	2008	<100	I/P + USA	Massachusetts, USA
Friends Forever Israel Project <sup>95</sup>	2008	<100	A/J + USA	New Hampshire, USA
New Story Leadership <sup>96</sup>	2010	<100	I/P + USA	Washington, DC, USA

These unifying aspects differentiate programs based on the *international encounter model* from the indigenous Israeli/Palestinian dialogue initiatives that have been the focus of most existing scholarship on Israeli/Palestinian “intergroup encounters.” The international programs are characterized by a) extended and continuous encounters, b) “sleeping with the enemy” (i.e. jointly shared living accommodations), c) organizational leadership, staff, and culture derived predominantly from the host country, and d) English as the dominant language, rather than Arabic and Hebrew in translation or (as is most often the *de facto* practice in encounters between Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel) simply Hebrew.<sup>97</sup>

Table 2.2 outlines these points of difference between international and indigenous models.

*Table 2.2: Points of Difference between International and Indigenous Encounter Models*

<sup>95</sup> The Friends Forever Israel Project is the organization’s second regional program. Friends Forever has run a cross-conflict encounter program for youth from Northern Ireland since 1986. Source: “Friends Forever Israel Program,” Accessed July 7, 2011, <http://friendsforeverusa.org/index.php?page=programs&display=19>.

<sup>96</sup> The New Story Leadership Middle East program is the organization’s third regional program. New Story Leadership has run international encounter programs for youth from Northern Ireland and South Africa. Sources: Author's interview with NSL executive director Paul Costello, Washington, D.C., January 28, 2009; “New Story Leadership in the Middle East,” Accessed July 7, 2011, <http://www.newstoryleadership.org/>.

<sup>97</sup> See Rabah Halabi and Michal Zak, “Language as a Bridge and an Obstacle,” in Rabah Halabi ed., *Israeli and Palestinian Identities in Dialogue* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 119-140.

<b>Program Aspect</b>	<b>International Model</b>	<b>Indigenous Model</b>
Time	2-3 weeks, continuous, shared accommodations	Series of sporadic meetings and/or weekend workshop
Setting	International setting (usually North America or Europe)	Local facility (usually dialogue program, school, or community center) in Israel or East Jerusalem
Dominant Language	English	Hebrew or bilingual Arabic/Hebrew with translation; some English
Program & Organizational Culture & Staffing	International/Third-Party	Israeli or Joint/Bi-National <sup>98</sup>

In addition, the international location – irrespective of particular program content – places participants in a markedly different category of visceral experience. For teen-aged participants, the framework of international encounter programs is that of a journey abroad, a foreign environment, often involving a separation of unprecedented duration and distance from home, family, friends and the conflict itself.

Proponents of international programs often frame this removal from context as an advantage, arguing that international settings inspire openness and new thinking for participants, while equalizing the status of the parties in conflict by placing them under the authority of relatively impartial third-party authorities.<sup>99</sup> In the 1998 *60 Minutes* piece, Morley Safer asks John Wallach “Why here [in the US]? Why not there, where the problem is?” Wallach responds without hesitation, “You couldn’t do it there – one side or the other

<sup>98</sup> On issues of equality and governance of Israeli/Palestinian joint peacebuilding organizations, see Gawerc, “Israeli Palestinian Peacebuilding Partnerships,”; Posner, *Teaching Peace While Living War*; Maia Hallward, “Building Space for Real Peace? Israeli and Palestinian Activism in the Second Intifada,” *Global Change, Peace, and Security* 21, no. 3 (2009): 309-323.

<sup>99</sup> Traubman, “Camps for Jews and Arabs (Muslims and Christians) in North America.”

would be dominant.”<sup>100</sup> Critics, on the other hand, often cite the international aspect of programs in order to undermine their legitimacy, frequently insinuating insincerity on the part of the participants (“they just wanted a free trip abroad”) and bias, ignorance or naïveté on the part of the Western third-party hosts.<sup>101</sup>

Although comparative research between international and indigenous encounter programs is yet to be done, scholarship can be marshaled for both sides of the argument. Gavriel Salomon has noted the significance of the temporal dimension, citing the brevity and discontinuity of most indigenous encounters as limiting their impact on participants, in comparison to the extended, continuous encounters offered by international programs.<sup>102</sup> Philip Hammack, on the other hand, has criticized the international model as a “misguided” intervention, imposing on participants a “cosmopolitan” ideology that suits American needs and narratives, but which is culturally incompatible, politically inappropriate, and methodologically ineffective for contexts of nationalist struggle such as the Middle East.<sup>103</sup>

Whether advantage or flaw, the cultural and geographic distance of international programs from the actual conflict context highlights a problem inherent to the

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<sup>100</sup> “Give Peace a Chance,” *60 Minutes*.

<sup>101</sup> Arab and Palestinian critics often suspect these programs of pro-Israel bias, particularly because the programs are frequently founded and funded by North American Jews (for clarification, eight of the twelve encounter programs listed on the chart have Jewish founders—although in two cases, the same programs have Arab or Muslim co-founders; four programs have Christian founders and affiliations, though two of these projects originally focused on the Northern Ireland conflict). Israeli critics, on the other hand, often suspect the same American Jews of bias due to their predominantly liberal or left-wing political views. SOP participants and Israeli and Palestinian critics have voiced both of the above suspicions. See David Bar-Ilan, “The Seeds Strike Back,” *The Jerusalem Post*, January 28, 2000.

<sup>102</sup> Gavriel Salomon, “Recent Research Findings by the Center for Research on Peace Education,” Accessed May 27, 2011, <http://cerpe.haifa.ac.il>; “Does Peace Education Make a Difference in the Context of an Intractable Conflict,” *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 10, no. 3 (2004), 257-274.

<sup>103</sup> Phillip L. Hammack, “Identity, Conflict and Coexistence: Life Stories of Israeli and Palestinian Adolescents,” *Journal of Adolescent Research* 21, no. 4 (2006): 323-369, and “The Narrative Stalemate: Conflict, Identity, and the Cultural Psychology of Israeli and Palestinian Adolescence,” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2006). See also Mohammed Abu-Nimer, “Conflict Resolution Approaches: Western and Middle Eastern Lessons and Possibilities,” *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 55, no. 1 (January 1996), 35-52; Kevin Avruch, *Culture and Conflict Resolution* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1998).

transformative encounter model. Kelman called this, “the well-known *re-entry problem*, which is common to all types of workshops and therapeutic efforts.”<sup>104</sup> In an early description of the problem-solving workshop, Kelman and partner Stephen Cohen phrased the issue simply: “If an individual changes in the workshop setting, what is the likelihood that he will maintain those changes in his home setting?”<sup>105</sup>

This issue is accentuated for interventions in contexts of intractable conflict, in which participants’ “home settings” are hostile toward the changes that the encounter aims to produce, and often to the very idea of dialogue or relationship with the “enemy.”<sup>106</sup> After studying dozens of encounter programs, Salomon found that, “While such programs have a positive impact on many participants, it is still an open question whether perceptual and attitudinal changes last... after all, [these] programs are carried out in a social environment where an ‘ethos of conflict’ and a belligerent atmosphere appear to dominate.”<sup>107</sup>

“Re-entry” remains a perennial problem of Conflict Resolution, cited by contemporary scholars and practitioners as among the core challenges of the field.<sup>108</sup> The issue does not occur to “insiders” alone. The same question seemed to arise from audiences in every presentation I conducted on this topic over fifteen years of practice and research:

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<sup>104</sup> Herbert C. Kelman and Stephen P. Cohen, “The Problem-Solving Workshop: A Social-Psychological Contribution to the Resolution of International Conflicts,” *Journal of Peace Research* 13, no. 2 (1976): 83.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> Abu-Nimer and Lazarus, “The Peacebuilder’s Paradox.”

<sup>107</sup> Salomon, “A Summary of our Findings,” 7.

<sup>108</sup> For example, on the *Beyond Intractability* Conflict Resolution online resource, the “re-entry problem” is mentioned in interviews as a core challenge by eleven contemporary scholars, independently, in 2003-04. See Dennis Sandole, “The Dangers of Re-Entry,” interview by Julian Portilla, 2003, Accessed March 16, 2011, <http://www.beyondintractability.org/audio/10853>. See also Julian Portilla, interviews with Tamra Pearson d’Estree, Dennis Sandole, Maire Dugan, Jay Rothman, Michelle LeBaron, Mark Chupp, Mark Gerzon, Chip Hauss, Sara Cobb, Eileen Babbit, Louise Diamond, “Expert Advice,” on *Beyond Intractability*, Accessed March 16, 2011, [http://www.beyondintractability.org/audio/tamra\\_destree/?nid=2429](http://www.beyondintractability.org/audio/tamra_destree/?nid=2429). See also Tarja Väyrynen, *Culture and International Conflict Resolution: A Critical Analysis of the Work of John Burton*, 125-26, 143. See also Afa Alizada, “Outcast or the Problem of Re-Entry” *Caucasus Edition: A Journal of Conflict Transformation* (2010, June 15), Accessed June 28, 2010, <http://caucasusedition.net/blog/‘outcast’-or-the-problem-of-re-entry/>.

“So what happens when they go home?”<sup>109</sup> Answering that question first became the purpose of my work for Seeds of Peace, before evolving into the focus of this dissertation.

### Background: Practice and Theory

#### *Encounter, Re-entry and Follow-up: A Personal Introduction*

I first worked for Seeds of Peace as a camp counselor in August 1995, the program’s third summer of operation. Just out of college and lacking any facilitation background, I served as a tennis instructor and bunk counselor, with no role in the formal dialogue program. It was not long, however, before Israeli and Palestinian campers brought arguments from their “coexistence sessions” back to our bunk. On one occasion, I returned to the bunk to find Arab and Jewish campers standing outside, huddled in separate groups. I noticed a Palestinian camper in tears, and asked what was the problem. He stuttered several times, struggling to regain composure and find words in English, finally explaining that, “One of the Jews said *tfu* on me.” He had to repeat it several times before I understood that an Israeli camper had spit on him. I was livid; I remember asking myself what anyone who could behave in such a manner was doing at a “peace camp.”

I marched over to the group of Israeli campers to demand an explanation. I found the group trying to calm one youth who was visibly shaken, his face flushed. Chastened, I asked what happened. “He said the Holocaust is a lie,” the boy responded, pointing at the Palestinian with whom I had just spoken. “He said a few thousand Jews were killed, because they were fighting against the Germans. He said... my grandfather is a liar.” I don’t recall

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<sup>109</sup> Author’s personal experience.

what I did next. I remember only feeling overwhelmed, confused, paralyzed. The outrage, the anguish, the visceral reactions of both campers were authentic, innocent and perfectly plausible. They had triggered emotional explosions in each other by simply repeating what one had always been taught, and what the other knew to be true. It was as if they had been rigged with historical tripwires for the occasion.

Before I gathered myself, an older Israeli camper came to the rescue. He was an SOP veteran, having attended camp the previous summer and been selected to return as a “Peer Support.” He shuttled back and forth between the groups, speaking calmly with each of the aggrieved campers, and gradually bridging the physical distance between them. The two aggrieved campers gradually came to stand on either side of a wooden bench, repeating their feelings about what had transpired between them to the older camper. He paraphrased their statements in turn, as if translating, until eventually they were able to speak with each other. Without his intervention, I have no idea whether or how the two would have agreed to sleep in the same room that evening. Instead, the next day, I saw them walking together to the dining hall. A few days later, I found the Palestinian camper studying documents about the Holocaust that the Israeli camper had downloaded for him from the internet. This was an epiphany for me as much as the youth involved; my first genuine “encounter” experience.

The camp made a powerful impression on me, and on many of the campers as well. Some sent me letters soon after returning home, saying how much they enjoyed camp, how much they missed it and longed to return. Several wrote again in November, after a right-wing Israeli activist assassinated Israeli Prime Minister Rabin in order to derail peace negotiations with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and preserve Israeli military

control and Jewish settlement of the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT).<sup>110</sup> In the wake of the assassination, my former campers expressed concerns about the future, and about losing the hope that camp had sparked for them. Moved by their letters, I contacted the Seeds of Peace office in New York and asked if the organization had any activities in the Middle East, and if I might volunteer there.<sup>111</sup> I received a reply from John Wallach, inviting me to a reunion for all SOP graduates scheduled to take place in Jordan that summer. After the reunion, he wrote, I was to find office space in Jerusalem, assess the motivation and needs of Israeli and Palestinian graduates and the feasibility of a follow-up program.

That program grew from graduates' own initiatives – a Palestinian graduate invited an Israeli friend to her home; an Israeli invited two Palestinian friends to give a presentation at his school; Jordanian graduates came to visit Israeli and Palestinian friends, who in turn initiated a joint homestay trip to Jordan and gave a presentation at a Jordanian high school. The initiators chronicled these activities in SOP's *Olive Branch* quarterly newsletter, which was sent to all alumni. As word spread, dozens of other graduates followed suit, initiating their own school presentations and visit exchanges. The organization steadily added regional staff to meet growing demand for activities, in 1999 opening the Jerusalem Center for Coexistence to house what had become a bustling year-round program. From visits and presentations, the activities grew to include biweekly dialogue groups, overnight seminars for each school vacation, and eventually community service projects, parents' programs, and

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<sup>110</sup> On the assassination of Rabin and its effect on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, see Charles Enderlin, *Shattered Dreams: The Failure of the Peace Process in the Middle East, 1995–2002* (New York: Other Press, 2002).

<sup>111</sup> I was granted a fellowship by the Dorot Foundation for one year of Jewish study and volunteer work in Jerusalem.

conflict resolution training for older graduates.<sup>112</sup> The eruption of the *intifada* in late 2000 threw the Jerusalem program into a period of profound, but not permanent crisis. The content of programming changed in response to conditions, as did levels of alumni activity – but “follow-up” continued.<sup>113</sup> Seeds of Peace began as an American summer camp, but evolved into a (predominantly) Middle Eastern youth movement.

My role during eight years in Jerusalem was to counter the “re-entry problem.” The initial impact of the camp program was evidenced by widespread enthusiasm for follow-up activity among many, if not all graduates, especially following their first summers at camp. Drawing on the organization’s connections and resources, my colleagues and I provided whatever support alumni requested in order to continue dialogue and relationships with each other, and to promote peacebuilding in their communities. The motivation was theirs; our work was to do what was necessary to make such activities possible. In practice, this meant a peculiar and demanding constellation of multi-tasking. Every SOP event required soliciting travel permits for Palestinians from the Israeli army (IDF), escorting youth across IDF checkpoints, convincing parents their children would be safe on “the other side,” identifying mutually agreeable locations, organizing transportation around the country, and often deciding whether to continue in the wake of violent events in the country – a myriad of measures necessary to navigate a labyrinth of physical, political, and psychological barriers.<sup>114</sup>

Years of negotiating this elaborate infrastructure of separation left me acutely aware of the powerful constraints, cultural and structural, that discourage cross-conflict

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<sup>112</sup> On the evolution of the follow-up program, see Maddy-Weitzman, *Waging Peace in the Holy Land*; Lazarus, “Jerusalem Diary.” See also back issues of *The Olive Branch*, which are available at “The Olive Branch Youth Magazine,” *Seeds of Peace*, Accessed June 17, 2011, <http://www.seedsofpeace.org/node/1830>.

<sup>113</sup> See Maddy-Weitzman, “Waging Peace in the Holy Land”; Posner, “Teaching Peace in a Time of War,” 199-202.

<sup>114</sup> For more detail, see Lazarus, “Jerusalem Diary”; Abu-Nimer and Lazarus, “The Peacebuilder’s Paradox”.

engagement between Israelis and Palestinians – and the will required to persevere with peacebuilding in such conditions. Years of witnessing this struggle as an outsider left me equally conscious of SOP's origins as an American intervention, guided by American assumptions. The primary purpose of this dissertation is to evaluate this model of peace education; yet it also provides a map of that labyrinth, and an examination of those assumptions.

*SOP in the Middle East: Global Power and Local Knowledge*

Upon arrival in Jerusalem in 1996, I found myself utterly dependent on alumni, their families and local partners I met through them. Before beginning work for SOP, I had previously spent a few months in Israel, on an English-language semester abroad program at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. I spoke little Arabic and had few Palestinian connections other than SOP graduates; I knew just enough Hebrew to know how little I actually understood about Israelis. My Jewish-American identity provided me a degree of access, but no authentic insight into the different and much more difficult realities of Israeli existence. Among myriad cultural, political and religious differences, one stood out: A soldier is one thing an affluent Jewish-American child knows s/he (might choose to, but) will never have to be; the situation is precisely the opposite for every Jewish youth in Israel.

I spent my first year as a perpetual guest, traveling between graduates' homes throughout Israel, the West Bank, Gaza, Egypt and Jordan, being served disproportionate helpings of food and opinion. One week after I arrived, a Palestinian graduate invited me to her West Bank refugee camp, with IDF jeeps parked conspicuously at the entrance. She was

proud to show me, her American camp counselor, the local summer camp where she served as head counselor. Using stones, she and her colleagues had marked off a dozen sections of a dusty field about the size of a basketball court. Local children would rotate in groups through these spaces each morning, a different activity – sports, art, song, history, all taught with minimal equipment – awaiting them in each one. I could not help but be impressed by her resourcefulness, and by the contrasts of conditions and resources between her “camps” and ours.

My primary guide and teacher in my first years was Sami Al-Jundi, a Palestinian peace activist from the Old City of Jerusalem who became my close colleague. I met him at a planning session for a joint Israeli-Palestinian cultural center in Jerusalem in June 1996; Sami was working as a shared taxi driver at the time. We communicated in Hebrew, which he had absorbed during a decade spent in Israeli security prison.<sup>115</sup> I initially called upon Sami to transport SOP graduates and myself around Israel and the OPT, soon asked him into meetings to help with translation, and rapidly came to rely on him for essential local knowledge of every kind. Seated at Sami’s right hand on countless trips across the country, I learned that he had experienced his own transformation of perspective while in prison. Since his release, Sami had been involved with the Palestinian Center for the Study of Nonviolence

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<sup>115</sup> Sami was jailed in 1980, at age 18, for building a bomb with two teen-aged friends in his home in the Old City of Jerusalem. The explosives detonated, killing one friend and maiming the other; Sami was arrested in the hospital and spent ten years and one month as a security prisoner, during which time he became inspired by reading Dostoevsky, Gandhi and Mandela, among many other experiences, toward dialogue and nonviolence. After release, Sami worked for several years for the Palestinian Center for the Study of Nonviolence, before working as a Program Coordinator and Jerusalem Center Supervisor for Seeds of Peace from 1996-2006. Sami discusses his life and philosophy in the documentary film *Encounter Point*, DVD, directed by Ronit Avni and Julia Bacha (Jerusalem: Just Vision, 2006). His comprehensive autobiography can be found in Sami Al-Jundi and Jen Marlowe, *The Hour of Sunlight: One Palestinian’s Journey From Prisoner to Peacemaker* (New York: Nation Books, 2010).

and various joint initiatives, seeking a way to express his vision of a shared future for Israelis and Palestinians – until he found it in Seeds of Peace.<sup>116</sup>

The SOP “regional” program, as it was officially known, became a *sui generis* hybrid culture infused by the culturally, politically and socially impossible human connections generated through Seeds of Peace. SOP graduates and staff traversed the country together, riding in a fleet of beat-up Ford Transit taxi vans driven by Sami and six of his brothers, with conversations and musical selections swerving haphazardly in and out of Arabic, Hebrew and English.<sup>117</sup> It was a cacophonous, often exhilarating and thoroughly unusual tri-cultural experience for all involved.

We were repeatedly reminded of the rareness of our cross-conflict caravans, when pulled over for questioning by Israeli and occasionally PNA security forces. Soldiers were frequently mystified after throwing open the doors of what appeared to be proletarian Palestinian taxis to find mixed groups of Arab, Jewish and American passengers. Some soldiers were warmly surprised and expressed support; others held us for questioning, suspecting that the Arabs in the car had kidnapped the Jews. These routine ID checks functioned as “reality checks” for our merry band, lest we forget that the US passports of our staff – and the contacts SOP possessed in the US embassy and the Israeli government – were what enabled Palestinian participants to cross the checkpoints at all.

This “regional program” was a global/local partnership. SOP provided the catalyst of the initial encounter, and provided the access, power and resources of a well-connected

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<sup>116</sup> See Al-Jundi and Marlowe, *The Hour of Sunlight*; Lazarus, “Jerusalem Diary.”

<sup>117</sup> The Ford Transit van was the primary vehicle of Palestinian public transportation, and widespread among Israelis as well, during the 1990s. The culture of Palestinian “Ford drivers” and taxis is chronicled in Palestinian director Hany Abu-Assad’s 2003 film *Ford Transit*. See Arjan El-Fassed, “Abu-Assad Wins ‘Spirit of Freedom’ Award At Jerusalem Film Festival,” *The Electronic Intifada*, Posted July 21, 2003, Accessed July 11, 2011, <http://electronicintifada.net/content/hany-abu-assad-wins-spirit-freedom-award-jerusalem-film-festival/4688>.

American organization. Israeli and Palestinian graduates and staff brought the courage to cross borders and challenge consensus, and the local knowledge that enabled the program to operate effectively on the ground in their communities. In a 2006 study, Ahsiya Posner described the symbiosis:

Both locals (“insiders”) and internationals (“outsiders”) each occupied a unique niche and had distinct “value added.” For example, local staff members of Seeds of Peace... had special access to and trust of key members of society... They also had extensive knowledge of the cultural “dos-and-don’ts” from their entire set of life experiences. Meanwhile, internationals played an important supporting role by offering a certain distance and objectivity to the conflict dynamic, along with access to resources, financial support, and media coverage, etc. from their own home countries and/or the larger international community.<sup>118</sup>

This interdependence was not, however, symmetrical – it was never reflected in SOP’s organizational discourse or directorship, which remained exclusively American.<sup>119</sup>

As the regional program grew and the organization invested significant resources in Jerusalem, a clash of cultures evolved between SOP’s organizational headquarters in New York and the regional office. This initially surfaced in subtle manifestations, such as repeated demands by New York staff to enforce the “English-only” policy of SOP camp during activities in the Middle East – which went ignored by both graduates and the regional staff. In decorating the Jerusalem Center, the US leadership insisted on the exclusive display of images from SOP camp in Maine, or photo ops of SOP participants with world leaders – regional photos were explicitly ruled out. This policy stood for some time before a compromise was worked out, permitting images from any SOP event, as long as participants appeared in the trademark t-shirts.

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<sup>118</sup> Posner, “Teaching Peace in a Time of War”, 308.

<sup>119</sup> As Posner explains, “In 2004, Seeds of Peace’s U.S.-based offices in New York and Washington D.C., along with its Middle East-based Jerusalem Center, were still primarily managed and run by Americans. Moreover, Israelis and (particularly) Palestinians held the lower-ranked positions. Indeed the seven most senior positions within Seeds of Peace— namely, the Executive Director, the Camp Director, the Jerusalem Center Director, and the four Vice-Presidents of the organization— were all held by Americans “(Ibid).

Assumptions of our primacy as Americans and intervenors permeated our promotional rhetoric and internal discourse – even in terminology borrowed directly from Conflict Resolution. The terms “re-entry” and “follow-up,” for example, framed our work and participants’ roles around the camp program – the few exceptional weeks of participants’ lives that they spent on *our* turf, speaking our language, under our tutelage. These terms did not adequately reflect or respect the critical part of the “SOP” experience: the continuous, arduous, and local struggles in which SOP alumni engaged as aspiring Israeli and Palestinian peace-builders. Graduates faced the “re-entry problem” anew, in the forms of criticism and doubt, every time they chose to address an audience together, or answer a cellphone call from “the other side” in the presence of peers, or just go to school in a “Seeds of Peace” shirt. All these actions and many others truly constituted “follow-up,” whether or not SOP staff were present. “Re-entry” did not mean simply the problems they faced upon return home from camp. “Re-entry” meant their lifelong political reality; “follow-up” meant *their* efforts to change it. SOP provided extraordinary experiences and opportunities to participants, but the learning and the benefit was mutual, while the struggle and sacrifices were theirs. Our methods, our values, our intervention were effective inasmuch as graduates found them applicable in worlds we did not know, helpful in struggles we could not lead, meaningful in languages we did not understand.

One Israeli Jewish graduate of Seeds of Peace sharply outlined this disconnect between American intervenors and Middle Eastern participants in a 2006 interview:

Who governs this organization are Americans, and they don’t understand what it means to be Israeli, what it means to be Palestinian and what it means to live in conflict... They, who don’t have any idea how to make peace, who don’t need to make peace, come to teach us how to make peace – they don’t know anything about living in fear, and they come to teach us how to run our lives... We can make peace, but on their terms. What do they know about us? What do they know about our

conflict? ... Just give us the place, the support, and just let us do what we know how to do.

They think it's their expertise to bridge between countries, and they don't have any idea. They have never succeeded in resolving a conflict, they have never lived in a conflict, or lived in fear, or ever cared what the world thinks of them. What do they care? They are the world.

It's not their people, it's not their country... What do they care to tell us to get out of the territories? What do they care to tell [the Palestinians] the refugees will not return? Are they the refugees? Are they the families? Are they that nation? What do they care? It's not them – it's another notch on the belt.

People in this organization need to come with the humblest approach possible, because they know nothing about this conflict, and how to solve it. Modest – they need to come to learn. Instead, we have to learn, and they come to teach. What are they teaching? Because they've never been through this, then they're teaching us? Bring us people from Bosnia and Kosovo, Ireland, who will talk to us...

John [Wallach] says "Make one friend. What are you talking about, John?" Did you ever have a friend who you thought someone from his family might kill you? Who are you, and from where did you get the idea that you can give us advice?

I would expect that they would give us a place, time, and money. That's all they have to give. If they want people to facilitate, they should bring people who have lived in conflict, who know what fear is, who know what it means to struggle for independence.

Her statement prompted me to ask, in the interview, whether she felt that SOP and similar programs should continue their work. She replied without hesitation, "Absolutely."

To explain, she began to distinguish between her impressions of the "program," especially the Middle East "regional" program, and the leadership of the US organization:

Everything connected to interaction with the higher levels of the organization in SOP I remember negatively.... [but] all the grassroots people were great... At the level of the grassroots people at the [Jerusalem] Center, there were no chosen ones. Everyone got telephone calls, everyone who wanted a connection had one... The places when we felt [the program] was about us was the grassroots – at the [Jerusalem] Center, at the seminars, the pizza. When we used to come to the Center and stuff *The Olive Branch* in envelopes, and at the end they would order us pizza – that was such a wonderful social atmosphere. Everybody knows who you are, a listening ear... I had the feeling that the people who work with me, the staff

workers... were fun, and they loved us... There was simply an absolute disconnect between these two levels.

She summarized the balance of critique and endorsement by saying, “SOP has a good format – fantastic. The summer camp is fantastic. But I will always have a problem with Americans telling me how to run my life in the Middle East.”

Two contemporary scholars have illustrated similar divergences of perspective between the globally powerful architects of humanitarian interventions and their intended beneficiaries. In a 1999 study of international aid projects, Mary Anderson exposed cases in which such interventions inadvertently exacerbated conflict in their target communities, these unintended consequences resulting from failures to understand local context.<sup>120</sup> In a 2005 study, Susan Shepler challenges the “conventional wisdom” regarding a cause célèbre of Western humanitarian intervention: “child soldiers” in Sierra Leone. Drawing on extensive ethnographic observation and interviews in local communities, Shepler reveals that international post-conflict aid programs often had the paradoxical effect of making “child soldier” into a coveted status among locals, by granting “child soldiers” privileged access to aid, education, health, employment and other benefits and resources.<sup>121</sup> On a cultural level, Shepler argues that “child soldier” itself is a category established by Western intervenors, rooted in conceptions of the duration and innocence of childhood that are entirely foreign to Sierra Leone. The same could be said of the identity of a “Seed of Peace.”

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<sup>120</sup> Mary Anderson, *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace—Or War* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002).

<sup>121</sup> In one case, a “child soldier” reintegration center struggled to identify its proper beneficiaries, because local youth all attempted to gain entry to benefits and programs by claiming to have been “child soldiers.” The Center first restricted access by allowing entry only to youth who turned in a firearm upon arrival. When they learned that local youth were attempting to procure weapons in order to present themselves as “child soldiers,” the Center established a more stringent test: they admitted only youth who knew how to quickly assemble and disassemble an AK-47. One wonders, however, whether the local youth didn’t quickly establish their own training courses in order to pass that test – courses which would have granted further profit and status to actual child soldiers. See Susan A. Shepler, “Conflicted Childhoods: Fighting over Child Soldiers in Sierra Leone,” (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2005).

At the same time, Shepler finds that Sierra Leoneans appreciated and valued international assistance crucial to repairing their shattered country, when distributed by criteria determined by local needs and priorities, rather than fundraising strategies for Western audiences. While situated in a very different context, aspects of this dynamic are visible in the case of Seeds of Peace. The same SOP graduate who voiced the above critique of the program's American leadership, has remained an enthusiastic participant in SOP activities well into her adult life. Indeed, when asked in the same 2006 interview to assess the program's overall impact on her, she responded in positive terms:

We always felt – they always told us to feel that we're very special and we were very empowered – that we can achieve everything, that we have great influence, that we can make peace [laughter]. Even today, I feel like I'm a person that can make changes – I matter. I count. That's the strongest feeling that SOP gave me. That I matter... Is that positive? Very. You feel like you belong to an elite group. And I think we did. SOP was the first time that I met people who are like me – who are intelligent, and care about what happens in the world ... we were an elite group. We're still very happy to belong to that group... All my best friends are from Seeds.

Her statements are exemplary of the testimonies of dozens of adult SOP graduates, whom I interviewed for this project between 2006-2010. Speaking seven to fifteen years after their initial camp experiences, the vast majority of these graduates spoke in complex, layered, sometimes contradictory terms regarding the impacts of SOP on their lives. Their testimonies might be characterized as “ambivalent” in the sense of containing dissonant themes, but not in terms of emotional affect. The majority of adult graduates assessed the program in emphatic measures of both criticism and praise, and crucially, in their own terms.

These issues came into sharp relief at Seeds of Peace in the years following the outbreak of the *intifada*, during intensive staff discussions of how to evaluate the success of the program. For whose role was it to define, or claim credit for, “success”? SOP had evolved through dialogue and relationship, not simply between Arabs and Israelis, but

between the American organization and Israeli and Palestinian (and other) participants. The intervention could not be simply assessed according to the intervenor's objectives, but whether, and how, participants interpreted these and translated them in their realities.

For me, these discussions provided the genesis of this dissertation. In 2004, I retired from SOP and began doctoral studies, aspiring to combine practical observations with rigorous analysis and theoretical perspective, in order to evaluate the program's complex impacts in a way that could not be pursued from within. The remainder of this chapter will address the issue of evaluation, and introduce the framework, methodology and contribution of the dissertation.

### *Evaluation and the Evolution of the Dissertation*

As Seeds of Peace approached its tenth anniversary in 2003, the organization's leadership grew acutely conscious of the need to conduct a credible assessment of the program's impact. The eruption of the *Al-Aqsa Intifada* in September 2000 had inspired internal and external questioning of the program's effectiveness and relevance, exemplified by the critical portrait on *60 Minutes*.<sup>122</sup> Inside SOP, a pair of deaths had shaken the community of graduates and staff. Aseel 'Asleh, a popular and enthusiastic graduate of the program, was killed by Israeli police on the fourth day of the new *intifada*, at age seventeen. Aseel was one of twelve Palestinian citizens of Israel killed by Israeli security forces in October 2000, during an unprecedented wave of civil unrest inside the country, ignited by the uprising in the OPT. In the same fateful year, SOP founder and President John Wallach

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<sup>122</sup> "To Be Continued," *60 Minutes*.

was diagnosed with terminal cancer. Wallach's death in July 2002, at age sixty, left SOP plagued by a leadership vacuum and chronic organizational conflict for the better part of the decade.<sup>123</sup> In the wake of these devastating losses and the climate of escalating conflict in the organization and the region, the past achievements and future viability of the organization came to be questioned by funders, graduates, staff and outside observers.

The program's accomplishments were not insignificant; SOP approached its tenth anniversary having expanded rapidly in terms of every measurable aspect of organizational life – programming, fundraising, and recognition – throughout its first decade of operation. From the initial 1993 summer session involving forty-two Egyptian, Israeli, and Palestinian boys, the program had grown to feature multiple summer camp sessions and a year-round Middle East program, involving more than 2000 graduates from twenty-two countries in six regions of conflict.<sup>124</sup> Staff grew from two US-based, part-time staff in 1993 to thirty-three full-time staff, based in three US cities and the Jerusalem Center for Coexistence, with plans to open additional offices in Tel Aviv, Israel and Ramallah in the OPT.<sup>125</sup> The annual budget grew from “roughly \$1 million in [the] first few years to... approximately: \$1.9 million in 1998, \$3 million in 1999, \$3.8 million in 2000, \$5 million in 2001, \$4.8 million in 2002, \$6.1 million in 2003, \$8.7 million in 2004 and \$7.2 million in 2005.”<sup>126</sup> SOP attracted widespread media attention: The 2003 annual report cited appearances in sixty-three major

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<sup>123</sup> Posner, “Teaching Peace While Living War”; Hammack, “Identity, Conflict, and Coexistence”; Al-Jundi and Marlowe, *The Hour of Sunlight*.

<sup>124</sup> Seeds of Peace. “Annual Report 2003,” Accessed July 10, 2011, [http://www.seedsofpeace.org/about/annual\\_reports](http://www.seedsofpeace.org/about/annual_reports).

<sup>125</sup> These offices opened in 2006, in a controversial manner—replacing rather than adding to the Jerusalem Center, which was closed in July of that year.

<sup>126</sup> Michelle Boorstein, “A Measure of Peace: The Role and Impact of People-to People in the Israel-Palestine Conflict” (Unpublished Master’s thesis, New York University, 2006), 40. See also “Annual Reports,” Seeds of Peace, Accessed June 30, 2011, [http://www.seedsofpeace.org/about/annual\\_reports](http://www.seedsofpeace.org/about/annual_reports).

electronic and print news media that reached audiences on five continents – a remarkable level of coverage for a peace education program of any size.<sup>127</sup>

Notwithstanding these numbers, Seeds of Peace had yet to evaluate the program's impact on youth participants, not to mention the societies in conflict that Wallach originally aspired to influence. This lack of formal assessment had practical implications. As the organization expanded and institutionalized, it depended increasingly on securing foundation and government grants to supplement funds raised through private donations. By 2003, grants from the State Department and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded the majority of SOP's follow-up activities in Afghanistan, the Balkans, Cyprus, India/Pakistan, and especially the Middle East.<sup>128</sup> SOP's vast reservoir of glowing participant testimonials, which effectively inspired private donations and positive press, were considered "anecdotal evidence" by federal agencies and foundations – an inadequate barometer of success. These strictly regulated institutions explicitly required grantees to implement systematic monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for funded programs.<sup>129</sup>

In 2003, the organization established an Evaluation Committee, composed of senior staff including myself, and members of the Board of Directors. Discussions centered on the need to produce *quantifiable* evidence of the program's impact.<sup>130</sup> Assigned to research

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<sup>127</sup> Figures are from Seeds of Peace, "Annual Report 2003" and Seeds of Peace, "A Decade of Peacemaking/Annual Report 2002," Accessed June 17, 2011, [http://www.seedsofpeace.org/about/annual\\_reports](http://www.seedsofpeace.org/about/annual_reports). In terms of finances, participant population and PR, SOP was larger than all other existing international encounter programs—combined.

<sup>128</sup> According to the 2003 Annual Report, US government agencies supplied SOP with a total of \$849,450 in 2003—with applications pending for more than one million dollars of additional funds from the Bush administration's Middle East Peace Initiative (Ibid).

<sup>129</sup> See Cheyanne Church and Julie Shouldice, *The Evaluation of Conflict Resolution Interventions: Framing the State of Play* (Derry/Londonderry: University of Ulster/United Nations University, 2002).

<sup>130</sup> Posner's "Teaching Peace in a Time of War" provides a detailed overview of evaluation practice at SOP as of 2005 (pp. 221-230), which is complemented by Boorstein's "A Measure of Peace" (updated through 2006). Boorstein explains that "SOP began its first venture into fact-gathering about its impact in 1995. At the time, "evaluation" consisted of having an educational psychologist, Leslie Hergert, come to camp at the start and at

assessment practices of similar conflict resolution and peace education initiatives, I engaged in a cursory review in the relevant professional literature. The scholarly debates on evaluation methods made measuring impact seem as challenging – or Sisyphean – an endeavor as resolving conflict itself.

The most comprehensive sources provided questions rather than answers. A 2002 conference report, derived from discussions among the leading lights of the peacebuilding evaluation field, declared that, “There is no clear definition of what constitutes ‘success’ in conflict resolution, so how do we know when an intervention has been successful?”<sup>131</sup> A 2003 compendium of expert opinion on “Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment” (PCIA)

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the end, to conduct focus groups and one-on-one interviews with campers, monitoring their attitudes before and after this experience. She returned in 1996 to repeat the study” (Boorstein, “A Measure of Peace,” 34). SOP camp counselor Nicholas Lewin also conducted a pre-test/post-test evaluation of SOP campers in the summer of 1997 (author’s recollection). Posner notes that in 2002, the organization rejected an impact evaluation proposal from Dr. Steve Worchel, the former Dean of Arts and Sciences at the University of Southern Maine who was working for SOP on the Delegation Leaders program at the time. Worchel had secured a \$400,000 grant from the National Science Foundation for the project. In 2003, the organization commissioned a pre-test/post-test survey from the Zogby International opinion research firm; in 2004-05, SOP hired the Social Impact evaluation research firm to conduct a comprehensive impact evaluation involving site visits to SOP camp and the Jerusalem Center and interviews with dozens of youth participants, older graduates, and current and former staff (for full disclosure, this evaluation was co-authored by Dr. Mohammed Abu-Nimer of American University, who is chair of the academic committee for this dissertation). Seeds of Peace opted to release only selected findings from the Social Impact evaluation after its completion in 2005, hence I do not relate to its findings in detail. It is important to note that, according to multiple interviewees with access to the information, the full findings were not released due to revelations of internal organizational conflict and criticism of the organizational leadership of that era, rather than the impact of the program per se. Indeed, numerous pre-test/post-test and older graduate attitudinal survey findings were published on the SOP website at the time (author’s recollection). Boorstein’s thesis includes some review of the Social Impact evaluation findings, including a statement that “The Evaluation Team found the SOP staff to be very supportive of the evaluation, stating that the organization after twelve years really needed to find out what was working and not working \_ right now there are no mechanisms in place for measuring success or failure” (Boorstein, “A Measure of Peace,” 39). At the same time, Boorstein states that, “Asked about the 172-page Social Impact evaluation and its recommendations, SOP director of government grants Susan Morawetz said there had been no change in programming as a result” (Boorstein, “A Measure of Peace,” 46). Some interviewees expressed the opinion, however, that the Social Impact evaluation contributed to significant changes in SOP’s top leadership. On organizational conflict within SOP, see chapter eight, “‘Program’ vs. ‘Organization.’” Finally, in terms of contemporary practice, Dr. Jane Risen of the University of Chicago – herself an SOP graduate – conducted extensive pre/post surveys of SOP campers in the summer of 2010, and is scheduled to continue her research this summer.

<sup>131</sup> Church and Shouldice, *Framing the State of Play*, 6, 50-51.

revealed that impact evaluation had been an afterthought not only at SOP, but also rather throughout the contemporary peacebuilding field:

It is only relatively recently that practitioners or organizations involved in peacebuilding have even bothered with [evaluation]. Those that did often regarded such evaluations as an irrelevance or a necessary burden, performed only to satisfy their donors, or even as a positively dangerous set of practices in which ignorant outside consultants are encouraged to engage in unqualified pejorative judgments.<sup>132</sup>

The editor of the “PCIA Debate” characterized the state of evaluation practice in the field as “methodological anarchy.”<sup>133</sup> A 2003 study of evaluation practices in Israeli peace education projects lamented that, “impact evaluation is missing from peace education.”<sup>134</sup> A subsequent overview by a leading Israeli-Palestinian peacebuilding NGO found that, “Practitioners agree on one thing: the impact of a dialogue group *can’t* be measured.”<sup>135</sup>

The SOP Evaluation Committee eventually opted for the most common method of impact assessment for peace education: a before-and-after camp survey of attitudinal shift among participants.<sup>136</sup> This method, commonly called “pre-test/post-test,” appeared tailor-made to the organization’s needs and the transformative encounter model, providing

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<sup>132</sup> Mark Hoffman, “PCIA Methodology: Evolving Art Form or Practical Dead End?”, in Alex Austin, Martina Fischer, and Oliver Wils (eds.), *Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment: Critical Views of Theory and Practice, The Berghof PCIA Handbook Debate* (Berghof Center for Constructive Conflict Management, 2003), Accessed July 1, 2011, [http://www.berghof-handbook.net/documents/publications/dialogue1\\_pcia\\_complete.pdf](http://www.berghof-handbook.net/documents/publications/dialogue1_pcia_complete.pdf), 12.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Karen Ross, “Towards ‘Peace Writ-Large’? Use of Evaluation in Assessing the Impact of Israeli/Palestinian Peace Education,” (Master’s thesis, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, 2004), 94. Available from <http://fletcher.tufts.edu/research/2005/RossThesis.pdf>.

<sup>135</sup> IPCRI: The Israel-Palestine Center for Research and Information, “YES PM: Years of Experience in Strategies for Peacemaking: Looking at Israeli-Palestinian People-to-People Activities 1993-2002,” (Jerusalem: IPCRI, 2003), 23.

<sup>136</sup> Sumanisiri Liyanage and Deepak Malhotra, “Peace Workshops in Protracted Conflicts: A Study of Long-Term Effects,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49, no. 6 (December 2004), 1-17. Nike Carstarphen, *Shift Happens: Transformation During Small Group Interventions in Protracted Social Conflicts*. Conflict Analysis and Resolution. Fairfax, VA, George Mason University.

“numbers” to illustrate the immediate changes inspired by the intervention.<sup>137</sup> A subsequent survey of older graduates would measure the longer-term endurance of attitudinal changes.

In adopting this method, however, our Evaluation Committee unwittingly ignored the warnings of leading Conflict Resolution scholar-practitioners. Kelman writes that, “The standard model of program evaluation, which seeks to examine the effects of an interventions on various relevant outcome measures, is neither appropriate nor feasible for the evaluation of [encounter-based conflict resolution].”<sup>138</sup> Jay Rothman warns that, “Conflict resolution in general, and [educational] training initiatives in particular, have been poorly served by standard means of pre- and post-evaluation.”<sup>139</sup> And indeed, as SOP sought an opinion research firm to conduct the pre-test/post-test surveys, the controversies of the evaluation literature became increasingly salient to me. I became particularly concerned with the inherent limitations of using attitudinal change as our primary “indicator” of impact. Participants’ attitudes, as my experience with SOP graduates suggested, are complex, dynamic, and private. As political tracking polls affirm, attitudes in the Middle East regarding the enemy/other and the conflict are a complex continuum, sensitive to social pressures and influenced by the vicissitudes of volatile politics. Escalations in violence, or breakthroughs in negotiations, can produce swings in opinion as transient as they are profound.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> See Michael Bamberger, Jim Rugh, Linda Mabry, *Real-World Evaluation: Working Under Budget, Time, Data and Political Constraints* (London: Sage, 2006).

<sup>138</sup> Herbert C. Kelman, “Evaluating the Contributions of Interactive Problem-Solving to the Resolution of Ethnonational Conflicts,” in *Peace and Conflict* 14 (2008), 30.

<sup>139</sup> Jay Rothman, “Action Evaluation and Conflict Resolution Training: Theory, Method and Case Study,” *International Negotiation* 2 (1997), 454.

<sup>140</sup> Ephraim Tabory explains that before Anwar Sadat’s November 1977 speech in the Israeli Knesset in Jerusalem, which broke a 29-year boycott of Israel by the Arab states, opinion polls consistently found 40-60% of Israelis believed Egypt “was interested in real peace with Israel.” After Sadat’s breakthrough visit, however, 90% believed in Egypt’s interest in peace – a majority that pushed right-wing Prime Minister Menachem Begin to negotiate the 1979 Camp David Accords and withdraw Israeli forces and settlements from Sinai (Ephraim Tabory, “The Attribution of Peaceful Intentions to the Visit by Sadat to Jerusalem and Subsequent Implications for Peace,” *Journal of Peace Research* 15, no. 2 (1978), 193-195). On recent vicissitudes of Israeli and

Evaluation scholars Cheyanne Church and Julie Shouldice name the “challenge of conflict context” as an inherent problem of peacebuilding evaluation, asking, “How can the ongoing changes in the volatile context in which an intervention is being conducted be reflected in the evaluation?”<sup>141</sup> As Salomon’s extensive survey research demonstrates, peace education interventions can produce effects that are profound, but hardly permanent – their impacts eroded by re-entry, then restored by follow-up, with the relative influence of intervention and dynamic context ultimately unresolved.<sup>142</sup>

Moreover, I saw many examples of SOP alumni who returned from camp full of enthusiasm for peacebuilding, only to find that their parents, youth movements, schools or other influential forces made it difficult or impossible to act on or publicly express these new attitudes. As one Palestinian graduate confessed to the SOP listserv during the second intifada, “right now I don’t tell too many, a lot of people that I’m in Seeds of Peace. I’m proud of being in Seeds of Peace but it’s not very safe to just tell anyone now that you go and talk to Israelis or visit them and all that.”<sup>143</sup> The same often held true for older Israeli Jewish graduates serving in military intelligence or combat units, as well as for Palestinian

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Palestinian public opinion, see Jacob Shamir and Khalil Shikaki, *Palestinian and Israeli Public Opinion: The Public Imperative in the Second Intifada* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010); See also Mark Tessler, “Narratives and Myths about Arab Intransigence toward Israel,” in ed. Robert. I. Rotberg, *Israeli and Palestinian Narratives of Conflict: History’s Double Helix* (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 2006), 174-193. For longitudinal tracking of public opinion, see Ephraim Yaar and Tamar Hermann, “Peace Index,” *Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research*, Accessed February 15, 2009, <http://www.tau.ac.il/peace/>; Khalil Shikaki, *Palestinian Center for Survey and Policy Research*, Accessed February 15, 2009, <http://www.pcpsr.org/>. For longitudinal opinion research among Palestinian and Jewish citizens of Israel, see Smootha, “Arab-Jewish Relations in Israel: Alienation and Rapprochement,” Peaceworks Report no. 67 (United States Institute of Peace, 2010).

<sup>141</sup> Church and Shouldice, *Framing the State of Play*, 6.

<sup>142</sup> Salomon, “A Summary of our Findings.”

<sup>143</sup> Quotation from Maddy-Weitzman, “Waging Peace in the Middle East,” 365. This dynamic is not only present in peacebuilding at the grassroots level; nearly all successful rounds of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations have taken place through secret “back channels,” to avoid the media scrutiny and political backlash that have doomed the majority of negotiation processes. See Anthony Wanis-St. John, *Back Channel Negotiation: Secrecy in the Middle East Peace Process* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2010).

graduates studying on highly politicized West Bank university campuses.<sup>144</sup> If graduates did not – or could not – express any “humanizing” attitudes through public action, then such changes would be proverbial “trees falling in the forest,” limiting program impact to small circles of participants. Kelman cites this “transfer problem” as a fundamental challenge to the conflict resolution field:

The problem of transfer actually involves two interrelated questions. First, if an individual changes in the workshop setting, what is the likelihood that he will maintain these changes in his home setting? Second, even if he does maintain these changes, what is the likelihood that he will be able to bring his new attitudes and formulations effectively to bear on the policy process? The first question refers to the well-known reentry problem, which is common to all types of workshops and therapeutic efforts. The second question is unique to the kind of workshop that we have been describing, which is concerned not merely with encouraging lasting changes in the individual participants, but with having an impact on the course of an international or intercommunal conflict.<sup>145</sup>

In the case of international peace education programs such as SOP, an inability of participants to express attitudes derived through the program in their home context would additionally raise questions of cultural compatibility.

Indeed, SOP’s international third-party model points to a deeper problem of peacebuilding evaluation, rooted in the structural asymmetry of the field: The imposition of the intervenor’s [Western] goals and priorities without understanding of local conditions and needs. Reina Neufeldt notes the suspicion voiced by many practitioners that impact evaluation is “part of a western worldview that is externally imposed on others in ‘the global south’ due to funding agency demands.”<sup>146</sup> Longtime development practitioner Kenneth Bush protests the assumption that measures of “success” be defined in advance by the designers and funders of an intervention, based in the affluent “global North,” rather than

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<sup>144</sup> See chapters five and six for detailed exploration of both issues.

<sup>145</sup> Cohen and Kelman, “The Problem Solving Workshop,” 83.

<sup>146</sup> Reina Neufeldt, “Circling and Framing Peacebuilding Projects,” *New Routes* 13, no. 3 (2008), 15.

the people affected in the “global South.” Bush alleges that, “The *a priori* identification of indicators [of success]... hegemonically imposes the worldview and interests of the evaluator’s system over those on the ground.”<sup>147</sup> In peace education evaluation, measuring “success” through attitudinal/psychological analysis of participants implies that the intervenors/evaluators a) sufficiently understand and b) are ethically positioned to place values on the *thoughts* of people living in starkly different cultures and conditions.

In a critical retrospective on the work of John Burton, Tarja Väyrynen challenges the implicitly panoptic assumptions of psychological criteria for intervention and evaluation:

Re-entry does not pose a psychological problem: it poses a question of the relevance structures and of the transfer of those structures outside the workshop context. The overemphasis on interpersonal and psychological understanding inside the workshop does not necessarily facilitate the return of participants to their own communities. Rather, if the issues discussed in the workshop are perceived to be ‘real’ from the point of view of the parties themselves, the changed relevances are likely to be transferred outside of the workshop.<sup>148</sup>

In recent years, leading scholar-practitioners have moved away from defining "success" solely in terms of attitudinal change, devising evaluation models aimed at a) accounting for dynamic context, b) giving participants equal voices in defining the goals of an intervention, and c) identifying if, how and when participants *act* to apply insights derived through an intervention in their home contexts.<sup>149</sup> These models, informed by years of applied practice, have contributed to re-defining "impact" in terms of cross-cultural relevance and long-term sustainability; their principles guide the evaluation approach of this dissertation.

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<sup>147</sup> Bush, “PCIA Five Years On,” in Austin, Fischer and Wils (eds.), *Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment*, 40-41.

<sup>148</sup> Tarja Väyrynen, *Culture and International Conflict Resolution: A Critical Analysis of the Work of John Burton* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 143.

<sup>149</sup> Jay Rothman, “Action-Evaluation and Conflict Resolution: in Theory and Practice,” *Conflict Resolution Quarterly* 15, no. 2 (Winter 1997), 119-31; Tamra Pearson d’Estree, Larissa A. Fast, Joshua N. Weiss, Monica S. Jakobsen, “Changing the Debate About ‘Success’ in Conflict Resolution Efforts,” in *Negotiation Journal* 17 (2): April 2001, 101-113; Rick Davies and Jess Dart, “The ‘Most Significant Change’ (MSC) Technique: A Guide to its Use” (2005), Accessed May 27, 2011, <http://www.mande.co.uk/docs/MSCGuide.pdf>; Herbert C. Kelman, “Evaluating the Contributions of Interactive Problem-Solving to the Resolution of Ethnonational Conflicts,” in *Peace and Conflict* 14 (2008): 29-60.

### *Interpreting Impact: Effectiveness and Effect*

In the peacebuilding evaluation literature, impact is defined in three principal ways: First, in terms of assessing *effectiveness* - whether the intervention is verifiably achieving stated goals; Second, in terms of understanding *effects* - all of the ways in which participant individuals and local communities see their lives affected by the intervention; Third, in terms of measuring an intervention's influence on the larger conflict situation.<sup>150</sup> A set of innovative approaches to evaluation practice guide this study's approach to all three conceptions of "impact."

Evaluations of impact-as-effectiveness are typically framed around the intended goals of the intervenors - the designers, directors and funders of an intervention. Evaluations of impact-as-effect, by contrast, focus holistically on the experiences of participants and their communities, seeking to elucidate *unintended* consequences as well as assessing the fulfillment of stated goals.<sup>151</sup> This dissertation studies the impacts of Seeds of Peace according to both definitions, and argues that responsible evaluation must integrate the goals and concerns of intervenors and participants; effectiveness must be evaluated in reference to effects.

An integrated focus on both effectiveness and effect is acutely important in the spheres of international development and peacebuilding, in which disparities of culture and power typically separate "intervenors" and participants or "beneficiaries." Intervenors are frequently based in affluent elite milieu of the "global North," while participants typically live in or on the edge of the "global South," in situations of intractable conflict, intractable

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<sup>150</sup> For an excellent overview of the theoretical contours of debate within the peacebuilding evaluation field, see Reina Neufeldt, "Framers and Circles: Exploring Assumptions in Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment," *The Berghof Handbook for Constructive Conflict Management*, Posted 2007, Accessed June 30, 2011, [http://www.berghof-handbook.net/documents/publications/neufeldt\\_handbook.pdf](http://www.berghof-handbook.net/documents/publications/neufeldt_handbook.pdf).

<sup>151</sup> Anderson, *Do No Harm*. See also Bush, *Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment*.

poverty, or both.<sup>152</sup> Such asymmetries often imply that intervenors and participants bring different perceptions to the intervention, in terms of definition of goals, motivations for participation and evaluations of impact and success.<sup>153</sup> Seeds of Peace is such an intervention, conceived in the elite Washington circles that pioneered early "Track Two Diplomacy" efforts, yet recruiting its participants from regions of conflict abroad, thereby spanning disparate cultural and global socioeconomic contexts.

Conventional methods of impact evaluation have been widely criticized for reinforcing the inherent structural asymmetry of the field. A number of alternative methodologies, by contrast, turn evaluation into an opportunity to raise awareness within organizations and the field, by highlighting voices often excluded or marginalized in the process of setting goals and defining impact. Two innovative evaluation approaches, in particular, present effective methods for integrating the perspectives of intervenors and participants, and thereby linking effectiveness to effects: "Action-Evaluation," and the "Most Significant Change" method.

Scholar-practitioner Jay Rothman's "Action-Evaluation" approach is based on the principle that, "Meaning and value, in life and in conflict, are created through an intersubjective agreement – within groups and between them – about what is meaningful and important."<sup>154</sup> Action-Evaluation essentially turns program design and evaluation into three phases of dialogue among and between members of all relevant stakeholder groups –

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<sup>152</sup> See Kenneth Bush, *A Measure of Peace: Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment of Development Projects in Conflict Zones* (Ottawa: IDRC: 1998), Available from "Conflict Sensitivity," Accessed July 1, 2011, [http://www.conflictsensitivity.org/sites/default/files/Measure\\_of\\_Peace.pdf](http://www.conflictsensitivity.org/sites/default/files/Measure_of_Peace.pdf); Kenneth Bush, "PCIA Five Years On: The Commodification of an Idea," in PCIA Dialogue (Berghof Center 2004), pp. 37-51, Accessed July 1, 2011, [http://www.berghof-handbook.net/documents/publications/dialogue1\\_bush.pdf](http://www.berghof-handbook.net/documents/publications/dialogue1_bush.pdf).

<sup>153</sup> Ibid; see also Neufeldt, "Framers and Circlers."

<sup>154</sup> Rothman, "Action-Evaluation and Conflict Resolution Training," 454.

engaging and procedurally equalizing intervenors and participants, and indeed all collectively identified groups substantively involved or affected by a proposed project.

In the initial phase of Action-Evaluation, each stakeholder group meets separately to define and prioritize goals. In the second phase, the different stakeholder groups present their goals to each other, and – crucially – articulate *why* these goals are important to them. In the third phase, the stakeholder groups jointly develop both programming and evaluation criteria around an inclusive synthesis of their different priorities.<sup>155</sup> Ideally, this process transforms evaluation from “an onerous chore tacked onto the end of dynamic conflict resolution programs” into “an inevitable and positive aspect of intervention – exactly what it should be if the intention is to empower all players by making them more effective planners, negotiators, listeners, analysts, and peace-builders.”<sup>156</sup> As Rothman explains, this method enables conflict resolution organizations to “practice what we preach,” and turns evaluation itself into an opportunity for training and *internal* conflict resolution.<sup>157</sup>

While Seeds of Peace has not formally engaged in Action-Evaluation, this study presents the script of such a process as it might have been articulated at SOP. Each of five qualitative chapters portray the internal dialogues and intergroup interactions of key stakeholder groups inside the SOP community: The US organizational leadership, the SOP program staff, the Israeli and Palestinian Ministries of Education, the program’s most active adult alumni, and three “national” sub-groups of SOP graduates: Israeli Jews, Palestinians from the OPT, and Palestinian citizens of Israel. As Rothman would predict, diversity and divergence of perspective existed between and within each of these groups. Moreover, as the

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<sup>155</sup> See Rothman, “Action-Evaluation in Conflict Resolution”; see also Marc Howard Ross, “Action-Evaluation in the Theory and Practice of Conflict Resolution,” *Peace and Conflict Studies* 8, no. 1 (May 2001), 1-16. .

<sup>156</sup> Rothman, “Action-Evaluation in Conflict Resolution,” 129.

<sup>157</sup> Rothman spoke as part of a videoconference presentation for graduate students studying “Evaluation and Conflict Resolution,” Georgetown University, April 14, 2011 (author was the course instructor).

qualitative chapters of the dissertation illustrate, the absence of a systematic internal dialogue process allowed differences between and within stakeholder groups to escalate into episodes of severe organizational conflict.<sup>158</sup>

Davies and Dart's "Most Significant Change" (MSC) method moves yet more radically to equalize impact evaluation, by defining effectiveness solely in terms of effects.<sup>159</sup> Rather than attempt to convene a "horizontal" dialogue between intervenors and participants, this approach places the definition of intervention impact and success wholly in the hands of participants. The MSC evaluator asks participants simply to discuss the "most significant changes" they and their communities have experienced as a result of the intervention. The evaluator asks participants for illustrative stories, without reference to any pre-ordained goals, indicators or survey questions focused on the interests of the intervenors. Participants ideally describe program impact in complexity and context, in their own language, on their own terms. After gathering data from a substantive sample of participants, the evaluator identifies prominent motifs that emerge from multiple testimonies, and presents these as the "most significant" impacts of the intervention.<sup>160</sup>

The qualitative chapters of this dissertation adopt a methodology reminiscent of MSC. They are based primarily on the testimonies of Israeli and Palestinian SOP graduates, and only secondarily on input from SOP staff or other authoritative figures. Moreover, the testimonies were elicited primarily through consciously open-ended conversations, in which the guiding question was simply, "tell me your life story in Seeds of Peace." I took these measures deliberately in order to allow participants to describe the impact of the program in

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<sup>158</sup> See chapters four and eight.

<sup>159</sup> Davies and Dart, "The 'Most Significant Change' Method."

<sup>160</sup> Davies and Dart mention that MSC evaluators do sometimes use quantitative methods to "rank" themes in order of prominence, such that it is possible to respond to the widespread desire of intervenors to enable quantitative assessment of effectiveness.

their own terms.<sup>161</sup> In doing so, I hope to emulate these methods that turn impact evaluation into an opportunity to challenge, rather than reinforce, existing disparities.

It is crucial to emphasize that I approach structural asymmetry as an inherent challenge, *but not an insurmountable obstacle*, to positive impact - in the spirit of Kelman, Rothman, and Abu-Nimer among others.<sup>162</sup> Indeed, SOP graduate testimonies often emphasized the organization's role in empowering them to move beyond marginal positions in the global power structure as their version of the "most significant change."<sup>163</sup> The qualitative sections of this study emphasize graduate narratives as a complement to the quantitative section, which assesses impact according to SOP's original stated goal of "empowering leaders for peace." This comprehensive approach is designed to enable an empirically grounded reckoning with the question of evaluating larger historical "impact."

#### *Interpreting Impact: "Good Enough" or "Peace Writ-Large"*

The third, and most controversial usage of "impact" connotes the degree to which an intervention succeeds in influencing the macro-conflict context, referred to by some scholars as "contribution to Peace Writ-Large."<sup>164</sup> The increasing insistence of donor organizations on impact evaluation has sparked a heated debate within the peacebuilding field over the proper scale of impact assessment. One school of evaluation scholarship, led

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<sup>161</sup> See the next chapter for detailed discussion of methodology.

<sup>162</sup> See Abu-Nimer, *Dialogue Conflict Resolution and Change*; Kelman, "Evaluating the Contributions of Interactive Problem-Solving;" Rothman, "Action-Evaluation in Conflict Resolution."

<sup>163</sup> Ned Lazarus, "The Political Economy of Seeds of Peace: A Critical Evaluation of Conflict Intervention" (Paper presented to International Studies Association Annual Convention, San Diego, CA, March 22, 2006).

<sup>164</sup> See Mary Anderson and Lara Olson, *Confronting War: Critical Lessons for Peace Practitioners Reflecting on Peace Practice Projects* (Cambridge, MA: Collaborative Development Action, 2003). See also Cheyanne Church, "Reflections on Peacebuilding Evaluation: From Infancy to Teenager," *New Routes* 13, no. 3 (2008), 3-7; Chigas and Woodrow, "Envisioning and Pursuing Peace Writ-Large."

by the Collaborative Learning Projects (CDA<sup>165</sup>) independent research group, contends that without focusing strategically on “Peace Writ-Large,” peacebuilding initiatives risk becoming ineffective and irrelevant.<sup>166</sup> All projects, according to this perspective, must link their strategic objectives to resolving the larger conflict situation, and then structure programming and evaluate results accordingly. CDA founder Mary Anderson warns that, “Peace programs that focus on change at the individual-personal level, and do not link those efforts to change at the socio-political level...will have no discernible impact on peace.”<sup>167</sup>

Other leading practitioners and scholars criticize the quest for “Peace Writ-Large” as setting unrealistic expectations for individual initiatives and/or the field as a whole. According to this perspective, grassroots and civil society interventions are valuable if they produce positive change for participants and local communities, regardless of verifiable impact on the larger conflict context. It is illogical, from this point of view, to hold small peacebuilding initiatives accountable for addressing the most difficult political problems in the world - conflicts that powerful states and international institutions have failed to resolve despite decades of diplomatic effort and prodigious expenditures.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> The organization, founded in 1985 by international development scholar-practitioner Mary Anderson, was originally called “Collaborative for Development Action.” See “Our History/About Us/CDA – Collaborative Learning Projects,” Accessed July 1, 2011, [http://www.cdainc.com/cdawww/aboutus\\_history.php](http://www.cdainc.com/cdawww/aboutus_history.php).

<sup>166</sup> Peter Woodrow, “Reflecting on Peace Practice” (Presentation to RPP Training Session, Arlington, VA, January 5-6, 2011). See Anderson and Olson, *Confronting War*.

<sup>167</sup> Quoted from Collaborative Learning Projects, “Introduction to Reflecting on Peace Practice” (Power Point Presentation for RPP Training Session, Arlington, VA, January 5-6, 2011).

<sup>168</sup> See Ramsbotham et al., *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*. For analyses of contemporary conflicts and negotiations see “International Crisis Group,” Accessed June 30, 2011, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/>; see also Sumatra Bose, *Contested Lands: Israel-Palestine, Kashmir, Bosnia, Cyprus and Sri Lanka* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); on “Comparative Conflict Analysis,” see Andrew Blum, “The Futures of Conflict: Exploring the Use of Comparative Scenarios in Track II Peacebuilding,” *International Studies Perspectives* 6, no.3 (2005): 342-358.

In this vein, Tamra Pearson d'Estree argues that, "Attempting to create structural or societal change directly using a small group dialogue process is simply unrealistic."<sup>169</sup> In terms of practice, Pearson d'Estree advocates evaluating interventions strictly "according to their specific goals," while at the theoretical level "changing the debate about 'success' in conflict resolution" to reflect appropriate expectations.<sup>170</sup> Proper evaluation of grassroots peacebuilding, she argues, will craft "particular indicators that may reveal that certain intermediate changes are occurring."<sup>171</sup> Christoph Spurk urges evaluators and practitioners to "forget impact" at the macro-level, and instead evaluate the "outputs" and "outcomes" that "describe results in the immediate environment of a project, or with its direct target groups or beneficiaries."<sup>172</sup> Marc Ross famously summarizes the argument in colloquial terms, arguing that, "There are a number of things projects might do which are 'good enough,' not a single standard of perfection against which they are to be evaluated. 'Good enough' projects make significant differences in people's lives."<sup>173</sup>

Ross emphatically advocates pluralism in project design and evaluation, recognizing the diversity of practical approaches within the field, and the complexity of real-world project outcomes. Ross argues that evaluation should allow for "multiple images and degrees of 'success,'" explaining that, "Good-enough conflict management recognizes the importance of many small, self-sustaining steps that improve how groups behave toward each other and address threats to identity at the core of ethnic disputes... 'pieces of peace'

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<sup>169</sup> Tamra Pearson d'Estree, Larissa Fast, Joshua Weiss and Monica Jakobsen, "Changing the Debate About 'Success' in Conflict Resolution Efforts," *Negotiation Journal* 17, no. 2 (April 2001), 102.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid, 103.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid, 102.

<sup>172</sup> Christoph Spurk, "Forget Impact," *New Routes* 13, no. 3 (2008), 12, available at "Life and Peace Institute," Accessed June 30, 2011, [http://www.life-peace.org/sajt/filer/pdf/New\\_Routes/NewRoutes83.pdf](http://www.life-peace.org/sajt/filer/pdf/New_Routes/NewRoutes83.pdf).

<sup>173</sup> Marc Howard Ross, "PCIA as Peacebuilding Tool," in Austin, Fischer and Wils (eds.), *PCIA*, 79. See also Ross, "'Good-Enough' Isn't So Bad: Success and Failure in Ethnic Conflict Management," *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 6 (2000), 27-47.

that improve a situation without necessarily getting everything right at once.”<sup>174</sup> Though not a peacebuilding practitioner himself, Ross is sensitive to practitioners’ concerns regarding unrealistic standards of evaluation, arguing that, “Partial successes are not necessarily failures, and we need a nuanced language that reflects this.”<sup>175</sup>

Pearson d’Estree gives concrete expression to this vision of nuance and pluralism, creating an evaluation framework that presents multiple potential indicators of impact, to be measured longitudinally over time and evaluated at multiple levels of analysis. She creates a typology of concrete changes that intergroup interventions aspire to produce, divided into four overall categories: 1) Changes in participants’ “representation” of the conflict; 2) Changes in participants’ “relations” toward the outgroup/other; 3) Foundations for “transfer” of new attitudes and relations to wider communities; 4) Foundations for implementing changes at higher levels.<sup>176</sup> Each category of change contains 4-5 indicators of change, ranging from interpersonal measures such as “new attitudes” and “empathy” to sociopolitical indicators such as “social networks,” “inputs in political processes” and “reforms of political structures.”<sup>177</sup> Longitudinally, Pearson d’Estree suggests assessing impact at three different phases: “Promotion” – during the intervention; “Application” – the immediate aftermath, and “Sustainability” – the “medium and long-term.”<sup>178</sup>

In terms of levels of analysis, the framework differentiates between micro, *meso* and macro-impacts, meaning a) the immediate participants; b) the local/organizational/network level; and c) the larger sociopolitical/conflict context. Pearson d’Estree emphasizes,

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid, 34, 44. “Pieces of Peace” is quoted from Jay Rothman, *From Confrontation to Cooperation: Resolving Ethnic and Regional Conflict* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1992).

<sup>175</sup> Ross, “‘Good-Enough’ Isn’t So Bad,” 44.

<sup>176</sup> Pearson d’Estree et al. “Changing the Debate About ‘Success,’” 106.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid. On the analysis of networks in peacebuilding and evaluation, see Susan Allen Nan, “Conflict Resolution in a Network Society,” *International Negotiation* 13, no.1 (2008): 111-131.

<sup>178</sup> Pearson d’Estree et al. “Changing the Debate About ‘Success,’” 108.

however, the importance of the middle “meso” level, “a level that represents participants’ reference groups, epistemic communities and local institutions. Changes at this level link those micro-level changes most conflict interventions hope to achieve and the macro-level changes most often used as criteria for intervention.”<sup>179</sup>

This dissertation derives key practical and theoretical principles from Pearson d’Estree, Ross and Spurk. While distinct, their writings include important common themes:

- First, they argue that establishing concrete, measurable criteria of assessment *is complex, but still possible* and indeed essential. In that vein, the quantitative section of this study tracks a concrete, measurable indicator of impact: SOP graduates’ long-term participation in Middle East peacebuilding activity.
- Second, these authors emphasize a *pluralistic* vision adapted to the complexity and multiplicity of approaches, indicators and outcomes that characterize the peacebuilding field. In that spirit, the selected indicator comprises the full spectrum of peacebuilding activity, from dialogue and peace education to advocacy and protest.<sup>180</sup> Moreover, the qualitative chapters present complex, contextualized portraits of intervention impact.

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid, 108. In a second piece, d’Estree argues (with Monica Jakobsen) that “while influential individuals who return to their societies may not be initially able to swing whole societies in new directions, they often have significant impacts on the information, policies, and behaviors of their professional organizations, their political parties, their religious communities, their neighborhoods or villages, or their extended family networks. It is at this meso-level that ‘transfer’ from the workshop activities to the larger intergroup relationship occurs.

Assessment of conflict resolution and other social interventions has too often focused only on two ends of the continuum – individuals and societies. This has left out of the assessment the very level of activity that theories of ‘civil society’ have attempted to empower” (Tamra Pearson d’Estree and Monica Jakobsen, “Establishing a Common Framework for Comparative Case Analysis of Interactive Conflict Resolution,” Presented at the 13th Annual Conference of the International Association for Conflict Management, St. Louis, MO, June 18-21, 2000). Another analytical/strategic framework based on the micro/meso/macro distinction is John Paul Lederach’s “pyramid” distinguishing between official government (Track One), civil society (Track Two) and grassroots (Track Three) levels of analysis/intervention; Lederach also emphasizes the importance of the middle (civil society) level for its potential to influence the levels above and below. See Lederach, *Building Peace*.

<sup>180</sup> A 2004 report portrayed the diversity of the field through a “peacebuilding palette” citing 19 different forms of peacebuilding work, divided into “Political Framework, Reconciliation and Justice, Security, and Socioeconomic Foundations” categories. See Dan Smith, “Towards A Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding: Getting Their Act Together - Overview Report of the Joint Utstein Study of Peacebuilding” (Oslo, Norway:

- Third, these authors focus on *outcomes that can be realistically expected* from and attributed to an intervention, according to its specific context, scope and methods. This dissertation likewise highlights micro and meso-level experiences and actions that can be plausibly expected from and traced to the impact of the program. Moreover, the qualitative chapters chronicle not just the impact of the program on graduates, but the changes wrought by graduates in the structure of the program.
- Lastly, this dissertation adopts Pearson d’Estree’s emphasis on long-term sustainability, tracking patterns of graduate peacebuilding activity over periods of many years, and linking fluctuations to changes in micro/personal, meso/organizational and macro/political context.

In the spirit of these authors, the dissertation does not evaluate impact according to “Peace Writ-Large,” a nebulous quantity that by any definition has eluded the Middle East for generations. At the same time, it must be emphasized that this lofty expectation does not originate in the impact evaluation literature, but in the rhetoric of SOP and often of the field. One does not need an impact study to see that the slogan of “empowering the children of war to break the cycle of violence” has proven far beyond the reach of this or any other contemporary peacebuilding intervention, at any level.<sup>181</sup> A more appropriate aspiration might be to empower youth to challenge, to critique, to protest, to question the cycle of violence, and indeed to prevent the cycle of violence from breaking them. In the intractable reality of the contemporary Israeli-Palestinian conflict, that would be “good enough.”

The present study is designed to assess one project’s concrete contribution to the ranks of Israelis and Palestinians actively opposing the “cycle of violence,” in diverse ways.

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The Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2004), 28, Accessed July 1, 2011, <http://www.norad.no/en/Tools+and+publications/Publications/Publication+Page?key=165470>.

<sup>181</sup> “Seeds of Peace.”

Its findings provide an empirically grounded basis for assessing not only the impact of one particular program, but the potential of international “peace camps” to contribute to the embattled Israeli and Palestinian “peace camps.

## CHAPTER TWO

# *Overview: Design, Methods, Contribution*

### Overview of the Dissertation: Research Questions and Design

During my eight years with Seeds of Peace, I worked alongside Israeli and Palestinian graduates as they grew from adolescence to adulthood, and as SOP grew from a small pilot program to an internationally recognized NGO, all within a political atmosphere transformed from negotiations to conflagration. These experiences confronted me with the shifting social and political tides that encouraged graduates to publicly promote “peace” in certain times and places, while in other contexts pressuring them to keep their SOP shirts “in the closet.”

This study’s research questions and design are rooted in my observations in the field. The primary research questions focus on the scope, fluctuations and nature of alumni peacebuilding activity over time: First, have Israeli and Palestinian SOP graduates participated in Middle East peacebuilding activities over the long term? Second, how have profound changes in personal, organizational and political contexts affected graduates’ peacebuilding participation? Third, how do *adult* graduates assess the impact of SOP/peacebuilding participation on their lives?

The research design combines qualitative and quantitative approaches, aiming to model a longitudinal evaluation sensitive to the dynamic social contexts of its subjects. The study is divided into two sections of empirical findings and analysis, each approaching the evaluation of impact from a specific angle. Taken together, the two sections provide detailed

portraits of the scope and nature of Israeli and Palestinian SOP graduates' peacebuilding activity in the years since they were first encouraged, at camp, to become "ambassadors of peace." In so doing, they establish an empirical foundation necessary for grounded evaluation of the SOP program, its peace education model, and the aspiration to educate "peacemakers" in contexts of intractable conflict.

### *Section One: Quantitative Impact Analysis – Tracking Long-term Peacebuilding Participation*

The first empirical section traces and analyzes patterns of peacebuilding participation among all 824 Israeli and Palestinian SOP participants from 1993-2003, measuring and comparing participation levels according to nationality, gender, year of initial participation and other factors, surveyed at different stages of personal, organizational and historical time. This section employs basic quantitative methods to ascertain degrees of long-term program impact on graduates through the prism of peacebuilding activity, asking: Is there participation, by how many graduates, of which backgrounds, in which personal, organizational and political contexts? What are patterns of participation over time? Which backgrounds and contexts are associated with higher or lower levels of long-term activity? Chapter two assesses and analyzes levels of graduate peacebuilding activity in different personal, organizational and political contexts. It begins by describing and analyzing participation at different stages of *personal* development – 1) the *first year* after SOP camp participation, 2) the remainder of *high school*, 3) *post-secondary* (ages 18-21), and 4) *adulthood* (22-30). The chapter then highlights the impact of *organizational* and *historical* context on graduate peacebuilding activity, comparing participation according to different eras in the

development of the program and the conflict. The chapter concludes by identifying factors associated with long-term peacebuilding participation, gauging the relative influences of re-entry/conflict context and follow-up/program context, and weighing the implications of findings for the program and the field.

By focusing on peacebuilding *activity*, this study offers an alternative to the classic method of evaluating “intergroup encounters”: the before-and-after attitudinal survey.<sup>182</sup> As an impact indicator, long-term peacebuilding participation complements and, in meaningful ways, improves upon conventional assessments that measure impact in terms of attitudinal shift. This dissertation replaces potentially transient and reductive snapshots of opinion with sustained patterns of concrete, verifiable, public social action. This approach enhances the empirical validity of findings, while the project’s longitudinal scope highlights the effects of changing contexts, without necessitating an endless cycle of opinion polls.

### *Defining Peacebuilding Participation*

Peacebuilding activity/participation is defined as voluntary involvement in joint, non-violent, cross-conflict (i.e. Arab/Jewish or Israeli/Palestinian) engagement aimed at transforming perceptions and sociopolitical relations between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs and contributing to resolution of the conflict.<sup>183</sup> This broad definition encompasses a

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<sup>182</sup> On the prevalence of the pre-test/post-test method in evaluation practice, see Michael Bamberger, Jim Rugh, Linda Mabry, *RealWorld Evaluation: Working Under Budget, Time, Data and Political Constraints* (London: Sage, 2006). On shortcomings of this method, see Liyanage and Malhotra, “Peace Workshops in Protracted Conflicts.”

<sup>183</sup> On defining peacebuilding to include complementary social psychological and structural approaches see Abu-Nimer and Lazarus, “The Peacebuilder’s Paradox,”; John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington DC: USIP Press, 1997); Ramsbotham et al., *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*. For application of John Paul Lederach, Reina Neufeldt, and Hal Culbertson, *Reflective Peacebuilding: A Planning, Monitoring and Learning Toolkit* (The Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace, University of Notre

wide spectrum of forms of social action aimed at long-term conflict transformation, including advocacy, dialogue, human rights and humanitarian work, peace education, and non-violent protest. This definition is in concert with growing international recognition that diverse activities contribute to the goals of transforming conflict, reducing violence and building more just and peaceful societies.<sup>184</sup> While there are substantive differences between these forms of action, particularly between dialogical/educational and confrontational/politicized approaches, they share the crucial components of a) cross-conflict civic engagement and b) goals of non-violent conflict transformation. These aspects place all of the above activities outside the mainstream of political and social activity in Israeli and Palestinian societies.

Indeed, peacebuilding scholars estimate that tiny fractions of the Israeli and Palestinian populations have participated in any cross-conflict civic engagement – approximately 0.5% in activities engaging Israeli Jews and Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT).<sup>185</sup> These forms of peacebuilding activity are not simply

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Dame, Indiana and Catholic Relief Services Southeast Asia, 2007). For practical examples of Israeli and Palestinian peacebuilding from across the full spectrum of approaches, see “Visionaries,” *Just Vision*, Accessed June 2, 2011, <http://www.justvision.org/visionaries>.

<sup>184</sup> According to a 2006 World Bank report, “Peacebuilding is now understood more broadly. It often covers all activities related to preventing outbreaks of violence, transforming armed conflicts, finding peaceful ways to manage conflict, and creating the socio-economic and political pre-conditions for sustainable development and peace” (World Bank, “Civil Society and Peacebuilding: Potential, Limitations, and Critical Factors,” Report no. 36445-GLB. December 20, 2006, 12), Accessed July 1, 2011,

[http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTSOCIALDEVELOPMENT/Resources/244362-1164107274725/3182370-1164110717447/Civil\\_Society\\_and\\_Peacebuilding.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTSOCIALDEVELOPMENT/Resources/244362-1164107274725/3182370-1164110717447/Civil_Society_and_Peacebuilding.pdf). See also Lederach, *Building Peace*; Ramsbotham et al., *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*; and the “Peacebuilding Palette in Dan Smith, “Utstein Report: Towards a Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding,” 28.

<sup>185</sup> Estimate from Israel-Palestine Center for Research and Information (IPCRI), “YESPM – Years of Experience in Strategies for Peace Making,” 4. A greater number of youth participate in encounters between Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel, but still a small minority of the population, with maximal estimates at 10% and only some of those in programs of adequate duration, quality and substance. Author’s sources: Gavriel Salomon, “Beyond Coexistence: Teaching for Peace” (Paper presented at the University of Massachusetts-Lowell Greeley Scholar lecture, Boston, Massachusetts, April 20, 2010); Daniel Bar-Tal, “Policy for Education Toward Jewish-Arab Partnership: A Case Study” (Paper presented at the Association for Jewish Studies Annual Convention, Boston, MA, December 22, 2010).

unusual but also controversial, due to the centrality of the intractable conflict to perceptions of the enemy/other in both societies.<sup>186</sup> As one Israeli graduate of Seeds of Peace explained, “From the point of view of the majority of people... the encounter is understood as something that Leftists do, principally radical Leftists of the extreme sort. Something that’s really at the outer limits of the scale.” In this context, as Salomon explains, even allegedly non-political cross-conflict activities are at a basic level *subversive*, implicitly challenging of dominant social mores regarding the conflict and the “other side.”<sup>187</sup> Participants in all of the above forms of peacebuilding activity invariably report facing criticism within their immediate social circles.<sup>188</sup>

Such was indeed the case for graduates of Seeds of Peace, even though the organization declares itself officially “non-political,” and although its Middle East programs have focused primarily on dialogue, peace education, exchanges of visits and joint presentations rather than any overtly politicized actions. While teenagers meeting at a youth center or spending the night at each other’s homes may seem banal and benign events to an outside observer, the same actions are rare and politically charged if one is an Israeli Jew and the other is a Palestinian Arab. Indeed, such contact was fraught and uncommon enough to lead numerous Israeli soldiers ask Jewish passengers in SOP vehicles if the Arabs have taken them hostage.<sup>189</sup> Israeli and Palestinian SOP graduates universally reported facing criticism

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<sup>186</sup> Daniel Bar-Tal, “Societal Beliefs In Times of Intractable Conflict: The Israeli Case” in *International Journal of Conflict Management* 9 (1998), 22-50; Herbert C. Kelman, “The Interdependence of Israeli and Palestinian National Identities: The Role of the Other in Existential Conflicts,” *Journal of Social Issues* 55, no. 3 (Fall 1999), 581-600.

<sup>187</sup> Salomon, “Beyond Coexistence - Teaching for Peace.”

<sup>188</sup> See Hai and Herzog, “The Power of Possibility”; Gawerc, “Israeli-Palestinian Peacebuilding Partnerships.”

<sup>189</sup> This has occurred on at least four separate occasions—once in the author’s experience, three times reported by interviewees. As one Jewish-Israeli interviewee described, “[SOP staffer] Sami [Al-Jundi] was driving, [Arab friend] was definitely there, and a bunch of other Arabs, Palestinians... somewhere, a *magawnik* [Border Patrolman] stopped us, asked me to get out. He asked me to stand sideways, he turned me around so they

for their cross-conflict engagement from family members, friends and teachers. In this context, peacebuilding participation carried a degree of inherent political meaning – in some cases, a social stigma – above and beyond questions of individual participants’ attitudes. By continuing – or ceasing – to participate in peacebuilding activities in the Middle East, graduates “voted with their feet.” They made politically meaningful public statements that they were continually compelled to explain and defend, to significant others and to themselves. The content of their struggles is the focus of section two of the dissertation.

*Section Two: Qualitative Impact Analysis – Graduate Testimonies & Peacebuilding Dilemmas*

SOP graduates universally testified to facing internal and external struggles to justify continued peacebuilding participation; in essence, they articulated involvement in cross-conflict engagement as a perpetual dilemma. The second section of the dissertation focuses on the distinct forms in which graduates of different national identities confronted this dilemma, and the pressures that drove the majority of alumni to diminish activity over time, while a minority persevered as active peace-builders through the *intifada* and into adulthood. Based on qualitative data gathered through ethnographic observation, semi-structured interviews and interactions with more than 200 graduates during 2006-10, this section studies the peacebuilding activity of *adult* alumni (21-30 years old), and the evolution of their perspectives and relationships with each other and the organization over time. It elucidates the *meanings* of program impact, asking *how* adult alumni see themselves and their lives affected by experiences and relationships they derived through membership in Seeds of

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couldn’t read my lips, and he said they can’t see your lips, so if you’re being kept here against your will, just say yes, mumble yes. What a scene! I said look, we’re in Seeds of Peace, it’s OK, we’re OK!”

Peace. In discussing such meanings, this section employs a “grounded theory” approach, assigning the definition and evaluation of “impact” to Israeli and Palestinian graduates, rather than the program’s leadership, advocates or critics.<sup>190</sup>

This section focuses on factors that encourage and discourage peacebuilding participation, while highlighting issues uniquely salient to each of the three identity groups featured in this study: Israeli Jews, Palestinian Arabs living in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), and Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel (PCI). SOP membership was problematic in different ways for graduates from each national identity group. Each group’s internal debates revolved around a particular “national dilemma,” a specific issue that exposed contradictions between the “peacemaker” identity encouraged by SOP and the principles of their separate and conflicting national struggles. Chapter Four sets the context of these national dilemmas, exploring SOP’s approach to national identity as illustrated through the organization’s conflictual partnerships with the Israeli and Palestinian Ministries of Education. Chapter Five portrays the dilemmas of Jewish-Israeli graduates regarding whether and how to perform compulsory military service as a “Seed of Peace,” and whether and how to maintain ties with Arab counterparts and SOP during or after enlistment. Chapter Six studies the controversy among OPT Palestinian graduates regarding social taboos against “normalization” with Israeli Jews, and their debates over engagement in cross-conflict dialogue while under Israeli military occupation. Chapter Seven details the “identity crises” of Palestinian citizens of Israel, and the struggles of PCI graduates to overcome “dual marginalization” within the microcosm of Seeds of Peace, and the macrocosms of Israeli and Palestinian societies.

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<sup>190</sup> Kathy Charmaz, “The grounded theory method: An explication and interpretation,” (1983) in ed. Robert Emerson, *Contemporary Field Research* (Long Grove, Ill.: Waveland Press, 2001), 109-126.

The eighth chapter focuses on dilemmas voiced by *active* adult graduates, exploring themes resonant in the testimonies of alumni from all identity groups who have worked as adults in SOP and/or other peacebuilding initiatives. The chapter highlights their assessments of the SOP program and organization, its American model of peace education, and its place in the wider Israeli/Palestinian peacebuilding field. The dissertation concludes by assessing the implications of findings for future research and practice.

### Methodology

#### *Backward Mapping: From Practice to Theory*

The outlines of this inquiry emerged during my work with Seeds of Peace in the Middle East – long before I conceived of myself as a researcher, or of the project as a dissertation. This project’s chronology has therefore decisively informed its methodology. I began gathering data through experience and observation before becoming conscious of it as such. Such a path from practice to research is not uncommon in the study of conflict resolution, an academic field pioneered from its inception by scholar-practitioners.<sup>191</sup> As Ron Fisher details in his history of the field, its founding intellects were not disinterested observers but *interactive* mediators, interventionist third-parties aspiring to influence the outcomes of the workshops they convened, and the conflicts they studied. Their scholarship was simultaneously applied and theoretical, aimed at both contribution to science and perfection of practice.<sup>192</sup> Ilana Shapiro describes this common practice-to-research approach

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<sup>191</sup> See Fisher, *Interactive Conflict Resolution*.

<sup>192</sup> Prominent examples include Edward Azar, John Burton, Morton Deutsch, Leonard Doob, Herbert Kelman, Mohammed Abu-Nimer, Ron Fisher, Jay Rothman. See Fisher, *Interactive Conflict Resolution*; Ramsbotham et al., *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*.

as “*Backward mapping* – or [retrospectively] identifying the intended outcomes that led practitioners to their decisions about specific strategies and methods of intervention.”<sup>193</sup>

This dissertation derives particular inspiration from a previous example of backward mapping: Abu-Nimer’s study of Arab-Jewish encounter programs in 1980s Israel.<sup>194</sup> Abu-Nimer drew on years of personal experience facilitating Arab-Jewish encounters in Israel, offering a comprehensive and critical overview of the “coexistence” field of that era, informed by theory, systematic data analysis, *and* insights derived from previous practice. In the same vein, this study seeks not only to evaluate strategies and outcomes, but the larger social contexts, processes and assumptions that shaped them.

Writing as a practitioner-turned-researcher, I will make explicit my own roles in past situations under review. Rather than simply defining concepts in abstract terms, I will make use of memory and narrative to illustrate lived realities that inspired subsequent reflections. However, while pre-academic field experiences played crucial roles in the genesis of this dissertation, it should not be confused with a memoir. My invocation of memory and narrative are intended to clarify context and illuminate themes that emerged from *post-practice* empirical findings. Indeed, I chose the rigorous format of a dissertation precisely in order to reckon with questions beyond the grasp of personal observation, and to diminish the influence of personal biases. The parameters of this study are therefore informed by experience and observation, but conclusions are derived entirely from extensive, post-practice data collection and systematic, theoretically informed analysis.

Neither is this an example of pre-planned “action research.” During my tenure with SOP, I approached issues of documentation as a “pure practitioner” concerned with

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<sup>193</sup> Ilana Shapiro, “Theories of Change”, *Beyond Intractability* (January 2005), *Beyond Intractability*, Accessed June 7, 2010, [http://www.beyondintractability.org/m/theories\\_of\\_change.jsp](http://www.beyondintractability.org/m/theories_of_change.jsp).

<sup>194</sup> Abu-Nimer, *Dialogue, Conflict Resolution and Change*.

expediency and function rather than analysis or reflection. As a researcher, by contrast, I was compelled to design methods of categorizing information originally organized – to the degree that such a word was appropriate – for immediate practical purposes. Throughout the study, I will note the original, practical circumstances that ultimately came to inform analytical choices, coding and categorization.

### *A Research Biography*

For the sake of clarity and transparency, I will explain the evolution of my methodology through a brief “biography” of this study. The dissertation analyzes empirical data gathered from three principal sources, each rooted in a particular “biographical” stage and set of locations:

#### 1) 1995-2003 – *Full-time Practice and Participant Observation*

As explained above, this study is retrospectively informed by experiences and observations derived through work for Seeds of Peace at the summer camp in Maine (1995, 1997-2002) and in the Middle East (1996-2003). During this period, with the exception of the academic year following my initial summer as a camp counselor in Maine (1995-96), I lived in Jerusalem and worked full-time and exclusively for Seeds of Peace. In this capacity, I engaged in frequent travel throughout every region of Israel and the OPT (East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank) and several trips each year to Egypt and Jordan. I also spent periods of between 2-3 weeks per summer at SOP camp in Maine, and participated in numerous fund-raising and promotional events for the organization in the US.

## 2) 2003-Summer 2004 – *Transition and Database Compilation*

In 2003-04, living in Jerusalem but intending to retire from SOP and return to the United States to begin doctoral studies, I compiled a database of alumni participation in follow-up programs during the program's first decade of operations. The database included records of the participation of all 824 individual Israeli and Palestinian SOP graduates in follow-up/peacebuilding activities from 1993-2003 (details in Figure 1.3). Originally designed to prepare the organization for future impact assessment studies, this database evolved into the preliminary empirical foundation of this dissertation. The genesis of the database and quantitative analysis of findings are detailed in chapters four and five.

*Table 2.3: Quantitative Research Sample – Graduates of SOP Camp Program 1993-2002*

<b>National Identity Group</b>	<b>Total SOP Graduates 1993-2002</b>	<b>Female/Male</b>
Jewish-Israelis	425	215/210
Palestinians (OPT)	312	143/169
Palestinian citizens of Israel	87	43/44
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>824</b>	<b>401/423</b>

## 3) Fall 2004-2010 – *Full-time Research: Qualitative Data Collection, Analysis and Writing*

As a doctoral student at American University in Washington, D.C., I received methodological and theoretical training, and established the research design and frameworks for data analysis. I supplemented preliminary quantitative analysis of database findings with qualitative data gathered via the following methods:

- Formal interviews with 70 Palestinian and Israeli graduates of Seeds of Peace, conducted between 2006-10 in the US and the Middle East, personally and by telephone;

- Formal interviews with founders and key program staff of Seeds of Peace and 9 other North American peace education programs for Israeli and Palestinian youth;
- Informal conversations, and extensive online correspondence with more than 200 SOP graduates and dozens of current and former SOP staff, recorded in field notes;
- Ethnographic observations from eight semi-annual trips to Israel and the OPT, for an aggregate duration of six months' time between 2004-2009, recorded in field notes;<sup>195</sup>

Given my previous employment and extensive connections with the subject of my study, I took conscious measures to clarify my status and limit my associations with the SOP organization – though not the SOP community – during this period. After retiring from SOP in June 2004, I refrained from any professional association, advocacy, fund-raising or promotional activity on its behalf, and attended no organizational events directed to those ends. I met infrequently, for research purposes, with Seeds of Peace staff in Washington, D.C., New York and Jerusalem in 2005-06, and visited SOP camp in Maine for periods of 1-2 days, for research purposes, during the summers of 2004-2009.<sup>196</sup> I met frequently, for personal and research purposes, with graduates and former staff in the US and the Middle East, at sites including the Jerusalem Center in 2005-06. Indeed, I maintained extensive personal and social ties with hundreds of graduates and dozens of current and former staff,

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<sup>195</sup> I traveled to Middle East for periods of 2-6 weeks, for personal and research purposes, living in the Jerusalem area but traveling throughout Israel and the West Bank, during the following periods: December 2004-January 2005; May-June 2005 (also Jordan); December 2005-January 2006; June-July 2006; December 2006-January 2007; March 2007; March 2008; May-June 2009; observations 2006-10 are recorded in field notes.

<sup>196</sup> attended friends' weddings at the camp site in the summers of 2004 and 2005, and gave a presentation on Conflict Resolution to a small group of adult graduates, by invitation but without compensation, at the SOP Graduate Leadership Summit in May 2005. All other visits during SOP camp sessions were conducted solely for the purpose of interviews and observation of adult graduates working at camp. I refused, on all such occasions, requests to participate in camp activities, discuss my previous work experiences with campers, or profess any ongoing association with the organization other than personal relationships and research. I did join Facebook groups connected to the organization, again solely for research purposes. I also corresponded briefly online with current SOP staff regarding the content of the database and my research, on several occasions, and published a summary of preliminary findings, by request, in an organizational publication in 2009. I never sought, and did not receive, official approval from the organization for the conduct of this research.

participated actively in online correspondence and debates regarding issues of contention on organizational e-mail networks, and engaged in personal correspondence and social interaction – outside any official context – with graduates and staff, for personal and research purposes, as recorded in field notes.

SOP graduates and former colleagues are an extended family for me; experiences and relationships derived through my work with Seeds of Peace are woven into the essential fabric of my social world. In the course of my research, I learned that this is also the case for many graduates, whose memories of adolescence and adult social networks are filled with associations from SOP, regardless of their current relationship to the organization. As a researcher, I could not erase this thick web of associations, memories and relationships; instead, I sought to turn my presence within it into an advantage.

*Grounded Theory on a First-Name Basis: Detail of Qualitative Research*

While studying research methodology, I came to recognize “grounded theory” as the appropriate approach for this foray into “backward mapping.” As Charmaz explains, “the grounded theory researcher deriv[es]... analytical categories directly from the data, not from preconceived concepts or hypotheses.”<sup>197</sup> I had not chosen a case in order to test a theory, but rather sought analytical lenses and conceptual language to explain phenomena I had observed, and patterns and themes that emerged from the data. My analytical strategies evolved concurrent with ongoing observations, interviews, and interpretation of preliminary

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<sup>197</sup> Charmaz, “Grounded Theory,” quoted in Emerson, *Contemporary Field Research*, 336-37.

findings, mirroring the grounded theorist's "simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis phases of research."<sup>198</sup>

I began the qualitative phase by conducting formal interviews whenever the opportunity arose to hold a sufficiently private recorded conversation of 1-2 hours' duration with an Israeli or Palestinian SOP graduate. I preferred to conduct such conversations face-to-face, and initially planned to do so primarily during annual trips to the Middle East, as well as meetings with graduates living or traveling in the Northeastern US. In practice, however, my Middle East trips proved better suited for observation or informal conversation with groups of alumni than conducting large numbers of private interviews. In April 2007, the birth of my daughter ushered in a period in which I could no longer travel with ease to and in the Middle East. It became apparent that I would not succeed in orchestrating face-to-face interviews with many alumni whose perspectives I wished to include. In 2008, I began conducting recorded interviews via telephone and Skype with graduates in the Middle East. This sacrificed a degree of intimacy, but allowed me to expand the scope and expedite the process of research. I made swift progress thereafter, conducting the majority of interviews that year. Table 2.4 presents the distribution of interviews.

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid: 336.

Table 2.4: Distribution of SOP Graduate Interviews

Interview Type/Time	Israeli Jews	Palestinians	PCI	Total Graduates
Total Full Interviews	34	28	8	70
In Middle East	8	4	1	13
In USA	11	10	2	23
Telephone/Skype to Middle East	15	14	5	34
2006	1	2	0	3
2007	2	4	1	7
2008	19	18	5	42
2009	7	2	1	10
2010	5	2	1	8

Charmaz emphasizes the intersubjective nature of “grounded theory” research, explaining interview and interpretation as relational processes in which, “the categories reflect the interaction between the observer and observed... grounded theorists attempt to use their background assumptions, [theoretical] proclivities and interests to sensitize them to... issues and processes in their data.”<sup>199</sup> In my research process, I sought to take advantage of my longstanding relationships and immersion in the case at hand. I was fortunate, as a researcher, to do research on a “first-name basis”; my interviewees were all SOP participants during my tenure with the organization in Jerusalem. I benefited from mutual trust built on shared experience, and familiarity with terms and personalities of reference, factors that allowed us to conduct genuinely “high context” conversations.

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<sup>199</sup> Charmaz, “Grounded Theory,” quoted in Emerson, *Contemporary Field Research*, 336-37.

I began interviews by summarizing the goals of my research, and this was almost always enough to prompt a flood of memories and reflections. After this introduction, I asked interviewees to “tell me your life story in Seeds of Peace,” and in most cases had to ask little more than clarifying questions for the ensuing 60-90 minute conversation.<sup>200</sup>

Mindful of the tenets of grounded research, I refrained as much as possible from imposing categories or steering the conversation. Instead, I relied on interviewees to introduce the incidents and issues they found relevant, on their own terms. When interviewees requested guidance or structure, I referred them to biographical periods or topics of their own previous reference – prompting interviewees in open-ended manner to “tell me about the army,” “tell me about the *intifada*,” “tell me about college,” “tell me about the workshop.”

The formal interviews were only part of a multi-faceted approach to gathering information on the adult educational and professional paths, peacebuilding activity and cross-conflict relationships of SOP graduates. In the course of each year, I met informally with graduates countless times in diverse contexts: social gatherings, concerts, lectures, protests, World Cup match screenings, weddings, and chance encounters on the streets of Jerusalem, New York, Cambridge and Washington, D.C. These meetings, rarely convened for explicit research purposes, often provided valuable information. For example, at a Palestinian graduate’s wedding in a West Bank city, I found a Jewish-Israeli graduate who had violated standing IDF orders in order to attend her Palestinian friend’s celebration; these two graduates had originally met at camp twelve years before.<sup>201</sup> Other Palestinian SOP graduates arrived gradually, and their conversations and interactions with the Israeli graduate

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<sup>200</sup> In one case, I didn’t have to ask a single subsequent question for more than an hour.

<sup>201</sup> To clarify the “violation”: The IDF and the Israeli government have declared the Palestinian population centers of the OPT—“Areas A & B” according to the Oslo Accords—off-limits to Israeli citizens. The Israeli graduate in question was not serving in the IDF at the time.

over the course of the evening provided updated portraits of their contemporary lives and attitudes toward each other, the conflict, and SOP, as well as updates on numerous mutual friends not in attendance. This was one of myriad informal, unrecorded, yet highly informative encounters that occurred frequently throughout the research process. Even conversation was not always necessary to convey meaningful connections. Days after the birth of my daughter, a pair of Israeli and Palestinian graduates spontaneously arrived together at my Washington, D.C. apartment. They stayed only a minute, to catch a glimpse of the newborn and leave a gift they had purchased together.

In addition to these informal encounters, I engaged in extensive online correspondence, in individual and group formats. During periods of escalation in the conflict or controversy within the organization, debates raged on graduate and former staff e-mail lists. Whether due to my previous involvement or present research, many graduates contacted me during these crises, often forwarding long chains of heated e-mail exchanges.<sup>202</sup> After joining the Facebook online social network in 2008, I became “Facebook friends” with hundreds of SOP graduates, corresponding and reviewing their profiles, postings and public correspondence for relevant information on their adult careers and orientations toward each other, peacebuilding, and SOP – of which there was often a great deal. Indeed, I found that SOP alumni and former staff had formed at least 24 different SOP-themed Facebook groups, with anywhere from a handful to more than a thousand members.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> I became personally involved in online debates during a pair of these crises, which involved the firing of my longtime colleagues, during the summers of 2004 and 2006, and the closure of the Jerusalem Center in 2006. In each case, I engaged in internal online campaigns protesting the firings and treatment of my former colleagues, and the abrupt closure of the Center.

<sup>203</sup> I found the following SOP-derived Facebook groups on June 23, 2008: Camp staff, I am a Seed of Peace, Seeds of Peace Alumni Group — New and Improved, Israeli Seeds of Peace, Tim Wilson Fan Club, For the memory of Aseel Asleh, Seeds of Peace at Manhattanville, IndoPak Seeds of Peace, Seeds of Peace (IndoPak), 2007 Seeds of Peace, I WANT TO COME BACK TO SEEDS OF PEACE, Seeds suffering from Post SOP camp depression (PSOPCD), the israeli palestinian seeds of peace, Seeds counselors 07, Seeds '06, Seeds of

I found that Facebook could be a zone of conflict as well as communication. During “Operation Cast Lead,” the winter 2008-09 IDF offensive in Gaza, many alumni used the online network as a platform for protest and, on occasion, invective against the actions of “the other side.” Many Arab and Palestinian graduates posted a running count and graphic images of Palestinian casualties on their profiles, while a few Israeli graduates posted a tally of rockets fired from Gaza to Israel; at least one Israeli and one Palestinian “de-friended” most of their cross-conflict contacts during the course of the war. One Palestinian graduate living outside the country posted a desperate plea to send help for his brothers in Gaza, whom he learned via satellite television news, had been mortally wounded by IDF fire.<sup>204</sup>

These online episodes, and hundreds of informal conversations and interactions with graduates, provided crucial contextual information for my research. However, it is important to emphasize that quotes in this dissertation are derived directly from formal interviews, and that all information cited has been confirmed by multiple sources, and by the specific graduate(s) who are involved. Table 2.5 presents the numbers of graduates with whom I corresponded, interacted and/or whom I researched substantively during the course of qualitative research.

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Peace Beyond Borders, Seeds of Peace — Young Leadership Committee, Seeds of Peace in the Balkans, Seeds of Peace-Gaza office, Seeds of Peace 2005, Palestinian Seeds of Peace, Seeds of Peace Club at Manhattanville College, We still wear SOP T-shirts!, For friendship, health, love and opportunity-we are THANKFUL!!!

<sup>204</sup> In 2006, a Palestinian graduate from Gaza lost an uncle, aunt and six cousins from an Israeli airstrike near their home. During the 2009 Gaza War, Palestinian graduate Amer Shurrab learned in real time from an Al-Jazeera report that his father and two sons had been wounded by IDF fire and needed an ambulance. He immediately set about contacting everyone he knew—yet despite numerous interventions, including from international and Israeli human rights organizations, the ambulance was not allowed through for 24 hours, and his two brothers died. See Senator Patrick Leahy, "Statement on the Shurrab Family," Posted January 28, 2009, Accessed June 17, 2011, [http://leahy.senate.gov/press/press\\_releases/release/?id=c575c6a9-b1d1-4f91-a283-2603d1ff4ee0](http://leahy.senate.gov/press/press_releases/release/?id=c575c6a9-b1d1-4f91-a283-2603d1ff4ee0). See also Democracy Now!, "Palestinian US College Grad Loses 2 Brothers in Israeli Shooting; Father Watched Son Bleed to Death After Israeli Troops Blocked Ambulances," Posted January 22, 2009, Accessed June 17, 2011, [http://www.democracynow.org/2009/1/22/part\\_ii\\_palestinian\\_us\\_college\\_grad](http://www.democracynow.org/2009/1/22/part_ii_palestinian_us_college_grad). See also Al-Haq Palestinian Human Rights Agency, "Shurrab Family Returning Home from Their Farm: Two Sons Killed," Posted January 20, 2011, Accessed June 17, 2011, <http://www.alhaq.org/etemplate.php?id=422>.

Table 2.5: *Qualitative Research Sample*

<b>Nationality</b>	<b>SOP Graduates Researched</b>	<b>Female/ Male</b>	<b>Full Interviews</b>
Jewish-Israeli	148	75/73	34
Palestinian	112	49/63	28
PCI	30	16/14	8
Other (USA, Egypt, Jordan, Balkans, South Asia)	15	8/7	<i>n/a</i>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>148/157</b>	<b>70</b>

The dissertation design gradually crystallized around the advantages of “high context” intimacy. I had initially planned to conduct extensive comparative research outside SOP, on graduates of other North American peace education programs for Israeli and Palestinian youth. To that end, I interviewed founders, directors and staff from six other peace education programs in 2006. As I progressed, however, it became clear that I could not possibly replicate my immersion in SOP with other programs, nor address other cases in comparable depth or detail. It also became clear that the sample size and longitudinal scope of my study – following hundreds of individuals from three national identity groups over spans of 10-15 tumultuous years – made this in essence more than a “single case” study. I opted to focus entirely on SOP. As the largest, best-resourced and most prominent program of its kind, it is a case that merits comprehensive study.

After initial rounds of research, I also narrowed my target population for interviews. During 2006-2007, I contacted a wide range of SOP graduates in terms of previous levels of

follow-up participation. In 2008, I sharpened my focus, interviewing exclusively graduates with records of follow-up activity. Having themselves invested in long efforts to be “Seeds of Peace” in the Middle East, this group spoke in greater depth on the attendant dilemmas. Moreover, their responses were never uniform, whether as SOP alumni or within their national identity groups; in every case, they provided diverse and divergent answers to shared questions. These current or formerly active graduates were often no less critical of aspects of SOP than other alumni, yet their reflections were much more complex and nuanced, rooted in extensive, prolonged and ongoing experience. My quantitative findings had measured the proportions of graduates who did and did not stay actively involved as teenagers. I focused my qualitative research on elucidating the experiences and perspectives of alumni who engaged in the struggle of Middle East peacebuilding as adults. This chapter will conclude by reviewing leading studies of the peace education model in question, and outlining the original contribution of this dissertation.

### Contribution of the Research

In a 2005 impact study of a cross-conflict “peace camp” in Sri Lanka, Sumanisri Liyanage and Deepak Malhotra review existing scholarship on the impact of peace education. They note the vibrant theoretical literatures on identity in intergroup encounters and facilitation methodology, and studies of intergroup contact and attitude change in the United States. They credit Salomon’s research on attitude change among Arab and Jewish peace education participants in Israel as the only rigorous impact research on peace education in a context of intractable conflict. Yet they find that all rigorous long-term studies

“tend not to be situated in the arena of violent or extreme ethno-political conflict; rather, they tend to be in relatively peaceful climates (e.g., in the United States), often with participants who work together or attend the same school.”<sup>205</sup> The authors acknowledge the challenges of designing and conducting both interventions and studies in volatile contexts, yet admonish that, “The paucity of research on long-term impact... [and] the efficacy of attempts to change attitudes among groups embroiled in protracted conflict, is problematic from the perspective of institutions that organize and fund contact workshops designed to achieve these ends.”<sup>206</sup> This concern is correct, and not only for donor institutions, but for peace education practitioners pursuing this work in the most difficult conditions.

Liyanage and Malhotra’s study contributes an innovative experimental design to the repertoire of peacebuilding evaluation, combining attitudinal and behavioral measures of comparative cross-conflict empathy. They measure the comparative amounts of money that peace education participants and non-participants, from Sinhalese and Tamil communities, are willing to donate to help suffering children in the enemy community – one year after the initial encounter experience. In conclusion, they find that, “even brief contact (four days) can have long-term impact (one year later), even in extremely harsh environments.”<sup>207</sup>

In light of this finding, Liyanage and Malhotra recommend conducting similar research in other conflict contexts, and assessing, “whether such interventions are more effective when sociopolitical unrest is heightened or when it has ebbed, when a peace process is under way, or when peace is not in sight.”<sup>208</sup> Most relevant to the present study, they encourage practical and scholarly focus on, “‘follow-up’ interventions that might boost

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<sup>205</sup> Liyanage and Malhotra, “Long-Term Effects of Peace Workshops in Protracted Conflicts,” 910.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid, 920.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

the impact of initial, intensive interventions.”<sup>209</sup> The design, efficacy and evaluation of “follow-up,” they conclude, has “been ignored in the contact literature.”<sup>210</sup> Salomon echoes this call in a contemporaneous study, urging scholars to, “examine the long-term value of friendships between adversaries as part of a peace education program that provides continuous opportunity for the ongoing maintenance of the friendships over time.”<sup>211</sup>

This dissertation aspires to address the precise gaps identified by Liyanage and Malhotra and Salomon. It focuses on long-term impact, extending the scope from one year post-intervention to periods of more than a decade. It highlights the influence of dramatic changes in conflict context, through the longitudinal tracking of peacebuilding activity during both “peace process” and intifada conditions. Most important, it emphasizes the evolution and evaluation of diverse, sustained forms of “follow-up” in context rather than the impact of the initial, international encounter. Liyanage and Malhotra modestly suggested organizing “periodic contact between organizers and participants,” concerned that it might be “too costly to bring all participants together again.”<sup>212</sup> Yet the case at hand entails hundreds of “follow-up” activities involving hundreds of participants annually over more than a decade, as well as their friends, families and communities. This study aims to shift the focus from evaluating “intergroup encounters” as singular events, to studying a) whether, how, why, when and in what conditions a program inspired participants to engage in peacebuilding in their subsequent lives, in their home contexts.<sup>213</sup> I conclude this chapter by

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Salomon, “Does Peace Education Make a Difference in a Context of Intractable Conflict?”, 271.

<sup>212</sup> Liyanage and Malhotra, “Long-Term Effects of Peace Workshops in Protracted Conflicts,” 920.

<sup>213</sup> This study can not replicate the experimental design of Liyanage and Malhotra and Salmon’s studies, given the impossibility of creating a post-hoc “control group.” However, given the low levels of public participation in cross-conflict peacebuilding (less than one percent between Israelis and OPT Palestinians, according to IPCRI’s 2002 “Yes PM” report) and hostile intergroup attitudes (see Arian, Hermann et al., “Auditing Israeli Democracy,” and Smooha, “Alienation and Rapprochement”), it is clear that long-term engagement in cross-

relating these questions to the most comprehensive previous impact studies of the international “peace camp” model for Israeli/Palestinian peace education.

*American Peace Education for Israelis and Palestinians: A Tale of Two Studies*

Two recent studies provide rich qualitative portraits of two American peace education programs for Israeli and Palestinian youth: SOP and the Chicago-based program, Hands of Peace.<sup>214</sup> Both are doctoral dissertations, theoretically informed by the social psychology literature on “intergroup encounters,” and based on extensive ethnographic research undertaken following the outbreak of the second *intifada*. Both scholars played active roles in the programs while gathering their data, over periods of several years. Both focus on the struggles of participants to reconcile the American programs’ “humanizing” messages with the “ethos of conflict” prevalent in Israeli and Palestinian societies.

Yet despite these striking empirical and methodological similarities, they reach diametrically opposed conclusions. Edie Maddy-Weitzman’s 2005 study describes the impacts of SOP participation as “powerful, profound and lasting.”<sup>215</sup> Phillip Hammack’s 2006 dissertation, by contrast, argues that, “the conflict’s inevitable identity polarization prevents... interventions from having any lasting effect.”<sup>216</sup> Maddy-Weitzman sees her findings as illustrations of, “the merits of conducting peace education programs in a period

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conflict peacebuilding activity is exceptional, within all three societies concerned, in this generation. Additionally, the qualitative section addresses the question of attribution, exploring whether and how graduates connect their motivation to engage in peacebuilding to the experiences and relationships derived through SOP participation. Moreover, this study moves from Liyanage and Malhotra’s abstract, experimental measure (whether participants donate larger amounts of money that they are given through the study) to the real-world act of public engagement in Middle East peacebuilding activity.

<sup>214</sup> For information on the program, see “Hands of Peace,” Accessed July 10, 2011, <http://www.hands-of-peace.org/>.

<sup>215</sup> Maddy-Weitzman, “Waging Peace in the Holy Land,” 468.

<sup>216</sup> Hammack, “The Narrative Stalemate,” 403.

of heightened conflict.”<sup>217</sup> Hammack, by contrast, concludes that, “Such intervention strategies may be useful in the cultural context of the United States, but they have little value in the context of intractable conflict.”<sup>218</sup> The present study is informed by important insights of both studies, and offers a way to reconcile their divergent conclusions. I will outline the content, contributions and limitations of each, and contrast their approaches and findings with my own.

*Hammack: Interrogating Identity Intervention*

Phillip Hammack presents an incisive critique of American peace education programs for Israeli and Palestinian youth. Working from a “cultural psychology” approach, Hammack characterizes the programs as ineffectual examples of “identity intervention,” which he defines as the attempted imposition of a “cosmopolitan” American ethos on Israeli and Palestinian youth. According to Hammack, after a brief flirtation with this liberal, Western worldview during and just after the initial encounter, graduates ultimately reject it as incompatible with their nationalist “master narratives.” Hammack bases his findings on research conducted from 2003-2006: multiple interviews with forty-five graduates aged 15-17, mainly from Hands of Peace; three summers of participant observation at Hands of Peace in Illinois, where he served as facilitator and program director, one session of facilitation at SOP camp in Maine; and extended follow-up research in the Middle East.

Adopting a strict social identity theoretical framework, Hammack categorizes each interviewee according to three possible psychological outcomes: Identity Polarization,

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<sup>217</sup> Maddy-Weitzman, “Coping with Crisis.”

<sup>218</sup> Hammack, “The Narrative Stalemate,” 403.

Identity Transcendence, or Identity Confusion. Polarization represents adversarial perceptions of self and other, the reciprocal “enemy images” that typically characterize groups in protracted conflict – the dynamic Kelman refers to as “negative identity interdependence.”<sup>219</sup> Transcendence, by contrast, represents the cosmopolitan ideal that is, according to Hammack, the desired outcome of the transformative encounter. This is a state of internal reconciliation with the humanity and legitimacy of the enemy/other, in which the “individual has discovered a way of integrating both ingroup and outgroup into the life-story narrative in such a way that does not threaten the ingroup and his or her identification with it.”<sup>220</sup> Youth who can’t be clearly classified in either category are, according to the typology, confused. In interviews conducted one to two years after the initial encounter, Hammack identifies an inexorable regression among participants from initial “transcendence” back to “polarization,” concluding that, “the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be characterized as a *stalemate* of master narratives which are reproduced by youth, regardless of attempts at identity intervention.”<sup>221</sup>

Hammack’s findings resonate, in two key aspects, with findings of this study and others. First, in highlighting the diminishing salience of the initial encounter over time, for many participants, due to the stubborn realities of intractable conflict. Salomon, using an attitudinal survey approach, finds a similar “erosion” in attitudinal changes among peace education participants in Israel, concluding that “those changes brought about by a relatively short-term intervention can as easily be changed back by the prevailing socio-political

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<sup>219</sup> See also Bar-Tal, “Societal Beliefs,”; Kelman, “The Interdependence of Israeli and Palestinian National Identities,” and Salomon, “Israeli-Jewish Narratives of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.”

<sup>220</sup> Hammack, “The Narrative Stalemate,” 339.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, *xv*.

forces.”<sup>222</sup> In addition, the present study identifies a steep decline in the overall numbers of SOP graduates participating in follow-up activities by the ages of 17-18; the precise age range of Hammack’s sample. His findings are representative of the trajectories of many – though, crucially, not all – Israeli and Palestinian SOP graduates in the present study.

Second, Hammack highlights deep divergences of perspective between American intervenors and Middle Eastern participants, emphasizing their cultural roots and significant practical consequences for this intervention model. These findings resonate with my experiences of conflict within SOP, and were echoed by many interviewees of all nationalities for the present dissertation, such as *Yakir*, a Jewish-Israeli graduate:<sup>223</sup>

Sometimes the model of Seeds took the Americanization of conflict resolution too far. As I said before, you have here two peoples, who are Middle Eastern... the way of thinking, the way of negotiating is very different. So here is another point that can help... “Peace and love” [said in English – *NL*], at the beginning, it’s nice as kids. It’s not serious, it doesn’t work enough, and it doesn’t respect our opinions as Jews and Arabs to resolve the conflict in a different fashion.

Yet *Yakir*’s quote also points to a flaw of Hammack’s framework: It also fails to “respect” the possibility of Middle Eastern graduates striving “to resolve the conflict in a different fashion” – as he and many subjects of this study have done, in many different fashions.

Built around a binary opposition between what are conceived as mutually exclusive Western and Middle Eastern cultural psychologies, Hammack’s framework ultimately exalts the cohesion of narratives over the complexities of people; it cannot allow for agency, paradox, or internal dialogue. This framework leaves insufficient room for peace education graduates to identify with some elements of these programs’ discourses and reject others, to reframe or combine them with “indigenous” or original approaches to peace and conflict

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<sup>222</sup> Salomon, “A Summary of our Findings,” 8.

<sup>223</sup> All names of participants are pseudonyms, with the exception of the late Aseel ‘Asleh.

resolution, nor certainly to change the content of the American programs through their own initiatives. Yet these are all things that, as the ensuing chapters reveal, many SOP graduates have done. They have chosen diverse ways to make SOP identity, relationships, or a “humanizing” ethos authentically their own, whether in or outside Seeds of Peace.

In part, this is necessary given Hammack’s focus on the psychology rather than peacebuilding activity. Yet even in psychological terms, the rigid classifications of Hammack’s typology are not reflected in the testimonies of most of my interviewees. Rather than sounding clearly or permanently “polarized,” “transcendent” or “confused,” many interviewees alternate between moments of each – and remain, as complex human beings possessed of agency and reflexivity, capable of all of the above. An Israeli Jew proud of his family’s Middle Eastern origin, Yakir gave vent in his interview to personal struggles with the assumed opposition of “Israeli” and “Arab” identities, and interspersed critique and defense of dominant Israeli conceptions of the conflict. His relationship to the Israeli “master narrative” is far from simple; it is central to his identity, but it does not predict his behavior or explain him. Yakir also spoke of his peace education experiences having given him an “ambivalent” or “dual” relationship to Palestinians. Yet given Yakir’s experience and knowledge, I am inclined to describe him as a critical thinker wrestling with a complicated situation, rather than “confused.”

The same could be said of his ongoing relationship to the “master narrative” of Seeds of Peace. Critique notwithstanding, Yakir articulated his relationship to the American program as a dialogue integral to his mature self, not a zero-sum clash of cultures. Indeed, Yakir himself has remained active in SOP forums in the Middle East, and maintained friendships and dialogue with Arab and Palestinian graduates, for most of the fifteen years

that have elapsed since his initial summer in Maine. As such, Yakir is one of many SOP alumni responsible for pioneering, preserving, and often eventually staffing SOP or other peacebuilding activities in the Middle East – a phenomenon that Hammack’s sweeping conclusions cannot explain. Indeed, a focus on this legacy of “follow-up” is at the heart of the opposing conclusions of Maddy-Weitzman’s study.

*Maddy-Weitzman: The Impact of Follow-Up*

Edie Maddy-Weitzman’s findings present a stark contrast to Hammack’s dismissal of any lasting impact. Maddy-Weitzman, who lives in Israel, spent hundreds of hours from 2000-2004 observing SOP activities, primarily in the Middle East, and following graduates’ discussions on SOP online forums, in addition to interviewing 26 graduates. During the same span, she volunteered to assist SOP graduates in applying for higher education scholarships in the US; many dozens of graduates, especially Palestinians, made successful use of her services. Her period of observation coincided with a time of crisis for the program, marked by the onset and escalation of the *intifada*, the killing of Aseel ‘Asleh and death of John Wallach. Yet her conclusions essentially affirm the fulfillment of the principal pedagogical goals of the intervention:

[T]he Seeds interviewed for this study indicated that their participation in the Seeds of Peace program influenced them in powerful and profound ways. Israeli-Jews, Israeli-Palestinians, and Palestinians perceived that they became more open-minded regarding meeting and befriending each other, and learning one another’s narratives, resulting in increased knowledge and mutual understanding. By confronting stereotypes and prejudices, and discovering similarities with members of the other side, they increased their capacity to imagine the Other, enhancing humanization and empathy with the other side. Furthermore, many of the Seeds indicated that they had learned important communication and leadership skills and had also developed a stronger self-concept. Although the interviewees expressed an awareness of the

challenges and difficulties of being a Seed, they accentuated the positive aspects and spoke of Seeds of Peace as a life-changing experience with long-term influences, and one that impacted their future goals.<sup>224</sup>

Maddy-Weitzman illustrates all of the above outcomes with multiple quotes from graduates of all nationalities. The study includes detailed portraits of graduates struggling with the escalating conflict and popular opposition to “peace,” including angry online exchanges and expressions of despair and regret. Yet Maddy-Weitzman repeatedly casts SOP as a source of hope for participants in trying circumstances, concluding that, “Participation in [SOP activities] empowered the individual “Seed,” a particularly important outcome for youth living in the shadow of intractable conflict, where despair and hopelessness often prevail.”<sup>225</sup>

Maddy-Weitzman identifies several factors as instrumental in bringing about the positive outcomes she observed, and recommends them for the conduct of intergroup encounters in contexts of intractable conflict: First, the use of a mixed model with multiple categorization strategies; Second, systematic attention to issues of conflict and asymmetrical power relations; Third, and crucially, an ongoing follow-up program in the home region.<sup>226</sup> Indeed, the regional follow-up program is the primary focus of Maddy-Weitzman’s study, reversing the traditional focus on the camp program. Her dissertation provides a detailed account of SOP “regional” program activities in the *intifada* years – the most comprehensive existing portrait of the program’s work in the Middle East.

Maddy-Weitzman’s unprecedented attention to “follow-up” comes in marked contrast to Hammack’s study, which focuses on the US encounters as the authentic embodiment of the peace education model. The Middle East, in Hammack’s narrative, is the locus of the inexorable triumph of conflict over cosmopolitanism, rather than an ongoing

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<sup>224</sup> Maddy-Weitzman, “Waging Peace in the Holy Land,” 463.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid, 454.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid, 468.

struggle framed by those poles, in which some graduates became inspired to take part. The divergence in their approaches to follow-up likely derives from differences in personal experience and research samples. Maddy-Weitzman observed the dynamic year-round follow-up program of a well-established and resourced SOP program, and drew her interviewees from its most active graduates. The majority of Hammack's interviewees, by contrast, are drawn from a nascent Hands of Peace program, which could afford to provide little regional follow-up activity after the initial encounter.<sup>227</sup>

Which of these exhaustively researched, yet seemingly irreconcilable accounts is valid? Salomon's attitudinal research, the most extensive evaluative research program on peace education in Israel, confirms Hammack's findings regarding the diminishing impact of initial interventions.<sup>228</sup> Yet Salomon also finds that effective follow-up interventions, in his words, can "restore" the positive impacts "eroded" by hostile context.<sup>229</sup> In the same token, both Hammack and Maddy-Weitzman's studies are authentic, but partial, portraits. Their conclusions are accurate for, but limited to, specific eras of specific programs, and indeed specific sample populations within each program. When placed in context and proportion, rather than treated as representative of all encounters at all times, it becomes possible for their contradictory conclusions to both be true. And according to my findings, they are. Indeed, as the qualitative sections of this study will confirm, the individual testimonies of almost all of my interviewees provide quotes that could justify either of their assessments. Hammack's study is a vivid and authentic portrait of the psychological dynamics of "re-

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<sup>227</sup> Hammack acknowledges an "extensive" SOP follow-up program, but the program plays no significant role in his analysis or conclusions. Hammack did interview a smaller number of SOP graduates from the summer program of 2004, whose follow-up program opportunities were disrupted by severe organizational conflict. Hammack, "The Narrative Stalemate," 93. On organizational conflict in SOP 2004, see Posner, "Teaching Peace in a Time of War"; Al-Jundi and Marlowe, *The Hour of Sunlight*.

<sup>228</sup> Salomon, "Beyond Coexistence"; "A Summary of our Findings."

<sup>229</sup> Salomon, "A Summary of our Findings," 9-10.

entry;” Maddy-Weitzman’s an equally valid portrait of the sustaining effects of “follow-up.”

The synthesis of their findings with the results of this study point to a conclusion with clear practical and theoretical implications: In contexts of intractable conflict, encounter programs must not be one-time events, but lead into forums for sustained engagement in peacebuilding. The provision of meaningful "follow-up" opportunities, accessible and relevant to diverse participant groups, must be added to the list of conditions essential to successful intergroup dialogue.

Maddy-Weitzman's study and this one emphasize that effective "follow-up" must entail more than reprises of the original dialogue; it must be *pluralistic* and *responsive*, adapted to the diverse needs and visions, and asymmetrical realities, of participants. SOP graduates engaged in multiple forms of social and peacebuilding activity in the years after the camp encounter, including both uni-national and cross-conflict components. In the case at hand, as graduates matured, the organization adapted programs to their changing aspirations, providing higher education application programs and establishing professional conflict resolution training programs for adult graduates.

While deeply indebted to and informed by both of these studies, the present dissertation engages larger subject populations over longer periods of time, and clarifies key questions beyond the scope of their research. The quantitative section of this study addresses the actual balance between program impact and conflict context, measuring how many peace education graduates were involved in “follow-up,” and how many alienated by “re-entry,” at multiple stages of personal, organizational and historical development. The qualitative section presents the reflections of *adult* graduates on the long-term impacts of this intervention on their lives, on the dilemmas and opportunities it created for them, and the

factors that have inspired some to continue and others to desist from the difficult path of Middle East peacebuilding. In the process, it provides a context-sensitive model for long-term impact assessment in contexts of protracted conflict, and an empirical record on which to assess the program in question, its peace education model, and their potential contributions to the wider peacebuilding field.

## CHAPTER THREE

# *Quantitative Findings: Longitudinal Analysis of Alumni Peacebuilding Activity*

### Introduction

In this chapter, I present and analyze empirical findings regarding the long-term peacebuilding participation of Israeli and Palestinian graduates of the Seeds of Peace (SOP) program during the program's first decade of operation. My research questions frame the data analysis: First, have Israeli and Palestinian SOP graduates participated in Middle East peacebuilding activities over the long term? Second, how have changes in personal, organizational and political contexts affected graduates' peacebuilding participation? The chapter begins by details the content and compilation of the quantitative data set, which traces the participation of all Israeli and Palestinian graduates of the 1993-2002 SOP summer camp programs in SOP follow-up activities held in the Middle East from the organization's inception through the fall of 2003.<sup>230</sup> I explain the framework and terms by which data is coded, classified and analyzed, emphasizing the framework's focus on relating variations in alumni participation to gender and national identity, and to changes in personal, organizational and political contexts. I strive to explain in depth the rationale underlying my choices of codes, classifications and categories and the circumstances of their compilation. Far from sterile, technical terms, these are contingent products of dynamic historical

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<sup>230</sup> Follow-up activities in the US, initiated by or for graduates studying in North America, are included for the years 2002-3.

situations. The chapter then uses participation data to map dynamic processes of personal, organizational and political change over the duration of the study, presenting basic statistical analyses of patterns of SOP alumni participation in each evolving context. The chapter concludes by identifying themes for qualitative exploration in subsequent chapters, and considering the implications of findings for the program and its peace education model.

The chapter's quantitative analyses reveal the following patterns and key findings:

- The initial SOP camp experiences inspires widespread participation in SOP/peacebuilding activity among the majority of alumni during their first year after camp; yet activity declines to a committed minority of alumni after high school;
- Peacebuilding participation was rarely a linear trajectory; it fluctuated for many graduates. Indeed, the majority of long-term *active* alumni reported one or more extended periods of inactivity, followed by a “return” to SOP and/or peacebuilding;
- Conflict context is influential but not inexorable; the eruption of the *intifada* in 2000 initially caused steep declines in alumni participation, especially among Palestinians – but the effect was temporary, and substantially reversed in subsequent years;
- Two factors related to SOP “follow-up” opportunities – the availability of follow-up programming in the Middle East, and the selection of a minority of alumni to return to camp a second time as “Peer Supports” (PS) – were the most influential factors in determining graduates’ long-term participation, *even in a context of escalating conflict*.

Together, these findings indicate that 1) the SOP camp experience is initially impactful, even “transformative,” for a majority of alumni; 2) “re-entry” to the reality of the conflict erodes that initial impact over a period of years; but 3) consistent “follow-up” counters “erosion” for a small core group of active alumni, who maintain long-term peacebuilding activity.

These findings echo two of Salomon's key findings regarding "erosion" and "restoration" of intervention impact, derived from years of attitudinal assessment of Arab-Jewish peace education programs in Israel. In his words, "Those changes that can be brought about by a relatively short-term intervention can be as easily changed back by the prevailing socio-political forces... [yet] attitudinal and perceptual changes that become eroded by external socio-political forces can be restored" by meaningful follow-up activity.<sup>231</sup>

#### *Data Set: Origins and Development*

The data set is compiled from the SOP organization's alumni database, which I helped create in 1999 while directing the organization's follow-up program, and reconstructed in 2003-4 as related below. The data set includes the coded individual long-term participation records of all Israeli and Palestinian graduates of the first ten "camp classes" of Seeds of Peace – youth who attended camp in the summers of 1993-2002.<sup>232</sup> The data set includes 824 alumni: 425 Jewish-Israeli graduates (ISR), 312 Palestinian graduates (PAL), and 87 graduates who are Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel (PCI).<sup>233</sup>

The data set examined in this chapter evolved through a series of stages. It was originally compiled to serve the practical purposes of the SOP program, before I conceived

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<sup>231</sup> Salomon, "A Summary of our Findings," 9-10.

<sup>232</sup> Jewish-Israeli and Palestinian/Arab-Israeli Seeds were selected for all camp delegations by the Israeli Ministry of Education's Youth and Society Department (מנהל חברה ונוער), except in 2001, when they were selected by the Youth Department of the Haifa Municipality. The Palestinian Seeds were selected between 1993-95 by local committees with the approval of the PLO, in 1996 by the Palestinian Ministry of Youth and Sport, between 1997-2000 by the Palestinian Ministry of Education, and in 2002 by a committee organized jointly by Palestinian SOP staff and Al-Quds University in East Jerusalem.

<sup>233</sup> The number of currently living Palestinian/Arab-Israeli graduates is 86, due to the killing of 1997 graduate Aseel Asleh in October 2000. The number of currently living Jewish-Israeli graduates from this time period is 424, due to the death from cancer of 1993 graduate Yoav Rubin in April 2009. The number of currently living Palestinian graduates from this time period is 311, due to the death from a hiking accident of 2002 graduate Naseem Shqeir in May 2010.

of its contents as “data” or my role as that of a researcher. The SOP regional staff first gathered the names and contact information of all program graduates onto a Microsoft Access table in the autumn of 1999, as part of institutionalization processes that accompanied the opening of SOP’s Jerusalem Center for Coexistence. The staff derived contact information for participants from the camp directories of all previous SOP International Camp sessions, and repeated the process in subsequent summers upon the return of each newly initiated group of graduates from camp. For several years, staff accessed the database exclusively in order to record, update and access graduates’ contact information, and to compile mass mailing, phone and email address lists for upcoming follow-up programs.

The original design of the database included a broad range of informational categories. These categories included detailed aspects of each graduate’s personal background, camp experience and relationships; items such as bunk number, dialogue group, names of close friends in the program, plus information on secondary schooling, distinctive talents, family, and details of future military enlistment for the Israelis (see appendix for full category list). The database file was named “Dossier,” in the hope that it would maintain an evolving profile of each graduate’s identity and activities in the organization. The demands of day-to-day programming at the Jerusalem Center were such, however, that these dossiers remained blank for years, and the database functioned simply as a directory.

As explained in chapter one, SOP established an Evaluation Committee in 2003, in order to prepare the organization for impact evaluation. As we discussed the approaching evaluation process, it became clear that the organization lacked updated contact information for many older alumni, as well as systematic documentation of their follow-up participation.

Indeed, the organization possessed no authoritative count of the total number of youth who had participated in the camp program. To address these gaps in “institutional memory,” I assumed the task of updating the “Dossier” database, and turning it into a comprehensive record of follow-up participation. Drawing on attendance lists and reports from previous years, and consulting frequently with colleagues and graduates, I compiled detailed participation records for all of the program’s Israeli and Palestinian alumni. In addition, I listed identifying factors for each participant – gender, nationality, number and date of camp sessions attended – that might be relevant for impact evaluation.

The process of data compilation for purposes of evaluation distanced me from the perspective of a pure advocate/practitioner, introducing the questions of a researcher: How could I compile a record that would be empirically grounded, independently verifiable, maximally immune to unconscious bias? How could I render a mass of data coherent, clear and useful for analysis, without sacrificing the complexity and depth of the information contained therein? How could I reflect patterns of fluctuation in alumni activity and relate these to the multiple factors that affected the relationships of graduates with the organization at different stages in their lives?

These questions shaped my processes of coding and categorization in crucial ways. The issue of empirical validity guided me away from the slippery slope of measuring attitudinal shifts, toward the empirically more solid ground of tracking alumni peacebuilding activity. The issue of clarity and communicability of results led me to prioritize parsimony and simplicity in coding. Finally, my desire to study the scope and sources of variations in follow-up activity *over time* – variations I had observed in my work with graduates – influenced my construction of analytical categories.

### *Coding: Three Levels of Long-term Participation*

This research treats long-term graduate participation in SOP follow-up and other peacebuilding activities as its primary impact indicator. As explained in preceding sections, I propose that long-term peacebuilding participation is both a complement to and, in important ways, an improvement upon conventional pre-test/post-test surveys of attitudinal change. The key advantages of this method are a) its focus on forms of concrete, public social action rather than private, self-reported and potentially transient perceptions, and b) its longitudinal scope. This focus enhances the empirical validity and significance of findings, and allows the researcher to track changes in participants' commitments to program activities and goals over time, without necessitating an endless cycle of opinion polls.

Long-term participation is not, of course, a flawless indicator; my research design takes deliberate measures to address limitations in terms of sensitivity to context. Intractable conflicts tend to produce complex, volatile, separate and unequal political realities between and within rival groups.<sup>234</sup> In such contexts, participating in cross-conflict peacebuilding activities may be a matter of free choice for certain people, in certain places, at certain times, but a struggle, a risk, or an impossible dream for others. In coding the participation of SOP alumni, I aimed to create a system that would reflect the complicated reality of the program and its asymmetrical operating environment, while simultaneously ordering data in a manner accessible and transparent to readers unfamiliar with the case.

I began the process by recording individual Israeli and Palestinian graduates' participation in all follow-up activities that my colleagues and I could determine from our

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<sup>234</sup> Lederach, "Building Peace"; Ramsbotham et al., *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*.

memory and records. On its own, however, this tally of graduate attendance at program events could not produce a context-sensitive evaluation. Alumni participation is always contingent upon shifting personal, organizational, and conflict conditions; a fair measure of participation would need to account for the availability of opportunities for participation in each graduate's specific situation. A context-sensitive evaluation should note the participation, for example, of Palestinian graduates who, though prevented by Israeli military restrictions from personally attending joint events in Jerusalem, instead actively participated in local meetings, online dialogue forums, and/or published articles in the SOP youth magazine, *The Olive Branch*. Conversely, a context-sensitive evaluation should register the choice of other graduates *not* to participate, despite not facing any geographic or political constraints – and the spectrum of participation in between these poles. At the same time, the standards by which diverse forms of participation are to be assigned specific values should be clear and maximally immune to bias on the part of the researcher.

In order to create a scale both context-sensitive and transparent, I established a simple three-point ranking system of graduate participation:

- *Out of Touch*: This score indicates that during the time in question, an alumnus did not participate in activities and had scant or no contact with alumni or staff.
- *In Touch*: This score indicates limited participation in activities and periodic contact with alumni or staff. Participants in primarily uni-national, but not *available* bi-national activities, are ranked as “in touch”; as are participants in primarily social events, but not activities with explicit peacebuilding content. “In touch” alumni attend but do not initiate activities; they demonstrate a degree of commitment or connection to SOP, but not sustained engagement in cross-conflict peacebuilding.

- *Active*: This score indicates frequent, sustained engagement in *available* cross-conflict activities in SOP and/or other peacebuilding initiatives. Active participants join cross-conflict forums that meet weekly or biweekly throughout the year, and often initiate activities by inviting others to visit their homes, schools and communities.

Figure 3.1 outlines the distinctions between “active” and “in touch” participation rankings.

*Figure 3.1: Distinctions Between Active and In Touch Participation Levels*

<b>Activity Levels</b>	<i>Active</i>	<i>In Touch</i>
<b>Quantity</b>	Frequent, repeated, sustained participation in available forums throughout year; initiates contact with staff and/or graduates multiple times per month.	Occasional participation in select events (monthly or less); periodic contact with staff and/or graduates.
<b>Quality</b>	Initiates events, invites others to home/school/ community, volunteers at Center, frequents cross-conflict forums with explicit peacebuilding content, publishes <i>Olive Branch</i> articles, engages in frequent online dialogue.	Attends events but does not initiate; occasional cross-conflict events; can include more frequent attendance at social and/or uni-national events; occasional article or online correspondence.
<b>Types of Activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Public presentations (schools, youth groups, SOP Center);</li> <li>➤ Long-term projects (film, drama, media, community projects);</li> <li>➤ Sustained forums (weekly or biweekly dialogue groups, training courses);</li> <li>➤ Overnight Seminars;</li> <li>➤ Cross-checkpoint visits/cross-border homestays;</li> <li>➤ Work for SOP;</li> <li>➤ Similar activities with non-SOP initiatives;</li> <li>➤ Advocacy/Protest focused on peace and/or human rights.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Large one-time events (Center opening, “class reunions,” “talent show,” lectures);</li> <li>➤ Social gatherings, holiday events;</li> <li>➤ <i>Occasional</i> home visit, trip, or seminar;</li> <li>➤ <i>Not</i> engaged in sustained forums, long-term projects, work for SOP, or initiation of peacebuilding activities.</li> </ul>

It is possible to construct more elaborate scales to measure the spectrum, quantity and quality of alumni participation, yet the elegance of this system is its simplicity. It establishes clear, significant criteria of differentiation between levels of participation, maximizing transparency and minimizing the subjectivity of values assigned. Once classified, participation becomes the dependent variable against which I measure the impacts of a series of factors, longitudinally correlating participation rates with aspects of participant identity, and with different moments in personal, organizational and political development.

The longitudinal aspect is designed to allow a temporal dimension of context-sensitivity. Since 1993, the Middle East conflict, the organization, and its Israeli and Palestinian graduates have experienced profound changes, leading to fluctuations in alumni activity. As one Palestinian graduate explained, "From the time I [began] in '96 up to this point, within my own mind it's so fragmented. You know, there was never any systematic pace. There were times when things were so active and hopes were up, and then there were times that you felt like... undid, like sort of reversed all the progress that was made."

In the years that have elapsed since SOP's first summer, Israeli and Palestinian alumni have grown from adolescents to adults, from students to professionals, from children to parents, and for many Israeli Jews – from youth, to soldiers, to veterans. The organization has grown from an experimental start-up program to an internationally recognized NGO with million-dollar budgets, thousands of alumni, and dozens of staff in the US, the Middle East and the Asian subcontinent. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has transformed from a context of historic negotiations, to horrific escalation, to “unilateral separation” and no

apparent prospect of resolution.<sup>235</sup> Such dramatic changes in context created qualitative differences in the “SOP experience” of each new group of participants, in terms of the camp program, the political environment in which they experienced “re-entry” and young adulthood, and the scope and quality of “follow-up” activities available to them in the Middle East. The ensuing sections will provide portraits of these three dynamic contexts, in order to consider the impact of particular contextual changes on SOP graduates’ peacebuilding participation.

*Personal Context: Being a “Seed of Peace,” from Adolescence to Adulthood*

What happens at the beginning, is you return from camp, and you have an amazing year. Everything is good, SOP is the greatest thing in the world. After that, all the bad things happen, and after that you finally *mityatzevet* (stabilize).

–Israeli graduate

It’s really hard to say if, you know, I stayed connected with Seeds over the past ten years or not. Because there were periods in your life that you want nothing to do with Seeds and on the other hand there are situations that you want to go back to see. And for me, what I connect to Seeds is through people.

– PCI graduate

Seeds of Peace participants typically attend their first camp program as young adolescents, ages 14-16, often immediately following their first or second years of secondary school. According to Erikson’s theory of “stages of development,” this is a period in which youth work to establish a mature sense of self, experiment with social roles and experiences, and forge identities connected to sets of ideals, role models and collective narratives derived

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<sup>235</sup> See Alan Dowty, “The Impasse that Remains,” and “The Perfect Conflict” in *Israel/Palestine* (New York: Polity Press, 2008); Rashid Khalidi, “Stateless in Palestine,” in *The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood* (Boston: Beacon, 2007); Rashid Khalidi, “Introduction to the 2010 Reissue,” in *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010/1997), pp. xvii-xlii.

from their surrounding cultural milieu.<sup>236</sup> The journey from early adolescence to young adulthood, in Erikson's conception, is often a period of profound psychological, social and physical change. Such developmental changes do not occur in isolation, of course, but rather in the context of particular cultural, social and political systems that impose different sets of expectations and obligations on adolescents and young adults.

In his "biography" of SOP, *The Enemy Has a Face*, John Wallach explains that he consciously designed the program for this age group, aspiring to challenge the dominant norms of their political socialization:

The initial negotiations with the... governments were not easy. I remember an exchange with an official in Jerusalem who told me that [teen-aged] Israelis were far too young to leave home and attend a camp so far away. 'They are not politically mature,' the official said. That, of course, was why I wanted them in their early teens – before the combined pressures of parents and grandparents, governments, school systems and the media had programmed them politically.<sup>237</sup>

The American summer camp milieu that informs the non-dialogue side of SOP's camp program is itself designed to foster personal growth and relationship-building among youth, often including strong components of collective identity formation and socialization.<sup>238</sup> Thus, Wallach conceived of SOP as, in political terms, an intentionally counter-cultural experience for Middle Eastern participants—presaging and encouraging the struggles that graduates would face upon "re-entry" from camp. It is this aspiration that Hammack, espousing a "cultural psychology" perspective, criticizes as quasi-imperialist "identity intervention."<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> David Hulme, *Identity, Ideology and the Future of Jerusalem* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 16-25.

<sup>237</sup> Wallach, *The Enemy Has a Face*, 6.

<sup>238</sup> Amy L. Sales and Leonard Saxe, *How Goodly are Thy Tents: Summer Camps as Jewish Socializing Experiences* (Lebanon, NH: Brandeis University Press, 2004).

<sup>239</sup> Hammack, "The Narrative Stalemate."

Yet what did these experiences mean to graduates themselves? If the program were no more than an ill-conceived American “identity intervention,” how did it become a meaningful point of reference for many Israeli and Palestinian participants? It was SOP alumni who spurred the transformation of the program from an American summer camp to a year-round program in the Middle East, indicating a strong initial desire of many graduates to integrate SOP into their lives at home. Many alumni proudly adopted and promoted the identity of a “Seed of Peace” at different times in their lives. The ensuing sections provide empirically grounded trajectories of participation, tracing how many alumni became involved in SOP/peacebuilding after camp, in what contexts, and for how long. The first section sketches the evolution of graduates’ personal contexts. Its primary question: Between early adolescence, graduation from high school, and eventual induction into university, military and/or professional life, how did changes in graduates’ personal social contexts affect their relationships to the organization and its goals, and their participation in its programs?

To address these questions, this chapter assesses graduates’ peacebuilding activity at a series of four biographical stages in the ideal-typical life-trajectory of a “Seed of Peace”:

- *First Year*: The first (academic) year after a graduate’s initial SOP camp experience;
- *High School (HS)*: The remainder of each graduate’s secondary school years;
- *Post-HS*: The first 2-3 years post-secondary school graduation, usually entailing military service for Israeli Jews, and higher education for Palestinian alumni;
- *Adult*: Ages 21+, entailing higher education and/or initial career-building;

These ideal-typical stages are designed to allow the researcher to observe snapshots of participation at particular stages, and patterns over time, framed by increasing distance from the initial camp experience, and transition from adolescence to young adulthood. Each stage

involves a different set of incentives for and pressures against participation for graduates, a different balance of “follow-up” and “re-entry.” In the following section, I present a characterization of social context and key findings regarding alumni participation at each life-stage, grounded in participant observation and reinforced by interviews with adult graduates.

*Stage One: First Year*

For a fifteen year-old kid... to be picked from everyone in your school, to get on the plane, to go to a forest where everywhere you can see the water – it was like a dream, it was a very strong bond. It was a home. [Back] at home, I wear that [SOP] t-shirt; when I’m cleaning, I wear a different color of the shirt. When I go out, if it’s cold, I wear the sweatshirt. Open my door, you see the photos of my [SOP] friends. Open the drawer, it’s full of emails and letters. It was a very strong part of me.

–*Palestinian graduate*

Many first-time SOP campers returned home imbued with seemingly irrepressible enthusiasm. During my years with SOP, I was an annual witness to the exuberance of each group of newly-minted “Seeds,” who traveled together like soccer fans returning in triumph from the World Cup.<sup>240</sup> After tearfully parting from SOP staff in Maine, green-shirted throngs of Israeli and Palestinian campers repeatedly burst into camp songs and cheers – on buses to the airport, in the security line, at the gate, on the plane, and again upon arrival in the Middle East. The scene is captured in an Israeli parent’s videotape of her child’s arrival at Ben-Gurion airport with Israeli and Palestinian delegations in the summer of 2000. The SOP alumni linger in each other’s company, exchanging hugs and erupting in chants and songs in the middle of the airport arrivals hall. A number of parents appear moved by their children’s effusive goodbyes, while the commotion elicits bewildered responses from bystanders and

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<sup>240</sup> Alternative: First-time SOP campers returned home imbued with seemingly irrepressible enthusiasm.

security officials.<sup>241</sup> Such emotional displays were typically re-enacted at each “reunion” in the first months after camp, which the majority of recent graduates eagerly attended.<sup>242</sup>

Most first-year graduates returned home to become 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> grade students, 14-16 years of age. They typically demonstrated high levels of enthusiasm for SOP and high attendance at program-sponsored follow-up activities and graduate-initiated, informal social events. First-year graduates strived to sustain ingroup and outgroup friendships, initiated their own meetings and attended any and all available activities. Indeed, it was a group of highly motivated first-year graduates, following the summer of 1997, who pioneered the most popular forms of follow-up activity in the pre-*intifada* era – cross-conflict home visits between Israelis and Palestinians, group homestay exchanges with counterparts in Jordan, and joint presentations to Israeli and Palestinian school audiences. SOP became a primary extracurricular activity and social network for many first-year graduates.

The participation data reveals high levels of active and overall follow-up participation by first-year graduates. Fully half of all graduates from 1993-2002 were *active* participants in SOP activities during the first year after camp, and only one-fourth “out-of-touch.” Tables 3.1a and 3.1b present levels of first-year follow-up participation among all SOP camp graduates from 1993-2002, according to a) percentages among each nationality group, b) the average rates of participation of all three groups, and c) the total participation percentage of all alumni. The figures in Table 3.1a include both “active” and “in-touch” participants, excluding only those alumni who were out-of-touch during the first year. Table 3.1b presents

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<sup>241</sup> From 1993-2000, Israeli and Palestinian delegations traveled together to and from the Middle East via Ben-Gurion airport outside Tel-Aviv. During and after the second intifada, Palestinians from the Occupied Territories have been forbidden to travel via Ben-Gurion, and Palestinian delegations to SOP have crossed the Allenby Bridge to fly from Amman.

<sup>242</sup> Indeed, before the establishment of the Jerusalem Center in 1999 created a space for large gatherings, the first post-camp reunions were often held at the West Jerusalem branch of McDonald’s, whose staff on several occasions felt compelled to banish clamoring crowds of SOP graduates.

the percentages of alumni who were *active* participants during the first year after their initial camp experience.

*Table 3.1a: Percentage of Alumni Participation During First-Year (Active and In-touch participation)*

<b>Year</b>	<b>PCI (n=87)</b>	<b>ISR (425)</b>	<b>PAL (310)</b>	<b>OVERALL AVERAGE</b>	<b>% OF ALL ALUMNI (822)</b>
1993 (n=32)	57%	38%	56%	50%	47%
1994 (59)	33%	55%	65%	51%	58%
1995 (55)	100%	71%	55%	75%	67%
1996 (56)	0%	59%	52%	37%	54%
1997 (73)	75%	95%	79%	83%	88%
1998 (73)	57%	91%	81%	76%	84%
1999 (167)	100%	94%	89%	94%	92%
2000 (149)	77%	71%	70%	73%	60%
2001 (40)	86%	88%	n/a	87%	85%
2002 (118)	94%	90%	84%	89%	86%
<b>1993-2002</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>75%</b>

*Table 3.1b: Percentage of Active Alumni Participation During First-Year*

<b>Year</b>	<b>PCI (n=87)</b>	<b>ISR (425)</b>	<b>PAL (310)</b>	<b>OVERALL AVERAGE</b>	<b>% OF ALL ALUMNI (822)</b>
1993 (n=32)	0%	19%	44%	21%	22%
1994 (59)	0%	21%	30%	17%	24%
1995 (55)	40%	32%	36%	36%	35%
1996 (56)	0%	28%	38%	22%	30%
1997 (73)	25%	70%	59%	51%	63%
1998 (73)	14%	69%	55%	46%	58%
1999 (167)	79%	62%	48%	63%	57%
2000 (149)	54%	48%	28%	43%	40%
2001 (40)	79%	76%	n/a	77%	75%
2002 (118)	71%	76%	72%	73%	74%
<b>1993-2002</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>51%</b>

As the tables illustrate, there are some significant differences in participation according to “camp class” (i.e. year of initial camp participation) and nationality. This is especially true among the minority of alumni who are Palestinian citizens of Israel (11% of all graduates), who are markedly less active than their counterparts from 1993-1999, but the most active of all groups from 1999-2002. Fluctuations in participation according to “camp class” will be explored in the organizational/political context section of this chapter; differences according to nationality will be explored in depth in subsequent chapters.

It is important to note the emergence of one key finding: Both active and overall participation increase dramatically for all groups with the establishment of a year-round Middle East follow-up program in 1997. The follow-up program was established in response to the demands of graduates of the earliest camp sessions, who conveyed to SOP staff in letters and conversations a strong desire to continue SOP activities and relationships, and a need for support in the face of skepticism and resistance from their home communities.

#### *The Peacebuilder’s Paradox: “Re-Entry” and Response*

First year graduates’ enthusiasm for SOP was not universally shared by their families, friends, and teachers; alumni ubiquitously reported facing harsh criticism from their close social circles regarding continued involvement with Seeds of Peace. A Palestinian graduate stated that, “People always tried to convince my parents to stop me from going [to SOP activities], but I never listened to them.” This type of criticism was SOP graduates’ introduction to the “Peacebuilder’s Paradox” – the dissonance between the power of

dialogical encounters to inspire transformations of perspective at a micro/personal level, and their inability to affect intractable conflict conditions at the macro/societal level.

One Israeli graduate, Moran, described an emblematic “re-entry problem” incident to the SOP email listserv in 1998:

I need your help. Me and my friends got together two days ago. Everything was going just fine, when they started talking about the army and the state of the country. I knew the conversation would end bad, and soon they started to speak about Arabs. I defended the Arab side, thinking I was in for a nice long political discussion. But that didn't happen. What did happen was that my best friend got up and started shouting at me. He said that ever since I got back from camp I've been acting different, that I forgot where I came from and where I've returned to. From his words: “I don't understand, is this camp really more important than your friends? After all, you have changed nothing. All you did is to make friends with some other kids. That is all good when you're there but here things are different. It's not that simple.” That got me thinking? Did we really make a change? Does anyone outside of Seeds of Peace think as we do? Am I really a bad person for not thinking the same as ALL my friends? It's hard. I feel very much alone.<sup>243</sup>

The story struck a familiar chord with other SOP graduates, who responded with a flood of supportive emails and phone calls. An Arab graduate identified with Moran, affirming a sense of common SOP identity: “I just want to tell you that you are not the only person going through that... don't listen to what people are trying to tell you. *They* don't know what *we* all have been through this summer.”<sup>244</sup> Moran eventually printed out the messages of support she received from Arab counterparts, and showed them to her skeptical Israeli peers – who were apparently impressed, and apologized for their harsh criticism.<sup>245</sup>

“Re-entry” struggles were a staple of online correspondence between alumni and articles published in *The Olive Branch*, the SOP newspaper. *The Olive Branch* published a “Coexistence Hotline” column in which alumni voiced similar dilemmas and received responses from SOP peers. These forums, in addition to SOP regional activities, served as

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<sup>243</sup> *The Olive Branch* 3, no. 1 (Fall 1998). Quoted in Wallach, *The Enemy Has a Face*, 107.

<sup>244</sup> Wallach, *The Enemy Has a Face*, 108. Emphasis mine.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*

“support group” environments for alumni, with narratives of struggles at home and nostalgia for camp becoming part of an extended, shared “SOP experience” and “Seed of Peace” identity.<sup>246</sup> The aspirations and problems of alumni shaped the evolving SOP follow-up programs, bringing to light a set of challenges, constraints and incentives for continued participation that became an expected part of “being a Seed” – illustrated in Figure 3.1.

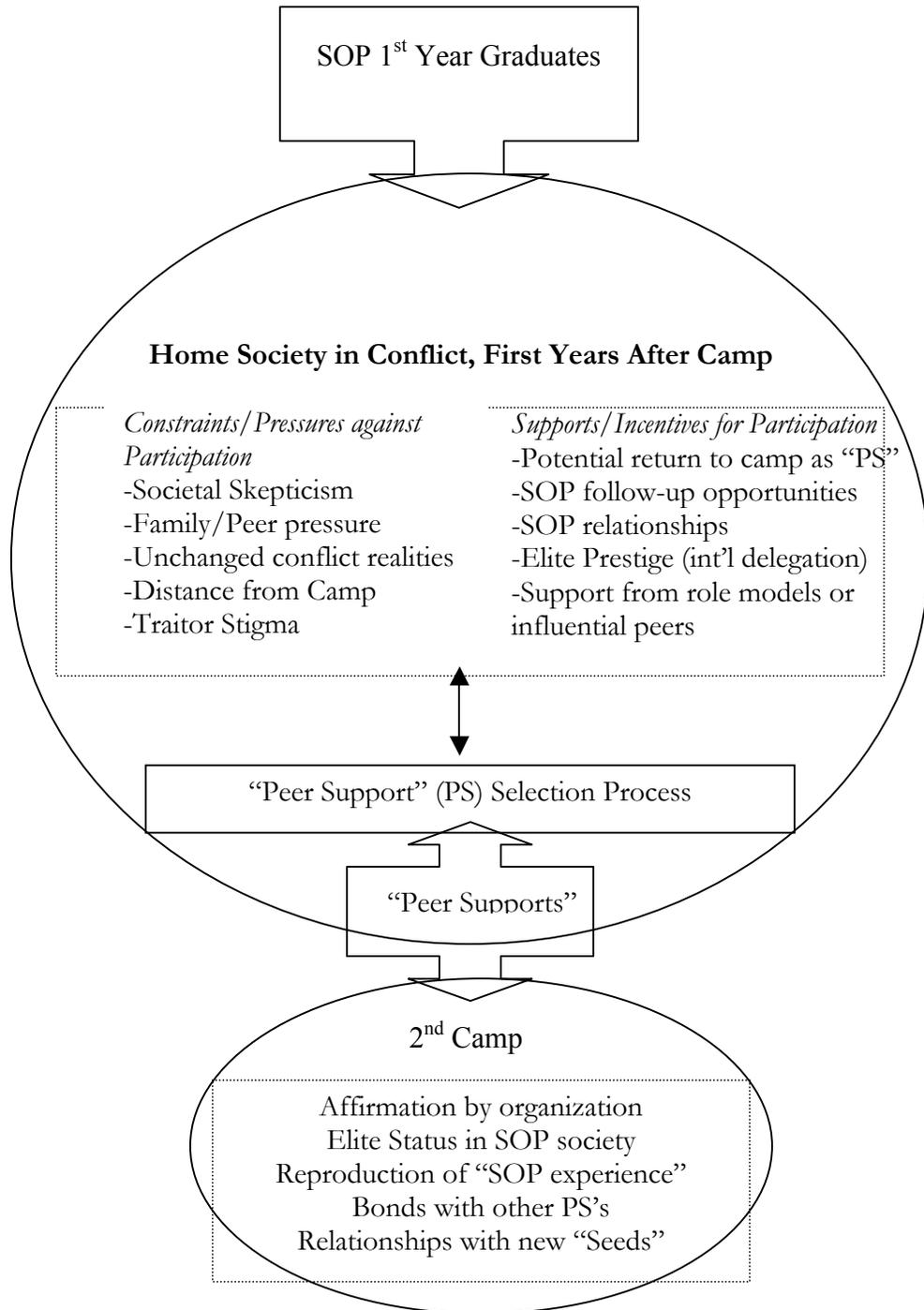
Prominent among the incentives was the prospect of returning to camp as a “Peer Support,” or “PS” in SOP jargon. Each year, SOP staff selected a minority of alumni – typically those deemed most active in follow-up programs – to be PS’s and return to camp for a second summer. From 1993-2002, a total of 240 graduates, or 29% of all alumni, returned to camp as PS’s. First-year graduates typically expressed fervent hopes to be selected as PS’s, and submitted applications for the position in large numbers.

As Figure 3.2 illustrates, the prospect of becoming a “PS” served as a powerful positive reinforcement of key incentives for SOP activity (enhancement of SOP networks and relationships, reinforcement/addition of shared SOP experience, affirmation of elite status within SOP) while mitigating at least one of the pressures (distance from camp/friends). One alumna, a Palestinian citizen of Israel, recalled this as a constant theme of her first-year correspondence with an Israeli Jewish friend: “We wrote letters every day. And she always signed them, “P.S. I hope I’ll be a PS next year.”

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<sup>246</sup> See Maddy-Weitzman, “Waging Peace in the Holy Land.”

Figure 3.2: “Re-Entry” Pressures and “Follow-up” Incentives: First Years After Camp



In the first year after camp, the majority of SOP alumni participated in follow-up activities, the plurality actively so. As the first year receded into memory, however, the persistence of the “Peacebuilder’s Paradox” engendered the “erosion effect” postulated by Hammack and Salomon.<sup>247</sup> A divide began to emerge between those alumni selected to be PS’s and those who did not “make the cut.” PS’s largely continued to be active participants throughout high school, while non-PS’s, with few exceptions, became increasingly less active.

### *Stage Two: High School*

After largely active first years, the remainder of secondary school was typified by a divergence between an active core group and a steadily increasing number of “in touch” and non-participant alumni. The active graduates were most often those selected to return to camp as PS’s, or selected to participate in SOP international conferences, speaking tours abroad or other high-profile follow-up activities. These core groups often remained active through much or all of high school, with SOP activities and relationships continuing to be a prominent part of their lives at home. Other graduates became steadily less involved. Tables 3.3a and 3.3b present the data for participation during the remainder of high school.

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<sup>247</sup> Hammack, “Identity, Conflict and Coexistence.”

Table 3.3a: Percentage of Alumni Participation During Remainder of High-School (Active and In-touch)

Year	PCI	ISR	PAL	OVERALL AVERAGE	% OF ALL ALUMNI
1993	14%	38%	44%	32%	34%
1994	0%	39%	43%	27%	39%
1995	40%	57%	41%	46%	49%
1996	0%	41%	19%	20%	30%
1997	100%	63%	66%	76%	66%
1998	14%	71%	58%	48%	60%
1999	93%	72%	52%	72%	65%
2000	54%	65%	44%	54%	56%
2001	86%	64%	n/a	75%	70%
2002	71%	72%	77%	73%	74%
<b>1993-2002</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>58%</b>

Table 3.3b: Percentage of Active Alumni Participation During Remainder of High-School

Year	PCI	ISR	PAL	OVERALL AVERAGE	% OF ALL ALUMNI
1993	14%	25%	22%	20%	22%
1994	0%	15%	4%	6%	10%
1995	0%	32%	18%	17%	24%
1996	0%	13%	14%	9%	13%
1997	50%	45%	45%	47%	45%
1998	14%	51%	35%	33%	41%
1999	50%	41%	15%	35%	34%
2000	46%	31%	25%	34%	30%
2001	50%	36%		43%	40%
2002	24%	53%	49%	42%	47%
<b>1993-2002</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>33%</b>

A steadily declining number of alumni, if still a majority, continued to participate in SOP/peacebuilding activities during the remainder of secondary school: from 75% during the first year to 58% in ensuing high school years. What distinguished those who continued to participate? Though only 29% of all alumni became PS's, the PS's made up 70% of *active* graduates, and 45% of active and in-touch graduates at this stage. Meanwhile, 58% of graduates not selected as PS's became out-of-touch. As with first-year graduates, follow-up

participation became significantly higher after the advent of a year-round SOP Middle East program in 1997. Overall, however, the trend of declining participation held in every case. As Table 3.4 illustrates, there was not a single year in which overall participation did not decrease between the first year and high school stages.

*Table 3.4. Declines in Overall Participation (Active and In-touch) During High School*

<b>Camp Class</b>	<b>First Year</b>	<b>High School</b>	<b>% Change</b>
1993	47%	34%	-13%
1994	58%	39%	-19%
1995	67%	49%	-18%
1996	54%	30%	-24%
1997	88%	66%	-22%
1998	84%	60%	-24%
1999	92%	65%	-27%
2000	60%	56%	-4%
2001	85%	70%	-15%
2002	86%	74%	-12%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>-17%</b>

While the overall number of active graduates declined at this stage, those alumni who did remain active testified in interviews to deepening their relationships, intensifying their activities and assuming responsibility for encouraging first-year graduates in the face of familiar “re-entry” problems. High school-stage graduates turned certain activities into annual traditions, participating in them multiple times throughout high school. In the years before the outbreak of the *intifada*, joint Israeli/Palestinian trips to Egypt or Jordan during school vacations, a joint winter workshop at Kibbutz Yahel in the Negev desert, and joint Christmas Eve visits to Bethlehem all drew dozens of repeat participants. After the *intifada*, the Holiday of Holidays celebration in Haifa, “coexistence marathon” seminars in northern Israel, and vibrant summer programs hosted at the Jerusalem Center drew masses of repeat

participants. Active alumni created *sui generis* “traditions” of their own. A pair of graduates, Israeli and Palestinian, hosted an annual joint birthday celebration for several years. In some cases, visits and school presentations made pairs or groups of friends from Seeds of Peace frequent guests in each other’s communities, well-known to each other’s families and peers.

In separate interviews, a pair of graduates, Israeli and Palestinian, provide a window into the depth of relationships formed among the most active alumni. Each described their friendship with each other as a crucial aspect of their high school social world. These graduates never attended SOP camp together, but met at an SOP activity in the Middle East, and went on to exchange visits for years to come. As the Israeli graduate, Elanit, recalled, “You [SOP Jerusalem staff] took me to *Aisha’s* house many times. You took me to Aisha’s house every time I could get you to take me...” Aisha spoke of the friendship as offering a bulwark for both young women against criticism from their own communities:

The most important [friend] is *Elanit* – we’re still in touch, we’re still friends, we’ve been friends for 11-12 years. It definitely changed my life. My friendship with her helped me more than anything [in high school]. The first time we met was at one of the activities back home, and we stayed in touch. I had friends, we were going to each other’s places and visiting, but there was something with Elanit that felt more real than anyone else. At some point, we realized that we’re going through the exact same experiences in our lives, her in her town and me in [Palestinian city]. We both had our lives threatened because of our activities in Seeds of Peace, we both felt misunderstood and alienated. I always yearned for the kind of freedom I couldn’t have [in my city], and she helped convince me that I would find that.

We would spend hours on the phone, just talking about teenage problems and helping each other. She came to visit me at [home], slept over, it was so great... we went out at Ramadan, and there were firecrackers, she thought we were being shot at... talking to her parents, I still talk to them sometimes, and she still talks to mine.

I went to the movies, the cinema, for the first time with Elanit... Basically, she was the teenager friend that I always wanted to have, but didn’t have in Palestine. And I think I was the friend that she didn’t have where she was. We connected on a completely different level than an Israeli and a Palestinian – we were best friends.

Elanit mirrored the description, stating that “[we] agreed that most people are on a different planet than us.” Elanit also described coming to accept the veracity of Palestinian descriptions of life under Israeli occupation for the first time through her visits to Aisha. Both testified in interviews that their friendship has continued into adulthood; as Aisha explained, “She came to my wedding, she came to visit me three times [abroad]. I was finally enjoying the freedom that I wanted, and she got to be part of that. We don’t talk all the time, but when we do, it’s just like no time passed, like we are best friends again.”

Active high school graduates made a habit of meeting informally at the Jerusalem Center, with those living in Jerusalem hosting gatherings of SOP friends from around and outside the country whenever there were events. As one active Israeli graduate recalled:

This was truly a wonderful period. We could just come into the [SOP] Center and talk for hours. Me and my friends, we would just suddenly decide that we’re meeting at the Center. We didn’t have to ask anyone’s permission – it was always open. We didn’t have to sit in a café; we would go to the Center, hang out there all day, and then go to [Israeli graduate’s house] in the evening. Saturday morning, we would go to [Café] Aroma and then maybe hang out with you guys [SOP staff] again.

These relationships did not consist solely of pleasant “hanging out”; graduates continued their joint presentations to schools and foreign groups visiting the Jerusalem Center, engaged in joint projects and seminars, and participated and served as “facilitation interns” for dialogue groups. As indicated by Aisha’s admission that both she and Elanit faced threats indicates, these activities and relationships placed alumni squarely outside their social consensus, and mutual support remained a crucial element.

Active alumni also served as mutual sources of support in the wake of personal tragedies, in several instances traveling *en masse* to funerals and condolence visits to bereaved

counterparts after the death of a parent or sibling. One interviewee, a Palestinian citizen of Israel, emphasized the importance of the support he received after his father's death:

The most important [event was] my father's death... how my Seeds of Peace friends reacted afterwards... that really emphasized that the Seeds of Peace group – not the organization – is not only a group that I discuss politics with and meet at seminars and sometimes on birthdays, but it's a group involved in my daily life and my growth in general, in what I will become. To me that was one of the... bond-creating experiences in my life. Most of the good friends I have in Seeds of Peace are people who are actually there... the way they stood with me is unforgettable.

Support in the wake of tragedy was most prominently – and for some, controversially – expressed following the police killing of fellow SOP graduate Aseel 'Asleh in October 2000.<sup>248</sup>

Before his death at age seventeen, Aseel 'Asleh exemplified what it meant to be an “active” SOP graduate throughout high school. A popular member of the 1997 camp class – the contingent that pioneered SOP follow-up activities in the Middle East – Aseel returned to camp twice as a PS (1998, 1999), gave presentations at multiple Israeli schools, attended every major Middle East activity of his time and SOP's 1998 international conference in Switzerland, and exchanged home visits with many dozens of friends – Israeli Jews, Palestinians and Jordanians.<sup>249</sup> Aseel became well-known in his local community as an advocate of dialogue, nonviolence and reconciliation, embodying the vision of youth leadership encouraged by the program.<sup>250</sup> Among SOP alumni, he built extensive cross-conflict networks of friends, extending far beyond his original camp class. For Aseel and

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<sup>248</sup> See Maddy-Weitzman, “Waging Peace in the Holy Land.” Aseel's life, death and impact in and outside SOP are described in greater depth in chapters six and seven. For details regarding his killing by Israeli police, see chapter six, or footnote 23 and sources cited therein.

<sup>249</sup> See “10 Years: Remembering Aseel,” on *Seeds of Peace*, Accessed June 3, 2011, <http://www.seedsofpeace.org/asel10>.

<sup>250</sup> See Abu-Baker and Rabinowitz, *Coffins on Our Shoulders*, 110-112.

roughly one-third of overall graduates, SOP was the equivalent of a youth movement – a central component of personal identity and social activity – throughout high school.

As high school graduation approached, however, the frequency of SOP activity declined even for many active alumni. In the final year of high school, alumni of all nationalities began to focus on securing their post-secondary futures in ways that tended to significantly diminish involvement in SOP. Many Palestinian graduates focused intensively on preparing for the dreaded *tanjibi* matriculation exam, and drastically minimized all extracurricular activity – voluntarily or due to parental edict.<sup>251</sup> Many Palestinian citizens of Israel focused on their *bagrut* matriculation exams and applications to universities and/or university preparatory programs (*mekhinoi*). Many Jewish-Israeli graduates focused on *bagrut* exams, and especially on their approaching enlistment in the Israeli military. Some Israeli graduates aspiring to serve in combat or intelligence units deliberately ceased SOP activity altogether as their draft dates drew near. In the years immediately following high school graduation, with most Israelis engaged in compulsory military service, the majority of SOP alumni became out-of-touch, with only a small minority remaining actively involved.

### *Stage Three: Post-High School*

After high school, there's the army – it's that simple... So that was three years of disconnection.

– *Israeli graduate*

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<sup>251</sup> On the *tanjibi*, Susan Nicolai wrote in a 2007 report for the UNESCO International Institute for Education and Planning, “The epitome of exams, the *tanjibi* is legendary for its difficulty, with corresponding amounts of pressure on students... One student described his experience: ‘You keep your face stuck in a book, there is a lot of psychological pressure, and in fact it makes me feel I’m in prison.’ A teacher said she believes, “The *tanjibi* has its own rituals: anxiety, then fear, then frantic fear” (Nicolai, “Fragmented Foundations: Education and Chronic Crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory,” Accessed July 13, 2011, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001502/150260e.pdf>, 92-93). Annual *tanjibi* scores are published, with student’s names, in all major Palestinian newspapers.

When I graduated, all the [Israeli Jewish] Seeds that were with me in the same year, went to the army. And that was it – for two years, I cut my relations.

– PCI graduate

In the years immediately following secondary school, alumni participation dropped precipitously, with 56% of alumni “out-of-touch” and only 15% “active.” Almost all graduates faced a significant degree of personal upheaval, moving away from home and needing to establish identities and networks in new environments – usually the Israeli military and Palestinian universities – in which SOP was rarely a point of positive reference.

Tables 3.5a and 3.5b present the participation figures at the Post-HS stage.

*Table 3.5a. Percentage of Alumni Participation Post-High School (Active and In-touch)*

<b>Year</b>	<b>PCI</b> (n=64 <sup>252</sup> )	<b>ISR</b> (367)	<b>PAL</b> (282)	<b>OVERALL</b> <b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>% OF ALL</b> <b>ALUMNI</b> (713)
1993	0%	25%	44%	23%	25%
1994	0%	39%	43%	27%	34%
1995	40%	30%	23%	31%	33%
1996	33%	16%	24%	24%	20%
1997	67%	63%	55%	62%	61%
1998	14%	43%	52%	36%	44%
1999	50%	57%	55%	54%	56%
2000	54%	32%	62%	49%	46%
2001	63%	44%	n/a	54%	47%
2002	n/a <sup>253</sup>	n/a <sup>254</sup>	71%	71%	71%
<b>1993-2002</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>44%</b>

<sup>252</sup> At the time of the data coding (2003-04), not all alumni had reached the Post-HS stage.

<sup>253</sup> None of the Israeli alumni from 2002 had graduated high school at the time of coding.

<sup>254</sup> None of the PCI alumni from 2002 had graduated high school at the time of coding.

Table 3.5b: Percentage of *Active Alumni Participation Post-High School*

Year	PCI (n=63)	ISR (367)	PAL (280)	OVERALL AVERAGE	% OF ALL ALUMNI (710)
1993	0%	6%	11%	9%	10%
1994	0%	12%	17%	10%	14%
1995	20%	21%	14%	18%	18%
1996	0%	0%	19%	6%	7%
1997	33%	15%	34%	27%	24%
1998	14%	14%	19%	16%	16%
1999	29%	12%	11%	17%	13%
2000	0%	9%	22%	10%	14%
2001	38%	12%	n/a	25%	18%
2002	n/a	n/a	21%	21%	21%
<b>1993-2002</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>15%</b>

The enlistment of the vast majority of Israeli graduates for 2-3 years of compulsory military service discouraged peacebuilding participation in multiple ways, for both Israelis and Palestinians. For Israelis, IDF obligations drastically reduced or eliminated free time in logistical terms, and Israeli graduates often testified to deeper prohibitive effects of military service on SOP participation. Combat and intelligence units often forbade or discouraged soldiers to maintain social contact with Palestinians. Moreover, many graduates' experiences in the military diminished their psychological readiness for cross-conflict contact. As one Israeli graduate explained, "Physically, you can't go to the military and then just have coffee on the weekends with Palestinians. It's too problematic, too emotional."<sup>255</sup>

The issue was equally problematic for many Palestinian graduates in Israel and the OPT, for whom the enlistment of Jewish-Israeli counterparts often provoked a profound crisis of conscience regarding continued participation in SOP. Numerous Palestinian interviewees testified that the IDF enlistment of Israeli graduates inspired feelings of

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<sup>255</sup> The experiences of Israeli graduates surrounding IDF service are discussed in detail in chapter five.

alienation and betrayal, leading them to withdraw from SOP and/or cross-conflict engagement, temporarily or permanently. “I didn’t understand,” stated on Palestinian citizen of Israel, “part of the beliefs and the vision that I had kind of snapped when my fellows joined the army. I couldn’t understand it, it didn’t connect. We went to a peace camp, and we talked about peace, and now they’re joining the army.” Additionally, Palestinians attending universities in the OPT or the Arab world simultaneously faced censure on their campuses for connections with SOP, which led some to minimize their involvement.<sup>256</sup> Moreover, two key participation incentives at earlier stages, the possibilities of PS selection and assistance with scholarship applications, were no longer relevant for most graduates at this stage. As tables 3.6a and 3.6b illustrate, the negative effects on participation – especially on active, cross-conflict engagement – are clear.

*Table 3.6a. Changes in Overall Participation (Active and In-touch) at Post-High School Stage*

<b>Camp Class</b>	<b>First Year</b>	<b>HS</b>	<b>Post-HS</b>	<b>% Change: HS/Post-HS</b>	<b>% Change TOTAL</b>
1993	47%	34%	25%	-9%	-22%
1994	58%	39%	27%	-12%	-31%
1995	67%	49%	31%	-18%	-36%
1996	54%	30%	24%	-6%	-30%
1997	88%	66%	62%	-4%	-26%
1998	84%	60%	36%	-24%	-48%
1999	92%	65%	54%	-11%	-38%
2000	60%	56%	49%	-7%	-11%
2001	85%	70%	54%	-16%	-31%
2002	86%	74%	71%	-3%	-15%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>-13%</b>	<b>-30%</b>

<sup>256</sup> The responses of Palestinian graduates to Israeli enlistment in the IDF, and experiences in university in the Middle East and abroad, are explored in chapters six and seven.

Table 3.6b. Declines in *Active* Participation Post-High School

Camp Class	First Year	HS	Post-HS	% Change: HS/Post-HS	% Change TOTAL
1993	22%	22%	6%	-16%	-16%
1994	24%	10%	14%	+4%	-10%
1995	35%	24%	18%	-7%	-17%
1996	30%	13%	7%	-6%	-23%
1997	63%	45%	24%	-21%	-39%
1998	58%	41%	16%	-25%	-42%
1999	57%	34%	13%	-21%	-44%
2000	40%	30%	14%	-16%	-26%
2001	75%	40%	18%	-22%	-57%
2002	74%	47%	21%	-26%	-53%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>-18%</b>	<b>-36%</b>

Thus, between the first year after camp and the first years after high school graduation, hundreds of alumni moved from active to in-touch participation, or from in-touch to out-of-touch. Amid these dramatic declines, who were the graduates who remained involved? PS's continued to predominate in that regard, making up 68% of active alumni and 53% of active and in-touch alumni. 70% of alumni not selected to be PS's, by contrast, were out of touch post-high school. In terms of "camp classes," the trend of increased participation by post-1997 groups held in terms of general involvement (active or in-touch): 30 percent of pre-1997 graduates were active or in-touch at this stage, versus 53% of post-1997 graduates. In terms of *active* participation, however, there was less of a difference: 10% pre-1997 versus 18% post-1997. This uniform decrease in *active* participation illustrates the uniquely discouraging effect of the post-HS context, during which many formerly active graduates downgraded their involvement to occasional, and largely uni-national, events.

*Palestinian "Seeds Scholars" and Israeli Conscientious Objectors*

Two exceptional sub-groups of alumni made up a disproportionate measure of active graduates during the post-HS period. Among Israeli Jews, the minority who made the radical choice of conscientious objection to military service – 14 people, just 3% of all Israeli graduates – constituted more than one quarter of active Israeli alumni during the Post-HS stage. Among Palestinians, 47 graduates obtained scholarships for college or graduate studies in North America and Europe during this time, often with significant application assistance from Seeds of Peace.<sup>257</sup> Spared the political pressures of Palestinian and Arab campuses, two-thirds of these graduates became involved in SOP activities in the US and/or in peacebuilding on their campuses.<sup>258</sup> One Palestinian graduate reported on his independent campus initiative to *The Olive Branch*:

Once settled, I started thinking about creating an Arab-Israeli open discussion. I looked for an Israeli partner to join me in a panel to talk about Middle Eastern issues from different perspectives. I wanted to organize an event where I could express my point of view. I do not aim to force people to think the way I do, but rather present different perspectives and let them make their own judgment. Eventually a Israeli student joined me in my project, Nine organizations sponsored our event. We decided to include both the presidents of Hillel (the Foundation for Jewish Campus Life) and the Muslim Student Association on our panel. My vision of the discussion was to have a few people sitting in a tiny room listening to us and sharing their opinions. But as it turned out, we had about 200 students in a huge auditorium in addition to staff members and professors listening to us. The discussion lasted two hours. It was the first time, as I was told by many professors, that a Palestinian student presented the Palestinian perspective [here]. Furthermore, it was expressed alongside an Israeli perspective. As a result of our success, we decided to continue the program throughout the year, as an on-going dialogue discussing different Middle Eastern issues each time.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> Seeds of Peace. "Annual Report 2003."

<sup>258</sup> For descriptions of peacebuilding activity on US campuses initiated by "Seeds Scholars," see "The Olive Branch Youth Magazine," Accessed June 21, 2011, <http://www.seedsofpeace.org/node/1830>. The following issues contain illustrative articles: Winter 2002-03 edition: [http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/Winter2003\\_2.pdf](http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/Winter2003_2.pdf); Winter 2003-04 edition: [http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/Winter2004\\_1.pdf](http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/Winter2004_1.pdf); [http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/Winter2004\\_2.pdf](http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/Winter2004_2.pdf).

<sup>259</sup> See "The Olive Branch Youth Magazine: Winter 2003-04 Edition," Accessed June 21, 2011, [http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/Winter2004\\_1.pdf](http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/Winter2004_1.pdf).

It was the relatively high activity levels of Palestinians studying abroad that made Palestinians the most active of all groups during the post-secondary period.

Several Israeli conscientious objectors also earned scholarships at US universities, and often gave presentations with Palestinian counterparts at their own campuses and others. In 2001, the organization officially established a "Seeds Scholars" program, and began sponsoring events including an annual Thanksgiving seminar for all graduates studying in North America. An Israeli graduate valued SOP events in the US as a "safety net" against feelings of isolation, a social reunion with long-lost friends, and an opportunity to reflect and respond to the news of the intifada at home:

I have felt since I came here a feeling of futility; violence carried on back home, and all I could do from here was listen to the news and mourn the dead. [But] Just as at home, Seeds seek to change reality for the better. We discussed what actions are within our reach as college students in the US... Many Seeds are older and have already organized meaningful activities on their campuses... Simply hearing so many Seeds discuss their plans and actions was empowering. Seeds were active everywhere, whether it was starting Jewish-Arab dialogue groups, raising awareness about the Middle East, participating in student groups and student government, or writing for the newspaper... This energized me to want to get involved and do what I can as a college student to change what I dislike in this world. I felt that together, we can make things happen.<sup>260</sup>

Those "Seeds Scholars" who were able to return home in the summers often brought renewed energy with them, joining activities at the Jerusalem Center while at home, and in some cases pursuing internships with human rights and peacebuilding organizations.<sup>261</sup>

The atmosphere these graduates describe - action, empowerment, energy, initiative - are starkly different from the terms in which most post-high school Israelis framed their

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<sup>260</sup> See "The Olive Branch Youth Magazine: Winter 2002-03 Edition," Accessed June 21, 2011, [http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/Winter2003\\_2.pdf](http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/Winter2003_2.pdf).

<sup>261</sup> Gazan students studying abroad often did not return home for periods of years, both due to the volatile and often violent conditions in Gaza, including intermittent Israeli military operations and fighting between supporters of Palestinian political movements Fatah and Hamas, and for fear of being unable to leave due to Israeli closures of the border.

experiences in the IDF, or post-high school Palestinians described university campuses in the OPT.<sup>262</sup> These exceptional groups serve to emphasize the discouraging effects of the two mainstream post-HS contexts (Israeli military service and Palestinian universities). Indeed, without Israeli conscientious objectors and Palestinians studying abroad, the numbers of active graduates during the Post-HS stage might well have fallen to 10% or less of all alumni.

It is important to place this Post-HS participation data in larger context. The participation rankings represent not just a distinct stage of graduates' personal lives, but a snapshot of a specific demographic group taken during a particular window in time. For all of the graduates surveyed here, their post-secondary years coincided with the first years of the second *intifada*, a period of horrific violence and bitter disillusionment with the failed Oslo peace process. Moreover, while graduates had inspired SOP to support diverse year-round activities for high-school aged alumni, the organization offered no organized programs tailored to alumni at this stage of their lives. Hence, the graduates surveyed here experienced the inherently discouraging personal contexts of this life-stage without any relevant organizational framework, and in a profoundly discouraging political context, an environment which can only have exacerbated pressures against participation. The ensuing section will explore the effects of organizational and political context in detail.

From the first year to the post-HS stage the overall trend of steadily diminishing participation obtains for all identity groups and "camp classes." Yet this stage was not the end of the story for all. For some alumni, these post-secondary "years of disconnection" did become a breaking point, after which they never resumed active SOP or peacebuilding

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<sup>262</sup> See Chapters five and six.

participation. Other graduates, however, sought to “return” to SOP and/or peacebuilding activity after a temporary “time-out.”

#### *Stage Four: Adult*

In my last six months in [IDF] service, I heard that they opened the course [at the Jerusalem Center]... mediation – conflict management. That was one of the first programs they had for the “graduate” Seeds. And I felt like that’s my return ticket.

*–Israeli graduate*

When I sat only with the Arabs, I also felt there was something missing. I also couldn’t find answers to the questions that I was asking. And when I went to the uni-national seminar, we also didn’t find answers. And I realized that the frustrations that I had two years ago, I’m not going to find the answers by myself.

*–PCI graduate*

It was the demands and efforts of groups of teen-aged SOP graduates that originally transformed SOP from an American summer camp to a year-round Middle East program. As the same “founding generation” of SOP alumni entered adulthood, a committed core group sought ways to (re-)integrate the program, their cross-conflict relationships, or the larger goals of peacebuilding, into their adult lives. In their early twenties, these graduates resumed activity or became newly active, pioneering a new set of adult-oriented programs at Seeds of Peace, and participating, training or working professionally in the peacebuilding field through SOP and/or diverse other initiatives. These active adults made up a minority of overall SOP alumni, yet their diverse forms of renewed participation indicated enduring commitments to the program, their relationships, and/or a larger vision of peacebuilding.

In terms of SOP activity, graduate demand inspired the Jerusalem Center/regional program to establish a series of intensive training courses for adult alumni, beginning in

2004. Taught by local experts, the courses offered certification to a few dozen alumni in a range of core peacebuilding skills, including conflict resolution, “difficult conversations,” dialogue facilitation, mediation and negotiation. In interviews, graduate participants also described these courses functioning as de facto forums for Israeli and Palestinian alumni to confront each other’s experiences and perspectives from the post-HS “years of disconnection.” As one alumna explained, “The facilitation course was truly... like one long dialogue group of a year and a half.”

Multiple graduates described these encounters as candid and genuinely “difficult,” but often spoke with pride of achieving unprecedented clarity, maturity and honesty in cross-conflict relationships. As one course participant recalled, “During a year-and-a-half, we really accompanied each other through long processes in our lives... not just in the context of the conflict – each one in terms of relationships, career, each of us was in a period of transition and choices about life, and we passed through this time together. That created something very strong that remains.” This mature understanding often “generalized” from the personal to the collective level. Numerous adult alumni asserted that as adults, they achieved a depth of cross-conflict understanding that had been cognitively impossible for them as youth. As one Israeli alumna explained:

[PCI graduate] was a very good friend of mine when we were small, and it was very hard for him that all the Jews were going to the army, and we had a lot of conversations about that. But again, I couldn’t really understand the position that he was in... I wasn’t really able to understand that place. From a more political perspective, the meaningful process began when I started working at Seeds [as an adult].

Other Israeli graduates related that as adults, they realized the veracity of Palestinian stories of oppression that they had been cognitively *unable* to comprehend or believe as teenagers. A Palestinian alumna stated that, “It’s easy for me to see [now] that Jewish people went

through the Holocaust and... how Israelis see soldiers as honored people... I understand the Jewish narrative... Of course extremism in all these things definitely bothers me, but today I can listen to the Jewish narrative without being sad."<sup>263</sup> Several graduates of these training courses went on to complete masters' degrees in conflict resolution at leading university programs abroad.<sup>264</sup>

A few dozen of those trained in conflict resolution have used their skills to work as facilitators and staff for SOP and other peacebuilding programs, a number of them forming the core of the SOP regional program staff for several years since. Other alumni, upon completing military service or university, applied directly to work as counselors at SOP camp. The reported quality of graduates' work experiences with SOP varied, with some becoming inspired to continue working for years, and others becoming alienated due to political discomfort or severe organizational conflict.<sup>265</sup> Yet many graduate staff spoke with pride of their efforts to pass on their enthusiasm to a new generation of participants, and to change the organization from within. As one Palestinian graduate explained, "I stayed [active in the program] for ten years, the last 3-4 years... working with the new kids... I think we [graduates] had power doing that, and we changed some things... we had some power, Arabs and Israelis, in the organization."

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<sup>263</sup> Her quote is remarkable in light of numerous studies that assert that Israeli and Palestinian peace education participants are equally capable of "humanizing" their perceptions of individuals on the other side, but that Palestinians have much greater difficulty granting legitimacy to the Israeli narrative. See Salomon, "A Summary of our Findings."

<sup>264</sup> Israeli and Palestinian graduates have completed masters degrees in peace and conflict-related fields at American University's International Peace and Conflict Resolution Program, Eastern Mennonite University's Conflict Transformation Program, and Georgetown University's Conflict Resolution Program and Walsh School of Foreign Service, among others. One Israeli graduate is currently pursuing a doctorate in Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame.

<sup>265</sup> These experiences are explored in detail in chapter eight; see also Posner, "Teaching Peace in a Time of War."

Some adult graduates who were alienated by organizational conflict at SOP became active in other dialogue and peace education programs. Other active adult graduates grew to find peace education insufficiently “political,” criticizing SOP or dialogue in general as inappropriate for the increasingly asymmetrical realities of Israelis and Palestinians. These graduates became involved instead in anti-occupation advocacy, protest and/or nonviolent direct-action initiatives. Adult graduates became activists, participants and/or staff of a diverse range of peacebuilding and nonviolent action initiatives outside Seeds of Peace; Table 3.6 presents a list of 35 examples from three genres of peacebuilding activity.

Some graduates designed their own methods of grassroots peacebuilding. Two Jewish-Israeli alumni have used Arabic language skills to begin freelance teaching, in their words, “Arabic to Jews and Hebrew to Arabs” in Jerusalem, as well as offering reciprocal language courses for SOP graduates. They report that these courses inevitably became forums for cultural exchange and dialogue, which they encouraged. A Palestinian graduate established an online English-language Palestinian news forum that deliberately includes Jewish and Israeli authors of diverse political perspectives – and has maintained the policy in the face of harsh criticism.<sup>266</sup> Often, graduates combined diverse forms of peacebuilding, in and outside SOP, at different stages of their adult lives.

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<sup>266</sup> "Palestine Note," Accessed July 11, 2011, <http://palestinenote.com/blogs/blogs/about.aspx>. On criticism of the editorial policy, see Natasha Mozgovaya, "Coming Home to Hebron, Looking Forward to Palestine," *Haaretz*, May 9, 2011, Accessed July 11, 2011, <http://www.haaretz.com/blogs/focus-u-s-a/coming-home-to-hebron-looking-forward-to-palestine-1.360690>.

Table 3.6. *Peacebuilding Initiatives in which Adult SOP Graduates Participated/Worked*<sup>267</sup>

Dialogue/ Negotiation	Advocacy/Protest	Education/Media/ Mixed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Al-Quds University/Peace Now Dialogue</li> <li>• Creativity for Peace</li> <li>• Crossing Borders</li> <li>• Givat Haviva</li> <li>• Hands of Peace</li> <li>• Heartbeat Jerusalem</li> <li>• Independent dialogues at Israeli universities</li> <li>• Interfaith Encounter Association</li> <li>• Israeli-Palestinian Negotiating Partners</li> <li>• New Story Leadership Middle East</li> <li>• Peace Camp Canada</li> <li>• Peres Center for Peace</li> <li>• Sulha Peace Project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alternative Information Center</li> <li>• American Task Force on Palestine</li> <li>• <i>Bat Shalom</i></li> <li>• The Campus is Not Silent (“<i>Ha-kampus Lo Shotek</i>”)</li> <li>• Coalition of Women for Peace</li> <li>• <i>HaMoked</i></li> <li>• Holy Land Trust</li> <li>• International Solidarity Movement</li> <li>• Middle East Nonviolence and Democracy</li> <li>• New Profile</li> <li>• Palestinian Campaign for the Right of Entry/Re-Entry to the Occupied Territories</li> <li>• Peace Now</li> <li>• Student Left activist coalition at Tel-Aviv University</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• American, Eastern Mennonite, Georgetown University Conflict Resolution MA's</li> <li>• Campus for All</li> <li>• Faculty for Israeli-Palestinian Peace</li> <li>• Geneva Initiative</li> <li>• Just Vision</li> <li>• Jerusalem Stories</li> <li>• Olive Tree Scholarship Program</li> <li>• One Voice</li> <li>• Palestine Note</li> <li>• Search for Common Ground</li> <li>• Sixty Years, Sixty Voices</li> <li>• <i>Zochrot</i>: Remembering the Nakba in Hebrew</li> </ul>

<sup>267</sup> This list does not include multiple advocacy, dialogue and peacebuilding events and initiatives initiated by SOP graduates on the following US campuses (not an exhaustive list): American, Brandeis, Drake, Earlham, Harvard, Lehigh, Manhattanville, Mount Holyoke, Princeton, Smith, Southern Maine, Virginia, Wartburg, Yale.

Several graduates have also taken part in “Track One” peacebuilding activity, including employment and consultancies with the United Nations Special Coordinator Office for the Middle East Peace Process, service on the PLO’s Negotiations Affairs Unit, and working as aides to prominent Israeli and Palestinian political figures. One Jewish-Israeli alumna proudly served as a parliamentary aide for Ahmad Tibi, a prominent Arab member of the Israeli Knesset and a perennial lightning rod for nationalist criticism from mainstream Israeli Jewish society.<sup>268</sup> During the only intensive period of official negotiations during the last decade, SOP graduates served as assistants to three of the principal negotiators – former Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmad Qurei (Abu Ala’), Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. In interviews, all of the above graduates linked the inspiration for their political work directly to experiences and relationships derived through SOP. All of these assistants also expressed frustration, however, with their inability to affect the outcome of the negotiations; their proximity did not translate into actual power. The peacebuilder’s paradox existed even at the highest level.<sup>269</sup>

Indeed, many of the most active graduates reported experiencing periods of burnout, a common phenomenon among activists engaged in protracted, unresolved struggle. “My entire adult life has been connected to trying to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict,” sighed one Israeli interviewee, “After the daily struggle, the endless stream of crises and demonstrations, I’m a little bit of a tired horse... How many times can you stand and shout? But I know I’ll always go to demonstrations, it’s just part of me.” As in high school,

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<sup>268</sup> During the 1996 Knesset elections, for example, then-Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu’s campaign employed the slogan “Bibi or Ahmad Tibi.” See Charles S. Liebman and Elihu Katz (eds.), *The Jewishness of Israelis: Responses to the Guttman Report* (New York: SUNY Press, 1997), 115.

<sup>269</sup> Indeed, in a dramatic illustration of these high-placed graduates’ lack of power to effect change, one of the Israeli negotiations assistants was unable to leverage his credentials to secure an overnight “entry permit” from the IDF for the Palestinian negotiations assistant, whose father was hospitalized in West Jerusalem at the time.

numerous graduates spoke of alternating between periods of peacebuilding activity and inactivity, in response to changes in personal, organizational and political contexts. One alumna, a Palestinian citizen of Israel, explained:

In [recent years], I was working with the organization and I was in a very good connection with the organization, because I was working at the Center and seeing the new Seeds and working with them almost every day. But now I'm starting to go back where I was [before]. I feel like the vision that we had, we're not able to affect reality. The last six months, what's been going on in the region, and the dialogues that I have with people, I felt like we're coming up with the same questions, is it really effective to do this, to do peace? I started out believing, then I went through a part where I didn't want anything to do with peace, and then I went back, and now I feel like I'm going in circles. So except for the facilitation course... I'm not doing anything. But it's separate from the relationships that I have with people. My friendships with other Seeds, have always been strong... 80% of my friends are from Seeds of Peace.

Some active adults insisted there had never been a lapse in their involvement or their cross-conflict relationships. "I was active in all the phases [of personal development]," recalled one Palestinian graduate, and "There are people that, from the beginning to the end, we are still connected. [Some] from the same facilitation group in '97... [other] people you collect on the way, different forums and dialogues... people that you never had camp with, but because of having the same experience, it's as if you are starting actually from the same point." For these graduates, a decade or more removed from their initial camp experience, peacebuilding and/or SOP constituted meaningful points of reference in their adult lives.

How many are these active adult graduates? It is important to note that I cannot provide equally comprehensive figures for adult participation. I completed coding the original participation data before leaving SOP in 2004, and cannot assess with equal precision the subsequent activity of all alumni. I do not, therefore, attempt to estimate how many graduates are "in-touch" in an occasional and/or uni-national manner. However, drawing on qualitative sources detailed in previous chapters – interviews, conversations,

correspondence and publications including information on Israeli and Palestinian alumni – I provide a credible *minimum* estimate of alumni who actively participated in SOP and/or cross-conflict peacebuilding during their twenties. In other words, the actual numbers cannot be lower than the figures presented below, and may indeed be slightly higher. Table 3.7 lists minimum figures of *active* adult graduates.

*Table 3.7: Active Adult Graduates (minimum estimates)*

<b>Group</b>	<b>PCI (86)</b>	<b>ISR (425)</b>	<b>PAL (312)</b>	<b>TOTAL (823)</b>
SOP Work	5	46	32	<b>83</b>
General Peacebuilding Work	10	55	41	<b>106</b>
Peacebuilding Activity	14	69	57	<b>140</b>
Percentage of Adults Active 1993-2002	<b>16%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>17%</b>

The overall percentage of active adult graduates (17%) is slightly higher than the percentage of active graduates at the Post-HS stage (14.6%). 15 alumni became newly active as adults, while 44 others resumed active participation after being either “in-touch” or “out-of touch” during the Post-HS stage – particularly Israeli Jews. These additions were largely balanced, however, by other alumni decreasing or ceasing activity. While the overall increase is small, it counters the previous trend of diminishing activity at each stage, indicating a potential for renewed interest among some graduates at the adult stage, especially Israeli Jewish graduates post-IDF service.

Who were, then, the minority of graduates actively engaged in cross-conflict peacebuilding as adults? There were a few adult graduates who became active despite never

having participated in follow-up programs as youth. One of these, a Palestinian alumnus from the original 1993 camp class, joined SOP conflict resolution training courses as an adult and became a passionate advocate of cross-conflict dialogue. He went on to jointly organize, with an Israeli SOP counterpart, dialogues between students at his Palestinian university and Israeli activists from Peace Now, and later initiated a series of dialogues between Palestinians and right-wing Israelis.<sup>270</sup> He was mirrored by an Israeli counterpart from the 1993 camp class, Yoav Rubin, who likewise had never participated in follow-up as a teenager. A student of Jewish philosophy and a social justice activist in Israel, Rubin joined SOP training courses as an adult, served as a facilitator at camp, and became an independent and influential voice in the SOP community before tragically dying of cancer in May 2009. A group of his Israeli and Palestinian SOP counterparts jointly paid respects at his funeral in Jerusalem.<sup>271</sup>

These two 1993 alumni are exceptional individuals and exceptional cases, however. The overwhelming majorities of active adults had also been active participants in high school (91%) and returned to camp as Peer Supports (89%), confirming the enduring salience of follow-up activity and PS selection. Indeed, 52% of all PS's were active as adults, compared to only 3% of all alumni who attended camp only once.

This renewal of activity among several dozen adult alumni, combined with continued activity among dozens of others, contradicts Hammack's assertion that, "the conflict's

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<sup>270</sup> No author, "Settling Differences: First time Israelis and Palestinians are meeting on a regular basis in the West Bank," *Jerusalem Post*, Oct. 15, 2009. Accessed April 4, 2011, [http://www.seedsofpeace.org/story/2009/10/settling\\_differences\\_first\\_time\\_israelis\\_and\\_palestinians\\_are\\_meeting\\_on\\_a\\_regular\\_bas](http://www.seedsofpeace.org/story/2009/10/settling_differences_first_time_israelis_and_palestinians_are_meeting_on_a_regular_bas).

<sup>271</sup> "In Memoriam," *The Olive Branch*, Fall 2009, Accessed July 11, 2011, [http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/OBFall09\\_Part2.pdf](http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/OBFall09_Part2.pdf).

*inevitable* identity polarization prevents... interventions from having *any lasting effect*.<sup>272</sup>

Among a sizable minority of alumni, the impact was indeed profound and lasting. Moreover, it is apparent that even during periods of inactivity, latent connections to SOP/peacebuilding endured among many alumni, and eventually found expression in more favorable contexts.

It is also important to note, as stated above, that these are minimal figures and do not include a considerably wider “in-touch” pool of adult graduates involved occasionally or uni-nationally. Some alumni testified to other profound impacts that the program has had on their adult lives, introducing them to their closest ingroup friends and in two cases, spouses. Some alumni spoke of drawing inspiration from SOP for youth and women’s empowerment and economic justice work in their own communities. The numbers of “active” graduates recorded here reflect only those adult alumni who embodied the primary goals of the program by engaging in *cross-conflict peacebuilding* years after their camp experiences, and after profound changes in their personal lives and their political environments.

#### *Significance of Life-Stage Findings*

These findings illustrate a clear, common trajectory of follow-up participation over time. Widespread, enthusiastic follow-up participation during the first year after camp diminished over the course of high school, leaving a much smaller core group involved after high school graduation. The years immediately after high school were the nadir of participation, due especially to the enlistment of most Israeli alumni for compulsory military service and the resultant alienation of many Palestinian graduates. During the first year after the initial camp

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<sup>272</sup> Hammack, "The Narrative Stalemate," 403.

experience, more than two-thirds of graduates from all groups, and three-fourths of all alumni, participated in follow-up. After high school graduation, by contrast, majorities of all groups were out-of-touch. In time, however, a number of adult alumni “returned” to peacebuilding activity in and outside SOP – the vast majority of whom had been highly active in high school, and had been selected for a second summer at camp.

As Table 3.8 illustrates, the overall trend of diminishing participation obtains for all identity groups; previous tables illustrate that the same trend holds for all “camp classes.”

*Table 3.8: Overview of Life-Stage Findings<sup>273</sup>*

<b>PCI (n=87)</b>	<b>First-Year</b>	<b>HS</b>	<b>Post-HS (64)</b>	<b>Adult*</b>
Active	36%		27%	15%
In-touch	32%		20%	n/a
Out-of-Touch	32%		53%	n/a
<b>Israeli (425)</b>	<b>First-Year</b>	<b>HS</b>	<b>Post-HS (367)</b>	
Active	50%		34%	16%
In-touch	25%		24%	n/a
Out-of-Touch	25%		42%	n/a
<b>Palestinian (312)</b>	<b>First-Year</b>	<b>HS</b>	<b>Post-HS (282)</b>	
Active	46%		25%	18%
In-touch	24%		24%	n/a
Out-of-Touch	30%		51%	n/a
<b>All Alumni (824)</b>	<b>First-Year</b>	<b>HS</b>	<b>Post-HS (713)</b>	
Active	44%		29%	17%
In-touch	27%		23%	n/a
Out-of-Touch	29%		49%	n/a

These findings affirm two of Salomon’s key findings from pre-post attitudinal evaluation of peace education programs in Israel: the “erosion” of intervention impact over time, on the

<sup>273</sup> As explained previously, the *Post-HS* findings are ranked according to participation during the 2002-3 academic year. Not all alumni had yet graduated from high school at the time, hence the smaller sample totals noted in the column.

one hand, and the potential of follow-up activity to “restore” or sustain a degree of positive program impact, on the other.<sup>274</sup> Indeed, significant proportions of alumni remained actively involved for much longer than the typical pre/post-test period of six months to one year. Nearly half of all graduates were active in peacebuilding throughout most or all of high school, and at least 17% active in peacebuilding 10-15 years later.

The pattern of diminishing active participation is clear across the board, yet this process should not be understood as inherent, inevitable or isolated from the influence of context. The next section explores patterns of alumni participation according to *organizational and political conditions*, using time-bound snapshots of participation to measure the effects of changes in program and conflict contexts.

### Organizational and Political Contexts

The Seeds of Peace program underwent profound changes during its first decade of operation, due to developments such as the initiation of Middle East follow-up programs in 1997, the opening of the Jerusalem Center for Coexistence in 1999, and the death of founder and president John Wallach in 2002. Regional political developments also significantly altered the lives of program graduates and the program’s working environment, especially the eruption and escalation of the second *intifada* in the fall of 2000. Dramatic changes in historical and organizational context led to qualitative differences in the “SOP experiences” of each new group of participants, especially in terms of the “re-entry problems” they faced, and the scope and type of follow-up activities available to them upon their return to the

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<sup>274</sup> Salomon, “A Summary of our Findings.”

Middle East from SOP camp. This section traces the impact of particular sets of organizational and political conditions on levels of graduate peacebuilding participation. It begins by identifying three distinct “eras” in the evolution of SOP, according to the degree to which program and conflict contexts corresponded with the conditions theorized as essential to successful intergroup contact. I compare alumni participation rates in each era, note effects of sudden shifts in context, and use variable analysis to disaggregate the relative impacts of program-related and conflict-related factors on alumni participation. I find that follow-up program-related factors remained salient even for participant groups that experienced negative conflict conditions. I conclude that in contexts of intractable conflict, follow-up must be considered an essential condition for successful intergroup encounters.

*Camp Class, Program Era, Conflict Context*

Among the primary pitfalls of large-scale, longitudinal evaluation is the illusion of homogeneity that is fostered by fitting many distinct cases into a single framework of analysis and/or measurement. In the case at hand, it becomes easy to imagine that each new group of “Seeds” essentially repeats the experiences of their predecessors, that each annual session of the program is a variation on the same themes. This effect can be amplified by an excessive focus on the common rituals and program elements repeated at each camp session – the green t-shirt uniform, dialogue sessions, the Color Games – rather than the distinct circumstances in which each session takes place. Indeed, an excessive focus on the camp itself presents an inverted picture, privileging the moment and place of intervention over the environments in which graduates live their lives.

Rather than taking a unified “SOP experience” or the centrality of camp for granted, this section considers that participants in different camp sessions faced unique organizational and political conditions both at camp, and upon return home to the Middle East. This section does classify alumni according to “camp class,” i.e. the year of each graduate’s initial camp program; however, the focus on long-term peacebuilding participation in the Middle East turns this initial camp session into the starting point of a trajectory rather than the main event. I use the participation rankings outlined in the previous section to explore the impact of differences between particular iterations of camp, and of the different circumstances to which newly initiated “Seeds” returned in the Middle East. This section asks if, and how, the formative experiences at camp, and the presence or absence of follow-up programming in the Middle East, impacted levels of long-term peacebuilding participation.

A focus on the “formative years” of graduates’ “SOP experience” relates directly to classic theoretical concerns regarding intergroup encounters. Scholars of intergroup contact classically identify a series of conditions as crucial to the success of encounters in reducing intergroup hostility and stereotyping:

- a) *Equal status* for participants within the encounter context;
- b) *Social legitimacy* derived from recognized authorities in the participant communities;
- c) Engaging participants in joint projects with *common goals*;
- d) *Acquaintance potential*, i.e. creating opportunities for cross-conflict relationships.<sup>275</sup>

As discussed in chapter one, critiques of contact theory have argued that intergroup encounters must also include facilitated discussion of the realities of conflict, including power asymmetry, competing narratives, collective identity, violence and victimhood. SOP

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<sup>275</sup> Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*; Pettigrew, "Intergroup Contact Theory."

camp and follow-up programs employed, in all eras, a “mixed model” featuring both relationship-building and intensive dialogue components – hence the substance of the conflict was explicitly addressed.

In this section, I adapt these theoretical conditions to the SOP/Middle East context by ranking six indicators of contact conditions for each “camp class” and “era: Quality of camp and regional follow-up programs, status of Track One negotiations, levels of conflict-related violence, and Israeli and Palestinian official support for participants. The program-related indicators correspond with theoretical conditions of equal status, common projects, and acquaintanceship potential; the negotiations, violence, and official support with conditions of equal status and societal legitimacy (and, in all likelihood, these influence all of the above). Based on these rankings, I identify three “eras” in which “optimal contact conditions” were either less present (1993-96), more present (1997-99), or unevenly so (2000-2002).

*Table 3.9: Indicators of Optimal Contact Conditions – SOP and Contact Theory*

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Relevant Theoretical Condition(s)</i>
<i>Program Context</i> Quality of camp program; Quality of Middle East follow-up program;	Equal status, Common Goals/Projects, Acquaintanceship Potential
<i>Official Support</i> Israeli official support for participants; Palestinian official support for participants;	Equal status, Societal Legitimacy
<i>Conflict Context</i> Track One Negotiations; Conflict Violence;	Societal Legitimacy (and all others indirectly)

*1993-1996: Early Years – Experimental Phase*

SOP's first summer session culminated in the iconic image of American, Israeli, and Palestinian heads of state standing with the program's first graduates on the White House lawn, all bearing broad grins and green SOP t-shirts in celebration of their historic acts of mutual recognition. It is fitting, perhaps, that the program's first four years were characterized by conditions similar to the early years of "Oslo": A sense of profound optimism and potential fostered by unprecedented breakthroughs, chastened by the inexperienced "start-up" nature of the program, violent setbacks to the nascent peace process, and inconsistent follow-up on the ground in the Middle East.

For its first camp programs, SOP "borrowed" the premises and staff of two boys' summer camps in Maine, Powhatan (1993-94) and Androscoggin (1995-96), for a single summer session of two weeks in late August, after the host camps finished their own summer programs. SOP was an innovative model at the time, and all aspects were therefore experimental, trial-and-error; staff were all learning on the job. The participant population grew from all-male in 1993 to gender-balanced thereafter, and participant delegations grew from Egyptian, Israeli and Palestinian in 1993 to include small groups of Americans, Jordanians and Moroccans (1994-present), Bosnians, Croats and Serbs (1995), and Greek campers (1996). The numbers of new Israeli and Palestinian campers ranged from 32 in 1993 to 55-59 in 1994-96.

The content of the camp program varied greatly. Certain core program elements and traditions gradually emerged: daily, structured dialogue sessions, SOP uniforms, the climactic "color games" competition at camp's end – but their form varied from year to year. In 1993 and 1994, participants wore their own clothes at camp; due to tensions over nationalist

slogans on t-shirts, however, SOP shirts became the mandatory everyday uniform from 1995 on. In 1993, dialogue sessions were spontaneously convened rather than planned into the schedule as they became in subsequent years. In 1995-96, campers' dialogue groups met with different facilitators each day, a practice that was discontinued thereafter. In 1996, older (teen-aged) campers served as dialogue facilitators, a practice that also did not last. The team colors worn by participants during the climactic "Color Games" competition changed from red and gray (1993) to red and black (1994-95) to blue and green (1996).

In terms of follow-up, numerous graduates organized spontaneous meetings and exchanged visits. Organized gatherings occurred around semiannual visits from SOP founders John Wallach and Barbara Gottschalk. SOP also invited all alumni to a pair of mass "reunion" gatherings including photographed audiences with world leaders. In 1994, dozens of Israeli and Palestinian graduates met with US Vice President Al Gore in Jerusalem; in June 1996, nearly 200 SOP alumni spent three days together in Jordan and met the late King Hussein. Alumni also corresponded intensively with Gottschalk, who began publishing an informal newsletter, which was upgraded into the tri-annual *Olive Branch* magazine in 1996. Peer Support selection was equally experimental; a select group of alumni returned to camp every summer from 1993-96, with titles ranging from "Peer Support" to "Program Leader" to "Junior Counselor" to "Facilitator" to "Ombudsman."

Official support was imbalanced, reflecting the asymmetry of power between Israelis and Palestinians. The Israeli Foreign Ministry and Ministry of Education selected official delegations each summer, invited delegates for a three-day preparation seminar in Jerusalem and sent Ministry officials as delegation leaders. On the Palestinian side, John Wallach's

connection with Yasser Arafat guaranteed official PLO support.<sup>276</sup> The children of influential PLO officials attended camp, but the Palestinians had no formal educational institutions on the ground comparable to the Israeli Ministry of Education. Wallach's former Palestinian colleague, photojournalist Rula Halawani, recruited and selected the Palestinian participants and delegation from 1993-96, and invited delegates for a single preparation meeting in Jerusalem. In 1996, the newly established Palestinian Ministry of Youth and Sport lent its imprimatur to the program, but participants described the behavior of numerous Ministry representatives who accompanied them as delegation leaders as less than professional.

The political climate was bi-polar, alternating between historic breakthroughs, horrific massacres and stinging setbacks to the peace process. Optimism was generated by the Israeli and Palestinian interim agreements in (1993, 1995); the Israel-Jordan peace treaty (1994); IDF withdrawals from Gaza and Jericho (1994), and the major West Bank cities (1996); as well as (initially) the "return" of Yasser Arafat and the exiled PLO leadership and establishment of the Palestinian National Authority. Distress and distrust were sown, in turn, by Israeli settler Baruch Goldstein's massacre of 29 Muslim worshipers in Hebron (1994); by the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin by Israeli extremist Yigal Amir (1995); by the killings of 178 Israelis in attacks by Palestinian militants from Hamas and Islamic Jihad (1993-96); the deterioration of negotiations and renewal of settlement expansion following the narrow electoral victory of Israeli rejectionist Binyamin Netanyahu (1996); and the subsequent eruption of three days of clashes between IDF troops, Palestinian protesters and PNA police resulting in the deaths of 17 Israelis and 70 Palestinians in September 1996.<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> Wallach, *The Enemy Has a Face*.

<sup>277</sup> On the history of the period, see Enderlin, *Shattered Dreams*. For casualty figures, see "Statistics: Fatalities," B'Tselem: The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, Accessed June 11, 2011, <http://old.btselem.org/english/statistics/Casualties.asp>; "Terrorism Deaths in Israel 1920-1999," *Israel*

I will briefly summarize the relevant conditions according to the six categories.

- *Camp Program*: Two-week session; experimental program and inexperienced staff;
- *Follow-up*: No consistent, organized programming in Middle East; 1996 Jordan reunion;
- *Israeli Official Support*: Consistent; Ministry of Education selects and escorts delegations;
- *Palestinian Official Support*: Inconsistent; Arafat approves, but no institutional selection or training process until 1996 (PNA Ministry of Youth and Sport);
- *Track One*: “Peace process” atmosphere of great optimism, generated by treaty signings;
- *Violence*: Sporadic but devastating attacks by Palestinian and Israeli opponents of negotiations, including Rabin assassination; 1996 clashes between IDF and PNA police.

Table 3.10 summarizes the overall alumni participation data for 1993-96. The “Total” row presents the total participation percentage (gross numbers) of all alumni from 1993-96, without reference to identity; the “Average” row presents the combined average rates of alumni participation for the three identity groups during the period in question.<sup>278</sup>

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*Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Accessed June 11, 2011,  
[http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/2000\\_2009/2000/1/Terrorism%20deaths%20in%20Israel%20-%201920-1999](http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/2000_2009/2000/1/Terrorism%20deaths%20in%20Israel%20-%201920-1999).

<sup>278</sup> In other words, the “total” row presents (the aggregate number of participant alumni) / (the aggregate number of alumni) during a given time period. The “average” row presents (Israeli participation rate) + (Palestinian participation rate) + (PCI participation rate) / 3 during a given time period. The figures are distinct, given the unequal distribution of participants between the groups, particularly in the PCI group.

Table 3.10: Alumni Participation by “Camp Class,” 1993-1996

	<b>Active and In-Touch Alumni</b>	<b>First Year</b>	<b>HS</b>	<b>Post-HS</b>	<b>Adult</b>
1993		47%	34%	25%	n/a
1994		58%	39%	34%	n/a
1995		67%	49%	33%	n/a
1996		54%	30%	20%	n/a
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>53%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>28%</b>	n/a
<b>AVERAGE</b>		<b>53%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>26%</b>	n/a
	<b>Active Alumni</b>				
1993		22%	22%	6%	22%
1994		25%	10%	14%	15%
1995		35%	24%	18%	22%
1996		30%	13%	7%	7%
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>28%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>16%</b>
<b>AVERAGE</b>		<b>24%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>14%</b>

A few findings are noteworthy in terms of assessing the relative impacts of program and conflict conditions. From 1993-1995, overall participation steadily increases, before a sharp decrease in 1996. The 1995 group is the most active of this era, while the 1996 group displays the least participation of all SOP camp classes from 1993-2002. The salience of program conditions is evident in the 1993-1995 increases, which can be related to a gradual consolidation of the program, but not to the inconsistent conflict context, which careened between agreements and attacks. The relatively active 1995 group actually faced difficult political conditions in the first year following camp, including the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin in November 1995, Hamas suicide bombings that killed 60 Israelis in February and March 1996, and the election of Netanyahu in May 1996. However, the same 1995 group enjoyed the most optimal follow-up conditions, being invited in June, as first-year alumni, to the SOP “reunion” and audience with King Hussein in Jordan. Thus, the greater long-term

participation of the 1995 group hints at the “restorative” potential of effective follow-up even in difficult conflict contexts.

The effects of conflict escalation are especially evident in the record-low long-term participation of the 1996 group – an outlier in its era and the entire period of 1993-2002. In the aftermath of Netanyahu’s assumption of the Israeli premiership, the 1996 delegations attended camp in an unprecedentedly negative conflict context characterized by stalemate in Track One negotiations. Netanyahu refused, in the first months of his administration, even to meet with Yasser Arafat.<sup>279</sup> Less than a month after returning from camp, 1996 alumni witnessed an eruption of Palestinian protest in response to Israeli excavations under the Old City of Jerusalem, which deteriorated into three days of armed conflict between the IDF and PNA security personnel. This was violence orchestrated by the Israeli government and nascent PNA, committed by their uniformed security forces, unlike the terror attacks of previous years which were perpetrated by Israeli and Palestinian opponents of peace negotiations. This escalation occurred before 1996 graduates participated in any follow-up events, and indeed no organized follow-up activities occurred until February 1997. Hence, the 1996 group’s decreased participation demonstrates the discouraging effect of conflict escalation *in the absence of meaningful follow-up opportunities*. In ensuing years, by contrast, new groups of alumni pioneer a rapid expansion of follow-up activity, despite meager progress in official negotiations.

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<sup>279</sup> Helen Kennedy, "Bibi-Yasser Huddle Predicted but Israeli Aide Doubtful of Report," *New York Daily News*, July 26, 1996, Accessed June 11, 2011, [http://www.nydailynews.com/archives/news/1996/08/26/1996-08-26\\_bibi-yasser\\_huddle\\_predicted.html](http://www.nydailynews.com/archives/news/1996/08/26/1996-08-26_bibi-yasser_huddle_predicted.html).

*1997-1999: Golden Years: (Relatively) Optimal Conditions*

In these years, SOP celebrated a series of milestones: the inauguration of its own camp facility in Maine (1997), the convening of a Middle East “youth summit” in Switzerland (1998), and the opening of the Jerusalem Center for Coexistence (1999), inviting hundreds of youth and dozens of dignitaries for each occasion. An Israeli alumna described the gala opening of the Jerusalem Center, a week of festivities attended by more than 500 graduates from Cyprus, Egypt, Jordan, and every corner of Israel and the OPT:

I remember at the opening of the Center, it was a whole week that was a dream. Simply a dream. I had two Cypriots at my house, a Turkish-Cypriot and a Greek-Cypriot, and everybody [else hosted] Jordanians and Egyptians and Americans and Palestinians, and we went to the [US] consulate together, and we went everywhere together – it was magical. You had this feeling that you belong to something bigger than life.

There was much to celebrate; the program had coalesced around a consistent, expanded camp curriculum while enthusiastic graduates pioneered a dramatically expanded program of year-round, cross-border follow-up activities in the Middle East. SOP regional staff cultivated contacts within the Israeli bureaucracy to secure permits for Palestinian participants to travel around, in and out of the country, and built sufficient trust with Israeli parents to secure permission for their children to travel to the West Bank, Egypt and Jordan.

Numbers of new participants grew at camp, from 73 in two sessions in 1997 and 1998 to 167 in three sessions in 1999. Regional activities likewise expanded. Two Israelis joined 10 Palestinians for Christmas eve celebrations in Bethlehem in 1997; the same activity attracted dozens of each in 1998, and more than 100 participants in 1999, with equivalent growth in participation at annual “winter workshops” at Kibbutz Yahel in Israel, and homestay trips to Egypt and Jordan. The opening of the Jerusalem Center allowed for the creation of biweekly alumni dialogue groups, and the convening of dozens of events

including graduates' families and friends, and presentations for local and foreign groups visiting Jerusalem.

The political climate was stalemated but (temporarily) stable. Negotiations dithered and frustration mounted among still-occupied Palestinians; violent attacks continued, but were fewer and farther between. The Palestinian Ministry of Education took over the selection and training of Palestinian delegations to SOP, lending the highest levels of official/societal support that Palestinian participants ever enjoyed. Indeed, as outlined in subsequent chapters, SOP graduates often felt empowered to challenge their own Ministries of Education and mainstream political consensus. At the April 1998 SOP Youth Summit in Switzerland, SOP alumni negotiated agreements on the most controversial issues – Jerusalem, borders, refugees – in contrast to Netanyahu government's explicit refusal to negotiate "final status." In May 1998, Israeli alumni were invited to join other Israeli youth for speeches by US President Bill Clinton and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu on the occasion of Israel's 50<sup>th</sup> Independence Day. In Netanyahu's speech, he mocked the idea of trusting Palestinians, asking sarcastically, "Who imagines that he could safely go to Gaza?" SOP graduates in the audience brazenly shouted back, "Me!"<sup>280</sup>

After the replacement of Netanyahu's government with a Center-Left coalition headed by Ehud Barak in 1999, SOP seemed briefly to represent the political *zeitgeist*. At the Jerusalem Center's grand opening ceremony in October 1999, Israeli Minister of Education Yossi Sarid declared his support for the establishment of a Palestinian state, and promptly exchanged a hug with his Palestinian counterpart, Deputy Minister Naeem Abu Hummus. These hopes gradually evaporated, however, as Barak refused any further IDF withdrawals,

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<sup>280</sup> Author's personal experience, interviews with SOP graduates.

and the ill-conceived July 2000 Camp David summit ended in bitter recriminations.<sup>281</sup> Israeli and Palestinian alumni heard the news of the summit's failure together at a seminar on media literacy in the Palestinian town of Beit Jalla. Graduates' perspectives on the collapse of Track One diverged clearly along national lines. Nonetheless, enthusiastic participation in Jerusalem Center programs continued throughout the summer of 2000, the first time that SOP sponsored daily Middle East programming simultaneous with camp in the US.

I will briefly summarize the relevant conditions according to the six categories.

- *Camp Program*: 3-4 weeks, multiple sessions; consistent program, experienced staff;
- *Follow-up*: Year-round activities in Middle East; exchanges of home visits, joint school presentations, homestay trips to Egypt and Jordan; regular dialogue groups and summer overnight seminars at the Jerusalem Center (1999-2000);
- *Track One*: Negotiation of minor interim accords, stalemate on final status issues;
- *Violence*: Sporadic suicide attacks, but fewer than 1993-96; no IDF withdrawals;
- *Israeli Official Support*: Consistent; Ministry of Education selects delegations;
- *Palestinian Official Support*: Consistent; Ministry of Education selects delegations.

Table 3.11 summarizes the overall alumni participation data for 1997-99. Participation levels are consistently higher than the previous era, across the board. These dramatic activity increases can be linked to improvements in program conditions and in Palestinian official support, although overall political context was essentially stagnant. In terms of

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<sup>281</sup> See Hussein Agha and Robert Malley, "Camp David: The Tragedy of Errors," *New York Review of Books*, August 9, 2001, Accessed June 11, 2011, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2001/aug/09/camp-david-the-tragedy-of-errors/>. See also David Matz, "Reconstructing Camp David," *Negotiation Journal* 22, no. 1 (2006): 89-103; Jeremy Pressman, "Visions in Collision: What Happened at Camp David and Taba?," *International Security* 28, no. 2 (Fall 2003), 5-43.

programming, SOP camp sessions expanded from 2 to 3-4 weeks, while enthusiastic alumni transformed SOP into a vibrant, year-round Middle East program, as detailed above. The PNA Ministry of Education selected, trained and escorted each of these delegations to camp, providing the greatest possible degree of balance in terms of official support – although the Ministry objected strenuously to alumni participation in SOP follow-up programs.<sup>282</sup> These contextual improvements all relate to the theoretical conditions for successful intergroup contact: equal status, common projects, societal support and acquaintanceship potential – hence the increased participation of 1997-99 alumni affirms the salience of these conditions.

*Table 3.12: Alumni Participation by “Camp Class,” 1997-1999*

<b>Active and In-Touch Alumni</b>	<b>First Year</b>	<b>HS</b>	<b>Post-HS</b>	<b>Adult</b>
1997	88%	66%	61%	n/a
1998	84%	60%	44%	n/a
1999	92%	65%	56%	n/a
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>54%</b>	n/a
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>51%</b>	n/a
<b>Active Alumni</b>				
1997	63%	45%	24%	24%
1998	58%	41%	16%	25%
1999	55%	34%	13%	16%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>16%</b>	20%
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>20%</b>	19%

The increased alumni activity of this era may also support Salomon’s suggestion linking the duration of peace education interventions with impact (the longer the better).<sup>283</sup> Indeed, the 1997 group, which enjoyed the longest camp program of all, remained the most active overall. Moreover, the 1997 group also enjoyed relatively optimal conditions

<sup>282</sup> See Chapter Four.

<sup>283</sup> Salomon, “A Summary of our Findings,”; Salomon, “Beyond Coexistence.”

throughout the remainder of high school, unlike the 1998 and 1999 groups, whose final high school years coincided with the hostile context of the second intifada. Slight declines in long-term activity among 1998 and especially 1999 alumni may be linked to the sudden escalation of the conflict in autumn 2000. Nonetheless, overall participation rates (active and in-touch) remain universally higher among 1997-99 alumni than their 1993-96 predecessors. This trend, remarkably, holds true even for the groups whose formative SOP experiences coincided with one of the darkest periods in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

#### *2000-02: Intifada, Instability, and "Internal" Dialogue*

This tumultuous period encompassed the peak and the nadir of SOP's Middle East program. Hopes raised by the Jerusalem Center's first fulltime summer program, in June-August 2000, were shattered by the eruption of the second *intifada* in late September and the killing of Aseel 'Asleh on October 2<sup>nd</sup>. Programming shifted immediately toward increased emphasis on separate Israel and OPT tracks. Over time, the Jerusalem Center witnessed a gradual process of reorganization and recovery under conditions of insecurity and violence, culminating in a resurgent summer of bi-national activities in 2003.

In 2000, the Jerusalem Center's first year culminated in a triumphant "Summer at the Center," with hundreds of Israeli and Palestinian alumni and friends participating in weekly courses combining dialogue and cross-checkpoint trips with art, music and photography.<sup>284</sup> These programs marked the first time that SOP summer camp coincided with a daily program of SOP activities in the Middle East. More than 70 Israelis and Palestinians joined

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<sup>284</sup> "Summer at the Center," *The Olive Branch* (Winter 2001), Accessed June 11, 2011, [http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/Winter2001\\_2.pdf](http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/Winter2001_2.pdf).

SOP's largest-ever homestay in Jordan, dancing together in green SOP shirts amid thousands of Arab pop music fans, at singer Ehab Tawfiq's stadium concert at the Jerash music festival.<sup>285</sup> Graduates celebrated the end of the summer with an outdoor "talent show" in August 2000, attended by more than 200 graduates from around the country, co-hosted by Aseel 'Asleh and a Jewish-Israeli friend.

On September 28, 2000, the heavily policed visit of controversial Israeli right-wing leader Ariel Sharon to the disputed *Haram A-Sharif*/Temple Mount holy site in Jerusalem sparked furious Palestinian protest throughout the OPT, to which the IDF responded with lethal force.<sup>286</sup> Images of the clashes sparked an unprecedented wave of riots and protests by Palestinian citizens of Israel, resulting in the killing of 13 Arab demonstrators by Israeli police in October 2000, including Aseel.<sup>287</sup> Searing images of victimization quickly stoked the "ethos of conflict" in both populations – especially news footage of a Palestinian boy, Mohammed Al-Dura, shot dead in his helpless father's arms in Gaza on September 29, and the lynching of two Israeli soldiers by a Palestinian mob in Ramallah on October 12.<sup>288</sup> Constantly escalating violence scuttled attempts to resume Track One negotiations. Ariel Sharon rode a wave of Israeli rage to sweeping victory in February 2001 elections, freezing contacts with the PNA until a brief cease-fire in summer 2003. In the interim, Palestinian factions "militarized" the intifada, launching scores of shooting and suicide bombing attacks in Israel and the OPT. The IDF re-occupied the entirety of the West Bank and Gaza, using

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<sup>285</sup> See Al-Jundi and Marlowe, *The Hour of Sunlight*.

<sup>286</sup> See Moish Goldberg, *A Million Bullets in October*, Israel, Noga Communications, 2007 (Hebrew). For English review, see Yossi Gurevitz, "Red October," *Nana*, November 28, 2007, Available from *Occupation Magazine*, Accessed June 11, 2011, [http://www.kibush.co.il/show\\_file.asp?num=23930](http://www.kibush.co.il/show_file.asp?num=23930).

<sup>287</sup> A Jewish-Israeli driver was also killed by stones thrown by Palestinian citizens at his vehicle on the coastal highway. See Or Commission report, Abu-Baker and Rabinowitz, *Coffins on our Shoulders*.

<sup>288</sup> Daniel Bar-Tal and K. Sharvit, "A psychological earthquake of the Israeli Jewish society: Changing opinions following the Camp David summit and the Al Aqsa Intifada," in ed. Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, *The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: From Conflict Resolution to Conflict Management* (Houndmills, England: Palgrave Macmillan), 169-202.

tanks, helicopter gunships and fighter jets to destroy PNA infrastructure and using curfews, hundreds of checkpoints and obstacles to bring Palestinian civilian movement to a standstill.<sup>289</sup> By 2005, the violence claimed roughly 3,000 Palestinian and 1,000 Israeli lives.<sup>290</sup>

The *intifada* exposed SOP alumni to bereavement, fear, violence and trauma.

Graduates posed next to bullet and shell-scarred homes on the cover of the winter 2000 *Olive Branch*, and wrote of the losses of friends, family members and any sense of personal security.<sup>291</sup> These conditions initially drove many alumni to declare on internet forums that they were “leaving” SOP, and rendered the checkpoint and border-crossing adventures of previous years impossible.<sup>292</sup> SOP regional staff spent the autumn of 2000 engaged in condolence visits to Aseel ‘Asleh’s family, trauma counseling, organizing uni-national meetings, and assisting Palestinian graduates applying to study abroad. As the situation continued to deteriorate, regional follow-up was re-organized along separate national lines. Dialogue groups began for Israeli Jews and Palestinian citizens of Israel, while OPT Palestinian alumni debated among themselves, in uni-national forums, the legitimacy of SOP and communication with Israelis.<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>289</sup> See Khalidi, *The Iron Cage*.

<sup>290</sup> Zeev Schiff, "Israeli Death Toll in Intifada Higher Than Last Two Wars," *Haaretz*, August 24, 2004, Accessed June 11, 2011, <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/israeli-death-toll-in-intifada-higher-than-last-two-wars-1.132555>. According to B'Tselem: The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, there were 4,156 conflict fatalities between 2000-2005: 3,152 Palestinians and 10 foreign citizens killed by Israelis; 942 Israelis and 42 foreign citizens killed by Palestinians; see “B'tselem: Statistics - Fatalities." For research on fatalities, see also David A. Jaeger and M. Daniele Paserman, “The Cycle of Violence? An Empirical Analysis of Fatalities in the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict,” in *American Economic Review* 98, no. 3 (September 2008).

<sup>291</sup> See *The Olive Branch* (Winter 2001), Accessed June 11, 2011, [http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/Winter2001\\_2.pdf](http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/Winter2001_2.pdf).

<sup>292</sup> See Maddy-Weitzman, “Coping with Crisis”; Posner, “Teaching Peace in a Time of War”; David Shipler, *Arab and Jew: Wounded Spirits in a Promised Land* (New York: Penguin, 2001).

<sup>293</sup> See Maddy-Weitzman, “Waging Peace in the Holy Land,” “Coping with Crisis”; Posner, “Teaching Peace in a Time of War,” Al-Jundi and Marlowe, *The Hour of Sunlight*.

The upheaval provoked a widespread societal backlash against peace education and all cross-conflict engagement, exacerbating the effects of “re-entry” for alumni.<sup>294</sup> At the official level, both Israeli and Palestinian Ministries of Education withdrew their support for the program and refused to recruit delegations for the summer of 2001. In the Israeli case, Haifa mayor Amram Mitzna stepped into the void, recruiting a small delegation of 40 Arab and Jewish teenagers from his city to attend SOP camp. The Israeli Ministry of Education (IMOE) recanted before the summer began, sending staff to serve as delegation leaders in 2001 and resuming participant selection in 2002. On the Palestinian side, however, the Ministry of Education (PMOE) refused to recruit delegations in 2001 and 2002. Camp proceeded with no OPT Palestinian delegation in 2001. In 2002, Al-Quds University President Sari Nusseibeh sponsored a Palestinian delegation composed of youth from East Jerusalem, against the opposition of the PMOE and some Palestinian SOP alumni.<sup>295</sup>

Amid the controversy and turmoil, the program experienced a gradual recovery. Dialogue groups and community projects for Israeli Jewish and PCI alumni thrived, meeting in Haifa, the central “Triangle” region, and Jerusalem, eventually joined by the East Jerusalemite Palestinian delegation of camp 2002. More than 200 graduates attended annual memorial services for Aseel ‘Asleh at the Jerusalem Center. SOP staff ferried video messages from OPT Palestinian graduates and counterparts in Israel, substituting a virtual dialogue to replace face-to-face meetings. Video proved a substantive and powerful method of dialogue, as alumni shared stories of scarring experiences, and in one case, Palestinian alumni

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<sup>294</sup> See *Palestine-Israel Journal*, "People-to-People: What Went Wrong & How to Fix It?", 12, no. 4 & 13, no. 1 (2005-06), Accessed July 10, 2011, <http://www.pij.org/current.php?id=40>; Hai and Herzog, "The Power of Possibility."

<sup>295</sup> Dynamics between SOP and the Ministries of Education are explored in detail in chapter four; intifada experiences and debates among Palestinians regarding participation in SOP are explored in chapter six.

documented IDF destruction of buildings in the center of their city.<sup>296</sup> Uni-national Palestinian seminars drew growing numbers of participants, and alumni sentiment gradually shifted towards renewal of cross-conflict engagement. In December 2002, more than 100 alumni participated in the first overnight “Winter Workshop” in three years. When the Israeli government and Palestinian factions reached a tenuous cease-fire in May 2003, the Jerusalem Center announced an ambitious summer program, and received an overwhelming response. Hundreds of Israeli and Palestinian graduates from everywhere in Israel and the OPT (including Gaza), participated in six joint, overnight seminars on topics including Jerusalem, human rights, religion, media and community service.

I will briefly summarize the relevant conditions according to the six categories.

- *Camp Program*: Mixed – program consistent, participant population varied each summer;
- *Follow-up*: Intifada initially forces major changes in content, but programming continues;
- *Israeli Official Support*: Inconsistent; 2000, 2002 MOE recruits delegation; In 2001, MOE refuses, Haifa Municipality recruits small, mixed Arab-Jewish delegation;
- *Palestinian Official Support*: Inconsistent and lacking popular legitimacy; 2000, MOE recruits delegation; 2001, no OPT Palestinian delegation; 2002, East Jerusalem only.
- *Track One*: Total collapse of negotiations and deterioration of relations until tenuous cease-fire of summer 2003;
- *Violence*: Unparalleled escalation, thousands of casualties; daily Palestinian attacks on Israelis; IDF invades, reoccupies, cuts movement between all West Bank cities.

Table 3.13 summarizes the overall alumni participation data for 2000-02.

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<sup>296</sup> See Maddy-Weitzman, “Coping with Crisis”; Al-Jundi and Marlowe, *The Hour of Sunlight*.

Table 3.13. Alumni Participation by “Camp Class,” 2000-2002

	Active and In-Touch Alumni	First Year	HS	Post-HS	Adult
2000		60%	56%	46%	n/a
2001		85%	70%	47%	n/a
2002		86%	74%	71% <sup>297</sup>	n/a
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>72%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>48%</b>	n/a
<b>AVERAGE</b>		<b>82%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>54%</b>	n/a
<b>Active Alumni</b>					
2000		40%	30%	14%	13%
2001		75%	40%	18%	18%
2002		74%	47%	21% <sup>298</sup>	15%
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>58%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>14%</b>
<b>AVERAGE</b>		<b>61%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>16%</b>

The 2000 camp class displays significantly lower participation rates than the 2001-02 groups, in both first-year and high school stages, particularly in terms of active participation. This is a striking finding; this group’s participation levels are outliers, both in comparison to its predecessors from 1997-99 and the 2001-02 classes that follow. This suggests that *follow-up conditions may have a greater impact on long-term participation than does the original encounter at camp.*

The 2000 group attended SOP camp under the same relatively optimal conditions that characterized the 1997-99 groups, but then faced the abrupt escalation of conflict and consequent cancellation of bi-national follow-up programs soon after returning home. To specify, the 2000 delegations attended a full SOP camp program with normal participant populations and the support of both Ministries of Education, elements that were lacking in 2001 and, for the Palestinians, in 2002. Moreover, the returning 2000 campers displayed great initial enthusiasm for follow-up activities, joining summer programs at the Center and

<sup>297</sup> Only 11 alumni, all OPT Palestinians, qualified as Post-HS at the time the rankings were recorded, hence this finding is not necessarily indicative of a general trend.

<sup>298</sup> Only 11 graduates of the 2002 camp class, all Palestinians, had reached the Post-HS stage at the time of coding.

signing up for dialogue groups and a planned trip to Jordan in high numbers, before the eruption of the intifada. The group's lower participation rates indicate that the deterioration of program and conflict conditions in the Middle East exerted greater impact on their long-term peacebuilding activity than did the quality of their initial encounter experiences at camp.

It is equally important to note that the 2001 and 2002 classes displayed high levels of participation in the first-year and high school stages despite lacking full MOE support, and despite experiencing conflict conditions equally negative – if not worse – than those of the 2000 cohort. There are two distinguishing factors that may explain the participation disparity between 2000 and 2001-02, given that they share the constant of a discouraging conflict context. The first factor is expectations. All three groups faced volatile, violent second intifada environments after camp; yet this reality came as a shock to the 2000 group, while it was assumed for the others. The 2000 group faced unique disappointment in terms of follow-up programming as well, with the cancellation of eagerly awaited activities in the fall. For the other groups, by contrast, follow-up programs fit their post-camp expectations. The same condition influenced the quality of follow-up programming experienced in their first year. It took months for the Jerusalem Center staff to adapt regional programming to the intifada context in 2000; while in 2001 and 2002, follow-up programs were effectively tailored to the difficult reality, and elicited high levels of graduate participation.

A similar effect is evident with the 1996 camp class, which faced an unexpected, violent escalation of the conflict within a month of returning home from camp – and became the least active class of its era, and indeed of SOP's entire first decade. Thus, it appears that sudden negative shifts in conflict context for alumni newly returned from camp resulted in lasting, negative effects on long-term participation.

At the same time, the positive impact of effective follow-up is also evidenced by the 2000-02 findings. This is indicated first by the resurgent participation of the 2001 and 2002 classes, who also faced negative conflict conditions; their primary contextual change in comparison to the 2000 group was consistent (and increasingly bi-national/cross-conflict) follow-up programming. An additional indicator of the impact of follow-up is the disparity in participation between 1996 and 2000 “outlier” groups. Each of these groups faced abrupt escalations of the conflict upon return from camp – indeed, the escalation in 2000 was markedly more severe. Nonetheless, the first-year and high school participation rates of 2000 alumni are nearly double those of their 1996 counterparts. Again, the presence of a more substantive follow-up program in 2000, albeit diminished by the intifada, is the primary contextual difference between the two groups. As the next section explains, the same pattern is apparent when the three “eras” are compared.

#### *Summary of Comparative Conditions by Era*

To compare participation rates by “era.” I created a scale of program and conflict conditions, marking each of the six program and conflict condition indicators according to a scale in which -2 indicates the worst conditions, 0 indicates a neutral condition, and +2 indicates optimal conditions. Table 3.14 details the status of each distinct condition according to era. As illustrated by the table, conflict-related conditions are relatively better in 1993-96 (+1) and 1997-99 (+1), and at their lowest-quality in 2000-02 (-4). Program-related conditions, on the other hand, are lowest in 1993-96 (+1), optimal in 1997-99 (+4), and

relatively better in 2000-02 (+3), with the primary distinction being the existence of year-round Middle East follow-up from 1997 forward.

*Table 3.14: Detail of Program and Conflict Conditions by Era*

<b>Program/Conflict Conditions</b>	<b>1993-96</b>	<b>1997-99</b>	<b>2000-02</b>
Camp Program	1	2	2
Follow-Up Program	0	2	1
Negotiations	2	1	-2
Violence	-1	0	-2
ISR support	1	1	0
PAL support	0	1	-2
<b>TOTAL (12 = optimal)</b>	<b>3/12 (25%)</b>	<b>7/12 (58%)</b>	<b>-3 (&lt;0)</b>

Tables 3.14a and 3.14b present the alumni participation rates (active and in-touch participation) for each era. PC-2 presents the combined average percentages of each identity group (Israeli Jews, OPT Palestinians, Palestinian citizens of Israel), while PC-3 presents the total percentage of all alumni.

*Table 3.14a: Average Overall Participation (Active and In-Touch) by Era*

<b>Era</b>	<b>Active/In-touch 1st Year</b>	<b>Active/In-touch HS</b>	<b>Active/In-touch Post-HS</b>
1993-96	54%	30%	29%
1997-99	85%	65%	54%
2000-02	82%	66%	55%

Table 3.14b: Total Overall Participation (Active and In-Touch) by Era

<b>Era</b>	<b>Active/In-touch 1st Year</b>	<b>Active/In-touch HS</b>	<b>Active/In-touch Post-HS</b>
1993-96	53%	39%	28%
1997-99	89%	64%	54%
2000-02	72%	65%	48%

The camp classes that experienced the least optimal camp and follow-up program conditions, 1993-96, displayed significantly lower participation across all groups, at every stage. By contrast, there were much higher long-term participation rates among both the 1997-99 classes, which experienced less negative conflict conditions, and the 2000-02 classes, which experienced extreme negative conflict conditions but better program conditions.

Overall, the findings of this section affirm a strong influence of both program and conflict conditions on levels of long-term participation. Yet while affirming the importance of conflict conditions, the findings indicate that program conditions, particularly the quality of regional follow-up, had decisive impact even in the most violent periods of the conflict. The period without any organized follow-up program, 1993-96, correlated with low participation, despite a more hopeful context including historic breakthroughs in Track One negotiations. The 1997-99 and 2000-02 groups each displayed much higher long-term participation rates, despite the fact that these two sets of graduates experienced drastically different conflict contexts. The outbreak of the *Al-Aqsa Intifada* in September 2000 placed the 2000-02 graduates in a dramatically more violent, polarized conflict environment than that experienced by the 1997-99 group. Yet graduates of both eras participated at higher rates, often much higher, than those of the 1993-96 graduates at every life-stage. The

combination of an extended camp program and an active SOP regional follow-up program is the common denominator between these 1997-99 and 2000-02 eras. Thus, these findings emphasize the crucial importance of comprehensive programming, including effective, sustained follow-up, in the years following peace education interventions – especially in a volatile context of intractable conflict.

#### *Snapshots of Shifting Context: 2002-03 and 2003-04*

During the period in which I originally compiled the graduate participation database, 2003-04, significant changes occurred in both program and conflict context, which led to increases in alumni participation in SOP/peacebuilding activity. In order to capture this shift, I compared levels of participation during the 2002-03 academic year with levels during the 2003-04 academic year. The results provide further evidence of the influence of contextual changes on levels of graduate peacebuilding activity. I present here an overview of the organizational and political environments in each period, followed by findings.

*2002-03:* The cycle of violence that began in autumn 2000, with an aggressive Israeli military campaign to repress a renewed Palestinian uprising, escalated to make 2002 to the most lethal year of Israeli/Palestinian violence since the war of 1948.<sup>299</sup> Palestinian militant attacks killed 240 Israelis in 2002 and 119 in the first six months of 2003, while the Israeli military invaded and re-occupied the population centers of the West Bank and Gaza, killing more than 1,000 Palestinians in 2002 and hundreds in the first half of 2003, and placing

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<sup>299</sup> George Mitchell et al., *Report of the Sharm El-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee*, April 30, 2001, Accessed July 20, 2009, <http://www.mideastinfo.com/documents/mitchell.pdf>. For research on fatalities, see also Jaeger and Paserman, "The Cycle of Violence?"

entire cities under military curfew for months at a time.<sup>300</sup> In the month of March 2002 alone, Palestinian suicide attacks killed 130 Israelis, culminating in the killing of 29 people at a Passover holiday celebration. The IDF killed 238 Palestinians in the same month, culminating in Operation “Defensive Shield,” during which the IDF set about systematically destroying the infrastructure of the PNA, reducing government buildings and a whole neighborhood of the Jenin refugee camp to rubble, and placing PNA/PLO President Yasser Arafat under “house arrest” by surrounding his half-demolished Ramallah headquarters with tanks and troops. 2003 began with a grim stalemate, with US diplomats shuttling between Arafat’s besieged compound and the Israeli government, while military curfews and high levels of violence continued apace. In 2003, a reformed and American-approved Palestinian cabinet led by Mahmoud Abbas began negotiations with the Israeli government and, separately, Palestinian paramilitaries – a sign that, if nothing else, a measure of “conflict fatigue” might be setting in among factions leading the fighting.

Despite these bleak conflict conditions, the SOP follow-up program experienced a partial recovery in 2002-03, after two years of disrupted programs and drastically diminished participation. From the onset of the *intifada* through the summer of 2002, follow-up programs had been essentially divided into joint Arab/Jewish activities held with some regularity in Israel, and uni-national activities for Palestinians in the OPT held whenever and wherever possible. The decline in follow-up activity was exacerbated by SOP’s failure to secure the participation of the Palestinian Ministry of Education (MOE) for the 2001 summer camp, which therefore included no Palestinian delegation.

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<sup>300</sup> Jaeger and Paserman, "The Cycle of Violence?"

For the summer of 2002, by contrast, SOP bypassed the Palestinian MOE and worked with Al-Quds University in East Jerusalem to recruit a delegation of 43 Palestinian youth, all Jerusalem residents. These youth were all bearers of “Blue (Israeli) ID,” and hence permitted by the Israeli government – unlike West Bank and Gaza Palestinians – to travel legally in Jerusalem and pre-1967 Israel.<sup>301</sup> These new “Seeds” from East Jerusalem proved a traditionally enthusiastic first-year contingent, participating in biweekly dialogue groups and frequent activities with Israeli counterparts in Jerusalem, Haifa and the “triangle” area. Many Palestinian alumni in the OPT expressed discontent with the recruitment and subsequent cross-conflict engagement of this all-Jerusalemite delegation, but sizable numbers of the same alumni participated in uni-national local meetings, and in a uni-national Palestinian seminar in Jericho. In addition, as conditions of daily life continued to deteriorate in the OPT, increasing numbers of Palestinian alumni sought the organization’s assistance in obtaining scholarships to study abroad. Thus, organizational/political conditions might be characterized as unfavorable for active participation for a) post-HS and adult alumni in general, and b) Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, while improving for younger alumni in East Jerusalem and Israel.

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<sup>301</sup> The more than 2 million Palestinian residents of the West Bank and Gaza are forbidden to travel to Jerusalem, pre-1967 Israel and/or in Israeli-settled or controlled areas of the West Bank without temporary permits issued by the Israeli military via its Civil Administration bureaucracy in the OPT. Permits are granted only upon review and approval by both the military and the *Shabak* or *Shin Bet*, Israel’s internal security police (known in English as General Security Services (GSS)). During periods of heightened tension, permits are difficult to impossible for many Palestinians to obtain, especially young men. Haaretz journalist Amira Hass, who has chronicled the evolution of the “permit” system over two decades, explains that “Over the last 20 years Israel has instituted a complicated system of travel and residency permits for the Palestinians in the West bank and Gaza. “Permit” is a euphemism for prohibition. The more Israeli politicians spoke of a two-state solution, the more complicated this regime of travel restrictions between Gaza and the West Bank became. The tentacles of this regime, which made travel between Gaza and the West Bank more difficult, and limited entry to individuals in certain areas of the West Bank, branched out further and further.” Quote from Amira Hass, “The Right to Deport,” *Haaretz*, April 14, 2010, Accessed June 11, 2011, <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/opinion/the-right-to-deport-1.284215>.

2003-04: In June 2003, the Israeli government and the Palestinian paramilitary factions linked to the dominant political parties Fatah and Hamas entered into a three-month cease-fire – which they additionally agreed not to call by the legally binding term “cease-fire.” Instead, all sides preferred to use the Islamic term *hudna*, a sign of reticence rather than reverence. Indeed, although fire decreased, it hardly ceased; sporadic attacks caused dozens of deaths, and while negotiators discussed withdrawal of Israeli forces from West Bank cities, none took place. August saw a swift re-escalation of violence, culminating in Israeli assassinations of prominent leaders of Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Gaza following a pair of suicide bombings that killed dozens of Israelis in Jerusalem. In Gaza, fighting escalated between Israeli forces and Palestinian paramilitaries launching crude *Kassam* rockets at Israeli settlements in and around the Strip – foreshadowing a dynamic that would drive the military aspect of the conflict in the years to come. Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon’s government maintained its “house arrest” of Yasser Arafat, and negotiations advocate Mahmoud Abbas resigned his brief tenure as PNA Prime Minister in frustration. The political stalemate, and the Israeli siege of Arafat’s compound, continued unabated until the Palestinian President’s death in November 2004. In the meantime, the Israeli government accelerated construction of the “Separation Barrier,” an elaborate, sprawling network of concrete walls, barbed wire fences, trenches and fortifications surrounding Palestinian-populated areas in and around the West Bank.<sup>302</sup>

Yet as fragile and fleeting as it proved to be, the tenuous truce of summer 2003 was a watershed moment for the SOP follow-up program. Two months of *hudna* transformed the

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<sup>302</sup> The Separation Barrier is widely called the "Apartheid Wall" in Palestinian discourse, and the "Security Fence" in official Israeli discourse. The construction of the barrier was declared in violation of international law in an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on July 9, 2004. See "The Separation Barrier," *B'Tselem*, Accessed June 11, 2011, [http://www.btselem.org/separation\\_barrier](http://www.btselem.org/separation_barrier).

limited revival of the previous year into a genuine resurgence of the graduate program. Alumni from Gaza, the West Bank, and Israel signed up in large numbers for activities, the Israeli Civil Administration resumed approval of SOP's permit requests for Palestinian participants, and the Jerusalem Center overflowed with graduates in a manner not seen since before the *intifada*. The SOP staff seized this window of opportunity, convening a series of large-scale bi-national, overnight seminars consecutively over six weeks. The follow-up program continued its growth even after the *budna's* premature demise, initiating SOP's first programs for its growing demographic of adult graduates. The Jerusalem Center held the first of a series of professionally taught mediation and facilitation training courses for Israeli and Palestinian alumni. Additionally, in response to the growing numbers of graduates studying in the US, the organization created a "Seeds Scholars" program including a yearly seminar in the US, a Student Advisory Council (SAC) to report to the organization's Board of Directors, and organizational support for student-led dialogue programs on campus.<sup>303</sup>

These developments led me to record a final set of alumni participation rankings, for which I consulted the SOP staff leading the programs at the Jerusalem Center and in the US.<sup>304</sup> I found that the positive shifts in conflict and program context had a significant effect. As Table 3.15 illustrates, while the majorities of graduates from all groups were out-of-touch

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<sup>303</sup> For descriptions of peacebuilding activity on US campuses initiated by "Seeds Scholars," see "The Olive Branch Youth Magazine," Accessed June 21, 2011, <http://www.seedsofpeace.org/node/1830>. The following articles are illustrative: Winter 2002-03 edition - Ibrahim Khader, "Helping at Home from Far Away," Karen Karniol-Tambour, "The Seeds Safety Net," Mohamad Matar, "Why We're Here," [http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/Winter2003\\_2.pdf](http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/Winter2003_2.pdf); Winter 2003-04 edition - Mohamad Matar, "Lehigh's New Forum for Dialogue," [http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/Winter2004\\_1.pdf](http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/Winter2004_1.pdf); Karen Karniol-Tambour, "A Reason to Give Thanks"; Ghadeer Tarazi, "From Ideas to Action," [http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/Winter2004\\_2.pdf](http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/Winter2004_2.pdf).

<sup>304</sup> Jen Marlowe, then-Co-Program Director at the Jerusalem Center; Dr. Reuven Barneis, then-Administrative Director and Director of (post-secondary) Graduate Programs at the Jerusalem Center; Megan Hughes, then-Education Director at the New York office of SOP.

in 2002-03; the majorities of graduates from all groups were active or in-touch in the period following the *budna*, due to a surge in active participation.

*Table 3.15: Changes in Alumni Participation by Group 2002-03 to 2003-04*

<b>Group</b>	<b>% Active</b>	<b>% In-touch</b>	<b>% Out-of-touch</b>	<b>Participation Increase 2003-04</b>
PCI 02-03	12%	29%	59%	
PCI 03-04	34%	29%	37%	<b>+22%</b>
ISR 02-03	17%	26%	57%	
ISR 03-04	26%	26%	48%	<b>+9%</b>
PAL 02-03	20%	29%	51%	
PAL 03-04	27%	27%	46%	<b>+5%</b>
Overall 02-03	16%	28%	56%	
Overall 03-04	29%	27%	44%	<b>+12%</b>

*Significance of Findings: Shifting Contexts*

These findings affirm that favorable shifts in political and organizational context had meaningful impacts on alumni participation, which rose among all graduate groups between 2002-03 and 2003-04. The shift is especially significant because it includes a re-connection by many alumni who had previously diminished or ceased altogether their activity in the organization. These findings suggest that a *latent* motivation to participate in SOP and/or peacebuilding endured for numerous graduates who had diminished or ceased participation after the outbreak of the *intifada*, amid the onset of military service for Post-HS Israelis, and in the absence of any adult-oriented programming. In 2003-04, the amelioration of crucial contextual conditions, albeit partial and temporary on the political level, inspired a wave of

*re-activation* of latent SOP identities and relationships. This reaffirms Salomon's finding regarding the "restorative" potential of follow-up opportunities, but indicates that potential can endure over a much longer time span than considered in previous studies.<sup>305</sup>

It is crucial to note that the positive "shift" in program conditions was a direct, and effective, response by SOP Jerusalem staff to changes in the conflict situation. In terms of practice, these findings highlight the importance of programmatic response to political conditions. In this instance, the SOP Jerusalem staff implemented an ambitious, cross-conflict summer 2003 program that took advantage of the temporary opportunities engendered by the *budna*. Moreover, the staff responded effectively to changing graduate demographics, with the advent of the mediation and facilitation certification training courses in Jerusalem, and "Seeds Scholar" programs in the US – successfully creating venues for involvement for the growing numbers of adult graduates. These findings again emphasize that a) severe conflict escalation temporarily diminished, but did not permanently erase, the motivation of many graduates, and that b) the key determinant of alumni participation was not simply conflict conditions, but the program's response to those conditions.

#### *Variable Analysis*

In an attempt to examine the relative influence of participant background, program conditions and/or conflict conditions, I used logistic regression tests to measure relative correlations of a series of independent variables with rates of long-term participation. In all tests, the dependent variable (DV) was the participation rate of all eligible graduates,

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<sup>305</sup> Salomon, "A Summary of our Findings."

classified according to the active/in-touch/out-of-touch scale, while the independent variables (IV) were dummy (0/1 binary) variables. I sought correlations between the following variables and long-term participation:

- *National Identity*: Palestinian citizen of Israel (PCI), Jewish-Israeli (ISR), or Palestinian (PAL). The sample sizes are as in previous sections (see table A).
- *Gender*: Dummy variable (0 = male, 1 = female).
- *Era*: 1993-1996, 1997-1999, 2000-2002.
- *PS (Peer Support)*: In the period under review, 240 Israeli and Palestinian youth, approximately 29% of all graduates, were selected to return to camp for one or more additional summer sessions as a “Peer Support” (PS). As described in the previous section, in addition to providing an additional camp experience, PS selection constituted a source of prestige, a distinction coveted and competed for by many graduates, not all of whom were selected.

Gender and national identity are aspects of participant background, with national identity related, of course, to conflict conditions. The “era” variable is related to both conflict conditions and program conditions, each era in the manner specified above (see Table 3.14). The “PS” variable, by contrast, is purely a program-related variable, not connected either to participant background or conflict conditions.

In bi-variate regressions, PS selection and “camp class” produced the only consistently significant correlations. The 1993-96 camp class correlated with decreased participation, while 1997-99 and 2000-02 camp classes and PS selection all correlated with increased participation, with PS selection producing the strongest effect. Tables 3.16a-c

presents the statistically significant correlations at each stage. All statistically significant correlations ( $P > |z| < 0.01$ ) are listed.

*I. First Year after camp*

As detailed above, during the first year after camp, the majority of graduates are active participants in follow-up programs. Therefore, the regression test treats “active” participation as the base outcome, and measures the correlation of each variable with “out-of-touch” and “in-touch” levels of participation. The statistically significant, negative correlations of PS, 1997-99 and 2000-02 variables with lower levels of participation implies that the same variables predict active participation.

<i>1<sup>st</sup> Year</i>	Coefficient	Std. Err.	$P >  z $
<i>Out-of-Touch</i>			
PS	-4.768586	.7322522	0.000
1997-99	-2.418441	.3109718	0.000
2000-02	-1.86354	.2836023	0.000
<i>In-Touch</i>			
PS	-2.561048	.2839364	0.000
1997-99	-1.068784	.2746073	0.000
2000-02	-1.353776	.278447	0.000

*II. Secondary School*

At the secondary school stage, a (small) majority of graduates are “out-of-touch,” hence the regression analysis measures the correlation of each variable with “in-touch” or “active” participation. PS selection, 1997-99 and 2000-02 camp classes, and female gender all display statistically significant correlations with “in-touch” participation, with female gender

and 1997-99 displaying weaker correlations, and PS selection markedly stronger. Regarding “active” participation, Jewish-Israeli nationality displays a relatively weak positive correlation, 1997-99 and 2000-02 stronger correlations, and PS selection an especially strong correlation.

HS	Coefficient	Std. Err.	P> z
<i>In-Touch</i>			
PS	2.126506	.3425542	0.000
Gender	0.6039385	.190653	0.002
1997-99	0.7404431	.2520224	0.003
2000-02	1.057741	.2464599	0.000
<i>Active</i>			
PS	4.1908	.3400474	0.000
1997-99	1.68099	.3308546	0.000
2000-02	2.040508	.3289712	0.000
ISR	.7101855	.2445726	0.004

### III. Post-HS

The majority of graduates are “out-of-touch” in the Post-HS stage, hence “out-of-touch” participation is treated as the base outcome. PS selection is strongly correlated with both “in-touch” and “active” participation. The only other statistically significant correlation is the negative correlation of the 1993-96 camp class with “in-touch” participation.

Post-HS	Coefficient	Std. Err.	P> z
<i>In-Touch</i>			
PS	2.28412	.2450468	0.000
1993-96	-1.21022	.2848071	0.000
<i>Active</i>			
PS	2.934975	.3024374	0.000

*Multi-Variate Regressions*

For each set of independent and dependent variables, I conducted a series of multi-variate regression tests, in order to examine the *relative influence* of these different variables through measuring their effect in combination. I sought correlations of 66 combined bi- and tri-variate independent variables with participation rates at each personal life-stage. Table 3.17 lists the multi-variate combinations:

*Table 3.17: Complete List of Combined Variables Tested*

<b>Combined Variable</b>	<b>Component Variable A</b>	<b>Component Variable B</b>	<b>Component Variable C</b>
1. Gp	Gender	PS	
2. G93	Gender	1993-96	
3. G97	Gender	1997-99	
4. G00	Gender	2000-02	
5. A93	PCI	1993-96	
6. A97	PCI	1997-99	
7. A00	PCI	2000-02	
8. I93	ISR	1993-96	
9. I97	ISR	1997-99	
10. I00	ISR	2000-02	
11. P93	PAL	1993-96	
12. P97	PAL	1997-99	
13. P00	PAL	2000-02	
14. Psa93	PCI	1993-96	PS
15. Psi93	ISR	1993-96	PS
16. Psp93	PAL	1993-96	PS
17. Psa97	PCI	1997-99	PS
18. Psi97	ISR	1997-99	PS
19. Psp97	PAL	1997-99	PS
20. Psa00	PCI	2000-02	PS
21. Psi00	ISR	2000-02	PS
22. Psp00	PAL	2000-02	PS

Rather than present dozens of tests here, I will provide a summary, followed by a tabulation of overall results. This test automatically assigns either the highest (active) or lowest (out-of-touch) value as a “comparison group,” then presents the probability that the presence of the independent variable will produce the other two possible outcomes.

- The combined Gender/PS variable correlated strongly and significantly with active participation at all life-stages ( $P > |z| = 0.00$  in each case);
- Among combined Gender/Era variables, 1993-96 correlated significantly with non-participation, 1997-99 with active participation, and 2000-02 was not significant. Thus, era was a more salient factor than gender, with 1993-96 decreasing activity, and 1997-99 increasing activity.
- Among Nationality/Era combinations, there were few significant correlations. Of those, 1993-96 correlated with decreased participation, 1997-99 with increased participation.
- Adding the “PS” variable to nationality/era variables transformed the results; more than half of the tests were statistically significant, all predicting increased participation, especially active participation.

Table 3.18 summarizes all statistically significant correlations between combined variables and increased or decreased participation rates, in all 66 multi-variate regression combinations tested. The terms in the table signify the following results:

- *Correlation* presents the tally of statistically significant correlations ( $p > |z| < .01$ ) including the variable in question;
- *Positive* indicates coefficients correlated clearly with increased participation;
- *Negative* indicates coefficients correlated clearly with decreased participation;
- *Low* indicates coefficients correlated with the lowest (out-of-touch) participation rate;

- *Effect* indicates the variable’s relative influence on other variables; in other words, when combined with other variables, does the presence of this variable contribute to increased or decreased participation? The effect is further specified as “strong” or “limited”: A clear positive, for example, displays positive correlations in the vast majority of cases, and few or no negatives; A limited positive also displays a majority of positives, but fewer total, and a larger number of negative correlations.

Table 3.18: Independent Variables with Significant Correlations to Participation Rates

IV	Tests	Significant	Positive	Negative	Low	Effect
1. PS	62	45	42	0	0	Strong +
2. 1997-99	60	39	34	3	0	Strong +
3. 1993-96	60	36	13	9	5	Strong -
4. ISR	48	31	25	3	1	Limited +
5. 2000-02	60	25	20	3	0	Limited +
6. PAL	48	23	17	5	1	Limited +
7. Gender	32	14	9	2	1	Limited +
8. PCI	48	14	11	3	1	Limited +

#### *Significance of Findings: Variable Analysis*

The variable analysis findings indicate that *program-related variables* correlate consistently with distinctly positive or negative rates of long-term participation. *Identity-related variables* such as gender or nationality, by contrast, display relatively inconsistent effects. Two variables correlate consistently and strongly with increased rates of long-term participation: PS selection and initial participation in the 1997-99 era. Initial participation in the 1993-96 era, by contrast, correlates strongly with decreased long-term participation. As discussed in previous sections, the 1993-96 era is distinguished by a shorter, more experimental camp

program and the lack of any organized follow-up program in the Middle East, while 1997-99 represents the era of optimal conditions in terms of both camp and follow-up programming and the conflict context. These results, therefore, emphasize that the consolidation of the camp program and the provision of extensive regional follow-up dramatically amplified the long-term impact of the original intervention.

*The PS Effect: Diverging Tracks of Alumni Activity*

The most powerful predictor of increased long-term participation, by far, is PS selection. Indeed, PS selection correlates so strongly with increased participation that it maintains a significant and positive correlation, in a majority of cases, *when combined with any other variable*. Tables 3.19a-c illustrate stark differences between the long-term participation patterns of the graduates selected to be PS's, and the graduates who were not.

*Table 3.19a. Overall Participation by Life-Stage, PS/Non-PS*

<b>1st Year*<sup>306</sup></b>	<b>Non-PS</b>	<b>PS</b>	<b>Non-PS%</b>	<b>PS%</b>	<b>Participation Difference</b>
Out-of touch	183	1	31%	.004%	PS +31%
In-touch	203	17	35%	7%	NPS + 28%
Active	197	222	34%	93%	PS+59%
<b>HS</b>					
Out-of touch	338	12	58%	5%	PS+53%
In-touch	164	43	28%	18%	NPS +10%
Active	81	185	14%	77%	PS+63%
<b>Post-HS</b>					
Out-of touch	359	33	70%	16%	PS+54%
In-touch	116	95	23%	47%	PS+24%
Active	35	73	7%	36%	PS+29%
<b>Adult*</b>					
Active	15	124	3%	52%	PS+49%

<sup>306</sup> \*During the 1<sup>st</sup> year life-stage, no graduates have yet been selected to be PS's, nor do any of them know whether they will be selected. Some PS's are selected only two or three years after initial camp participation, so the same holds true for those graduates throughout much of their HS life-stage.

Table 3.19b. Percentage of Active and In-Touch Graduates by Life-Stage, PS/Non-PS

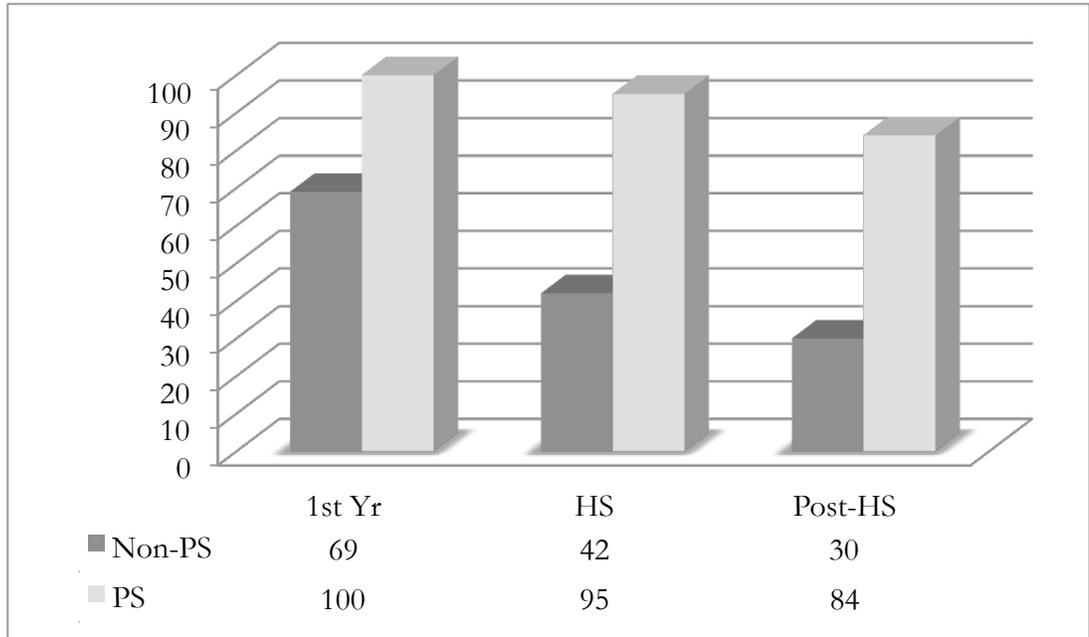
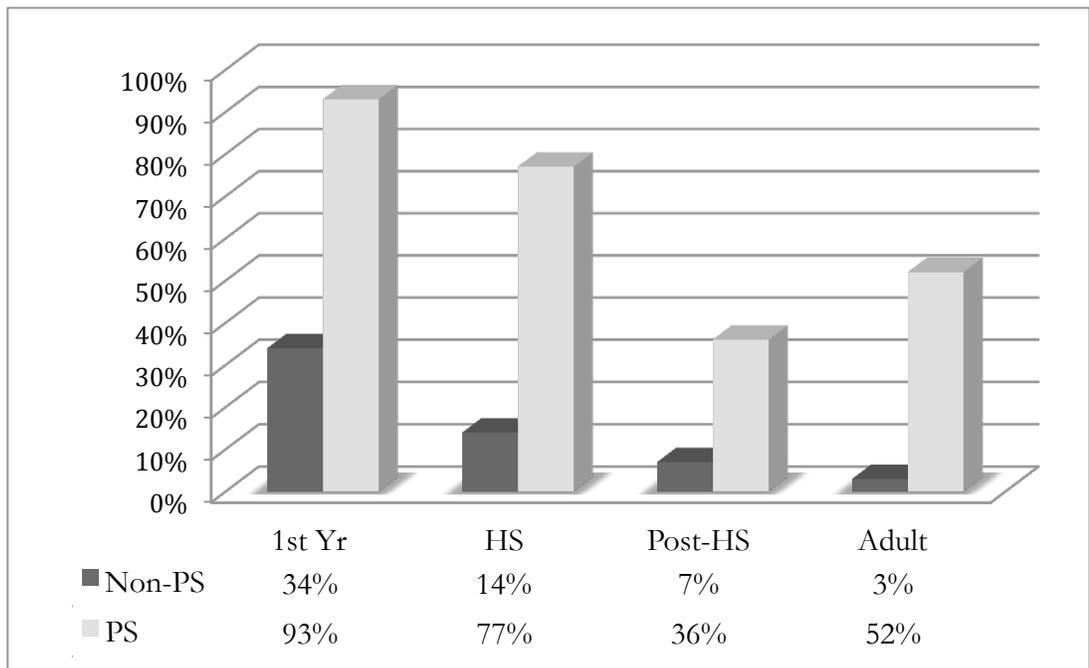


Table 3.19c. Percentage of Active Graduates by Life-Stage, PS/Non-PS



In percentage terms, at every life-stage, PS's are much more active than non-PS graduates: three times more active in the first year (before selection), five times more active in HS and Post-HS stages, and *seventeen times more active as adults*. In terms of raw numbers, at every life-stage, PS's are *at least ten times less likely to be out-of-touch* than non-PS graduates. Indeed, the disparity between the two groups is such that in raw numbers, PS's make up the majority of active graduates at every life-stage, despite representing only 29% of the total graduate group. The PS selection process established, in effect, two different classes of graduates following divergent paths in their long-term relationship to the organization and to peacebuilding activity in general.

Qualitative data suggests several factors that may contribute, in varying degrees, to the PS/non-PS divide in long-term participation. It is important to note, however, that the same data makes it clear that no single one of these factors, in isolation, constitute a sufficient explanation of the phenomenon.

- *Self-selection*: Graduates active in follow-up were much more likely to earn Peer Support selection, especially after the establishment of organized regional follow-up. To a degree, therefore, the PS group was constituted of graduates already highly motivated toward follow-up participation. However, there were almost always more applicants than actual PS positions available, so the PS group does not represent the sum total of all graduates originally motivated toward follow-up participation.
- *Additional Camp Experience*: In some interviews, PS graduates reported positive experiences in their additional summers at camp; some insist that being a PS had a more significant impact on their personal development than their initial camp experiences did. For graduates reporting positive PS experiences, it is reasonable to infer that this

reinforced or increased their motivation for follow-up participation. However, such an effect cannot be universally assumed. Some interviewees reported disappointment with their experiences as PS's at camp, and it is reasonable to infer that such experiences might have decreased motivation for follow-up participation. In addition, for many first-year graduates, the goal of earning PS selection is a powerful motivating factor. After some have achieved selection, however, and completed their PS experience at camp, this incentive no longer applies. The removal of this incentive indicates that there must, therefore, be other motivating factors that generated the continuing disparity in participation between PS and non-PS graduates during HS, Post-HS and adult life-stages.

- *Affirmation/Rejection by the Organization:* By instituting a selection process to distinguish between certain graduates worthy of returning to camp as PS's from all others, the organization sent powerful messages of personal affirmation to those selected, and of rejection to those whose applications were denied. The sense of being valued and recognized by the organization inspired by earning PS selection can reasonably be inferred to have increased motivation for follow-up participation. The opposite effect can be inferred among graduates who may have experienced a sense of rejection after being denied the sought-after PS status.
- *Membership in a Prestigious Elite:* In addition to personal affirmation, PS selection marks those selected with a prestigious status within the SOP community, and initiates them into an exclusive sub-network with separate sets of shared experiences and social bonds – an elite within the elite. PS selection can be understood as greatly increasing a graduate's "social capital" within the greater SOP network.

➤ *Expansion of SOP Social Networks:* PS's develop relationships with graduates from at least one additional "camp class," expanding their network of relationships to include younger alumni. In addition to generally thickening and broadening their ties to and within the SOP community, PS's therefore had reasons to attend SOP events even as their "generation" approached the Post-HS stage, with its pressures against participation. Rather than operating in isolation, all of the above factors can be considered as multiple sources of an ongoing dynamic, a positive feedback loop in the long-term relationship between SOP and those graduates selected to be PS's – while generating a negative mirror image in the organization's relationship with graduates not selected.

Beyond its experiential and social attributes, the return to camp as a PS represents an intensive form of follow-up activity. Indeed, for the earliest camp classes, a return to camp represented the principal – often the only – organized form of follow-up available. Thus, the predominance of PS selectees among long-term active graduates underscores the key finding of the quantitative section of this study: That the original camp intervention itself is not enough. It is a first step, necessary but very rarely sufficient to inspire, in John Wallach's words, long-term "commitments to fighting for peace."<sup>307</sup> The camp program initially inspired many participants long-term to engage in peacebuilding, but in the intractable Israeli-Palestinian context, that impact was not – on its own – sustainable. However, additional camp experience combined with opportunities for organized, consistent, meaningful follow-up activity did support and sustain peacebuilding activity among many graduates as they grew and changed, and even as the world changed radically around them.

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<sup>307</sup> Wallach, *The Enemy Has a Face*, 13.

## Conclusions

These findings carry implications for the SOP program in specific, as well as for the theory, practice and evaluation of peace education and intergroup dialogue in the Middle East and other contexts of intractable conflict.

For the SOP program, the findings emphasize the importance of *pluralistic, responsive, sustained follow-up*. Graduates demonstrated sustained “commitments to fighting for peace” when the organization supporting multiple and evolving avenues of long-term activity – designed not according to organizational priorities but in response to the aspirations, initiatives, and asymmetrical realities of graduates. During the period in question, that included returns to camp, year-round peacebuilding initiatives in the Middle East pioneered by teen-aged and adult graduates, and support for empowerment through higher education and training in the region, the US and Europe. While this implies a profound commitment of organizational resources, any less would have substantively diminished the levels of long-term graduate peacebuilding activity portrayed here – with approximately half of all alumni engaged in peacebuilding through much of high school, and nearly one-fifth as adults. The findings regarding Peer Support selection, in particular, should stimulate reflection on the establishment of “elites” among alumni. PS status appears to function as a double-edged sword, inspiring extraordinary commitment among the alumni who achieve elite status, but possibly alienating others who did not “make the cut.”

Overall, these findings imply meaningful levels of both agency and responsibility on the part of the organization. Over time, the hostile conflict context eroded the long-term impact of SOP participation for many graduates, but a significant minority remained active in peacebuilding over the long-term, even 10-15 years after attending camp. It was not the

conflict alone, but the program's responses to the conflict that affected graduates' long-term commitments to peacebuilding. It is thus incumbent on the organization to understand where it has and has not helped to support and sustain such commitments, and then to design programming and allocate resources accordingly.

In prescriptive terms, the findings should encourage peace education practitioners to move from a focus on the first "transformative encounter" or "intervention" to more comprehensive strategies, which treat the initial encounter as the foundational step of longer-term dialogue and relationship between participants themselves, and between participants and the program. Some programs have already moved in this direction. The second-oldest and second-largest international peace education program of this genre, Building Bridges for Peace, describes its summer camp program in Colorado as a "summer intensive," the first step of a long-term process:

[Building Bridges for Peace (BBFP)] is a multi-year, multi-level leadership development and peacebuilding program that works with American, Israeli and Palestinian teens. BBfP equips participants with the skills and confidence to manage conflicts and become leaders in creating more peaceful, equitable, and just communities. The program begins with a three-week summer intensive in Colorado and the two-year follow-up program is conducted in participants' home communities. BBfP provides participants with continued opportunities for advanced leadership, communication, and peacebuilding training through the Leader in Training (LIT) program, Alumni in Action program, Interns for Peace, and staff positions.<sup>308</sup>

As of this writing, SOP is composing a strategic program plan designed to support "sustained engagement" in graduates' home communities<sup>309</sup>; the SOP website states that "Seeds of Peace's internationally-recognized program begins at its summer Camp in Maine

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<sup>308</sup> "Building Bridges for Peace," Accessed June 11, 2011, [http://s-c-g.org/Seeking\\_Common\\_Ground/Building\\_Bridges\\_for\\_Peace.html](http://s-c-g.org/Seeking_Common_Ground/Building_Bridges_for_Peace.html)

<sup>309</sup> Author's interviews with Eva Gordon, SOP Director of Strategic Initiatives, Portsmouth, NH, July 9, 2010; Washington, D.C., March 15, 2011.

and continues through year-round regional initiatives.”<sup>310</sup> Additionally, the organization is placing unprecedented emphasis on connecting graduates to the wider Israeli/Palestinian peacebuilding community, to actualizing “commitments to fighting for peace” in local initiatives and struggles.<sup>311</sup>

The adoption of this comprehensive strategic vision carries clear implications for evaluating of this type of intervention. In this approach, pre-test/post-test attitudinal evaluations remain relevant for understanding effects of the initial encounter. However, graduates’ subsequent involvement in local, cross-conflict peacebuilding activity, tracked over time and with sensitivity to volatile contextual factors, will be an equally crucial indicator of sustained program impact.

In theoretical terms, these findings affirm Salomon’s findings regarding the “erosion” of intervention impact over time in a hostile context, on the one hand, and the potential of follow-up activity to “restore” or sustain positive program impact, on the other.<sup>312</sup> Moreover, whereas Salomon asserts that follow-up was only effective for Jewish-Israeli participants in the programs he studied, this was not the case among Israeli and Palestinian graduates of Seeds of Peace, who tended to remain active in similar if not equivalent proportions over the long-term. Palestinian graduates often cited the program's initiation of uni-national dialogue and empowerment-oriented programming, as well as provision of educational and professional opportunities, as crucial components in sustaining their commitments in the post-intifada era. A comparison of program content between this case and the peace education programs cited in Salomon’s study would be a worthwhile line

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<sup>310</sup> "Seeds of Peace."

<sup>311</sup> Eva Gordon.

<sup>312</sup> Salomon, “A Summary of our Findings.”

of future research, in order to shed light on effective design of “follow-up” to suit the asymmetrical realities and aspirations of Israeli and Palestinian participants.

Salomon also asserts the “short-lived impact of *short* peace education interventions”; the high initial enthusiasm of SOP camp graduates indicates that longer initial interventions may indeed result in greater impact. However, this study affirms above all the need to design sustained frameworks, rather than single interventions, for peace education programs to have lasting impact – by supporting their graduates’ efforts and strengthening their capacity and motivation to “fight for peace” in diverse ways, and in difficult contexts. Indeed, it seems appropriate to add the provision of meaningful follow-up opportunities to the list of essential conditions for successful intergroup “contact” in a situation of intractable conflict.

This section presents a primarily quantitative illustration of SOP graduates’ ongoing journeys between “re-entry” and “follow-up,” between “erosion” and “restoration” of motivation to engage in cross-conflict peacebuilding. This is an insightful, but incomplete picture, evaluating graduates’ experiences according to the goals of the intervenor. The next chapters present graduates’ own testimonies on the impacts of SOP participation on their lives, which were in every case complex. The chapters focus on a set of dilemmas that alumni faced as aspiring peacebuilders in a situation of intractable, escalating conflict, highlighting factors they cited as encouraging and discouraging them at critical moments in their journeys from adolescence to adulthood.

### Overview of Qualitative Chapters

In the previous chapter, we have seen evidence of long-term program “impact” on SOP graduates, demonstrated by trajectories of follow-up activity involving up to half of the program’s Israeli and Palestinian alumni from 1993-2003. We have seen that internal program-related factors, rather than simply external conflict conditions, played decisive roles in determining levels of long-term alumni participation. We have also seen that the key long-term trends and contextual effects, in terms of long-term participation, are shared among SOP graduates from all three identity groups surveyed – Israeli Jews, Palestinians from the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), and Palestinian citizens of Israel (PCI). It is evident that for a core group of alumni, the combination of camp and follow-up program experiences and relationships generated a cross-conflict network of graduates and a shared sense of “Seeds of Peace” identity that survived the outbreak of the second *intifada*.

However, this is only part of the picture that emerges in the participation data. While there are similarities in participation patterns across identity groups, there are also meaningful differences of degree and kind. The next four chapters explore the extent and nature of divergences in “SOP experience” along national lines, referring to theory and qualitative data in order to seek the sources of distinction between these three identity groups within the SOP context. The first chapter focuses on the institutional level, analyzing SOP’s approach to national identity as expressed in policy and rhetoric, and embodied in the organization’s conflictual cooperation with the Israeli and Palestinian Ministries of Education. The following three chapters provide portraits of distinct “national dilemmas” of SOP membership articulated by Israeli, Palestinian and PCI graduates, and linking each dilemma to divergences in long-term participation patterns along national lines.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# *Flag-Raising: Seeds of Peace and the Israeli and Palestinian Ministries of Education*

### Introduction

“Peace” in the abstract is commonly understood as an integral Jewish, Islamic, Christian, democratic and “universal” value. In the Israeli and Palestinian educational systems, however, peace education has long been a point of controversy. The Israeli Ministry of Education’s website praises Israeli laureates of UNESCO peace education prizes, yet the current Ministry harshly censures Israeli schools that introduce students to Palestinian perspectives on the conflict.<sup>313</sup> This is emblematic of the ambivalent approach toward peace education displayed by both Israeli state and Palestinian National Authority (PNA) Ministries of Education (MOE). In certain contexts, both Ministries have cooperated with peace education projects and attempted to integrate the field into national curricula, aiming to align themselves with international norms and progressive elites within each society. In other contexts, both Ministries have condemned and rejected all of the above. Since the Oslo Agreements, peace education initiatives have functioned as lightning rods in both

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<sup>313</sup> “Prizes and Honorable Mentions,” Israel National Commission for UNESCO, Accessed May 26, 2011, <http://cms.education.gov.il/EducationCMS/Units/Unesco/MeydaShimushi/Prasim/ZhiotVtziunimLishvach.htm>. The site mentions two Israeli laureates of the UNESCO Peace Education Prize: Rev. Emile Shoufani in 2003, and Givat Haviva in 2001, as well as two honorable mentions: The Middle East Children’s Association in 2000, and Ulpan Akiva in 1998. Seeds of Peace was also awarded a UNESCO Peace Education Prize, in 2000. See “18 Years of Peacemaking,” Accessed May 26, 2011, <http://www.seedsofpeace.org/about/history>.

educational systems, illuminating points of tension and contention between nationalist and universalist aspirations within each national movement.<sup>314</sup>

Ambivalence has also characterized the approaches of peace education advocates to the Israeli and Palestinian educational authorities and their nationalist curricula. Some peace education initiatives have sought Ministry partnership, aiming to achieve broad legitimacy within Israeli and Palestinian societies and engage mainstream audiences. Other initiatives aim to embody a radical alternative, working outside the system with a handful of private individuals and institutions.<sup>315</sup> Some initiatives incorporate, or alternate, elements of both strategies. In all cases, the attempt to teach “peace” in a context of ongoing conflict creates tradeoffs between local and international legitimacy, nationalist and universalist values, and engagement with mainstream audiences or progressive minorities within each population.

This chapter examines these dilemmas through the prism of Israeli government and PNA relations with Seeds of Peace. I will illustrate the ways in which SOP's stated goals of "empowering the children of war to break cycles of violence," "humanizing the conflict," and educating "ambassadors of peace" frequently placed the program at odds with its local governmental partners. Based on years of participant observation and subsequent interviews with Israeli and Palestinian alumni, SOP staff, and Ministry personnel, this chapter portrays a

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<sup>314</sup> A struggle over the current Israeli Ministry of Education's campaign to change the official civics curriculum has been phrased explicitly in terms of nationalism versus universalist values. As Lital Levin reported in a *Haaretz* article entitled “Civics Teachers: The Ministry of Education Is Endangering Democracy” in July 2011: “At an emergency meeting... dozens of civics teachers clarified to their superiors at the Ministry, that they are concerned by the changes included in the curriculum regarding [teaching] Zionist values at the expense of universal values” (Lital Levin, “Morim La-Ezrahut: Misrad Ha-Khinukh Mesaken Et Ha-Demokratyah,” *Haaretz*, July 1, 2011, Accessed July 3, 2011, <http://www.haaretz.co.il/hasite/spages/1233254.html>). For the analogous debate inside the PNA Ministry of Education, see Nathan J. Brown, “Contesting National Identity in Palestinian Education,” in *Israeli and Palestinian Narratives of Conflict: History's Double Helix*, edited by Robert I. Rotberg (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 225-244.

<sup>315</sup> Ahsiya Beth Posner, “Teaching Peace While Living War: Obstacles to Effective Peace Education by Non-Governmental Organizations--the Case of Israel/Palestine 2000-2004” (PhD diss., Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, 2006); Karen Ross, “Legitimizing Peace Education in Israel: Measuring Success in Institutional Terms,” unpublished research paper, 2011.

tense interdependence between the American peace organization and Middle Eastern Ministries, each grudgingly compromising core principles for the legitimacy obtained through the other's endorsement. In addition, the chapter details the dilemmas of Israeli and Palestinian SOP participants, torn between the clashing expectations of their government chaperones and their liberal American hosts.

As a third party intervening in the century-old Middle East conflict, SOP is not the first entity seeking to enlist Arab and Israeli youth in a quest to shape the future of the region. Before and after their baptism as "Seeds of Peace," participants are educated, induced and coerced by schools, movements, peers, relatives and other influential forces to fulfill prescribed roles and adhere to consensus within their respective national struggles.<sup>316</sup> Formal and informal educational institutions prepare youth for life within what Israeli general-turned-rightist politician Moshe Ya'alon approvingly calls a "society of struggle."<sup>317</sup> Thus, even when Israeli and PNA Ministries of Education have cooperated with SOP and similar initiatives, they have often been at odds with the pedagogical goals of peace education in general, and SOP in specific.<sup>318</sup>

#### *Peace Education: Conflict with the 'Ethos of Conflict'*

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) defines peace education as "the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about

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<sup>316</sup> Daniel Bar-Tal and Gavriel Salomon, "Israeli-Jewish Narratives of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Evolution, Contents, Functions and Consequences"; Nathan Brown, "Contesting National Identity in Palestinian Education"; Eyal Naveh, "The Dynamics of Identity Construction in Israel through Education in History," all in *Israeli and Palestinian Narratives of Conflict: History's Double Helix*, edited by Robert Rotberg (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

<sup>317</sup> Quotation in Ari Shavit, "Parting Shot", in *Ha'aretz*, June 2, 2005. Ret. Gen. Ya'alon is a cabinet Minister in the current Israeli government headed by Binyamin Netanyahu.

<sup>318</sup> See Isabel Kershner, "Teaching Kids Not to Hate," *The Jerusalem Report*, March 13, 2000, 24; Brown, "Contesting National Identity in Palestinian Education"; Naveh, "The Dynamics of Identity Construction in Israel."

behavior changes that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence... to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level.”<sup>319</sup> UNICEF frames the above as universal pedagogical values, “essential component[s] of quality education... in all societies, not only in countries undergoing armed conflict or emergencies.”<sup>320</sup>

Scholarship on peace education suggests, however, that it is especially difficult to “teach peace” in precisely the situations of violent intergroup conflict in which it seems most needed. In such situations, rival groups develop social psychological repertoires designed to sustain high levels of mass mobilization.<sup>321</sup> The conflict becomes a crucible of identity formation; youth are raised on what Bar-Tal calls an “ethos of conflict” – a set of shared beliefs about the collective self, the enemy other, and the nature of the conflict.<sup>322</sup> As Salomon contends, the value content of peace education can be “inherently subversive” of core aspects of collective identity in such situations, including historical narratives and hostile images of the enemy “other.”<sup>323</sup>

Bar-Tal explains that “intractable conflicts,” such as prevail in Israel-Palestine, Kashmir, Kosovo, Northern Ireland and Sri Lanka, “are demanding, stressful, exhausting, and costly both in human and material terms. Societies involved in this type of conflict develop appropriate psychological conditions which enable them to cope successfully with

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<sup>319</sup> Susan Fountain, “Peace Education in UNICEF,” Working Paper, Education Section, New York, June 1999, Accessed May 26, 2011, <http://www.unicef.org/education/files/PeaceEducation.pdf>.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

<sup>321</sup> John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1995), 11-18. For information on the Israeli case, see Baruch Kimmerling, “The Social Construction of Israel’s National Security” in Stuart Cohen (ed.), *Democratic Societies and Their Armed Forces: Israel in Comparative Context* (London: Frank Cass, 2000).

<sup>322</sup> Bar-Tal, “Societal Beliefs in Times of Intractable Conflict.”

<sup>323</sup> Gavriel Salomon, “Beyond Coexistence: Teaching for Peace” (Paper presented at the University of Massachusetts-Lowell Greeley Scholar lecture, Boston, Massachusetts, April 20, 2010).

the conflictual situation.”<sup>324</sup> Bar-Tal enumerates a set of “shared societal beliefs” about self, other and reality that make up a collective “ethos of conflict,” including emphases on unity, patriotism, security, victimhood, the justice of the collective cause and de-legitimization of the adversary.<sup>325</sup> This conflict catechism becomes integrated into the reproduction of the conflict at multiple levels. For individuals, it serves as a psychological survival kit, rationalizing the stresses and sacrifices mandated by the struggle. The collective comes to depend on the ethos as a source of shared identity, a kind of “social glue” binding together the nation. At the systemic level, the ethos functions as enabler and an ennobler of conflict, making it seem to well-socialized citizens a necessary, normal, and dignified way of life. Simply by portraying conflict as a problem to be resolved rather than an existential struggle, peace education implicitly challenges the ethos of conflict.

As Bar-Tal notes, certain “societal beliefs” about self and “other” can be found in all human collectives. What distinguishes an ethos of conflict is the contrast of positive self-image with negative enemy image: the justice of one side’s cause is vindicated by the other’s alleged crimes; the peacefulness of one side is predicated on the other’s aggressiveness; the innocence of one side is “proven” by the other’s guilt. Each side imagines its own humanity in contrast to the demonized other, a dynamic that Kelman calls “negative identity interdependence.”<sup>326</sup> As Kelman explains, this is a relationship in which basic acknowledgment of humanity and legitimacy is seen in mutually exclusive, zero-sum terms: “Any legitimacy extended to the enemy group is seen to detract from the group’s own

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<sup>324</sup> Bar-Tal, “Societal Beliefs in Times of Intractable Conflict.”

<sup>325</sup> Ibid.

<sup>326</sup> Kelman, ““The Interdependence of Israeli and Palestinian National Identities.””

legitimacy.”<sup>327</sup> In its common aspiration to “humanize the other,” peace education again threatens to undermine psychological pillars of the “ethos of conflict.”

At the same time, there is a place for “peace” within the social psychology of intractable conflict. Bar-Tal lists a belief in the ingroup’s “own wish for peace” as one of the essential components of the “ethos of conflict,” serving to reinforce the positive self-image of ingroup members even as their group engages in violent behavior. Asserting this wish for peace becomes, paradoxically, a way of denying responsibility, of reasserting victimhood, of shifting all blame for the conflict onto the demonized other. As Kelman explains,

Each group perceives the other as the source of its negative identity elements... There are two major types of negative identity elements ... [in] the relationship to the other in conflict: the view of one’s self as weak and vulnerable, and the view of one’s self as violent and unjust. In the rhetoric of conflict, these two self-images perform very different functions: Each party claims the status of victim and each denies the role of victimizer.<sup>328</sup>

Kelman goes on to explain that neither party would ideally accept either role; “each group would rather see itself as neither the other’s weak and vulnerable victim, nor the other’s cruel oppressor or assailant – yet the conflict relationship forces these negative images upon them.”<sup>329</sup> It becomes crucial, then, to relentlessly shift blame to the enemy for the negative aspects of the conflict, especially violence against civilians. In rhetorical terms, the phenomenon is exemplified by justifications of suicide bombings in crowded civilian areas, such as presented by Hamas spokesman Osama Hamdan in 2007:

Anyone who comes to live in a war zone is a combatant, regardless of whether he wears a uniform. That's one thing. Secondly, neither Hamas nor the Palestinian resistance force intentionally killed civilians. You mentioned the buses. What's an easier target – a bus, which is protected by various security measures, or a school [or]

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<sup>327</sup> Ibid.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid.

a theater, or a stadium, for example?... Why were buses targeted? Because they are the means of transport used by the soldiers as well...<sup>330</sup>

Former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir employed similar logic in 1970, explaining that, “When peace comes, we will perhaps in time be able to forgive the Arabs for killing our sons, but it will be harder for us to forgive them for having forced us to kill their sons.”<sup>331</sup>

“Peace” in this vein is typically a dreamlike ideal, expressed in abstract, symbolic motifs such as images of doves or olive branches next to the national flag, or images of hands extended in friendship. Hence, Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu recently repeated the statement, “We extend our hands in peace to our neighbors,” in speeches rejecting proposals for resolving the conflict.<sup>332</sup> In the same spirit, late PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat famously invoked the own wish for peace in his 1974 speech at the United Nations General Assembly, in order to rhetorically relieve the Palestinians of any responsibility for choosing peace or war: “I come bearing an olive branch and a freedom fighter’s gun; do not let the olive branch fall from my hand.”<sup>333</sup>

The rhetorical commonplace of the “own wish for peace” serves important internal and external political purposes – reinforcing belief in the “justice of our cause” among citizens, while seeking to sway the allegiance of third-party audiences. In recent decades, declaring support for peace education in international forums has become a standard way for the Israeli government and the PNA to demonstrate the sincerity of their “own wish for peace.” Hence, every Israeli and Palestinian leader of recent years, regardless of policy, has

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<sup>330</sup> Interview with Hamas representative in Lebanon Osama Hamdan, Al-Kawthar TV, August 6, 2007. See <http://www.memritv.org/clip/en/1527.htm>. Accessed May 26, 2011.

<sup>331</sup> Meir spoke at a 1969 press conference in London (1969), as quoted in Marie Syrkin (ed.), *A Land of Our Own: An Oral Autobiography of Golda Meir* (New York: G.P. Putnam and Sons, 1973), 242.

<sup>332</sup> Binyamin Netanyahu, speech to the Knesset, May 18, 2011.

<sup>333</sup> Yasser Arafat, speech to the United Nations General Assembly, November 13, 1974. Available at *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Accessed May 26, 2011, <http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/cahier/proche-orient/arafat74-en>.

declared support for Seeds of Peace.<sup>334</sup> During the first months of his first term in office, Netanyahu affirmed support for Israelis meeting Palestinians at SOP, even as he personally refused to meet with Arafat.<sup>335</sup> During the second *intifada*, Arafat referred foreign reporters to the SOP button pinned on his jacket lapel as evidence of his support for peace, even after the PNA Ministry of Education refused to recruit participants for the project.<sup>336</sup>

*What You Can't Do, You Can't Teach: Peace Education and the Ministries of Education*

The record of both Ministries' policies toward peace education reflects a similar ambivalence; they have neither been able to completely accept nor wholly reject the content of peace education, neither to consistently implement nor completely ban specific projects. In a 2006 study of the issue, Posner explains that, "neither the Israeli nor Palestinian Ministry of Education has acted consistently... towards the implementation of peace education curricula in its formal school systems."<sup>337</sup>

To a certain degree, policies towards toward peace education have seesawed with official policies and popular sentiments toward peace. Leading Israeli scholar of peace education Daniel Bar-Tal has twice been tasked with integrating the field into the official state curriculum – by the Rabin/Peres (1992-1996) and Olmert (2007-2009) administrations, both of which conducted intensive negotiations with the Palestinians – only to have years of

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<sup>334</sup> "Seeds of Peace."

<sup>335</sup> Binyamin Netanyahu, in response to a letter from an Israeli SOP graduate, printed in SOP's youth magazine *The Olive Branch* 1 (1): Winter 1996. On Netanyahu's refusal to meet with Arafat, see Helen Kennedy, "Bibi-Yasser Huddle Predicted but Israeli Aide Doubtful of Report," *Daily News*, August 26, 1996, Accessed May 26, 2011, [http://www.nydailynews.com/archives/news/1996/08/26/1996-08-26\\_bibi-yasser\\_huddle\\_predicted.html](http://www.nydailynews.com/archives/news/1996/08/26/1996-08-26_bibi-yasser_huddle_predicted.html).

<sup>336</sup> Author's interview with Seeds of Peace co-founder, Executive Vice President Emeritus and Board Member Barbara Gottschalk, Washington, D.C.

<sup>337</sup> Posner, "Teaching Peace in a Time of War," 136.

work thrown out by the right-wing administrations that followed.<sup>338</sup> He describes the rise and fall of the first such task force, a process that repeated itself fifteen years later:

In the Oslo period there was another feeling, a feeling of overcoming, a feeling of hope that our difficult conflict is turning towards a solution. During that period I worked in the Ministry of Education and then-Education Minister Amnon Rubinstein charged me with leading an official committee with representatives of branches and departments of the Ministry to prepare peace education for the long term. We worked efficiently, professionally, with a song in the heart – at least in the hearts of those who supported the historic initiative. But all of this work – a year of dedicated work – was thrown out after the murder of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and the elections of spring 1996. The new Minister of Education was not interested in education for peace.<sup>339</sup>

Similarly, during a dovish moment following the demise of the first Netanyahu government in 1999, Israeli Education Minister Yossi Sarid and PNA Deputy Education Minister Na'im Abu El-Hummus attended the grand opening ceremonies of the SOP Jerusalem Center for Coexistence. Sarid declared onstage his support for a Palestinian state, after which he and Dr. Abu El-Hummus embraced in front of a cheering crowd of hundreds of Israeli and Palestinian youth.<sup>340</sup> Yet one year later, both Ministries ended their cooperation with SOP after the eruption of the second *intifada*. According to Posner, “[C]ontinual flip-flopping from “hawkish” to “dove-ish” [governments] prevented the development of... a strong and consistent peace education program to be implemented in the state’s schools,” and rendered official relationships with peace education NGOs “fraught with change and highly dependent on the particular mentality of the current Israeli Minister of Education.”<sup>341</sup>

Yet even under more positively inclined administrations, Ministries have struggled to cooperate with peace education NGOs. As Posner explains, Ministry officials she

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<sup>338</sup> Daniel Bar-Tal, “Policy for Education Toward Jewish-Arab Partnership: A Case Study” (Presentation for the Annual Convention of the Association for Jewish Studies, Boston, Massachusetts, December 21, 2010); Yoram Harpaz, interview with Daniel Bar-Tal (Hebrew), *Hed Ha-Khinukh* 4, February 2011, 32-38.

<sup>339</sup> Harpaz, “Interview with Daniel Bar-Tal,” 37.

<sup>340</sup> Author’s personal observation. Also noted in Kershner, “Teaching Kids not to Hate.”

<sup>341</sup> Posner, “Teaching Peace in a Time of War,” 342.

interviewed, “Spoke of their hesitancy to build relationships with peace education NGOs, describing how the education ministries’ mission and mandate is distinctly different...

Ministries of Education are focused solely at the uni-national level, concerning themselves with the education of their respective citizenry so as to build a strong nation-state.”<sup>342</sup> In Israel, as one MOE official stated, “a primary objective of the Israeli school system is to train students to be good soldiers in the army,” leading to a reluctance to endorse programs that might undermine students’ motivation to enlist in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).<sup>343</sup> Indeed, the Israeli MOE threatened to cease participation in Seeds of Peace over the refusal of a small number of Israeli SOP graduates to serve in the IDF on grounds of conscience.<sup>344</sup>

PNA Education officials expressed skepticism about peace education during the Oslo years, expressing a sense that their nascent Ministry, established in 1994, needed to prioritize “more basic responsibilities” and not “accessories.”<sup>345</sup> In early 2000, The PNA Ministry’s head of International and Public Relations, Khalil Mahshi stated that, “Given the emergencies the fledgling Ministry has had to face... the reconstruction of decrepit schools, putting systems in place, paying teachers and the like – peace education has not been, and still isn’t, a priority.”<sup>346</sup> Yet when pressed on the issue, Mahshi cited the controversial content of peace education, alleging that, “the Seeds of Peace project, like other peace-education programs, causes divisiveness in schools, creating tension among the pupils, teachers and parents. As a government institution that has to serve the whole population, the PNA

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<sup>342</sup> Ibid, 336.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid, 339.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid, 213.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid, 306. The words are from PLO Chief Negotiator Saeb Erekat, who is among the most enthusiastic Palestinian supporters of peace education.

<sup>346</sup> Kershner, “Teaching Kids not to Hate.”

Ministry of Education is reluctant to be involved in such controversy.”<sup>347</sup> In summary, Posner states that both Israeli and PNA Ministries “tended to view all peace education NGOs with skepticism, suspicion, antagonism or, at best, ambivalence.”<sup>348</sup>

Even projects not explicitly labeled “peace education,” but challenging of traditional nationalist pedagogy, have ultimately failed to achieve Ministry support. Nathan Brown describes the process of building the first official Palestinian curriculum as a clash between nationalist and universalist visions of Palestinian identity. Palestinian scholar Ibrahim Abu-Lughod spent years drafting a “progressive” humanist curriculum under the auspices of a UNESCO grant, only to have his work rejected by the PNA Ministry of Education:

The approach proved too radical ... [T]he intellectual basis of the entire curriculum was [instead] said to be faith in God ... The books that were finally produced reflect the Ministry of Education’s emphasis on religion, family and national identity. Indeed, most striking about the new books is how the various authoritative components are interlinked: God, nation, homeland and family all deserve loyalty and obedience ... Given the opportunity to write a comprehensive curriculum for the first time, the Palestinian educators inserted nationalist symbols in every conceivable location and illustration in the new books.<sup>349</sup>

The rise and fall of Abu-Lughod’s progressive Palestinian curriculum is strikingly reminiscent of Bar-Tal’s two ill-fated Israeli task forces on peace education.

A truly innovative Israeli-Palestinian peace education initiative entitled “Learning Each Other’s Historical Narrative” has won international acclaim, yet has been marginalized at home by both Ministries of Education.<sup>350</sup> The project, a series of dual-narrative historical

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<sup>347</sup> Kershner, “Teaching Kids not to Hate.”

<sup>348</sup> Posner, “Teaching Peace in a Time of War,” 329.

<sup>349</sup> Brown, “Contesting National Identity in Palestinian Education,” 233-234.

<sup>350</sup> Sami Adwan and Dan Bar-On (eds.), “Learning the Other’s Historical Narrative: Israelis and Palestinians” (Beit Jalla: PRIME, 2003, 2006). See also Adwan and Bar-On, “The Psychology of Better Dialogue Between Two Separate but Interdependent Narratives,” in *Israeli and Palestinian Narratives of Conflict*, ed. Rotberg, 205-224. See also Ned Lazarus, “Making Peace with the Duel of Narratives: Dual-Narrative Texts for Teaching the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict” *Israel Studies Forum* 23, no. 1 (2008): 107-124.

textbooks of the conflict edited by Professors Dan Bar-On and Sami Adwan, has been translated into six languages and honored with international peace education awards.<sup>351</sup> It has met with resistance, on the other hand, from the Israeli MOE.<sup>352</sup> In 2010, the chairman of the Israeli Ministry's Pedagogical Secretariat, Zvi Zameret, banned the book from Ministry high schools and censured a principal for allowing its use.<sup>353</sup> The PNA, for its part, initially attempted to use this Israeli refusal as an opportunity to present a peaceful image to international audiences – declaring that it had adopted the textbook for general use, when in fact it had been approved only for pilot use in two schools.<sup>354</sup> After this announcement appeared online, however, the PNA quickly rescinded its approval and withdrew students from a project involving the textbook, “under pressure.”<sup>355</sup>

In light of this record, the MOE relationships with SOP seem exceptionally positive on the surface. The Israeli MOE, in particular, has cooperated with SOP through Left and Right-leaning administrations, only once withdrawing endorsement of the program, and then only for a few months. The PNA Ministry, sensitive to the Palestinian societal taboo against

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<sup>351</sup> Lazarus, “Making Peace with the Duel of Narratives.”

<sup>352</sup> At a 2007 conference honoring the late Dr. Bar-On at Ben-Gurion University, he spoke of the Ministry of Education's response to the dual-narrative textbook project, saying: "When Sami [Adwan] and I started the dual narrative approach at PRIME in 2002, we intentionally avoided both our Ministries of Education and the Media as we felt that neither we nor the Ministries were ready to discuss implementing our new approach. However, one local journalist broke our strategy in 2004, and after a short time we got an angry letter from the Ministry, to each one of the teachers and their principals, which warned them not to use this approach in Israeli schools. Most disturbing was the argument the Ministry used: 'At these difficult times one should not expose our pupils to the narrative of the other side as they may become doubtful about the validity of their own narrative.' I felt ashamed near our Palestinian colleagues, that this is the educational approach of our Ministry, rather than encourage our pupils to question their own historical narrative, and clarify what is essential for their identity and what they are willing to reconsider, in light of the narrative of the Palestinians. I still hope that at some point our Ministry will become more future oriented in this aspect of its educational work." Received via email correspondence from Dr. Bar-On.

<sup>353</sup> Zvi Zameret, “A Distorted Historiography,” *Haaretz*, October 29, 2010, Accessed May 26, 2011, <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/opinion/a-distorted-historiography-1.321731>.

<sup>354</sup> Or Kashti, “PA Adopts Textbook Banned in Israel, Offering Both Sides' Narratives,” *Haaretz*, October 11, 2010, Accessed May 26, 2011, <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/pa-adopts-textbook-banned-in-israel-offering-both-sides-narratives-1.318307>.

<sup>355</sup> Or Kashti, “History Students Fight to Use Textbook Presenting Both Israeli and Palestinian Narratives,” *Haaretz*, October 25, 2010, Accessed May 26, 2011, <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/history-students-fight-to-use-textbook-presenting-both-israeli-and-palestinian-narratives-1.320983>.

“normalization” with Israel, has been less consistent – yet the PNA Ministry renewed cooperation with SOP after the first years of the *intifada*.<sup>356</sup> Posner notes that as an international organization, SOP was a more attractive partner for both Ministries, “because of the potential resources, leverage, and access that these ‘outsiders’ were perceived to have, which could be of benefit to Israeli and Palestinian government bodies.”<sup>357</sup>

In a sense, each party – the US peace organization and Israeli and Palestinian Ministries – chose to officially overlook incompatible elements of each other’s ideologies, in order to present a public image of enhanced local or international legitimacy. Yet at the ground level, Ministry educators, SOP staff, and Israeli and Palestinian participants all took these ideological differences seriously – and often consciously articulated the SOP/MOE relationship as a conflict. The remainder of this paper goes beyond the public images of cooperation projected by organization and Ministries, detailing the lived experience of this partnership and its consequences for SOP and Israeli and Palestinian participants. The strains began anew with the opening ritual of every SOP camp session, which symbolized the organization’s ambivalent relationship to participants’ national identities.

### *Flag-Raising: Seeds of Peace and the “National Question”*

At first glance, national flags dominate the entrance to the Seeds of Peace International Camp facility in Maine. The emblems of two dozen participant nations stand side-by-side on equally spaced fifteen-foot poles, planted prominently yet conspicuously *outside* the gates of camp. This spatial allegory defines the idealized place of nationality within

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<sup>356</sup> On “normalization,” see Walid Salem, “The Anti-Normalization Discourse in the Context of Israeli-Palestinian Peacebuilding” in *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture*, 12 (1): 2005, 100-109.

<sup>357</sup> Posner, “Teaching Peace in a Time of War,” 287.

the microcosm of SOP: National identities are to be granted formal and equal recognition – but checked at the door. The symbolic message is made explicit to initiates through the meticulously choreographed ritual that inaugurates every camp session:

The flag-raising ceremony, held at the gate of our camp, is actually the formal opening of the session... During this ceremony we raise the flags on high poles arranged in a semi-circle, while each corresponding delegation sings its national anthem. Every delegation applauds for the other national groups... At the end, we all sing the Seeds of Peace song together; raise the Seeds of Peace flag and then walk through the gate together, leaving our respected and recognized national flags outside the camp.<sup>358</sup>

The original choreographer, late SOP founder John Wallach, marked every such occasion with his own declarations of independence, starkly contrasting his vision of camp as an inclusive community against the divisive attachments to be “left outside.” Wallach reprised his flag-raising stump speech in a 1999 description of the ceremony’s climactic conclusion:

... [W]e march back through the iron gates and into the camp *as one*. We are all wearing the same T-shirts, and the occasion feels historic. We are leaving the flags and symbols outside and *creating our own nation*. This nation is governed not by hate and conflict, prejudice or ideology, but by the social norms that bring about honest, trusting relationships and discussions.<sup>359</sup>

SOP was thus conceived anew for each group of campers as a unified community defined by the transcendence of rigid national divisions, an exceptional time and space in which the “human” takes precedence over the “nation.”

The pageantry made an indelible impression. Years later, graduates can recount in vivid detail images witnessed and emotions experienced during flag-raising, their formative moments as “Seeds.” Yet their testimonies emphasize that far from leaving national differences behind, participation in SOP sometimes brought these into sharper relief.<sup>360</sup>

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<sup>358</sup> “International Camp 2009,” available at *Seeds of Peace*, Accessed February 4, 2010, <http://www.seedsofpeace.org/camp2009>.

<sup>359</sup> Wallach, *The Enemy Has a Face*, 34. Italics mine.

<sup>360</sup> Maddy-Weitzman, “Waging Peace in the Holy Land,”

Indeed, flag-raising itself tended to provoke profoundly different reactions along particular fault lines. The ceremony served well campers who belonged to dominant groups within internationally recognized nation-states or nationalist movements, who had flags to raise and anthems to sing. Most Israeli Jews and Palestinian participants from the OPT, for example, recall taking great pride in their patriotic performances and the applause of their historical enemies. The same ritual evoked markedly different emotions, however, for campers from the Palestinian minority in Israel (PCI). These youth recount “not knowing where to stand or what to sing” during flag-raising, which they associate with confusion, isolation and political pressure from Israeli MOE officials present at the scene.<sup>361</sup> The minority campers’ choices – whether to stand as Israelis, Palestinians, both, or neither – remained points of controversy in their relationships with Israeli officials for years to come.<sup>362</sup>

These opening rites were designed to spare Israeli and Palestinian majority participants such immediate crises of conscience. Yet equally profound dilemmas surrounding SOP membership confronted these youth upon return to the Middle East – growing increasingly acute with the inexorable approach of the Jewish-Israelis’ military conscription. Flag-raising was thus never the final word for graduates, but the first round of an extended tug-of-war between aspirations to embody “peacemaker” identities, promoted by SOP, and mutually exclusive national loyalties promoted by the Ministries of Education. Many graduates articulate the essence of “being a Seed” as perpetual negotiation, internal and external, of the boundaries and claims of “humanization” and nationalism. Asked what

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<sup>361</sup> Flag-raising raised difficulties for other delegations as well, especially among Balkan minority delegations such as ethnic Albanian participants from Macedonia, and ethnic Serb participants from Kosovo and Bosnia. The most serious conflict involved the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot delegations of 1998-2001. These groups did not participate in the ceremony, as any recognition of the symbols of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) constituted a criminal offense for Greek Cypriots at the time. These delegations deliberately arrived at camp a day late, after the ceremony’s conclusion.

<sup>362</sup> Maddy-Weitzman, “Waging Peace in the Holy Land.”

she learned at Seeds of Peace, one Arab graduate famously said, “to make peace with your enemy, you must go to war with yourself” – the “self” meaning the traditional concept of national identity.<sup>363</sup>

*Respect and Suspect: National Identity as Normative and Negative*

“Respect” is the ubiquitous keyword of official SOP discourse on national identity. But what is the substance of this “respect”? John Wallach’s rhetoric on the topic is rife with mixed messages, in which nationalism is simultaneously construed as normative and condemned as negative. Wallach’s statements are typified by a sequence in which acknowledgement of nationalism’s basic political legitimacy and psychological power is accompanied by implicit critique of its ethical content. He explains flag-raising, for example, as a pre-emptive measure, an inoculation against the outbreak of a nationalist backlash:

Were Seeds of Peace not to raise flags or to sing anthems and simply ban the display of flags within the campground, many youngsters would feel it necessary to assert constantly their national identity within the camp. But by standing at attention and focusing on campers from other countries as they raise their flags and sing their national anthems with gusto and pride, we convey a powerful message of respect for each camper’s national identity. When they see what they are fighting for is being expressed and accorded respect right from the start, the campers can *move forward*.<sup>364</sup>

Progress is thus framed as movement away from campers’ original attachments, toward their new “nation.” The professed respect appears of the jealous sort accorded a foe for fear of seductive or destructive potential, as implied in the Hebrew saying *kabdehu ve-khashdehu*:

“respect him and suspect him.” In SOP’s case, the approach derives as much from trial-and-

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<sup>363</sup> Wallach, *The Enemy Has a Face*.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid, 33. Emphasis mine.

error experience as theoretical concern.<sup>365</sup> In the initial 1993 and 1994 sessions, the appearance of flags and national symbols on campers' t-shirts and necklaces sparked tense confrontations between Arab and Israeli youth. From 1995 on, the program mandated the wearing of green SOP t-shirts at all times, and banning all nationalist jewelry, for the duration of camp.<sup>366</sup> It is ironic, but emblematic, that SOP came to clothe its own supra-national identity in the familiar apparel of nationalism – anthem, flag and uniform.<sup>367</sup>

This ambivalent approach to national identity is not *sui generis* to Seeds of Peace. It is rooted in classic Conflict Resolution theory and practice, the flag-raising ritual echoing Kelman's strategy for "problem-solving workshops" with Israeli and Palestinians: Begin by validating the embattled national identities, in order to enable participants to "move beyond" them.<sup>368</sup> The normative/negative approach to national identity is thus more than rhetorical motif at SOP. It is genetic code, permeating organizational structure, program practice and participant experience. Indeed, SOP's relationships with participants are conducted from the start along dual, distinct and often divergent individual and national tracks.

Valuing the legitimacy conferred by governmental approval, SOP established partnerships with the Israeli government and PNA, conducted via the respective Ministries of Education. In Wallach's words, "Having the governments select their participants gives each delegation an official imprimatur that is important to the goals of Seeds of Peace."<sup>369</sup> As Posner explains, SOP describes this as perfectly consistent with the program's objectives:

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<sup>365</sup> Herbert C. Kelman, "Interactive Conflict Resolution: Micro-process and Macro-process" (Presentation to graduate seminar, Cambridge, MA, November 11, 2009).

<sup>366</sup> Gottschalk.

<sup>367</sup> Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage Publications, 1995). Wallach writes that "when it works, [SOP] becomes a real community, a safe community, with its own anthem, flag, T-shirt and smiling faces." (*The Enemy Has a Face*, 23).

<sup>368</sup> Herbert C. Kelman, "Evaluating the Contributions of Interactive Problem-Solving to the Resolution of Ethnonational Conflicts," *Peace and Conflict* 14 (2008), 29-60.

<sup>369</sup> Wallach, *The Enemy Has a Face*, 8.

In addition to the benefits of having governments run the Seeds of Peace delegation selection process, ideally strong government relations allow the Seeds themselves to enjoy a larger umbrella of popular support for their participation with such a forward-thinking organization. In other words, Seeds of Peace's close relationship to government may allow these teenagers to internalize and believe that they can both be a part of such an organization and still be a good citizen to their respective country and people. The two are not mutually exclusive.<sup>370</sup>

Israeli and Palestinian participants are selected and prepared for camp by their respective Ministries; they arrive at camp as members of separate national delegations, escorted by adult "delegation leaders" (DLs) who are usually Ministry officials. In deference to its partnership with participant governments, the organization formally recognizes the "sovereignty" of these delegations outside the SOP context, as symbolized by the flag-raising ceremony.

Within its own "territory," by contrast, the organization commits to relate to participants as equal members, human beings, individuals, "Seeds" – in essence, as "nationals" of SOP. When invoked, this commitment challenges the authority of the Ministries of Education over "their" delegates, and indeed contradicts a core assumption of their pedagogy – that national loyalties are always primary, if not exclusive. In the flag-raising allegory, the organization's dual commitments are portrayed as complementary; in practice, SOP staff and MOE officials have often interpreted them as competitive or contradictory. In theory, the camp gate constitutes a clear boundary between the spheres of organizational and governmental authority. In practice, the American organization and its Israeli and Palestinian interlocutors have perennially disputed each other's territory, in Maine and the Middle East, with participants often left hanging in the balance.

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<sup>370</sup> Posner, "Teaching Peace in a Time of War," 202.

*Territorial Conflict: The SOP/MOE Dynamic*

From the camp, the message was that the delegation leaders are idiots, who are trying to sabotage the process. This was very clear... disdain for the delegation leaders... They don't understand something that we understand. You're torn between two contradictory pressures – messages to listen, messages that their undertone is very peacenikky, and the message from the delegation leaders to fight for our own, not surrender, prove ourselves, not to apologize for things we didn't do.

– *Einav*, Israeli graduate

The respect/suspect relationship between SOP and the Ministries of Education was mutual. At camp, the Ministry-selected delegation leaders (DLs) acted as a peculiar type of chaperone, often assuming a role of policing boundaries of identity and relationship among the campers, and attempting to enforce the “ethos of conflict” among their delegations. Like Wallach, the Ministries seemed to see SOP as a way to train young “ambassadors” – but ambassadors of Israel or Palestine rather than “peace.”<sup>371</sup> Those youth who implemented SOP's vision of their mission as “Seeds” – by building genuine cross-conflict friendships, publicly legitimizing the other side's grievances, or questioning their own side's policies – risked the censure of their chaperones, who generally exhorted participants to represent the national consensus and not their personal opinions. For precisely the same actions, the same youth elicited praise and encouragement from SOP staff, as well as selections to represent SOP to visiting donors and media crews. As the next section illustrates, an adversarial dynamic between SOP staff and MOE delegation leaders quickly developed into an expected part of the program.

In SOP's initial summers, delegation leaders circulated freely at camp, stopping by activities and engaging their delegates in conversation on a daily basis. Yet after a number of

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<sup>371</sup> A propos, an Israeli reality TV program called “The Ambassador” invites contestants to compete to represent Israel to foreign audiences. See Sebastian Usher, “Reality TV works on Israel's Image”, Accessed June 19, 2010, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/4036051.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/4036051.stm); see also *Hashagrir* (“The Ambassador”), Accessed June 19, 2010, <http://www.keshet-tv.com/hashagrir/default.aspx>. An Israeli SOP graduate was first runner-up in one year's competition.

tense incidents, the program came to see this contact as counterproductive. By 1995, SOP instituted policies strictly limiting DL contact with campers to biweekly delegation meetings and selected all-camp events. The organization established a separate DL activity program involving multiple sightseeing and shopping excursions outside camp. This DL program did evolve to include substantive educational content of its own; its original purpose, however, was simply to distance DLs from camp and campers.<sup>372</sup>

In the same token, the SOP staff began to interpret dissension between campers and DLs as a positive sign. SOP Co-Founder and longtime Vice President Barbara Gottschalk often related the following story as a parable of progress, narrated here by Wallach:

In August 1993, before anyone knew about the secret negotiations being held between Israel and the PLO in Oslo, ABC-TV's 'Good Morning, America' sent a crew to [camp] to do a live segment from the shores of the lake. It was the fourth day of our first summer... during the interview, one of the Israelis took a hard line against the creation of a Palestinian state. But Yehoyada, the other Israeli, said, 'I think the Palestinians should have their own land.' Afterward, he was proud of what he had said. But this concept, that Palestinians deserved a state, contradicted his government's position. When reports arrived later that day about what 'Yoyo' had said, the Israeli delegation leader berated him. He even called him a traitor.

'When I found Yoyo he had been crying for a couple of hours,' recalled Barbara Gottschalk. 'I asked him to stand up. I took him by two arms and held him tight, and I said, 'Yoyo, don't you ever let anyone else tell you what to say. If you had said the opposite of what you said, it would have been all right with us. It doesn't matter to us what you said. What is important is that you said what was in your mind and in your heart.' That was a major turning point for him. He told his delegation leader that he would not retreat, that he was sorry if it had caused embarrassment, but he believed in what he had said. Two days later, news of the secret Oslo talks became public. The networks reported that there were plans for Israel's prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin, and the PLO's chairman, Yasser Arafat, to meet. They would, the

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<sup>372</sup> "[SOP] schedules numerous activities—including Outward Bound adventures, trips to historic sites, lectures on facets of American democracy, home visits with citizens of nearby Otisfield and Casco—designed to foster close relationships among the delegation leaders. At an American camp, parents are permitted to visit only on two or three designated days every summer. For us, too, it is vital that the Arab and Israeli youngsters have their own space and freedom to interact without adults looking over their shoulder. Over the years we have reached a healthy compromise between the delegation leaders' desire to be with their delegation leaders and the youngsters' need for time to interact with one another. Each delegation leader meets twice a week with his or her entire group and is welcome to share occasional meals with the youngsters and attend the daily... "lineup," when the entire camp gathers"—Wallach, *The Enemy Has a Face*, 22.

reports said, sign a document that could lead to eventual statehood for Palestinians. ‘See, my government agrees with me,’ declared Yoyo. His courage to think and speak for himself had paid off.<sup>373</sup>

The story reflects the self-conception that emerged among SOP staff – as providers of emotional support for young pioneers against their reactionary elders, defenders of their freedoms of thought and speech. In addition to providing legitimacy for SOP in the Middle East, the Ministries of Education provided foils for the American staff to build a heroic self-image. While serving their original purpose of representing SOP’s validation of national identities, the DLs also became convenient straw men for its critique of nationalism.<sup>374</sup>

Accordingly, the SOP leadership began to describe the subversion of their Ministry partners’ ideology as an essential part of the educational process. Wallach overtly frames the MOE and SOP as pedagogical opponents:

[T]he respective governments prepare their teenagers to continue the ideological struggle fought for generations by their leaders. Governments view the program as coaches might a soccer game – they coach their side to win. This attitude colors the selection process, with youngsters being chosen not merely for their English-language facility but also for their ability to defend their nation’s policies and positions. Each government now holds pre-camp retreats, usually lasting for a few days, at which senior officials brief the delegation and caution them not to say anything that might be embarrassing to the people back home. More than one government has warned its delegates that it will know, presumably from other teenagers in the group, if any of them challenge the official position. Thus, one of our greatest challenges is to coax these youngsters to think for themselves.<sup>375</sup>

Numerous graduates remember the Ministry-led pre-camp preparation seminars in terms that match Wallach’s description – portraying the encounter as a zero-sum battle of historical narratives. As one Palestinian graduate recalled:

That was the number one call [by the MOE], to show the Israelis why they’re wrong, why they’re occupiers, why they’re immoral, why they are aggressive and to show

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<sup>373</sup> Wallach, *The Enemy Has a Face*, 31.

<sup>374</sup> Quote from an Israeli graduate: “It was clear that the cool thing was to go the SOP way. The delegation leaders were a burden. That was the undertone that we got from the camp, about how to treat them.”

<sup>375</sup> Wallach, *The Enemy Has a Face*, 21.

them how the Palestinians are victims of their occupation, how much we've suffered, in both quality and quantity of suffering, and we were focusing before we came on how to have the most, the damaging impact in a way on the other side to show them how bad they are. How bad their countrymen are, their army is, how bad their government is, why their existence in that land is purely wrong and they should leave it because they've stolen our land. That was pretty much the mission, to go to [SOP] and do all these things...

To show the Arab countries, the Israelis, the Americans, what we have gone through as Palestinians and how much we've suffered and not just suffered on our personal level of we're 14 and 15 year old students and kids but to go back historically and prove that we had the right and we were the victims at every stage whether we were talking about 73 or 67 or 48 or 1936, 21, 18 and all the way to Balfour declaration and the Ottoman Empire. We were going to show them that Palestinians were always the victims of somebody else's agenda and at the same time we still have the right to, we are the ones that have the right to live in this land, period, and everybody else can take their bags up. And of course you get to the camp and you're eager to see the Israelis and you're eager to tell them...

You're going to put your case, you wanna exaggerate your living and what you've gone through and we were eager to sit down in the co-existence sessions and tell them look you came, you were Jews and you came from Europe and it's not our fault, it's Hitler's fault, that he was the one committing all the crimes against you and we even acknowledged the Holocaust for you, but he was alone, this is not our business. We have nothing to do with anything that you have gone through and now you're doing the same thing that you suffered to us. This is, of course, in a way it's a very basic argument and any child can tell you this, but as children that was our mission to say you have inflicted so much suffering on us and we're here to tell you about it.

According to Wallach, SOP welcomed the collision that the Ministry indoctrination ensured.

Just as each government trained delegates to defeat the other side in a zero-sum debate, SOP saw its victory in campers' challenges to their own governments.

SOP's successful confrontation with militant nationalism evolved from a theme of internal discourse into a staple of public relations rhetoric, conflating the politics of campers and DLs in the process. According to this meme, the alleged recruitment of hard-line youth granted the program an aura of *gravitas*, contradicting criticisms of "preaching to the converted." "So you're deliberately taking hard-line, militant youth," Morley Safer asks

Wallach in his 1998 piece for *60 Minutes*, “unshakeable in their convictions?” Wallach nods approvingly as Safer answers his own question: “And you think you can shake them.”<sup>376</sup> In the same interview, juxtaposed against images of Israeli and Palestinian teens embracing each other, Wallach assumes a tone of tough authenticity, declaring, “This is not a left-wing, peace organization. We don’t simply plant a tree, sing a song, and call it peace.”<sup>377</sup> The contentious partnership with the Ministries, above all else, lent credibility to this claim.<sup>378</sup>

*Enforcing the Ethos of Conflict: MOE Resistance to SOP*

Wallach’s assessment of the ostensibly militant politics of SOP participants is certainly overstated. The Ministries effectively assembled delegations representing a range of mainstream secular nationalist opinion in their societies, with most participants falling on the spectrum from moderately Left to moderately Right of Center. His description of the Ministries’ scare tactics, however, is unfortunately not exaggerated. It is crucial to emphasize here that the majority of individual DLs personally treated campers with affection and respect, and never attempted to coerce, humiliate, intimidate or silence them – those who did were exceptions to the rule. They were, however, powerful exceptions. Dominant figures at both Ministries bullied and intimidated participants, openly and repeatedly, at pre-camp preparation seminars and meetings in the Middle East, and at camp in Maine.

“I have eyes and ears everywhere,” a PNA Director-General of Education in the West Bank warned Palestinian participants on multiple occasions, “and I will know if you are

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<sup>376</sup> “Give Peace A Chance,” *60 Minutes* (CBS News October 11, 1998).

<sup>377</sup> Ibid.

<sup>378</sup> “Having the governments select their participants gives each delegation an official imprimatur that is important to the goals of Seeds of Peace. But even more important, the governments’ hands-on involvement has helped ensure that those selected are not chiefly from families that are already ideologically disposed to dovish or liberal causes... It is important for us to receive as many youngsters from right-wing or conservative backgrounds as from more tolerant or liberal perspectives”—Wallach, *The Enemy Has a Face*, 8-9.

making *friends* with *them*.”<sup>379</sup> This Director-General used her direct authority over school principals in the West Bank to penalize and reprimand participants who crossed the party line. One active Palestinian SOP participant, Yara, recalled being publicly condemned on multiple occasions for her enthusiastic involvement in the program:

After [camp], there was a meeting of all the “Seeds” in Ramallah [at the MOE]. [The PNA official] said, “Certain people, they lost themselves, they got changed, but don’t follow the example of these people,” and she pointed at me. She was the Director General of the Ministry of Education... Because I wanted to travel to Jordan with SOP, they talked about it on the loudspeaker in school. They said, in the middle of the school day, that the director general of the Ministry of Education forbids anyone to go to programs with Israelis because it’s not what a decent citizen would do.

Another Palestinian SOP participant recalled being publicly condemned by local education officials, humiliated and failed by her teachers. She complained to no avail, saw her grades and confidence suffer, and eventually sought refuge by studying abroad.

At the Israeli Ministry, SOP’s chief liaison is remembered by multiple Israeli SOP participants for a record of insults, threats and exclusionary measures aimed at two targets: Arab-Israeli delegates whose politics appeared too Palestinian, and Jewish-Israelis whose politics veered too far Left, especially the minority who considered conscientious objection from military service. At camp, a number of PCI campers reported that Israeli DLs threatened to report them to the Israeli internal security services (*Shabak*) in retaliation for allegedly subversive activities, often related to refusal to sing the Israeli anthem during the flag-raising ceremony.<sup>380</sup> The chief MOE liaison spoke with open contempt toward Jewish youth who expressed any doubt regarding military service, once stating that an Israeli girl who had declared herself a pacifist had no right to stand by the Israeli flag. Nonetheless,

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<sup>379</sup> Direct quote from speech delivered at pre-camp preparation seminar at the Ministry of Education in Ramallah; I was present, understood and requested translation from Palestinian participants for assurance.

<sup>380</sup> *Shabak* is the Hebrew acronym for General Security Services (also *Shin Bet*), the state’s internal secret police.

both Ministries maintained their relationships with SOP, in each case continuing to select participants and return to camp for multiple sessions.

When rebuked by DLs, participants frequently appealed to SOP staff, who faithfully played the supporting role prescribed in Gottschalk's parable. Gottschalk and other staff earned the ire of MOE officials by repeatedly rewarding the same youth with speaking tours, prestigious meetings with world leaders, and coveted return trips to camp as Peer Supports. At the individual level, SOP staff acted to empower participants who voluntarily defied the boundaries set by their respective educational authorities. At the institutional level, however, the organization consistently prioritized its MOE partnerships, sometimes more than the Ministries themselves. Over the years, both Ministries threatened repeatedly to withdraw from the program, and did so temporarily after the outbreak of the second *intifada*. Yet Seeds of Peace, by contrast, perennially sought to renew its partnerships with them, with no mention of their repeated patterns of participant intimidation.<sup>381</sup>

Both Ministries chafed against core aspects of SOP's philosophy and program. Both sometimes resorted to bullying tactics against delegates, "making examples" of individual youth in order to enforce boundaries of identity and loyalty upon their delegations. Both saw dialogue and media as forums for essentially zero-sum advocacy of nationalist narratives, and protested what they considered biased representations of the conflict by staff or participants. In these aspects, the two Ministries behaved as mirror images.

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<sup>381</sup> The chief institutional liaison to Seeds of Peace since 1993 is the Ministry's Youth and Society Administration (Hebrew: *Minhal Khevrah v'Noar*). It has been repeatedly criticized by students for authoritarian behavior, in *Yediot Abarot* in 2004 and *Ma'ariv La-Noar* in 2009, in each case by elected youth leaders of the Ministry's National Youth Council (*Moetzet Ha'Noar Ha'Artziti*), which the Youth and Society Administration supervises. See Moran Zelikovitz, "Moetzet Ha-Talmidim Matzigah: HaMordim," *Yediot Abarot*, June 22, 2004, Accessed June 11, 2011, <http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-2935970,00.html>.

At the same time, each Ministry's most heated confrontations with SOP and dissident "Seeds" erupted consistently over distinct "red line" issues, which were specific to each national group. For the Palestinian Ministry, appearing to enforce the social/political taboo against *tatbi'a* or "normalization" with Israel was of utmost concern. SOP celebrated cross-conflict friendship, as embodied by Wallach's signature "Make one friend" slogan at camp, and by SOP staff's assistance with cross-checkpoint home visits for graduates in the Middle East; all of this was anathema to top officials at the Palestinian Ministry.<sup>382</sup> For the Israeli MOE, the flashpoints were absolute support for military service among Jewish youth, and suppression of Palestinian identification among Arab minority delegates. Though the organization took pains to avoid taking official stands on these issues, the mere willingness of SOP staff to lend a listening ear to Arab and Jewish youth struggling with these dilemmas was treated as a bitter affront by the Israeli Ministry, which threatened to withdraw support from the organization over the issues. While the substance of their concerns was quite different, both Ministries seemed to perceive their respective red line issues as "internal affairs," and SOP's involvement akin to a violation of national sovereignty.

In a similar vein, both Ministries resented and sometimes resisted the expansion of SOP programming to include independent year-round activities in the Middle East. They protested at different times, in different terms. The Israeli MOE opposed Israeli Seeds' visits to Arab friends on security grounds, condemning homestay trips to the West Bank, Egypt and Jordan when SOP did not agree to bring armed Israeli escorts to Arab Seeds' homes.<sup>383</sup>

The Ministry went so far as to send official letters to parents, denouncing the trips as

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<sup>382</sup> See Salem, "The Anti-Normalization Discourse."

<sup>383</sup> It is important to note that the visits to the West Bank occurred before the outbreak of the second *intifada*, in safe conditions, and that when bringing Israelis to Egypt or Jordan, SOP coordinated security with Jordanian and Egyptian governments. Participant security was of primary concern to SOP, as a single cross-border security incident would likely have spelled the end of the regional program and possibly the organization.

dangerous and urging them not to send their children. The Palestinian MOE protested in terms of *tabbi'a*, publicly rebuking Palestinian Seeds for visiting Israeli homes and schools, and refusing to excuse students from school for joint trips to Egypt or Jordan or overnight workshops in Israel.<sup>384</sup> While phrased in different terms, the Ministries' separate protests echoed a common note: What SOP celebrated as young peacemakers crossing borders and breaking down boundaries, the Ministries treated as infringement upon their territory. And while their protests failed to stop SOP from building an independent follow-up program in the Middle East, or to prevent hundreds of youth from participating in joint activities, their efforts gradually contributed to consequential rifts within the American organization.

#### *Asymmetrical Leverage: MOE Influence on SOP*

While they proved unable to mediate their young recruits' relationships to each other and SOP, the Ministries did succeed in fueling debates among graduates and within SOP's American staff and leadership. The Israeli and Palestinian Ministries' roles in this aspect were substantively different, as dictated by the dramatic and pervasive asymmetries of power that characterize the bilateral Israeli-Palestinian and trilateral American-Israeli-Palestinian relationships. The Palestinian MOE, initially established only in 1996, was a hastily assembled department of a nascent, sub-sovereign "National Authority," governing a discontinuous archipelago of occupied territories, suspected of corruption by its people, the

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<sup>384</sup> In a notable incident, the Palestinian MOE refused to excuse students for an overnight workshop upon learning that the students would be housed on an Israeli *kibbutz*, or collective agricultural settlement. The kibbutz was located in the Arava desert, in territory that was not previously settled by Palestinians and is not claimed by the PLO—however, the Ministry expressed concern that the term kibbutz was offensive in itself.

Israeli state, and the mediating US government, and respected by none of the above.<sup>385</sup> The Israeli MOE, by contrast, was a well-established bureaucratic arm of the most economically, educationally, militarily and technologically developed state in its region, which maintained control over the airspace, borders, and resources of the PNA territory and enjoyed the diplomatic advantages of a decades-long “special relationship” with the United States.<sup>386</sup> Given these vast disparities of capacity and American connections, the two Ministries employed distinct strategies vis-à-vis SOP. Nonetheless, both Ministries sought and found ways to effectively “push back.”

Within the SOP organizational structure, the Palestinian Ministry’s influence was parochial but consequential. Lacking any experience, networks, or social, cultural or political capital in the SOP leadership’s elite American (and predominantly Jewish) milieu, Palestinian Ministry officials exerted influence solely through their localized authority, and largely in the negative. As a US-led “people-to-people” initiative, SOP was a suspect entity in Palestinian society, easily framed as an arm of US or Israeli policy, and subject to the chronic “legitimacy deficit” that plagued joint peacebuilding endeavors at the time.<sup>387</sup> Thus, the Palestinian MOE’s only effective leverage was its ability to affect perceptions of SOP within the Palestinian community; its primary modes of influence were threatening or refusing to recruit new delegations, and dissuading Palestinian graduates from follow-up participation. These efforts had some effect, especially during the *intifada*, though it was blunted by the

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<sup>385</sup> Posner, “Teaching Peace in a Time of War.” On the sub-sovereign status of the PNA and asymmetry vis-à-vis Israel, see Weinberger, *Co-Opting the PLO: A Critical Reconstruction of the Oslo Accords 1993-95* (New York: Lexington, 2005).

<sup>386</sup> See Aaron David Miller, “Israel’s Lawyer,” *Washington Post*, May 23, 2005.

<sup>387</sup> Avivit Hai and Shira Herzog, *The Power of Possibility: The Role of People-to-People Programs in the Current Israeli-Palestinian Reality* (Herzliya: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2005); author interview with Avivit Hai, June 2006.

continuing desire of sufficient numbers of Palestinian families to send children to camp, and of sufficient numbers of graduate Seeds to participate, regardless of Ministry policy.

The Israeli Ministry faced greater limitations in its efforts to prevent or limit popular participation in SOP programs. Both US leadership and joint “people-to-people” initiatives enjoyed substantially higher degrees of legitimacy in Israeli society, leaving the Israeli MOE less influential over public perceptions of SOP than its Palestinian counterpart. Thus, despite receiving official letters of disapproval from the Ministry, Israeli SOP parents still sent hundreds of their children on visits to the West Bank, and seven SOP homestay trips to Egypt and Jordan between 1998-2000.<sup>388</sup> The relative weakness of the Israeli Ministry’s influence over SOP’s public legitimacy was most dramatically illustrated at the outbreak of the second *intifada*. In response to the escalation of the conflict, both Ministries of Education attempted to go on “strike” from SOP summer camp, refusing to recruit delegations in 2001. Both Ministries also eventually resumed participation, after SOP managed without them for a period. However, in the Israeli case, the boycott lasted weeks and with little effect; in the Palestinian case, the boycott and its effects lasted years.

In Israel, John Wallach quickly broke the MOE boycott by mobilizing two key Israeli supporters: Haifa mayor Amram Mitzna and *Haaretz* journalist Ori Nir.<sup>389</sup> Mitzna responded to the Ministry’s decision by immediately announcing that the city of Haifa would independently recruit Arab and Jewish youth to serve as that year’s Israeli delegation at SOP. Nir published an op-ed lambasting the Ministry, stating that, “refusing to go to Seeds of

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<sup>388</sup> Author’s participant observation.

<sup>389</sup> Amram Mitzna was mayor of Haifa from 1993-2003, a Labor Party MK from 2002-2003, and Labor Party national chairman and prime ministerial candidate in the 2003 election campaign. Ori Nir served in 2001 as an Arab Affairs correspondent for *Ha’aretz*, going on to serve as Washington Bureau Chief for *Ha’aretz* and then for the *Forward* newspaper, before becoming national director of Americans for Peace Now.

Peace because there's a conflict is like refusing to go to the doctor because we're sick."<sup>390</sup>

Soon after, the Israeli Ministry reversed its decision and belatedly endorsed the Haifa delegation, sending DLs and resuming participant selection for 2002. In the PNA, by contrast, despite receiving personal endorsements from PNA President Arafat and PLO Chief Negotiator Saeb Erekat, SOP failed to recruit a Palestinian delegation in 2001, and the PNA Ministry of Education refused to return to participant selection until 2004. In the intervening years, Al-Quds University President Sari Nusseibeh, a former PNA official himself and prominent Palestinian advocate of dialogue, personally intervened to maintain Palestinian participation in SOP:

I discovered that one of the sectors that was least favoring of cooperation with Israelis, even in the hey-day of Oslo when there was cooperation between security and political sectors, was the academic and education sector . . . More recently, I know that the Palestinian Ministry of Education is not favorable to cooperative projects, which is why IPCRI, Seeds of Peace, and other such organizations have had to work only with the Palestinian private schools.<sup>391</sup>

Al-Quds University recruited a Palestinian delegation of youth from East Jerusalem in 2002, which expanded to include West Bank youth selected by local Fatah youth councils in 2003. These efforts produced Palestinian delegations endorsed by Arafat, yet perceived as partially illegitimate in Palestinian society, and indeed by some older Palestinian SOP alumni.

However, in stark contrast to its Palestinian counterpart, the Israeli Ministry asserted a powerful voice *inside* Seeds of Peace, its officials confidently and persistently advocating a clearly defined agenda in their relations with the organization. SOP's American leadership felt compelled to acknowledge and negotiate Israeli MOE demands, if not – at least during SOP founder John Wallach's decade as President of the organization – to accede to them.

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<sup>390</sup> Ori Nir, "Dialogue? Not in the Ministry of Education," *Haaretz* June 19, 2001, Hebrew ("Dialog? Lo Ba-Misrad Ha-Khinukh").

<sup>391</sup> Quoted in Posner, "Teaching Peace While Living War," 139.

When Wallach proved resistant on key issues, the Ministry countered by building an influential support network on SOP's Board of Directors, effectively lobbying powerful Board members of declared pro-Israel political sympathies. As a whole, the dynamics between SOP and its Israeli and Palestinian official partners bear a striking resemblance to the imbalances chronicled by observers of the Track One process, longtime US negotiator and eventual SOP President Aaron David Miller prominent among them.<sup>392</sup> This section will conclude with an assessment of the Israeli Ministry's efforts to affect SOP policy at this level, and the organization's changing responses over time.

#### *A Shifting Balance of Power: The Israeli MOE and SOP*

Attempts by the Israeli MOE to control the content, staffing and participant populations of dialogue programs are not without precedent. Abu-Nimer reports the occurrence of widespread MOE intervention in 1980s Arab-Jewish coexistence programs in Israel.<sup>393</sup> At the time, these programs were often funded or supervised, in whole or part, by the Ministry's Unit for Democracy and Coexistence Education.<sup>394</sup> The Unit applied its bureaucratic and financial leverage to keep political content firmly within the bounds of

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<sup>392</sup> Aaron David Miller, "Israel's Lawyer," *Washington Post*, January 22, 2005; see also A.D. Miller, *The Too Much Promised Land: America's Elusive Search for Arab-Israeli Peace* (New York: Bantam, 2009).

<sup>393</sup> Abu-Nimer, *Dialogue, Conflict Resolution and Change*.

<sup>394</sup> The Israeli Ministry of Education and Culture's Unit for Democracy and Coexistence was founded in 1986 (Abu-Nimer, *Dialogue Conflict Resolution and Change*, 61). It was re-oriented to include religious Jewish content and renamed the Department for Values Education (Hebrew: *Minhal La-Khinukh 'Erki*) in 1996, under the leadership of Education Minister Zevulun Hammer of the National Religious Party (NRP), appointed by the government of Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, before being closed in 1999. See Anshel Pfeffer, "What are They Learning There? And why is this Subject Considered Dangerous?" (Hebrew: "Mah Hem Lomidim Sham? Ve-Lamah Nekhsav Ha-Miktzo'a Ha-Zeh Mesaken?"), *Haaretz*, December 28, 2003, Accessed July 9, 2011, <http://www.haaretz.co.il/hasite/pages/ShArtSR.jhtml?itemNo=376886&objNo=54775&returnParam=Y>; See also Michal Barak, "Civic Education in Israel," *Adalah Electronic Newsletter* (18), September 2005 (Hebrew: *Khinukh Ezraki Be-Yisrael*), Accessed, March 22, 2010, <http://www.adalah.org/newsletter/heb/sep05/ar1.pdf>.

mainstream Israeli discourse, to discourage expressions of Palestinian identity by Arab facilitators and participants, and to discipline or dismiss those who challenged these limits.

In its partnership with SOP, the Israeli Ministry's interventions focused on identical issues, and took similar forms to the behavior of the Unit for Democracy and Coexistence in the 1980s. Ministry representatives never failed to raise three core issues in annual contract renewal discussions with SOP, negotiating for: a) veto power over the selection of Israeli participants for SOP speaking tours or the chance to return to SOP camp as a "Peer Support" (PS), an opportunity granted to roughly one-quarter of alumni; b) influence over the content and staffing of the dialogue program at camp; c) influence over the content and staffing of regional activities. In discussions with SOP leadership, MOE officials regularly identified by name individual campers or SOP staff whom they considered problematic.

In comparison to its decisive influence over Israeli coexistence initiatives of the 1980s, the Israeli Ministry's leverage over SOP was initially limited. As a prominent American organization, bolstered by Wallach's ties with top officials and prized for its public relations value to all three governments, SOP was not compelled to accept Ministry dictates. The relationship was instead one of complex interdependence, characterized by an ongoing process of negotiations surrounding a core set of disputes, resulting in temporary settlements but never permanent resolution. Over the years, however, MOE officials steadily increased their bargaining power by building personal relationships with key members of SOP's Board of Directors. In retrospect, patterns of negotiating behavior are easily discernible, pointing to each side's priorities and strategies and, over time, to a gradual shift in the balance of power.

During John Wallach's decade as SOP President (1993-2002), the organization consistently held its ground on certain issues, and made minor concessions to appease the

Ministry on others. SOP never acceded to perennial MOE requests that delegation leaders be granted access to the campers' dialogue sessions.<sup>395</sup> Matters of participant selection were typically settled through bargaining, with SOP granting the Ministry the right to name a few, but never most of facilitators, PS's, or conference delegates. On the Ministry's most contentious demands – to determine SOP staffing, or to veto participants selected to return to camp as PS's – the organization compiled a mixed record. Wallach employed a consistent strategy to deflect MOE campaigns to remove specific staff, or veto PS selections on political grounds. To avoid revoking PS status from active graduates who were valued by SOP but deplored by the Ministry, Wallach would add extra PS slots slated for youth who met MOE approval. To avoid firing competent, internally popular staff, Wallach would hire new employees more to the Ministry's liking, and grant the new hires immediate authority over their colleagues.

This pattern was most evident in regards to SOP staffing in the Middle East. SOP sent new “regional” directors to Jerusalem in 1998, 1999, 2001, and 2002, all the while retaining the same core staff and follow-up activities of which the Ministry disapproved. In each case, the MOE was ultimately unsatisfied with the results. Two of these appointees left after abbreviated terms. The others “went native,” supporting and in one case expanding the existing regional program, and becoming a *bête noire* to the Ministry in the process. In the final instance, a pair of Arab and Jewish MOE employees simultaneously served as integral parts of the SOP staff. Initially hired in 1997 as camp facilitators in order to assuage MOE concerns in Maine, the pair went on to facilitate for SOP in the Middle East, and in 2002 were abruptly named co-directors of SOP's Jerusalem Center. Ironically, it only then became

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<sup>395</sup> Author's interview with Barbara Gottschalk and participant observation of SOP/MOE negotiations.

apparent that this pair's long service on SOP staff had undermined their identification with the Ministry. As directors of the Jerusalem Center, they made no major changes, opting instead to preserve follow-up programs, policies and staff of which the Ministry disapproved, but which they had personally come to support.

Nevertheless, SOP's placing of salaried MOE employees in charge of its Middle East headquarters was an unmistakable indication of the shifting tides. For ten years, Wallach had publicly touted SOP's refusal of funding from participant governments, cautioning that such funds would come "with strings attached."<sup>396</sup> Clearly, the Israeli MOE found alternative ways to attach strings.

After Wallach was diagnosed with terminal cancer in the summer of 2000, SOP's resistance to the Israeli Ministry's longstanding demands seemed to weaken parallel to his condition. In the summer of 2002, SOP agreed for the first time to cancel PS selections of graduates, two Arab and one Jewish, due to Ministry disapproval of their politics. SOP's Jerusalem program staff protested to no avail. At the last minute, the decision was reversed and the youth reinstated – after their parents threatened to convene a press conference.

For the MOE, the setback was temporary. The Ministry's persistent campaigns bore fruit after Wallach succumbed to cancer in July 2002, in a radical restructuring of SOP staff and programs in concert with longstanding MOE demands. In ensuing years, SOP staff of whom the Ministry disapproved were distanced from the Middle East or fired altogether, and regional programs tailored to Ministry specifications.<sup>397</sup> As Posner explains, Wallach's successor as SOP President, longtime US diplomat Aaron David Miller, ruled in 2004 that "Seeds of Peace was to function according to the laws set by the Israeli and Palestinian

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<sup>396</sup> Wallach, *The Enemy Has a Face*, 8.

<sup>397</sup> Author's participant observation, communications and interviews with SOP staff.

governments and never work to undermine them, period. This held true no matter how much Seeds of Peace, or its constituents, disagreed with the government rules in principle.”<sup>398</sup>

The struggle between the poles embodied by SOP and the Israeli and Palestinian Ministries has not ended, however. It finds ongoing expression in the internal dialogues of Israeli and Palestinian graduates who remained active in SOP or peacebuilding, for years after camp. The ensuing chapters will explore their dilemmas, experiences and reflections on the meaning of peacebuilding and SOP participation in their unique national contexts.

### Conclusions

As explained previously, Allport’s “contact hypothesis” states that “societal support” is one of four essential conditions that must be fulfilled for intergroup encounter programs to succeed. Typically, such support means an intergroup initiative should obtain the explicit support of local authorities.<sup>399</sup> SOP’s strategy of pursuing partnerships with the Israeli and PNA Ministries is, therefore, theoretically grounded. However, in terms of SOP’s stated goals and the practical experience of youth participants, the fractious nature of SOP-Ministry relations makes it unclear whether these partnerships perform that theoretical function at all. As illustrated above, dominant figures in each MOE consistently used their roles within the program to defy its stated goals and contest the value content of peace education – thereby undermining, rather than strengthening, the sense of legitimacy among youth participants.

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<sup>398</sup> Posner, “Teaching Peace in a Time of War,” 207.

<sup>399</sup> Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*; Pettigrew, “Intergroup Contact Theory.”

In his 1999 study of “coexistence” programs in Israel, Abu-Nimer warns that, “Governmental support for such activities should be carefully viewed and weighed. Most of the governments in such a context are controlled and dominated by policymakers who... are in charge of exclusion policies and ideologies. Thus, encounter and dialogue programs can be easily manipulated to meet the interest of such governmental policymakers.”<sup>400</sup> In a 2006 comparative study of SOP and other leading Israeli-Palestinian peace education initiatives, Posner concludes that in the Middle East context, “peace education NGOs may in fact be more successful if they work outside of the formal institutions and structures. This is because these state structures are often not supportive of peace anyway.”<sup>401</sup> Posner recommends that peace education initiatives strive to constitute a “third space,” an alternative to the status quo. It is notable that other leading North American programs that share the SOP model, notably Building Bridges for Peace, have consciously maintained their independence from both Ministries of Education.<sup>402</sup>

In terms of this dissertation's findings, it is crucial to note that both Ministries strived largely to control, limit and/or prevent Middle East peacebuilding activity by SOP alumni. In other words, while the Ministries engaged in contentious partnership with SOP at camp, they were often overtly at cross purposes with the organization's regional follow-up program. In light of the previous chapter's affirmation of the crucial importance of follow-up in terms of providing support for participants and sustaining long-term impact, this opposition raises deeper questions regarding the benefits of partnership with the Ministries of Education.

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<sup>400</sup> Mohammed Abu-Nimer, “Education for Coexistence in Israel,” in Mohammed Abu-Nimer (ed.), *Reconciliation, Coexistence and Justice: Theory and Practice* (New York: Lexington Books, 2001), 249.

<sup>401</sup> Posner, “Teaching Peace in a Time of War,” 291.

<sup>402</sup> Author's interview with Founder and former Director of Building Bridges for Peace, Melodye Feldman, New York City, October 10, 2006.

It is also important to note that this chapter's portrait of SOP/MOE relations is largely limited to the period 1993-2006, and does not necessarily apply to SOP's current leadership and relations with the Israeli government and the PNA. In recent years, SOP has improved its inclusion of Delegation Leaders, building a substantial "Educators" program including seminars at SOP camp, Middle East follow-up and international conferences and generally treating DL's as valued participants and potential peacebuilders in their own right rather than "obstacles to peace."<sup>403</sup> Numerous DL's have stated that their involvement with SOP has influenced their own perspectives on the conflict, and a number of them have gone on to work successfully for the program without using their presence to "enforce the ethos of conflict." Two Israeli MOE officials who served repeatedly as DL's, one Arab and one Jewish have gone on to draft reformed, nuanced curricular approaches to Arab- and Jewish-Israeli identity within the Ministry.<sup>404</sup> The evolution of the DL's program may indicate a different relationship with the Israeli Ministry.<sup>405</sup> Since 2009, SOP's leadership also emphasizes that they have reasserted the organization's political independence in areas in which that capacity weakened in the wake of John Wallach's death.<sup>406</sup>

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<sup>403</sup> Author's interviews with Daniel Moses, Director of the Seeds of Peace Educators (DL's) Program, Jerusalem, May 20, 2008 and May 17, 2010.

<sup>404</sup> Author's conversations with the DL's/Ministry officials, Seeds of Peace International Camp, July 2009.

<sup>405</sup> There are indications, nonetheless, that the deeper dynamic of conflicted cooperation between SOP and the Israeli government and PNA has not disappeared. On the Palestinian side, the Hamas victory in 2006 elections and subsequent Palestinian "civil war" of 2007 have meant continued PNA vacillation in terms of cooperation with SOP. This has not prevented PNA President Mahmoud Abbas from continuing Arafat's tradition of invoking SOP to prove commitment to peace education, recently declaring to journalists that he has sent four of his grandchildren to the camp (author's interview with Barbara Gottschalk). The Israeli MOE has maintained its partnership, and there has been at least one episode of MOE staff becoming embroiled in conflict over regional program staffing. In 2007-08, an Israeli Ministry official and former DL served as SOP's program director for Israeli graduates. This official earned the praise of numerous SOP graduates who worked with her on the regional staff, yet was fired in a subsequent round of internal organizational conflict. Sources: Author's interviews with SOP graduates, with SOP Executive Director Leslie Lewin, Director of Strategic Planning Eva Gordon, Board member Barbara Gottschalk, Educators Program Director Daniel Moses.

<sup>406</sup> For example, on the tenth anniversary of the killing of SOP graduate Aseel 'Asleh, the organization published a "Remembering Asel" section on its website, including links all of the organization's statements on Aseel's death, the Or Commission testimonies indicating police misconduct, media coverage of the case, as well

During its first fifteen years, however, the record of this partnership provides ample grounds for questioning its strategic value for peace education practice. It is impossible to know, but important to consider, whether more SOP alumni might have engaged in peacebuilding over the long-term had their Ministries of Education genuinely supported that outcome. In the testimonies of SOP graduates, Ministry officials often acted to exacerbate the very "re-entry problems" that their involvement was meant to mitigate.

#### Overview of "National Dilemmas"

As detailed above, both the Israeli and Palestinian Ministries of Education frequently resisted the expansion of SOP activities in the Middle East, going so far as to condemn, threaten and attempt to penalize participants on occasion. These efforts failed to stop SOP from building an independent follow-up program in the Middle East, to prevent hundreds of graduates from participating, and to prevent youth and families from voluntarily visiting each others' homes, schools and countries in the pre-*intifada* years. The Ministries' persistent protests appear to have contributed, however, to defining the terms of internal debates that divided graduates *within* each national group.

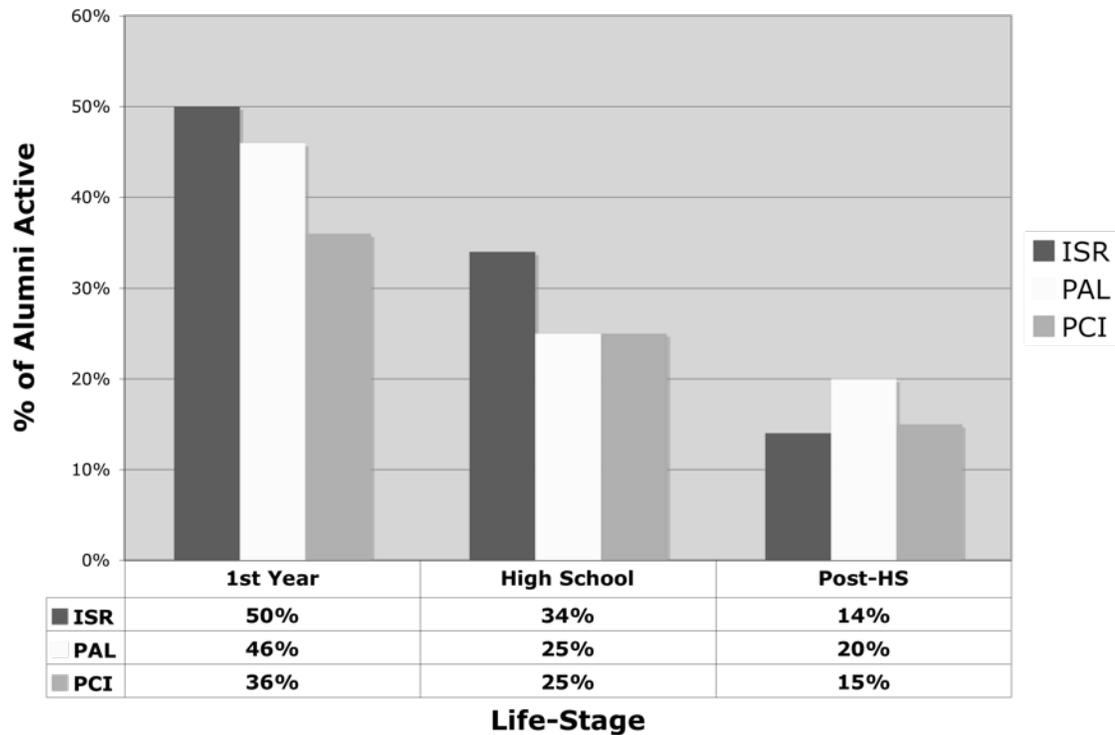
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as tributes to Aseel, statements by the organization, a petition published by SOP graduates who had been friends of Aseel protesting the closure of his case by Israel's Attorney General in 2008, and photos of a demonstration by those graduates outside Israel's Ministry of Justice. See "Remembering Asel: 10 Years" on *Seeds of Peace*: <http://www.seedsofpeace.org/asel10>. Accessed June 1, 2011. For more information on the case and the demonstration, see chapters six and seven. Additionally, when Palestinian graduate Mahmoud Jabari was arrested on February 25, 2011 by Israeli police while photographing a demonstration in the IDF-controlled section of Hebron, SOP was openly supportive of his role in photographing the protest and campaigned publicly for his release. SOP Israeli and Palestinian Program Directors published an online petition on January 28 calling for his release; on March 2, Executive Director Leslie Lewin and the directors of seven other North American NGOs published a joint statement calling for his release. See "For Seeds/Mahmoud Jabari Arrest," *Seeds of Peace*, Accessed June 26, 2011, [http://www.seedsofpeace.org/for\\_seeds/mahmoudarrest](http://www.seedsofpeace.org/for_seeds/mahmoudarrest).

Indeed, whenever Seeds graduates met in uni-national forums during the program's first decade, fierce arguments erupted precisely along the Ministries' "red lines." Palestinian Seeds debated what types of relationships with Israeli Jews constituted "normalization," and whether and how to continue such relationships in changing personal and political circumstances. Jewish-Israeli Seeds debated the morality of compulsory military service, whether and how to serve in the army as a "Seed of Peace," and whether and how to maintain ties with Arab counterparts and the organization during or after enlistment. PCI Seeds debated how to define and represent themselves to each other, to the Jewish-Israeli and OPT Palestinian Seeds, and inside Israeli and Palestinian societies. All groups debated the SOP organization's policy on these red-line issues, internally and in communications with SOP staff and leadership. Indeed, the Ministries' red line issues became the defining measures of what it meant – not to be a "Seed of Peace" *per se* – but to be an *Israeli* Seed, a *Palestinian* Seed, or a Seed *and* a Palestinian citizen of Israel.

These "red lines" left visible marks not only in uni-national discussions, but in nationally-specific patterns of follow-up/peacebuilding activity. Table 3.1 presents percentages of active participants for each identity group, at each (pre-adult) life-stage:

Table 3.1: Active Participation by Nationality and Life-Stage



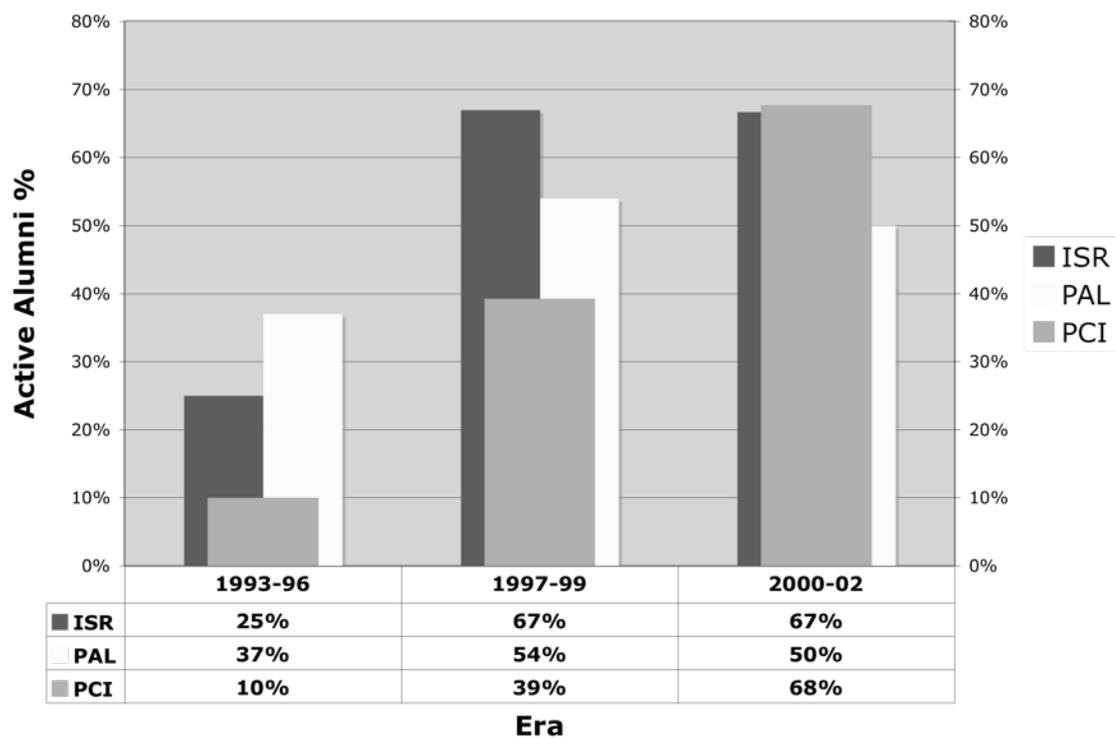
The 425 Israeli Jewish graduates in this study, for example, were the most active group during the first year and high school stages, yet their activity dropped precipitously after high school graduation – coincident with military conscription.<sup>407</sup> Active participation among the 312 Palestinian alumni from the OPT, by contrast, declined sharply during the later years of high school, when accusations of *tatbi'a* from peers, relatives and often teachers prompted most of those not selected as Peer Supports to withdraw. Uniquely, OPT Palestinian participation shows only minor decline at the Post-HS life-stage, a stage in which SOP served as a bridge for dozens of Palestinian graduates to obtain higher education scholarships abroad. This service was of profound importance to Palestinians, enabling access to educational prestige and resources unavailable at home, and refuge from conditions

<sup>407</sup> The Post-HS stage is 1-3 years after high school graduation; see chapter three.

of escalating violence and intensifying Israeli military domination. For most Arab and Jewish-Israeli alumni, by contrast, this aspect of SOP was of marginal relevance.<sup>408</sup>

The 87 Palestinian citizens of Israel in this study participated less than both other groups overall, and significantly less in SOP's first years. However, as Table 3.2 illustrates, the PCI group underwent a radical shift after the outbreak of the *intifada*, becoming equally or more active than their counterparts in 2000-02.

Table 3.2: Active 1<sup>st</sup> Year Participation by Nationality and Era (emphasis on PCI graduates)



This surge in PCI participation occurred during an exceptional period, in which SOP regional activities placed greater emphasis on Arab-Jewish relations inside Israel, and the Israeli Ministry of Education withdrew temporarily from the camp program. New groups of

<sup>408</sup> There are exceptions, notably among two sets of Israelis: Jewish conscientious objectors who faced alienation or ostracism from their immediate peer group, and Arab and Jewish Israeli alumni who were a) academically gifted enough to qualify for scholarships at US universities, and/or b) economically challenged enough to require substantial aid in financing higher education whether in Israel or abroad.

PCI participants seized this unprecedented opportunity to make their voices heard within the SOP framework. The echoes of the October 2000 clashes of Arab citizens with Israeli security forces, and the killing of PCI SOP graduate Aseel ‘Asleh in those events, resounded in the newly assertive role claimed by Palestinian minority alumni in Seeds of Peace.

The subjects of these “national dilemmas” cannot be solely attributed to the Ministries of Education, of course. The respective MOE concerns with normalization, military service and PCI identity reflect mainstream Israeli and Palestinian discourse and social consensus. Graduates of other encounter programs testify to struggling with these “national dilemmas,” without ever having been instructed by MOE delegation leaders.<sup>409</sup> However, the persistent and personal nature of the Ministries’ campaigns on these issues cannot but have contributed to the content, depth and intensity of subsequent debates among graduates themselves. Indeed, the Ministries’ sovereign enclaves within the SOP context – pre-camp preparation seminars and in-camp delegation meetings – provided graduates with their first rehearsals of these national debates. In these meetings, MOE officials clarified the red lines to participants, often through the public censure of delegates deemed to have crossed them. During these confrontations, some participants typically identified with the reprimand, others with the reprimanded – forging divisions and dynamics internal to each group that became entrenched and reproduced for years to come.

The following chapters will explore these unique aspects of each group’s “SOP experience.” They begin with the reflections of Israeli Jewish alumni on compulsory military service, and continue with the struggles of OPT Palestinian alumni with the stigma of normalization in the shadow of ongoing Israeli occupation. The final chapter of the section

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<sup>409</sup> See interviews with Building Bridges for Peace graduates Inas Radwan and Yoaad Shbita at "Visionaries," *Just Vision*, Accessed June 11, 2011, [www.justvision.org/visionaries](http://www.justvision.org/visionaries).

will focus on the Palestinian citizens of Israel, whose inherent identity crisis left them profoundly affected by both aspects of SOP's conflicted approach to national identity – structurally disadvantaged by the organization's partnership with the Israeli MOE, yet sometimes uniquely empowered by SOP's discourse of "humanizing the conflict."

## CHAPTER FIVE

# *A Soldier and/or a Seed of Peace:*

## *The Israeli Dilemma*

### Introduction: *Three Soldiers, Three Opinions*

In the spring of 2002, during the most violent season of the second *intifada*, a group of Israeli “Seeds” organized a seminar for alumni aged 18 and above to discuss IDF service. The choice of topic was hardly surprising; indeed, concerns regarding military service surfaced invariably at SOP events, whether in Palestinian-Israeli dialogue groups or whenever Israeli graduates met in “uni-national” forums. Approximately 50 Israeli SOP alumni, most of them engaged in various stages of compulsory service, gathered in Tel-Aviv for this seminar. For this group, the army was the institution that dominated daily life, as for all mainstream Israeli Jews of their age.<sup>410</sup> Their seminar took an unconventional approach to the subject, however, by including perspectives on IDF service that included conscientious objectors and Palestinians, and framing IDF service as a dilemma.

An open discussion of combat service in the OPT provoked especially heated exchanges. The discussion took place among a “uni-national” group of exclusively Israeli Jewish graduates, with no audience but each other. The voices of three combat soldiers stood out among the dozens of alumni gathered in a loose circle around the room, as each of them expressed starkly different views of the identical missions they had performed in the

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<sup>410</sup> By mainstream, I mean all sectors of Jewish-Israeli society other than *Haredi*, or ultra-Orthodox Jews.

OPT: manning checkpoints, arresting suspects, guarding military bases and settlements. One soldier, *Yakir*, betrayed no crisis of conscience; in light of Palestinian militant attacks that had killed hundreds of Israelis in recent years, he felt thorough justification for what he considered preventive military actions. A second soldier, *Meir*, framed the issue differently. Given the stories he had heard from Palestinian counterparts of suffering humiliation at the hands of Israeli soldiers, Meir felt morally obligated to volunteer for combat duty. If it wasn't him at the checkpoint, he explained, it would be someone else – but not likely someone who had Palestinian friends, or even saw Palestinians as equal human beings. While he was on duty, Meir asserted, he saw to it that his unit treated Palestinians with respect. As he spoke, a third combat soldier, *Ofer*, fidgeted uncomfortably. Ofer allowed his colleague to finish before stating sharply, “I used to think that way. Now I've been there, I've seen what it is, and I think that serving at a checkpoint politely is like raping a woman politely.”

These three combat soldiers described the precise sort of policing operations that became defining images of Israeli military service since the first Palestinian *intifada*, or uprising.<sup>411</sup> Instead of the battles against the armies of neighboring states that were hallmarks of previous generations, these three soldiers had been tasked with controlling the occupied civilian population, defending settlements whose existence they considered either a mistake or an injustice, and pursuing elusive militant cells inside densely populated cities, villages and refugee camps. Their narratives contained no glory, no victory and little detail; they had no desire to associate themselves with specific locations or operations, no wish to hint, “I was

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<sup>411</sup> As Eyal Ben-Ari explains, “The categorization of enemies that soldiers face forms the basis for a scale of prestige or stature accorded to an individual or a unit within the IDF and in (Jewish) Israeli society in general. Accordingly, participation in battles in war is more prestigious than participating in engagements during ‘peacetime.’ Both activities are considered more impressive than patrols along the borders where ‘nothing happens,’ and which are in turn more respected than policing civilians in the occupied territories.” Eyal Ben-Ari, *Mastering Soldiers: Conflict, Emotions and the Enemy in an Israeli Military Unit* (New York: Berghahn, 1998), 78.

there.” In military historian Martin Van Creveld’s words, theirs was “a struggle about which poets will remain silent.”<sup>412</sup> The soldiers’ tone was of obligation rather than pride; indeed, Meir and Ofer expressed shame over the content and skepticism about the morality of their actions. Tellingly, these soldiers assessed the success of their service on the front lines in terms of their ability – or lack thereof – to curb the harm inflicted by their own forces.

The scene encapsulated three key aspects of Israeli SOP graduates’ encounters with IDF service. First, the lack of a unified perspective – in this case, three soldiers described service of nearly identical content in three distinct and opposing ways. Second, their dominant prism of occupation rather than war. This was exemplified by constant reference to checkpoints, which are archetypal symbols in *Palestinian* narratives of the IDF, as opposed to the mainstream Israeli frames of “fighting terror.” As the sites of mundane daily interface between the army and the civilian population, checkpoints dominate Palestinian experience and imagination, the ultimate signifiers of frustration, humiliation and abject powerlessness. In mainstream Israeli Jewish discourse, by contrast, checkpoints are understood functionally in terms of security provision, and essentially taken for granted.<sup>413</sup> Thus, though no Palestinian SOP graduates were present in the room for this discussion, their perspectives were clearly etched in the minds of their Israeli counterparts.

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<sup>412</sup> Martin Van Creveld, *The Sword and the Olive: A Critical History of the Israeli Defense Force* (New York: Public Affairs, 2002), 356. He continues: “[No memorials] celebrate the IDF ‘victories’ over the PLO and its successor organizations in Lebanon or over the inhabitants of the Occupied Territories — the countless cases when guerillas were intercepted and killed, acts of terrorism allegedly preempted, arms caches uncovered, and the like. It is as if the army and the people to whom it belongs have lost their pride, leaving behind little more than sorrow, pain and regret.” (Van Creveld, *The Sword and the Olive*, 357)

<sup>413</sup> See the following documentary films: Ronit Avni and Julia Bacha (directors), *Encounter Point* (Typecast: 2005): 85 minutes; also Yoav Shamir (director), *Checkpoint* (Choices: 2005): 80 Minutes.

### Chapter Overview

Like all mainstream Jewish youth in Israel, Israeli graduates of Seeds of Peace are conscripted at age eighteen for several years of service in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).<sup>414</sup> Yet in contrast to the vast majority of their peers, Israeli SOP graduates enter the IDF having engaged in extensive social contact with Palestinians, and become intimately familiar with Palestinian grievances against the Israeli army. A recent ethnography of Israeli military service suggests that IDF discourse requires soldiers to “de-personalize” their perceptions of the Palestinian population<sup>415</sup> – a psychological imperative common to military campaigns throughout history, but clearly at odds with the SOP slogan, “The enemy has a face.”<sup>416</sup> This chapter chronicles the struggles of Israeli “Seeds” to reconcile the SOP ethos of “humanizing the conflict” with the demands of compulsory military service.<sup>417</sup>

The chapter is informed by interviews and conversations with 40 Israeli SOP graduates in their mid-twenties, conducted during the years 2006-2010, after they had completed their terms in the IDF, as well as previous years of participant observation.<sup>418</sup> These interviewees are not a “representative sample” of the Israeli public; as SOP selectees, they represent educationally high-achieving youth of various demographic backgrounds. Moreover, the interviewees were an “elite” subset among SOP graduates; all were prominent participants in SOP activities throughout their high school years. Most were selected by the organization to return as PS's to camp in Maine. Moreover, they attended high school during the 1990s heydays of the Oslo peace process. During high school, these Israeli youth visited

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<sup>414</sup> For the purposes of this paper, in which the sample group are all ethnically Jewish citizens of Israel, the term “Israeli” will connote Jewish-Israeli identity, as opposed to the Palestinian Arab ethno-national identity of Arab residents of the OPT, or Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel.

<sup>415</sup> Ben-Ari, *Mastering Soldiers*, 82-83.

<sup>416</sup> John Wallach, *The Enemy Has a Face*.

<sup>417</sup> Ibid.

<sup>418</sup> With the exception of several interviewees who refused to serve on grounds of conscience.

Palestinian homes and communities, and brought Palestinian friends to their homes and schools, highly unorthodox experiences even for members of their generation. In September 2000, the eruption of the *Al-Aqsa Intifada* rendered such activities largely impossible, even illegal. History thus heightened the dissonance between this group's SOP and IDF experiences: They lived through the best of times as young Israeli peacebuilders, and the worst of times as IDF soldiers.

The chapter presents Israeli graduates' perspectives regarding the influence of SOP membership and ideals on their IDF service, and the impact of their IDF experiences on their connections with Seeds of Peace and Palestinians. Employing a grounded theory approach, I highlight common themes that emerged from graduates' testimonies: their internal dialogues regarding the in/compatibility of peace education and military service, and the difficult negotiation of relationships with Palestinian counterparts and the American "peace organization" during and after enlistment.

### Background and Literature

#### *Thematic Overview: "Seed/Soldier Dissonance"*

In SOP's first decade of operations, all but 14 of the program's 425 Israeli graduates – more than 95% – enlisted in the IDF, indicating that most either prioritized military service over peace education, or did not see the two vocations as irreconcilable *per se*.<sup>419</sup> In post-IDF interviews, however, many graduates described IDF service as triggering profound crises of conscience – what I will call "Seed/soldier dissonance." One graduate, *Gal*, saw this

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<sup>419</sup> It is important to note that while conscientious objection was a marginal phenomenon among the overall Israeli graduate group, conscientious objectors represented a much higher percentage, and many of the most prominent voices, among those Israeli graduates active over the long-term in SOP and peacebuilding.

process beginning upon return to Israel from SOP summer camp, long before actual enlistment:

I think that many of the Israeli “Seeds” return to the country [from SOP camp] very confused, and become more confused the closer they get to the stage of military service... Look, it’s a dilemma... all the educational process toward enlistment, all the indoctrination of military service, and its importance, is something that’s very strong in 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade, both in school and in youth movements. I’m not at all sure if an organization like Seeds of Peace has any ability to cope with this... It’s not even in the sense of a dilemma of whether or not to enlist – that’s too radical for the majority of people – it’s coping with the fact that any doubt at all arises.

While in the IDF, the intensity of graduates’ dissonance typically varied in accordance with the type of military service they performed, and their levels of personal contact with Palestinians while enlisted. Dilemmas generally grew more acute for those personally engaged with Palestinians during service, whether through continued personal communication with Arab friends from SOP, or through military assignment to combat/policing roles in the OPT.

Thus, while peace education and cross-conflict relationships did not make most Israeli graduates unwilling to serve, these experiences left them profoundly conflicted as enforcers of Israeli rule over the occupied Palestinian population. The minority of graduates who refused to enlist in the IDF linked their refusal directly to the experiences and relationships they derived from Seeds of Peace activity. Among the majority who did serve, a number of interviewees engaged in “selective refusal” inside the army, challenging orders or refusing assignment to the OPT; others went to the “front line” but found themselves alienated or embroiled in conflict with fellow IDF soldiers over the treatment of Palestinians; others acquiesced to OPT assignments only to express retrospective remorse or disgust at what they witnessed in the field. Few graduates emerged from OPT service with their images of the IDF intact.

For many interviewees, “Seed/soldier dissonance” went both ways; SOP membership complicated IDF service, and vice versa. Most – though not all – Israeli graduates reported withdrawing from peacebuilding activity and cross-conflict relationships during military service. In the words of one graduate, IDF service meant “three years of disconnection” from SOP. After discharge, however, alumni diverged in their adult relationships to SOP and Palestinians. Some described IDF service as a temporary “time out” from SOP, after which they resumed cross-conflict activities and relationships – indeed, 20 of them worked for SOP as adults. A minority of graduates, on the other hand, described their time in the military as a “point of no return” to peacebuilding activity.

The chapter will proceed in three sections: First, a brief review of relevant literature on the role of IDF service in mainstream Israeli identity and society; Second, exploration of SOP graduates’ testimonies on IDF service, arranged according to degrees of “Seed/soldier dissonance”; Third, testimonies regarding post-IDF “reintegration” into the SOP community, highlighting Israeli graduates’ efforts to re-establish cross-conflict relationships, and the responses of Palestinian counterparts and American SOP staff. Above all, the chapter attempts to give authentic voice to graduates’ struggles – successful and otherwise – to fulfill dissonant ideals and identities, to be soldiers *and* Seeds of Peace.

### *A Nation-at-Arms: IDF Service in Israeli Identity and Society*

Since its establishment amid the war of 1948, the State of Israel has been described by both advocates and critics as a “nation in uniform” and a “nation-at-arms.”<sup>420</sup> Israel has

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<sup>420</sup> See Uri Ben-Eliezer, *The Making of Israeli Militarism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998); Stuart A. Cohen (ed.), *Democratic Societies and Their Armed Forces: Israel in Comparative Perspective* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2000); Yoram Peri, “The Radical Social Scientists and Israeli Militarism,” *Israel Studies* 1, no. 2 (Fall 1996), 230-266.

engaged in wars or major military operations involving neighboring Arab states in every decade of its existence, in addition to perpetual armed conflict of varying intensity with Palestinian and Arab guerilla forces. At the funeral of an Israeli slain in an Arab attack in 1956, IDF chief of staff Moshe Dayan delivered a eulogy often cited as exemplary of the Israeli view of universal military service as an existential necessity: “Without a helmet or a gun barrel we will be unable to plant a tree or build a house. Let us not be afraid to perceive the enmity that consumes the lives of hundreds of thousands of Arabs around us... The only choice we have is to be armed, strong and resolute or else our sword will fall from our hands and the thread of our lives will be severed.”<sup>421</sup> The late Baruch Kimmerling observed in 1998, “Even now, Israel is considered to be in a state of protracted existential conflict, which is expected at any time to erupt into a total war that will require the recruitment of all its material, human and emotional resources.”<sup>422</sup> In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, rocket attacks on Israeli populations centers inspired contemporary Israeli politicians to invoke a famous statement of Israel’s founding Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, from the earliest years of the State: “The entire nation is the army, the entire country is the front.”<sup>423</sup> And indeed, uniformed soldiers and automatic weapons remain on ubiquitous public display in Israel in a manner unequalled in any contemporary country of comparable development and governance.

While exotic to foreign visitors, the pervasive presence of the military in civilian life is entirely banal to Israelis. As Kimmerling explains, for the majority of Israel’s Jewish

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421 Quoted from Baruch Kimmerling, “The Social Construction of Israel’s National Security,” in Cohen ed., *Democratic Societies and Their Armed Forces*, 243.

422 Ibid.

423 Since the 2006 Lebanon War, the statement has been frequently repeated in the Knesset and other governmental forums, often by Israeli President Shimon Peres. See Greer Fay Cashman, “Peres Honors Reservists: ‘The Whole Nation is the Army,’” *Jerusalem Post*, May 5, 2010, Accessed July 13, 2011, <http://www.jpost.com/Israel/Article.aspx?id=174791>.

citizens, near-universal conscription has always been the norm, the *sine qua non* of Israeli identity and the citizen's primary contribution to the social contract.

Universal conscription was complemented by a system of reserve duty, which spanned much of the active life of men and, sometimes, of unmarried women. This doctrine of man- and woman-power utilization intentionally located military service at the core of the Israeli experience and consciousness. It also contributed to the construction of the meaning of citizenship, societal boundaries and stratification, as well as... cultural setting.<sup>424</sup>

In explaining the origins of the IDF's image as a "people's army," Yagil Levy emphasizes the role of internal nation-building functions rather than external threats:

"The civilian is a soldier on 11 months' annual leave." That sentiment, once expressed by Gen. Yigael Yadin, a former chief of staff of the IDF, has prevailed throughout Israel's history. Israelis have long viewed the IDF as more than simply the military; in popular mythology, the IDF is "the people's army," a crucial institution both for the defense of the state and the self-image of the nation. David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister and the IDF's principal architect, considered the military the most efficient nation builder for a new immigrant society, and he therefore assigned soldiers to develop agricultural settlements and teach Hebrew to young immigrants. In this manner, the IDF cultivated its image as a universal militia standing above the class divisions of the young Israeli-Jewish society-meritocratic, depoliticized, and socially engaged. Together with... the ever present Arab threat, the IDF's populist glow made compulsory military service an article of faith in Israel and, for many years, placed it beyond debate.<sup>425</sup>

Rebecca Schiff argues that Israel cannot be understood through the traditional Western dichotomy strictly separating civil and military spheres, as Israeli political and social life is defined by the informality and permeability of borders between the two.<sup>426</sup>

One Israeli Seeds of Peace graduate echoed Schiff's distinction between Israel and Western societies, in explaining the depth of popular identification with IDF soldiers kidnapped by Hamas and Hezbollah in 2006 – and the State's massive military responses:

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<sup>424</sup> Kimmerling, "The Social Construction of Israel's National Security," 225.

<sup>425</sup> Yagil Levy, "Israel's Rough Draft," in *Foreign Policy* 142: May/June 2004, 70-72.

<sup>426</sup> Rebecca Schiff, "Civil-Military Relations in Israel: Revisiting Israel as the 'Uncivil State'," (Presentation at the Van Leer Institute Conference, "An Army that has a State?", Jerusalem, June 5-6, 2006), Accessed April 30, 2010, <http://www.vanleer.org.il/eng/videoShow.asp?id=292>.

Why are we so crazy because [some] soldiers were kidnapped?... In the USA, it's an army of poor people and minorities. Here, everyone's a soldier – I'm a soldier – my father's a soldier. We treat the kidnapping of a soldier even worse than a citizen. From the Palestinians' point of view, [Gilad Shalit] is a prisoner of war and that's correct – but for us, he's an eighteen year-old boy. How is it that we are so upset by this, and the rest of the world is pretty indifferent, and we're both right? Cause that's part of the risk of being a soldier, but for us a soldier is a citizen.<sup>427</sup>

Schiff, echoing other scholars who see these phenomena as legitimate societal responses to external threats, calls Israel a “highly militarized society, not a militaristic state, but a militarized society that embraces the military's role in national security and policy.”<sup>428</sup>

Critical Israeli scholars such as Kimmerling, Levy and Uri Ben-Eliezer, by contrast, emphasize the internal politics and destructive consequences of what they call “Israeli militarism.”<sup>429</sup> Moreover, Ben-Eliezer traces the fading of the IDF's aura in recent decades, in the wake of lethal accidents, scandals, controversial and unsuccessful wars, and routinized repression of Palestinians in the OPT. Van Creveld echoes this “declinist” sentiment in his history of the IDF, concluding that, “A military that used to regard itself – and was regarded by others – as the vanguard of the nation in many ways has turned into a social anachronism.”<sup>430</sup> Nonetheless, Ben-Eliezer argues that the post-hegemonic IDF still defines identity within a polarized Israel, divided between “militarist” and “civil” sub-cultures, with

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<sup>427</sup> IDF corporal Gilad Shalit was taken hostage by Hamas operatives from a base outside the Gaza Strip in June 2006; the IDF responded with several weeks of sustained bombing and shelling of Gaza, to which Hamas and other Palestinian groups responded with rocket fire on Israeli towns bordering Gaza. A week later, Hizballah kidnapped three Israeli soldiers and brought them to Lebanon as part of a cross-border raid in which they also killed six Israeli soldiers. Israel responded with a three-week bombing campaign killing hundreds of Lebanese, to which Hizballah responded by launching thousands of Katyusha rockets into Northern Israel and killing dozens of Israelis. After years, protracted indirect negotiations, more rocket fire and a massive Israeli offensive in Gaza in January 2009, Gilad Shalit remains in Hamas captivity. There is a large grassroots movement in Israel pressuring the government to obtain his release.

<sup>428</sup> Schiff, “Civil-Military Relations in Israel.” See also Stuart A. Cohen, “Introduction,” in Cohen ed., *Democratic Societies and Their Armed Forces*; Yoram Peri, “The Radical Social Scientists and Israeli Militarism,” *Israel Studies* 1, no. 2 (Fall 1996), 230-266.

<sup>429</sup> Ben-Eliezer, *The Making of Israeli Militarism*; Levy, “Israel's Rough Draft.”

<sup>430</sup> Van Creveld, *The Sword and the Olive*, 356.

the “militarist” camp resurgent in the post-Oslo period.<sup>431</sup> Indeed, while far from immune to criticism, the IDF remains the institution most trusted by Israelis. In a 2010 poll, 81% of Israeli respondents expressed trust in the IDF, as opposed to 54% in the Supreme Court, and 37% in the Knesset.<sup>432</sup> Ideological divisions notwithstanding, there remains wide agreement among scholars and the public on the centrality of the military in Israeli life.

It is important to note that in mainstream Israeli society, peace activism and military service are not perceived as contradictory endeavors. Social psychologist Daniel Bar-Tal describes a set of “shared societal beliefs” that define Israeli perceptions of the conflict with the Palestinians, which simultaneously include an obsession with military security and a self-perception as constantly “extending a hand for peace” – in vain – to the Arabs.<sup>433</sup> This shared “ethos of conflict,” expressed through universal conscription, a “Republican” ideal of citizenship, and the perception of constant threat, treats compulsory service as a litmus test for good citizenship, and a prerequisite for any engagement in public criticism of government or IDF policy.<sup>434</sup> Israel’s largest grassroots peace movement, Peace Now, was established in the 1970s by an open letter of protest published jointly by more than 300 reserve officers – noting their ranks and units.<sup>435</sup> In addition to the widespread “parachuting” of retired generals into high positions on parliamentary lists, Israeli peace

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<sup>431</sup> Al-Haj and Ben-Eliezer (eds.), *In the Name of Security*.

<sup>432</sup> Additionally, 50% of respondents stated that human and civil rights organizations are “damaging to the State.” See Ofra Idelman, “The Majority of the Public Supports a Loyalty Oath to a Jewish State as a Condition for Voting Rights,” in *Haaretz*, December 1, 2010 (Hebrew). From *Haaretz: Israel Daily News*, <http://www.haaretz.co.il/hasite/spages/1201542.html>. For the full poll results, see Asher Arian, Tamar Hermann et al., *Auditing Israeli Democracy: Democratic Values in Practice* (Jerusalem: Israel Democracy Institute, 2010). From *Israel Democracy Institute*, Accessed December 16, 2010, <http://www.idi.org.il/sites/english/events/ThePresidentsConference/Pages/2010DemocracyIndex.aspx>.

<sup>433</sup> Bar-Tal, “Societal Beliefs In Times of Intractable Conflict.” See also Bar-Tal and Gavriel Salomon, “Israeli-Jewish Narratives of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Evolution, Contents, Functions and Consequences,” in Rotberg (ed.), *Israeli and Palestinian Narratives of Conflict: History’s Double Helix*, 19-46.

<sup>434</sup> Gershon Shafir and Yoav Peled, *Being Israeli: The Dynamics of Multiple Citizenship* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>435</sup> Mordechai Bar-On, *In Pursuit of Peace: A History of the Israeli Peace Movement* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996).

initiatives continue to seek public legitimacy by emphasizing past military experience.<sup>436</sup>

Some, such as retired Admiral Ami Ayalon's "People's Voice" Initiative, tout the credentials of founding members.<sup>437</sup> Others, such as the mainstream Leftist Council for Peace and Security, or the radical Leftist Combatants for Peace, build their membership and their message on the moral authority granted by previous battlefield experience.<sup>438</sup> In all cases, prior military service is seen as complementary, rather than contradictory, to peace activism.

SOP graduates commonly explained their enlistment in such terms. As *Kfir* explained, "As I help my community through my membership in Seeds, I think that I can't criticize my community if I didn't fulfill my duties as a citizen." Numerous Israeli graduates spoke of their choice to enlist proudly, in terms of fulfilling a moral imperative; others more ambivalently, in terms of conforming to social norms or restraining the excesses of the army. All, however, spoke of service instrumentally, in terms of establishing the societal legitimacy to build careers, or to be effective political activists. Indeed, all Israelis interviewed for the present study – including those who refused IDF enlistment on grounds of conscience – described military service as essential to securing adult social legitimacy in Israeli society.

#### *Rite of Passage: IDF Service in Israeli Adolescence and Adulthood*

Most Israeli SOP graduates described military service as the quintessential rite of passage into adulthood, expected after high school in the same manner as college is for

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<sup>436</sup> Cohen, *Democratic Societies and their Armed Forces*; Schiff, "Civil-Military Relations in Israel."

<sup>437</sup> "Ha-Mifkad Ha-Leumi," Accessed December 16, 2010, <http://www.mifkad.org.il/>.

<sup>438</sup> "Council for Peace and Security," Accessed December 16, 2010, <http://www.peace-security-council.org/>; "Combatants for Peace," Accessed December 16, 2010, <http://www.cfpeace.org>.

affluent American youth.<sup>439</sup> One interviewee succinctly explained the normative progression of life in Israel: “After high school, there’s army – it’s very simple.” Indeed, Israeli induction proceeds in a manner analogous to affluent Americans’ college preparations: A battery of aptitude tests, recruitment meetings, chatter with peers and adults about possible futures, completion of applications and the anxious anticipation of a verdict in the daily mail.<sup>440</sup>

Anthropologist Eyal Ben-Ari describes these processes of “presocialization” into IDF culture as normative features of Israeli adolescence:

Jewish-Israeli youths continually undergo processes of vicarious socialization (watching movies and television programs, listening to radio shows, or participating in various preparatory courses for the military) and anticipatory socialization (talking to older people who have been or are going through military service). Such presocialization includes a variety of schools, preparatory meetings and briefings with representatives of different military units (the latter are invited onto school premises), or visits to military bases. Closely related activities are individual-centered preparations through physical exercises (and the emotional steeling these often entail) or the simple if significant, gathering of information on such matters as the conditions of entry into different units, the circumstances of service, and the criteria and opportunities for promotion.

All these processes were visible among Israeli SOP graduates as they neared age eighteen.

The approach of conscription also led some formerly active alumni to absent themselves from SOP events; as they often explained apologetically, they feared that links with SOP might harm their security classification, and jeopardize accession to their desired unit.

Much as US colleges attract distinct populations and confer upon their graduates particular reputations, IDF units are distinguished within Israeli society as much according to criteria of socioeconomic composition and prestige as by actual military function. Service in select non-combat units can become a career springboard, constituting valuable social

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<sup>439</sup> Ben-Ari, *Mastering Soldiers*.

<sup>440</sup> Many SOP grads also take pre-army courses, or do a “service year” prior to the draft, in each case conducted through youth movements and involving community service and training, underscoring a connection of the military with images of service and idealism. In fact, at least three times, groups of Israeli alumni attempted to organize a “service year” through Seeds of Peace.

capital, networking opportunities, and technical training in education, media or public relations. Other non-combat roles are viewed pejoratively as the insipid province of *jobniks*, i.e. uniformed bureaucrats.<sup>441</sup> Combat units elicit reactions ranging from reverence (air force, commandos) to varying degrees of respectability (armor, intelligence, infantry); certain others provoke raised eyebrows in any white-collar setting (Border Patrol). As Ben-Ari explains, “Position in the military (itself derived from participation in combat) determines to a great degree the kinds of status, prestige, and social significance accorded soldiers and officers.”<sup>442</sup> In terms of future economic and political prospects, most Israeli employers and political constituents expect at bare minimum to see some kind of military “degree.”

In this context, conscientious objection from military service constitutes a radical break with dominant norms, one with potentially significant economic and social consequences. As one SOP alumna, *Zohar*, recalled, pursuing conscientious objection, “made me further alienated from everyone and their sister, people stopped talking to me at school. The ones that kept talking to me did it for the wrong reasons. People from my youth movement – we’d been friends my whole life – stopped talking to me.” The process of obtaining exemption from military service on grounds of conscience requires a meeting with a council of IDF officers, who often reprimand applicants for alleged disloyalty – the first of many confrontations with friends, relatives and new acquaintances. To open Zohar’s council hearing, the officers asked, “The State of Israel, that educated and protected you since you were born, why do you want to turn your back on her, how can you do it?”<sup>443</sup>

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<sup>441</sup> Ben-Ari, *Mastering Soldiers*, 78.

<sup>442</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>443</sup> Applicants must prove to the military council that their objection to enlistment is based in pure pacifism, rather than political opposition to the occupation; Zohar recalled repeating that, “this isn’t something against Israel, I wouldn’t serve in the Brazilian army.” This precisely contradicts, however, the prevailing sentiment among SOP graduate interviewees, who found military service *per se* legitimate and necessary in Israel, but not

Among the 14 SOP graduates who refused to enlist, half performed alternative civil forms of national service in Israel; the others won college scholarships in the United States, where several remain as of this writing. Almost all remained highly active in peacebuilding, with multiple organizations, well into adulthood. Despite being a small minority among Israeli graduates, conscientious objectors have been especially prominent among graduates active after high school graduation, with several working on the SOP staff. Their adult experiences highlight the legitimacy dilemma that confronts all active Israeli graduates. Conscientious objectors earned the enduring trust and respect of Palestinian counterparts, but often struggled to “re-integrate” into Israeli society. Active Israeli graduates who did enlist earned basic societal legitimacy in Israel, but often struggled to earn trust and rebuild relationships with Palestinians after completing compulsory service.

In addition to career consequences and status connotations, the unit placement of SOP graduates had profound implications on the intensity of “Seed/soldier dissonance.” Among my interviewees, combat soldiers (and conscientious objectors) almost universally carried emotional burdens. The impact of intelligence service, by contrast varied with proximity to actual combat. Some intelligence veterans acted essentially as frontline soldiers and were often equally affected. Others engaged in “remote control” combat, offering increased distance to compartmentalize and “de-personalize” their actions. Others worked in information processing and analysis, where they were largely able to draw distinct psychological lines and ward off questions of conscience. Most intelligence units did require

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the policing of occupation. Achieving exemption on grounds of conscience is *de jure* possible for anyone, but *de facto* granted only to women – hence, women made up 13 of 14 conscientious objectors among SOP graduates. For information on conscientious objection in Israel, see the following Israeli organizations: “Yesh Gvul,” <http://www.yeshgvul.org/>; “New Profile,” <http://www.newprofile.org/>; “Courage to Refuse,” <http://www.seruv.org.il/defaulteng.asp>; “Refuser Solidarity Network,” <http://www.refusersolidarity.net/>; All accessed July 13, 2011.

the severing of social ties with Arabs – including Israeli citizens – which prompted graduates to separate themselves from SOP connections during the majority of their service.<sup>444</sup> Many returned to SOP activity afterwards, however, with those less involved in direct combat often contemplative regarding their military service but bearing less apparent scars.

At the other end of the spectrum are graduates who worked primarily in education or communications roles in the military, who often found their service intellectually satisfying. They mention dilemmas, if at all, in the abstract. In fact, several of these soldiers speak proudly of “smuggling” their own versions of “humanizing the conflict” into the curriculum that they taught to classes of incoming recruits. The next sections will present testimonies of soldiers regarding their experiences as “Seeds” and soldiers, according to degrees of “Seed/soldier dissonance.”

### Graduate Testimonies

#### *Minimum Dissonance: Army-Lite*

“Military service? It wasn’t such military service. It was just professional training.”  
– *Avivit*, Israeli graduate

“Almost everything I did in the army was connected [to SOP]. That’s what is wonderful about it.”  
– *Yishai*, Israeli graduate

The minority of SOP alumni who expressed no internal reckoning with military service tended to share certain exceptional conditions: a) roles involving no policing of occupation, no direct combat, and little if any indirect combat and b) useful training in skills

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<sup>444</sup> It should be noted, however, that there are clearly degrees of flexibility and interpretation—some graduates cut off all contact, others allow themselves to speak to staff but not Arabs, others Arab-Israelis but not Palestinians, others speak to all Arab counterparts but never about their service, etc. Almost all intelligence veterans mention a ban on travel to Arab countries effective for several years following service; however, many of these meet with Arab counterparts frequently in Israel, East Jerusalem or abroad, and in some cases with the approval of their superiors in the military.

directly connected to professional aspirations. There are three units frequently associated with this kind of testimony: a) news reporting for *Galei Tzahal*, the IDF's popular radio station<sup>445</sup>; b) the IDF's foreign relations liaison unit; c) roles in various non-combat units involving education and training, usually with intellectual and moral rather than strictly technical elements.<sup>446</sup> In the latter two categories, graduates with the most positive memories explain their roles as granting them a platform to integrate some kind of "peacemaking" aspect into their work in the military.

Such profound fulfillment was, however, truly exceptional – most of the ranks of these non-conflicted spoke of their service in a more casual, even blasé, manner:

Funnily enough, I don't think the army was such a meaningful period of my life with regards to Seeds. The army was really just a forced reality. Oh, you can't talk to Arabs, so let's sneak into a Seeds seminar once in two years, which I did, in Tel Aviv. Relatively speaking, it was a very laid-back service. It didn't shape my political opinions, it didn't change anything. If anything, in the army, I was a very vocal Seeds activist. I would always bring the *Olive Branch* [SOP news magazine] into the army.

Others found their service and SOP's role more meaningful, but in a career-oriented sense.

In army radio and certain intelligence units, SOP was apparently a positive CV item for recruits. Two radio veterans attribute their successful enlistment to SOP. One of these attributes his accession to the radio in terms of the self-confidence and public speaking skills that "flourished" at SOP. The same graduate spoke of the content of service with pride, saying, "I want to emphasize that if I were to choose what to do again, I would make the

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<sup>445</sup> Literally, "IDF Waves"; it is the second-most popular news station in the country, employing soldiers as most of its reporters and production staff. The army also operates the country's most popular national pop music station, another emblem of the lack of civil-military separation described by Rebecca Schiff.

<sup>446</sup> There is one exception, a graduate who originally considered refusing enlistment, but was drafted to a classified intelligence unit. Not at liberty to reveal any details, this graduate remained in the military for seven years and reported entirely positive feelings regarding the unit and no ethical dilemmas. Due to the confidential nature of the service, it was not possible to ascertain whether this graduate was involved in combat, enforcement of occupation or related actions.

same choices. I do feel that I have to do something for my country and also for myself, something that I have and *want* to do.”

Another radio veteran, *Avivit*, spoke somewhat flippantly of her service, and described SOP’s contribution explicitly in terms of name-dropping social capital:

I think that if I hadn’t been in Seeds of Peace, I wouldn’t have gotten into *Galei Tzahal*, by the way. In the entrance interview I spoke about it a lot. They asked me – at the time, it was the Taba negotiations, it was 2000 – who are the Palestinian delegation to the Taba negotiations. So I said, this and this and this, and [Palestinian politician], whose child I’m friends with. ‘Cause at the time we had a good relationship. And this lit them up, so I talked about it.

*Avivit*’s description emphasizes the distance between her journalistic service and more traditional units. She played up her relationship with a prominent Palestinian for recruiters from the radio station; the same relationship might have raised eyebrows negatively for applicants to combat-related units. Overall, *Avivit* describes her service as professional training, hardly provocative of soul-searching: “The military wasn’t so military... It’s not like, ‘It was hard for me to stand at a checkpoint.’ I never felt bad in the army, I didn’t feel that there’s something flawed, I never felt there’s something that contradicts me as a ‘peace-loving Leftist’ [laughter] – it was comfortable for me – kind of ‘army-lite.’”

Other Israeli graduates actively sought to integrate a “peacemaker” role into their military service. One graduate, *Dani*, serving in the IDF’s Foreign Relations liaison unit drew upon SOP experience in frequent communications with soldiers from neighboring Arab states. While stationed on the Jordanian border, *Dani* initially found the relations between Israeli and Jordanian soldiers cold and formal. He “broke the ice” by asking Jordanian soldiers about their hometowns, neighborhoods and schools, and surprising them with his recognition: “Where in Amman? Yeah, I’ve been there; I know people from there.” After these overtures, the Jordanian soldiers began serving coffee at the daily meetings, and

engaging in personal conversations. Dani became an unofficial intermediary, valued by the Jordanian soldiers and his superiors. In one instance, Jordanian soldiers mentioned to him that Israeli soldiers stationed in a watchtower on their side of the border habitually sat with their legs dangling out, such that travelers crossing from Jordan to Israel were greeted by the soles of the soldiers' boots – a gesture widely considered *gauche* in Arab culture. Dani communicated this to his superiors, and the practice was immediately corrected.

Other Israeli graduates acceded to teaching positions in the intelligence and attempted to use these as pulpits for a degree of “humanizing the enemy.” One graduate, *Naomi*, moved herself to a teaching position after negative experiences in the OPT. She spoke of her teaching role as a chance to challenge disturbing norms in the army:

Later on, when I went to teach... I freed myself a bit from these things, because I already wasn't in a setting that was entirely military. And that was a restorative experience, because I could sit with my students and talk about serving in the intelligence, about ethical dilemmas and thinking about what to do, and things they will be exposed to, and to tell them, in the end, think twice. Your enemy is not foolish, and in the end he is a human being. That was one of the things that was most important to me when I taught. I remember I did at least 4 or 5 lessons for my students, to try and shake them out of that complacent, cocky military attitude, that I really felt in the army, that really bothered me at the time.

Another graduate, *Yishai*, excelled in the Arabic-language training courses common for intelligence recruits, but insisted on a teaching role, to the chagrin of his supervisors. He quickly took a leading role, and made “humanization” part of his Arabic curriculum:

So I got, in the end, to this fantastic place of teaching... where I could realize the responsibility that we spoke about [in SOP], because you're a teacher, you're faculty, you're a role model. So I was a teacher, and the beauty was, that I would go to class and teach a lesson about soccer. Arabic expressions for soccer. Not connected to anything, but this is Arabic – I'm allowed to do it. I brought in content about children, I brought in a lot of religion, a lot on Islam. And I brought in what I had to as well...

I enjoyed this a lot, and this was a wonderful place. A very open place. I'm pleased that because of this, a lot of people enter the intelligence now, and they know that

not all the Arabs are Muslims, and not all the Muslims are Arabs. That's how I would open the lecture – I'd ask, how many Muslims are there in the world? How many Arabs? This would frequently shock people to discover this – that the Persians aren't Arabs, the Turks aren't Arabs, that the largest Muslim country isn't an Arab country – a lot of people didn't get that.

...If it wasn't army, I would have stayed there... I enjoyed it in an extraordinary manner. A lot of what I know today, is from there. And all the time, I had the relative advantage of thinking... my immediate associations were unmediated, in the sense that I had met Palestinians, I had met Jordanians, I had met Egyptians, suddenly a lot of things I learned from Seeds come together in theory. Practice came before theory.

Like the others, Yishai thus attributed a crucial role to his SOP background in the military, influencing his choice of unit, the content of his service and his effect on other soldiers.

Still, even many of those Israeli graduates most sanguine about their own service understood their experiences as highly unconventional. Avivit mentioned a conversation with a fellow Israeli Seed, whom she considered more “military” and less lucky:

I remember that I once talked about this with [Israeli Seed], who was an officer, something jobnicky, and they sent him to guard a settlement near Ramallah. Guarding. I remember I was pretty shocked by that. And he was pretty shocked, and he did it... the system worked. He didn't believe in it, he didn't support it, but he didn't want to argue with anyone all the time. So to my relief, I didn't face... the ethical dilemmas I faced were what to say, what to do, not “whither our relations with the Arabs?” In retrospect, I wouldn't have done anything... I don't think I would have been happy to go, even to be a teacher, in a combat unit.

In explaining his insistence on teaching Arabic rather than serving in the intelligence, despite pressure from above, Yishai insinuates that his choice was a form of selective refusal:

The course I did... at the end of the course... I don't know how to explain this. This course leads into positions in the intelligence. At the end of the course, for many reasons, I told them I'm not fit for an intelligence position. There's an option to go straight from this course into a teaching position... that's considered inferior. That's something that they used to send the inferior ones to – inferior from a social perspective, a professional perspective. If your class didn't get along with you, they sent you there. And me, I had good grades, I didn't have any problems, but I came and said *this isn't for me, there are things in this that I'm not sure I can do, ethically speaking...* and what I think is for me is teaching. Send me to teaching...

Thus, these graduates deliberately sought educational roles based on ethical concerns about the content of more traditional military service. Their counterparts who took on combat roles spoke of their IDF experiences in quite different terms.

*Combat, Conscience and Compartmentalization*

It makes it hard. It made it hard. A professional soldier doesn't have to be nice, he has to be professional. Not let his emotions influence him. What does a soldier who was in Seeds of Peace do? I don't know. Feel sick about it.<sup>447</sup>

– Erez, Israeli graduate

In interviews, the majority of Israeli graduates acknowledged feeling some sense of inherent incompatibility or contradiction between SOP membership and IDF service, whether occasional or constant, whether in terms of general ethics and affiliations or specific relationships or actions. Graduates commonly employed a strategy of compartmentalization to deal with Seed/soldier dissonance, attempting to draw boundaries between SOP and IDF spheres of activity and consciousness. Some graduates were forbidden to maintain SOP relationships by the military; nearly all voluntarily absented themselves from SOP events for much or all of their time in the IDF. Alumni repeatedly described putting their SOP activity or consciousness “on hold.” One graduate encapsulated a widely held sentiment, stating simply, “I felt like I can't be in both places simultaneously.” Another graduate, citing army regulations and a wish to avoid offending Palestinian Seeds by arriving at events in uniform, described his IDF term as “three years of disconnection.”

Yet despite these efforts, both of these graduates and most others reported repeated failures to maintain a clean separation. SOP and IDF worlds eventually collided, whether in

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<sup>447</sup> Hebrew, literally “feel on the face.”

crises of conscience regarding military operations, impulsive visits to the Jerusalem Center in uniform, or doubts inspired by confrontations or conversations with Arab counterparts. In attempting to delineate lines of separation, one graduate inadvertently hinted at the difficulty of strictly separating, physically or psychologically, these two deeply felt aspects of identity:

*Physically*, you can't go to the military and then just have coffee on the weekends with Palestinians. It's too problematic, too *emotional*. It's just not done. That was a *physical* thing. *Emotionally*, SOP was always in my heart.<sup>448</sup>

Conflicted statements of this sort were common in graduates' testimonies, particularly among those who served in combat and intelligence, and often used to hint at SOP existing as a repressed aspect of identity or emotion during military service. Another graduate, Gal, began by stating that IDF service was "very difficult for me," then proceeded to alternate between emphasizing and minimizing the dissonance she experienced:

I remember that during my service, there were *a lot* of moments that I suddenly felt that this isn't compatible with all my ideology, with all my beliefs, but these were *short* moments. *Most of the time*, I felt like this is a part of me. Military service is a mission, it's something I was educated to do; I didn't have *too much conflict* during the time that I was there.<sup>449</sup>

As she continued, however, she went on to describe her service as precipitating a "large sense of despair. Suddenly when I was part of the military system, all the hope that I had as a youth dissipated."

Numerous other graduates echo her description of profound disappointment from their initial encounters with the IDF as an institution. After being raised on idealized visions of the military, one graduate described her first six months in the army as "miserable... such a myth-breaking thing." Another alumna reported, "You discover a system that's closed off

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<sup>448</sup> Emphasis mine.

<sup>449</sup> Emphasis mine.

[*atumab*], and terrible, and you see how people behave.” Even some graduates far removed from the front evoke images of the IDF as an obdurate bureaucracy:

As [part of] an organization I felt I was really bound by this uniform thinking and... compartmentalizing way of approaching things... this is what you can do, this is what you can't do and you can't get really creative in your thinking, and that's me coming from one of those creative units in the army, the foreign relations division that... compared to any other part of the army was very progressive, but even in that sort of progressive unit I felt it was such a contrast to my experiences in the immediate years beforehand, that it just was difficult.

For graduates experiencing culture shock upon enlistment, a common solution was to seek to switch units or stations – and some eventually succeeded in finding a better place. Others simply attempted to keep a low profile and muddle through. One graduate who adopted such a strategy, *Amir*, invoked the Israeli slang term *Rosh Katan*, literally “small head”<sup>450</sup>: “During the military service, you try as much as possible to be within the confinements of your service, not think too much every day... *Rosh Katan*. And not in the negative sense. In the human sense, what you have to do to endure three years of doing what you don't want to do.” This sort of passive going through the motions is typically associated with desk jobs, but was also voiced by one combat soldier: “I'm not proud of myself. I was a tired soldier. And sad. Depressed. Old school depressed. I never shouted at anyone, never hit anyone, never toyed with anyone. I stood, in the winter, in the rain, and I was depressed.”

The negative encounters of new recruits with military bureaucracy and regimen are the stuff of universal cliché, the province of neither Israelis nor peace education graduates alone. Almost every graduate interviewed for this study, however, linked his or her particular IDF dilemma – and on occasion, its resolution – to ideals or relationships derived from Seeds of Peace, and the toll of disillusionment or separation from them. As Amir explained,

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<sup>450</sup> See Ben-Ari, *Mastering Soldiers*, 39.

“during my time in the army... what influenced me was essentially knowing the people, through Seeds.” In his case, he remained in occasional touch with a Palestinian friend, even meeting this person secretly in Jerusalem once, at the friend’s request. Their conversations, though infrequent, deeply influenced his perception of his own service:

I think the most challenging thing to deal with is essentially the fact that I kept in touch with [Palestinian friend] during the same period. Not a constant connection, once every few months, but when we were talking, it was terrible. [This friend]’s cousin was wounded, I don’t remember if they shot him or bombed the house he was in... critically wounded, I think it was in Nablus, or in Ramallah, I don’t remember. With [this friend], it was terrible for me, this gave me context, for the place that I was in all the time, and how I look at it from outside, how I think about the army. Every time that [we] talked... During my military service, that was the contribution – was it a contribution? – what should I call it? That was the strongest influence that I experienced from Seeds, via the people who I knew and loved.

Amir’s maintenance of cross-conflict contact during IDF service was exceptional – as was his Palestinian friend’s receptivity. However, many Israeli graduates did not need to engage in actual conversation to be frequently reminded of their connections on “the other side.”

Graduates serving in combat and combat-related intelligence, in particular, repeatedly expressed experiencing fears of harming Palestinians they knew, or their relatives, or fellow Seeds. As one combat veteran testified:

One of my major fears was, am I going to go into a house and know the people, or see a picture from Seeds of Peace on the wall. Because belonging to Seeds of Peace is like a brand, people know the logo, they wear the logo, and they’re proud of it... it would definitely be an experience. That, you might ask, why would that be different than any other Palestinian? But I think the fact that you look at the person across you differently does have its, it does influence the whole perspective. You know what I mean? ‘Cause, like I don’t know, stuff we did... I’ve been to some of these towns before, with Seeds of Peace, which was just like, you know, now I’m here with a different position, and it’s really a different, a mind-shifting...

Others generalized these fears of potentially recognizing or harming Palestinian Seeds to their encounters with the Palestinian civilian population as a whole. One graduate was overwhelmed by shame when ordered to accompany a superior officer in the West Bank:

I remember that, when I traveled [in the OPT] in a car, some armored vehicle, in a uniform and a bulletproof vest, what can I tell you? I was ashamed. I was ashamed to be there in uniform. I didn't want them to see me like that. And I remember the officer who drove me there, and he would open the window, and pass by with total contempt, like, 'I'm here, I'm here.' This embarrassed me so much. I really wanted to bury myself in those situations. Truly, I didn't want to go. I remember my friends, coming in uniform to a ceremony at school, putting on the beret... I really didn't like this. I didn't feel good about this.

The same graduate expressed profound discomfort from the visceral encounter with the machinery of occupation:<sup>451</sup> "I was near [Palestinian city], in the brigade headquarters... you wake up at 4:30 in the morning to do a guard shift... and to see the checkpoint with thousands of people standing in line. That did something to me. It's hard to remain indifferent." And indeed, this graduate did not remain indifferent, demanding to be transferred out of the OPT.

The struggle to "remain indifferent" was a recurring theme in the testimonies of graduates on the front line. Some failed altogether. One graduate, *Yiftach*, originally volunteered for combat service out of a proudly stated desire to "do the maximum" for his country. He ended his service by refusing the role he was assigned, and being briefly imprisoned in protest. A skilled marksman, Yiftach was trained to be a sniper. However, on the eve of deployment to an OPT location where he had visited Palestinian friends a few years earlier, he lodged repeated protests with his commander, who rebuked him in response. Yiftach eventually declared, "I can't do this" and attempted to leave the base. After being caught and disciplined, Yiftach was granted release in order to be retrained as a medic for the same unit. Other graduates reported engaging in frequent conflicts with superiors over operations or decisions. One graduate chose to pursue officer status in order

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<sup>451</sup> This particular graduate first attended camp during the second intifada, when the cross-checkpoint visits of earlier years were generally impossible.

to gain decision-making authority, after frequent episodes of frustration with his orders as a soldier. Yet another graduate deliberately "forgot" his bullets at the base when deployed for policing duty in the West Bank, in order to avoid the possibility of using them.

Others took pains to repress recurring concerns. One graduate, Kfir, described a constant struggle to "put on hold," "reduce" and "minimize the influence" of what he called "the critical eye that developed in Seeds of Peace." In his words, "You work in a place that you can't be preoccupied with that all the time, you can't constantly cast doubt, there are orders, things are complex." Nonetheless, he recalled provoking the censure of his commander for failing to bottle up questions:

I'll tell you, the baggage of Seeds of Peace accompanies me. I remember an action, that my unit helped perform ... in a very very clear way, I asked my commander, "tell me, we're doing right now this action and that action. Are we really, truly sure that this guy we're going to catch, there's proof, there's evidence against him? Are we sure that we're not harming civilians? Are you sure they've thought about that?" He tells me, "What's the matter with you? This goes through approvals, and ta-ta-ta..."

... The Israeli assumption is that the army doesn't intentionally try to harm. On the other hand, this is an army, there's nothing to do, an elephant in a china shop, an army – with tanks, planes, it doesn't matter what you do, they will be harmed. Seeds accompanied me as I thought of these actions; when you do things like this, or help do actions like this, it's sitting on my heart. I say to myself, "Fuck! Don't let civilians be harmed." I don't want to know that I'm partner to the harm, even unintentional, careless harm, without taking measurements, measures of risk and supervision, of Palestinian civilians who were harmed for no reason. What's that I don't want? I do my action, my orders. Ethically, I'd prefer to know that these actions are truly only against terrorists, saboteurs, people who have well-grounded suspicions against them at least, and things like that.

Numerous other front-line veterans shared Kfir's aspiration to draw boundaries between the intended targets of their operations and the Palestinian population. As one graduate, *Oren*, explained:

So, the whole concept of, there's somebody else, this could be the brother of, this could be the cousin of, somebody I know, made it for me more of a professional act. I still believe very much in what I did, but it wasn't an act of revenge, it wasn't... it

was there to stop things that were, you know, harming my people. The people [we harmed] were not nice people...

Another veteran, *Avinoam*, conceived his operations through the moral prism of a binary opposition between his intended targets and the Palestinians he had met through SOP:

Where I served, you were dealing 24/7 with Arabs who have one thing on their mind, and that is to kill Israelis. With all the respect I have for Seeds of Peace, there are quite a few Arabs who think that way, who wake up in the morning and the only thing on their mind is how to hurt Israel and Israelis, and that's what the military does... many of my friends, after a certain period in the military, become numb to Palestinians. In the military, the Israel-haters, who are not even a majority among the Palestinians, are the only Palestinians you see. But thanks to SOP and the meaningful experiences I had with SOP, I always knew in my mind that not all Palestinians are like that. It's very easy, after a certain period, to think that all Palestinians just want to hurt Israelis. But I knew, and it was burned in me, that not all Palestinians are like that – that they are people who have dreams, who raise families, who want to go to the States and go to the beach, etc.

Through these elocutions and oppositions, front-line soldiers articulated a struggle beyond “remaining indifferent.” Their explanations seem designed to preserve the peaceful, “humanized” images of self and other constructed at SOP, separating these from the violence and de-humanization by which they were surrounded, and in which they engaged.

In contrast to non-combat veterans, front-line veterans often reported shifts in political consciousness and opinion as a result of experiences in the IDF. These changes did not point in a unified political direction, but were almost unanimously expressed in a pair of themes: On the one hand, deeper appreciation of threats posed by Palestinian and Arab militant groups; on the other hand, an unprecedented validation of Palestinian grievances against the IDF in its role of policing occupation. These were not mutually exclusive attitudes; in numerous cases, the same graduate articulated both at once. Some soldiers expressed relatively firm senses of justification for their own actions; others less. Yet most of the same soldiers counted their idealized images of the IDF as casualties of their exposure to

the realities of military conduct in the OPT. *Razi*, a combat veteran, did so indirectly, citing the ostensibly clean record of his unit as exceptional rather than exemplary:

Luckily, I was in a base that wasn't extreme. Yes, we were in the West Bank, and yes, we sometimes did stuff that I wasn't happy with it. Nobody likes to be an aggressor, and sometimes, it took you there – to be an aggressor. But luckily I was in a unit that did this in a civilized way, as much as you can. In my unit, there were no issues of humiliating, stealing, beating unnecessarily. I was, like, I trusted my unit, and in most cases, like 99% of the cases, the trust was validated.

Others were starkly disillusioned by what they witnessed. Two graduates describe their military experiences as validating claims they heard from Palestinians about IDF abuses, accusations these graduates had found unbelievable as teenagers. As Avinoam stated:

When I went to Seeds of Peace, and I heard Palestinians say there are soldiers who hit, there are soldiers who abuse, there are unjustified arrests – I never believed them. Being in the military, and seeing how it works – this is not a policy of the military – but there are cases where the military arrests people without explaining why they are arrested... they might have good reasons, intelligence and whatnot... and the person is detained for a month without knowing why he is detained. And I learned that there are many soldiers who abuse their power, who beat and steal and do things that are forbidden by military doctrine. When you have tens of thousands of people operating in the West Bank... the open door calls out to the thief... when you put 19-20 year-old soldiers, and give them the power of G-d, over a civilian population that cannot defend itself, then there are always rotten apples that will take advantage of that... the legal system in Israel is trying to prevent that, but the scope is wider than we are able to prevent. As a child, I couldn't believe that these things are happening, and now, I know that even if the Israeli legal system is trying to do everything it can to prevent that, the Palestinian whose 80 year-old mother is hit, it doesn't matter, they don't care if that person is apprehended, they lose all their faith in the Israeli system.

Another graduate summarized the process, stating that, “my time in the army really influenced me... I started to look at things I went through in Seeds differently. That is to say, I started to hold the kind of critical opinions that I previously didn't like very much.”

Few of the front-line veterans left the army with their images of the IDF, the Palestinians, or *themselves* intact. As youth, they were inculcated with the Israeli Ministry of Education's fervent advocacy of military service and the morality of the IDF, on the one

hand, and exhorted by SOP to be “fighters for peace,” on the other. On the eve of enlistment, some invoked the classic trope of the soldier longing for peace but forced to fight, a core motif of the Israeli “ethos of conflict,” imagining a world in which both are possible, complementary, even synonymous.<sup>452</sup> Experience most often shattered this image, leaving many with doubts or scars, and without a fundamental pillar of youthful identity.

Naomi summarized the legacy of her service as a “blurring of my identity”:

I really distanced myself from religion, and from the army, and the cheap patriotism of the army. ‘Til today that makes me really angry... The army really tries to encourage that something that feels to me very empty, very hollow. The army really does this, really strong, that is, ceremonies, symbols, ranks, and letting you feel part of something bigger. It does this excellently, and people are sucked in, I’m always shocked how much people get into this stronger and stronger. That’s something in the army that I really loathed.

Kfir reiterated several times his firm conviction that IDF service is a obligation – but alternated these statements with darkly subversive portraits of the conscription system and the ideology underpinning it:

It’s a very difficult challenge, because: A) You have your actions, and there are no questions here, and you do something stupid then you go to military prison, no way around it. And beyond that you have a feeling of patriotism, they demand of you, they inscribe in you; you’re imprinted – like, they burn it in your hard disk here, all the stuff about Zionism, Israeli-ness, army, and it’s clear. I come from a home where my father was a senior officer in the reserves, and that’s a big part of the service to the country. It takes time to grow up; they take you at the right age. They don’t take you at the age of 27, you’d give them a kick in the head. Go to the territories, run after...? F\*\*\* that!<sup>453</sup> Who would do that now? But at age 18, you’re at an age that your character is not molded, and they know that, and it’s intentional in my opinion, it’s no coincidence. On the one hand, you’re old enough to deal with things like weapons, etc. and understand the basics of soldiering, and on the other hand you’re not mature enough to doubt too much, or raise too much of a voice in protest. They’re not stupid, in the system.

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<sup>452</sup> See Bar-Tal, "Societal Beliefs in Times of Intractable Conflict"; Wallach, *The Enemy Has a Face*.

<sup>453</sup> Literal Hebrew: "Your mother’s a whore!"

Now, there's that, you know, it's a big honor to serve in the army blah blah blah OK. But there's also a kind of... Sparta. Sparta. I know people who, truly, to die in the army seems to them a great honor. Fucking they raise you on this stuff, it's horrible.

Kfir's portrait of the military preying on his youthful innocence is a stinging bit of self-deprecation in Israeli culture, in which it is considered a cardinal humiliation to "end up a *freier*," i.e. a sucker or a dupe.<sup>454</sup> Erez, who began his service aspiring to fulfill the double ideal of the Seed as soldier, ended his term disillusioned, asking caustically: "What's the fantasy, that a soldier who was in SOP, he'll be an angel at a checkpoint? ... Seeds of Peace creates contradictions that don't exist in reality, and they can't exist."

#### *Seeds of Peace, Scars of War*

Two combat veterans spoke of trauma and loss that went beyond shocks to self-image. Yiftach, who was jailed for refusal to serve as a sniper, eventually returned to his unit as a medic. While comfortable with the duties of his new role, he remained deeply troubled by what he witnessed on missions in the OPT, and the dehumanizing language employed by other soldiers regarding Palestinians. He spoke up in meetings and eventually wrote a letter of protest, which earned him praise from an officer, but disdain the other soldiers in his unit. Yiftach was evidently not alone in his distress; after the unit took several casualties in fighting, a fellow soldier committed suicide. Soon after, Yiftach left the army to seek counseling, and did not return.

Oren also expressed disgust with things he witnessed in the field, from both sides:

I saw things that were very difficult for me to see. I will give the example of, we were doing a patrol in Hebron, and one of the Palestinians... there was a person that was

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<sup>454</sup> See Hagit Ofra, "Obama, Don't be such a Freier," *Washington Jewish Week*, December 8, 2010.

standing in the window, so we told him to go back in, to step away from the window, and his response was to take a baby kid and put it in front of him, which was appalling to me. I can balance it with a story on our side if you want... the people in Kiryat Arba [Israeli settlement near Hebron], in a different patrol one of the soldiers – he took his knife, and there was a Palestinian car and he took out the air of the wheels with a knife, and yes he was court-martialed for it – which I was very pleased with the system, which I thought would be more lenient, especially because my commander was from a religious background, whatever – but the act itself was like, whoa, why would you do that *stam* [for no reason]? It was an example of hatred that I just wasn't capable of fathoming.

However, Oren narrated these and other sordid scenes, such as pursuing a Palestinian militant into a brothel, with detachment. His narrative, wry and taut through the rest of the interview, faltered only when he recalled the deaths of fellow soldiers. Within a few months of enlistment, Oren lost two colleagues and nearly his own life:

I was part of a *pigua* [terror attack]... on [specific date] two terrorists, whatever they were, entered my base and while we were in morning preparation and they shot at us, they killed two people, two of my commanders, they injured most of my squad, I had a bullet fly and literally miss me by two inches, it broke my glasses off my face. Um, you know. That was also a significant experience in that part of the service. The two guys, the two Palestinians did not live to tell the story, but you know... this happened fairly early in my army service.

Some time later, Oren was sent along with tens of thousands of Israeli troops to fight Hizballah in the June 2006 War in Lebanon. He paused repeatedly as he recounted his experiences of, in his words, “full-on war”:

It was a very difficult war for me personally. Five members of my former unit, which I knew all of them personally, some of them I trained, some of them were officers who trained with me personally, two of them were friends from the area, that were killed... it was definitely a... shaping experience... It was horrible... you have to think of whose memorial services you're gonna go to each year, because they're all around the same time. I didn't stay in the army, I left four months after the war, which is when my initial contract finished. It was... it was just like overwhelmingly, a lot of people that I knew, think about it, five people, of which, three of them I trained... some of them even in boot camp, I came in and I gave them lectures about certain, you know... it was very personal, the loss... the feeling of, I wasn't there... there's like a whole complex there...

Oren and Yiftach, who were both active SOP participants throughout high school, have not resumed SOP activity since leaving the military – though Yiftach has initiated occasional contact with a pair of close friends, Israeli and Palestinian. Oren initially cited his status as a reserve officer to explain his absence from SOP, but concluded by hinting at deeper issues: “I don’t see myself participating... As long as I’m an army captain, I can’t go along and have conversations with Palestinians... it doesn’t work, so as long as I’m in reserves, I probably will not have contact with Palestinians... not sure necessarily why... maybe the dissonance is too hard to settle.”

Oren and Yiftach are exceptional cases among my Israeli interviewees, both in terms of direct expression of trauma and in terms of their post-IDF disconnection from Seeds of Peace. Every other Israeli interviewee with a similarly active SOP record in high school almost immediately re-engaged with the organization and Palestinian counterparts upon leaving the army – in some cases even before. Post-IDF re-integration into SOP frameworks and networks was frequently not, however, a simple endeavor.

#### *Re-Integration: A New Re-Entry Problem*

Upon release from the IDF, Israelis of the current generation archetypically pack their bags and wander the globe for months at a time, escaping the memories of military service in India, South America, or other exotic locales. For many Israeli SOP alumni, the post-IDF itinerary included additional stops in Jerusalem and/or Maine, rejoining SOP as participants in graduate activities, or often as camp or Center staff. Describing the exile from SOP effectively imposed by most forms of military service, one Israeli graduate expressed a

widespread sentiment, saying, “the army takes part of your personality.” After the army, many alumni moved swiftly to take it back. For those who had been highly active “Seeds” in high school, SOP had indeed been a meaningful part, a source of valued networks and relationships, often a core element of self-definition. Soon after discharge from the IDF, many of these formerly active graduates attempted to “return” to SOP sites, relationships and/or activities – indeed, sometimes even before. Almost every interviewee recalled making a spontaneous, and sometimes ill-conceived, appearance at an SOP event while in uniform. Others sought permission from commanders to participate in isolated events, especially the organization’s 2005 “Leadership Summit” in Maine. Some, such as Gal, enrolled in courses designed for adult graduates at the Center:

In my last six months in the service, I heard that they opened the course, the first course was mediation – conflict management... That was one of the first programs they had for the “graduate” Seeds. And I felt like that’s my ‘return ticket.’ I started the course half a year before I completed my service, and I worked out a special arrangement with the commander to allow me to travel every Thursday to Jerusalem. To leave early from the army, leave my weapon on the base, because of course it wasn’t possible to arrive with a weapon, and it was known in my unit that on Thursdays, Gal travels, no matter what, no matter what there is to do, even if we’re staying all weekend, then I go on Thursday and come back the next day.

“Return” to SOP was a phenomenon common to previously active Israeli alumni, whether they expressed positive, negative, or ambivalent feelings about their time in the IDF.

Graduates who described military service in critical terms often framed SOP explicitly as a counter-cultural antithesis of the army. Gal articulated her return to SOP both in terms of seeking personal fulfillment and registering a quiet statement of opposition:

When I look back today, I think my choice to return to Seeds before I was discharged originated from a variety of directions, also because I felt like the military framework is suffocating my brain, is starving it, and I was desperately seeking something to develop myself again, to return me to dealing with things that interest me. And I also think that there was some attempt, on my part, to feel that despite it all, I’m doing something that is opposed to what I’m... what I’m cooperating with.

Some graduates coming from positive military experiences described SOP as a forum for harnessing skills they had acquired in the army “for peaceful purposes.” As Yishai explained:

In the army I gained the tools of spoken Arabic, of Arabic in general and learning a lot a lot a lot and in an intensive manner about the Arab World in general, and on the Muslim World and Islam ... but really to go back to Seeds and to apply this, in directions that are not connected to security, but... connected to what I am doing now by teaching spoken Arabic [to Israeli Jews], and why I returned to Seeds [to work], and why I’ll be joining the facilitation course insh’allah, and every time there are activities connected to this I try to insert myself... It was clear, that the moment I left [the army], there was a place to implement the things I learned – and that place is in meeting Palestinians anew – that’s why I quickly returned to Seeds.

Two shared themes stand out in Israeli interviewees’ narratives of “return”: a) an eagerness to immediately reclaim, reestablish and/or reevaluate the SOP identity and connections that were placed “on hold” during military service; b) a desire for IDF experiences and service to receive some degree of acknowledgment, legitimacy or understanding from the organization, Palestinian counterparts, or both. Neither proved to be a simple task.

The conclusion of IDF service did not, in most cases, bring resolution to Israeli graduates’ struggles to reconcile humanist and nationalist, or peace-making and military identities – quite the opposite. The prolonged separation, the loss of the common youth movement framework, the ascendant politics of “unilateral separation” incarnated by the Separation Barrier, the anger and betrayal expressed by many Palestinian counterparts and the inability of SOP staff to legitimize or understand IDF experiences all set the bar for adult SOP involvement higher than ever. As Gal explained, “When I returned to Seeds ... I felt suddenly how distant these things are from each other, and how much... it’s almost surreal to wake up in the morning with a uniform and weapon, at two in the afternoon put them aside, and take a bus to the SOP Center in Jerusalem, to talk about peace.” And yet, she and a determined cadre of Israeli graduates persisted in attempting to bridge this chasm. The

following section focuses on para- and post-army reintegration struggles of Israeli graduates, including their perspectives and the responses of the organization and Palestinian graduates.

*Symbolic Politics: IDF Uniforms in SOP Contexts*

Some months before the outbreak of the second *intifada*, a group of Israeli and Palestinian families gathered at the Jerusalem Center for a celebratory dinner. Their children, all SOP graduates, had recently completed a documentary film project together; the families would jointly attend the premiere at a local cinema later that evening. As the families entered, SOP staff and Seeds busied themselves with efforts to “break the ice” between parents. In the midst of these inherently awkward initial encounters, many in the crowd were taken aback by the arrival of a middle-aged Israeli soldier in full olive drab. He was the father of one of the film project’s participants, a career officer. Before the surprised staffers were forced to formulate a response to this unprecedented event, one of the Palestinian families welcomed the uniformed father to their table – their sons were good friends. This Palestinian family saved the staff from a genuine dilemma: Whether to humiliate the Israeli by explicitly stigmatizing the outfit he wore to work every day, or to humiliate the Palestinians by implicitly requiring them to socialize with a uniformed Israeli soldier.

The salvation was, however, quite temporary – the issue grew more common and more problematic in ensuing years, as Israeli Seeds themselves began surprising the staff with unannounced, uniformed appearances at the SOP Center and bi-national events. It remained entirely unclear whether this Israeli father simply drove straight from work without a second thought, unconscious of the symbolism of IDF fatigues for Palestinians, or if on

the contrary he intended to make a statement of identity and gauge the others' responses. Interviewed years after the fact, Israeli graduates also could not decisively explain the motives of their own uniformed appearances. As more Israeli graduates appeared in uniform, and more Palestinian Seeds complained, the staff established an explicit policy of asking Israeli graduates not to arrive in uniform, while continuing to require those who did to stow their weapons in a staff members' office, and to change clothes immediately.<sup>455</sup>

Graduates expressed different degrees of understanding of the problematic nature of these “surprise” visits. Some, such as Kfir, articulated fluent awareness of the visceral effect of the uniform on Palestinians, albeit in hindsight:

I remember that once I came in uniform, really at the twilight of my service but I still had a uniform and a weapon, I came to the Center, and I entered, I was with the weapon, a sawed-off M-16, [Palestinian staffer] was there, I remember it vividly, truly. He looked at me, and explained who I am, with an embarrassed laugh and smile, and the Arabs – there were Arab kids who I hadn't met – stared at me in utter shock. And as I said, I can understand that... A soldier for them is occupation, it's a checkpoint, and things like that. And I came with a gun. Theoretically, from their standpoint, I could take that weapon and shoot them in the head.

Erez likewise expressed retroactive understanding of the predicament in which the presence of armed Israeli soldiers placed SOP as a “peace” organization in the Palestinian community:

I remember that I arrived at the SOP Center in uniform, with my weapon, and I said how can I do this? But on the other hand it's just us, the Seeds. [Palestinian staffer] saw me at the Center, and he told me, 'You know that Seeds' reputation is already on the floor, you don't have to add to that.' I saw him [several years later], and I told him, 'You really stuck it to me.' He asked if I understand why he said that. I said that I understand why he said that, and why he feels that way, and I understand that for a Palestinian Seed, the Center is the last place that he wants to see an Israeli soldier.

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<sup>455</sup> It is worthy of note that Israeli graduates often stowed their weapons in the offices of certain Palestinian staff members, which, though likely an illegal act, was indicative of an exceptional level of mutual trust.

Other Israeli alumni evinced less understanding, taking personal insult from the policy. One graduate vividly recalled his umbrage at being asked to leave by a staff member who was unable to quickly locate a change of clothes at a large bi-national event outside Jerusalem:

I joined the army... and of course the work... was very demanding and it took a lot of my schedule and my energy, so I couldn't participate, but unlike others, I still wanted to participate. I still wanted to come to Seeds of Peace events.

Unfortunately, one of the worst memories I have of Seeds of Peace, was that workshop... which was on a Friday, and I came straight from the army, and I knew that the workshop was ending at 1:00, and I got out of the army only at 11:30, and I had no other clothes except my uniform, and I was prevented from entering the event because my uniform would offend Palestinians. So I turned around, not seeing anybody, and I felt terrible. It wasn't like I was carrying any weapons, the only weapon I was carrying was my pager, but I was not allowed in. So first of all that made me feel not welcome, that made me feel very disappointed and very upset. So that made me feel that it's not a home for me; I had always considered SOP as a home, but if you're not welcome at that place, then it's not a home anymore. So for those two years, I felt like SOP, it's a great experience I had in the past, and I have great friends that I'll still have in the future, but the organization itself, that's over, I'm not a part of it anymore.

...I felt rejected by the organization – if it's a staff member, whether it's an American or Palestinian or Israeli staff member, that's rejecting me from an SOP event, then it's the policy of the organization. So on that note, I was disappointed by the organization and rejected by the organization. [SOP staffperson] was a symbol of the organization and I was obviously offended on a personal level at all. But I didn't come to SOP events afterwards not because I didn't want to see [SOP staffperson], but because I didn't want to see SOP – I didn't want it to be a part of my life.

The depth of this graduate's injury evokes the depth of attachment and identification with both IDF and SOP, and the difficulty of accepting their areas of irreconcilable difference. As a phenomenon, the repetition of these uniformed appearances, against ever-more explicit protests of SOP staff, seemed to betray an irrepressible need among Israeli graduates for legitimation of their conflicted status as Seeds and soldiers. In interviews, Israeli alumni use their uniformed appearances as parables to illustrate the depth of longings to "return" to SOP, and the inability of SOP staff or Palestinians to grant the legitimacy they craved.

Numerous Israeli graduates suspected that this uniform policy indicated a broader bias against military service on the part of the organization, the regional staff or particular staff members. One graduate found the application inconsistent and the policy hypocritical:

I was in Jerusalem, I came to the Seeds of Peace Center, and [SOP staff member] was still there, and I came in uniform... and he wasn't really happy about that, although he didn't say anything to me. To others he did say that it's not nice to come in uniform. And I remember that then, it seemed a pretty nasty thing to say. Even today, I don't think it's necessary; it's better to deal with it, and not bury your head in the sand; let's say, OK, take off the uniform and everything will be OK, how stupid.

Even graduates such as Kfir, who expressed understanding of the complications involved, shared this sentiment: "Seeds did not know, and in my opinion still doesn't know... how to handle the Israeli army. We have, as Israelis, a lot of criticism that, not implicitly, but even in a quite clear manner, Seeds encourages shirking [conscientious objection]." Another graduate echoed his suspicion of sympathy for conscientious objection, insinuating, "there was this undertone that it's not cool to be a soldier, but it's cool to be a pacifist." And indeed, SOP faced difficulties in dealing with active duty soldiers, while exhibiting no similar issues with conscientious objectors – an upside-down situation according to Israeli norms, precisely the opposite of the prevailing hierarchy in Israeli society. Another graduate, David, asserted that he felt "pressure from people in SOP not to go to the army or to be something different," adding that, "it's harder to be in Seeds of Peace and talk about the army than it is to be in the army and talk about Seeds of Peace."<sup>456</sup>

Despite these feelings, the same graduates who expressed offense at the policy all became active at different levels after completing military service. Indeed, David explained his feelings of rejection as a soldier as motivating his subsequent decision to work at SOP:

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<sup>456</sup> It is important to note that he did not serve in a unit related in any way to combat.

I was really devastated... that in many ways is what's driving me now to work with graduates and improve how they feel about Seeds of Peace. This is one of my major motivations for working now with Seeds of Peace, I don't want anybody to feel the way I did... I don't know how much more comfortable we can make it, but I'm definitely trying... I really hope to have people comfortable being in the army and being in SOP, because it's not easy being in both, but it's possible.

David also articulated a general appreciation of the problematic nature of the issue for the US staff and Palestinian members, proposing outreach to graduates in the IDF be an “internal Israeli activity,” handled by Israelis like himself. However, he nonetheless repeats an emphasis the organization actively communicate messages of legitimation to alumni in the army, in terms that evoke John Wallach's rhetoric of validating embattled national identities:

First of all, don't be disappointed in them. I can understand why it's hard for people in the organization, especially Palestinians, to know that their friends are in the army. I recognize that. It has to be an internal Israeli activity, showing the graduates who are in the army that they have a place in the organization; that's what I didn't feel. Let them know that they have a place in the organization, that the organization is not disappointed, that it's not just waiting those three years and then they're back to life.

It is important to note that it was Israeli graduates themselves who commonly treated military service as “three years of disconnection” from SOP, whether due to IDF regulations, cognitive dissonance, or both. The organization welcomed serving alumni to visits, events, courses – the only policy SOP ever instituted on the issue regarded symbols of service, weapons and uniforms. David's sincere plea underlines the psychological nature of the issue, and the depth of many Israelis' identification with those symbols. At a profound level, it is not enough, for many Israeli graduates, to be recognized only in “civilian clothes.”

David's statement that, “it's not just three years and then you're back to life,” resonates equally, but differently, in graduates' testimonies on the substance of post-IDF “return” to SOP. Sudden immersion in SOP frameworks, and especially encounters with international and Palestinian questions and perceptions about the IDF, prompted renewed

reflection on SOP membership and IDF service for many post-army graduates. The next section will focus on the crucial point of post-army re-entry: confrontations and conversations with Palestinian graduates.

### *Post-IDF Encounters with Palestinians*

At the Israeli graduates' 2002 seminar on IDF service in Tel Aviv, a pair of Palestinian SOP alumni volunteered to come and discuss their experiences in the OPT during the second *intifada*. Most of the Israelis present were serving in the IDF, and had rarely seen or spoken to Palestinian counterparts in the previous two years. The session was designed as a presentation with Q&A, not "dialogue" *per se*. This was the Palestinians' preference, and a structural requirement, as they spoke to a group of more than 40 Israelis.

Given that ratio, the explosive political situation and the tenor of the Israelis' internal arguments, this cross-conflict conversation proceeded in remarkable quiet for more than an hour. The Israelis listened intently, without interruption, as the Palestinians told of Apache helicopters circling and tanks in the streets, rings of checkpoints and trenches surrounding their cities and homes, the unpredictable imposition of military curfews turning college exam schedules, family events and the business of ordinary life into haphazard chaos. The group moved seamlessly into a respectful, wholly unmediated question and answer session, during which an Israeli graduate asked for clarification of Palestinian public opinion, and the speaker's own feelings, about suicide bombings and other Palestinian attacks against Israelis.

Both Palestinians responded in turn, and in similar fashion; they opposed suicide bombings and all attacks against Israeli civilians on both moral and strategic grounds.

Attacks against Israeli soldiers in the OPT, however, the Palestinians saw as justified resistance to military occupation. “You know me,” said one Palestinian. “I’ve welcomed you to my home as friends and I still welcome you to my city and my home as friends. You are always welcome as Seeds, as yourselves. But if you come to my city as soldiers, invading and threatening us with tanks and weapons – I do not choose violence, this is not my way – but it is a natural response and it is our right to fight back against soldiers who occupy us and threaten our lives, this is self-defense.” There was silence in the room. One of the Israelis, a combat soldier, held his bowed head in utter disbelief and struggled to speak. “I never believed,” he stammered, “I never believed someone would threaten to kill me at a Seeds of Peace event.”

“But I did *not* say that *I* will kill *you*,” the Palestinian speaker protested, and proceeded to reiterate his position and emphasize a distinction between a general right of resistance and any personal implications. This distinction was irrelevant, however, to his stunned Israeli counterpart, who had indeed been in Palestinian cities as an armed soldier. The deferential tone of the session was shattered. Hebrew conversations erupted in every corner, numerous participants attempted to mediate, and neither of the aggrieved parties acknowledged the presence of anyone else in the room. Mirroring his colleague’s air of affront, the Palestinian graduate pointed at him and personalized the argument in kind. “But I saw *you* on television,” he said, referring to a media appearance by the Israeli graduate from four years before. His voice had risen, refocusing the attention in the room. “You said if [a Palestinian] throws stones at you, you will shoot him!” “Well it’s not a question anymore,” the Israeli graduate responded indignantly. “I have been there. They did.” He paused again. “And I didn’t.” He stormed out of the room and did not return to the session.

This conversation was a microcosm, encompassing key elements of post-army encounters of adult Israeli and Palestinian graduates. Years later, many graduates vividly remember the moment. It exemplified the newly personalized stakes of the confrontation, which triggered shock for many Israelis upon hearing Palestinian perceptions of the army in which they served, and for many Palestinians upon contemplating the actions of their counterparts as soldiers. In each case, graduates viewed each other's views and roles in the conflict as consequential, no longer hypothetical. As the same Israeli combat veteran stated:

The event for me, it was hurtful. Because in a way, I was part of Seeds of Peace that for me, it was some kind of a neutral zone. Of course, it's not a neutral zone, nobody asks it to be a neutral zone, but when I'm in Seeds of Peace, the feeling is to be more safe. You can say whatever, or not say whatever, you can say stuff and feel safe. And ... even speaking of the army with [Palestinian friends], of course, they were like really good guys, but [this Palestinian]... was an extremist in his opinions, and it was really hurtful, because I didn't get the backup that I needed from my fellow Israelis. I think I was like the oldest in the room, and when [he] started justifying killing of soldiers and I was there and everyone knew that, it took some of the trust that I had in Seeds of Peace, 'til today.

The same phenomena were in evidence at the next large-scale public encounter between IDF veterans and Palestinian graduates, the organization's 2005 Leadership Summit in Maine.<sup>457</sup> Another combat veteran, *Razzi*, recalled that, "In 2005, in the summit... I took the microphone and I said hello, I'm Razi and I was in a combat unit... there was silence in the hall. OK, well, I was in a combat unit, but that doesn't make me unsuitable to talk to."

Some Israelis were stung by the critical responses of Palestinian counterparts to the fact that they had enlisted. A non-combat veteran, who minimized the personal importance of military service, felt that Palestinian alumni accorded it much greater significance:

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<sup>457</sup> The 2005 Leadership Summit brought more than 100 adult graduates, mainly Israeli and Palestinian with smaller groups from Egypt and Jordan, together for five days at SOP International Camp in Maine. The schedule included a variety of lectures, training sessions, facilitated dialogue groups, professional networking, meetings with SOP Board members and staff, and joint negotiations of a framework for establishing a graduates' organization. Despite deliberate attempts to play down the social aspect, the Summit is frequently referred to by graduates simply as "the reunion."

[IDF service] wasn't a milestone for me. It was much more a milestone for the other side, the fact that I went to the army, this was something I was very happy about, going and serving... it was a milestone to the extent that my image has changed in their eyes, in the eyes of the Palestinian Seeds, after I had served. I was a little bit shocked at first when I first realized that. But that sort of became more evident: To them, I'm a different [person] than I was before. To me, I'm the same person, I was a student, then I was a soldier, then I'm a student again. To them it was a milestone, it wasn't to me. I don't remember specific examples, but I remember a general sense of loss of trust on their side, I was less respected.

The same Israeli graduate later cited this "discovery" as initiating a reciprocal loss of trust in Palestinian Seeds, culminating in alienation from SOP and peacebuilding in general.

In graduate testimonies, cross-conflict conversations about military service are universally described as fraught with tension. However, Israeli graduates did not universally experience these encounters as negative. Some valued the ability to engage with Palestinian counterparts despite, or after, highly charged exchanges regarding the IDF. As Razi explained, after his announcement at the Summit, "actually, most of the people accepted that. I talked to a Palestinian girl who said that the first time she heard I was in a combat unit, she was really angry at me. But at the summit, we talked a lot, and she was very nice to me. So that's the type of meeting that I think Seeds of Peace should encourage." Another graduate lauded his excellent working relationship, on SOP staff, with a Palestinian colleague who allegedly once made a threatening statement regarding his service in the IDF:

I have a very negative memory, of one Palestinian Seed saying to me if you ever get near my house [as a soldier], I'll kill you... So this is what makes it even more interesting now to be working with [this person] for Seeds of Peace. We occasionally have our own discussions and our own arguments, and this is a good thing about working with SOP, that it increases my time with Palestinians so that I can talk about these things. Obviously, [Palestinian colleague] and I have disagreements and different points of view. [We] still haven't spoken to her about that sentence. We are still great friends and we were then, but [the statement] was a big shock for me, and I didn't know how to deal with that. But I guess I just put it in the back of my mind and didn't think about that, because I knew that I wouldn't have to be close to their houses – in my [non-combat] service, I wouldn't have to deal with that. But that's a sentence that is reflected still in my mind and I think will be for a long time.

Other Israeli graduates, by contrast, emphasized the value of conversations with Palestinians about the army, both in terms of building authentic, honest relationships and in terms of sparking unprecedented reflections of their own. As a non-combat veteran, Orly, explained:

About enlisting in the army, it's funny, because after [completing army service], at the reunion, the Arabs asked us about the army, and that was essentially the first time... that I thought about the army at all. Always, other people spoke about feeling conflicted; I never felt internally conflicted. OK, I knew that I'm not going to be a combat soldier, and I didn't face the dilemma.

Another non-combat veteran identified conversations about the military with Palestinians as “truly a critical turning point in my life, from every standpoint, in terms of processing my experience as a soldier, the meaning of this.” Among combat veterans, such reports of positive cross-conflict conversations about army service were rare. One combat veteran did, however, report that, “I spoke a lot with [Palestinian Seeds]... I carried on such deep dialogues... I spoke with many Arabs about the army and its meanings... These are important conversations. There is criticism in them, but not bad criticism.”

### *A Different Shade of Green: Employment in the Organization*

Israeli graduates chose two particularly intensive paths of post-IDF engagement with SOP and Palestinian counterparts: 1) Working for SOP, at camp and/or as program staff in the Middle East, and 2) Participation in a series of year-long training courses sponsored by SOP in Jerusalem, on Mediation, Conflict Resolution, and Facilitation. There are clear patterns of divergence between these paths, in terms of the quality of “re-integration.”

Several interviewees transitioned immediately from IDF service to working as camp counselors in Maine; all reported profound difficulties. The move entailed an abrupt shift

from the strictly regimented roles of Israeli soldier to those of informal educator, chaperone, cheerleader and nurturer – of Palestinian youth. One soldier-turned-counselor, Meir, described the jarring juxtaposition:

[As a counselor] I'm sitting in camp, with a boy from Jenin and a girl from Bethlehem. I might have stood [as a soldier] outside her house. The image of the Israeli soldier, for them, is the devil. And I have to ask them if they ate enough carrots. I can't think of anything more absurd than this. And absurd's not bad. I think for them it's good. But this situation cannot exist in reality; it's ridiculous.

Despite the dissonance, all of the Israeli graduates in this situation reported forming close relationships with younger Palestinian campers. Indeed, they described these relationships as the most, and in some cases the only, positive aspect of their experience as counselors. Each counselor initially struggled over whether and how to reveal their IDF service to campers, and each eventually shared their background with campers in their bunks. As Meir explained:

I felt like [the Palestinian campers in his bunk] wanted to know. So I told them that we can have a conversation. I asked them to ask me. The guy from Jenin didn't speak a word of English, so I tried all my knowledge of Arabic. He told me, if I knew that you had been a soldier before I got to know you, I never would have exchanged a word with you.

Noga, a female Israeli graduate, described a similar process with a Palestinian camper: “A boy from [Palestinian city]... the thing he hates most in the world is Israeli soldiers. And he loves me... he discovers [she was a soldier], and he doesn't care. He doesn't care 'cause he loves me.” Indeed, despite withdrawing from official SOP frameworks soon after that session, Noga reported that she remained in frequent contact with Palestinian campers whom she met that summer as a counselor. These counselors did not attribute their difficulties to relations with Palestinian campers, nor to the sudden shifts from the hierarchical military to casual camp framework, or from Israeli to American cultural

dominance. Instead, they spoke of feeling marginalized, misunderstood, and even ostracized as Israelis, on political grounds, by other counselors and staff.

These counselors struggled above all with the Middle East political paradigm of SOP's American staff – that of the US liberal-Left, critical of the conventional pro-Israel politics that, by contrast, prevailed on SOP's Board of Directors. The political discourse among counselors was driven by American strains of Middle East identity politics, latent or blatant. The dominant voices were of Jewish-Americans asserting more or less conscious challenges to mainstream pro-Israel ideology, and of Palestinian-, Arab- and Muslim-Americans asserting identity and solidarity with the Palestinian cause.<sup>458</sup> Many on the organization's largely Jewish senior staff, concerned with the labeling of SOP as a "Jewish organization" in the Arab world, actively sought to hire and promote non-Jewish, and especially Arab and Palestinian staff members. The Israeli soldiers-turned-counselors, in each case, were lone Israeli counselors at their sessions, "parachuted" from an IDF environment in which the assumptions were pro-Israeli and pro-military, to one dominated by criticism of all of the above.

Thus, while Israeli counselors eventually felt comfortable discussing their identity and admitting to military service with Palestinian campers, several never felt able to do the same with colleagues. Noga painted a stark portrait of politically-driven social isolation:

What was hard for me at camp... first of all they brought me as the only Israeli counselor. There were two Palestinian counselors, an Egyptian counselor, and other counselors with Muslim and Middle Eastern roots. And they loved each other, and everything I said, every joke I told, they turned into something political. And everything happened behind my back. They tried to turn me into some kind of fanatic... There was an Egyptian who said, when the Palestinians arrived on the bus,

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<sup>458</sup> There were always numerous American staff of various Christian denominations as well, but they rarely set the political tone.

“here come the occupied.” For her, that’s allowed; for me, it’s forbidden. They made an entire campaign against me.

And they brought American counselors who are radicals, and they were against me in everything. One who was Jewish-American attacked everything, every opinion I presented. When I would say something, they wouldn’t listen, they wouldn’t ask me what I mean, they would just get up and leave and report to Tim [camp director Tim Wilson] or somebody else. And the head counselor was Palestinian, and the head of the girls was his girlfriend. And in my bunk, they put an American who thought she had to explain everything to me... My kids loved me, especially the Palestinians. I’m still in touch with my Palestinian campers... But the counselors singled me out, and I was alone – I had no support. I went for a talk with Tim. And Tim didn’t understand a thing. He thought he understood me, but he understood nothing.

In retrospective, Noga summarized, “I think it was a mistake to bring someone straight from the army to a place where it’s totally forbidden to show any sympathy for their country.”<sup>459</sup>

Noga and another graduate citing a similar experience distanced themselves from the organization not long after their terms as counselors.

By contrast, numerous other Israeli graduates who worked at camp as counselors and facilitators remained highly active in SOP and other peacebuilding initiatives. Several factors distinguish these alumni from the soldiers-turned-counselors described above: All graduates reporting positive “re-integration” experiences became camp staff only *after* participation in intensive SOP frameworks *in the Middle East*. These graduates never came to Maine as staff *alone*; they worked at camp with a peer group of other Israeli and Palestinian alumni, who were similarly active with SOP in the region. Unlike the isolated soldiers-turned-counselors, these Israeli alumni transitioned gradually after the army, in SOP contexts

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<sup>459</sup> Although “Noga” (and I) emphasize the political dimension, her experience is strikingly reminiscent of that of a Palestinian graduate who returned to camp as an adult to be a facilitator, and was the only “Seed” among the group of facilitators. This Palestinian graduate also felt alienated and ostracized, not on political but methodological and social grounds, by the other facilitators. There is clearly some difficulty for most graduates returning to camp in staff roles, and much more success for those who return with a group of fellow graduates as colleagues, rather than alone among staff who do not share their experience.

that encouraged reflection on military service and included sustained dialogue with Palestinians, with little or no American presence.

One such graduate, *Leora*, narrated her “return” as a lengthy, challenging and ultimately empowering process fueled by difficult, substantive conversations with Palestinians on military service. She began by enrolling in a bi-national mediation course, meeting biweekly at the Jerusalem Center, after which she worked as a facilitator at camp:

So [the mediation course] was really my way back inside. The process started there, and got stronger when I traveled to camp, eight months after my discharge from the army, I traveled to camp for the entire summer to be a facilitator... There, it was truly a critical point in my life... suddenly everything was in my face, all the meaning of this... Beyond, of course, the facilitation itself, and the experience of the camp, there was something very intensive among the group itself, of the facilitators, that confronted me with everything – with the military service, and its meanings, with the disconnect from Seeds and the return to Seeds.

Leora cited two dialogues with Palestinian colleagues, both focused on the Seed/soldier dilemma, as inspiring critical reflection, intellectual evolution, and a renewed commitment to peacebuilding. The first was a series of conversations with her Palestinian co-facilitator:

I think the most difficult moments weren't while I was a soldier, they were afterwards... Mainly in conversations with [Palestinian co-facilitator], the question of how a person who believes in peace and promotes peace and educates for peace can be part of a military organization? And I think that's where my real process began, of critique of military service, of not taking for granted the education that we receive in the country. I don't define myself as a pacifist, really not. To my chagrin, an army is something that, at least for the moment, is demanded. But I think that my real process of critique, and the ability to criticize, began then – at the age of 20, 21 – not at age 15. I wasn't able to then.

The second dialogue, with a different Palestinian SOP graduate, took place in the context of a facilitation course in which she enrolled after a summer facilitating at camp:

There was an exercise that I had to do with [Palestinian Seed]... we hadn't met previously, I knew who she was, she knew me, but we had never really met... so we had some kind of exercise to do in the technique of “difficult conversations,” and she opened the subject of the army. I remember we had a conversation for two hours, three – really difficult. But that question, really, how is it possible, how is it

possible for those things to go together? I even remember that I really wept, it was truly difficult for me to explain. Until today, I have no closure on this topic. But thanks to her questions, I ask questions until today. Thanks to her questions. Thanks to the questions of somebody who didn't grow up with this education, who sees things differently – these are things that have truly remained with me.

It is important to note Leora's expression of a critical perspective towards dominant Israeli paradigms of education and military service – a perspective echoed by nearly all of the adult Israeli graduates who remain highly active in SOP and/or peacebuilding.

In the adult, post-IDF, post-*intifada* SOP context, high levels of SOP or peacebuilding activity are, with few exceptions, the province of Israeli graduates expressing critical, unconventional political views. Nearly all the adult Israeli graduates reporting close relationships with Palestinian counterparts are either conscientious objectors, or IDF veterans with critical views of their military service. All of these Israeli graduates are able to empathetically articulate Palestinian perspectives about the army. In other words, these are Israelis who clearly understand that Palestinians cannot be expected to fulfill any deep-seated wish for legitimization of their IDF service.

In the same token, it is important to note that Leora emphasizes the ability to discuss the army honestly with Palestinian counterparts as the breakthrough – the establishment of a context for her to struggle openly with her dilemma and its implications, without facing ostracism or expecting blanket legitimization – rather than any final resolution. When asked what Palestinians should understand about the dilemma of military service, Meir responded, “I wish I knew... I can't ask them to understand something I don't understand myself.”

In separate interviews, active Palestinian SOP graduates also cited “difficult conversations” with Israeli counterparts, specifically about IDF service, as crucial moments in their own adult engagement in peacebuilding. Indeed, a group of these Israeli and

Palestinian graduates, most of whom trained and worked at the Jerusalem Center, formed strong bonds over time. Together, this cadre eventually became the core of the organization's regional programming *and* camp facilitation staff, many of them also active in peacebuilding frameworks outside Seeds of Peace. The following chapters will focus on the testimonies of Palestinian graduates.

CHAPTER SIX

*Dialogue, Occupation and Normalization:*

*The Palestinian Dilemma*

One whose hand is in water is not like one whose hand is in fire.

– *Arabic proverb*

Introduction

In December 1998, SOP Camp Director Tim Wilson traveled to the Middle East. He was greeted as a visiting dignitary by the Israeli and Palestinian Ministries of Education, who invited dozens of recent graduates to meetings in his honor, held at their respective facilities in Jerusalem and Ramallah. The Israeli meeting proceeded without special incident. Israeli graduates did engage in impassioned argument over issues of (future) military service, but the debate was conducted in Hebrew, out of earshot for Wilson, and was in tone and substance quite typical to Israeli SOP gatherings. The Palestinian meeting proved a somewhat more unusual and memorable experience for Wilson, the graduates and their Ministry hosts, each for different reasons. Wilson began the day in Gaza, where he had spent the previous day meeting with local SOP alumni, and visiting the future site of the short-lived Palestinian airport.<sup>460</sup> That evening, SOP regional staff shared a suite with Wilson at one of the fledgling hotels that shared the shoreline with late PNA President Yasser Arafat's headquarters,

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<sup>460</sup> The Gaza International Airport opened in 1998, in accordance with the Israeli-Palestinian interim agreement negotiated between Yasser Arafat and Binyamin Netanyahu at the Wye River negotiations. After a celebratory opening and a few years of operation, the airport was declared closed by Israel in 2001 after the outbreak of the second intifada. The IDF destroyed the runways in 2002. See Alan Johnston, "Years of Delays at Gaza Airport," BBC News, Accessed July 12, 2011, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/4449461.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4449461.stm).

serving foreign and affluent Authority clientele during Oslo's faintly hopeful early years.<sup>461</sup>

Wilson's group departed the hotel at daybreak, with Gaza MOE officials and a busload of Gazan SOP graduates, driving twenty minutes to the Erez border station.

It was a routine crossing that morning, the sort to which I had quickly become accustomed at Erez, if never quite inured. On the PNA side of the border, the SOP group waited an hour on the pavement, watching scores of Palestinian day laborers pass. Meanwhile the SOP regional staff, flashing American passports, crossed 200 yards of no man's land to the Israeli side, to retrieve the group's IDF-issued travel permits. At first, the lower-ranking soldiers manning the office on the Israeli side knew nothing of the permits in question. However, when the SOP staff contacted the Israeli military commander, with whom we maintained a good working relationship, on his personal cellphone, the permits suddenly turned up in a desk drawer. After misspelled names and mistaken ID numbers were identified and reprinted, the SOP staffers returned to the Palestinian side to distribute documents. At this point, the paths of Americans, top Ministry officials and ordinary Palestinians diverged. Foreigners and Palestinian "VIPs" crossed on the main road, large trilingual signs marked "Safe Passage" guiding their way to an air-conditioned building reminiscent of security and passport control at an airport too small to support a concession stand. Neither luxurious nor oppressive, this path was plain, tolerably securitized and functional.

The Palestinian masses – and, in this case, the youth and lower-ranking DL's – disappeared behind rows of concrete barriers, into a vast, dimly lit hallway built to channel the daily flood of thousands of Gazan workers into eight narrow lanes known to all as "the

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<sup>461</sup> On Gaza during the Oslo period, See Amira Hass, *Drinking the Sea at Gaza: Days and Nights in a Land Under Siege* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1999); Graham Usher, *Dispatches from Palestine: The Rise and Fall of the Oslo Peace Process* (London: Pluto Books, 1999).

terminal.”<sup>462</sup> At the end of each lane, an Israeli soldier waited behind bulletproof glass for each Palestinian to place any baggage on an x-ray belt, squeeze through a narrow turnstile and hand over documents to be checked against “the computer.” In theory, if everyone’s documents were in order, crossing the terminal might have been an uncomfortable but unremarkable process. However, this was rarely the case in practice. A fraction of the lanes were actually open at any given time, leaving dozens of Palestinians, mainly workers desperate for a day’s pay, cramming themselves anxiously into the stalls. Any discrepancy between database and documents clogged the bottleneck, leaving irritable soldiers arguing the merits of humanitarian necessity with mothers dragging children whose names did not appear on their ID cards, and men whose need to bring home wages remained undiminished despite the expiration of their permits. Those fortunate to pass without incident exited via a bridge draped in garlands of rust-tipped barbed wire, spanning a dark and pungent creek palpably infused with elements other than water. The experience was engineered such that no person could pass without scrutiny and subjection.<sup>463</sup>

Foreigners were shielded, as a matter of IDF policy, from the dystopia of the terminal. SOP regional staff had earned the exceptional privilege of entering this restricted area by virtue of personal ties with the IDF officer corps at Erez, relationships built in the course of shepherding hundreds of Palestinian youth across the border to activities every year. On this December day, when the Palestinian youth met with customary delays, Wilson demanded to accompany SOP regional staffers to the terminal, to help sift their delegates through the filter. A middle-aged African-American whose surgically reconstructed knees required the support of a cane, Wilson was scandalized by the sight of Palestinians, old and

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<sup>462</sup> The roof was an “amenity” added sometime in the Oslo years (Author’s personal observation).

<sup>463</sup> Despite these severe security procedures, militants succeeded in carrying out numerous attacks at Erez during the second *intifada*, killing and wounding Israeli soldiers and in some cases Palestinian bystanders.

young, stuffing themselves into the cramped stalls to await inspection. He demanded to undergo the process himself, barely squeezing his aging lineman's frame through the bars, only to receive the uniquely personalized shock of having his passport unceremoniously tossed at him by a female Israeli soldier of unmistakable African descent.

Wilson remained visibly shaken for the duration of the ninety-minute bus ride to the PNA Ministry of Education in Ramallah, where he was seated upon arrival as the guest of honor at a giant banquet table in the function hall. With MOE Directors-General from the West Bank and Gaza seated at either hand, facing an audience of dozens of Palestinian SOP graduates from around the OPT, Wilson launched into an impassioned denunciation of the humiliation he witnessed that morning, evoking at every turn his childhood memories of racism and segregation. SOP regional staffers spoke briefly afterwards, echoing Wilson's empathy and praising the Palestinian youth for their perseverance in peacebuilding in the face of such indignities. It was rare for an audience of SOP graduates to hear ringing public validations of their collective victimhood from the self-consciously even-handed and understated American staff. Palestinian Seeds and MOE officials alike seemed buoyed by the SOP representatives' emphasis on the everyday iniquities endured by Palestinians. During the ensuing discussion, however, it became clear that even if the burdens of occupation were borne by all Palestinians, the Palestinians involved in SOP shared no consensus on how to respond to the situation, nor in particular to the overtures of their Israeli colleagues.

Wilson asked to hear a personal update from each Palestinian graduate, as he had done in his previous meeting with the Israelis. The crowd included many active Palestinian alumni, those who had pioneered SOP's checkpoint-crossing follow-up program together with Israeli counterparts. These youth proudly attested to their activities since camp, naming

Israeli cities they had visited, Israeli schools at which they had spoken, Israeli friends they had hosted in their homes. Their enthusiastic avowal of cross-conflict exchanges did not amuse the Ministry's Directors-General. After the first few graduates spoke, the West Bank Director General angrily declared, in Arabic, the Ministry's objection to any "normalization" of relations with Israelis. When the next youth eagerly recited a similar résumé, the Director General felt inclined to elaborate. She rose from her seat to state that as members of a Ministry delegation, none of them had any right to visit Israeli homes or schools. "Who gave you permission?" she demanded in equal measures of disbelief and disgust.

The teen-aged girl whom she had interrupted shot back immediately in kind, asking, "Who are you? Who are you to tell me who I can speak to, where I can go and who can come to my house? Are you my father? Are you my mother?" The Ministry officials and some graduates appeared stunned by the brazen response. Other alumni jumped in with sharp statements of their own. "I don't let Israeli soldiers tell me where is Israel and where is Palestine, where I can go and cannot go," declared one graduate indignantly, "and I certainly will not let you tell me that, with all due respect to the Ministry and the Authority." Another graduate brought SOP squarely into the debate, stating, "This is the first time I've heard from the Ministry since camp; that was August, it's December now." Pointing at the SOP staff, she proceeded to rebuke the Ministry by comparison: "The week we got back from camp, they [SOP] called to ask how am I doing, how was camp, how was coming home, do I want to do any activities? So, who is it that cares about us? Who should we listen to?"

A few graduates, particularly from Gaza, began to weigh in on the side of the Ministry. The Gaza Director-General, sister of assassinated PLO leader Abu Jihad and a figure more composed and respected than her West Bank counterpart, intervened to calm

the fray and allow discussion to resume.<sup>464</sup> The tension remained high, however, as alumni continued to proclaim their participation in cross-conflict activities, utterly undeterred. The situation quickly became unbearable for the West Bank Director-General, who rose once more, this time to invoke the Palestinian refugee problem, declaring, “My home is in *Akka* [Acre, in Israel], and until I go back to [reclaim] my home, no one is going to [visit] any Israeli home!”<sup>465</sup> Again, her interruption left the speaker unimpressed. This time it was a respected Palestinian Peer Support, something of an elder statesman among the alumni. He rose to clarify his position: “Maybe you think I go to Israeli schools to sell my country? I go to tell them who I am, who we are, what are our roots in this land, what is our history! I show them that we are human beings, not terrorists. I tell them, we have our human rights and our national rights, and real peace must be based on our rights!”

### Chapter Overview

#### *Tatbi'a or not Tatbi'a – That is the Question*

This Ramallah meeting eventually adjourned without agreement, the argument to be resumed at every uni-national Palestinian alumni forum in the years to come. Already charged in 1998, the issue became yet more controversial in the ensuing eras of *intifada* and

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<sup>464</sup> Abu Jihad was the *nom de guerre* of Khalil Al-Wazir (\_\_\_-1990?), one of the four founding leaders of Fatah and widely considered second only to Yasser Arafat among PLO leaders in terms of popular stature. Israeli commandos assassinated Al-Wazir in Tunis in 1990. His sister, Zainab Al-Wazir, served as Director-General and later Assistant Deputy Minister—Gaza of the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education. His widow, Intisar Al-Wazir, was PNA Minister of Social Affairs from 1995-2005.

<sup>465</sup> Acre (*Akka* in Arabic, *Akko* in Hebrew) is a city on the northern coast of Israel, one of six major cities of mixed Arab and Jewish population in the country. An ancient port and a medieval stronghold of European Crusaders, Acre's Old City was almost entirely Arab before 1948. In the 1948 War, three-fourths of Acre's Arab residents were displaced, while others escaping nearby destroyed villages took refuge in the city's historic landmark, the Al-Jazzar mosque, and eventually settled there as “internal refugees.” After the establishment of Israel, Jewish neighborhoods were built around the Old City and settled largely with Jewish refugees from Europe and the Middle East. Today the city's population is 46,300, of which 72 % are Jewish and 28 % Palestinian citizens of Israel. The Old City is still 95% populated by Palestinian citizens and impoverished. Sources: Israel Central Bureau of Statistics; Isabel Kershner, “Israeli City Divided by Sectarian Violence,” *New York Times*, October 12, 2008.

“separation.” The opinions of graduates often shifted with political tides and personal circumstances, sometimes in response to developments in the SOP organization, or the enlistment of Israeli Seeds in the military. A few months into the second *intifada*, a majority of Palestinian graduates at a uni-national gathering voted *against* Palestinian participation in cross-conflict activities, specifically *camp*, for that summer.<sup>466</sup> Some of those who were present went on to treat that boycott as a permanent ban; others saw it as temporary and resumed participation in time. Individual perspectives changed, but the premise of the debate remained consistent: Whether engaging in dialogue with Israelis constituted acquiescence to Israeli subjugation of Palestinians, or a way to struggle against it. Graduates argued passionately on both sides of the issue, as if their own social legitimacy were always at stake, always in question.

The spectrum of views was diverse and wide, but two parameters of the debate were consistent. First, in public, nearly all alumni affirmed the existence and negative connotations of “normalization,” though in the absence of any agreement on the actual definition. Most often, it was exemplified by whatever sorts of cross-conflict engagement a particular graduate did not personally practice; one person’s peacebuilding was another person’s normalizing. Second, all held to an instrumental evaluation of dialogue: Its legitimacy would be measured above all according to its perceived utility – or lack thereof – in advancing the Palestinian cause. This does not imply that no one privately ascribed value to experiences of dialogue or cross-conflict relationship. To the contrary, most Palestinian interviewees privately praised the positive impacts of these experiences on their lives, in terms of character development and understanding of the conflict; some adult alumni work as

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<sup>466</sup> As mentioned earlier, the Palestinian Ministry of Education also refused to recruit a delegation that summer, and 2001 became the only SOP summer program to take place without a Palestinian delegation from the OPT.

dialogue facilitators today. However, the terms of the *public* Palestinian debate were clear: to be legitimate, dialogue needed to emphasize collective *effect*, not personal *affect*. It could be justified insofar as it contributed to changing the oppressive Palestinian condition; all else was tainted as *tatbi'a*.

This chapter explores Palestinian graduates' debates of the legitimacy and effectiveness of engaging in cross-conflict dialogue and relationship, within SOP and other peacebuilding forums. It begins by reviewing the categorization of forms of cross-conflict engagement as *tatbi'a* in Arab and Palestinian society, and the effect of that branding on joint peacebuilding initiatives occurring in the context of ongoing Israeli occupation. The chapter presents graduate testimonies on the stigmatization of SOP participation in Palestinian educational and social contexts in the Middle East, and reflections on the importance of SOP's role in assisting Palestinians to obtain scholarships for higher education abroad during the *intifada*. The chapter concludes by portraying the diverse responses of active Palestinian graduates' to the issue of "normalization," including those who limit their cross-conflict relations accordingly, and those who advocate dialogue and relationship as effective contributions to transforming perceptions of Palestinians in Israel and abroad.

### Background and Literature

This debate was not unique to Palestinians in Seeds of Peace. It echoed the perspectives expressed by encounter participants from minority/dominated populations, in studies of inter-racial dialogue in the US and UK, Arab-Jewish dialogue in Israel, and Israeli-

Palestinian dialogue in the Middle East.<sup>467</sup> And as chronicled in those studies, Palestinian SOP participants commonly cited the inability of interpersonal dialogue to directly alter their collective reality as a source of perennial frustration. Their struggles evoke the “Peace-builder’s Paradox” – the dissonance between the psychological breakthroughs generated by effective dialogue, and the stubborn realities that such individual epiphanies alone cannot change.<sup>468</sup> Such frustration was a hallmark of the counter-intuitive Palestinian experience of the “peace process” in general, and the resultant legitimacy problem that plagued Palestinian peace advocates in specific.<sup>469</sup> The barbed wire, steel and concrete labyrinths of Erez and similar “terminals” arrived precisely on the heels of historic headlines of mutual recognition, coming to constitute the primary interfaces for most OPT Palestinians with Israel, even in times of reduced violence. This disempowering process played directly into the anti-normalization narratives long dominant in Arab and Palestinian political discourse, seemingly validating the warnings of opponents of engagement with Israelis. The persistence of occupation amplified internal opposition to “normalization.” The failure of the PLO’s Track One shift from resistance to negotiations led to the potential association of almost all cross-conflict engagement, in Palestinian society, with the stigma of *tatbi’a*.

#### *Dialogue Under Occupation and its Discontents*

In 1991, a pair of Israeli scholar/activists parodied the clichéd celebration of dialogue in diplomatic forums, proclaiming that, “Lately, dialogue, like motherhood and

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<sup>467</sup> Hewstone & Brown, *Contact and Conflict in Intergroup Encounters*; Abu-Nimer, *Dialogue, Conflict Resolution and Change*; Maoz, “Multiple Conflicts and Competing Agendas”; Emile Bruneau, Roy Cohen and Rebecca Saxe, “Israelis and Palestinians Benefit Asymmetrically from Dyadic Encounters,” (Unpublished working paper, 2010). Used by permission of authors.

<sup>468</sup> Abu-Nimer and Lazarus, “The Peacebuilder’s Paradox and the Dynamics of Dialogue.”

<sup>469</sup> Hai and Herzog, “The Power of Possibility”; Salem, “The Anti-Normalization Discourse”; Hallward, “Building Space for Real Peace?”; Gawerc, “Israeli-Palestinian Peacebuilding Partnerships”.

apple pie, has become something no one would openly reject.”<sup>470</sup> They go on to list dictators who have publicly extolled the virtues of dialogue when it served their image or interests. In Palestinian politics, however, the opposite condition has often prevailed; dialogue with Israelis is something that few – even among some of its practitioners – openly embrace. The PLO’s journey from armed struggle to negotiated engagement with Israel was long, arduous and met by intense internal opposition at every step. The PLO’s first representative to engage in confidential meetings with Israeli Leftists, Dr. Issam Sartawi, was assassinated for doing so in 1982 by a separate Palestinian faction.<sup>471</sup> This killing did not, however, deter the PLO from engaging with a widening spectrum of Israelis whenever this was seen to serve the national interest, culminating in the mutual recognition of 1993.<sup>472</sup> At the same time, cross-conflict contact has remained controversial in Arab and Palestinian politics, despite – or often because of – the strategic engagement of Arab and Palestinian leaders with Israel. For Palestinians, as Abu-Nimer explains, “Dialogue is a very dangerous business.”<sup>473</sup>

“On the Palestinian side,” writes Palestinian scholar Walid Salem, “the censuring of those who work with... those purported to be the enemy has always been with us.”<sup>474</sup> Writing in the *Palestine-Israel Journal*, itself a joint publication of Israeli and Palestinian scholars and activists, Salem identifies the “problem of normalization” as among the “most prominent challenges” to cross-conflict engagement of any kind.<sup>475</sup> Salem speaks from both

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<sup>470</sup> Haim and Rivca Gordon (eds.), *Israel/Palestine: The Quest for Dialogue* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 3.

<sup>471</sup> See Mordechai Bar-On, *In Pursuit of Peace*.

<sup>472</sup> See Salem, “The Anti-Normalization Discourse.”

<sup>473</sup> Mohammed Abu-Nimer, “The Miracles of Transformation Through Interfaith Dialogue: Are You a Believer?”, in David R. Smock ed., *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 2002), 15.

<sup>474</sup> Walid Salem, “Is a Joint Community-Based Agenda Possible?”, in *Palestine - Israel Journal of Politics, Economics & Culture*, 14, no. 1 (2007), 68.

<sup>475</sup> See Salem, “The Anti-Normalization Discourse”; Walid Salem, Israeli-Palestinian Civil Society Cooperation: New Context, New Strategies, in *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture*, 12 (4) and 13 (1): 2005-2006, 124-126; Salem, “Is a Joint Community-Based Agenda Possible?”

scholarship and experience; his Panorama Center in Jerusalem has been, for more than a decade, among the most prominent Palestinian think tanks engaged in dialogue and research with Israeli intellectuals and institutions.<sup>476</sup> The charge of normalization looms large in the op-ed pages and chat rooms of contemporary Palestinian and Arabic media, and is ubiquitously cited as an obstacle by Palestinian peace-builders, as it was in interviews by Palestinian graduates of Seeds of Peace.<sup>477</sup> Indeed, the charters of governmental and civil society associations throughout the Arab World, including those governments formally at peace with Israel, contain clauses explicitly outlawing *tatbi'a*.<sup>478</sup> Egyptian and Jordanian actors and authors who have crossed the border to meet with Israeli counterparts have met with expulsion from their trade unions as a result, serving as examples that “normalization” is not the norm.<sup>479</sup>

Given the central and controversial place of *tatbi'a* in the Palestinian and Arab lexicons of the conflict, it is striking that Salem is almost alone among scholars publishing in English, whether research or comment, on the subject.<sup>480/481</sup> The taboo, it seems, extends to

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<sup>476</sup> “Walid Salem,” available from *Just Vision*, Accessed April 20, 2010, <http://www.justvision.org/en/portrait/75955/interview>. See also “Panorama: The Palestinian Center for the Dissemination of Democracy and Community Development,” Accessed April 20, 2010, <http://www.panoramacenter.org/>.

<sup>477</sup> See Gawerc, “Israeli-Palestinian Peacebuilding Partnerships”; “Normalization” at *Just Vision*, Accessed June 16, 2011, <http://www.justvision.org/search/thematic/results/taxonomy%3A1185>.

<sup>478</sup> Mahmoud Mi'ari, “Attitudes of Palestinians Toward Normalization with Israel,” *Journal of Peace Research* 36 (3): 1999, 342.

<sup>479</sup> Ibid. See also ‘Ali Salem: My Trip to Israel was an Attempt to Rid Myself of Hatred,” Middle East Media Research Institute Special Dispatch no. 2555, September 22, 2009, Accessed April 20, 2010, <http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/0/3657.htm>.

<sup>480</sup> Among the few other English articles are Mahmoud Mi'ari, “Self-Identity and Readiness for Interethnic Contact of Young Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip,” *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 23, no. 1 (1998), 47-70; Mi'ari, “Attitudes of Palestinians Toward Normalization with Israel,” Paul L. Scham and Russell E. Lucas, “Normalization and Anti-Normalization in Jordan: The Public Debate,” *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 5, no.3 (2001), Accessed June 16, 2011, <http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2001/issue3/jv5n3a5.html>.

<sup>481</sup> If a similar lack of attention existed in Arabic-language publications, the dearth of English publication might be understood as symptomatic of the general marginalization of joint endeavors. However, given widespread public debate and publication in Arabic, it appears to indicate that the issue is treated as an “internal” problem.

discouraging discussion of this divisive topic in front of foreign audiences; *tatbi'a* is treated as a quintessentially “internal” Arab and Palestinian issue. This foreign-language *lacuna* may also stem from what is lost in translation; a comparison of discursive power between the banal English term “normalization” and its potent Arabic equivalent brings to mind Mark Twain’s distinction between a lightning bug and a lightning bolt.<sup>482</sup> Connotations of betrayal, corruption, shame and surrender make *tatbi'a* more akin to “appeasement,” “selling out,” or being an “Uncle Tom.” Palestinian peace activist Ali Abu Awwad effectively conveys the visceral meaning of the term in the documentary film *Encounter Point*, explaining that “any meeting with Israelis to discuss nonviolence is immediately labeled as *tatbi'a*, that is, someone who sells his principles, who gives in to his enemies and killers.”<sup>483</sup>

This translation gap is indicative of the conceptual chasm separating Arab and Western prisms of the conflict. Western paradigms emphasize the military/security and nationalist/identity aspects of the Israeli-Palestinian divide, and typically treat Arab acts of accommodation as positive signs of détente or steps toward reconciliation. Palestinian and Arab paradigms, by contrast, classically frame the conflict as a colonial liberation struggle between dispossessed natives and alien settlers, treating Arab acts of accommodation as capitulations to immoral power, examples of might defeating right.<sup>484</sup> This is particularly

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<sup>482</sup> “The difference between the almost right word & the right word is really a large matter—’tis the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning.” Attributed to an 1888 letter from Mark Twain to George Bainton in Bainton’s *The Art of Authorship* (1890), 87-88. Available from “Respectfully Quoted,” *Bartelby.com*, Accessed April 20, 2010, <http://www.bartelby.com/73/540.html>.

<sup>483</sup> *Encounter Point*, Ronit Avni and Julia Bacha, directors, *Just Vision*, 2005.

<sup>484</sup> I would say the Israelis are a hybrid on this issue (as on many others). Mainstream Israeli narratives welcome normalization in terms of formal relations with Arab states; however, where the Palestinian national movement is concerned, Right-wing (and in the past, “centrist” Labor Party—see Golda Meir 1969) Israeli discourse often rejects recognition and accommodation as capitulation and contrary to national rights. The 1994 signing of the Jordan-Israel peace treaty has been widely commemorated in Israel as an image in postage stamps, telephone cards, and photo montages celebrating the country’s 50<sup>th</sup> and 60<sup>th</sup> anniversaries. The more controversial 1993 handshake between Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin on the White House lawn, by contrast, did not appear in official documents or celebrations. In his writings, Walid Salem also examines various forms of Israeli

evident in portrayals of Arab leaders who have made historic gestures of recognition of Israel. Egypt's late President Anwar Sadat, for example, is lionized in the West as a peacemaker, his 1977 speech at the Knesset in Jerusalem hailed as the consummate example of courageous leadership breaking through a vicious cycle of violence.<sup>485</sup> In Egypt, however, it is Sadat's October 1973 surprise attack against Israeli forces in the Sinai that is commemorated by a museum, bridges, boulevards, neighborhoods and a national holiday. There are no monuments to Sadat's trip to Jerusalem, which is recalled in the press primarily, if not exclusively, by its critics.<sup>486</sup> Indeed, the recently appointed head of Cairo's prestigious Al-Azhar Islamic seminary declared upon accession that Muslims are forbidden to visit Jerusalem under Israeli control, and discouraged interfaith dialogue with Jews, calling these actions "tantamount to legitimizing the occupation."<sup>487</sup> His statements condemn Sadat's action by implication, contradicting his predecessor at Al-Azhar, whose jurisprudence had granted Sadat's diplomatic overture an imprimatur of religious legitimacy.<sup>488</sup>

On the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, the Egyptian weekly *Roz Al-Yousuf* published an overview of Egyptian attitudes toward normalization, reporting widespread antagonism to the idea.<sup>489</sup> The responses, even of those who endorsed a degree

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opposition to "normalization" with the Palestinians and integration into the Middle East (See Salem, "The Anti-Normalization Discourse").

<sup>485</sup> See Fisher, Ury and Patton, *Getting to Yes*.

<sup>486</sup> For debate of Sadat's trip to Jerusalem including a prominent and controversial Egyptian supporter of dialogue, see 'Ali Salem, "My Trip to Israel was an Attempt to Rid Myself of Hatred."

<sup>487</sup> See Jackie Khoury, "Sheikh Ahmad Al-Tayyeb: It is Forbidden for Muslims to Visit Jerusalem until its Liberation from the Occupation," in *Haaretz*, March 23, 2010 [Hebrew], Accessed March 23, 2010, <http://www.haaretz.co.il/hasite/spages/1158394.html>.

<sup>488</sup> The previous leader of Al-Azhar, the late Sheikh Mohammed Sayyed Tantawi, had been an advocate of interfaith dialogue, and participated in numerous international and interfaith forums that included Israeli religious leaders. The new leader, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, denounced his predecessor by implication, stating that "There is no difference between an Israeli who conquers Arab land and a Jew who wants to conduct a dialogue to foster closeness between the religions." See *Ibid*.

<sup>489</sup> See "Roz Al-Yousuf Special Supplement: Normalization with Israel—For and Against," Middle East Media Research Institute Special Dispatch no. 2624, October 30, 2009, Accessed April 20, 2010, <http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/229/3734.htm>.

of bilateral relations, were invariably couched in terms of hostility. Three journalists sought to legitimize trips to Israel by emphasizing adversarial motives and perceptions. One journalist explained that it is important to visit Israel because “it is imperative to know one’s enemy”; another defended the practice by explaining that, “A journalist who travels to Israel is... like a plumber who descends into a sewer: he has to, because it is his job.” A third asked sarcastically, “Does [normalization] mean traveling to Israel for personal or for professional reasons? Does it mean getting to know an Israeli? And what if you do know one but you hate his guts?”<sup>490</sup>

These examples illustrate that in popular discourse, the word *tatbi’a* serves as a trigger for de-humanized “enemy images” of Israelis and narratives rejecting Israel’s presence in the Middle East, notwithstanding years of formal peace or negotiations between Israel and Arab governments. Indeed, the Arabic root in question is *tabe’a*, or “nature” rather than “norm” – granting *tatbi’a* connotations of an act not only abnormal, but unnatural. At the same time, most respondents saw no contradiction between supporting a policy of “negative peace,” i.e. political negotiations and military non-belligerence with Israel, while condemning cultural, economic, professional and/or social relations with Israelis.<sup>491</sup> Legitimate engagement is framed in terms of political *effect*; “normalization” associated with emotional *affect*. This *effect/affect* distinction is echoed in findings of research on Palestinian attitudes toward

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<sup>490</sup> Ibid. It is worth noting that these respondents were proponents of a degree of contact, and relatively restrained; others resorted to stereotypes usually reserved for anonymous online comment forums. Popular hostility is also illustrated by the 2001 pop hit “I Hate Israel,” by Shaaban Abdel Rahim, which earned record-breaking sales. See Ashraf Khalil, “Voice of Egypt’s anger: Pop singer’s hit strikes anti-Israeli chord,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 7, 2001, *SFGate*, Accessed April 29, 2010, [http://articles.sfgate.com/2001-05-07/news/17601392\\_1\\_cairo-peace-society-shaaban-abdel-rehim-anti-israel](http://articles.sfgate.com/2001-05-07/news/17601392_1_cairo-peace-society-shaaban-abdel-rehim-anti-israel).

<sup>491</sup> On the distinctions between “negative” and “positive” peace, see Johan Galtung, “Violence, Peace, and Peace Research” in *Journal of Peace Research* 6 (3): 1969, 167-172.

normalization, although Palestinian support for certain forms of professional, especially economic, engagement with Israelis is much greater.

Palestinians in the OPT have a distinctly less abstract relationship to Israelis than residents of Egypt or Jordan, the vast majority of whom experience neither personal contact nor interdependence with actual Israeli people at all.<sup>492</sup> Of course, Palestinians face pervasive negative “contact” with Israelis in the forms of bureaucrats, soldiers and settlers; on the other hand, Palestinian merchants and laborers have depended since 1967 on Israeli employers and markets, and often speak of business relations with Israelis in positive terms, frequently singling out particular partners or bosses for praise. In a 1994 study of Palestinian attitudes toward normalization, Mahmoud Mi’ari found “greater support for normalization among intellectual associations in Palestine compared with elsewhere in the Arab World,” and attributed this to “greater contact with Israelis and political and economic dependency on Israel.”<sup>493</sup> At the same time, Mi’ari emphasized a clear reticence toward more personal forms of interaction:

Support for cultural cooperation with Israelis does not indicate a desire to associate socially with them... The greater intimacy involved in social normalization may explain this finding. Support for cultural cooperation between Palestinians and Israelis also differs according to the intimacy involved in joint cultural activity. Support is higher for cultural activities in which the intimacy involved is low, such as [political] conferences, than for activities in which the intimacy involved is relatively high, such as the theatre.<sup>494</sup>

In a previous survey, Mi’ari found that “only a small minority of Palestinian students from the West Bank and Gaza Strip are ready for social relations with Israeli Jews. The lower the

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<sup>492</sup> On views of normalization in Jordan, see Lucas and Scham, "Normalization and Anti-Normalization in Jordan."

<sup>493</sup> Mi’ari, “Self-Identity and Readiness for Interethnic Contact,” 347.

<sup>494</sup> Ibid.

intimacy involved, the more ready the Palestinians are: 16% are ready to work in the same office with Jews, 13% to have Jewish friends, 11% to live in the same neighborhood.”<sup>495</sup>

Mi’ari’s findings outline the boundaries of legitimacy for Palestinian advocates of grassroots dialogue, even in the relatively optimistic atmosphere of 1994. Political or professional engagement with Israelis could be publicly justified as potentially beneficial or, at worst, a necessary evil. However, emphases on empathy, relationship and reconciliation – all hallmarks of Western peacebuilding paradigms and goals of many Israeli Jewish participants – were considered putting the cart before the horse by most in Palestinian society.<sup>496</sup> As Nadia Nasser-Najjab concludes in a study of “people-to-people” projects during the Oslo period:

While Palestinians considered dialogue as one form of their struggle against the Israeli occupation and its practices (which they saw continuing around them), Israelis came to meet Palestinians for cooperative purposes and to establish relations in an era of peace... In general, those who had supported contact with Israelis since the outset and early stages of dialogue defined their goal as the attempt to influence Israeli public opinion and convince Israelis of the legitimacy of the Palestinian national struggle against occupation... While the donors aimed to bring about change in the negative perceptions of Palestinians and Israelis and to bridge the gap between them, the Palestinian participants accepted the framework simply to be able to pursue their own aims and objectives.<sup>497</sup>

Nasser-Najjab goes on to divide Palestinian civil society into two camps: One rejecting any contacts with Israelis, the other engaged in cross-conflict dialogue, but “dissatisfied with the nature and process of such encounters” and primarily seeking to acquire “an understanding of Israeli society which would help them define the goals and strategies for their struggle.”<sup>498</sup>

This frame of continued struggle, nonviolent but adversarial, was attuned to prevailing

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<sup>495</sup> Mi’ari, “Attitudes of Palestinians Toward Normalization with Israel,” 340.

<sup>496</sup> Gawerc, “Israeli-Palestinian Peacebuilding Partnerships.”

<sup>497</sup> Nadia Nasser-Najjab, “Post-Oslo Dialogue: An Evaluation,” in *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture*, 12 (4) and 13 (1): 2005-2006, 27.

<sup>498</sup> *Ibid*, 28.

Palestinian discourse and political conditions. It was at odds, however, with the post-conflict prism of most joint initiatives of the time, and all the more so with SOP's emphases on psychological breakthroughs and interpersonal friendship.

The struggle Nasser-Najjab refers to, of course, is the shared – if not unified – national struggle against Israeli occupation. However, given the intractable nature of that problem, both sides of this intra-Palestinian divide often invested equal energy and resources battling each other. This was also an asymmetrical conflict; those opposed to engagement aligned themselves squarely with the traditional ethos of conflict, while proponents of dialogue could point only to the tenuous breakthroughs of Oslo in order to challenge the dominant discourse. It was opponents of cross-conflict contact who organized coalitions, compiled blacklists and issued denunciations of alleged normalizers in media, mosques and universities, not the other way around.<sup>499</sup>

#### *Asymmetry and Legitimacy: Palestinians in Post-Oslo Peacebuilding*

In the earliest years of Oslo, a semi-supportive political environment rendered such efforts initially ineffective – in 1994, a Palestinian anti-normalization coalition collapsed within six months of its inception.<sup>500</sup> However, once applied, the label of *tatbi'a* proved impossible for peace-builders to remove. As the Palestinian population grew increasingly frustrated with the stagnation of the peace process in the 1990s, joint initiatives found

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<sup>499</sup> Mi'ari, "Attitudes of Palestinians Toward Normalization with Israel"; Salem, "The Anti-Normalization Discourse."

<sup>500</sup> Mi'ari, "Attitudes of Palestinians Toward Normalization with Israel."

themselves constantly on the defensive, plagued by a chronic legitimacy deficit disorder.<sup>501</sup> In response, in 1995 and again in early 2000, Palestinian NGOs involved in people-to-people work met to establish parameters for Palestinian involvement in cross-conflict contact, hoping to rehabilitate their public legitimacy. The PNA Ministry of NGO Affairs hosted the 2000 Conference, which created a governmental committee to grant official imprimatur to those activities deemed appropriate. The committee was canceled, however, after the autumn outbreak of the *intifada*, with the NGO Ministry itself ceasing to function in 2002.<sup>502</sup>

In the ensuing years of IDF offensives and “Separation” policy, Palestinian activist opinion in and outside the OPT swung decisively toward boycott of Israel and opposition to contact with mainstream Israelis, as embodied by the “Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions” movement (BDS).<sup>503</sup> The founding organization of the BDS movement, the Palestinian Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI), established an online blacklist of cross-conflict peacebuilding organizations in 2005, which has been continually updated.<sup>504</sup> The blacklist includes most members of the joint Palestinian-Israeli NGO Forum, including Seeds of Peace and even Palestinian organizations combining dialogue and nonviolent

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<sup>501</sup> Michelle Gawerc, "The Dance of Legitimacy" (Presentation to the Association for Israel Studies Annual Convention, Waltham, MA, June 15, 2011). See also Hai and Herzog, "The Power of Possibility."

<sup>502</sup> Nasser-Najjab, "Post-Oslo Dialogue," 29-30.

<sup>503</sup> "Introducing the BDS Movement," Accessed June 17, 2011, <http://www.bdsmovement.net/bdsintro>. See also "Youth Against Normalization," Accessed June 17, 2011, <http://youthanormalization.blogspot.com/>.

<sup>504</sup> "Palestinian Youth United Against Normalization with Israel," *Palestinian Academic and Cultural Boycott with Israel* (PACBI), April 28, 2010, Accessed June 17, 2011, <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1220>. The site calls for the "boycott of all institutions complicit in normalization activities by refusing to host them in any student or youth forums and events," naming "organizations like Seeds of Peace, One Voice, NIR School, IPCRI, Panorama, and others [that] specifically target Palestinian youth to engage them in dialog with Israelis without recognizing the inalienable rights of Palestinians, or aiming to end Israel's occupation, colonization, and apartheid [sic]."

protest against the Separation Barrier, such as the Al-Tariq organization founded by Palestinians active in the Israeli-Palestinian Bereaved Families' Forum.<sup>505</sup>

These developments amplified pressure on Palestinian peace-builders, who faced a combination of Israeli repression, isolation on the Palestinian Left and – with Hamas's 2006 electoral victory and 2007 Gaza takeover – the rising power of an ideologically opposed Muslim religious Right. In *Encounter Point*, Ali Abu Awwad dramatically depicts the perseverance of Palestinian peace-builders amid this “perfect storm” of hostile conditions: “To be Palestinian, and to be a peace activist – not just to believe in peace, but to be *active*, you have to be like a mountain.”<sup>506</sup> And indeed, while relentless tides of opposition took a toll on Palestinian peace-builders, as individuals and as a community – their efforts did not subside. A small but committed cadre of Palestinian individuals and groups persisted through a decade of devastating Israeli military offensives and Palestinian political conditions, beginning with the *intifada* and culminating in the 2009 war in Gaza. Over this period, Palestinian leadership in joint peacebuilding initiatives evolved and in the field of

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<sup>505</sup> Al-Tariq was established in 2006 by "members of the Palestinian peace camp," including Ali Abu Awwad and Khaled Abu Awwad, peacebuilders active for many years in the Israeli/Palestinian Parents' Circle-Families Forum. According to its website, "The goal of Al-Tariq is to empower and educate Palestinian society to use non-violent means to resolve the conflict, combat hatred, violence and extremism," as well as uni-nationally focused development and democratization campaigns "On issues concerning women and youth, focusing on promoting a culture of non-violence and implementing development projects that strengthen the Palestinian citizen identity and lay the foundations for a future Palestinian state." See "Al-Tariq," Accessed June 17, 2011, <http://altariq.wordpress.com/>. See also Avni and Bacha, *Encounter Point*. The author has personally participated in joint, grassroots nonviolent protest led by the founders of Al-Tariq against the planned construction of the Separation Barrier on village lands in the OPT. Despite its record of engagement in nonviolent direct action against the Israeli occupation, PACBI issued a call to boycott Al-Tariq on February 7, 2011, alleging that "dialogue groups like Al-Tariq are nothing but a cover for the status quo of Israeli domination," and calling, "on the Palestinian participants in this project to withdraw immediately and act in accordance with Palestinian consensus by boycotting such projects of normalization." See "Al-Tariq: A Dialogue with Occupation, Colonization and Apartheid!," PACBI, Accessed June 17, 2011, <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1476>.

<sup>506</sup> Avni and Bacha, *Encounter Point*.

nonviolent direct action, expanded.<sup>507</sup> Whether through overtly political “joint struggle” or less politicized “people-to-people” work, a minority of Palestinians continued engaging with Israelis in diverse projects aimed at longer-term conflict transformation, while struggling to bolster their public legitimacy.

Perseverance notwithstanding, Palestinian peace-builders by no means stood impervious to public pressure. Inside the peacebuilding community, the Palestinian legitimacy crisis fueled a pair of changes. First, it surfaced and sharpened what had been a latent political divide among activists. “Dialogue” became an epithet among groups focused on protest, advocacy and direct action, many of whom adopted explicitly Palestinian discourse and political platforms, while resorting to rhetorical gymnastics to distance themselves from groups involved in less politicized peacebuilding. Jeff Halper, founder of the Israeli Committee Against House Destructions (ICAH), declared in 2006 in the jointly edited *Palestine-Israel Journal*, “We are opposed to people-to-people programs in principle, and to the whole idea of dialogue.”<sup>508</sup> At the 2008 Middle East Studies convention, a Palestinian activist protested the inclusion of her *Ta’ayush* movement in a study of peacebuilding groups, explaining that, “We discussed that so much – we argued for hours, and we came to the conclusion that what we do is *not* dialogue!”<sup>509</sup> Neither speaker acknowledged the irony of Palestinians and Israelis engaging in intensive discussion in order to arrive at the conclusion that they are not involved in dialogue.

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<sup>507</sup> Gawerc, “Israeli-Palestinian Peacebuilding Partnerships”; Julie Norman, “We Do Not Work for Peace’: Reframing Nonviolence in Post-Oslo Palestine,” (Paper Presented to the International Studies Association Annual Convention, New Orleans, Louisiana, February 17, 2010).

<sup>508</sup> Jeff Halper, “Our Agenda is to Work Together to End the Occupation,” *Palestine-Israel Journal* 13, no.1 (2005/2006), 102.

<sup>509</sup> I was responsible for the alleged categorization error. Ironically enough, the Arabic word *Ta’ayush* is the common Arabic translation of the English term “coexistence” (Hebrew: *du-keiyum*). The group translates Ta’ayush as “partnership” (Heb: *shutafut*) or “joint living.” See Hallward, “Building Space for Real Peace?”; also “Ta’ayush, Accessed June 20, 2011, <http://www.taayush.org>.

Gawerc's 2010 study of prominent peace education NGOs in the post-Oslo era points to another key development, also including an ironic aspect. For Palestinians involved in peace education, the crisis of legitimacy among the Palestinian public actually contributed to strengthening their leverage vis-à-vis Israeli counterparts. In almost every case studied, as the conflict escalated, Palestinian activists in joint initiatives began to demand equal shares of authority and resources within NGOs whose internal governance had previously reflected the larger imbalance of power. Palestinian peace-builders from different groups consulted with one another in their campaigns to change their organizations from within. As one Palestinian member of the Parents' Circle/Families' Forum explained, they would no longer be "Palestinians on a shelf," brought out only to speak to donors and Israeli audiences. Some Israelis responded sympathetically to the demands of Palestinian counterparts; others were forced to adapt by a reality in which few Palestinians were willing to work with them at all. In some cases, Palestinian activists established separate partner NGOs registered in the PNA, thereby changing Israeli-administrated joint organizations into formal, bi-national partnerships. At decade's end, Gawerc found that initiatives that endured the *intifada* had been structurally transformed in significant ways to accommodate Palestinian demands.<sup>510</sup>

The trends in the Palestinian peacebuilding community are reflected in the testimonies of Palestinian SOP graduates. The escalation of the conflict and erosion of legitimacy pushed many Palestinian alumni to sever ties, temporarily or permanently, with Israelis, SOP, and/or peacebuilding altogether. Other graduates remained passively or unilaterally involved, while shifting focus to advocacy, party politics, or in a few cases non-violent direct action. A handful followed the lead of a pair of former SOP staff members,

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<sup>510</sup> Gawerc, "Israeli-Palestinian Peacebuilding Partnerships."

who left SOP in 2001 to take prominent roles in the International Solidarity Movement (ISM), an explicitly pro-Palestinian activist group organizing nonviolent protests against the occupation.<sup>511</sup> The Palestinian graduates who remained active in SOP typically fell into two categories. First, and more numerous, were dozens of Palestinian alumni who spent significant periods studying abroad on scholarships, often acquired with assistance from SOP. There, many became involved in SOP activities in the US and in some cases activism and/or dialogue on their campuses. Second was a core group of Palestinian alumni in the OPT who remained engaged and supportive of SOP and other peacebuilding initiatives, working with Israelis to transform perceptions while striving to build legitimacy in the Palestinian community. These active graduates campaigned “from within” to reshape the SOP organization and program in ways that would improve its image in their community. As one graduate, *Majdi*, explained, “If you, once in your life, when you are a young kid, [were] affiliated with [SOP], it would stick on you. For good and for bad. That’s something that kept lots of us, from the inside, trying to make this organization look better and better.”

As was the case in several other NGOs studied by Gawerc, the campaigns of Palestinian graduates succeeded in generating significant internal change at SOP. During the course of the *intifada*, the organization instituted numerous changes demanded by Palestinian alumni. The organization replaced the term Palestinian Authority with “Palestine” in official communication, ceased bringing campers to the Holocaust Memorial Museum after camp, and eventually ended post-camp trips to Washington, D.C. altogether, with their White House photo ops and State Department visits. Facilitated discussions came to be called “dialogue” rather than “coexistence sessions,” while the organization placed a growing

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<sup>511</sup> See Al-Jundi and Marlowe, *The Hour of Sunlight*.

emphasis on uni-national educational and community service programming for Palestinians.

In both Maine and the Middle East, SOP added and promoted Arab and Palestinian staff.<sup>512</sup>

However, true to the “Peacebuilder’s Paradox,” these internal changes did not immediately affect external perceptions. One Palestinian graduate, *Lana*, described the evolution of her father’s response to her decision to work for SOP as an adult:

When I was offered the job you know I was excited and jumping up and down and my dad was like no, what are you thinking, stay in the [government] job, Seeds of Peace is not a good reputation, you’ll screw yourself up in the country and... it’s a small town, you know if one person wants to start a bad rumor about you, you know you just gave them the green light now and then you’re screwed. I was like yeah, yeah, whatever, whatever... So at the beginning my dad was really mad at me actually and he like didn’t speak to me for a month... [then] I started always trying to tell him what I’m doing, [uni-national educational programs] I’m doing with the kids, what’s my goal behind this... so then he was like, oh, I don’t think people realize what Seeds of Peace really is and this is great. Then he started encouraging me more and even helping me out and giving me advice and a lot of help from my parents, which I never got before.

At the same time, Lana admitted that in public, unless she has time for an extended debate, “I generally do not say where I work... it’s too frustrating to keep explaining it to people... they have a certain image in their heads... this is normalization and you know, why of all places, you’re a talented woman, why work there, you’re educated, you’re smart...” The stigma of *tatbi’u* rendered such work almost akin to civil disobedience, analogous in social and professional (though not legal) repercussions to conscientious objection among Israelis.

As one Palestinian graduate, *Rima*, now working in the field professionally, explained:

I got to a place in my life where I know I should sacrifice, and I am sacrificing things in my life to support Seeds of Peace and to have Israeli friends. I know that there are some organizations here that will never employ me; I know that there are friends I will never have, that they will always look at me as a traitor. Now I’m OK with the choices I have made in my life. It was very frustrating always having to defend it, and I think it’s a big mistake that we Palestinians do, just labeling everything as

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<sup>512</sup> The Board of Directors, however, did not change significantly at the time, an issue which will be explored in chapter eight.

normalization, rather than trying to change anything. It's not that it doesn't exist – it does exist in some areas in our society – but organizations that work towards peace, that's not normalization.

In the same interview, Rima insisted that hers is a minority opinion – not only among the wider Palestinian public, but among Palestinian graduates of SOP. “Most” Palestinian graduates, Rima asserts, “don't believe in the work of Seeds of Peace... they think of it as partly normalization,” while only “a few” Palestinians share her conviction. “Although I don't believe that there will be peace anytime soon,” she explains, “I still believe in the importance of keeping lines of talk open. It sucks that the majority of the people who usually agree with me are Americans or Israelis [not Palestinians].”

The present study cannot confirm or deny her estimate; in private interviews, most Palestinian graduates gave vent to complex, conflicted internal dialogues regarding the legitimacy of cross-conflict engagement, rather than vehement opposition. Many *active* SOP alumni, however, echo Rima's sense of isolation – likely reflecting the public hegemony of anti-normalization discourse more than aggregate private opinion. This public/private split echoes a phenomenon documented by opinion researcher Khalil Shikaki, who found in a 2005 poll that, “ ‘Favoring ‘peace with Israel’ is the majority opinion among Palestinians, but *the same Palestinians see their opinion as a minority opinion.*”<sup>513</sup> The remainder of this chapter will explore the spectrum of Palestinian graduates' responses to the dilemmas of dialogue in the shadows of Israeli occupation and the Palestinian preoccupation with “normalization.”

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<sup>513</sup> Shikaki is quoted from a conference presentation presented at the University of Michigan in February 2005, cited in Tessler “Narratives and Myths about Arab Intransigence toward Israel,” 191.

### Graduate Testimonies

Most of my friends are against what they call normalization and they say Seeds of Peace as a model of it.

– *Ziad*, Palestinian graduate

Everybody that was in Seeds of Peace got so much shit from friends, from people all around you – and [graduates] who don't have strong enough personality, or people who didn't have a good experience, they give up, or they say it wasn't a good thing. I'm actually one of the rare people who still think Seeds of Peace is right.

– *Mubammad*, Palestinian graduate

#### *"A Huge Pressure": High School Contexts*

*Tatbi'a* was never an abstract issue for Palestinian SOP participants; in graduates' testimonies, the stigma follows them like a shadow from their formative experiences in SOP. Indeed, numerous participants were warned of the dangers of "normalizing relations" literally upon their induction into the Palestinian delegation. At the PNA Ministry of Education's 1999 pre-camp preparation seminar, the West Bank Director-General welcomed new recruits with a stern warning: "Certain people, they lost themselves, they got changed, but don't follow the example of these people." She pointed directly at their elders, the Palestinian graduates selected to return to camp as Peer Supports, who had allegedly "lost themselves" by doing exactly what the program encouraged them to do – continuing to engage in dialogue and relationships with Israelis after camp. The same debate accompanied the delegates to Maine. One Palestinian graduate, *Hamdi*, a veteran of multiple summers as a camper and counselor, reported that "I've been to five sessions in Seeds and every single session you have, a group... that's against the whole idea and like why are we here, this is useless, this is stupid, this is, you know, absurd, *tatbi'a*, what are we going to get out of this?"

Indeed, early in the summer of 2000, the news that one Palestinian camper's cousin had died from wounds sustained during stone-throwing clashes with the IDF prompted all the Arab delegations to gather and debate whether to remain at camp. Hamdi recalled arguing against leaving at the time, stating that, "Going home would actually be quitting and would actually be defeat on our side... [losing] the best opportunity we have for improving our situation... that would just be a defeat on our part and a weakness on our part." He remembered strong voices for and against leaving the program, with the debate concluding only after a dramatic personal intervention by John Wallach swayed the bereaved camper:

Emotions were still very high, a lot of people were crying and a lot of people were saying that's it, we're going to go home, we don't want to do anything else and the camper who his cousin had died was sitting amongst us and he was most enthusiastic about quitting the program and going home and taking people with him and during this meeting that we were having, John Wallach walks in and he stands in front of the camper whose cousin had died and said this is the make it or break it deal right here, you can go home and I can't stop you but if you go home then that's the end of Seeds of Peace and the program is dead and there'll be no more Seeds of Peace and John Wallach took off his shirt or his sweatshirt, the Seeds of Peace sweatshirt and threw it on the ground in front of the camper whose cousin had died and he said I'm giving you the choice right now, you're going to decide if the program dies here or if it goes on and then that camper picked up his shirt off the ground and put it on and said we're staying and then John Wallach falls to the ground at his feet and starts crying and everybody else starts crying at the same time. And we stayed.

These Palestinians remained at camp, then "stayed" and "left" and "returned" to SOP at different stages in the years to come, as documented in chapter three. The questions of legitimacy and normalization, however, stayed with them and never left.

Upon return home from camp, every single Palestinian interviewee reported being received by some peers, relatives or teachers with incredulity, accusations of betrayal and assertions that they had been "brainwashed." A few graduates ignored or ridiculed these criticisms; one lifelong active alumna insisted that, "Honestly, I never cared about [*tatbi'a*]. I never gave it any attention. I hear the discussions on the topic, but ... It's nothing more than

it crosses my mind, and nothing else.” Another graduate turned the issue into a running joke; for years, he opened every conversation with SOP staff by declaring, “My brain is really dirty – can you give me a brainwash?” Both of these graduates enjoyed strong support from their immediate families, and both went on to study abroad for college, factors that may have helped diminish the sting of the accusations.

Other graduates endured ongoing antagonism within families, schools, youth movements and universities, with more serious implications. One outspokenly active graduate, *Jalila*, described a steady stream of neighbors and relatives arriving at her home, to urge her parents to end her involvement with SOP. She recalled being publicly denounced at least three times. First, in a local mosque, she recalled that, “they talked about SOP, that it deviates the generation,” naming her and others as deviants. At school, she was refused permission to take a test *early* in order to miss a school day for an SOP trip to Jordan. Upon appeal, the matter went to the Ministry of Education, where the West Bank Director-General used the opportunity to lay down the law: “Because I wanted to go to Jordan [with SOP], they talked about it on the speaker in school: The Director-General of the Ministry of Education forbids anyone to go to programs with Israelis because it’s not what a decent citizen would do.” Upon enrolling at a West Bank university, she found herself on another blacklist, this time published by the student union: “They hung a blacklist on the wall: these people, they’re involved in *tatbi’a*, *ta’ayush*, forgetting your case, becoming a friend of Israelis... when they knew I went to the camp, they looked at me differently.” The stigma even followed Jalila overseas, to graduate studies on a North American campus, where she became involved in Arab student activism. When she arrived at meetings, a fellow student from Syria customarily greeted her by saying, “Here comes the *khawana*, the betrayer.”

Educational settings figured prominently in enforcement of this social code.

Graduates commonly reported being censured, penalized and publicly ridiculed by teachers, sometimes on an ongoing basis. One graduate, *Aisha*, became a daily point of reference in her religion class, where the teacher “attacked me and failed me on purpose, in front of the whole school. One day I was a traitor, then a Jew, then an atheist, and he attacked my Dad.” Aisha reported the abuse, which only inflamed the situation: “The one teacher that I trusted to tell her... told her husband, who turned out to be *Hamas*, and he was calling my home, and my other teacher [continued] attacking, and it was like that, for three years, every day.”

For both Jalila and Aisha, the harassment took on overtones of gender and religion. At one point, Jalila was banned from attending SOP activities for months due to pressure from conservative relatives, after a cousin claimed to have seen a male SOP staffer pat her on the back after dropping her off at home. Aisha explained her conflict with the religion teacher, who required all female students to wear a *hijab* (Islamic women’s headscarf) in class, as about more than simply Seeds of Peace:

I always felt very different from people my age in [Palestinian town]. It’s a very small society, it’s still pretty conservative, and people would expect very certain behavior from me, or any other girl or guy. I always questioned God, I always questioned religion – at the time, as a teenager, I wanted things that now might appear superficial, but they’re things that any other teenager would think of. I wanted to be able to wear what I want, to say what I want, to do activities with Seeds of Peace without being criticized.

Both young women continued to assert independence in the face of recalcitrant authorities. “People *always* tried to convince my parents to stop me from going [to SOP activities],” Jalila recalled, “but I never listened to them.” Aisha took solace in her friendship with an Israeli SOP graduate, who endured similar treatment after declaring intent to refuse military service:

At some point, we realized that we’re going through the exact same experiences in our lives, her in her town and me in [mine]. We both had our lives threatened

because of our activities in Seeds of Peace, we both felt misunderstood and alienated. I always yearned for the kind of freedom I couldn't have in [my town], and she helped convince me that I would find that. We would spend hours and hours on the phone, just talking about teenage problems and helping each other. She came to visit me, slept over... I went to the movies, the cinema, for the first time with [her]... Basically, she was the teenager friend that I always wanted to have, but didn't have in Palestine. And I think I was the friend that she didn't have where she was.

The harassment did, nonetheless, take its toll. Aisha became almost unable to concentrate on schoolwork, particularly during her senior year, a period of intense pressure for all Palestinian students as they prepare for *tanjibi* matriculation exams. She left the country to study abroad on scholarship, and only then began to appreciate the effects of her ordeal:

I think those three years [of high school] that I was involved in Seeds of Peace were the toughest of my life. I was seriously traumatized. I had trouble when I arrived in college, trouble studying, because I was so afraid of teachers... When I got to college, I had an advisor who had to help me learn to study again, to trust teachers. And I eventually realized that I was clinically depressed then – I had clinical depression, I just didn't know what it was.<sup>514</sup>

Living abroad, Aisha claimed to have found “the freedom I always wanted,” and indicated no plans to return to Palestine. Jalila did return to the country, but maintained distance from her hometown. She affirmed the weight of her struggles as a young, female, Muslim, Palestinian identified with “peace,” sighing deeply and saying simply, “it's a huge pressure.”

#### *Post High-School: University and Intifada*

Some graduates affirmed a quasi-religious quality to *tatbi'a*, one graduate from Gaza quoting his personal critics as calling SOP affiliation “a sin.” However, alumni testimonies

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<sup>514</sup> It is important to note that this young woman's family supported her, that she spoke to SOP staff frequently, that she freely chose to continue her activities, and that she relied on SOP staff as confidants. Here is the continuation of her quote: “The only light in my life then was Seeds of Peace. It was so good to meet people who were open-minded, who had different experiences, even going to Israel to meet [Israeli friend], it was getting out of my shell, I loved every minute of it. I wished I lived closer to Jerusalem. No one understood what I was going through. The most help I got was from [Israeli friend], and from [SOP staff], who understood what I was going through, and were really supportive.”

make clear that the taboo is by no means a religious or sectarian phenomenon. According to Walid Salem, each of the major post-colonial ideologies of Palestinian and Arab politics – pan-Arabism, Marxism, Islamism, and nationalism – possesses its own unique platform of opposition to normalization with Israel. Each political movement defines the word somewhat differently, but all are officially opposed to something called “*tatbi’a*.”<sup>515</sup> Palestinian graduates reported facing threats from fellow members of the mainstream *Fatah* party’s *Shabiba* youth movement, and being denounced by members of the Marxist, and ostensibly secularist, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP).

It was this ecumenical, nationalist opposition to normalization that made Palestinian universities especially hostile environments to cross-conflict engagement.<sup>516</sup> As Rima recalled:

Specifically when I was in the university at the beginning, I thought it was working against me, because I couldn’t openly say I was from Seeds of Peace... [Other Palestinian Seeds] were at my university, but... I thought that they’re not mentioning that they’re part of SOP and maybe I shouldn’t. It wasn’t that I would have no friends, because it was known that I was part of SOP, and I had friends. But then the second *intifada* started, and it became impossible to ever mention anything about it.

Mi’ari’s 1994 study found less than one-fifth of Palestinian university students open to social contact with Israelis.<sup>517</sup> In the post-Oslo era, even in the relatively cosmopolitan university settings of Bir Zeit and Bethlehem, redoubts of Palestine’s secular intelligentsia and Christian minority, Palestinian alumni uniformly kept their SOP affiliations in the closet.

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<sup>515</sup> Walid Salem, “The Anti-Normalization Discourse in the Context of Israeli-Palestinian Peacebuilding” in *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture*, 12 (1): 2005, 100-109

<sup>516</sup> The only Palestinian university which supports student engagement with Israeli counterparts is Al-Quds University in Jerusalem, whose President Dr. Sari Nusseibeh was a leading figure in the first Palestinian intifada, and is a longtime advocate of and participant in dialogue, nonviolent resistance and joint peacebuilding. See Sari Nusseibeh, *Once Upon a Country: A Palestinian Life* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007). See also Mary King, *A Quiet Revolution: The First Palestinian Intifada and Nonviolent Resistance* (New York: Nation Books, 2007), 165-239.

<sup>517</sup> Mi’ari, “Attitudes of Palestinians Toward Normalization with Israel.”

During the first years of the second *intifada*, Palestinian university students were arrested, wounded, and killed in confrontations with IDF soldiers; courses and examinations were routinely disrupted by IDF curfews, raids and student strikes. The perennially politicized student unions experienced unprecedented radicalization, as student elections produced the first electoral victories for Hamas, harbingers of the Islamist movement's triumph in the 2006 national parliamentary elections. New IDF checkpoints controlled movement to and from campus, and became infamous for turning routine family visits or trips to town into risky and unpredictable ordeals, thereby stranding students on campus for semesters at a time, despite being only a short distance from home.<sup>518</sup> These were worst-case conditions for all students, only more so for Palestinian SOP graduates. The extreme escalation of Israeli occupation and Palestinian militancy inflamed anti-normalization attitudes, simultaneous to the enlistment of most of their Israeli counterparts in the military.

Accordingly, only a few Palestinian graduates remained active in SOP while attending West Bank or Gaza universities during the *intifada*. In terms of SOP activity, this set of experiences functioned similarly to military service for Israelis. For the vast majority, college years in the OPT were either an extended "time-out" or an absolute breaking point. *Fadia*, a Palestinian graduate, described her undergraduate experience as eviscerating trust in Israelis:

I went to college in [Palestinian city]. I lost friends to... you know, some of them died, I mean *istashbadu* [became martyrs]; I lost friends to prisons, I went through checkpoints, I went through sleepless nights because the Israeli... the Israeli groups you know, soldiers were in town and taking people randomly or seizing a building and bombing people. At that time I came in contact with the Israeli face you know, Israelis now were soldiers and some of them might have been people who I went to camp with and it didn't make sense to me anymore...

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<sup>518</sup> See Amira Hass, "The Checkpoint, The Rabbi and The Goat," Haaretz, July 31, 2003, Accessed June 17, 2011, <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/features/the-checkpoint-the-rabbi-and-the-goat-1.95823>. See also Hazem Zanoun, "Higher Education Under Occupation," *The Olive Branch*, Winter 2002-3, Accessed June 17, 2011, [http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/fall2002\\_3.pdf](http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/fall2002_3.pdf).

Another graduate, *Ibtisam*, emphasized feeling powerless to respond to the Palestinian backlash directed at her, even by her closest friends:

I faced it in college because that's when people were like, "Why did you go there and why did you do this?"... Even like in high school... I also faced some stuff but it wasn't bad because there wasn't really an *intifada* going on. When I went to college, even my fiancé, when the *intifada* started, he was like, "I can't believe you did that!" I'm like, "Yeah, me neither I can't believe I did that." My friends and everyone... well basically they were killing us every day you know you like you can't argue that... you can't argue anything at that point...

Another Palestinian graduate echoed this sentiment, stating simply, "When I felt I'm not in a position to defend my position, that's the end of the time [with SOP] for me."

Palestinian graduates in these situations expressed bitter disillusionment over the IDF enlistment of Israeli graduates. *Ibtisam* was one of numerous Palestinians who recalled a lasting, visceral reaction to seeing an Israeli graduate in uniform during this period:

He came wearing his uniform to the [SOP Jerusalem] Center. I was so shocked and that was it. I think that was when I said "no more"... Every time I tried to like go and see what's happening you know, I had negative vibes you know and I would just say "no, no, no, I'm not going to do this," you know... I definitely didn't have social relationships with anyone from Seeds of Peace at that point. I did go to some, like to one or two activities that I didn't feel good about, obviously and, I guess that's it.

A further complaint encompassed both Israelis and the SOP organization, for allegedly failing to protest or to protect Palestinian Seeds in times of vulnerability. As *Fadia* explained:

I didn't teach the Israelis Seeds anything. I didn't touch them because I didn't see anyone... not one of them or a group of them, come up and say this is wrong, this has to stop. I felt betrayed by them, by the organization, by every Israeli on earth and I decided that there are sides and I'm taking this side, I'm taking the Palestinian side, because there is no middle anymore. There wasn't a middle so I took the Palestinian side at that time in college and I'm still on that side... It was inhumane what I went through... I do not deserve to be a person who has to go through that, has to live with all this fear. My father had an operation when there was a curfew and we couldn't go see him and we didn't know if at any time there will be no electricity or... we had no idea, and it was difficult, and I was a Seed of Peace!

For some, this disappointment lingered. To date, it remains a minority of Palestinian West Bank and Gaza university graduates who have “returned” to cross-conflict relationships, SOP or peacebuilding activity – nearly all *after* college graduation.

Most of these graduates who did “return” successfully did so through the conflict resolution, mediation and facilitation training courses sponsored by the Jerusalem Center, which provided frameworks for intensive, sustained reflection on their traumatic experiences – first in preparatory sessions with other Palestinian graduates, and then in extended discussions with Israelis. SOP events at all reminiscent of their teen-aged programs, such as the 2005 Leadership Summit in Maine, did not achieve the same effect. Fadia chose to attend the Summit, despite misgivings, “as a test... I [was] very confused about Seeds of Peace and I want[ed] to see where the organization stands and see where I stand. I went, was very frustrated and realized that this is definitely not the thing for me and I left [SOP].”

Ibtisam also attended the Summit, in order to send a message to the Israelis:

I [went] because I want[ed] to tell them we don’t need anything to do with them. I went with this mentality to the summit and I technically didn’t talk to any Israeli in the summit, only in dialogue, and I remember once... in one of the dialogues [an Israeli] is like, “You guys don’t talk to us and you hang out alone, the Arabs and mostly the Palestinians, and when we’re there you speak in Arabic...” I’m like, “You know what, you should be grateful that I’m here and I’m willing to come and sit in a dialogue with you, not to be your friend, so like get over it, I’m not gonna be your friend, you know. I’m here for business, I’m not here to make friends.”

At the time, Fadia and Ibtisam were both enrolled in the SOP mediation course, which included both uni- and bi-national components. Fadia attended only the uni-national meetings, before divorcing herself from SOP altogether: “I know some [Palestinian graduates] who carried their experience and still think the same way... it stuck to their personality and to their beliefs when they grew up, but I’m not one of them... I mean, that is all gone now... So I guess I wasn’t a Seeds of Peace success.”

Ibtisam, by contrast, attended the full course, and also began to work with SOP in the West Bank. In that capacity, she was eventually assigned to prepare a bi-national seminar with an Israeli colleague, whom she knew had served in combat. She described a confrontation with him that became a turning point for her:

Tim [Wilson] asked me to work on a bi-national seminar and I had to work with [Israeli graduate]... and I still didn't break this wall, you know. But then once we were sitting and... I knew that he was in [Palestinian city as a soldier], so I'm like, "You know what, I'm sure you shot at us didn't you, don't deny it, I'm sure, it was the *intifada*, come on, and that doesn't make me comfortable to talk to you, and if you are not going to say that it was wrong, I shouldn't spend time trying to convince you." And he was like, "I admit it was wrong," and then I was like, "Would you be willing to stand in front of all the Palestinian Seeds and apologize?" And he was like, "Yes, I would, I would be happy to do this."

And that's when things changed for me, you know. I started to feel, I guess people make mistakes... and that was the incident where like things started to shift for me. And then we started working on projects together and... actually, now, I consider him one of my really close friends... he earned it... my friendship and my trust.

Ibtisam expanded her work with SOP in coming years, before leaving the country to pursue an advanced degree in Conflict Resolution and engage in advocacy at a Palestinian think tank in the United States. While abroad, she encountered Palestinian SOP graduates who, often with assistance from SOP, acquired scholarships to attend college in North America. They had not shared Ibtisam's difficult experiences studying in the West Bank during the second *intifada*, but they often joined her among the ranks of active adult Palestinian alumni.

#### *"Seeds Scholars": Palestinian Graduates Studying Abroad*

Over the years, numerous Palestinian campers requested, not in jest, that the organization furnish them with an "SOP ID" card – perhaps in the hope that being a "Seed" might somehow equal "VIP" status, and protect or exempt them from the travails of life

under occupation. Yet graduates attending university in the OPT, during the *intifada*, would have had no use for such a document. Not only did SOP affiliation not improve their situation, it amplified their disillusionment and added the stigma of *tatbi'a* to their multiple layers of vulnerability. Precisely the opposite was true, however, for dozens of Palestinian graduates who chose to pursue secondary or higher education abroad. For this group, SOP membership provided a path out of dire conditions, a path “up” in terms of career opportunity – and a path that conferred prestige on them in Palestinian society at that. Directly or indirectly, SOP furnished these graduates with contacts, credentials, experiences, permits, resources and/or skills – in short, with the "social capital" that, combined with outstanding personal qualifications, earned them scholarships in the US and Europe.<sup>519</sup>

A pair of Palestinian alumni turned to SOP for assistance with college applications in 1999; dozens soon followed in their footsteps. In fact, on the first day of the second *intifada*, a group of dozens of Palestinian graduates from Gaza and the West Bank traveled to the Jerusalem Center to meet with a professional college counselor.<sup>520</sup> For the majority of Palestinian applicants, mere acceptance was not sufficient – they would be able to study abroad only with full financial support. This necessitated either outstanding applications, or

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<sup>519</sup> Pierre Bourdieu defines social capital as, "The sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (Quote from Pierre Bourdieu and Lois J.D. Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 119). In this case, the institutionalized relationships, acquaintances and recognition were between the SOP organization and US universities, brokered through the American administration, Board and staff members. For SOP graduates, their SOP membership was, in Bourdieu's words, the " 'credential' which entitles them to credit" (Quote from Pierre Bourdieu, "The forms of capital," in John G. Richardson (ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 241-258). See also Ned Lazarus, "The Political Economy of Seeds of Peace: A Critical Evaluation of Conflict Intervention" (Paper presented at the International Studies Association Annual Convention, San Diego, CA, March 22, 2006); J.E. Côté, "Sociological perspectives on identity formation: The culture-identity link and identity capital," *Journal of Adolescence* 19 (1996), 417-428.

<sup>520</sup> The college counselor was Dr. Edie Maddy-Weitzman, whose research on SOP greatly informs this study, and who volunteered her expertise to SOP graduates generously for many years. See chapter two for a review of Dr. Maddy-Weitzman's dissertation; for detail of her volunteer counseling for SOP graduates see Maddy-Weitzman, "Waging Peace in the Holy Land," and Maddy-Weitzman, "Coping with Crisis."

scholarships directly “earmarked” for SOP or aspiring peace-builders at particular institutions.<sup>521</sup> Alumni from more elite backgrounds were often somewhat savvy about schools and applications, while graduates from refugee camps, villages and working class families were often utterly unfamiliar with any aspect of the arcane process. Filling in applications, editing personal statements and composing letters of recommendation quickly became integral parts of SOP regional staff work, while the US organization hired a full-time Educational Director to seek scholarships, create connections with universities and maintain contact with alumni already enrolled abroad.<sup>522</sup> By 2003, 120 SOP graduates were enrolled at educational institutions in the US, and several others in Europe; nearly half of these “Seeds Scholars” were Palestinians.<sup>523</sup>

The story of one Palestinian graduate from Gaza illustrates the disparity in conditions for study between the intifada-era OPT and universities abroad, and the crucial role the organization played in securing access and resources for study abroad. This graduate enrolled at Bir Zeit University in the West Bank in September 2000, in order to be “close to home.” However, he soon found himself cut off from his family through two years of intifada and Israeli military curfews and incursions, living in constant fear that the IDF would deport him back to Gaza, unable to concentrate on studies at all. He eventually gave up and turned himself in deliberately, in order to be sent back to his family. Back at home, he applied for and received a scholarship designed specifically for SOP graduates by a US

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<sup>521</sup> For example, the Slifka scholarship for Arab and Jewish peacebuilders at Brandeis University—earned by three SOP graduates (all Israeli conscientious objectors, as it turned out); the Olive Tree scholarship at City University of London in the UK, awarded twice to Palestinian SOP graduates; a scholarship in Italy, shared by one Israeli and one Palestinian SOP graduate, and scholarships to attend United World College secondary schools around the world, held by at least 18 SOP graduates as of 2004.

<sup>522</sup> Author's personal experience; I wrote letters of recommendation and assisted with composition of personal statements for college applications for dozens of SOP graduates beginning in 1999.

<sup>523</sup> Seeds of Peace, “Annual Report 2003.” By 2005, the number of “Seeds Scholars” is cited as 150 (Annual Report 2005, Accessed June 17, 2011, [http://www.seedsofpeace.org/about/annual\\_reports](http://www.seedsofpeace.org/about/annual_reports)). That number does not include a smaller number of alumni who studied abroad without assistance from SOP.

university. His next obstacle became acquiring a US visa. At first, the Israeli authorities refused him a permit to leave Gaza in order to undergo a mandatory interview at the US Embassy in Tel-Aviv. SOP interceded and, through contacts in the Embassy and the Israeli government, succeeded in obtaining the permit and enabling the interview. At that point, post-9/11 US visa policies delayed the issue of his visa, causing him to miss the fall semester.<sup>524</sup>

Finally in late November, he received his visa and purchased a plane ticket from Cairo for the following month. One week before his scheduled flight, however, Israel declared all borders closed to Palestinian movement in response to a suicide attack in Tel-Aviv. His date of departure came and went with the borders sealed. A week later, SOP appeals and US Embassy contacts eventually succeeded in securing a permit for him to leave the country - if he made it to the Rafah border crossing the same afternoon. He packed his bags and met me at Erez within hours; we navigated a maze of IDF checkpoints inside Gaza to arrive at the bullet-scarred Palestinian border terminal with Egypt. On the other side of the border, Egyptian security forces put him in a police van and drove him directly to the Cairo airport where he was held under armed guard, as was standard procedure with Palestinians from Gaza. And he was still not free to fly - SOP had to intercede once more, this time by contacting the British Embassy in Cairo to arrange an emergency transit visa, as the only available flight that day went through London.<sup>525</sup>

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<sup>524</sup> See Zanoun, "Higher Education Under Occupation," *The Olive Branch*.

<sup>525</sup> Indeed, were it not for the heroics of the British Embassy staff person who happened to answer our call, the trip would likely have ended in deportation back to Gaza again. Instead, a staff member from the Embassy drove to the Cairo airport well after hours, demanded that the Egyptian police release the Palestinian graduate, drove him back to the Embassy and personally completed the visa procedure, and escorted him back to the airport, from whence he flew through London to the United States, and began a new life.

The Palestinian graduates studying abroad left home with diverse ambitions and interests, and scattered to more than fifty different institutions throughout North America and Europe. Some became campus activists – in Palestinian advocacy, dialogue, or both; others focused on social life or studies, and avoided politics and peacebuilding altogether. Numerous Palestinian students established fundraising and awareness campaigns on behalf of their communities at home, such as the LEARN - "Leading Education and Relief for Nablus" initiative established by an SOP graduate on a campus in the Midwestern US.<sup>526</sup> Some became involved in the American side of SOP, pioneering a new "US Students" network and "Seeds Advisory Council" (SAC), coordinating programs for the "Seeds Scholar" community and serving as liaisons between graduates and the organization.<sup>527</sup> Many gave speeches at SOP fundraisers and attended workshops organized by SOP's Education Director during school vacations. Others established independent dialogue initiatives, or became involved in other peacebuilding organizations.<sup>528</sup>

Their experiences were far from free of difficulty. Some struggled to find a social place and a political voice, especially those attending small colleges in rural locations, in post-9/11 America. Many expressed feelings of "survivor's guilt" for the quality of education, and the basic safety and freedom they enjoyed abroad. As one interviewee explained, "I was one of the privileged people who got to get out... to establish independence, and get away from the region... there is a certain amount of knowledge that I wouldn't have gotten in Bir Zeit. And I feel bad that other people who really wanted to leave are not able to do that as well."

All remained connected to vulnerable friends and family in Palestine, sometimes

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<sup>526</sup> See "The Olive Branch Youth Magazine - Winter 2002-03 Edition," Accessed June 21, 2011, [http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/Winter2003\\_2.pdf](http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/Winter2003_2.pdf).

<sup>527</sup> See "Post-HS" section, chapter three.

<sup>528</sup> Interviewees engaged in speaking tours with Faculty for Israeli-Palestinian Peace and One Voice, among other cross-conflict peacebuilding initiatives, as well as numerous Palestinian advocacy forums.

preoccupied for weeks at a time during extended IDF offensives in the West Bank (2002-3) and Gaza (2006, 2009). Many Palestinians experienced life abroad as simultaneous refuge and exile. While relieved to study and later work in peace, some – especially graduates from Gaza – spent years without being able to return home or see their families, to celebrate weddings or to bury loved ones, including in two cases family members killed in IDF attacks in Gaza.<sup>529</sup> They never escaped the burdens of Palestinian life. But they did distance themselves from the dehumanizing daily grind of checkpoints, soldiers, casualties – and blacklists against "normalization." For those who wished to remain active in SOP, they found themselves in contexts that often adulated, rather than denigrated, their associations with "peace."

Not all who studied abroad remained active; nor did all active adult Palestinian graduates study abroad. However, when the active "Seeds scholars" returned to the OPT for vacations or to live, equipped with energy, credentials and international experience, they strengthened the diminished credibility and depleted ranks of Palestinian SOP.<sup>530</sup> Like the conscientious objectors on the Israeli side, this exceptional group played a crucial, sometimes disproportionate, role in maintaining a core of active older graduates through the *intifada*. In their interviews, current and former "Seeds Scholars" unanimously emphasized pride in their experiences and appreciation of SOP's role in "opening doors" of opportunity, regardless of their levels of current involvement. The tone of their testimonies starkly contrasts with the

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<sup>529</sup> In 2006, a Palestinian graduate from Gaza lost an uncle, aunt and six cousins from an Israeli airstrike near their home. During the 2009 Gaza War, Palestinian graduate Amer Shurrab learned in real time from an Al-Jazeera report that his father and two sons had been wounded by IDF fire and needed an ambulance. He immediately set about contacting everyone he knew—yet despite numerous interventions, including from international and Israeli human rights organizations, the ambulance was not allowed through for 24 hours, and his two brothers died. See note 149 for sources.

<sup>530</sup> Only the West Bank residents could actually return with any frequency. Gaza residents already stayed abroad for years at a time before the Hamas takeover, in order to avoid being trapped in Gaza during extended and unpredictable border closures. After the Hamas takeover, none of the Gazan graduates studying abroad in this study have returned.

themes of betrayal, disappointment and isolation common to graduates who endured the *intifada* on Palestinian campuses.

This should not imply that questions of *tatbi'a* simply stopped at the water's edge. Some "Seeds scholars" who involved themselves in international Arab and Arab-American contexts were confronted with familiar accusations. One graduate, 'Abdi, counter-intuitively described Arab-Americans as often more rigid than OPT Palestinians on the subject:

From my personal encounters... with the Arab Americans and the Palestinians – They are much more militant, in their heads of course, and a lot more unwilling to talk to the other side. Much, much more unwilling to talk to the Israelis or to conservative Americans or American Jews for that sake. I mean right away you would hear the comment *yahudi, yahudi, yahudi* [Jew] and for us, for somebody like me, I don't care... It's the saying that *idey fil nar moush zai idey fil mai*, people that have their hands in fire are not like the ones that have hands in the cold water ...

You have people that are hearing stories about the situation, and people that are living in the situation, and a lot of them get in conflicts. Like they say, "Oh my god I can't believe your Palestinian and you're saying this," or, "I can't believe you're Palestinian and you're friends with Israelis and you host Israelis to sleep at your house," or you go out with them or you have fun with them or invite them to dinner... I can't believe you're doing that with your occupier." They make it sound way, much more problematic than it is. I even had this discussion with my parents this summer and they were saying that the [OPT] Palestinians are the least people that probably hate the Israelis and the Jews in the world, in the Muslim world...

'Abdi illustrated this theory with a tale of bringing a friend, an Israeli SOP graduate, and her family to his workplace, the US headquarters of an international corporation based in the Middle East. This friend was finishing study abroad, and her parents had come for her graduation, their first trip to the US. He brought the family to see his office:

I'm introducing her to people "this is my friend, she just graduated, she's here visiting and blah, blah, blah," everything is great and nice and I didn't mention her nationality at the time. Then she left and, "Oh my god, how nice, very nice, who is she, where is she from?" and I'm like, "She's Israeli and she just finished, she has gone through the army as well," and all of them just looked at me like, "Are you out of your mind to bring somebody like this?" These are people that are in the [international] business world... and they tell you, "What you're bringing an Israeli and worse that you're friends with an Israeli that's gone through the army?" And I'm

like, “Okay we’ve been friends for a long time, what she’s done and what I’ve done has nothing to do with our friendship here.” They were in extreme shock that the Palestinian, the one that came from there, and has seen the aggression of the Israelis and the question of the occupation and yet here you are bringing a friend to visit your workplace and introducing her to other people.

‘Abdi invoked his firsthand experience with the conflict to dismiss his colleagues’ questions, saying, “[When] you know your family is there and your parents are there and your house is there, you don’t need to prove nothing to anybody; but people that are here need some sort of justification to what they claim of being Arab or being Palestinian.”

#### *Drawing Lines: The Internal Debate*

Ironically, numerous other Palestinian graduates invoked the precise theme of ‘Abdi’s proverb – “one whose hands are in fire is not like one whose hands are in water” – to precisely the opposite effect. In their version, after suffering through the *intifada*, living in the shadow of the Separation Barrier, one can no longer seek peace, trust Israelis, or treat them as partners or friends. Neither this proverb nor any factor, experiential nor geographic, can fully account for the divergences of opinion among adult Palestinian graduates on the topic of *tatbi’a*. In every demographic and experiential category, there are proponents and opponents of different categories of dialogue and engagement. Among Gazan graduates who knew no Israelis outside SOP, and who lost family members to IDF attacks, there are proponents and opponents of peacebuilding – and among the proponents, some involved in SOP and others decisively not. The same divergence prevailed among Jerusalemite Palestinian graduates who studied in Israeli universities, who experienced daily contact with Israeli civilians and greater freedom of movement and socioeconomic opportunity than

Palestinians in Gaza or the West Bank. Indeed, in some Palestinian families that sent two children to camp, the children's disagreements on normalization became flashpoints of sibling rivalry. In the following example, the debate spread from participants to parents.

In the early years of the second *intifada*, SOP honored a pair of families, Palestinian and Israeli, at the organization's annual gala fundraiser at Carnegie Hall in Manhattan. Children from each family had met at camp in Maine, become friends, and gone on to exchange multiple visits to each other's homes, soon bringing their parents along with them. These children and parents remained connected through the escalation of the *intifada*, the Israeli mother coming to see the Palestinians in contravention of IDF orders, and joining protests in Israel against the treatment of the Palestinian population. At Carnegie Hall, they presented these stories together to a hall packed with 1,500 SOP supporters. After receiving standing ovations and touring New York together, the parents set out on separate journeys to homes located less than a half-hour's drive apart. The Israelis took a routine flight to Ben-Gurion airport outside Tel Aviv and a taxi home. The Palestinians, barred from Ben-Gurion since the start of the *intifada*, flew to Amman, Jordan, where they spent a night with relatives before embarking on the grueling ordeal of crowds, heat, and successive Jordanian, Israeli and Palestinian security checks at the Allenby Bridge border crossing. Inside the West Bank, their journey continued several hours, through several more IDF checkpoints, via the only roads open to PNA residents – a precarious route aptly known as the Valley of Fire.

Upon arrival at home, the parents were greeted by news that their arduous journey on behalf of SOP had come at a cost. The father, an educator of excellent reputation, had long been next in line for a promotion at work. An appropriate position had recently opened, and his advancement appeared a sure thing. After his speaking tour on behalf of

SOP, however, he found himself under formal review by authorities in his department, on suspicion of “normalizing activities.” He was summoned to a hearing, where he contested the charges. In the course of the hearing, his interrogators identified the source of the accusations against him: A fellow Palestinian educator from a different region, whose child was also an active SOP graduate, and who had likewise hosted SOP gatherings at her home and exchanged visits with Israeli families. While the accused parent managed to argue successfully that this was a case of the pot calling the kettle black, his accuser apparently saw this Carnegie Hall appearance as somehow one step too far over the line of legitimacy.

The content of this “normalization” debate among Palestinian “Seeds of Peace” might seem odd to outside observers and, indeed, to many Palestinians. *Tatbi’a* or not, what is left to debate for Palestinians meeting under the rubric of an organization dedicated to dialogue? However, precisely because the Palestinian graduates had all at least previously engaged in cross-conflict meetings, simple purity was forever out of the question. For them, the issue was infinitely more complex and urgent than most; their debates took on nuance uncommon in everyday discourse. Rather than simplistically condemning or condoning contact with Israelis *per se*, most Palestinian graduates strove to draw boundaries between legitimate and illegitimate forms of encounter, using a variety of criteria to define the spectrum from (legitimate) dialogue to (illegitimate) normalization.

Some drew distinctions in space, approving of meetings abroad but not in country, or approving of “neutral” locations like camp or the Jerusalem Center, but not private homes, for example. Others were willing to invite Israelis to witness Palestinian realities in the OPT, but would not agree to return visit in Israel. Some drew distinctions in time, asserting that SOP participation should be contingent on appropriate political context –

legitimate during the Oslo years, for example, but not during the *intifada*, or not until the dismantling of the Separation Barrier, or not during or after the wars in Lebanon or in Gaza. Other graduates focused on the nature of the exchange, endorsing political debates but frowning upon personal relationships. Some focused on the identity of the Israelis involved, according to politics or military service: including or excluding settlers, right wingers, soldiers, reservists, or veterans (of combat or in general), or agreeing to political dialogue with some but personal relationships only with others. Some demanded a complete moratorium; others argued that the Palestinian cause was best served by carrying the message to every single Israeli and international audience that was willing to listen. The chapter will conclude with portraits of two composite, conflicting approaches of Palestinian graduates to the issue. The first defined legitimacy by the maintenance of strict red lines against "normalization" within the context of dialogue. The second treated the taboo against "normalization" as yet another barrier limiting collective and personal freedom.

*Resistance, not Relationship: Dialogue without "Differentiation"*

Three graduates – all, it is worth noting, from Gaza – echoed precisely the standards applied by Ministry of Education officials. For these alumni, adversarial political dialogue conducted in third-party settings was an honorable endeavor, while personal and social engagement with Israelis was distasteful. In their views, *tabi'a* is a genuine offense, one that applies to certain aspects of the SOP program and certain Palestinian participants, whom they personally condemned. As *Nidal* explained:

I didn't have... direct relations with any of the Israelis in Palestine and Israel, I was always thinking that, okay it has changed my way of thinking, I know that we have to

deal with Israelis but there should be a certain limit in the way that you interact with them, that you don't have to give them the impression that we're okay, at the same time I see Palestinians being humiliated at crossings and the basics of life are not there for the Palestinians, so I just can't go and deal with the Israelis as if its nothing, as if I've totally changed for that.

At the same time, Nidal invoked his own standard of *tatbi'a* to fend off attacks from his own critics at home, framing dialogue as an alternative form of resistance to occupation:

I was always criticised by a lot of people, like how come you go meet Israelis, this is *tatbi'a*... normalization, it's a brainwashing, it's not right, you are a kid and you're thinking differently, you shouldn't have this kind of peaceful thinking. And I always used to defend my point of view that I'm not there to normalize, I don't go for *tatbi'a*, I go there because I have to present my case, my Palestinian issues, if we're not telling them [then] they don't know what's real, I don't think Israelis would know... I felt more a Palestinian because I was talking and resisting occupation in a different way, but this is my right, and I was fighting for my right and then convincing other people that this is something I'm not begging for, this is my right, my grandparents' right, this is what Palestinians were always suffering from...

While critical of the program's values and the behavior of Palestinian colleagues, Nidal felt SOP was a legitimate forum for advocacy and, crucially, that he was an effective advocate.

Another Gazan graduate, *Nabil*, echoed Nidal's struggle and his sentiments. "[To] most of the people," Nabil explained, "it's *tatbi'a*, and you know what is *tatbi'a* – it's a sin... it was hard... even to say that I've convinced some of the Israelis and they respect our rights... People who know me, they believed, but it's very hard for them to deal with such things." Still, Nabil felt proud of his personal performance:

No, I never regretted, of course not, even at that time I didn't do something I would ever regret, I didn't give up something I believed in, I didn't do anything to be ashamed of. No, absolutely not. Maybe the opposite! Sometimes when I think back, we used to have the coexistence sessions, and I remember we just talked about stuff, and how did I put some issues about Palestine, and our case and our issues, and Gaza, and it doesn't feel bad at all. I felt I did something good. It was an experience, you know, and I will never really regret it.

A third graduate, *Tha'er*, while deeply critical of SOP and cross-conflict socializing, also felt sanguine about his own motives and actions:

Personally, I didn't go to meet Israelis in Palestine, to go to birthdays, that wasn't the purpose that I went. But for my purpose, it was good – to meet others, also Israelis, and to improve your skills of communication – listening, speaking, to listen to the others, to be ready to be convinced by others and to convince others, to be confident when you speak, to gather information, to defend your arguments – these are skills that are helpful for anyone.

In turn, these graduates reinforced their sense of legitimacy by contrast with the actions of Palestinians who did not observe similar restrictions. As Nidal explained, “I used to criticize the Palestinians who used to have friendship, relations with Israelis as if like they're friends... I always used to say, ‘No this shouldn't happen... unless I feel, [as] a Palestinian, that the Israelis are not treating me as they are occupying, as occupation.’”

Both Nidal and Tha'er explicitly cited activities and venues they considered illegitimate. International forums were ideal; in Nidal's words, “I always felt that going outside is something, just make it like officially in a way of presenting and communicating with Israelis, under like international occurrence.” In the country, Tha'er tolerated the Jerusalem Center as a third-party location; Nidal never traveled there. Israeli homes, towns, schools, as well as birthdays and holidays were all out of the question. As Tha'er averred, “Every activity, every time I left Gaza then was just to the office in Jerusalem, or to the Palestinian cities, like one time I went to Jericho. I don't believe to go to houses.”

Yet interestingly, later in their interviews, each was eventually reminded of instances in which they transgressed these clear boundaries. Before the *intifada*, Tha'er was filmed visiting an Israeli graduate in the coastal city of Ashkelon, just north of Gaza, as part of a documentary project. He treated the visit as refugee's journey to his ancestral home, the city built on the location of the Palestinian town of *Asqalan*, from which his family was expelled

in the 1948 War.<sup>531</sup> In Tha'er's words, "This was one of the things, one of the chances that I was happy to do at that time, to go to *Asqalan*, to my city, where my father and my grandfather was kicked out in the *Nakba*, the catastrophe, to go and even to film, to represent your cause." Tha'er and Nidal also both attended an overnight SOP seminar held at Kibbutz Yahel in the Negev desert.<sup>532</sup> "I was really happy," Nidal explained, "that I've been to the *Naqab*, a part of what I always thought it's Palestine but it's now Israel, and that I would never have the chance to visit that place."<sup>533</sup> While at the kibbutz, a local family invited him in, and curiosity led Nidal to make an exception:

I remember the time they let us visit some families and I was really, I was curious to know the way those people live and I can remember, I just remember now I was really feeling, I was feeling weird like, "Boy, what's that? I'm at a Israeli house and for sometimes, no I shouldn't do that," but at the same time it was like I'm not doing it for the sake of just having, like always coming back, it was only one time, but I really wanted to see it and to tell about myself.

Curiosity also led Nidal to attend an SOP seminar held in the village of Neve Shalom/Wahat Al-Salaam, an intentional community established jointly by Palestinian and Jewish citizens of Israel.<sup>534</sup> A decade later, he appeared clearly moved by his memories of the experience: "I

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<sup>531</sup> Ashkelon is a city of more than 112,000 residents on Israel's Mediterranean coast, located eight miles north of the Gaza Strip. In this as in many cases in the country, the Arabic and Hebrew names are nearly identical, both based on the biblical-era Hebrew name. (In biblical times, Ashkelon was actually a settlement of the Phillistines, the people of Goliath, historical enemies of the ancient Hebrews.) Regarding the expulsion of the Palestinian population of Asqalan and neighboring villages in 1948, see Benny Morris, *Tikun ta'ut: yehudim ve-'aravim be-eretz yisra'el* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2000). In English, see Benny Morris, *1948 and After: Israel and the Palestinians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>532</sup> Kibbutz Yahel is an Israeli collective agricultural town established as a joint venture of the United Kibbutz Movement and the Movement for Progressive (Reform) Judaism in 1976 in the southern Arava region of the Negev desert, 65 kilometers north of the Red Sea city of Eilat. See "Kibbutz Yahel Today," Accessed June 17, 2011, <http://www.yahel.org.il/English/tabid/160/Default.aspx>. The kibbutz, populated largely by American Jewish immigrants to Israel and their children, invited Seeds of Peace to hold large annual winter workshops there including hundreds of participants from Israel, the OPT, and a handful from Jordan, and to conduct presentations and discussions with students at the local regional school.

<sup>533</sup> *Al-Naqab* is Arabic for the Hebrew *Negev* desert.

<sup>534</sup> Deanna Armbruster, "Neve Shalom/Wahat Al-Salam: The 'Oasis of Peace,'" Accessed June 17, 2011, [http://oasisofpeace.org/armbruster\\_article.pdf](http://oasisofpeace.org/armbruster_article.pdf). See also Grace Feuerverger, *Oasis of Dreams: Teaching and Learning Peace in a Jewish-Palestinian Village in Israel* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

like that place, the way the people were there... It was really good... it meant something, it meant that this is an example, you can always, people can always live together.”

A gap between strict public insistence on emotional distance, and actual affective experience, also appeared in Nidal’s narrative of the 1999 grand opening celebration of the Jerusalem Center. While he did not personally attend, a busload of Gaza graduates did, including SOP contacts from the Ministry of Education. Nidal recalled the principles laid out by MOE officials in explaining their decision to attend the ceremony: “They didn’t want to go and then they decided to go but not meet with Israelis directly or talk to Israelis as the Ministry of Education, so they went to the opening, they met with John [Wallach] and they left, but they didn’t interact with any Israelis.” Conspicuously absent from Nidal’s secondhand account of the event, however, were the actions of the PNA’s Deputy Minister of Education at the scene. The Minister, Dr. Naim Abu El-Hummus, stood with his Israeli counterpart, Yossi Sarid of the Left-wing Meretz party, before a crowd of more than 500 Arab and Israeli “Seeds” in full SOP regalia. Visibly moved by the spectacle, each delivered impassioned remarks. “I am proud to be here with my counterpart from the Palestinian Authority,” Sarid began, then stopped and shook his head. “Authority,” he repeated quizzically, “well, in the future, it won’t be an ‘Authority’ – it will be a Palestinian state!” The crowd immediately burst into applause, and the two Ministers spontaneously embraced on the dais.<sup>535</sup> The embrace was, however, apparently edited out of the Gaza delegation’s retrospective reports of the event.

These Gazan graduates’ declared red lines hewed close to the official PNA position on engagement with Israelis, even as their own actions or emotions occasionally exceeded

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<sup>535</sup> Author's personal observation. See also Kershner, “Teaching Kids not to Hate.”

their professed boundaries. They framed dialogue as an opportunity for adversarial advocacy rather than mutual exchange, and disdained social contact and interpersonal relationships as signs of acquiescence to Israeli domination. They insisted above all on maintaining the *collective* nature of the encounter, resisting individualization and differentiation of the other, thereby rejecting key aspects of SOP's understanding of "humanization," in a manner resonant with the strict "confrontational" approach to intergroup encounters.<sup>536</sup>

Their reticence reflects the prevailing Arab and Palestinian consensus against altering deeply rooted "enemy images" of Israelis, even while engaging in strategic interaction with Israel. This was always the dominant Arab and Palestinian paradigm outside SOP, and it gained support among Palestinian alumni after the *intifada*. However, this strictly adversarial approach continues to have vocal critics among Palestinian alumni, who challenge its strict dichotomy between *affect* and *effect*. These graduates, many of whom have worked as adults in peacebuilding, see dialogue as educationally valuable - but also argue that empathic engagement with Israelis can constitute a more effective means of Palestinian advocacy.

*Breaking Through Psychological Barriers: The Palestinian Case for Dialogue*

I strongly believe that one factor in changing and solving the Palestinian/Israeli conflict is gonna come from the Israelis inside Israel. That's a big factor in solving this problem, and it's very, very important for Arabs and Palestinians to be able to sit down with those... with Israelis, and even though, of course not all of them had the same policies and thoughts, but especially those that you disagree with the most. Those are the people that are crucial to sit down with and talk to.

-Palestinian graduate

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<sup>536</sup> See Ifat Maoz, "Contact in protracted asymmetrical conflict: Twenty years of planned encounters between Israeli Jews and Palestinians," *Journal of Peace Research* 48, no. 1 (2011), 115-125.

All Palestinian SOP alumni, especially post-*intifada*, voiced frustration with the failures of the organization and the peacebuilding field to meaningfully alter the conditions of Palestinian life under continued Israeli repression. Some graduates, however, also criticized the campaign against "normalization" as compounding the conditions of isolation and restriction, as intellectually stifling and politically counter-productive. These Palestinian graduates, all of them active in peacebuilding and advocacy against the occupation, lamented Palestinian failures to use dialogue and peacebuilding forums to enhance their own knowledge, and to challenge dominant Israeli perceptions, all for fear of being stigmatized.

One graduate, *Aziza*, described her struggles in attempting to arrange a cross-conflict course for journalists. The course involved a series of meetings, in Palestinian locations in East Jerusalem and Bethlehem, in which participants would discuss historical narratives, the power of mass communication, and the portrayal of the other in media. Aziza expressed her view of dialogue in describing her attempts to recruit Palestinian participants:

This is how I think about it: Palestinians are always complaining about how the media portrays us, that we are portrayed as terrorists, as if we're the occupiers and not the victims – now they have a chance to work on changing it, and they're rejecting it completely. Those Palestinian journalists who have never been to Jerusalem or inside Israel at all, we're now giving them the chance to see this, to talk to those Israelis, to ask why they're portraying us this way in their media, and these are young journalists who will grow up to be powerful in our society, and I just don't understand how they can reject this chance just because there are Israelis. They will always be there; they will always be your neighbors, or your occupiers. I understand why they want to boycott Israel, but this is different. We're trying our best to make this seminar very equal – we're holding part of it in Bethlehem and part of it in East Jerusalem. But even with that, there were Palestinians rejecting it... everything for them is normalization, normalization, and they've used this word so much that they don't understand, there are times it really doesn't apply.

Aziza echoed the adversarial framing of dialogue in arguing her case to opponents, saying,

“Think about it this way – how can you fight your enemy without knowing how they think?”

Nonetheless, she recalled Palestinians frequently hanging up the phone, or offering her

unsolicited advice: “They tell me be careful who you talk to about this subject, there are groups that would be very interested in killing you or hurting you. And that frustrates me, being threatened by other Palestinians, as if we don’t get enough from Israelis.”

Another Palestinian interviewee, Iltezam, bristled at the sound of the word *tatbi’a*. She described the taboo as intellectually stifling, and contrasted it with the freedom of expression she experienced in dialogue sessions:

The facilitation – I viewed it as a [facilitator] and a participant – I really felt there was a huge level of personal freedom. There was definitely more of a training on the Israeli side, they used to tell them the ideas they are supposed to have at camp – but within the coexistence sessions, there was a certain level of freedom for the kids to break loose from that, and to learn something and express something to each other.

So I don’t think it’s right – I don’t think *tatbi’a* is a right word for that. If people call that *tatbi’a*, then everything is *tatbi’a*. A family raising a child is a process of normalization... this was about us leaving on a trip, a really nice trip, and talking to people that it was impossible for us ever to talk to. That’s what I would say to people calling this normalization. And I would say the same about [other peacebuilding organization in which she was active]. There is a huge amount of personal freedom. In both organizations, there was never a time when anyone ever lectured me about what to say – I expressed myself.

Iltezam ultimately criticized the concept as contrary to her humanist philosophy, saying “*Tatbi’a*... I’m post-modern with the way I think about things. I truly believe that everything is relative and everything is based on human subjectivity. So that is why I have always fought against that idea and I will always fight against that idea.”

Other graduates voiced similar criticisms of the “normalization” taboo serving to prevent Palestinians from effectively addressing the groups whose perceptions they most needed to change. One graduate, Muhammad, asked, “When we talk about how we have no influence on the media, when we say America has all the money, has all the influence – how are we going to get them to realize that we are humans too?” Muhammad presented his view

of dialogue as advocacy through a narrative of an argument with a Palestinian graduate alienated from SOP:

Yesterday, one of the points she said was “I was still young, and when I grew up I realized that they were trying to brainwash us.” I said if you have a strong personality, then you can’t be brainwashed. When you live here, and you know what’s going on, how can you be brainwashed? The purpose of SOP is going there and affecting as many people as you can. One person is enough for me, but I feel that I’ve touched a lot more than one person. There are a lot of people from Seeds that I really care about. There are people that I know that wanted to go to jail rather than join the army – and then again, these people are affected by their society too.

Muhammad proudly listed Israelis whom he believed he had affected in SOP and another international dialogue program. In describing discussions, he differentiated clearly between the asymmetry of power in the conflict, and the power he felt in the encounter:

The tears affected me the most. When you see them leave the coexistence sessions crying, not because Israel is suffering, but because their government is making me suffer, because I am suffering. I am suffering because of what they came to convince me – we are not equal. We are equal as human beings but we are not equal on the scale of suffering, on the scale of government, on the scale of power. We [Palestinians] are the oppressed.

While emphasizing his role as advocate, Muhammad treated empathic listening as an inseparable part of his approach to advocacy – a strategic rationale for empathy. As he explained, “The main thing I realized in the coexistence sessions is not to be offensive all the time. If you’re offensive, then they’ll spend their time thinking of a comeback, being defensive. But when you reach their human side, then they listen and respect. A lot of arguments towards the end were just Israelis trying to listen.”

Strategically speaking, Muhammad valued international dialogue programs as opportunities to reach not only Israelis, but Jews in North America. He recounted a Jewish-American board member approaching him on a visit to a US Holocaust Memorial Museum:

She started crying and said I am so sorry for what my people are doing to your people, because it is so similar to what happened to us. This woman, a mother of

three children, who is proud that there is a Jewish state, apologized to me for what Israel is doing. What touches me is when people are outside their defense mechanism – when people are just passionate, and honest, and thinking in an unbiased way considering their backgrounds. [Her] parents went through the Holocaust, they were in Germany in World War II, they went through a lot, and when I see her apologizing to me, passionately, crying, that has a very big effect.

Another graduate, Jerias, also took pride in “the credibility that Seeds of Peace gave us, as Palestinians, in conservative Jewish surroundings. I don’t mean socially conservative, of course, but right-wing on Israel and Palestine.” He recalled a joint speaking tour with an Israeli graduate in Canada, in which they appeared at a synagogue and four different Jewish organizations, among other events:

I was able to say things that I would never have been able to say if I was not part of Seeds of Peace. I was very honest in my criticism of Israel, in a way that many Jewish people would have been offended, but Seeds of Peace [removed] the barrier between those people and me as a Palestinian, so that they opened their hearts and listened to what I had to say. And by the way, I know that it’s not their fault if they were offended, they don’t know any better. They don’t know what Israel does to Palestinians on a daily basis. And maybe being offended is the wrong word – maybe for them, it is more like being hurt.

Jerias evinced a high level of empathy for audiences towards whom other graduates, Israeli and Palestinian, often expressed resentment. Jerias reserved such resentment for Israeli policy, but in doing so, allowed a degree of “differentiation” of individuals and collective:

When I pass through Israeli checkpoints, or just moving through the West Bank and seeing what Israel has done to the West Bank, and seeing what they have done in Gaza, I can only feel resentment towards Israel as a State, and towards the people who through their silence have consented to these actions. Yes, there is the good, the bad and the ugly, but the Palestinian people on the street, the bad and the ugly is all that they see. And even someone like me, who has Israeli friends, I still feel great resentment towards the state of Israel for their actions in the West Bank and Gaza.

When asked if he expresses that resentment, he responded, “Well, I actually have many Israeli friends with whom I feel comfortable expressing that resentment.”

Jerias also distinguished between micro- and macro- in evaluating the effect of his advocacy. “I still have hope that SOP will have an effect,” he explained, “and I think that what we do is really good, but I don’t know how much it can affect the grand scheme.” Yet in contrast to advocates of the strict adversarial, collectivist approach, this group of graduates ascribed value in conflict transformation on an individual level – in terms of changing *perception*, i.e. changes in their own views and especially those of Israeli counterparts, and in terms of *empowerment*, i.e. the enhancement of their own skills and opportunities as advocates of the Palestinian perspective in Israeli and international forums. Despite universally shared disappointment that SOP/dialogue did not alter macro-realities, some Palestinian graduates valued the program and/or the field for altering Israeli and American perceptions of Palestinians and the conflict, or for assisting Palestinian alumni in improving their positions within the structure.

It is these aspects that proved crucial for Palestinian graduates in distinguishing dialogue from *tatbi’a*, and ultimately separating active adult graduates from the more numerous Palestinian alumni alienated from SOP or the general field. Those who defined SOP as normalization typically dismissed any changes in Israeli graduates’ perceptions as insufficient or disingenuous, and the empowerment of Palestinian graduates as co-optation. Those who advocated SOP participation, by contrast, cited evidence of transformation of others’ perceptions of Palestinians, especially as illustrated by Israelis choosing conscientious objection or Israelis (and Americans) engaging in political activism. In addition, they emphasized SOP’s role in providing bridges to professional opportunity for Palestinian graduates, and providing useful training and prominent platforms for asserting distinctly Palestinian visions of “humanization” and “peace.”

## CHAPTER SEVEN

# *Self-Determination: The Dilemma of Palestinian Citizens of Israel*

### Introduction: *The Peacemaker*

In 1998, SOP's *Olive Branch* youth news magazine received an unprecedented correspondence – a plea from a young woman who was not officially a “Seed of Peace.” “I feel so confused,” the author, Reem Masarwa, confessed in a letter entitled “Caught Between Worlds.” “As an Arab, Palestinian girl living in Israel,” she explained, “I find it interesting but also difficult to have two different sides to myself... Can these two worlds live together? Am I strange?” she asked, phrasing the dilemma of more than one million Palestinian citizens of Israel in terms of teen-aged angst about fitting in.<sup>537</sup> “I need someone to listen to me,” Reem wrote, likely hoping to find a sympathetic community at Seeds of Peace.

Reem directed her entreaty to the magazine's “Coexistence Hotline,” a “Dear Abby”-style advice column for SOP's rather esoteric niche market of adolescent peacemakers in regions of conflict. Her letter stood out in multiple respects. In previous “Hotlines,” Israeli and Palestinian graduates sought support from fellow “Seeds” in the face of criticism from others: family, friends, teachers. Reem, by contrast, described an internal

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<sup>537</sup> Reem Masarwa, “Caught Between Worlds,” in *The Olive Branch* 3, no.1 (Autumn 1998), 8. Reprinted in *The Olive Branch* 5, no. 1 (Winter 2000-2001). Available from "The Olive Branch Youth Magazine," *Seeds of Peace*, Accessed June 17, 2011, [http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/Winter2001\\_2.pdf](http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/Winter2001_2.pdf).

dialogue rather than external criticism. She illustrated the issue by simply surveying the contents of her own room:

If you enter my room, you can feel and see an amazing meeting between West and East, old and modern, Palestinian tradition and American culture. There are books in many languages, from many cultures... on the same shelf. And I love them all. The important thing is they are not fighting. Not in my room. They live in peace, with me and each other: Records of [Israeli Hebrew song collection] *Shalom, Chaver* are not shooting at those of [Lebanese Arabic singer] Fairuz, as in real life.<sup>538</sup>

Despite having no “SOP experience,” Reem echoed the aspirations for reconciliation and the sense of being “different” articulated by SOP graduates.

Previous “Hotline” columns, authored by SOP graduates from the Jewish-Israeli and OPT Palestinian majorities, featured difficulties encountered upon return from camp: textbook episodes of the “re-entry problem.”<sup>539</sup> Unlike those cases, Reem did not discover a dilemma in America; she was born into it. Israeli Jewish and OPT Palestinian “Seeds” faced issues stemming from their own conscious – and retractable – decisions to deviate from the national “ethos of conflict” and engage with “the other side”; safer options were always available to them.<sup>540</sup> Reem, however, did not create a conflict for herself; the conflict created her. As she explained, “On one hand, I am part of the Israeli society, and I carry an Israeli passport, but on the other hand I have a very strong connection to the Palestinians and all

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<sup>538</sup> *Shalom, Chaver* [English: *Goodbye/Peace, Friend*] is a pair of best-selling Hebrew song collections recorded jointly by leading Israeli pop artists in 1996, in the wake of the assassination of late Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by a right-wing Jewish extremist opposed to Rabin’s agreements with the PLO. The album, named after the closing words of US President Bill Clinton’s eulogy for Rabin, achieved iconic status in the Israeli “peace camp.” Fairuz is a renowned Lebanese singer who recorded dozens of best-selling Arabic albums, and is regarded as the second-most popular singer in the history of modern Arabic popular music (following Egypt’s Umm Kulthum). Among her iconic hits is a pair of dirges on the loss of Jerusalem recorded after the 1967 War, which earned the status of unofficial anthems of Arab and Palestinian nationalism. Palestinian delegations at SOP camp frequently elected to sing Fairuz’s *Zaharet Al-Mada’en* (“Flower of Cities”), one of her lamentations for Jerusalem, for their “cultural night” presentations at camp.

<sup>539</sup> On the “re-entry problem,” see Cohen and Kelman, “The Problem-Solving Workshop,” 83; Wallach, *The Enemy Has a Face*, 107.

<sup>540</sup> Bar-Tal, “Societal Beliefs in Times of Intractable Conflict.”

the Arabs.”<sup>541</sup> She did not need SOP to associate her with “the other side”; her identity card attached her, without further explanation, to both sides of the mutually exclusive Middle East equation.

As *Olive Branch* editor, I typically forwarded “Coexistence Hotline” entries to the full SOP graduate listserv, seeking responses for publication. In this case, however, a specific address leapt immediately to mind. I sent Reem’s letter directly to a fellow Palestinian citizen of Israel (PCI), Aseel ‘Asleh, a fifteen year-old SOP graduate from the Galilee town of ‘Arabeh. Having attended the previous two summer camp sessions (1997-98), Aseel was the most enthusiastic PCI graduate SOP had ever seen. The vast majority of Arab delegates from previous Israeli delegations had “dropped out” upon return from camp or soon after. Aseel, by contrast, eagerly joined SOP school presentations and exchanged repeated visits with Jewish and Arab friends, inviting them to his home in the North to break the Ramadan fast, and traveling for hours to attend a Jewish friend’s *Purim* holiday party in the southern city of Ashdod.<sup>542</sup> Indeed, Aseel attended so many such gatherings that his mother took to calling SOP staff whenever she lost track of her son’s whereabouts.

A self-described internet addict, Aseel was a prolific online correspondent; SOP co-founder Barbara Gottschalk credits him as the driving force behind SeedsNet, the program’s online dialogue forum.<sup>543</sup> Aseel’s e-mail missives ranged from typical “Seeds” chatter – birthday greetings, wisecracks, nostalgia for camp – to meditations on peace, conflict and identity. More than a social network, Aseel treated SOP as an intellectual community, even a

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<sup>541</sup> Masarwa, "Caught Between Worlds."

<sup>542</sup> Author was present at both occasions.

<sup>543</sup> Barbara Gottschalk, Interview by author, Washington, D.C., January 18, 2008. Indeed, an American counselor once jokingly claimed to have designed a software program called the “Aseel Avenger,” in order to protect his hard disk against overload due to barrages of e-mail from a certain camper. See Lazarus, "Jerusalem Diary."

spiritual home – a refuge from the daily alienation of feeling, in his words, “like I’m a stranger in this country.”<sup>544</sup> He internalized and personalized John Wallach’s rhetoric and the program’s mission, writing that, “‘Enemy’ is just a word everyone uses, an excuse for hate... I just want to change my world so that there’s no need for such a word.”<sup>545</sup> Aseel signed many of his communiqués simply as “The Peacemaker.”<sup>546</sup>

To the *Olive Branch* editors, Reem’s letter presented an opportunity for Aseel to gather sentiments he had scattered in diverse emails into a cohesive statement of purpose. He did not disappoint. Aseel began by addressing the primary theme of Reem’s letter, the PCI identity crisis. On this “national dilemma,” he echoed Reem’s key notes, juxtaposing emphatic pride in Arab and Palestinian identity with ambivalence toward Israeli citizenship and implicit protest of Israeli policy: “I’m an Israeli? So how come the word Arab is still there? I can never take the word Israeli off my passport, or the word Arab, which I feel proud of every time I hear it.” At the same time, Aseel echoed Reem’s referential acknowledgement of personal connections to Hebrew language, Israeli culture and society.

Yet rather than dwell on the content of “Arab,” “Palestinian” or “Israeli” *per se*, Aseel introduced a “human” element. Aseel used his column to critique the appropriation of identity by nation-states, portraying their boundaries and documents as artificial impositions. “When God first created this planet,” Aseel wrote, “we can see that He never created it with borders, He never used checkpoints between countries, and I don't remember Him giving us

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<sup>544</sup> Seeds of Peace, "A Tribute to Our Friend: Asel Asleh 1983-2000."

<sup>545</sup> Aseel 'Asleh, E-mail correspondence, January 28, 1998. Quoted in "Tribute to Asel Asleh," available at *Seeds of Peace*, Accessed May 12, 2010, <http://www.seedsofpeace.org/about/aseltribute>.

<sup>546</sup> Author's personal correspondence with Aseel 'Asleh; also quoted in Seeds of Peace, "A Tribute to Our Friend."

passports or ID's so we will be able to move freely."<sup>547</sup> With these references, Aseel added dimensions of agency and power to the discussion, subtly shifting the frame from cross-cultural conflict to a struggle for self-determination within a political context. He reframed the dilemma of Arabs in Israel as a question of collective identity *and* collective action, asking not only "who are we?" but "how can we change our situation?"

Core themes of SOP discourse – empowerment, humanization, leadership, transcendence – resounded in Aseel's narrative in an original and subversive manner, tailored to a minority's struggle against exclusion and discrimination. Aseel challenged Reem, and by implication the Palestinian citizens of Israel, to defy their dual marginalization, to assert themselves in both contexts, and in so doing to transform the categories that define the conflict and their second-class status within it:

You are between worlds, as you said. I don't agree that you are "caught". That looks like you don't want to be there, like these two worlds are leading you... We can't change what we are, but we can change the way that we live in already, we can take our lives in our hands once again, we can move from a position of a viewer of this game to a player. We are no more asked to watch; we can make a change. We don't have to be caught; we can lead these two worlds, and still keep everything we had... We are not asked to forget everything, we are just asked to deal with them differently. When your voice becomes a voice of a leader no one will care for your ID. You will be able to lead a place where an ID isn't needed, as well as passports or checkpoints.<sup>548</sup>

A tone of secure self-confidence, above all, set Aseel's statement apart from Reem's plea for external validation. Rather than see herself "Caught Between Worlds," Aseel's title exhorted Reem to "Lead Both Sides."

In conclusion, Aseel accentuated the theme of defying categorization with a quote inspired by the medieval Sufi poet Rumi: "A friend once told me, 'Out beyond ideas of

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<sup>547</sup> Aseel 'Asleh, "Lead Both Sides," in *The Olive Branch* 3 (1): Autumn 1998, 8. Reprinted in *The Olive Branch* 5, no. 1 (Winter 2000-2001). Available from "The Olive Branch Youth Magazine," *Seeds of Peace*, Accessed June 17, 2011, [http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/Winter2001\\_2.pdf](http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/Winter2001_2.pdf).

<sup>548</sup> Ibid.

right-doing and wrong-doing, there is a field. I'll meet you there.”<sup>549</sup> Aseel had adopted the “field” metaphor, which he first heard from SOP co-founder Barbara Gottschalk, as something of a personal motto. Earlier that year, he had invoked it in a compelling meditation on “Land Day,” the annual day of protest marked by Palestinian citizens of Israel in memory of six demonstrators killed by police in 1976, during mass protests against state confiscation of Arab-owned lands.<sup>550</sup> In a message entitled “Peaceful Thoughts,” Aseel sent a strikingly sober set of reflections to the SOP email list, again linking the dilemma of identity to the dilemma of action:

...What I learned back in camp was priceless; we were all the same, so nothing else mattered. But what I learned in camp only showed up here eight months later: today in *Yom El-Ard* [Land Day]. Today I will know what Seeds of Peace really gave me. I will know what to do when someone will call my [Jewish-Israeli] friends “killers” or “murderers.” No friend of mine is a killer, and I’m not a friend of one either.

Today I will be asked to choose between what they call “protecting and remembering” and between what they call “forgiving.” I will be asked to choose. And I will. Will my choice be the right choice, be the right thing to do, or will it be the wrong thing to do? Well a friend of mine once said “Out beyond ideas of right-doing and wrong-doing, there is a field. I’ll meet you there.” And I will be there, and I will see you when you get there. For the thoughts that are around me and the feelings that guard me, I will not forget a friend’s words, and I will remember his words, by making others remember mine.

I will go on. I will make this planet a better place to live and I will go on. For all the souls who only saw pain and sorrow in their eyes; for the souls who will never see

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<sup>549</sup> Ibid. The “friend” in question was SOP co-founder Barbara Gottschalk, who sent Aseel the quote in an email conversation. The quote can be found on thousands of internet sites, including “Tribute to Asel Asleh,” Accessed May 12, 2010, <http://www.seedsofpeace.org/about/aseltribute>. The full quote, inspired by the 12<sup>th</sup> century Sufi Muslim poet Mevlana Jalaladin Rumi, is, “Out beyond ideas of right-doing and wrong-doing, there is a field. I’ll meet you there. When the soul lies down in that grass, the world is too full to talk about. Ideas, language, even the phrase ‘each other’ don’t make any sense.” The language is American poet Coleman Barks’ Rumi-inspired “version” rather than a literal translation of the original. See Jalaladin Rumi, *The Essential Rumi*, trans. Coleman Barks and John Moyne (New York: Harper, 2004), 36. The literal translation from Rumi’s medieval Farsi is substantially different: “Beyond Islam and unbelief there is a ‘desert plain.’ For us, there is a ‘passion’ in the midst of that expanse. The knower [of God] who reaches there will prostrate [in prayer],/ (For) there is neither Islam nor unbelief, nor any ‘where’ (in) that place.” See “Corrections of Popular Versions,” available at *Dar Ul-Masnavi of the Mevlevi Order*, Accessed May 12, 2010, [http://www.dar-al-masnavi.org/corrections\\_popular.html#30](http://www.dar-al-masnavi.org/corrections_popular.html#30).

<sup>550</sup> See Abu-Baker and Rabinowitz, *Coffins on Our Shoulders*, 82-83.

the pain of another soul, I promise you I will go on. Until we meet in the field, my friend, take care.

For Aseel, the “field” might have evoked the green expanses in Maine where he gathered with friends, or the SOP community, the community to which he devoted so much time, from which he drew inspiration, and upon which he left an imprint like no other graduate.

His words took on fateful significance two years later. On October 2, 2000, seventeen year-old Aseel was shot dead by Israeli police in an olive grove near his Galilee home, on the sidelines of a violent confrontation between security forces and an enraged crowd of Arab youth. Eyewitness and police testimony indicate that Aseel was standing alone, away from the crowd, when officers chased him into the trees and shot him with live ammunition in the back of the neck.<sup>551</sup> Aseel was one of thirteen Palestinians killed that month in northern Israel, during a wave of protests, often escalating into riots, fueled by the eruption of the *intifada* in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. He was killed and buried wearing his green t-shirt from Seeds of Peace.<sup>552</sup> In his life, Aseel gave simultaneous expression to the struggle of Palestinian citizens of Israel and the humanizing ethos of Seeds of Peace. In the wake of his death, he has been invoked as a symbol of the power and the futility of both.

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<sup>551</sup> Author's interviews with 'Asleh family, photographs, doctor's report. See also "Arabeh - October 2, 2000," in Israel Supreme Court, "*Din Va-Khesbon: Va'adat Ha-Khakerab Ha-Mamlakhtit La-Birur Hitnagshuyot Bein Kokbot Ha-Bitakhon La-Vein Ezrakhim Yisraelim Ba-Oktobar 2000*," Accessed June 17, 2011, <http://elyon1.court.gov.il/heb/veadot/or/inside3.htm#d>. See items 48-62. For English, see "The Official Summation of the Or Commission Report, Item 47" *Haaretz*, September 2, 2003, Retrieved from *Adalah*, Accessed June 12, 2011, <http://www.adalah.org/features/commission/orreport-en.pdf>.

<sup>552</sup> Mass protests, sometimes leading to riots and violent confrontations with security forces, erupted on October 1, 2000 in dozens of Arab population centers in the Galilee and Triangle regions of Israel, and continued at varying intensities in different areas for nearly two weeks. Aseel was killed on October 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Lotem Junction, about 1 kilometer from his home in Arabeh, as was another youth, Alaa Nassar. Police and eyewitness testimony indicate that Aseel was alone, separate from the crowd, standing at substantial distance from the area of confrontation, when a group of police chased him into the olive grove, where he was shot with live ammunition in the back of the neck at point-blank range. Overall, 12 Arab citizens and 1 Gaza resident were killed by Israeli security forces; 1 Jewish citizen was killed by Arab rioters during the events. See Or Commission Report; see also *Adalah*, "Findings and Conclusions of *Adalah's* 'The Accused' Report," October 2006, Accessed June 17, 2011, <http://www.adalah.org/features/october2000/accused-s-en.pdf>.

This chapter will present the testimonies of PCI graduates on the impact of Seeds of Peace, highlighting their perspectives on the dual dilemmas raised by Reem and Aseel, the questions of collective identity and collective action. It will compare PCI graduates' experiences with Aseel's portrait of SOP as a place of equality, where "we were all the same," and describe their struggles to pursue that ideal in a reality where – as Aseel's death tragically illustrated – they are not.

The next section provides a review of the identity dilemmas of Palestinian citizens of Israel, informed by scholarship and SOP graduate experiences. The core of the chapter portrays the struggles of PCI participants to assert themselves within the microcosm of Seeds of Peace, and their evolution from the least to the most active group of SOP alumni in terms of post-camp peacebuilding, highlighting Aseel's role in modeling empowerment and transforming perceptions of Palestinian citizens of Israel within and beyond SOP. The chapter details the challenges of post-high school and post-October 2000 contexts for PCI graduates, and concludes with portraits of adult PCI graduates' involvement in peacebuilding in and outside of Seeds of Peace.

### Background and Literature

#### *Dilemma Part One: Who Are We?*

There's no question of if I'm an Arab or not. But the question is, am I a Palestinian, or an Israeli, and how much of one or the other. So when I came back [from SOP camp], I started asking my parents, who are we, where did we come from, and who are the Palestinians, and are we Israelis, and how did we get our IDs, and what's the relationship between the Arabs in Israel and the state of Israel. And I started talking to the other Palestinians in Israel who were part of Seeds of Peace, and it helped me understand what is my identity. And when I questioned my identity, it always came out in my political views in the dialogue.

– *Suzan*, PCI Graduate

According to Israel's 2011 census, one in five of Israel's 7.7 million citizens are of "Arab" nationality.<sup>553</sup> The same 1.5 million individuals represent a commensurate proportion of the Palestinian population of the Middle East, according to one scholarly estimate.<sup>554</sup> Questions of this group's demographic weight and national orientation have long been subjects of political preoccupation on both sides of the Green Line. Current Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu has previously described the growth of the country's Arab population as a "time bomb" that threatens to undermine the Jewish character of the state; the same fear has been expressed as a hope in Arab and Palestinian nationalist rhetoric.<sup>555</sup> Thus, even before they are born, Arab citizens of Israel are defined by competing nationalist projects, attached with labels and burdened with expectations that their loyalties might tip the balance of power in the conflict. This is somewhat ironic. As any survey of Israeli socioeconomic indicators or Middle East politics will reveal, it is only in rhetoric that this group has ever achieved such status and power.<sup>556</sup>

As a collective, despite "demographic weight" and decades of political participation, Palestinian citizens of Israel have scarcely been able to determine the budgets or borders of

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<sup>553</sup> Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, "63rd Independence Day - Approximately 7, 746,000 Residents in the State of Israel," Posted May 8, 2011, Accessed June 17, 2011, [http://www1.cbs.gov.il/www/hodaot2011n/11\\_11\\_101e.pdf](http://www1.cbs.gov.il/www/hodaot2011n/11_11_101e.pdf). This is not an exact figure, as the Central Bureau of Statistics estimate includes the 1967-occupied territories of East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, in which Arab residents are not citizens.

<sup>554</sup> Dan Rabinowitz, "The Palestinian citizens of Israel, the concept of trapped minority, and the discourse of transnationalism in anthropology", in *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 24, no. 1 (January 2004), 64-85. Rabinowitz estimates that Palestinian citizens of Israel comprise "About 18 percent of the population of Israel, and a similar proportion of the entire, scattered Palestinian people."

<sup>555</sup> Aluf Ben and Gideon Alon, "Netanyahu: Israel's Arabs are the Real Demographic Threat," *Haaretz*, January 18, 2003, Accessed May 21, 2010, <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/netanyahu-israel-s-arabs-are-the-real-demographic-threat-1.109045>. On demographic discourse among Palestinians in Israel, see Rhoda Kanaan, *Birthing the Nation: Strategies of Palestinian Women in Israel* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003).

<sup>556</sup> On the socioeconomic marginalization of Palestinian citizens of Israel, see Rabinowitz, "The Concept of Trapped Minority"; see also the National Committee for the Heads of the Arab Local Authorities in Israel, "The Future Vision of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel," 2006, Accessed June 17, 2011, <http://www.adalah.org/newsletter/eng/dec06/tasawor-mostaqbali.pdf>; also Or Commission Report; also Abu-Baker and Rabinowitz, *Coffins on Our Shoulders*.

their own municipalities or the content of their educational curricula, not to speak of government policy on the conflict.<sup>557</sup> Indeed, their political identity – or lack thereof – was defined by imposition. The armistice lines ending the 1948 War separated this “default community” of Palestinian Arabs, who managed to remain in their homeland, from more than 700,000 members of their families and communities – whose collective existence was thereafter defined by the status of exiled refugees.<sup>558</sup> As Rabinowitz explains, in spite of Israel’s extension of “formal citizenship including the right to vote and be elected, [Arabs in Israel] were now at the political, economic and administrative mercy of a regime they never chose. Relations with the mainstream of their people – the vast majority of Palestinians living outside the borders and control of Israel – were almost completely severed.”<sup>559</sup>

In its formative acts toward the 160,000 Arabs who remained in its territory, the nascent state of Israel made them voting citizens, but moved immediately to qualify their citizenship. For eighteen years, the Israeli government kept its Arab citizens under direct military administration, governing every aspect of civil liberty and socioeconomic development, thereby establishing separate and unequal spheres of citizenship for Jews and Arabs.<sup>560</sup> After abolishing the “military government” in 1966, the state maintained policies of land confiscation, discriminatory allocation of rights and resources, and surveillance by

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<sup>557</sup> See Ian Lustick, *Arabs in the Jewish State: Israel's Control of a National Minority* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1980); Majid Al-Haj, *Education, Empowerment and Control: The Case of the Arabs in Israel* (Albany: State University of New York, 1995); Abu-Baker and Rabinowitz, *Coffins on Our Shoulders*.

<sup>558</sup> “The Palestinian community in Israel was created in a ‘default’ process as a result of the cease-fire agreements between Israel and the Arab countries during 1948-49”; Irene Nasser, “Oral History and the Transmission of Memory Among Palestinian Citizens of Israel” (M.A. Thesis, American University, 2008), 5.

<sup>559</sup> Rabinowitz, “The Concept of Trapped Minority,” 74.

<sup>560</sup> Lustick, *Arabs in the Jewish State*; Rebecca Kook, *The Logic of Democratic Exclusion: African-Americans in the United States and Palestinian Citizens in Israel* (New York: Lexington Books, 2002); Shira Robinson, “Occupied Citizens in a Liberal State: Palestinians under Military Rule and the Colonial Formation of Israeli Society, 1948-1966” (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2005).

security services that Ian Lustick characterized in 1980 as a “system of control.”<sup>561</sup> In subsequent years, the relations of the state, the Jewish majority and the Arab minority have evolved in complex processes that cannot be simply characterized. Sociologists in the 1980s and 1990s described the Arab community in Israel undergoing simultaneous processes of “Israelization” and “Palestinization,” with steps toward incorporation and recognition in Israeli politics and society continually checked by widespread prejudice and entrenched patterns of exclusion.<sup>562</sup> The second-class status of Arab citizens, and its implications vis-à-vis Israel’s status as a democracy, are topics of contestation among contemporary scholars, who variously describe the situation as “democratic exclusion,” “ethnic democracy,” “hegemonic democracy,” “internal colonization” and “ethnocracy.”<sup>563</sup> Equality or integration, however, are terms that none choose to apply.

The situation of Palestinians in Israel does not fit typical paradigms of asymmetric majority-minority relations contained within a single political entity. Rabinowitz describes Palestinians in Israel as an archetypal “trapped minority,” a fragment of a “mother nation” whose population stretches across multiple states dominated by other national groups, in a manner akin to minorities “left behind” in enclaves of the former Yugoslavia, or Kurds straddling the border regions of Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey.<sup>564</sup> In this case, the intractable

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<sup>561</sup> Lustick, *Arabs in the Jewish State*.

<sup>562</sup> Sammy Smooha, "Index of Arab-Jewish Relations in Israel 2004," (Haifa: University of Haifa, 2005).

<sup>563</sup> See Yoav Peled and Doron Navot, "Ethnic Democracy Revisited: On the State of Democracy in the Jewish State," *Israel Studies Forum* 20, no. 1 (Summer 2005), 3-27. For specific advocates of each term, see (in order) Kook, *The Logic of Democratic Exclusion*; Sammy Smooha, "The Model of Ethnic Democracy: Israel as a Jewish and Democratic State," *Nations and Nationalism* 8, no. 4 (2002), 475-503; Ilan Peleg, *Democratizing the Hegemonic State: Political Transformation in the Age of Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Raef Zreik, "Why the Jewish State Now?," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 40, no. 3 (Spring 2011), 23; Oren Yiftachel, *Ethnocracy: Land and Identity Politics in Israel/Palestine* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

<sup>564</sup> Rabinowitz, "The Concept of Trapped Minority," 78. Rabinowitz identifies the following groups as “trapped minorities”: A non-comprehensive list would include Kurds in Turkey, Iran and Syria (their core group and national heartland being in Iraqi Kurdistan); pockets and enclaves of various elements of former Yugoslavia now trapped in the newly established independent states that have replaced the federation, such as

Israeli/Palestinian conflict amplifies the sense of entrapment, as expressed by a Palestinian member of the Israeli parliament: “I am in a tragic situation, whereby my country is at war with my people.”<sup>565</sup> As Rabinowitz explains, Palestinian citizens of Israel are “marginal twice over,” within Israel and their Palestinian mother nation:

Unlike... ‘simple’ national minorities, trapped minorities may find their credentials within their mother nations are devalued. Their residence, acculturation and formal citizenship in a state dominated by an alien hegemony implicates them. Thus, the Palestinian citizens of Israel, labeled ‘Arabs’ or ‘Palestinians’ by Israelis, are equally suspect for Palestinians and Arabs abroad due to their citizenship of and general association with Israel.

Seen from the Arab world, the Palestinian citizens of Israel emerge as an ambiguous and problematic element whose status in the national arena is yet to be determined, and whose very loyalty to the Palestinian nation might still be suspect. Israel’s willingness, where it exists, to integrate its Palestinian citizens into economic, political and social life, might in fact further reduce their chances of clarifying their credentials in the eyes of Palestinians generally. In the 1960s and 1970s... the Palestinian citizens of Israel were treated by the exiled Palestinian leadership as a self-seeking, spoilt collective, collaborating with the Zionist occupation of the homeland. Paradoxically, the very contingent of Palestinians that managed to remain in situ in the homeland found itself physically disconnected and morally excommunicated from the centre of gravity of national crystallization.

For Palestinian citizens of Israel, their pursuit of the classic political needs of a minority – preservation of authentic identity and achievement of social and political equality – are often treated as mutually exclusive, subversive objectives by the Israeli and Palestinian majorities.

In interviews, numerous PCI graduates of Seeds of Peace described this existential Catch-22, and its effect on their sense of self. As one graduate explained, “The Jewish-Israeli

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Kosovar Albanians within Serbia; Muslims in various parts of the Balkan, notably Turks in the north east of Bulgaria and Pomaks across the border between Bulgaria and Greece; Russians in the Baltics, the Caucasus and Trans-Caucasus who, after the demise of the Soviet Empire have found themselves entrapped between their familial roots in the newly independent non-Russian republics and their ancient national affinity with Russia; Armenians in Azerbaijan, Ukrainians in Siberia or Kazakhs in Uzbekistan; There were Hungarians in post-World War I Slovakia and Romania; Sudeten Germans between the wars and after 1945; Catholics in (British) Northern Ireland; Protestants in a future united Ireland; a variety of groups in Africa and South-East Asia following the establishment of new nation-states such as the Tutsi in Ruanda, the Hutu in Burundi, the Malays of Southern Thailand and many more.”

<sup>565</sup> Rabinowitz, “The Concept of Trapped Minority,” 73.

[population], if I say I'm Palestinian, they get pissed off. But if I tell them I'm an equal Israeli as them, they get pissed off too. So you don't know what you are." Another graduate described a constant sense of potentially being caught in the crossfire: "I mean, if I'm with the Israelis, it could be them killing my relatives in the West Bank, and if I'm with the Palestinians, they could be killing me in bombings... So it's very confusing, definitely." In the 21st century, the conflict has caused significant numbers of civilian casualties in Israel, victims of indiscriminate attacks such as suicide bombings and rocket fire. This has increased the exposure of Palestinian citizens of Israel, who were previously the group least likely to be on the "front lines" in a military sense.<sup>566</sup> One PCI graduate, while working at SOP camp during the 2006 Lebanon War, described feelings of simultaneous anger at Israeli attacks, and fear from Arab attacks:

I was always... so much against the Israelis invading Lebanon and what they were doing, but when rockets started falling on [my city in Israel], I was so upset, I was so afraid, people are dying, it could be my parents, and there was no one I could talk to. The Palestinians didn't understand why I was so upset with [Hezbollah leader] Nasrallah, because the rockets are against Israel so they're good, you know. But not for me. [At first], I was saying the war is good, and Nasrallah keep it coming, and the same day there were Arabs killed in [my city], and I said, yeah, it could be your parents, so keep it coming?

Violent escalations of conflict typically solidify the social and psychological borders between rival identity groups; for Palestinian citizens of Israel, however, escalation emphasizes that the border runs right through them.

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<sup>566</sup> The vast majority of Palestinian citizens of Israel are exempted from service in the IDF by both IDF policy and choice. There are two exceptional groups; males of the minority Druze religious sect, 9% of the Arab population, who are subject to the draft, and Bedouin, among whom roughly half of young men choose to serve. Christian and Muslim Palestinian citizens are not subject to the draft and, with a very few exceptions, do not serve and condemn any members of their community who do. See Rhoda Kanaaneh, "'Embattled Identities: Palestinian Soldiers in the Israeli Military'", *Journal of Palestine Studies* 32, no.3 (Spring 2003), 5-20.

*Labels and Loyalties: Arab, Palestinian, Israeli*

Even in more peaceful times, mundane aspects of PCI identity remain controversial. In *The Olive Branch*, Aseel 'Asleh wrote that as a Palestinian citizen of Israel, "Simple questions like 'Where do you come from?' and 'where do you live?' are the same questions that build homes and countries."<sup>567</sup> The most basic terms of reference for this minority remain subjects of contestation among and between Arabs, Israelis, Palestinians, and Palestinian citizens of Israel. They are a group called by many names, by others and themselves. In Israeli state discourse, they are referred to as "the Arab sector," "the minorities," or "Arab citizens," terms emphasizing separateness, minority status and qualified citizenship, but often not full "Israeli" identity and nothing "Palestinian." The discomfort of Israeli Jews with Palestinian identity is replicated in colloquial Hebrew, where Palestinian citizens are referred to as "Arabs," "Israeli Arabs," or, "the Arabs of Israel."

This elision of Palestinian identity is often paradoxically emphasized in Israeli Jews' attempts to advocate equality or express esteem towards Arab citizens. One Jewish-Israeli SOP graduate, while on a condolence visit to the 'Asleh family, expressed surprise that they referred to Aseel as a Palestinian, stating that, "for me, Aseel is an Israeli just like me."<sup>568</sup> Another PCI graduate recalled going through lengthy discussions with a Jewish co-worker, who meant to pay him the highest respect by stating, "We are no different – you are Israeli just like me." In right-wing Israeli rhetoric, on the other hand, Arab citizens are perennially assailed as a "fifth column," inherently disloyal, potential or actual enemies of the State.<sup>569</sup>

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<sup>567</sup> Aseel 'Asleh, "Lead Both Sides."

<sup>568</sup> Author's personal observation.

<sup>569</sup> Amnon Meranda, "Lieberman to Zahalka: We'll Make Sure You End Up Where You Deserve," *Ynetnews*, Posted February 24, 2008, Accessed June 17, 2011, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3510477,00.html>; Abir Kopty, "Fifth Column Forever?", *Ynetnews*, Posted April 4, 2007, Accessed June 17, 2011, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3385477,00.html>.

Such suspicion is deeply rooted in state policy. Israel's formative leader, David Ben-Gurion, instructed his first Advisor on Arab Affairs to design state policy with a suspicious eye toward Arab citizens, saying, "Judge them not according to what they have done, but what [damage] they could do."<sup>570</sup>

In the Arab world, Palestinian citizens of Israel are popularly referred to as "1948 Arabs" or "the Inside Arabs," terms which, in order to avoid mention of Israel, leave its Arab citizens frozen in time or lost in space.<sup>571</sup> When OPT Palestinians express solidarity with Palestinian citizens of Israel, the wider Arab terms are often simply adapted to affirm Palestinian identity, as in "the Inside Palestinians" or "1948 Palestinians."<sup>572</sup> In pejorative comments, OPT Palestinians mimic Israeli discourse, calling the PCI minority "the Arabs of Israel" or most disparagingly, "the Arabs of *shamenet*," equating them with a creamy Israeli dairy product.<sup>573</sup> The latter term carries connotations of co-optation, expressing OPT Palestinian resentment of the supposed passivity and luxury of Arab life in Israel.

At SOP, many PCI graduates – even those who identified adamantly as Palestinian – recalled having few OPT Palestinian friends, and feeling degrees of social distance from OPT Palestinians. One PCI graduate, *Fat'bi*, who stood with the Palestinian delegation for flag-raising and attended Palestinian rather than Israeli delegation meetings, explained that his assertions of Palestinian identity still met with skepticism: "The Palestinians didn't know who I am. They didn't really show any interest in a Palestinian who lives in Israel, who has

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<sup>570</sup> Lustick, *Arabs in the Jewish State*.

<sup>571</sup> Zvi Barel, "Just Who Are These 1948 Arabs?", *Haaretz*, August 16, 2005, Accessed June 17, 2011, <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/features/just-who-are-these-1948-arabs-1.167007>.

<sup>572</sup> Muhammad Amara, *Politics and Sociolinguistic Reflexes: Palestinian Border Villages* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1999).

<sup>573</sup> David Grossman, *Sleeping on a Wire: Conversations with Palestinians in Israel*, trans. Haim Watzman (New York: Picador, 1993, 2003), 32. In the 2009 feature film *Ajami*, a film produced and acted primarily by and about Palestinian citizens of Israel, an OPT Palestinian character expresses disgust to another OPT Palestinian with the statement, "You know collaborators? They're even worse, these Arabs of Israel." (Scandar Copti and Yaron Shani, directors, *Ajami*, Jaffa: Noga, 2009).

an Israeli passport.”<sup>574</sup> Another PCI graduate related this distance to his acceptance of aspects of the Jewish-Israeli historical narrative, saying, “When we sit with the Palestinians... we are considered as people who understand the Israeli Jewish side much more than they do... people who believe in the Holocaust and in the Jewish experience... and its importance more than Palestinians do believe and would like us to believe in it.” Numerous PCI graduates related that the alleged comfort of their lives in Israel, compared to the stark suffering of OPT Palestinians, left them considered less authentically Palestinian:

When I was at camp in 2002, and there were Palestinians (from the OPT) in the group, I felt less Palestinian. We laughed about – I’m Palestinian, but not kosher Palestinian [*kasher, ya’ni*], that is not 100% Palestinian. Especially in Seeds, I saw that, the Palestinian identity, the more you suffer, and the more you have horror stories about the occupation and everything, then you are more Palestinian. The Palestinians who come from Jenin [refugee] camp, they are more Palestinian. [To] the Palestinians that come from Haifa, they say “what do you know?” Even the Palestinians say “you have a very good life, and what are you complaining about?” Even when we are in the dialogue, when they are talking about checkpoints, and the Palestinians from Israel say that there is racism against Palestinians in Israel, you feel that there is no place for your “suffering.”

The same graduate explained that in dialogue sessions, she continually felt distanced from whichever group was dominant, saying, “When I am with an Israeli group, I feel more Palestinian, and when I am with a Palestinian group, I feel more Israeli.”

One PCI participant, *Abeer*, recalled the evolution of her identity in the context of a relationship with an OPT Palestinian friend from Seeds of Peace. In her first summer at camp, Abeer identified herself as Israeli, something that her OPT Palestinian friend *Shadia* seemed to accept. On the eve of the *intifada*, however, that changed. At an SOP seminar in the West Bank, Shadia held a private “screening” of nationalist videos in her room. The videos climaxed with a montage of graphic images of Palestinian casualties set to the “Arab

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<sup>574</sup> The same graduate noted that when he persisted, he eventually received a much warmer welcome at Palestinian delegation meetings, and expressed retrospective gratitude to the Palestinian delegation leaders and participants who affirmed his identity at the time—though he could not remember any of their names.

Dream,” a popular song calling for Arab unity against Israel.<sup>575</sup> At the conclusion of the song, Abeer found herself the focus of her friend’s anger:

Me and [Shadia] went to the first camp together, and she knew that I have said that I was an Israeli. And in [the workshop]... we had those rooms, and there was this song, this Arabic song... this national song, with all the pictures and everything, and every time I saw that video I had to cry, and I was very upset, and she said that I should be ashamed, that I’m an Israeli anyway, why am I pretending to be a Palestinian, that I should go to hell, and I remember crying like crazy... She told me that she felt that I was ashamed for the Arab community because I said I was Israeli.

Some time later, the same graduate expressed an evolution towards Palestinian identification in the *Olive Branch*, writing that, “I am a Palestinian, although I don’t remember my parents ever telling me that I am Palestinian, this is who I am, who I’ll always be.”<sup>576</sup> She described the process in simple terms of recognizing her authentic history and culture, rather than the conflict: “It took me a while to understand what was there all along: one of those moments when you think of history and who are the people with whom you share the same background and things you can’t put into words.” In her interview for the dissertation, Abeer also recounted a close Jewish-Israeli friend responding initially with anger and suspicion towards her increasing Palestinian identification.<sup>577</sup>

Thus, Palestinian citizens of Israel are necessarily conscious of the potential implications of their terms of self-reference. Some terms acknowledge an Israeli aspect of identity, such as “Arab-Israeli,” “Palestinian-Israeli,” or the all-inclusive “Palestinian Arab-Israeli.”<sup>578</sup> Other options minimize connection to Israel, employing *in* rather than *of* in order

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<sup>575</sup> Robert Fisk, “The Arab Dream Has Become a Nightmare,” *Independent.ie*, March 18, 2011, Accessed June 17, 2011, <http://www.independent.ie/opinion/analysis/robert-fisk-the-arab-dream-has-become-a-nightmare-2560178.html>.

<sup>576</sup> I omit the specific source for the sake of anonymity.

<sup>577</sup> It is also worth noting that she remains friends with both of them, the Palestinian and the Jewish-Israeli, ten years later.

<sup>578</sup> Bashar Iraqi, “Arab, Palestinian, Israeli - and a Peacemaker,” *The Olive Branch*, Winter 2002-03, Accessed June 20, 2011, [http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/winter2002\\_3.pdf](http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/winter2002_3.pdf).

to portray location rather than belonging – e.g. “Arabs *in* Israel” or “Palestinians *in* Israel.” These formulations are sometimes employed deliberately in order to omit the word “citizen,” in a form of semantic protest.<sup>579</sup> In recent decades, Palestinian scholar Nadim Rouhana and Jewish-Israeli scholar Sammy Smooha have conducted surveys of the self-identification of Palestinian citizens of Israel, and often reached strikingly different findings and interpretations of each other’s findings.<sup>580</sup> Specific results aside, the form and content of their research demonstrates a variety and a fluidity of self-identification, indicating that the popularity of terms has changed in response to political context.<sup>581</sup> Both scholars agree, however, that “the Palestinian component [of identity] is the important one, and it has strengthened since 1967.”<sup>582</sup> In 2004, Smooha found 54% of respondents including the term “Palestinian” in their self-descriptions, while only 30% included “Israeli.”<sup>583</sup>

Though the present study never raised this issue directly, several PCI interviewees described undergoing a progression of increased Palestinian identification in recent years. As one graduate, *Irsan*, said, “I think I probably called myself Arab-Israeli, then [at camp]. But we all did... In the early 1990s, a lot of the Arabs in Israel called themselves Arab-Israelis, and it’s changed a lot recently... now they call themselves more Palestinian or Palestinian-

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<sup>579</sup> Sabri Jiryis, *The Arabs in Israel* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1977).

<sup>580</sup> Smooha finds greater acceptance of Israeli components of identity, while Rouhana finds any Israeli connections “weak, instrumental and non-emotional for the Arab citizen” (quoted in Smooha, “Index of Arab-Jewish Relations 2004.”) Their respective findings cannot be separated from methodological politics. In Rouhana’s research, Palestinian and Israeli identity variables are treated as mutually exclusive, while in Smooha’s surveys, these identities can coexist—approaches reflective of the authors’ ideological commitments. See Nadim Rouhana, *Palestinian Citizens in an Ethnic Jewish State: Identities in Conflict* (Yale University Press, 1997); Sammy Smooha, “Index of Arab-Jewish Relations 2003-2009,” Haifa University, 2010, Accessed June 20, 2011, [http://soc.haifa.ac.il/~s.smooha/uploads/editor\\_uploads/files/IndexOfArabJewishRelations2003\\_2009.pdf](http://soc.haifa.ac.il/~s.smooha/uploads/editor_uploads/files/IndexOfArabJewishRelations2003_2009.pdf).

<sup>581</sup> In terms of variety, it is revealing that Smooha does not find a majority identifying by any of the specific terms—although majorities include the terms “Arab” and/or “Palestinian.” See Smooha, “Index of Arab-Jewish Relations 2004.”

<sup>582</sup> See Smooha, “Index of Arab-Jewish Relations 2004,” 45.

<sup>583</sup> In the 2004 “Index of Jewish-Arab Relations,” Smooha found “Palestinian Arab in Israel” the most popular identification at 38%, with “Israeli Arab” second at 23%. Overall, 54% included the term “Palestinian” while 30% of respondents included the term “Israeli.” 52% employed the “Arab/Palestinian *in* Israel” formulation and 18% identified as Arab, Palestinian or Palestinian Arab with no reference to Israel.

Israelis.” And indeed, all PCI interviewees for this study identified clearly as Palestinian.

This basic agreement on the label “Palestinian” did not translate into agreement, however, on political orientation toward Israel. As one graduate, *Tawfiq*, explained, PCI participants “were not a group that [was] very unified... everyone was Palestinian in opinion, [but] some were very pro-Palestinian, some were less, some were in the middle... everyone said that they understood the Israeli side, [but] very few of us actually agreed with the Israeli side.” Tawfiq measured the depth of Palestinian-ness in terms of political stances on conflict issues, and specifically in opposition to a PCI counterpart from Seeds of Peace:

[Other PCI graduate] is the very very Palestinian side of the story and I’m the less Palestinian... That means, for example, that speaking realistically, I know that the refugees will never return to Israel. They should return to Palestine if they want, and... what they should get, is financial and employment and living places help, not specifically from Israel but Israel and financial American aid. [Other PCI graduate] would say that we wouldn’t agree to a solution without the refugees returning to Israel, for example... When I finished my [Bachelor’s degree]... I was one of the people who said, I am still living in this country and out of respect for the country and the university I studied in I would stand for the national anthem, I would not sing; [other PCI graduate] would say, [I will not just] pretend to leave for the bathroom but I will deliberately sit during the national anthem.

Another graduate framed both his Palestinian identity and Israeli citizenship in ambivalent, *de facto* terms, as if anticipating a hostile response: “I am Israeli politically, because I live in Israel – but if you ask me, I am Palestinian, my genes are Palestinian. I am Palestinian not because I chose to be Palestinian, it’s just who I am. You don’t need to get pissed off.”

### Graduate Testimonies

#### *Palestinian Citizens of Israel in SOP: Transformation from Within*

Despite differences in their personal responses, PCI interviewees all spoke clearly of SOP as a challenging but productive forum in which to confront the identity dilemma. In the

words of one PCI graduate, “It was the first time I was put in a situation where I had a right to frame my opinions, and to reflect on where I’m coming from, and what is... When I first went to Seeds of Peace, it was the beginning of my political formation.” Another active graduate, *‘Ali*, explained:

I feel strongly devoted to my cause as a Palestinian fighting for his people, and I explored many of the fields of my identity and my needs as a Palestinian living in Israel through Seeds of Peace. As a minority in Israel, my leaders never provided these things for me, I was trying to search for answers for the questions that I have in different ways... I gained more in camp, and after camp, than I gained in any other place. And it’s not about knowing who I am. It’s about even shaping the identity itself, and to be strong about saying, this is who I am, this is what I am, this is why I call myself this way, and this is how I want to be, this is who I want to be.

His comments are remarkable, in light of the historical experience of Palestinian citizens of Israel in Arab-Jewish encounter programs in Israel, and specifically at Seeds of Peace.

Indeed, Palestinian intellectuals in Israel viewed Arab-Jewish encounter programs with a critical eye long before October 2000. Writing in the early 1990s, Abu-Nimer alleged the Israeli Ministry of Education used its leverage over encounter programs to suppress expressions of Palestinian identity by Arab students, aiming to harness encounters for the production “a co-opted Arab elite, educated through training to avoid political confrontation and conflict issues.”<sup>584</sup> When operating under the aegis of the MOE, Abu-Nimer argued, encounter programs functioned as part of the Israeli government’s “control system” over the Arab minority.<sup>585</sup> Echoing this critique in a history of Palestinian citizens of Israel, Abu-Baker and Rabinowitz wrote that these encounters “reinforced the cultural and political dominance of Israelis, highlighting [PCI participants’] alienation and marginalization,” leading many Palestinian teachers to see “the coexistence project as a political trap.”<sup>586</sup>

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<sup>584</sup> Abu-Nimer, *Dialogue, Conflict Resolution and Change*, 161.

<sup>585</sup> Ibid; see also Lustick, *Arabs in the Jewish State*.

<sup>586</sup> Abu-Baker and Rabinowitz, *Coffins on Our Shoulders*, 87

At the same time, Abu-Nimer did not dismiss the value of Arab-Jewish dialogue *per se*; to the contrary, he argued that effectively designed encounters are an “essential necessity... in a context where negative and destructive interaction overwhelms day-to-day interaction.”<sup>587</sup> Citing the apolitical, asymmetrical designs of Ministry of Education programs as critical flaws, Abu-Nimer advocated an alternative encounter model aimed at increasing participants’ awareness and critical thinking on the conflict, and empowering them to challenge both intergroup prejudices and asymmetrical power relations.<sup>588</sup>

For Palestinian citizens of Israel, Seeds of Peace has embodied both the negative and positive aspects of Abu-Nimer’s framework. In its early years, the program reflected precisely the sort of environment that Abu-Nimer warned against, in great part due to the role of the Israeli Ministry of Education. The persistent efforts of a group of PCI participants, however, eventually pushed the program significantly in the direction of Abu-Nimer’s vision of education for conflict transformation.

### *Second-Class Seeds? PCI in the Early Years of SOP*

I feel like with the Arab-Israelis they just kind of threw them in there with the mix, and didn’t really know how to deal with them. You’re leaving kids, and they’re not adults, in this awkward situation, learning how to deal with something that they don’t even know how to. And they have no one talk to, they have no one to help them with the situation, and you’re just kind of like “oh wow we’re making peace and we’re perfect and everything is nice, look at our beautiful yearbook.”

– *Irsan*, PCI graduate

Palestinian citizens of Israel have faced challenges of a different order than any other participant group at Seeds of Peace. For years, the organization did not recognize them as a

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<sup>587</sup> Abu-Nimer, *Dialogue, Conflict Resolution and Change*, 165-66.

<sup>588</sup> *Ibid.*

group at all, but as individual members of the Israeli delegation – a structural factor that reinforced their minority status at every turn, beginning even before arrival at camp.<sup>589</sup> Their Israeli and Palestinian majority counterparts competed in selection processes and attended preparatory seminars in their native languages. PCI minority participants did so in their second language, Hebrew. In the Israeli and OPT Palestinian pre-camp preparatory seminars, the respective Ministries of Education practiced national anthems, invited lecturers and simulated debates with “the other side,” reinforcing the collective identities and historical narratives of the 30-40 Israeli and Palestinian majority delegates. The few PCI members of Israeli delegations were instead confronted with their own lack of any unified identity, narrative, or positive recognition in the eyes of the Jewish majority or the Israeli state. One PCI graduate characterized the Israeli Ministry of Education's delegation preparation seminars as "one of the hardest times in Seeds of Peace":

“It's more or less the worst situation for most of the Arabs in Israel. In camp, you're surrounded by first of all a neutral environment which you don't have [at the seminar], second [at camp] you're surrounded by a lot of Arabs which you do not have [at the seminar] and third, in camp you can say whatever you want ... In the seminars it was not exactly that way. First of all it's not a neutral environment... you're not surrounded by counselors or PS's, you have the Ministry of Education representatives that are very likely not there to support you but more to support the Ministry or the country or their job... all the Arab [delegates] there were six probably max per camp or even less so. It's not a very friendly place for us to be in.”

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<sup>589</sup> At least two other US-based encounter programs, Building Bridges for Peace and Artsbridge, treat Palestinian citizens of Israel as a distinct group. At these programs, they represent a higher proportion of all campers, and as a group receive equal status and independent space for uni-national discussion. Sources: Author's interview with Melodye Feldman, Founder, Building Bridges for Peace (telephone), December 19, 2007; Author's interview with Deb Nathan, Founder and Director, Artsbridge, Cambridge, Massachusetts, April 20, 2010.

On the way to camp, security screeners at Israel's Ben-Gurion Airport invariably waved Jewish delegates forward, while singling out Arab delegates for questioning and searches.<sup>590</sup>

The extra questions only began there.

On the first morning of camp, the flag-raising ceremony defined Palestinian citizens of Israel squarely outside the nation-state norm, with no flag to raise and no anthem to sing.<sup>591</sup> As one PCI graduate recalled, "I had nowhere to go and no one to talk to... we were like kids there, looking for their parents, and everyone found their parents and I couldn't find mine." Many PCI participants stood with the Israeli delegation – at the time, the only faces they recognized in the entire camp – without singing the Israeli anthem, which opens with the words, "As long as in the innermost heart, a Jewish soul yearns..."<sup>592</sup> Others stood with no one and sang nothing.<sup>593</sup> There were no choices without a price. Many campers from the Palestinian and Arab delegations were scandalized at the sight of Arabs willing to stand under the Israeli flag; Jewish-Israeli campers were equally shocked to discover Israeli citizens who wouldn't. For PCI participants, the opening rites of camp typically exposed them to

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<sup>590</sup> In one instance, a Jewish-Israeli graduate recalled witnessing this process as sparking awareness of discrimination against Arab citizens, writing that, "It was the night of our departure to camp... Aseel was next to me in the security check. We were all asked to open our bags, but since Aseel was Arab, it was more complicated. The security man looked into his suitcase and made a mess, and I remember not really understanding while my mom felt really sorry for this kid who she had never met before. Aseel wasn't saying anything; maybe he was used to it. I wasn't." See Seeds of Peace, "A Tribute to Our Friend." On the treatment of Arab citizens at Ben-Gurion airport, see Tomer Zarchin, "High Court: Explain Why Arabs Discriminated Against By Airport Security," *Haaretz*, March 7, 2011, Accessed June 20, 2011, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/national/high-court-explain-why-israeli-arabs-discriminated-against-by-airport-security-1.347717>.

<sup>591</sup> See chapter four.

<sup>592</sup> See Gadi Benmark, "Hatikva in Arabic?," *Haaretz*, February 1, 2008, Accessed June 21, 2011, <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/opinion/hatikva-in-arabic-1.238451>.

<sup>593</sup> Among interviewees, only one PCI participant chose to stand with the Palestinian delegation. While many PCI graduates identify with the Palestinian flag, the words of the Palestinian anthem were unknown to all my interviewees as teenagers, including this graduate, who recalled stumbling over everything except the chorus.

pressure from their own delegation leaders, suspicion from Arab and Jewish cohorts, and well-meaning incomprehension from most American staff.<sup>594</sup>

As camp progressed, all participants were required to communicate in English – a second language for the Israeli and Palestinian majorities, a third for the teen-aged Palestinian citizens of Israel. More daunting than language itself was what PCI youth needed to express. They themselves had no consensus on their identity; some identified themselves as “Arab-Israeli,” others as “Palestinian,” others as all of the above. Neither did they find a safe space at camp to discuss this issue with each other. Israeli Ministry of Education officials, with few exceptions, openly discouraged Palestinian identification by Arab delegates, in some cases threatening to inform Israel’s internal security apparatus about delegates who insisted on asserting Palestinian identity. In “coexistence sessions,” if PCI campers offered opinions during heated debates on the conflict, they were invariably greeted with questions of their loyalty from both Arabs and Jews. “Who is the enemy for you?” a PCI graduate recalled being asked pointedly by a Jewish-Israeli in one dialogue session; later, a Palestinian participant demanded of her, “You have to choose.” It is not surprising, in retrospect, that many chose not to speak in dialogue at all.<sup>595</sup>

PCI participants equally enjoyed the “camp” side of the program – art, friends, sport. One graduate, despite having cut ties with SOP after high school, acknowledged forming lifelong friendships at camp. The experience, in her words, was “fun, interesting... a lot of cool people... beautiful,” in every facet that didn’t involve official identity. But “respect” for

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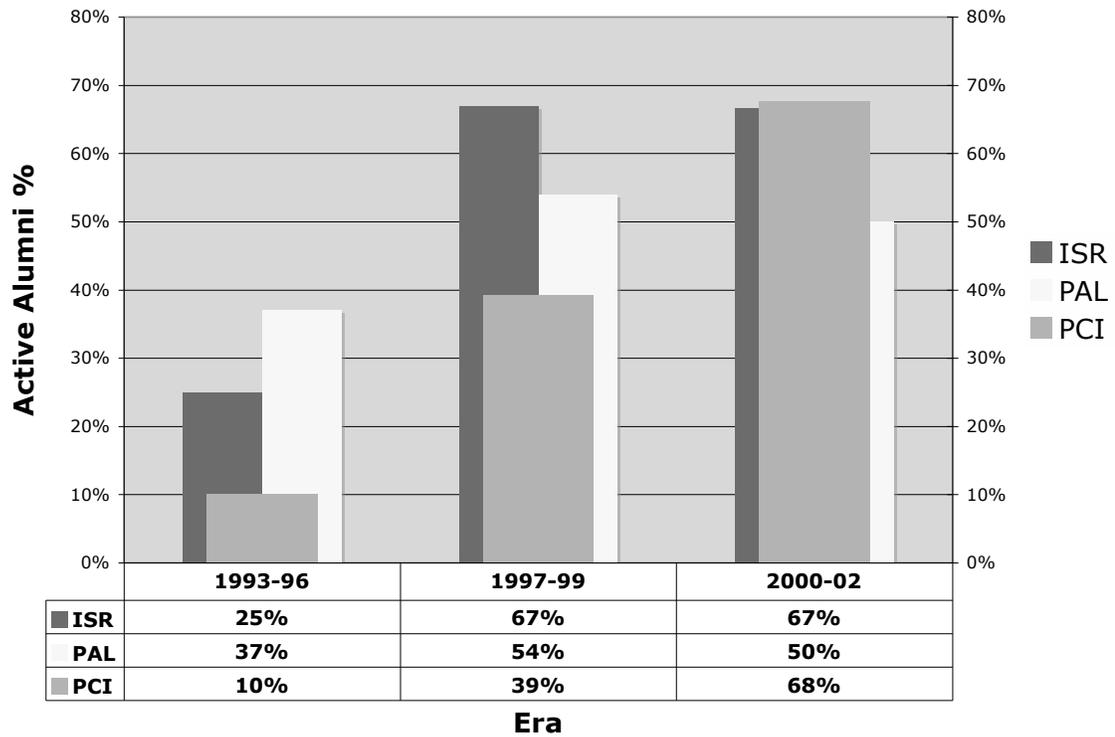
<sup>594</sup> It is important to note that Israeli delegation leaders varied in their responses to PCI delegates on the issue; some were understanding of abstention from the anthem, others markedly less so.

<sup>595</sup> An adult PCI graduate who facilitated at camp noted the silence of PCI campers in her dialogue group: “In the delegation meetings and the preparation seminar, there is always ‘you are supposed to represent Israel, you are Israeli,’ and they don’t talk in dialogues! I was facilitating, and they didn’t talk, and I asked why and they told me if we say anything, we are afraid the Jews will tell the delegation leaders, and they will send us home.”

state-defined identity left PCI participants doubly disadvantaged, as reflected in the “sovereignty” of the Israeli MOE over Arab-Israeli delegates, and the designation of the PNA as the sole legitimate representative of Palestinian identity. In terms of conditions essential to successful intergroup contact – equality of status, validation of identity – the early years at SOP were a worst-case scenario for Palestinian citizens of Israel.<sup>596</sup>

The results are reflected in my findings on follow-up activity. As Table 6.1 illustrates, PCI graduates participated less than Jewish-Israelis and OPT Palestinians for the program’s first years. These results affirm with what theories would predict: Treated as outliers at camp, these PCI graduates remained outliers, with few exceptions, in follow-up participation.

Table 6.1. Active 1<sup>st</sup> Year Participation by Nationality and Era (emphasis on PCI graduates)



<sup>596</sup> Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*; Pettigrew, “Intergroup Contact Theory.” See also Maddy-Weitzman, “Waging Peace in the Holy Land.”

However, as the figure also indicates, PCI graduates did not remain marginal. Their follow-up activity increased substantially over time, and in 2000-02 actually outstripped that of their majority counterparts. What explains this dramatic change? The remainder of this chapter will explore the process by which this group, outnumbered and uniquely disadvantaged in the program, became empowered. It will begin by examining the influence of external structural factors, which grant a partial explanation.

#### *Internal Empowerment in SOP: External Structural Factors*

The outbreak of the second *intifada* contributed in significant ways to the surge of PCI participation in 2000-02. New conditions dictated by the escalation of the conflict dramatically altered the place of the PCI minority in the program. Daily violence in the West Bank and Gaza brought an abrupt halt to any cross-checkpoint travel by Israeli graduates, while OPT Palestinian graduates were barred from Israel by increased IDF restrictions on their movement, and discouraged by a rising tide of popular opposition to *tabi'a*.<sup>597</sup> As a result, the SOP follow-up program shifted focus to joint activities involving Arab and Jewish citizens of Israel. Cross-conflict home visits and school presentations moved inside the Green Line, and SOP dialogue groups began meeting regularly near PCI population centers in the Galilee, Haifa and the Triangle, rather than distant Jerusalem.<sup>598</sup>

Additionally, both Israeli and Palestinian Ministries of Education withdrew from selection of SOP campers in 2001, creating an unprecedented situation at camp. The Haifa

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<sup>597</sup> See chapter six.

<sup>598</sup> For Palestinian SOP graduates in the OPT, the program organized uni-national meetings and seminars when possible, and worked to assist dozens of Palestinian graduates to obtain scholarships to study abroad. See chapter six.

Municipality stepped into the void in Israel, selecting 14 Arab and 26 Jewish youth from city schools. The Israeli Ministry of Education had previously selected campers solely from the public school system, bypassing prominent private schools in the Arab sector. The Haifa municipality, by contrast, selected several youth from leading private schools, where Palestinian history and identity formed part of the curriculum. No Palestinian delegation from the OPT attended camp in 2001, turning the 14 Arab campers from Haifa into the most prominent *Palestinian* voices at camp – a role that many proudly assumed. As one graduate from the Haifa PCI group explained, “I went to camp with a strong group of Arabs, confident, and I didn’t feel oppressed or anything.” Another Haifa PCI graduate stated that, “When I met [SOP graduates] from previous years, especially on the [PCI] side, I became aware that my delegation – the Palestinians from Haifa – was an exception.” He attributed this to the absence of the Ministry of Education, and noted that the Ministry attempted to exclude Haifa campers from returning to camp as Peer Supports. After camp, many of this group maintained friendships with Jewish-Israeli graduates, socializing independently and initiating joint community projects, developments facilitated by the fact of living in close proximity in the relatively supportive shared context of Haifa. The largest, best-educated PCI group ever to attend SOP, and the only PCI campers not selected by the Israeli Ministry of Education or overshadowed by OPT Palestinians at camp, they proved to be the most active *group* of PCI alumni in the history of the program.<sup>599</sup>

In theoretical terms, this is consistent with key aspects of leading theories of intergroup contact. The 2001 group experienced significantly improved conditions, in comparison to previous PCI group, according to both Contact Hypothesis and Social

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<sup>599</sup> PCI campers represented roughly 1/3 of total first-time Israeli and Palestinian campers that summer, as opposed to approximately 1/10 or less in previous summers.

Identity theories. In terms of the “Contact Hypothesis,” this group possessed much greater equality of status within the encounter, and greater opportunities for lasting relationship afterwards.<sup>600</sup> In terms of Social Identity Theory, the group arrived with a more clearly defined collective identity and a more supportive context, at camp, for expressing it.<sup>601</sup> Moreover, this finding is consistent with previous critiques of the role of Israel’s Ministry of Education in Arab-Jewish encounter programs.<sup>602</sup> In this case, the withdrawal of the MOE had a visibly positive effect on the experiences of PCI participants.

Yet these changes in structural conditions, while relevant, do not explain an *increase* in participation. Although the program context improved during the *intifada*, the conflict context sharply deteriorated. In terms of political atmosphere, these peak years of PCI participation occurred during a period of unprecedented crisis in relations between Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel, and alienation of Palestinian citizens from the state.<sup>603</sup> In the aftermath of October 2000, Arab-owned businesses in Israel experienced drastic losses in revenue, attributing them to an informal but widespread boycott by their former Jewish-Israeli clientele. Palestinian citizens, in turn, boycotted the 2001 national elections, as urged by the bereaved parents of the victims of police fire in October.<sup>604</sup> Only 18% of eligible Palestinian voters cast ballots in the 2001 prime ministerial contest, down from an historical average of 60-70%.<sup>605</sup> In an atmosphere dominated by boycotts and recriminations, it would seem equally plausible that Palestinian citizens would withdraw from initiatives such as SOP,

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<sup>600</sup> Pettigrew, “Intergroup Contact Theory.”

<sup>601</sup> Friedman, Halabi and Sonnenschein, “Israeli-Palestinian Workshops.”

<sup>602</sup> Abu-Nimer, *Dialogue, Conflict Resolution and Change*.

<sup>603</sup> See Or Commission Report.

<sup>604</sup> Julie Gal, director, *October's Cry*, 2005.

<sup>605</sup> Karin Tamar Schafferman, “Participation, Abstention and Boycott: Trends in Arab Voter Turnout in Israeli Elections,” *The Israel Democracy Institute*, Posted April 22, 2009, Accessed June 21, 2011, <http://www.idi.org.il/sites/english/ResearchAndPrograms/elections09/Pages/ArabVoterTurnout.aspx#p3>.

as was indeed urged by voices in their community<sup>606</sup> The next section will focus on the ways in which young Palestinian citizens of Israel acted to define their own identities and transform their place in the program, making Seeds of Peace a microcosm of their individual and collective struggles for *self*-determination.

*"Humanizing" SOP: PCI Participants, American Organization, and the Israeli Ministry of Education*

I told Aseel that I didn't think that I could contribute anything to Seeds of Peace as an Arab-Israeli. His answer was that this is the right organization to understand myself, and a person who understands himself is better able to understand others.

– PCI graduate

Aseel was not the first, nor the only PCI participant to challenge the authority of the Ministry of Education and the misconceptions of the SOP organization. Some early PCI participants expressed quiet dissent, refraining from singing the Israeli anthem at flag-raising, or going AWOL from delegation meetings – but these were mute protests, marked by absence and silence. Their absence continued after camp; in addition to minimal follow-up participation, they were nearly invisible in organizational PR and press coverage, their complex stories incompatible with the dominant two-state frame.

By 1996, some SOP staff recognized the existence of a problem, responding with suggestions that were themselves problematic, if well intentioned. One senior staff person assigned a PCI Peer Support the role of individually raising all flags at the opening ceremony, sparing him the need to choose – but in the process making his indecision even more conspicuous to all. SOP staff began to proudly relate the story as an example of resolving the flag-raising dilemma. In this and other ways, PCI youth were tenuously integrated into the

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<sup>606</sup> Abu-Baker and Rabinowitz, *Coffins on Our Shoulders*.

SOP narrative as “bridges for peace,” a role that did not reflect their actual, precarious political position. One PCI graduate, ‘*Abbas*, described a different learning process. In his words, dialogues at SOP helped disillusion him regarding his role as a “bridge”:

I’m not saying we are the middle ground and we are the right idea and we are the solution, we’re definitely not. It took me a while to give up on that idea that we are the people who understand both sides and know how they should live together and want to live with both sides and da, da, da, da, da...

It just seemed to be the normal explanation for any teenager who wants to see it as there’s a Jewish side, there’s a Palestinian side and there are us that are not fully Palestinians, we’re not fully Israelis, we understand both sides so the conclusion is we are the middle solution, I mean it’s the simplest explanation for a teenager but it’s *not*, we’re *not* the middle part, we’re *not* the solution, we’re just a third side. And regardless what the solution is going to be, it’s probably not gonna involve what we think. It’s going to be a middle ground between the Palestinians and the Jewish Israelis and nobody cares what we think...

When we’re sitting in a session and there’s the Palestinians and the Israelis, we’re not actually bridging between them, we’re another side, another point of view and it does not agree with either one of them and it’s not, and it does not mean this is the middle ground, this is where they should come.

It took an extraordinary fifteen year-old to have the confidence, perspective, and trilingual clarity of expression necessary to convey this “third side” to all three “other sides” in *Seeds of Peace: Israeli Jews, Palestinians and Arabs, and Americans*.

Beginning with Aseel, however, an exceptional minority of PCI participants proved up to the task. Possessed of fluent English and strong leadership skills, these graduates effectively adapted the rhetoric of “humanizing the conflict” to portray the struggle of Israel’s Arab citizens for civil rights, social justice and recognition – from Americans, other Arabs and Israeli Jews – of their history and authentic Palestinian identity. Aseel’s three years at SOP, from 1997-2000 – represent a clear turning point in the acknowledgment and visibility of PCI issues at SOP. Aseel’s outspoken embrace of his role as a “Seed” enhanced the profile and the participation of PCI graduates at SOP in subsequent years. None of his

PCI predecessors from the 1993-96 sessions remained active at SOP over the long-term; the PCI groups of 1998-2002, by contrast, all produced alumni who have gone on to play active roles *as adults* in SOP, and often other activist and peacebuilding contexts as well.<sup>607</sup> Aseel's "Lead Both Sides" was the first-ever *Olive Branch* article focused specifically on Palestinian citizens of Israel; in ensuing years, similar articles appeared in nearly every issue.<sup>608</sup>

This assertiveness was not universally appreciated. The MOE lobbied the organization to cancel Aseel's selection to return to camp as a Peer Support in 1998 and 1999, to no avail. The charismatic qualities that originally won Aseel a spot in the Israeli delegation had garnered him a wide network of friends and supporters, among Arab and Jewish peers and American staff. When the MOE flatly refused to include Aseel in the Israeli delegation to camp in 1999, SOP co-founder Barbara Gottschalk responded by inviting Aseel to attend "as a human being." Thus, he pushed the program to realize, in his case, its rhetorical promise to elevate "human" above "nation."<sup>609</sup>

Israeli Ministry of Education officials attempted to dissuade PCI campers from following Aseel's example. Yet Aseel's PCI contemporaries all recalled seeking his counsel at SOP – often upon recommendation of SOP staff. As one PCI graduate recalled, "At camp... every time we got out of [dialogue] everyone was mad at me. One time, I stood next to the Israelis, the next time next to the Arabs. I was totally upset... My counselor gave me

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<sup>607</sup> One PCI graduate from 1993-96 has gone on to be active in peacebuilding as an adult, outside SOP. That graduate explained, however, that she considers her peacebuilding work as "in spite of," not because of, SOP.

<sup>608</sup> See "Back Issues: The Olive Branch Youth Magazine," Accessed June 22, 2011, <http://www.seedsofpeace.org/node/1830>. Multiple relevant articles appear in the following editions: Winter 2000-01, Spring 2001, Fall 2001, Winter 2001-02; Fall 2002; Winter 2003-04.

<sup>609</sup> See chapter four.

Aseel's e-mail and insisted I talk to him, even though he wasn't at camp that session. She said he wrote about this for *The Olive Branch*; she really thought he could help me."<sup>610</sup>

Recognizing the need, SOP staff began tacitly assigning Aseel and other PCI Peer Supports the role of unofficial delegation leader for Arab campers from Israel. In his first summer at camp, PCI graduate 'Abbas recalled that, "Even before the *intifada* started, during the beginning of the camp... [the PCI Peer Support] organized a meeting as Arab's PS, for all the Arab-Israelis." Other graduates openly challenged the authority of their Ministry of Education chaperones. One PCI Peer Support, 'Ali, recalled his treatment by Israeli DL's as in fact sparking a process of Palestinian "identity accentuation":

When I was on the way to camp, the Israeli delegation was training me to sing the *Tikva* [sic], the Israeli national anthem. And it felt painful, and I went along with them, I said OK OK OK all the time. When the flag-raising happened, I couldn't step under the Israeli flag. Although I had very few answers to many questions about what is this flag to me. I had almost zero knowledge about why I don't want to be under this flag. But I had a strong feeling about I don't need to be there, this is not my position. From there, and standing under the Palestinian flag, singing their song, it definitely was a start... I remember when I used to run from the delegation meetings and I'd go to the Palestinian meetings. The angry [Israeli] delegation members and delegation leaders was another push to know who I am....

And then when I came back as a PS... the same thing happened, but this time I had a very different attitude from the delegation leader who was more racist, more aggressive, and he tried to harm me in different ways. One was to kick me away from camp. Then being expelled from school because I stood under the Palestinian flag, again. To third, physical threats when he grabbed me from my shirt, and I remember [SOP camp director] Tim Wilson taking care of that.

On this and numerous other occasions, SOP staff interceded on behalf of Arab campers in disputes with Israeli delegation leaders. Beginning at camp, this phenomenon spread as staff repeatedly chose outspoken PCI graduates to return to camp as Peer Supports, to the chagrin of the MOE. The status of Palestinian minority campers, initially an afterthought at

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<sup>610</sup> Seeds of Peace, "A Tribute to Our Friend."

SOP, became a perennial flashpoint in the organization's contentious partnership with the Israeli government, and its internal politics.<sup>611</sup>

The efforts of Aseel and other active PCI graduates changed the culture of SOP at the program level, sensitizing staff and other participants to specific dilemmas and needs of Palestinian minority campers. Over time, this led to meaningful programmatic changes. At camp, the flag-raising ceremony was re-designed in 2004, such that campers no longer stood separately by delegation.<sup>612</sup> Flags were raised and anthems sung, but campers remained dispersed in a mixed, ambiguous crowd for the duration of the ceremony, leaving no one conspicuous or accountable for choices of national identification. Some Peer Supports and staff made a point of singing all the anthems – making their own subversive statements without asking the most vulnerable campers to do so, and pay the price, in their place.

PCI participants initiated forums for independent, “uni-national” discussions at camp and, after the *intifada*, in the Middle East. These gatherings, at first informal and sporadic, gradually became an integral part of the program. One graduate affirmed the importance of these meetings as a balance to the influence of the Ministry of Education:

I understand that the organization works with the Ministry of Education here, and that's the way the Ministry wants it, to have one delegation, but the way that the delegation leaders treat us, I can't say that it's the fault of the organization, but I can say that the uni-national programs helped a lot... We are a group that needs the space to express our fears and to express our feelings, but we don't have that space.

This space was institutionalized through regular PCI-oriented seminars, and the establishment of new “Minorities Coordinator,” facilitator and program positions on the staff – filled by adult PCI graduates who, as youth, had pioneered the drive for change.<sup>613</sup>

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<sup>611</sup> See chapter four.

<sup>612</sup> Interviews with SOP graduates and staff.

<sup>613</sup> Ibid.

While significant, these program-level changes did not transfer to fundamental change at the level of SOP's US administration or Board of Directors, who continued to prize the organization's partnership with the Ministry of Education. When lobbied by MOE officials, these powerful figures often "pushed back" on its behalf. In an emblematic incident, SOP program staff selected an outspoken PCI graduate to return to camp as a Peer Support. The Ministry of Education protested the selection, and the US administration eventually ruled that this graduate would not come to camp without Ministry approval. At the urging of supportive SOP program staff, the graduate agreed to meet with Ministry officials, only to become embroiled in a loyalty investigation:

I remember that the way we were chosen to be PS's was that we sent our stuff to the organization, and we were chosen by the organization, and I was chosen – *kasher* [Hebrew for "kosher"] to be a PS. And then we had an interview with the Ministry, and all they cared about was will we represent Israel. So I had an interview with people from the Ministry, and they asked me trick questions, provocative questions. They pushed me into saying that I can't represent Israel.

It was like, how do you feel about the occupation, and what do you feel when you see the Palestinian flag, and what do you feel about the army in Israel, and they ended up asking me, do you feel that you represent Israel? And I feel that I do represent Israel! I represent 18% of the population here, the Arabs, and Israel is a democratic state, and there are a lot of colors and shapes here, and I represent 18% of them. Do I represent the views of the state, am I proud of the history of the state? Of course not. So I felt really bad. The organization had already accepted me. And then the Ministry put me through this humiliation.

The Ministry vetoed this graduate's PS selection along with two other selectees, one Jewish and one Arab. As described in chapter four, SOP at first accepted the veto, only to reinstate the PS selections after the teenagers' parents threatened to convene a press conference.

The PCI same graduate then proceeded to attend camp, and testified to asserting her independence, but also building a *modus vivendi* with the Israeli delegation leaders:

I ended up going and I expressed myself freely. And in delegation meetings, I was always in the hot seat, delegation leaders always had an eye on me, and when the

bombing happened in Jerusalem, they gathered us together, and they put us in small circles, and I was the only Palestinian there in the Jewish circle, and the delegation leaders started with me – he said [so], how do you feel? And the truth was, that at the end of camp, they were actually very pleased with me. It was good for me; I learned that it's not always wise to say exactly what you feel. I mean, I never lied – but you choose the way to say something, the time to say something, and I ended up having good relations with the delegation leaders.

Other PCI interviewees expressed similar appreciation of their struggles with the Ministry of Education at SOP as painful, but useful training for their larger struggle in Israeli society.

‘Abbas echoed the sentiment regarding the pre-camp preparation seminars:

Even though it's not a very friendly experience... it's a very building experience in terms of both understanding the conflict and the Jewish-Israeli side's point of view and in terms of your personality as an Arab actually living here. You at least start to find the things you definitely believe in and you will never back [away] from, and the things you thought you believe in, but you were willing to either shut up because you don't want to go into trouble with other people about them or bend them a little bit.

Seeds of Peace was hardly an equal “field” for PCI participants when Aseel arrived there as a camper in 1997; yet his efforts, with those of other active PCI graduates, pushed the organization in that direction. Although SOP maintained its partnership with the Ministry of Education, program staff and Jewish-Israeli graduates became increasingly sensitive to the situation of PCI campers, and supported their efforts to build SOP into a safe space for self-determination. As ‘Ali explained, “in the States [i.e. at camp] I had a stronger back and a stronger position to fight back. The fact [is] that people supported me there; the fact [is] that people told me, ‘If this is who you are, if this is who you want to be, so be it.’”

As PCI graduates became fully engaged and identified “Seeds of Peace,” they also became full partners to the Peace-Builder’s Paradox articulated by Jewish-Israeli and OPT Palestinian counterparts. Despite succeeding significantly in changing the culture of SOP, their efforts could not effect similar changes in Israeli society. The violent “events” of October 2000, the enlistment of Jewish-Israeli counterparts in the IDF, and adult

experiences in Israeli academic and career contexts served as bracing “reality checks” for active PCI alumni; none more so than the killing of Aseel.

*Black October: After Aseel*

On August 17, 2000, Aseel and a Jewish-Israeli friend jointly emceed the SOP Jerusalem Center’s end-of-summer celebration, leading a crowd of more than 200 Israeli and Palestinian graduates in ecstatic rounds of camp cheers. It was a fitting role for a graduate whose efforts contributed mightily to moving Palestinian citizens of Israel from the margins of SOP to center stage. He spent that night together with a large group of Israeli and Palestinian graduates at a friend’s home in Jerusalem.<sup>614</sup> Tragically, these were his final performances as a Seed of Peace.

Six weeks later, in the immediate aftermath of Aseel’s death, stunned SOP graduates flocked from around Israel to the Jerusalem Center, filling the building with candles and impromptu memorials for several days.<sup>615</sup> The ‘Asleh family called the Center and asked his friends to join them in mourning. Over the ensuing days, weeks and months, his friends did, driving with SOP Center staff hours back and forth from Jerusalem to ‘Arabeh, past piles of debris left by riots and crackdowns at the entrance of almost every Arab town. On the first such visit, the SOP group found Aseel’s grieving sisters wearing Seeds of Peace t-shirts they’d taken from his room. Mourning Aseel became a central part of the regional program that year, expressed through dozens of condolence visits to the ‘Asleh family, the publication of a book of tributes from his family, classmates, and more than 100 SOP graduates and

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<sup>614</sup> See Seeds of Peace, “A Tribute to Our Friend.”

<sup>615</sup> Emails poured in from graduates from the OPT and Arab countries, who could not travel to Jerusalem amid the rapidly escalating *intifada*.

staff, and attendance at the hearings of the Or Commission of Inquiry convened by the Israeli government into the “October events.”<sup>616</sup>

Journalists from the international press appeared almost immediately as well, captivated by the story of a young Arab peace activist, killed by Israeli security forces in as-yet-unclear circumstances, being mourned by Israeli Jewish friends.<sup>617</sup> Israeli journalists followed soon after, accompanying SOP graduates and staff on condolence visits to the ‘Asleh family.<sup>618</sup> A reporter from a Jerusalem weekend paper joined one such visit, and spent the four hour drive home calling colleagues, editors, family and friends, overwhelmed by the eloquence of Aseel’s family and the symbolism of his death, in a peace shirt, under an olive tree. Aseel’s story was the first – often the only one – to put a face, a family, a complex identity on Arab victims in the Israeli and Western coverage of the October events.<sup>619</sup>

The significance of the story was clear to John Wallach, who immediately issued a statement praising Aseel’s contributions to SOP and calling for an investigation of his death. The power of this narrative was not lost on SOP’s contacts at the Israeli Ministry of Education either. An MOE liaison called the Jerusalem Center staff in the days after Aseel’s death to express condolences, while urging the organization not to speak out on the issue. In that conversation, the liaison described the event as a tragedy for the organization both due to the loss, and because – in their allegation – an SOP graduate had been throwing stones at

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<sup>616</sup> See Or Commission Report.

<sup>617</sup> See Lee Hockstader, "Israeli Bullet Ends a Life in Two Worlds," *Washington Post*, October 5, 2000, retrieved from "Seeds of Peace/About Us/In the News," Accessed June 26, 2011, [http://www.seedsofpeace.org/story/2000/10/washington\\_post](http://www.seedsofpeace.org/story/2000/10/washington_post); Flore de Preneuf, "Asel is gone," *Salon.com*, October 7, 2000, retrieved from "Seeds of Peace/About Us/In the News," Accessed June 26, 2011, [http://www.seedsofpeace.org/story/2000/10/asel\\_is\\_gone\\_saloncom](http://www.seedsofpeace.org/story/2000/10/asel_is_gone_saloncom).

<sup>618</sup> Author's personal experience. Key stories in the Hebrew press about Aseel and the 'Asleh family appeared in *Kol HaZman*, the Jerusalem-area weekly supplement to the Ma'ariv newspaper, and an investigative piece by journalist Itai Engel for the Friday-evening news magazine of Israel channel two.

<sup>619</sup> On Israeli media coverage of the October events and the second intifada, see Daniel Dor, *Intifada Hits the Headlines: How the Israeli Media Misrepresented the Outbreak of the Second Palestinian Uprising* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004).

Israeli police. When I responded that such circumstances were entirely unclear, the MOE liaison claimed that the police possessed photographic evidence of Aseel throwing stones.<sup>620</sup>

The next day, SOP regional staff traveled to the site of the shooting, and took testimony from Aseel's father Hassan 'Asleh, who had arrived on the scene to see his son standing alone, separated from the confrontation, before the police chased him into the olive grove. When asked about Aseel's actions at the site, Hassan responded immediately, "not a single stone."<sup>621</sup> SOP regional staff sent Hassan 'Asleh's testimony to SeedsNet and continued to bring media to 'Arabeh, against MOE objections. In death as in life, Aseel remained a source of contestation between the Ministry and the SOP regional staff.

Within weeks, an investigative reporter on Israel's Channel Two news clarified the issue on national television, by asking a senior officer of the Israeli police's Northern Command why Aseel was killed. Rather than produce photos or defend police actions, the officer simply said, "I don't know."<sup>622</sup> Over years of investigation, police repeated the same answer to the governmental Commission of Inquiry led by Supreme Court Justice Theodor Or [henceforth: Or Commission] and the police's internal investigations department. The Or Commission identified the officers who chased Aseel, and concluded that there was no justification whatsoever for opening fire – but no officer has ever been indicted for wrongful

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<sup>620</sup> Author's personal experience. In addition, a Jewish-Israeli graduate reported being similarly approached by the same Ministry of Education official: "[the official] said that [their spouse] has recordings, from the *Shabak* and the *Mossad*, of Aseel throwing stones." While such evidence of throwing stones would by no means justify the use of lethal force by police in Israeli legal terms or in terms of international opinion, it would effectively do so in the eyes of the mainstream Israeli Jewish public. As is detailed, however, no such evidence existed, and police witnesses testified to the contrary. See Or Commission report.

<sup>621</sup> Author's interview with Hassan 'Asleh, 'Arabeh, October 5, 2000.

<sup>622</sup> The original Israel Channel Two report was compiled by Israeli investigative journalist Itai Engel. The footage mentioned here is excerpted in the short documentary film *HaYom v'Norah* (The Day He Was Shot), produced by Germain Choukroun and Israeli SOP graduates Ron Roman and Eli Shteinberg for a film seminar at Leo Baeck High School in Haifa. See Ron Roman and Eli Shteinberg, "Focus on Our Friend," *The Olive Branch* (Winter 2001-02), Accessed July 11, 2011, [http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/winter2002\\_1.pdf](http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/winter2002_1.pdf). The film won first prize at a 2002 International Student Film Festival in California. See "Seeds Taking the Lead," *The Olive Branch* (Winter 2002-03), Accessed July 12, 2011, [http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/Winter2003\\_1.pdf](http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/Winter2003_1.pdf).

death. Israel's Attorney General officially closed the case in 2008, sparking a protest by several dozen SOP graduates under the banner of "Friends of Aseel."<sup>623</sup>

Aseel's memory and case remained salient to his contemporaries among SOP program staff and graduates, who published several thousand copies of a book, held annual memorials attended by hundreds of graduates at the Jerusalem Center, held annual memorial services near the end of each camp session, continued annual visits to 'Arabeh and in several cases worked to publicize Aseel's case through individual initiatives.<sup>624</sup> On the first anniversary of Aseel's death, SOP President John Wallach published a statement calling for investigation and possible indictment in *The Olive Branch*:

Seeds of Peace sorrowfully mourns the first anniversary of the death of our dear and beloved colleague Asel Asleh.<sup>625</sup> While we commend the Or Commission for its continuing investigation, we regret that no fault has yet been found nor responsibility determined for this violent act despite hundreds of hours of testimony.

The family of Asel Asleh deserves more. They deserve a thorough investigation, regardless of where it leads. They deserve that those responsible will be identified and held accountable. They deserve the minimum that a democratic society assures

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<sup>623</sup> See chapter eight on the 2008 protest. On the investigations of Aseel's case, see Yoav Stern, "Main Suspect in October 2000 Killing Refused Lie Detector Test Six Times," *Haaretz*, October 18, 2006, Accessed June 27, 2011, <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/main-suspect-in-october-2000-killing-refused-lie-detector-test-six-times-1.202675>; also available from "News Articles/Remembering Asel/10 Years on October 2," *Seeds of Peace*, <http://www.seedsofpeace.org/asel10/newsarticles>. See also Ned Lazarus, "For Justice, Please Hold," *Haaretz*, November 17, 2005, Accessed June 27, 2011, <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/opinion/for-justice-please-hold-1.174413>.

<sup>624</sup> SOP co-founder and Executive Vice President Barbara Gottschalk led the memorial services at camp, and remained the most consistent and prominent supporter of officially remembering Aseel among SOP's US leadership. The tribute book is *Seeds of Peace, "A Tribute to Our Friend"*; while it was compiled by Jerusalem program staff, it was approved and funded by the organization, as were the memorials at the Jerusalem Center. Other publications included the prizewinning student short documentary film, *Ha-Yom v'Norah* (The Day He Was Shot) by SOP graduates Eli Shteinberg and Ron Roman (see footnote 621). SOP Jerusalem Center Program Coordinator and later Program Director Jen Marlowe published a play in 2010 on Aseel's life, entitled *There is a Field*, based entirely on interviews with Aseel's older sister Nardin 'Asleh. See "There is a Field," Accessed July 12, 2011, <http://www.donkeysaddle.org/index.php/about>. Marlowe also filmed readings of Aseel's letter, "Peaceful Thoughts," in multiple languages by people around the world. See "Peaceful Thoughts," Posted October 1, 2010, Accessed July 12, 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G9T8GcuX7yA>. In 2007, Seeds of Peace counselor Micah Hendler composed a choral tribute to Aseel, entitled "Asel's Field," which was performed in 2009 at SOP camp and by students at Yale University in 2009; see "Asel's Field," Accessed July 12, 2011, <http://www.seedsofpeace.org/asel10/tributes/aselsfield>.

<sup>625</sup> Aseel spelled his name "Asel Asleh" in his SOP correspondence and it appears thus in SOP publications.

all its citizens: a fair and unbiased trial in which all evidence is presented and a verdict is reached, so that justice may be done.

The testimony presented by the police to date has failed to show that Asel was personally involved in any violence on the day of this tragic event. To the contrary, all of the testimony has shown that when the officers first saw him, in his green Seeds of Peace t-shirt, he was lying in a pool of blood or was falling down in a grove of trees. None of them have testified that they saw him participating in violence, exhorting anyone else to violence, or in any way standing out among the crowd of protestors.

Asel's hundreds of friends and fellow Seeds deserve to know the truth. We deserve to know what happened. There can never be closure for his family which has been robbed of an intelligent, sensitive, caring, committed son.

Asel's commitment to the cause of peace between Arabs and Israelis is what we remember most. He gave throughout his life to advance these noble goals. In death, he—and we—deserve no less than a full accounting of the brutal act that robbed him, and us, of the promise of a life yet unfulfilled, a life that would have continued to spread goodness, fairness, justice and equality among all those he met. We implore the Or Commission to conclude its inquiry and to have the same bravery, courage and commitment that Asel had to lay blame wherever it might justifiably be – so that justice might ultimately be done.<sup>626</sup>

Yet in time, Aseel's parents grew disappointed with the official response of the leaders of the organization. The 'Asleh family saw Wallach's language and the medium of publication as insufficient and ineffective. They demanded instead that Seeds of Peace use its extensive media contacts to publicly "condemn the murder," in Hassan 'Asleh's words.<sup>627</sup>

After Wallach's death in July 2002, his successors to the SOP Presidency – selected by the Board of Directors – showed little interest in the case; they tolerated but never joined memorial services at camp and in the region, and refrained from making statements. Like the issues Aseel raised in his life, his memory and his case had decisive impact at the program

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<sup>626</sup> John Wallach, electronic correspondence distributed to Seeds of Peace graduates and staff, October 2, 2001. Reprinted under the heading "One Year Without Asel" in *The Olive Branch* (Winter 2001), Accessed July 12, 2011, [http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/Fall2001\\_1.pdf](http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/Fall2001_1.pdf). Available at "Statement from John Wallach/Or Commission Materials/Remembering Asel 10 Years," Accessed July 12, 2011, <http://www.seedsofpeace.org/asel10/orcomission/statement>.

<sup>627</sup> Author's conversations with Hassan 'Asleh. Hebrew: *lehoki'a et ha-retzakah*.

level, on staff, graduates, and organizational culture – but not at the top of the SOP power structure.<sup>628</sup> The ‘Asleh family maintained ties with Aseel’s close friends from SOP, but eventually cut ties with the organization and became sharply critical of “coexistence” programs altogether, explaining that “we need existence before co-existence.”<sup>629</sup>

Graduate interviewees of all identity groups described Aseel’s death as a shattering and disillusioning event, due to the manner in which he was killed, and the responses of the Israeli government and the SOP leadership, perceived by many as inadequate. In the words of one PCI graduate, “The way they treated Aseel’s murder, I mean, I can understand they don’t want to be a political organization, but in this region, you can’t do that. When you do nothing about something... it’s taking a stand. I don’t know if [it’s] because they don’t live in the region, [or because] people in charge are Americans.”

For Aseel’s PCI contemporaries, it was especially traumatizing. As one PCI graduate explained, it undermined her fundamental sense of personal security:

As a Palestinian, as a friend, as a Seed, my world crashed down when Aseel died. Not only that I lost him, but this picture that we all so much wanted to believe in, that it won’t happen to us. It will touch lots of lives, and lots of people will die, before it’s at some point solved, yeah, but I don’t think anybody thought what if it will happen to that person sitting right across the table discussing with me. What about that person sleeping in the bed right under me. Will they shoot him in the head?... We didn’t think about that... When it touches you, when it’s somebody you know, somebody you sat with, somebody you admired...

The shock of the violent death of a cherished friend, caused by “the other side,” was exacerbated for Aseel’s PCI counterparts, given the depth of their identification with Aseel, his place in the organization and the Palestinian community in Israel.

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<sup>628</sup> See Chapter eight, " 'Program' vs. 'Organization.'"

<sup>629</sup> Lazarus, "Jerusalem Diary."

Indeed, scholars who interviewed Aseel's high school classmates shortly after his death affirmed that he had built a public reputation as an outspoken advocate of dialogue:

Encouraged by his parents and the school, Aseel was a leading participant in coexistence meetings held between Palestinian youths, Jewish Israeli youths, and youngsters from the West. He made a special effort to convince his peers at school to join these encounters. When his friends wanted to boycott these meetings in protest against Israeli intransigence, Aseel convinced them not to quit. He insisted such meetings were politically meaningful, that they presented Palestinians with an opportunity to influence Israelis' views on Palestinians, Arabs, and the conflict.<sup>630</sup>

Aseel's status as a "peace activist" humanized his posthumous perception in the eyes of Israeli and Western audiences. In letters to the 'Asleh family and Seeds of Peace, many Israeli Jews and Westerners expressed a renewed dedication to work for peace and reconciliation.<sup>631</sup> It also deeply affected Arab and Palestinian audiences, but often in a different way. Abu-Baker and Rabinowitz described a powerful "nationalizing" effect:

Palestinian students from around the country were stunned at the manner in which Aseel was killed – perhaps murdered or executed is a more accurate term. Local and national Arabic language newspapers vented people's grief and pain. For many, the death of this particular young man became an emblem of collective loss. Poems, letters, and declarations of political resolve were published for months after his death; newborns were named after him. Many felt the whole event was turning them into better, prouder Palestinians. For members of an entire generation, the deaths of Aseel and the other victims in October 2000 transformed *Intifadat Al-Aqsa* and the Palestinian problem itself into an urgent, highly personal matter.<sup>632</sup>

In Palestinian memorial tributes to Aseel, his status as a martyr in the national struggle, and his advocacy of Palestinian rights often took precedence over associations with "peace" and

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<sup>630</sup> Abu-Baker and Rabinowitz, *Coffins on Our Shoulders*, 110.

<sup>631</sup> Such expressions were not limited to the SOP community. Anael Harpaz, the Israeli director of the Creativity for Peace summer encounter program, cites a visit to the Asleh family's mourning tent as the inspiration for her to begin her work in Israeli/Palestinian dialogue. "They asked Anael, an Israeli Jew, how she got involved. She told how she went to the wake of Asil Asleaeh [sic], the Israeli Arab boy and a Seeds of Peace alumnus, who was shot by the army in Arabah, and explained how she became determined to make a difference. She and several of the girls were crying by the end. But that had a bonding effect, too." (Karen Abu Zant, "The First Step on a Life-Changing Journey," Palestine Note, May 25, 2010, Accessed May 26, 2010, <http://palestinernote.com/cs/blogs/blogs/archive/2010/05/25/the-first-step-on-a-life-changing-journey.aspx>).

<sup>632</sup> Abu-Baker and Rabinowitz, *Coffins on Our Shoulders*, 112.

humanizing “the other side.”<sup>633</sup> Indeed, for many, he became a symbol of the failure of those ideals in his death. As one PCI graduate recounted, people previously critical of her participation in SOP greeted Aseel’s death as a vindication: “After Aseel’s death, I never had that much belief in Seeds anymore, at some level. . . . Maybe [due to] coming back home and hearing all these people around you, with a little smile on their faces like we told you so.”

### *Reality Checks*

I love that Seeds of Peace gave me this opportunity to have a friend from the other side, but it also disappointed me a lot. I used to see that light at the end of the tunnel, but now it seems so much further away, I can barely see that light. You just start understanding things, like, wow, they must have fooled me with that. You just don’t trust them with that. They used to tell me everything will be all right. They put you in this flawless land, where everything is right, everything is planned, and then they just put you back in the real world, and you’re like, wow, everything is not like that, and you stop trusting them. I understand what they were trying to do, but the world is not the way they present it to you in Seeds of Peace. As a teenager, you don’t understand; in the real world, you get really surprised, you get really shocked.

For the PCI graduates who had made SOP a home for themselves, alongside and after Aseel, October 2000 coincided with other discouraging events in terms of peacebuilding participation: The eruption of the *intifada*, the IDF enlistment of Jewish-Israeli counterparts, and their post-high school struggles in an increasingly divided Israeli society.<sup>634</sup> Most PCI interviewees described undergoing a post-high school period of crisis and disillusionment, linked to all of the above. One graduate, *Suzan*, was disturbed to discover *de facto* segregation between Arab and Jewish students at her Israeli university: “It’s very

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<sup>633</sup> Aseel is remembered among Palestinians as a *shahid*, or martyr, as are all of the Arab victims of October 2000. Streets in Arabeh are named after “*Al-Shahid Aseel Aslel*” and “*Al-Shahid Alaa Nassar*,” another young man from Arabeh killed on the same day.

<sup>634</sup> See Jack Khoury, “Study Paints Bleak Picture of Arab-Jewish Ties in Israel,” *Haaretz*, May 25, 2010, Accessed June 26, 2011, <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/study-paints-bleak-picture-of-jewish-arab-ties-in-israel-1.292051>.

obvious – there are two groups; we sit by ourselves, the Jews sit by themselves, and there’s no contact. And it was strange for me; what I was used to, in Seeds of Peace, was that we sit together and talk together. It wasn’t what I was used to.” Another graduate, *Hassan*, chose to study abroad, only to be shunned by a Jewish-Israeli student in his program: “She studies in the same classroom as I do, and she does not speak to me... it’s so weird. That’s because I am Arab, you know. My classmates, they couldn’t believe it – they would ask her, why don’t you talk to him, he’s a cool guy – and she would just walk past me.”

For Hassan, these experiences inspired painful re-assessments of the perspectives he developed in SOP:

The world is way more complicated than you thought it was going to be, especially more than what you thought at Seeds of Peace. You have to fail, you have to struggle, there is no equality, especially living here in Israel, trying to find a job, trying to find education in Israel, going to work with Jewish people that you never talked to before, the vibe that goes around them, it’s so weird, you’ve never felt it before. When you’re with Seeds of Peace, you’re under this protective hat, but when you go out, especially in Israel as an Arab, it’s not like that, it’s so depressing, it’s literally depressing... And that’s why Seeds of Peace disappointed me, because they took us to a certain point but then they just abandoned me. You took me to prepare me but you didn’t do a good job. I wish I didn’t know so much that I know right now.

Another graduate, *Elias*, stated that, “Seeds of Peace was a place of a lot of hope. But at the same time, this hope became an illusion. It became to me a sort of escapism rather than actually dealing with the situation.”

Almost all PCI interviewees cited the enlistment of Jewish-Israeli friends in the IDF as a profoundly troubling process, emphasizing their alienation from the society around them. As *Elias* explained, “I walk around, I look around at young people here, and I wonder – what did they do, where did they disappear to for those years? I know that in some cases people are not even able to tell their parents what they did... It’s just this whole hidden world that I don’t have any access to.” For PCI graduates as for Israeli and Palestinian majority

alumni, IDF service is described as causing a period of disconnection, either an extended “time-out” or a permanent breaking point with SOP:

When I graduated, all the Seeds that were with me in the same year, went to the army. And that was – from [two year period], I cut my relations. I didn’t go to seminars, I didn’t go to activities, stuff happened at the Center, discussions among the graduates – I didn’t read any of it and I didn’t want anything to do with it. And it was because part of the beliefs and the vision that I had kind of snapped when my fellows joined the army. I couldn’t understand it, it didn’t connect. We went to a peace camp, and we talked about peace, and now they’re joining the army – I didn’t understand that.

One graduate recounted an episode of visceral “uniform shock,” reminiscent of testimonies of some Palestinian graduates from the OPT: “I saw [Jewish-Israeli friend] when I went back to Israel, and he was wearing a military uniform, and I think it was after that that I *completely* was done with Seeds of Peace... seeing him in the uniform... put all of those people in a different category and I just kind of closed the chapter and moved on.” Another graduate deliberately distanced herself from a close friend, in order to avoid seeing her in uniform: “I didn’t want to imagine [Jewish friend] in uniform. I saw lots of people from Seeds in uniform, but I didn’t want to see [her] in uniform. After Aseel’s death, I mean, I know it wasn’t a soldier [who killed Aseel]... I just didn’t want to see her with a gun or a rifle.”

Among my interviewees, such episodes of “uniform shock” actually appeared more frequent and intense among Palestinian citizens of Israel than OPT Palestinian graduates living under IDF occupation. In high school, PCI graduates had socialized more freely and frequently with Jewish-Israeli counterparts than their OPT counterparts, never needing to cross checkpoints to see their friends from “the other side.” Afterwards, PCI graduates all testified to an emptiness left by the disappearance of their friends into the “hidden world” of the military.

### Adult PCI Graduates and The Politics of Peacebuilding

Such painful coming-of-age experiences were enough to distance many adult PCI graduates from SOP and/or peacebuilding. Of the thirty Palestinian citizens of Israel I classified as “active” graduates in 2003, 15 remained verifiably so as adults, 5-8 years later. However, that represents nearly one-quarter of the Palestinian citizens of Israel who attended camp from 1998-2002, with or after Aseel.<sup>635</sup> In qualitative terms, this group were involved in diverse forums and methods of peacebuilding, inside and outside SOP, including advocacy, dialogue, protest and sometimes all of the above. Their perspectives on their past in SOP, the contemporary organization, and peacebuilding in general, are marked by complexity, maturity and nuance born of experience in the field.

Some common themes emerge from their testimonies. Nearly all take part in campus or public advocacy on Palestinian issues. All are involved in joint activism with Israeli Jews. All testify to continuing friendships with one or more Jewish-Israeli graduates of Seeds of Peace. All see their experiences in SOP as having had enduring, positive personal impact for them in terms of confidence, relationships, skills and political consciousness. All distinguish between “the organization,” i.e. the Board of Directors and top leadership, on the one hand, and the program staff, content and personal relationships derived from it on the other. All are critical of “the organization” – *especially* those who have worked for SOP for extended periods. The differences between them were not about whether they identify as Palestinian; they all do. Neither were their debates about “normalization” or “humanization,” i.e. whether to engage in social and political relationships with Israeli Jews; they all do. They are

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<sup>635</sup> The minimal estimate would be 15 out of 66 who attended camp in 1998-2002, or 22.7%. 21 graduates, including Aseel, attended camp from 1993-97; only one of them remained verifiably active at the time of research, in both dialogue and advocacy of peacebuilding – but outside SOP. Indeed, this graduate of the “early years” described their involvement in peacebuilding as “in spite of Seeds of Peace.”

focused on the dilemma of action – what must be done to transform their situation, and whether Seeds of Peace and/or dialogue contribute to the change they seek.

*Dilemma Part Two: Dialogue and Activism*

Many times I thought that, you know, talking about Jerusalem with someone who's fifteen years old or twenty years old is not the same as going to Jerusalem to demonstrate against taking more lands in Jerusalem. And at the same time, talking about Jerusalem doesn't mean that you can't [demonstrate], or you shouldn't, or this is the only way to fight for Jerusalem... The dialogue is something that you need, it's a lesson that you need, in order to receive your right back, to take your right back. It's not a love story, you know, this is a struggle.

– PCI graduate

On the final morning of his life, Aseel chatted briefly online with *Akram*, a fellow PCI graduate, then in high school. Akram asked Aseel if he would join the demonstrations expected that day, in solidarity with the *intifada* raging in the OPT. Aseel replied that his parents didn't want him to go, fearing violence. Akram's parents had said the same, but like Aseel, he did not listen: "I just shut down the computer, and maybe seven hours after I went to the demonstration. I didn't want to listen to my mom; I felt that I need to be there to scream out what I saw on TV." At the demonstration, Akram considered joining young men from his hometown hurling stones at Israeli police, until his phone rang: "I received phone calls from my friends that I met at Seeds of Peace, the Jewish friends... asking where are you, how are you, are you OK, are you safe?" The calls somehow moved him to return home, in a way that his parents' fears had not. In subsequent years, Akram told this story in presentations at Israeli schools and SOP fundraising events, as an example of the program's positive impact on him; in his words, "I gave the story to Seeds of Peace."

Interviewed years later, Akram framed the story differently: “You know, back then, these phone calls made me go back [home]. If it was today, I wouldn’t go back. ‘Cause in the street I wasn’t confronting my friends, I was confronting the soldier, the policeman, who came to oppress me one more time.” Akram proceeded to proudly present the résumé of a radical activist: “I was shot at three times. I was in jail [many] times. I was beaten up by soldiers; last time I was beaten up by a soldier was last May, in a demonstration... a rally memorizing [sic] sixty years of catastrophe for the Palestinians.” Yet just as he linked his teen-aged restraint to the influence of friendships from SOP, Akram attributed his adult “choice of nonviolent resistance” directly to his experiences in the program: “All the demonstrations, and the rallies, and the protests, and all the different forms of resistance that I’ve been doing... and many of these decisions that I’ve made in my life, I had the strength to do it because of my experiences in Seeds of Peace.” His first clashes with state authorities, he emphasized, were his repeated run-ins with Israeli delegation leaders at camp. His years of experience in dialogue, as participant and facilitator, led him to the conclusion that dialogue is necessary, but not sufficient, in campaigning for the political changes he seeks.

Akram is aware of the tension in connecting SOP’s self-declared “apolitical” program to his overtly political activism:

[It’s] funny, [it] is ridiculous. It’s ironic... ‘Cause Seeds of Peace will never tell you go demonstrate and fight for your right. Sometimes I feel that Seeds of Peace actually tells people to sit and talk about something that you can’t get in a dialogue group... maybe [I] will make Seeds of Peace look bad. Because definitely this is not the cause of Seeds of Peace, and this is not what the people that run Seeds of Peace want me to think, but because of Seeds of Peace I got exposed to all these things, and they made me strong, to go and fight for them. I don’t know if this was the kind of leadership they were seeking, or the kind of argument that they wanted me to have, but this is what I have right now and I’m not giving it up.

Throughout his period of protest, Akram continued to work for SOP, facilitating dialogues and organizing seminars for younger participants. While noting the limitations of dialogue, he spoke as an enthusiastic practitioner: “I do believe in dialogue, and I do believe in the courses I’ve been through, and I do believe in the sessions I’ve been through in camp.” As a facilitator, Akram expressed pride in watching Palestinian participants begin to criticize suicide bombings “because they feed the anger of the people, but not the cause of the people,” and seeing Jewish-Israeli participants criticize abusive behavior by IDF soldiers at checkpoints, saying, “it’s fabulous – it’s magic.”

Akram explained his political philosophy through a pair of conceptual distinctions. First, he strove to differentiate between the Israeli Jewish collective and the State of Israel. Akram represented himself literally as an “enemy of the state,” deploring what he sees as the role the state prescribes for him: “Israel wanted me to be a ‘good Arab’... someone who plays [by] the rules. Israel wasn’t interested in Israelizing me, making me Israeli, or fitting me into Israeli society, they just wanted me to be quiet and silent about my past and my history.” He spoke of the state in hostile terms, declaring aspirations to replace it with an explicitly bi-national framework, emphasizing that, “I cannot allow it to exist this way.” Throughout, Akram repeatedly qualified statements against the state with attempts to convey respect for “the other side,” avowing “respect for their suffering” and “right in the Holy Land,” stating that, “The Jews have a need to be there and I have a need to be there. Not acknowledging their need, is not acknowledging my need. Acknowledging their need, but criticizing the way they have it right now, is something else.”

Second, Akram repeatedly distinguished between the goals of the SOP leadership in the US, and the actual program content and its impact on participants in the Middle East.

The program, in Akram's opinion, is not incompatible with his political program. To the contrary, he asserted that the SOP program "is contributing to this a lot, the fact that people sit with each other and respect each other and understand each other... they have to understand what we say, they have to understand our pain, and our needs, and that can only be done through dialogue." Akram described the program as especially valuable for Palestinian citizens of Israel:

I specifically chose to work with the minorities, and I'm not there to be a teacher for them, I don't teach them about what I know, I don't teach them about my experience, but I try to provide them with more options to know. I provide them with lectures, seminars, with dialogue. To even discuss their interior, inner issues as Palestinians in Israel. To put them through a seminar talking about group identity and individual identity, where they have to figure out who they are, and I'm not trying to teach anyone to say that "you are," and "I am," are the same. But they do leave the room with different conclusions and results.

At the same time, he perceived an incompatibility between the outcomes he observes and values in the program, and the objectives of its US leadership: "I don't know what is the real goal of people who run the organization, but this is what is happening. I see it because I run these sessions for the kids..."

Akram's involvement in civil disobedience is exceptional among my PCI interviewees; no other graduates claimed a record of confrontations, arrests and injuries. His radical politics are not universally shared; several PCI graduates echo aspects of Akram's revolutionary rhetoric, but others speak in practical terms of reforming rather than transforming the state of Israel. Such divergences are often visible in online self-representation; on Facebook profiles, some PCI graduates identify their location as "Palestine," others as "Israel"; some post comments primarily in Arabic, others in Hebrew.

At the same time, Akram voices themes that resonate in the testimonies of all PCI graduates. All interviewees framed their collective situation as unacceptable, all aspired to

achieve civic equality and national recognition in a reformed or transformed Israel, and all affirmed engagement in forms of advocacy, protest *and* cross-conflict peacebuilding. Among eight PCI interviewees not currently abroad, three were active in Arab student politics at Israeli universities; three worked full-time for extended periods at Seeds of Peace; two facilitated Arab-Jewish dialogues on campus or outside SOP; two others worked for joint Israeli/Palestinian organizations – one NGO that publicizes joint peacebuilding initiatives, the other NGO dedicated explicitly to “joint struggle against the occupation.”

Most articulated a sense of operating within a charged context, and feeling pressure from authorities and the majority to tone down their demands. One graduate, who expressed sharp disagreement with Akram’s confrontational politics, framed his own relative moderation not as more moral, but as more effective, pragmatic, rational, and tellingly, “more safe.” Another graduate, *Yazan*, active in an Arab student union on an Israeli campus, stated that, “We are not allowed to make a lot of noise in the university.” At the same time, he presented a list of student union activities that is far from quiescent:

We will bring Aseel ‘Asleh’s parents, and also we had *Yom Al-Ard* [Land Day]. We try not to do something exactly political, but also for the unrecognized Bedouin villages. So we talked about these things. They have this ground, and they live there for years, and they have no water, no electricity. So we take people there. And also we arrange small protests, when things got started in Gaza... We just carry signs, and posters and pictures about what is happening in Gaza. And even Jewish people joined us. Here is university, here are more peaceful people – I won’t say peaceful, but they are more ready to listen to you. They don’t start screaming – I mean, there are some of them – but it’s in general much easier... We view films – we have a mini-cinema, and we view Arabic movies. We try to raise our voice in the university, we try to get our rights. Even the student day, from the time of the founding of this university ‘til today, they never had anything for Arab students on Student Day. But this year, there will be an Arabic singer on the student day.

Like Akram, he connected his adult activism to his background in Seeds of Peace: “This is what we’ve studied from Seeds, man. Wherever you are, just try to make a little change. I’m

sure that all of us, each one of the Seeds are doing something for his community... wherever you are, make one friend and start some little change.”<sup>636</sup>

Questions of dialogue, peacebuilding, the SOP program and organization produced remarkably broad agreement, almost unanimity, between PCI interviewees. All have been actively involved in cross-conflict peacebuilding, broadly defined; all but one gave strikingly positive assessments of both dialogue and the SOP program, while simultaneously voicing strong criticisms of the “organization.” Tellingly, the single interviewee who spoke in negative terms of personal experience in the program attended camp in the early years, before Aseel (and without regional follow-up).<sup>637</sup> In addition to Akram, three other graduates worked as facilitators. Two of them spoke of dialogue as helping them overcome post-high school, post-*intifada* despair. As *Irsan* explained:

I didn't really believe in dialogue, in this past year and kind of made fun of it, and just thought of it as ineffective, and [then] I was a facilitator... And it was very amazing. I think I love [the participants], because they gave me, like, hope back in a sense. 'Cause it was the smallest little thing and they changed in the smallest little way, but it just made such a huge difference for me, and I think in the eyes of the other people that were there too... people, towards the end, were very honest and blunt with each other, but in a very respectful way.... There was a sense of honesty about it that I really liked, that there was no, like, nice gloss about it, we're gonna hold hands and everything's gonna be nice, but instead it was very honest.

Suzan described a process of “return” similar to adult Jewish-Israeli and Palestinian graduates. After disconnecting from SOP for an extended period, she attended a “uni-national” seminar for PCI graduates, which she found “helpful... to hear that other people are feeling this way, I'm not feeling this way by myself... recognition of the uni-national for me was very good, a recognition of the frustration I was going through.” At the same time,

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<sup>636</sup> He continued, “And insh'allah, one day we're gonna see Seeds in the government man—maybe *Akram*.”

<sup>637</sup> The same interviewee was actively involved in dialogue and peacebuilding as an adult, but described her involvement as “in spite of, not because of Seeds of Peace.”

Suzan reported that, “When I sat only with the Arabs, I also felt there was something missing. I also couldn’t find answers to the questions that I was asking.”

Suzan joined graduate courses, and began facilitating both in and outside SOP, opening dialogue groups on her university campus. She described the work in political terms, explaining that, “I am definitely trying to prevent what I am afraid is happening, through my facilitation work.” She confessed skepticism regarding the actual political impact of such work, but persevered, finding it personally meaningful:

I have to say, it’s very selfish, I say I do it for other people, but every time I go there, I have a new insight into the reality, we start comparing things and I have a better understanding of the situation and of reality, it’s learning, always this learning process, I enjoy it very much. I learn a lot about myself, and facilitation always helps me to stay calm. I can see it now, I’m still very enthusiastic, but now I think about how I say things, and how people are going to react and whether they will understand. I learn a lot from [Jewish-Israeli facilitator] now, I know more about where people are coming from, so I can talk to them in a way they understand.

Similar conclusions regarding personal versus collective impacts of dialogue led another graduate, *Elias*, to the opposite decision.

Referring to SOP, Elias explained that, “It can be beneficial on a personal level, which is how I see my experience, but politically, on a general level, it is more regressive than progressive.” He cited the extreme asymmetry of power between Jewish-Israelis and Palestinians, and the disappearance of any prospects for a negotiated solution, as rendering dialogue impotent. In his words:

Any Israeli-Palestinian joint work should be based on struggle, on struggle for the rights of the oppressed – dialogue and negotiation should serve to build up a joint struggle against the oppressor... on the basis that Palestinians are the oppressed, and Israel is to be – there is a campaign for boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel, and this campaign can form the basis of any joint work. And there are Israelis that are part of it. I think today we reached the point that only international pressure can end the Israeli occupation... Israel can be forced to do it when the occupation will cease to be beneficial for Israel and for Israelis. It is a relationship and a cooperation of struggle, of rights.

Seeds of Peace, of course, does not fit those political parameters.<sup>638</sup>

Nonetheless, Elias spoke of his SOP experiences in profoundly positive terms, as empowering, formative – indeed, as the catalyst of his political crystallization:

It was the first time I was put in a situation where I had a right to frame my opinions, and to reflect on where I'm coming from, and what is... I think my views started changing within my position within the organization and within such programs, was sort of advancing from that. When I first went to Seeds of Peace, it was the beginning of my political formation; I had no political views before that – it was an incentive to be more and more aware, and more and more critical of the situation. Not only of what was happening on the ground, but the conflict and the place of Seeds of Peace within the conflict.

Moreover, while adopting discourse reminiscent of Palestinian Marxist groups, Elias actively rejected their politics of “anti-normalization,”<sup>639</sup> instead advocating “humanization” and cross-conflict communication. While living abroad, Elias reported that he “missed speaking Hebrew,” describing the language as “home; this is how I was formed, this is how I grew up; this is part of me... when I'm abroad, when I meet Israelis, I speak to them in Hebrew. I would get funny reactions usually – oh, you have a weird accent, where are you from?” When asked if he didn't shun personal engagement with Israeli Jews, he responded with a comment appropriate to the entire group of PCI interviewees: “Not at all. It's something I sort of grew to be proud of, in a way – to be Palestinian, and to be able to do so. I think that's related [to SOP]... Not only with talking to Israelis, but being confident of yourself and who you are.”

In a 2008 interview for this dissertation, another PCI graduate described the post-high school years as a period of disillusionment from the idealized Arab-Jewish environment experienced in SOP. Yet the same graduate has gone on to work multiple summers for SOP

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<sup>638</sup> See Palestinian Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI), "Palestinian Youth United Against Normalization with Israel."

<sup>639</sup> See Salem, "The Anti-Normalization Discourse."

in Maine, and is currently working in Jerusalem for a joint Arab-Jewish peacebuilding initiative blending arts, dialogue and advocacy. Rather than reify rigid boundaries between "dialogue" and "action," these adult PCI peacebuilders exhibit complexity, hybridity and nuance in their approaches to peacebuilding, and in their assessments of the impact of Seeds of Peace. In an Israeli/Palestinian peace camp often divided between allegedly "apolitical" peace education and "radical" activism, these PCI peacebuilders are indeed examples of "leading both sides."

CHAPTER EIGHT

*Alumni Assessments: "Program" vs. "Organization"*



Introduction: *From Poster Children to Protesters*

Fifteen years after its inaugural appearance on the White House Lawn, the Seeds of Peace shirt made headlines in Israel as a symbol of protest.<sup>640</sup> On February 5, 2008, Arabic and Hebrew news sites posted images of uniformed SOP graduates demonstrating outside

<sup>640</sup> Photograph by Meged Gozani; reprinted by permission of Activestills.org. See "IsraelPalestine-Based Photo Collective," Accessed July 2, 2011, <http://activestills.org>.

Israel's Ministry of Justice, under a Hebrew banner reading, "Thirteen citizens are killed – and no one is guilty?"<sup>641</sup> One week earlier, Israel's Attorney General Menachem Mazuz had officially ended all legal inquiry into the October 2000 police killings of Palestinian citizens, declaring insufficient evidence to indict any officers involved – despite the Or Commission's previous findings that the deaths of Aseel 'Asleh and others were wholly unjustified.<sup>642</sup>

The decision outraged a group of SOP alumni who had been Aseel's friends in his life, and who had led memorials, met with his family, and followed his case through seven years of investigations since his death. These "friends of Aseel," Israeli Jews in their mid-twenties, drafted an open letter condemning the decision and gathered signatures from other SOP graduates.<sup>643</sup> To publicize the protest, several dozen "friends of Aseel" delivered the letter in the most conspicuous possible fashion, as a crowd of Israelis shouting slogans outside the Ministry's gates in the heart of Arab East Jerusalem. Asking no one's consent, they linked their dissent directly to Seeds of Peace, by donning the shirts they once wore alongside Aseel, the shirt that he wore to his grave.

Media coverage highlighted the event's counter-intuitive identity politics: Israeli Jews condemning their government's treatment of Palestinian citizens. "Israeli Jewish youngsters have joined the protests of their Arab counterparts," declared Israel's leading daily

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<sup>641</sup> See "Remembering Asel/10 Years on October 2/News Articles" on *Seeds of Peace*, Accessed June 27, 2011, <http://www.seedsofpeace.org/asel10/newsarticles>; Yoav Stern, "Friends of October 2000 Victim Protest Near Justice Ministry," *Haaretz*, February 6, 2008, <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/friends-of-october-2000-victim-protest-near-justice-ministry-1.238731>; Sharon Roffie-Ofir, "Ka-T'zionim, Segirat Tik Oktober Mesukenet La-Demokratyah," *Yediot Abaronot*, February 5, 2008, Accessed June 26, 2011, <http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/1,7340,L-3502888,00.html>; Sharon Roffie-Ofir, "Israeli Jews: Decision to Close October 2000 Riots Case Dangerous," *YnetNews*, February 5, 2008, Accessed June 26, 2011, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/1,7340,L-3503106,00.html>; Dimi Reider, "Seeds of Peace Alumni Rally for October Riots Victims," *Jerusalem Post*, February 6, 2008, Accessed June 26, 2011, <http://www.jpost.com/Israel/Article.aspx?id=91162>.

<sup>642</sup> See *Ibid*; Or Commission Report.

<sup>643</sup> A subsequent online petition, in English, gathered an additional 190 signatures.

newspaper, *Yediot Abaronot*.<sup>644</sup> Readers' "talkback" responses focused on the same aspect. "What kind of Jews is that?" asked one of a legion of hostile respondents. "Ones who care about their country," replied one of a minority of supporters.<sup>645</sup> The demonstrators encouraged this focus in statements to the press. Noa Epstein, a leading organizer, identified the group to reporters as, "Israelis and Zionists, who feel the pain of the Arab sector... As Jewish citizens of this state, it is especially important for us to say that this miserable decision endangers Israeli democracy."<sup>646</sup>

Their letter to the Attorney General further accentuated the focus on identity, acknowledging the asymmetries of Arab and Jewish citizenship with the trademark bluntness of Israeli political rhetoric:

Mr. Mazuz, if the victims were Jewish, you would not dare to close these cases... It is impossible that thirteen citizens of a democracy should be buried as a result of live ammunition fire from police on unarmed demonstrators, and no one bears responsibility. Your decision to tolerate this situation is morally, socially and politically intolerable. It will justify and entrench the distrust of an entire community, one-fifth of our citizenry, in the institutions of the State. It grants an official imprimatur to the injustice, the racism and systematic discrimination practiced against Arab citizens in Israel, and even undermines their right to life. This is cause for concern to all Jews aspiring to live in a democratic and progressive State.

While framed as a message of Israeli Jews to the Israeli government, this act of acknowledgment generated powerful responses among Palestinians. One demonstrator, *Gil'ad*, recalled reading Arabic online responses to the event: "It was moving to see the Palestinian response to this... on the talkbacks, in that funny written colloquial Arabic, the most beautiful response I've ever seen: 'I never thought that somebody could make you cry

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<sup>644</sup> Roffie-Ofir, "Israeli Jews: Decision to Close October 2000 Riots Case Dangerous."

<sup>645</sup> Ibid. In total, there were 106 hostile responses (78%) to 27 supportive responses (22%) posted on two leading Israeli news sites. On YNet sites associated with the mainstream newspaper *Yediot Abaronot*, there were 91 hostile responses (83%) to 19 supportive (17%). In Hebrew, the proportion was 73/12; in English, the proportion was 18/7. On the Israeli liberal-Left *Haaretz* site, the proportion was 15 hostile/8 supportive (65%/35%, in Hebrew). See sources in note 641; Accessed July 13, 2010.

<sup>646</sup> Roffie-Ofir, "Israeli Jews: Decision to Close October 2000 Riots Case Dangerous."

in two such different ways.” Aseel’s sister Nardin ‘Asleh wrote to the demonstrators, on behalf of the ‘Asleh family: “In these difficult days there is nothing more comforting and calming than to read, to hear, and to see you demonstrating for Aseel and for justice. You cannot imagine the strength that your step has contributed to us... I’m proud of you, I’m proud to be your friend, and I’m proud to be on your side in this struggle.”<sup>647</sup> Her response was striking in light of the ‘Asleh family’s estrangement from the SOP organization.<sup>648</sup>

In interviews, Palestinian graduates of Seeds of Peace described the event as a moment of public vindication, after years of being criticized in their community for the alleged passivity of their Israeli counterparts. *Majdi*, a Palestinian SOP staffer, encapsulated this sentiment:

I was really happy that it happened... There is at some point the feeling that... from the Palestinian side – we look at the Israelis like they don’t do enough, [that] they are actually passive, but when you see [this protest] you see how much [SOP] is really, it *is* effective, it made people who are against these ideas, and they are sympathetic with the Arabs and the causes of what happened to these Israeli Arabs who were killed, and how much it did upset them and made them outraged.

The authors of the protest letter strike a similar theme, attributing their political consciousness to experiences and relationships derived through SOP, particularly their relationship with Aseel: “It is sad, but important to point out that if our good friend Aseel ‘Asleh had not been one of the 13 victims, we would *not have known* to write this letter today. We met Aseel, of blessed memory, a wise and sensitive young man who believed with all his

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<sup>647</sup> Nardin ‘Asleh, E-mail correspondence to the demonstrators, February 6, 2008, reprinted with permission of the author.

<sup>648</sup> See chapter seven.

heart in reconciliation between Arabs and Jews, at the Seeds of Peace International Camp program.”<sup>649</sup>

The event was a watershed for the adult SOP graduates most active in peacebuilding, a public statement of the meaning they gave to “humanizing the conflict” in their lives. Yet as they took to the streets in SOP shirts, the demonstrators were equally intent on sending a message to the organization’s American leadership. As one demonstrator, *Ilan*, explained, “Seeds of Peace are always very proud having these emails about how they did this and that. But no, I don’t think they ever before did shouting and yelling, justice, justice, we demand justice! And I’m proud of us, I’m really proud of us.” Having worked for the organization as an adult, *Ilan* initially struggled with the decision to politicize the uniform:

It was an issue for me, I have to admit. I’ve actually told my kids that they shouldn’t go to political demonstrations with their Seeds shirts. I gave it a lot of thought – is this OK, what does it mean, does it mean that Seeds of Peace is demonstrating, does it mean that all the alumni are demonstrating? Who is demonstrating? But then we decided that it doesn’t matter, we are part of Seeds of Peace, and this is not a political demonstration. Or maybe it is, but we didn’t care. We didn’t care what Seeds of Peace thinks about it. We knew it’s right, and whatever. Even if it’s not true, we feel that Seeds of Peace is ours.

Another demonstrator, *Stav*, also served on SOP’s Middle East staff. She expressed full awareness that the action challenged the organization’s policy of remaining “not political”:

There was the interesting discussion of whether or not to wear Seeds shirts... Someone said well the organization won’t like it, and someone else said yes, but it will get us more attention, and that was it. And no one had a problem. Whoever wants to get more attention come with a Seeds of Peace shirt. And everyone came with a Seeds of Peace shirt. Which is funny because I was a [Regional Program staff person], and if the kids had asked me, I would have told them not to go, as kids, with a Seeds of Peace shirt. Because I was told [SOP] is not political... We all knew the higher-ups wouldn’t like it – and we all couldn’t care less.

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<sup>649</sup> "Friends of Aseel and Concerned Citizens," Letter to Attorney General Menachem Mazuz re: Closure of investigations of the conduct of police officers involved in the killing of 13 Arab citizens in October 2000," February 5, 2008, shared via email correspondence with the author.

A third protester, *Gil'ad*, recalled asking his colleagues at the scene, “Hold on, are we demonstrating against [Israeli Attorney General] Mazuz, or against SOP?”

### *Tomorrow's Leaders Today*

The iconic 1993 image of SOP participants on the White House lawn contrasts sharply with photographs of the 2008 demonstration. In juxtaposition, the images point to the profound changes experienced by active SOP alumni over those fifteen years, at personal, organizational and historical levels. The 1993 “Seeds” are, as President Clinton called them, “children;” in 2008, they are clearly mature.<sup>650</sup> In 1993, they are smiling participants at a premature celebration of peace; in 2008, somber witnesses to the persistence of conflict. The 1993 group applauds the achievement of their governments; indeed, the teenagers are but a photogenic backdrop for political leaders. The 2008 group asserts their own leadership, raising critical voices against structural injustice and political failure. The 1993 gathering envisions conflict resolution as the negotiation of territorial compromise in the OPT; the 2008 protest focuses on the rights of Palestinians within the state of Israel. The 1993 group is lined up for a Rose Garden photo-op, marketing a brand envisioned by the American leaders of SOP. The 2008 group stands in the streets of Jerusalem, defying Israeli political consensus *and* American organizational leadership, and redefining the symbol as their own.

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<sup>650</sup> In his speech at the signing ceremony for the Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles, President Clinton stated that, “In this entire assembly, no one is more important than the Arab and Israeli children gathered here.” President Clinton’s speech available at *Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Accessed August 1, 2007, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign%20Relations/Israels%20Foreign%20Relations%20since%201947/1992%201994/108%20Declaration%20of%20Principles%20on%20Interim%20Self-Gove>.

The preceding qualitative chapters depicted the struggles of SOP graduates with “Peacebuilder’s Paradoxes” – problems inherent to cross-conflict activism in their home societies.<sup>651</sup> SOP participation often exposed graduates to these issues, but the organization itself did not create and could not resolve them. The concluding chapter, by contrast, highlights a paradox of SOP’s own making: The most active adult alumni, those who embody John Wallach’s vision of “fighting for peace,” are often the organization’s most trenchant critics. The majority of active interviewees combined profoundly positive assessments of the content and personal impact of the SOP program with equally negative assessments of “the organization” in terms of its American-dominated organizational culture, internal governance, and external politics. This dissonance between praise for the program, on the one hand, and alienation from “the organization” on the other, was the most widely shared theme in the testimonies of active graduates. Unlike the “national dilemmas” discussed in previous chapters, this dilemma was shared by “Seeds” of all identities – voiced by at least two-thirds of my interviewees of every national group.<sup>652</sup> Their testimonies portray an effective peace education model embedded in a flawed organizational framework – indeed, of an organizational management frequently at cross purposes with the program’s most dedicated “fighters for peace.”

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<sup>651</sup> Abu-Nimer and Lazarus, "The Peacebuilder's Paradox."

<sup>652</sup> These two themes were both articulated in interviews by 24/34 Israeli Jews (71%), 23/28 Palestinians (82%), 7/8 Palestinian citizens of Israel (88%), and 54/70 graduates overall (77%).

## Graduate Testimonies

### *Two Sides of “Seeds”: Graduate Assessments of “Program” and “Organization”*

Seeds of Peace is life... Even now, when I stopped working for the organization, it's not that I retired from Seeds of Peace. [laughter] That would be like retiring from having blood type O+. I think Seeds of Peace maybe retired from being me. But I didn't retire from Seeds of Peace. We are Seeds of Peace. The good part of it.

– *Adult Israeli graduate and former SOP regional staffer*

In interviews and conversations, adult SOP graduates almost universally ascribed the SOP program with profound, positive and lasting impact in terms of their communication skills, self-confidence, educational and professional opportunities, political consciousness, social networks, and/or life course. Adult SOP graduates active in peacebuilding often credited the program in all of the above respects.<sup>653</sup> After hearing my research questions, many alumni opened their interviews by spontaneously declaring the centrality of SOP to their personal development. One Israeli graduate described her résumé as, “a building where Seeds of Peace is at the bottom and everything grows and branches out of that.” Another Israeli alumna declared that, “Seeds of Peace is the root of all my interests, personal and academic.” An adult Palestinian graduate observed that, “I haven't been involved in any other activity in my life for such a long time. My friends are from SOP mainly, I go to camp in the summer, here I hang out with Seeds of Peace, I go to activities; my life revolves around Seeds of Peace, and it has been like that for a while.” Another Palestinian graduate initially attempted a counter-factual approach to the answer, then ruled out that possibility:

It would be hard to say how my life would have been without SOP, because every part of my life has been affected by my participation in the program. My choice of school, the fact that I went to two-three activities every month from ninth grade

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<sup>653</sup> There were only four graduates out of 305 researched who did not acknowledge any positive personal impact. One, an Israeli graduate from the “early years” era, who had never participated in regional follow-up—responded succinctly. I asked him whether and how his experiences in the program had any meaningful role in his life after camp—he said, “no, it did not.” Another case is a Palestinian graduate who was in fact active for several years, before becoming retroactively critical of the program.

through twelfth grade, my decision to [study abroad]. And my life today is always being affected by the networks of people I met in Seeds of Peace. The networks of people that SOP has given me are very unique, and I don't think that many people have that kind of network of acquaintances. Throughout the Arab World, in Palestine itself, and even inside Israel.

An Israeli graduate, *Shikma*, described SOP as “the change point; the factor that without it, there's nothing... the other things would not have happened. Seeds of Peace is that point.”

Even graduates who had cut ties with the organization commonly described the program's impact on them as meaningful and enduring – as illustrated by the testimony of this Palestinian graduate:

This was something that helped myself and my career, and I had the choice, and I was brave enough to say, this is the time I can do it, this is the time I can stop it. My friends who continued have been awarded scholarships, they have many profits, for their life and their future, but I was happy because I joined in the right time, and I left in the right time. But I heard a lot, and it helped me a lot in my life. It helped me to study [in Europe]... You feel that you got advantages from this experience. In [European city], you hear 150 languages in the streets everyday, among them Jews, among them Arabs, and this experience helps you communicate with all of them.

A Jewish-Israeli graduate, who eventually abandoned SOP in favor of explicitly politicized “joint struggle,” attributed her activist consciousness to experiences and relationships derived through the program: “It *did* have a meaningful effect on my political consciousness, because I didn't grow up with Palestinians. It was my entrance... if I had grown up in a [political] family... maybe I would have known – but I didn't. I grew up in a typical Israeli family, so I really needed a real live [Palestinian] person talking to me for it to get through.”

Previous research has documented asymmetrical responses to dialogue/peace education between Jewish-Israeli and Palestinian participants.<sup>654</sup> The present dissertation, however, affirms this finding primarily in terms of public action, not personal impact. Since the outbreak of the second *intifada*, public actions identified with SOP, whether the 2008

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<sup>654</sup> Abu-Nimer, *Dialogue, Conflict Resolution and Change*; Salomon, “A Summary of our Findings.”

demonstration or simply operating an SOP stand at a city fair, have been initiated almost exclusively in Israel, by Jewish-Israeli and PCI graduates.<sup>655</sup> Yet the testimonies of Palestinian graduates suggest that this is due to the hostile context of Israeli occupation and Palestinian stigmatization of “normalization” in the OPT – rather than the content or personal impact of the program. In private conversations and interviews, dozens of Palestinian graduates – both active and not – emphatically asserted the experiential and educational value of SOP.

Indeed, acutely aware of the lines of criticism in their community, Palestinian graduates commonly launched into impassioned defenses of the program’s positive effects and basic legitimacy. *Nadia* opened her interview with one such declaration:

I’m gonna start by saying that I do not regret joining Seeds of Peace and when I have kids in the future I will send them to Seeds of Peace, ‘cause I want them to get that experience at a young age in their life. Seeds of Peace have changed my life and if it’s not for Seeds of Peace I would not be here today, and I don’t think I would have accomplished what I have accomplished in my life so far.

Meeting all these wonderful people, all these youth from all over the Arab world, you know, and especially Israeli youth was an experience that... I will carry it for the rest of my life, because to me most Israelis that I had met at that age were, you know, the soldiers that came to my house. You know, the soldiers that I met at checkpoints... But then like through Seeds of Peace I met the youth... the Israelis as... you know as human beings. And the skills I learned from Seeds of Peace were important skills that, at a young age, were important skills to learn when I was fifteen or sixteen years old. The dialogue, the learning how to respect each other, you know, learning how to hold your temper and like even though what the other person is telling you, you feel is so wrong and so unfair, but like holding yourself and trying to convince that person, because you believe that what you have to say, the message you hold as a Palestinian youth is so true and so strong, that you want to convince that enemy that this is not the true story. And I wanna tell you the Palestinian narrative so that you can hold that message and tell it to all your Israeli friends back in Israel.

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<sup>655</sup> Since 2001, the SOP regional program has regularly opened an information stand at the city of Haifa’s annual “Holiday of Holidays” street fair, celebrating Christmas, Hanukah and Ramadan (when it coincides). PCI and Jewish-Israeli graduates, occasionally joined by Palestinians, have presented information on the program and held face-painting, singing and other activities for children as part of the festival. See Maddy-Weitzman, “Waging Peace in the Holy Land.”; See also *The Olive Branch*, Winter 2001-02 Edition, Accessed June 27, 2011, [http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/winter2002\\_2.pdf](http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/winter2002_2.pdf).

Other Palestinian graduates echoed this pattern of superlative praise and disavowal of regret. One stated that, “Every time somebody [criticizes] it to me now, I realize that SOP was the best thing that ever happened to me”; another described SOP as, “The most amazing opportunity I had in my life... It changed my life, I loved every moment I had in Seeds of Peace, at camp and back home, and I don’t regret it at all.” Another Palestinian graduate, ‘Abdi, explicitly addressed widespread allegations in his community: “Seeds is a positive effect on anybody. I don’t think anybody would get hurt from joining such a program. People will tell you there are hidden agendas... and this is Jewish and this is CIA and I think that is all nonsense, [SOP] is good people trying to do good in the world.”

Yet despite their assertions of the program’s impact, legitimacy and value, ‘Abdi, Nadia, Shikma, and most graduates quoted above stated that they are currently only marginally engaged with SOP “as an organization.” They did not attribute this disconnection to “re-entry problems,” or express any ideological opposition to cross-conflict engagement or peacebuilding *per se*. Quite the opposite, these graduates vocally endorsed “humanizing the conflict,” and often testified to being active in other peacebuilding initiatives. They simply no longer saw SOP as the place to pursue these goals. As Nadia explained:

Towards the end of... college, I got to meet this great Israeli-American guy... and he was running [another peacebuilding NGO] and I felt that I wanna put my energy and efforts in that organization as opposed to Seeds of Peace, because I felt, even though I learned so much from Seeds of Peace and I took so much from it, it wasn’t enough for me. It wasn’t doing it. I didn’t feel that I was helping my people the way I wanted to and so I started working with [other peace NGO], which is a great organization and I felt like my energy and time and resources were more fulfilled.

Another Palestinian interviewee situated SOP as “a first step” in her political maturation process, stating that, “working with other teenagers, helped me move towards other organizations that take more of an active role in ending the conflict... if it wasn’t for SOP,

then I would not have been able to take up with organizations working for conflict resolution with, say, an older crowd.” ‘Abdi also spoke of “outgrowing” the program, explaining that, “I didn’t leave it because I think it has negatively affected me. No, absolutely not... It has very much positively affected me in many good ways, but I feel there is nothing else to do there for me. It’s not challenging me.” Shikma expressed frustration with the failure to implement ideas discussed at a series of graduate “leadership summits” convened by the organization from 2005-2009: “Ever since I finished the army, since the age of twenty, essentially, it’s always the same thing. We meet, we talk, we make plans, and nothing comes out of it. And it’s clear why nothing comes out of it, because the structure of the organization isn’t compatible with adults.”<sup>656</sup>

In the course of interviews, all of the graduates quoted above linked adulthood to a process of disillusionment with “the organization,” often linked to its leadership in the US. One Jewish-Israeli graduate perceived a gradual “Americanization” of organizational culture over time: “I was like, *walla*, what is this? It’s becoming... bureaucratic, and so American, with checklists, and what is necessary, and what’s not necessary... It was nice when everything was Middle Eastern and pleasant.”

One Palestinian graduate drew a typical distinction between his adolescent experiences in regional program activities, and his encounters as a college student with the American side of SOP:

Not my favorite organization. I have a problem with suits, and that’s my problem with SOP, just too many suits. The [Jerusalem] Center was friendly, there was a friendly atmosphere to it, everybody was informal, you felt everybody was trying to change the world. In the New York Center [sic], they just want to have more fundraisers to generate more money, I don’t think they cared about the cause, they

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<sup>656</sup> Seeds of Peace convened Graduate “Leadership Summits” in Maine (2005), New York (2006), Jordan (2008) and Morocco (2009), bringing hundreds of graduates from multiple delegations together to design frameworks and initiatives for continued involvement with the program.

just wanted to generate money because they have this organization and they want to keep it alive. It really disturbed me because this was the core of Seeds of Peace.

Dozens of adult graduates articulated similar rationales for distancing themselves from SOP.

Alumni commonly idealized the SOP of their youth as a “home” or a “family,” while characterizing the organization they encountered as adults as a “bureaucracy,” “business,” “company,” “corporation,” “institution,” or “office”:

I felt that when the organization got more famous, got in the lights, they didn't take care of us; it changed, they didn't take us along with them. It's like a restaurant that was owned by a family, and then it became a chain, and not only the style of the food changed, but the service and the people and everything. It changed from a home, to a travel agency for people... changing the style of activities, of management, the places, how it was directed... maybe the political situation forced certain changes, and the growth of the organization, but it seems the organization turned into a corporation and a company, not an organization that cares for young people at a very critical stage in their development.

Another Palestinian graduate employed identical terms in explaining why he declined a 2008 invitation to an SOP “Leadership Summit” in Jordan:

Two weeks ago they were in Aqaba. They invited me to participate, but *habibi* [dear one] not anymore, *kbalas* [that's it]. Seeds of Peace is not what we used to know, and we all know it. At one point, I took a very strong decision. I love the people in the organization, I keep in touch with them, they are my best friends – but as an organization, no way... It's becoming business more than the family we used to be.

These graduates, like numerous other estranged alumni, emphasized that changes in the organization, not the conflict, drove their decisions to disconnect. As one explained, “To feel that this is changing, that this is not any longer for me, it's very difficult. *It's not because of the political situation.*”

During the same period, dozens of other adult graduates remained intensively involved with SOP, working as counselors, facilitators, regional staff or all of the above. Yet in interviews these graduate staff were, almost without exception, equally critical of the organization on the same grounds, expressing senses of alienation from SOP's organizational

culture, US leadership and Board of Directors, fundraising and public relations discourse, “non-political” position on conflict issues, lack of diversity and awareness at top levels, opaque administrative processes and budgeting priorities, and chronic internal conflict.

Graduates who joined the SOP staff repeatedly framed their commitments to the program in terms of fighting to preserve an “authentic” SOP experience for new rounds of young participants, in the face of the mistakes of successive American administrations.

Indeed, graduates’ criticism of “the organization” increased in proportion to their exposure to its inner workings. One Israeli graduate and former staffer explained:

I divide [my SOP experience] into two periods. On the period that I was a participant, I don’t have a single word of criticism. Simply wonderful. People are always laughing about that “make one friend,” but I apparently took it seriously, and I truly made friends. I had a phenomenal experience... it was amazing, amazing, amazing, like being inside negotiations, it was phenomenal.

But my period of working in Seeds of Peace... This turned into an office, people who want to advance their careers. It turned into an institution, a place of work, and from the moment it crosses that line, it starts to fall apart. This is embedded, it’s inevitable, because it has to institutionalize, but that attracts people... who want to raise money but they don’t have any connection with the people or the cause.

A Palestinian interviewee testified that, “I was a very active member and always went to the Center in Jerusalem, but my staff experience pushed me in another direction, away from the organization.” A PCI graduate and former staffer explained that, “I’m not very proud to be part of the organization that represents the people in the States, but I’m proud to be part of the group of graduates, who they are really amazing people and committed... I do make this distinction between *the people who are active in Seeds*, and *the organization*.” The next section summarizes the background and substance of these critiques of the “organization,” all articulated by alumni deeply identified with the SOP “community” and “program.”

*The War Within: The Impact of Organizational Conflict on Adult Graduates*

In interviews, SOP alumni commonly cited John Wallach's death in July 2002 as a turning point for the organization. "After John died, I think the vision got blurry," explained one Palestinian graduate. An Israeli graduate and former staffer suggested the "founder's syndrome" theory of organizational behavior: "These are organizations that are established by people, and it's their baby... and John Wallach, with all the criticism he gets, he contributed something that was his idea, and when he went, something was missing."<sup>657</sup>

The records of Wallach's successors confirm that his absence plunged the organization into a severe and prolonged leadership crisis. Wallach's wife Janet served as interim President in the immediate aftermath of his death, until the Board of Directors appointed veteran US diplomat and SOP supporter Aaron David Miller as President in 2003.<sup>658</sup> Miller actively presided for approximately two years, before resigning in the wake of disenchantment voiced by graduates, staff and Board members at the 2005 Leadership Summit.<sup>659</sup> Janet Wallach served another interim stint, until the Board appointed marketing executive Stephen Flanders as Chief Operations Officer in 2006; he lasted six months.<sup>660</sup>

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<sup>657</sup> As Posner explains, "In the case of Seeds of Peace, Wallach was the 'center-spoke' of the organizational 'wheel' in that he expected to know about and/ or be involved in all happenings of the organization. Moreover, even though Wallach knew that he was dying, he was unable to pass the torch of leadership on to another person. This left Wallach's long-term vision for the organization an open debate, as exemplified by the "Old Guard"/ "New Guard" organizational split over the course of the intifada" (Posner, "Teaching Peace in A Time of War," 303). See also Stephen R. Block, *Why Non-Profits Fail: Overcoming Founder's Syndrome, Fundphobia, and Other Obstacles to Success* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 135-53.

<sup>658</sup> See Aaron David Miller, *The Too Much Promised Land: America's Elusive Search for Peace in the Middle East* (New York: Bantam, 2008).

<sup>659</sup> See Posner, "Teaching Peace in a Time of War." The author was present at the 2005 summit for a question-and-answer session in which an acrimonious debate erupted between Miller and alumni, which was cited by numerous interviewees—including American SOP staff—as "the beginning of the end" of Miller's term at SOP, both in terms of his interest in continuing to lead the program, and the organization's confidence in him. Other interviewees, not for attribution, linked the change to findings from the 2005 Social Impact evaluation regarding alumni and staff opinions of organizational management.

<sup>660</sup> See Eeta Prince-Gibson, "Planting Separate Seeds?", *Jerusalem Post*, August 24, 2006, Accessed June 17, 2011, <http://www.jpost.com/LocalIsrael/InJerusalem/Article.aspx?id=32701>; Al-Jundi and Marlowe, *The Hour of Sunlight*.

Janet Wallach was appointed to a third interim term before the Board hired Nicolla Hewitt, a public relations professional and former producer for NBC news anchor Katie Couric, in mid-2007. After Hewitt left in the same year, SOP spent two summer cycles without a chief executive.<sup>661</sup>

While Miller, Flanders and Hewitt came from eclectic professional backgrounds, they shared certain characteristics that reflected the hiring priorities of SOP's Board of Directors. Each brought acumen and connections valuable to the organizational aspect of SOP, in their respective fields of diplomacy/government, business/marketing, and media/public relations. Each had spent significant time and built connections in the Middle East: Miller as a Middle East negotiator for six US secretaries of state, Flanders as a high school student in Israel, Hewitt through work and travel in Jordan and the Gulf.<sup>662</sup> Yet none had any background in dialogue, education, peacebuilding, non-profit management, youth empowerment, counseling, development or human relations work of any kind.<sup>663</sup> According to alumni and colleagues, all were as poised in business meetings in New York and Washington as they appeared awkward at camp and other moments of obligatory interaction with "Seeds."

Their terms were also characterized by similar dynamics. Each summoned adult graduates to a new "leadership summit" that raised unfulfilled expectations; each presided

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<sup>661</sup> In the fall of 2009, SOP hired Leslie Lewin as Executive Director. Lewin, who had been an SOP camp counselor every summer since 1998, and the Camp Director since 2008, represented a radically different choice for organizational leadership—someone intimately acquainted with the SOP program and personally connected to graduates. Lewin remains Executive Director as of this writing.

<sup>662</sup> For information on Aaron David Miller's career, see "Public Policy Fellows/Aaron David Miller," *The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars*, Accessed July 2, 2011, [http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=sf.profile&person\\_id=166535](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=sf.profile&person_id=166535); see also Miller, *The Too Much Promised Land*. Sources on the selection process that resulted in the hirings of Miller, Flanders, and Hewitt: author's conversations with SOP staff and members of the Board of Directors (not for attribution).

<sup>663</sup> Miller, of course, had extensive experience in the world of diplomacy, negotiations, and Track One conflict resolution, but that is usually classified as "peacemaking" rather than "peacebuilding," which is more often associated with grassroots and civil society work. On the distinction, see Ramsbotham et al., *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*.

over controversial firings of regional staff and restructurings of the Middle East program; each left the organization amidst conflict and recrimination. In July 2004, Miller fired Jerusalem Program Director Jen Marlowe, replacing her with Camp Director Tim Wilson.<sup>664</sup> The act pitted two of SOP's longest-serving, most popular figures against each other, sowing confusion and divisions among colleagues and alumni closely tied to both of them.<sup>665</sup> In July 2006, Flanders abruptly closed SOP's Jerusalem Center for Coexistence, and opened separate offices in Ramallah and Tel Aviv.<sup>666</sup> Sami Al-Jundi, SOP's longest-serving Palestinian staff member, was fired for dissenting to these decisions. Flanders hired armed Israeli security guards to oversee, in his own words, the "termination" of Al-Jundi and two other Palestinian staff from "the company" where they had all worked between six to ten years. These actions provoked a backlash that ultimately unseated Flanders, but failed to reverse the changes he set in motion.<sup>667</sup> Hewitt likewise inaugurated her 2007 term with

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<sup>664</sup> As Posner explains, "During the summer of 2004, President Miller abruptly fired then Jerusalem Center Director Jen Marlowe without any warning, explanation, or consideration for the feelings and opinions of her and the rest of the Seeds of Peace community (staff and participants). Furthermore, since he assumed presidency, Miller demonstrated little desire to spend time getting to know the Seeds youth at the Seeds of Peace Camp in Maine. Such actions and behavior have threatened staff cohesion and allegiance to the organization, features that had previously been a trademark of Seeds of Peace" (Posner, "Teaching Peace in a Time of War, 304).

<sup>665</sup> Posner: "The Wallach-to-Miller transition... had clearly stirred up staff resentment and confusion over Seeds of Peace's ultimate purpose. Under normal conditions, such transition might bedevil an organization, but not to such a devastating extent. However, in the difficult intifada context, many of the frustrations and confusion surrounding this internal leadership transition ultimately compounded the frustrations and confusion that the organization faced within the external Israeli-Palestinian conflict" (Posner, "Teaching Peace in a Time of War," 286).

<sup>666</sup> Eeta Prince-Gibson, "Planting Separate Seeds?", *The Jerusalem Post*, August 24, 2006, Accessed June 26, 2011, <http://www.jpost.com/LocalIsrael/InJerusalem/Article.aspx?id=32701>.

<sup>667</sup> Flanders orchestrated these firings on a two-day trip to "the region" in July 2006. On the first day, he had two Palestinian staff, Sami Al-Jundi's brother Mazen Al-Jundi and Issa 'Abed Rabbo, move the contents of the Jerusalem Center to the new Tel Aviv office. On the second day, Flanders met with Sami, Mazen and Issa in the empty Jerusalem Center, announced their termination, and brought armed Israeli security guards to evacuate them from the building, which he then declared closed. Sami had worked for Seeds of Peace for ten years at the time; Mazen for seven, Issa for six. The author communicated in the immediate aftermath with the three fired employees, and was an eyewitness to their evacuation from the building. Other sources: Prince-Gibson, "Planting Separate Seeds?"; Al-Jundi and Marlowe, *The Hour of Sunlight*.

acrimonious “restructuring,” before inspiring the resignation of six veteran regional staff – five of them graduates of the program – on her first trip to the Middle East with SOP.<sup>668</sup>

In her 2006 study, Posner described the impact of the leadership crisis on SOP graduates:

In the difficult *intifada* context, many of the frustrations and confusion surrounding this internal leadership transition ultimately compounded the frustrations and confusion that the organization faced within the external Israeli-Palestinian conflict. One devastating result was that the Seeds of Peace management and staff, all of whom work for an organization that exists to teach respectful dialogue and treatment of others, ironically did not enact these codes-of-conduct with one another. Such a state of affairs had a damaging trickle-down effect on the perceptive Seeds of Peace youth participants, in particular, who caught on quickly to the hypocrisy of it all.<sup>669</sup>

Each wave of changes in personnel and programming divided the SOP staff, and sometimes participants, along new lines of opponents and proponents, leaving its own legacy of ideological rifts and interpersonal rivalries.<sup>670</sup>

Each wave also alienated different groups of *active* adult graduates, many of whom were offended or bewildered by the treatment of staff members they had known for years.

One Palestinian graduate, *Hamdi*, described these conflicts as cementing the distinction between “community” and “organization” in his mind:

Basically right now Seeds of Peace is an organization that doesn't exist any more to me. It died, you know, it started dying the day that... Jen Marlowe left and completely died the day Sami Al-Jundi left, and [became] just a completely different thing. Many, many other people share the same exact sentiment or feeling as I do, that's unfortunate that something that was very important in my life and so fundamental in making me who I [am] was destroyed, anyway but it still lives on in my memories and in the memories of many other people who were in it. It lives on amongst us because we're still a community of the Seeds and you know, we're still together and we're still very passionate about what we were in and what we did and I

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<sup>668</sup> Sources: Author's interviews and conversations with graduates and staff.

<sup>669</sup> Posner, “Teaching Peace in a Time of War,” 286.

<sup>670</sup> For full disclosure, I was retired from SOP at the time of all of the above changes, but actively opposed the firings orchestrated by Miller and Flanders and the closing of the SOP Center, sending letters of protest to the SOP community in each case. I was not involved at all in the incidents surrounding Nicolla Hewitt, and learned about her term solely from the testimonies of graduates and staff.

think what Seeds of Peace was still lives on amongst us and the relationships we have... but as an existing organization, it doesn't exist to us any more.

Other graduates found the personnel changes justified in principle, but objected strongly to the manner in which they were orchestrated.<sup>671</sup> Alumni not closely involved with SOP commonly expressed a vague dismay over the rancorous exchanges emanating from these events, and a preference not to “know the details.”

Over time, the accelerated “turnover” of employees took a toll in terms of “institutional memory.” After my retirement in 2004, I received repeated pleas for help from new SOP staff people attempting to reconstruct the participant database, or recover items and information lost in multiple transitions. The contents of the Jerusalem Center’s computer network, including seven years’ worth of files and records, vanished.<sup>672</sup> Under one administration, SOP Director of Communications Eric Kapenga invested months posting back issues of *The Olive Branch* magazine to the SOP website, to serve as an online history of the program. The next administration removed the web pages and deleted their contents.<sup>673</sup>

In interviews, many adult alumni lamented the loss from SOP offices, not only of familiar faces, but their entire vocabulary of shared memories and references. One Israeli graduate studying in the US explained the cumulative effect on his image of SOP:

I love Seeds and I always want to give back because the organization changed my life, but it's a problem liking Seeds as it is, or as it has been... the personnel changes every year. From the year that I was applying to [study abroad] and had to talk to Eva and Jeremy, to the next year that I had to talk to Nassim and Firas and another Lebanese woman, I forget her name, and this year, which is like, all new people... the staff I'm in touch with, changes every year.

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<sup>671</sup> Posner, “Teaching Peace in a Time of War.”

<sup>672</sup> Author's interview with Reem Mustafa, Administrative Manager of the Jerusalem Center for Coexistence/regional program (2001-2007), Jerusalem, May 26, 2009.

<sup>673</sup> Author's interview with Eric Kapenga, Seeds of Peace Communications Director, Jerusalem, March 17, 2008. After Leslie Lewin was appointed Executive Director in September 2009, the organization restored much of its previous program orientation, and re-posted back issues of *The Olive Branch* on the SOP website. See “The Olive Branch Youth Magazine,” Accessed June 27, 2011, <http://www.seedsofpeace.org/node/1830>.

Seeds of Peace is important because of camp, and I feel obligated more and more, because I am getting a scholarship. But dealing with these people, who are nice and are smart and are intelligent and fun, but... don't know what they need to do, over and over and over and over, it's insane, it's sort of depressing... I would never give up on it because I know how important it's been to me and it can be to other people, but the way it runs outside of camp is so frustrating. At [age] 24, when I have sort of an idea of how efficient organizations should work, or like, what exactly should *not* happen, it's very depressing to work with this organization.

A Palestinian graduate dramatized this loss of familiarity in his interview, saying, "I called the SOP Center and said it's [me], I have a problem, can I talk to Jen? They said she's not here anymore. Can I talk to Sami? He's not here anymore..." He proceeded to request to speak to a dozen staff who were no longer available, before saying, "I asked to talk to John Wallach. They said he's not here anymore."

#### *"Corporatization" and Alienation*

The people that were working on the fundraising were from that background of finance, people that know how to raise money in many different ways, they work in a capitalist environment – perfect, but this is not, you're not making profit out of this organization. This is a non-profitable organization that wants to make a difference with whatever works, and to have it be run as a corporate structure was not helping.  
– *Palestinian graduate*

This research is not concerned with the unique coalitions and grievances of each episode of internal conflict at SOP, but rather their shared patterns and cumulative effects on adult graduates' relationships to the organization. For rather than isolated incidents, these conflicts together reflected a recurring dynamic, in which SOP's top leadership a) prioritized its US fundraising and public relations operations over the actual work of Middle Eastern peacebuilding, and b) attempted to impose a formal, hierarchical, Western organizational culture on its hybrid, informal, *sui generis* and relationship-oriented regional program. In this

aspect, regardless of individual manners and merits, Flanders, Hewitt and Miller all fit the bill, and executed the will of SOP's business-oriented Board of Directors. As noted in previous chapters, the same dynamic surfaced repeatedly during John Wallach's tenure, and endured through Janet Wallach's interim stints and the leaderless period of 2008-09. Indeed, this dynamic persisted despite the disappearance, due to firings and resignations, of all the figures involved in the interpersonal rivalries of previous administrations.

The testimonies of active graduates abound with criticism of the organization's American leadership – especially the Board of Directors and executive officers in New York – for alleged prioritizing of fundraising and US public relations. In one interview, 'Abdi, a Palestinian graduate, defended SOP as “good people trying to do good in the world.” At the same time, he linked his own adult alienation from “the organization” to SOP's celebrity-studded gala fundraisers in the US:

[A] failure in my opinion has been the focus on bringing money into the organization, on fundraising. Of course, every organization needs money, but Seeds at one point turned into a money-making machine, what I call prostituting Seeds to giving these amazing speeches in front of wealthy men and women in the US and elsewhere just so they can write a check. I think that was an amazing mistake to use the Seeds in that way and making money out of them. Of course, if you like an organization you will talk on its behalf and you will work on its behalf and get it money absolutely but I think at one point it was run like an American corporate instead of a non-profit, and the pressure of fundraising had a much greater effect on the organization than the pressure of making better humans and delivering a good message to the new participants that were coming.

Graduates singled out “the Board” in their criticisms of the fundraising culture of “the organization.” In such critiques, “The Board” was often stereotyped by graduates as composed of American tycoons, primarily Jewish, politically mainstream or conservative, pro-Israel or unaware of Middle East politics, focused on finance, and disconnected from the realities of program and participants.

Actual Board membership has considerably expanded as the organization developed, becoming more ethnically and politically diverse than such characterizations allow and including numerous Arab-American members.<sup>674</sup> Yet some of the longest-serving, most invested and influential Board members did much to cement these stereotypes of the Board with personal comments to graduates and staff, and through support for extravagant fundraisers and for SOP's special relationship with the Israeli Ministry of Education.<sup>675</sup> Identity politics, moreover, was only a secondary focus of graduate critiques. Above all else, graduates criticized "the Board" as monolithic in *financial* and *professional* terms, and therefore responsible for skewing SOP's organizational priorities:

They tell us Seeds of Peace is for us, but it's not true! Seeds of Peace is for its bunch of rich donors. It's not for the Seeds. It's for the buyers of Seeds of Peace, like a commercial enterprise. I'm an American oligarch, flush with money, so they invite me to the Board of Directors... They're always concerned with the existence of the organization, that the organization exist, not that the organization does anything. In New York, with the Gala and the salaries, and all that. And by the time the money gets to the Middle East, there is no money.

The primary qualification for membership on SOP's Board of Directors has historically been financial means – and, indeed, remarkable generosity.<sup>676</sup> Board members serve as guarantors of SOP's financial stability, contributing tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars on an annual basis.<sup>677</sup> By the time of Wallach's death, some senior Board members had invested prodigious sums in building the organization. Board members personally underwrote the furnishing of the Jerusalem Center, the annual property expenses of camp, various graduate

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<sup>674</sup> See Al-Jundi and Marlowe, *The Hour of Sunlight*. For one discussion of issues surrounding Arab-American SOP Board membership, see Paul M. Barnett, *American Islam: The Struggle for the Soul of a Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 2007), 51-55.

<sup>675</sup> See Al-Jundi and Marlowe, *The Hour of Sunlight*.

<sup>676</sup> Author's interview with Barbara Gottschalk, co-founder and Executive Vice President of Seeds of Peace, Washington, DC, January 18, 2008. As of July 2010, the Board is considering changing this policy in order to accept members on basis of conflict resolution or educational expertise, and program experience.

<sup>677</sup> For financial information, see Seeds of Peace Annual reports at "Annual Reports," Accessed June 17, 2011, [http://www.seedsofpeace.org/about/annual\\_reports](http://www.seedsofpeace.org/about/annual_reports).

conferences, and educational grants for SOP graduates, among many other gifts. One past Chairman of the Board, Richard Berman, served concurrently as President of Manhattanville College in Purchase, New York. In that capacity, he provided full scholarships to nearly two dozen SOP graduates. Yet in the divided organizational context of SOP, such munificence may have simply reinforced the association of Board members with excess and privilege.

Negative images of “the Board” were widespread among alumni, but not unanimous. Some graduates who studied in the US and became active in SOP’s Student Advisory Council (SAC) sat in on Board meetings, developed personal relationships with Board members, and gave much more nuanced – indeed, humanized – assessments of the Board. As one of these graduates explained, “A lot of graduates seem to have the idea that the Board is monolithic, that they are all the same and think the same and act in a united fashion. The truth is, the Board has changed a lot over time, there are different people at different times, they disagree a lot, they have to compromise, and they’re not all aware of what’s going on to the same degree. And they care about this, that’s why they put their money in it.”

The Board and US administration were singled out for unanimous criticism, nonetheless, among one key group of active graduates: Alumni who worked as adults in the SOP regional program. One Palestinian citizen of Israel, who spent several years on SOP regional staff, encapsulated sentiments voiced by many others:

When I started working with them, other aspects came along – the way they work, the lack of communication between the Middle East office and the American office; I felt that they think very little of us, they felt that they’re doing the important work of getting the money. There were many times when we asked for money, when we needed money just to do our work – and they simply didn’t treat us like we were there. They treated us like we were worthless. When they came to visit, when their majesties came to the region, they gave feedback about our work without knowing anything that we did, and without taking responsibility for what they could do to

help the work in the region. It's not only me, it's a lot of Seeds, who were part of these things.

The next section will highlight the testimonies of adult graduates who staffed SOP through successive waves of organizational turmoil, eventually becoming immersed themselves.

### *Loyal Opposition: Graduate Staff*

The feeling of being disappointed by Seeds of Peace as an organization, it never changes. The disappointment in the past few years was, time after time after time after time, you realize that you are just not prioritized. Not you on the personal level – not you, not your program, not even the other side's program – it's not about, oh, they're prioritizing Palestine and not Israel, no! They're not prioritizing anything outside the United States – it's just not important enough.

I knew that when I was in charge of [regional] programs. People in the New York office didn't know who I am. The people who knew me... knew me from before – because I was a Seed. Not because I was doing an important job for Seeds of Peace.

*– Israeli graduate, former regional staff*

In the Middle East, adult graduates repeatedly stepped in to fill the gaps created by consecutive rounds of “restructuring” at SOP. They often articulated their decisions to work in terms of reproducing, for new groups of “Seeds,” all that they had cherished as teenage participants. As Ilan explained, “I tried to fulfill my idea of Seeds of Peace, of younger Seeds becoming part of the staff, becoming the leaders of tomorrow etc., that seemed natural to me. I grew up here, I grew up in Seeds of Peace, and now I want to give back. I saw it as a kind of vision, Israeli and Palestinian graduates working together with American staff.”

One Israeli graduate, *Or-Tal*, recalled joining the regional staff in response to an appeal by a newly appointed SOP President:

[SOP] called an emergency graduate meeting in Tel Aviv, because they had a new chairperson... begging for help, like, “I'm asking you guys to step up, and do this for Seeds of Peace”... it was after all the fiascos, after everybody resigned... Seeds of

Peace is my sucker crush, it was my first love. Like, of course, I'll always step up. All you had to do is ask, and every time they do... [when] I was fifteen: "We're on our way to pick you up, there's a presentation in Ashdod," great! "We need one more person to help with the puppet show, put up the stage." Sure, I'll cut school, cancel work, take three buses and show up...

I understood that the organization in New York is manipulative, and is exploiting us for money, but I thought it's like a mean cousin, you know, they're still your cousin. They're still just trying to do their job in a fucked-up way. Everything was fine, we were the oasis, the sanity. Everything was fine if I was Seeds of Peace.

As a graduate, Or-Tal identified deeply with SOP's new teen-aged recruits: "When I became a coordinator, I was like, those are my kids... They're just in love with what they're doing... you know they'll show up... the kids were still kids from Seeds of Peace that went through the camp. And they were still googling and facebooking their Palestinian friends." At the same time, she did not feel the enthusiasm of the youth reciprocated by the organization:

All of a sudden I started working with them and I noticed how messed up it is... there wasn't a thousand or two thousand shekels for the bus [for participants], while [staffperson] was making thirty thousand a month. That's Seeds of Peace for me. Some people doing, [other] people sitting around making money, off good ideas in general, good values.

Everything that [we] worked so hard for [as teenagers], and that we loved so much, everything that wasn't offered anywhere else: true coexistence, true everything bi-national, true dialogue throughout everything, it's not about publicity, it's not about anything, it's not even about making a mural – it's about talking to someone else from the other side – *that* was the cornerstone when I was there as a kid, and that didn't exist anymore. ... it's not that [the organization] in my time was so courageous or brave – but it was more led by the kids, and the kids were brave, we were brave.

Or-Tal eventually resigned in frustration, comparing her fealty to the organization to, "the abusive relationship, where the husband beats you but you can't leave because of the kids."

Other graduate staff acknowledged similar feelings, such as this Jewish-Israeli: "There was always the dilemma between hurting the kids on the one hand, and on the other hand not continuing to suffer from the organization. It was always there. So I felt that I did everything I could not to harm the kids, and to still demand what I deserve from the organization."

One group of adult Israeli and Palestinian graduates expressed great retrospective pride in their work for SOP. These graduates formed the core of the regional program staff for a period of several years, before and after the 2006 closure of the Jerusalem Center. In interviews, they sounded identical notes, emphasizing the bonds they formed with each other and the youth participants, and the quality of programs they implemented under tight budgetary constraints. As one Jewish-Israeli staffer explained:

The interaction was amazing. With all the shit that we ate from the Board, from the management, throughout the whole period, we did activities – my budget for... the first year was 500 shekels [\$150, NL]... with that, I ran a full year's worth of activities. We did seminars here at the community center next door, in sleeping bags, with no budget for food. Nothing! We spent no money. The kids the next year asked me if they need to bring sleeping bags, that made me laugh, because of course in Seeds of Peace you don't ever bring sleeping bags, [in our time] we always had amazing conditions. [laughter] But as much as we dealt with this situation, the work as a staff was... it was amazing, it was a simply wondrous feeling. I truly enjoyed it.

A PCI staffer echoed this positive assessment, emphasizing the building of relationships and the enthusiastic participation of youth as the indicators of “success”:

Everyone was actually satisfied with it, I mean more than satisfied... I guess it feels good at the end, especially when you come to the summer and you can actually see how many people stayed, how many people come to the bi-national activities, what you have to present in terms of all your annual activities you've actually succeeded to have in your own community with almost no financial help.

We used to meet every day everywhere around the country, most of the kids we were working with. [In addition to] staff members we were working with, the kids themselves we used to meet on a regular basis regardless without regard to activities, it was not an activity-based relationship between me and the kids or me and the rest of the staff, it was activities but it was also friendship. It's not a group that was forming because we only meet in Seeds of Peace events, there was a group that formed that is still in touch together now.

These graduate staff identified with the youth participants, and linked their own approach and motivation to their experiences in the program as youth:

None of us considered it as a job... it did not feel as a task but rather doing something you like. We spent long nights on it, we did not sleep in seminars... It

was the same reason [that] the kids were willing to put this effort [as for us] to organize a seminar. The staff met a hundred times to organize it but the kids themselves also met with the staff to give their own input ... What made them want to do this – and they're not getting any money – it's the same thing that [motivated] us, and [after all], *we were them* [SOP participants] at some point.

One staffer explained his work for SOP as a natural progression for graduates of the program: “To us, it was just another step in Seeds of Peace activities.”

This dedicated group, however, was equally unanimous in expressing frustration with the American side of SOP. “The New York Board or United States Board does not really know what we do here,” explained one PCI staffer, explaining that, “There were two compartments inside the [organization], there was the management compartment which was responsible for all advertising, money issues, all the legal stuff, and there was the actual coordinator group which [was] us.” According to all of them, US staff and Board members took no interest in, and showed little recognition of or support for their work. Several staffers repeated that, “they did not know we exist,” noting that regional activity reports went perpetually unread:

Slowly, slowly, we started to get sick of it, of the Board, of the ignorance... Every time I met Americans from one of the offices in the US who came to the country, every time, they asked me, “What? I didn't know [the regional program] is working. Really? Can you tell me about it? Can you please send me something written about it?” Yes, I sent that every month for the last year-and-a-half. Every time! “We don't know anything about it,” even though I sent every week a report, in English, that was supposed to go to everyone. It drove me crazy.

One Jewish-Israeli staffer felt that their status as graduates actually decreased the respect of their superiors: “We prepared a document... an annual financial plan, we need to know how much money we have, so we can prepare ... nobody talked with us about money. As if we were entirely irrelevant and inferior. It was completely an outlook of – ‘the kids are playing.’” As graduates of the organization, they really related to us as kids...”

SOP's "turnover" problem at the top contributed to their frustrations. As one graduate staffer explained, "So then there was Steven Flanders, we had to explain to him why we're doing uni-national, what's happening and what's problematic and everything and then in, I don't know, six months, ciao, he's leaving. And again there's an administrative vacuum." Yet their testimonies emphasize that the issue did not begin or end with any specific personality. Instead, the graduates repeatedly identified the relevant authority in SOP as "the Board," to which they attributed a conflicting set of priorities for the program:

Nicolla [Hewitt] did not know much at the time, she was still new. The Board knew more, at least the representatives of the Board. They were not vague, they were obvious. They were very clear on what matters to them and what does not. They care about money and they care about numbers. They want to hear how many activities, more important how many Seeds in each activity, they do not want to hear about small activities, they do not want to hear about regional activities, they do not want to hear about small – if to call them that way – small follow-up programs, they want big seminars, they want bi-national seminars – as if we did not try to do them – and they want as less money as possible [sic]... You should do this activity because this sells more to the media ... I don't know if all of it, but some people in the Board were more interested in numbers than in the content of the activities themselves.

Ultimately, this graduate described the root of the problem as miscommunication, originating in, "A different view or different aim of the regional follow-up program. We saw the purpose of the regional follow-up program differently from what other people saw it, and one of us failed to explain it good to the other."

A Jewish-Israeli graduate staffer, by contrast, interpreted the divide in cultural terms, alternating between Hebrew and English for emphasis in her narrative:

I felt this very strongly when I was working, [there] is a very Orientalist outlook, on the part of very many people in the management. Orientalist in the sense that if you don't speak English like them, then you're not smart like them. An outlook that calls the region, "*region*." I've already forgotten how much that irritates me, but during that period I didn't call it, I refused to use the term "*region*." What's this region? The Middle East! Israel! Palestine! It's like the way [Israelis] say "the territories." We don't know what to call it, there's a debate about this – the occupied territories, or the liberated territories, or the administered territories.... So we say "the territories." It's

the same thing with “*the region*.” In the “*region*” there are “*natives*.” I felt that in a very strong way towards the end of my work in the organization. In the *region* there are *natives, and the natives, they don’t speak English as good as we do*. It enraged me, this feeling. [English in italics – NL]

Ironically, this shared alienation from the American leadership actually strengthened the sense of solidarity between the Israeli and Palestinian staff:

There was a very strong feeling that the Israelis and Palestinians, with all the conflict there is between us, we are able to get along much better with each other than with the Americans. That we can meet, draft objectives, even if they’re different, for the work with the Palestinians and the work with the Israelis, but they will be agreed upon and they will be clear, and that everything... as long as we don’t have to do this with the Board and the management, who constantly land things on us that are irrelevant, without understanding what’s going on here. Each time, it’s some new American who doesn’t have a clue, and he’s sure that he’s the king of the world, who knows everything, what’s good for everyone.

The close ties of the Israeli and Palestinian staff, in contrast to their distance from overseas headquarters, solidified the peacebuilding vision of one graduate staffer, who said, “this was also what made me happy. I felt that, in the end, *yes we can*, Israelis and Palestinians – we can manage together [without Americans]. There were many times that I felt like I want to establish a local organization, that won’t be dependent on the whims of philanthropists.”<sup>678</sup> In 2007, this group’s cross-conflict solidarity culminated in their joint resignation from SOP. They resigned in protest after recently appointed President Nicolla Hewitt failed to hold any substantive discussion with them on her first trip to “the region.”

Hewitt did hold a “town hall” session in Jerusalem on the trip, open to all SOP alumni. Graduate staff attended this session, with the understanding that the new President would reserve time to speak privately with them afterwards. When the time came, however, Hewitt explained that she had to leave for her flight out of the country. Two female graduate staff volunteered to ride with her to the airport, in order to discuss their work. Hewitt

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<sup>678</sup> On same issue, see Gawerc, “Israeli-Palestinian Peacebuilding Partnerships.”

agreed, but proceeded to conduct cell phone conversations in the taxi until they drew within a few miles of the airport. At that point, Hewitt expressed concern that the presence of two “natives” in the car might cause airport security to delay her for questioning. She asked the driver to pull over, ordered the two graduate staff out, and left the young women stranded in the breakdown lane of the largest highway in “the region.” The act symbolized the distance that the organization had traveled from its original alumni-centered work ethic. In the regional program’s formative years, SOP staff had invested hours escorting graduates across checkpoints and borders, committed to seeing them safely home from every event.

Even after their resignation from the regional staff, these graduates refused to abandon their struggles within and outside Seeds of Peace. Most of them continued to work together as dialogue facilitators on university campuses in Israel, through other peacebuilding initiatives, and indeed for SOP. Several of them agreed to work at camp the following summer, where they encountered Hewitt a second time:

I remember that I saw Nicolla at the flag-raising ceremony, and she didn’t know the [SOP] anthem, she doesn’t know the words of the song. I cried. There were tears in my eyes. I felt that this is mine, this anthem is mine, Seeds of Peace, this is ours, we know the words, we’ve been living Seeds of Peace for so many years. I felt they’re taking this away from me, and also she’s somebody that – it’s not in her blood.

The same graduate described this particular flag-raising ceremony as awakening a sense of “Seeds of Peace patriotism... like, I won’t let them take this away from me [laughter]. As much as it’s kitsch, it’s truly how I feel. No matter what... Seeds of Peace, the image, the representation of Seeds of Peace in my head, my heart, in essence, it’s mine.”

This graduate’s sense of “ownership” is reflected in terms of long-term commitment. Resignations notwithstanding, the graduate staff quoted above – active SOP participants and Middle East peacebuilders for more than a decade – outlasted all of SOP’s various American

administrations. And much as the program affected their lives, their struggles registered impact – albeit belated – inside “the organization.” In September 2009, the Board of Directors selected then-Camp Director Leslie Lewin, an SOP camp counselor since 1998, to become Executive Director. For the first time since John Wallach’s death, the SOP leadership treated experience in the program, and connections with its graduates, as key qualifications for leading “the organization.” Lewin moved swiftly and decisively to redirect resources and restore emphasis on regional programming – rehiring and promoting staff members who had resigned in protest during the terms of her predecessors.

Such appointments are likely necessary, but insufficient, to fully reconcile the American “organization” and estranged adult graduates. Many alumni who resigned from SOP’s regional staff stood at the forefront of the 2008 “Friends of Aseel” demonstration – publicly directing their protest at Israeli policy toward Palestinian citizens, while privately contesting American hegemony within Seeds of Peace. Tellingly, rather than airing grievances related to their experiences as employees, these alumni cast their protest as a challenge to the self-styled “non-political” nature of the organization.

*A “Non-Political” Organization: Dialogue and Action*

Here, we’re finally doing something. All this inaction of Seeds, that’s inherent – there’s something built-in to the essence of the idea of dialogue, in the essence of the idea of encounter, that it’s like there’s no expectation of anything beyond. This came up in [SOP graduate seminars]. What’s next? ... What now? What are we *doing*? More active. More active in what? Never mind – *more active*. So the [friends of Aseel] demonstration was more active. Suddenly, a group of Seeds, we’re realizing the power, the potential that Seeds gave us, we’re unleashing it – ourselves.

– SOP graduate participant in 2008 demonstration

The SOP website declares that, “Treaties are negotiated by governments; Peace is made by people.”<sup>679</sup> The statement envisions a complementary – but parallel – relation between distinct spheres of official politics and grassroots peacemaking. “Seeds of Peace is doing what no government can,” proclaims another slogan, suggesting a strict separation of SOP and state.<sup>680</sup> A Google search produces infinite iterations of SOP’s self-definition as a “non-political organization.”<sup>681</sup> Promotional materials abound with linguistic fictions locating the organization above, beyond, outside but never *of or in* the realm of “politics.”<sup>682</sup>

Yet the same promotional materials, mirroring the iconic 1993 White House image, invariably juxtapose “Seeds” with heads of state – and imply that the former will eventually succeed the latter. John Wallach’s vision of SOP alumni ascending to power in Israel and Palestine remains a quintessential definition of success for the organization, as articulated at a 2010 meeting of the Board of Directors.<sup>683</sup> The SOP website lists among its “core objectives... to create a network of young leaders who will become a core constituency for peace,” and proclaims that, “fifteen years of conflict resolution programming have produced an impressive cadre of Seeds working in international affairs [and] politics.”<sup>684</sup> These guiding principles, integral to SOP since its inception, complicate its official “non-politics.” The resolution of intense political conflict is, after all, the *raison d’être* of the program – and few issues are more globally politicized than Middle East peace.<sup>685</sup>

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<sup>679</sup> "Seeds of Peace," Accessed June 27, 2011, <http://www.seedsofpeace.org>.

<sup>680</sup> Ibid.

<sup>681</sup> Author’s Google search, keywords “Seeds of Peace Politics,” July 25, 2010. See also “Our Mission/About us/Seeds of Peace UK,” Accessed June 27, 2011, <http://www.seedsofpeace.org/about/uk>.

<sup>682</sup> See Engstrom, A Fantasy-Theme Analysis of Seeds of Peace Publications.”

<sup>683</sup> Author’s conversations with multiple people who were present at the meeting, not for attribution.

<sup>684</sup> See “Programs,” *Seeds of Peace*, Accessed June 27, 2011, <http://www.seedsofpeace.org/programs>.

<sup>685</sup> See Lazarus, “Making Peace with the Duel of Narratives.”

SOP's "non-political" status is clearly not intended to dissuade participants from engaging in political discussions or pursuing political aspirations – as had been, in fact, the case with certain genres of Arab-Jewish encounter in Israel.<sup>686</sup> To the contrary, SOP requires campers to engage in political debates on a daily basis in dialogue sessions, and encourages these to continue in online forums and regional follow-up programs.<sup>687</sup> Moreover, the organization publishes the political opinions and publicizes certain political activities of individual alumni.<sup>688</sup> The "non-political" applies to the organization as a public entity – its content, discourse, staff and symbols – rather than graduates as private individuals.<sup>689</sup> "Seeds of Peace does not take sides in the conflict," explains Wallach in *The Enemy Has a Face*, presenting an approach that appears "non-partisan" rather than "non-political":

Remaining neutral is fundamental to the program. We do not espouse particular solutions to the Arab-Israeli conflict, nor do we condemn others. Each youngster must come to his or her own understanding of the possibilities of peace. If we were to stake out our own political territory we would not only limit the range of those possibilities but also risk alienating youngsters who enter the program with fixed political beliefs. We cannot afford such isolation. Seeds of Peace offers youngsters the opportunity to come to their own resolution about the conflict, and it supports

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<sup>686</sup> Abu-Nimer, *Dialogue, Conflict Resolution and Change*; Abu-Nimer and Lazarus, "The Peacebuilder's Paradox." An exemplary quote appears in an article by a Seeds of Peace parent in *The Olive Branch*: "When I was fifteen years old, the older generation also thought it necessary to initiate meetings for Arab-Jewish reconciliation, and those meetings occurred—although believe me, I couldn't tell you the name of the Jewish school we met with, because the meeting lacked something. Not that we didn't talk—we talked about food, about holidays and customs—but not a single word about the conflict. The adults apparently thought that if we ignore the conflict, it will just disappear...we, the Arab students, did not have the courage to talk, and the Jewish students did not have the courage to listen... The youth of Seeds of Peace succeeded where we failed. They played together, ate together, slept together, but also, every day they talked about the conflict. I believe it was difficult for them, but it is right to know what the other side says if you listen to them, and terribly wrong to decide what they think before ever hearing them speak for themselves" (Majeda Shehadeh, "Work of a Generation," *The Olive Branch* Fall 2001," Accessed June 27, 2011, [http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/Fall2001\\_3.pdf](http://www.seedsofpeace.org/files/Fall2001_3.pdf)).

<sup>687</sup> Examples of alumni debates online appear in Maddy-Weitzman, "Waging Peace in the Holy Land." SOP's longtime online forum, SeedsNet, featured heated and uncensored debate, including statements of abject opposition to "peace" or the organization's reigning climate of opinion.

<sup>688</sup> See "The Olive Branch Youth Magazine."

<sup>689</sup> According to the Seeds of Peace website, "Seeds of Peace is a non-political and secular organization and therefore does not represent any political or religious points of view," ("Frequently Asked Questions," Accessed June 27, 2011, <http://www.seedsofpeace.org/faq#n2802>).

their efforts, and the efforts of their national political leaders, to deal peacefully and honestly with the other side.<sup>690</sup>

SOP's "non-political" nature is thus conceived as the organization's commitment to impartiality regarding the issues contested under its auspices, in order to serve as an effective third party host for the rival participant groups.

Among graduate interviewees, this attribute enjoyed a broad degree of acceptance, in principle. One Jewish-Israeli graduate from a right-wing background described "apolitical" impartiality as integral to the organization's effectiveness and legitimacy:

It has to be an apolitical organization, and very open... The thing that was good, it was so mainstream and legitimate, it wasn't just another [Leftist] organization, like the Geneva Initiative. It has to be with strong relations with the Ministry of Education, with the [US] administration – that made it different from all the others. To recruit all kinds of people, with all kinds of perspectives. Otherwise, I wouldn't have gotten there. It shouldn't be one of those peacenik organizations.

A Palestinian graduate similarly cited the ability to attract right-wing participants as an advantage of SOP:

I've been involved in a couple, of these organizations, but now I would not recommend anything other than Seeds of Peace... The other organizations bring people who are already Left-wing and already peaceful... whereas Seeds of Peace brings people from different beliefs, which is why I think Seeds of Peace is what I would want to see in a coexistence program.

Their statements faithfully echo John Wallach's frequent disclaimers, epitomized by his statement to Morley Safer on *60 Minutes*: "This isn't some left-wing peace organization."<sup>691</sup>

Yet in practice, this policy evolved into another issue of contention between SOP's US leadership and its adult graduates. No longer "youngsters," many of these graduates aspired to *do* something to express the political perspectives informed in great part by their "SOP experiences" – especially adult graduates working on the SOP regional program staff.

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<sup>690</sup> Wallach, *The Enemy Has a Face*, 32.

<sup>691</sup> "Give Peace a Chance," *60 Minutes*.

In the Middle East, SOP took concrete measures to separate itself from “left-wing peace organizations” – eschewing official ties with the Israeli “peace movement,” and requiring employees to refrain from engaging in, or associating SOP with, activism. This “non-political” policy privileged a de-politicized, mainstream American understanding of “peace” over its local interpretations, which are plainly political.

One Israeli Jewish graduate explained the mainstream Israeli perception of cross-conflict dialogue itself as a radical act:

You can't do anything about it, it's not perceived as, I mean, it is normative activity, it's not going and taking drugs or I don't know what, tearing up iron walls in the territories, but from the point of view of the majority of people... it's more similar to going to tear down walls... it's perceived as something extreme Leftist... not just the organization, the act of meeting itself, it doesn't matter how apolitical it is, every encounter seems – and I imagine it's true on the other side – the encounter is understood as something that Leftists do, principally radical Leftists of the extreme sort. Something that's really at the outer limits of the scale.

In Israel, the term “peace camp” itself is simply a synonym for the political Left, i.e. the supporters of territorial compromise with the Palestinians and/or the end of Israeli occupation and settlement of the OPT.<sup>692</sup> Prominent Israeli/Palestinian dialogue organizations, such as Combatants for Peace, Neve Shalom/Wahat A-Salaam, and The Parents' Circle/Families' Forum, seamlessly combine aspects of activism, advocacy and dialogue.<sup>693</sup> Coexistence programs in Israel – even those programs labeled “apolitical” – are largely staffed by Israelis active in the political “peace camp.”<sup>694</sup> Thus, as SOP's regional staff participated in academic or professional forums concerned with dialogue and peacebuilding, or sought facilities and lecturers for SOP seminars in the Middle East – they met unabashed “left-wing” peace activists, who in turn sought opportunities for collaboration with SOP.

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<sup>692</sup> Mordechai Bar-On, *In Pursuit of Peace*.

<sup>693</sup> See Avni and Bacha, *Encounter Point*; “Visionaries,” *Just Vision*.

<sup>694</sup> David Hall-Cathala, *The Israeli Peace Movement 1967-87* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990); see also Abu-Nimer, *Dialogue, Conflict Resolution and Change*.

The regional staff valued these chances to build local networks; the US leadership, however, often discouraged such associations. In one example, SOP regional staff welcomed members of the *Ta'ayush* group who requested to hold a series of private, unpublicized Israeli/Palestinian dialogues at the Jerusalem Center, after hours – until the US leadership rescinded the invitation. In another, the US leadership vetoed the request of a group of Israeli and Palestinian doctors to conduct joint meetings at the Jerusalem Center.<sup>695</sup> The organization developed, as a result, a reputation for snobbery among the local peacebuilding community, which graduates, regional staff, and the organization's post-2009 leadership have struggled to dispel.<sup>696</sup>

In Palestinian society, the terms “peace” and “dialogue” are branded with the stigma of “normalization,” or acquiescence to Israeli occupation – resulting in the chronic “legitimacy deficit disorder” that plagues joint peacebuilding initiatives.<sup>697</sup> Prominent Palestinian NGO and activist forums tolerate cross-conflict partnerships solely on condition that Israeli groups declare explicit opposition to the occupation, among other prerequisites.<sup>698</sup> As detailed in chapter six, Palestinian supporters of cross-conflict dialogue defend the practice by emphasizing that it *is* political, that it represents a strategic method of altering Israeli attitudes and, in the long-term, government policies towards Palestinians.<sup>699</sup>

In this context, SOP’s “non-political” stance is a non-starter for Palestinians, an acceptance of the status quo. During John Wallach’s lifetime, his personal political record and friendship with Yasser Arafat granted SOP a degree of legitimacy in Palestinian political

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<sup>695</sup> Author’s interview with former Jerusalem Center Administrative Director Reem Mustafa, Jerusalem, May 2008.

<sup>696</sup> Author's personal experience, testimonies of SOP graduates and staff, author's conversations with current SOP leadership.

<sup>697</sup> Gawerc, “Israeli-Palestinian Peacebuilding Partnerships”; Hai and Herzog, “The Power of Possibility.”

<sup>698</sup> Gawerc, “Israeli-Palestinian Peacebuilding Partnerships.”

<sup>699</sup> See chapter six.

society. Following the deaths of Arafat and Wallach, SOP appeared to many Palestinians simply as an American NGO, closely tied to the US and Israeli governments, and hardly perceived as an “honest broker.”<sup>700</sup>

Palestinian graduates, including those active in SOP or peacebuilding, universally criticize SOP’s “non-political” stance as implicitly condoning the US government’s alliance with Israel and its overall policy in the region. Some tolerate this aspect, valuing the access that it grants them to present Palestinian perspectives to audiences they could not otherwise reach. Other graduates cite SOP’s “non-politics” as grounds for distancing themselves from the organization, such as this formerly active Palestinian graduate, now estranged:

I mean if Seeds of Peace was so sure of their agenda why didn’t they go to demonstrations, peaceful demonstrations? Don’t go throw stones, don’t do anything not politically correct. If you really believe that it’s unfair to take all these lands... Demonstrate. It doesn’t have to be violent. Just go stand there. How comes Seeds of Peace never took people there? We have enough people to paint our walls at the school, believe me.<sup>701</sup> Whether it’s students or teachers or someone you pay for, that’s not what we need. We need people who will do things that we can’t do by ourselves. I can’t go yell at a soldier but an Israeli friend could because he’s Israeli and the soldier couldn’t beat him up like he would beat me up. But Seeds of Peace made sure that Israelis are hardly ever put in that position.

The same Palestinian graduate expressed admiration, at the same time, for Israeli Jewish graduates who became [Left-wing] political activists, saying, “They are really exceptional people, who didn’t go to the army or became active. While they were in Seeds of Peace, they actually sometimes they did a better job than Palestinians trying to explain to Israelis why this is right and this is wrong.”

Numerous Palestinian interviewees recommended SOP engage in public protest, or make official statements against Israeli policy, to rehabilitate its reputation in Palestinian

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<sup>700</sup> See PACBI, “Palestinian Youth United Against Normalization.”

<sup>701</sup> This graduate is referring to an SOP seminar for Palestinians in Jericho, which included graduates doing community service work at a local refugee camp.

society. Adopting such a strategy, however, would risk painting SOP as a “left-wing peace organization” in Israel – alienating right-wing and mainstream Israeli graduates, sabotaging SOP’s partnership with the Israeli Ministry of Education, and undermining its aspirations to broad legitimacy in Israeli society. The issue is complex, and any strategy risks alienating certain constituents. Yet SOP’s leadership, in avoiding “politics” altogether, has implicitly prioritized the program’s image in Israel above its image among Palestinians.

Middle East audiences aside, the adoption of protest politics would clash with the image SOP has long cultivated for US donors, and with prevailing sentiments on its Board of Directors. Despite the grassroots ring of slogans such as “Peace is made by people,” the US organization has consistently privileged a “Track One” vision of peacemaking. At annual gala events in the US, SOP has awarded “peacemaker prizes” to American, Israeli and Palestinian diplomats and politicians, Kings and Queens of Jordan, even to the governor of New Jersey – but not to activists, advocates, intellectuals, practitioners, or scholars for whom conflict resolution and peacebuilding are their life’s work.<sup>702</sup>

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<sup>702</sup> There are exceptions, yet they ironically prove the rule. Two awardees, Ami Ayalon (2004) and Sari Nusseibeh (2002), are activists involved in Israeli/Palestinian peacebuilding – yet they are also both prominent “Track One” political figures. For several years beginning in 2002, they served as co-directors of “The People’s Voice,” (also called the Ayalon-Nusseibeh Initiative), a project that has gathered hundreds of thousands of signatures from Israelis and Palestinians in support of a two-state solution to the conflict, among other popular campaigns (see “Statement of Principles, Signed by Ami Ayalon and Sari Nusseibeh,” posted July 27, 2002, Accessed June 27, 2011, <http://reliefweb.int/node/171368>). Ayalon was a general in the Israeli Navy and director of the Shabak or Shin Bet, Israel’s internal security apparatus, before becoming a member of Knesset for the Labor Party from 2003-2009, concurrent with his work with the People’s Voice. Nusseibeh, a professor of philosophy by profession, has been the President of Al-Quds University in Jerusalem since 1995. The son of the mayor of East Jerusalem during a period of Jordanian rule (1949-1967), Nusseibeh has been a prominent activist for Palestinian rights and Israeli/Palestinian reconciliation for decades, conducted one of the first “back channel” dialogues between the PLO and representatives of the Israeli government in 1987, was one of the primary leaders of PLO communications during the first Palestinian intifada, and served as the Palestinian Authority’s official Jerusalem representative from 2002-04 (See “Curriculum Vitae,” Accessed June 27, 2011, <http://sari.alquds.edu/cv.htm>; see also Sari Nusseibeh, *Once Upon a Country: A Palestinian Life* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux 2007); Mary King, *A Quiet Revolution: The First Palestinian Intifada and Nonviolent Resistance* (New York: Nation Books, 2007). Nusseibeh has also been a crucial supporter of SOP and dialogue in the Palestinian community, organizing the SOP delegation through Al-Quds University in 2002, when the Palestinian Ministry of Education refused to participate.

At the same time, the US leadership has often discouraged engagement in activism or “political” statements by regional staff. The issue surfaced particularly during the second *intifada*, when some staff chafed at limitations on their personal activity and speech, earning censure from superiors. In one instance, after an IDF shell destroyed the Hebron home of a Palestinian SOP graduate in 2002, I posted a message requesting help for her family on an activist online forum.<sup>703</sup> The message found its way to a prominent SOP Board member, who urged me to, in his words, “Watch what you say.” In a more prominent instance, a pair of American staff left the organization in 2001 to engage in nonviolent direct action in the OPT. After their protests drew media attention, SOP’s US leadership ordered the regional staff to forbid these former colleagues from entering the Jerusalem Center.<sup>704</sup>

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<sup>703</sup> The following is the text of the message, posted on April 2, 2001: “Friends and fellow peace activists, One of our community of people working to create a sane and humane relationship between the Israelis and Palestinians has lost her home. Wafaa' Takroori is a 17 year-old Palestinian schoolgirl from Hebron, and for the last two years a leading member of Seeds of Peace. She has spoken out for peace to Israeli and Palestinian audiences around the country, and in America, throughout the period preceding the intifada, and exchanged many visits with her teenage Israeli colleagues. Two nights ago, Israeli army tank and artillery fire drove her and her family from their home in Hebron. This morning, she saw on television that the same home in which she hosted her Israeli friends only one month ago has been totally destroyed. The murder by Palestinian snipers of the 10-month-old baby Shalhevet Pass, in the adjoining Avraham Avinu settlement neighborhood, rightfully outraged and disgusted people throughout Israel and the world. The "response," however, has been aimed at totally innocent people who had nothing to do with the murder. Unfortunately, the press has refused to put a face on the Palestinian victims of the "response," not telling the Israelis that the army is actually adding insult to injury in its "response,"—punishing people who had nothing to do with the crime, destroying the lives of families and children, crushing the hopes of a young girl who had dedicated herself, against the prevailing will of her community, to making peace with Israelis. Once again, an act of outrageous and unjustifiable violence by certain Palestinian militiamen has evoked an Israeli army response of outrageous and unjustifiable violence aimed indiscriminately at all Palestinians guilty of living in the area. Once again, the combatants on one side have decided to respond to the victimization of innocents by victimizing more innocents. I turn to many of you knowing and appreciating the important work that you do in aiding victims of the cyclical violence, hoping that you will be organizing to help the residents of Abu Sneineh and Al-Takrouri, and to look for ways to help resurrect the hopes of a young girl who was waiting for her chance to join us in our struggle to end the violence, the occupation, the suffering, the stupidity, and create a decent life for both Israelis and Palestinians. She, her family, and probably many of their neighbors will need material and emotional support—and when the smoke clears, it may be time to rebuild some houses.” See “Young Palestinian Peacemaker’s Home Destroyed,” *Encounter EMEM – Forum For Middle East Peace Activists*, Accessed July 2, 2011, <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Encounter-EMEM/message/2331>.

<sup>704</sup> Two SOP regional staff, Adam Shapiro and Huwaida Arraf, left the organization in the fall of 2001 in order to pursue non-violent direct action against the Israeli occupation. Working with several Palestinian activists, they became founders of the International Solidarity Movement (ISM), which spread international volunteer activists throughout the OPT and became involved in a series of high-profile confrontations with the IDF

Such disputes notwithstanding, the “non-political” policy offered American staff a familiar role to play in “the region” – much like diplomats on temporary assignment abroad. It was less comfortable for Israeli and Palestinian graduate staff, living in their own societies, aiming to express their own opinions – which were often inspired by their experiences with Seeds of Peace. Highly active alumni, in terms of long-term participation, often became adults involved in protesting Israeli policy vis-à-vis Palestinians – especially Israeli Jewish alumni. While such activists are a small minority of all Israeli graduates, they are a large and influential component of the graduates who have worked for SOP as adults – indeed, a clear majority of those who have served full-time on the regional staff.

One Jewish-Israeli graduate, who has remained continuously active in SOP since attending camp as a teenager, articulated a sentiment common to these most active alumni:

The peace education and knowing people was fine and all that, but I was always frustrated that we couldn't go and demonstrate; I wanted to work on policy and not just grassroots work. I was a program coordinator afterwards at the Center, working on the Puppet Show and stuff, and I felt that it was nice and everything but it was all sterile, and our message wasn't getting beyond our little circle. I wanted to be more in the field. More activist, less dialogical. Without belittling it, the dialogue at Seeds has stretched thin – how many times can you sit in a circle and say the same thing? I wanted a different kind of communication, something that can express a political position and change something.

I also felt that way as a facilitator at camp. Yes, it was really clear for me when I sat in the position of looking at the group and outside the group. I think I received insights from this position, that there's diminishing returns – there's a limit to what you can achieve. Not to diminish this – it's essential, it's the beginning, if you don't know anyone and you've never had these discussions, you can't go anywhere, but it's a stage, and you reach a stage that you want to do more than this.

Many adult graduates involved in protest politics have remained simultaneously active in dialogue; others have not. Yet all of them cite their experiences in the program as driving

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between 2002-2004. SOP's top leadership cut all ties with both of them, ordering SOP regional staff to cut contact with them and not to permit their presence at the Jerusalem Center. The regional staff, their former colleagues and longtime friends, did not abide by these decrees.

their desire to take political action. One Palestinian graduate described SOP as, “A first step, working with other teenagers, [that] helped me move towards other organizations that take more of an active role in ending the conflict... if it wasn’t for SOP, then I would not have been able to take up with organizations working for conflict resolution with, say, an older crowd.” One Jewish-Israeli graduate stressed the connection between her SOP experiences and her adult activism, stating that, “There is no doubt that this is one of the most central elements that shaped me, as a social and political activist, in every sense.”

Some graduates, such as *Dina*, a Jewish-Israeli SOP staffer, expressed reticence about street protests, yet gave expression to a markedly critical political consciousness:

There is something about standing in a demonstration... I’m such a non-rigid person in many things, all the time I think that it’s terribly difficult for me to stand with one message... [A friend] goes to demonstrations, and then afterwards deals with 100 [fellow university] students, ditzes, idiots, in sociology, who don’t understand why he demonstrates with Arabs. “Why are you for the Arabs?” It’s terribly difficult to deal with, that demands a lot of energy. For [my friend], it’s very hard, but he knows how to deal with it very well. It scares me a lot more.

Dina went on to articulate an acute alienation from mainstream Israeli political views, explaining that, “From the moment I returned to SOP after the army, I feel that, I can’t lie to myself, I feel like a very political person in recent years even if I don’t go out and demonstrate.” While not “going out and demonstrating,” Dina has engaged in diverse forms of peacebuilding as an adult – publishing critical studies of Israeli security discourse, working as a community organizer in urban areas of mixed Arab-Jewish population, and facilitating dialogues with multiple indigenous and US-based programs.

Notwithstanding this reluctance, Dina joined the 2008 demonstration against closing the investigation of Aseel ‘Asleh’s death. Moreover, she advocated protesting in SOP shirts:

One of the problems in Seeds is that it is very difficult to find a statement that everyone can stand behind. I’m not even talking on the level of the organization, that

wants to be apolitical. I'm talking about the level of the graduates, on the level of doing something with a Seeds of Peace shirt. And I said, that here [Aseel's case] is a place that we, as graduates of Seeds of Peace, without regard to the organization itself, if it's for or against this, we can put on the shirt, because that's what ties us to this event, that's what's causing us to go out and demonstrate, that's what hurts us, that we know who Aseel was, and what he was, and that he wore this shirt when he was killed.

Dina noted that her parents also attribute her unconventional politics to SOP:

For my parents, it's very hard with my political positions that have drifted Left in recent years... Once, I asked my mother if she would have sent me to Seeds of Peace if she knew how things would develop – during one of our political arguments... My mom said she didn't know if she would have sent me to Seeds of Peace if she would have known how things would develop.

The dynamic between Dina and her mother mirrors the strained relationship of conservative elements of SOP's US leadership with the program's most active Middle Eastern alumni.

According to these adult "Seeds of Peace," now veteran Israeli and Palestinian peacebuilders, they were politicized precisely by the experiences and relationships generated through a "non-political" peace education program.

### Conclusion: A Contemporary Portrait of Program and Organization

This study set out to ascertain the impact of Seeds of Peace on the lives of Israeli and Palestinian graduates; yet it also conversely illustrates the impact of those graduates on the American organization. The efforts of SOP's first generation of adult alumni, detailed throughout this chapter, left their mark on key aspects of the "organization." Subtle but significant shifts in organizational culture, management, and politics have become visible since the hiring of "program" staff veteran Leslie Lewin as Executive Director of the

“organization” in September 2009. These were illustrated by the organization’s response to the 2011 arrest, by Israeli Border Patrol, of Palestinian graduate Mahmoud Jabari.

On February 25, 2011, seventeen year-old Jabari was arrested by Israeli Border Patrol officers while photographing an anti-occupation protest in the IDF-controlled section of Hebron, in the West Bank.<sup>705</sup> Jabari first attended SOP camp in the summer of 2007; since then, he became intensively engaged in peacebuilding, through SOP and other initiatives, and independently. By age seventeen, he had become the Palestine reporter for the “World Youth News” website sponsored by the International Education and Relief Network (iEARN), produced a film with the “Peace It Together” program for Israeli and Palestinian teenagers in Canada, and delivered speeches to the World Economic Forum and the UN Security Council, among other activities.<sup>706</sup> Echoing the testimonies of adult graduates in this study, Jabari traced his peacebuilding activity directly to his SOP program experience – in his words, “it was the beginning of peace activism.”<sup>707</sup>

For Jabari, then, the current SOP program inspired him in much the same way it had a previous generation of active graduates. Yet the contemporary leadership of the “organization” broke with previous patterns in responding to Jabari’s arrest by the Israeli troops enforcing the occupation of his West Bank city. The top level of the organization responded swiftly, notifying graduate networks, mobilizing influential contacts, publicizing the arrest and campaigning publicly for his release. SOP’s Israeli and Palestinian Program

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<sup>705</sup> On the demonstration, which included hundreds of Palestinians and dozens of Israeli and international activists, see Joseph Dana, “Hebron Demonstration Signals a New Intifada in the West Bank?”, Posted at *Joseph Dana*, February 26, 2008, Accessed July 2, 2011, <http://josephdana.com/2011/02/intifada-brewing-in-hebron-demonstration/>.

<sup>706</sup> See “For Seeds/Mahmoud Jabari Arrest,” *Seeds of Peace*, Accessed June 26, 2011, [http://www.seedsofpeace.org/for\\_seeds/mahmoudarrest](http://www.seedsofpeace.org/for_seeds/mahmoudarrest). The site lists Jabari’s affiliations, and links to statements surrounding his arrest, as well as some of his journalistic work, including a story for the “World Youth News”: <http://www.worldyouthnews.org/israels-new-heritage-list-brings-hebron-youth-out-streets-protest>

<sup>707</sup> Ibid.

Directors, themselves both adult graduates of the program, published an online petition on February 28 calling for his release. On March 2, SOP Executive Director Leslie Lewin and the directors of seven other North American NGOs published a joint statement calling for his release.<sup>708</sup> Jabari was released on March 3, and published his own statement regarding the incident on March 28. All of these statements were circulated widely, and remained posted on the organization's website as of this writing.

Several months earlier, SOP posted a "Remembering Aseel – 10 Years on October 2nd" section on its website, on the tenth anniversary of the killing of Aseel 'Asleh. The site features Aseel's writings and tributes from SOP graduates and staff – but also links to the specific Or Commission statements condemning police misconduct, to op-eds protesting the failure to indict any officers, to official statements by the organization, to the 2008 petition circulated by SOP graduates protesting the closure of investigations, and to photos of the "friends of Aseel" demonstration by SOP graduates outside Israel's Ministry of Justice.<sup>709</sup> The page features a video interview with a Palestinian citizen of Israel, who is an adult SOP graduate and veteran program staff member, an activist in the Palestinian nationalist National Democratic Assembly party, and a well-known *bête noire* of SOP's Israeli Ministry of Education contacts since his days as a teen-aged camper.<sup>710</sup>

These are not sea changes; SOP has officially maintained its classic discourse, partnership with the MOE and "non-political" status. The organization has issued "political"

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<sup>708</sup> The NGOs: iEARN, Mattie J. Stepanek Foundation, PBS NewsHour Extra, Peace it Together, The Daniel Pearl Foundation, Relief International, Three Dot Dash Global Teen Leaders and the We Are Family Foundation. See Ibid.

<sup>709</sup> See "Remembering Aseel: 10 Years" on *Seeds of Peace*, Accessed July 2, 2011, <http://www.seedsofpeace.org/asel10>.

<sup>710</sup> The party is officially referred to in Israel by its Hebrew acronym *Balad*, a double entendre with the Arabic word for "country," and by the Arabic *Tajamma*. See "National Democratic Assembly – NDA," Accessed July 3, 2011, <http://www.tajamoa.org/?mod=article&ID=860>.

criticism only in response to direct offenses against SOP graduates. Nonetheless, the contemporary leadership's official, public statements critical of actions of Israel's security forces and legal system are unmistakably at odds with the current Israeli government, which has campaigned aggressively to de-legitimize human rights organizations, to censor critical content and censure "subversive" educators in schools.<sup>711</sup> The partnership continues, but the organization has staked out an independent political position. This should not impress activists in what John Wallach once referred to as "left-wing peace organizations."<sup>712</sup> However, in terms of official SOP's internal political debate, there is a clear and sharp contrast with a record of muted responses in previous years.

To review that record, in the aftermath of Aseel's death, the SOP alumni community and the regional and camp program staff produced tributes, memorials and publications protesting his killing and the failure to indict; yet John Wallach's 2001 and 2002 statements to *The Olive Branch* remained for years the only official, public response of the organization's US leadership. After Wallach's death in 2002, internal conflict left SOP paralyzed and polarized; the US organization withdrew further from the issue of Aseel and other potentially "political" statements. When Palestinian graduates lost family members to IDF attacks in Gaza in 2006 and 2009, graduates, staff and Board members responded individually and privately; the organization, however, did not mobilize resources or issue an official response.<sup>713</sup> This was in keeping with the policy enshrined by Wallach's successors,

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<sup>711</sup> See chapter four; see also Zameret, "A Distorted Historiography"; Kashti, "History Students Fight to Use Textbook Presenting Both Israeli and Palestinian Narratives"; Levin, "Morim La-Ezrakhut: Misrad Ha-Khinukh Mesaken Et Ha-Demokratyah" (footnotes 353-355).

<sup>712</sup> "Give Peace a Chance," *60 Minutes*.

<sup>713</sup> It is important to note that certain individual members of the US leadership, particularly SOP co-founder, Executive Vice President, and Board member Barbara Gottschalk reached out privately and responded meaningfully to all of the above crises, and insisted on holding memorial services for Aseel 'Asleh at every session of SOP camp. Nonetheless, Gottschalk's attention to these issues were not reflected in the official,

according to which, “Seeds of Peace was to function according to the laws set by the Israeli and Palestinian governments and never work to undermine them, period. This held true no matter how much Seeds of Peace, or its constituents, disagreed with the government rules in principle.”<sup>714</sup> In 2011, however, that no longer held entirely true.

In the contemporary organization, “program” staff and Israeli and Palestinian graduates – including those who resigned in protest of previous organizational policy – have set a new tone. While SOP still remains cautious in comparison to advocacy organizations, the current leaders have moved to make Aseel’s life and death central to the official program narrative, have staked out political ground independent of the Israeli MOE, have sought partnerships with local and international peacebuilding NGOs, and have more openly embraced activism by SOP graduates.<sup>715</sup> The counter-vision of SOP expressed in the “friends of Aseel” demonstration is now influential at the highest levels of “the organization.”

This shift, however, may prove too little and too late to reconcile formerly active alumni who were alienated by the previous paradigm. The legacy of “corporatization” and organizational conflict is palpable in the testimonies of the most active peacebuilders in SOP’s first generation of graduates. When asked for their own “impact evaluations” of Seeds of Peace, they repeatedly distinguished between highly positive assessments of “the program” and harshly critical assessments of “the organization.” This dichotomy, articulated by adult SOP graduates of all nationalities, carries implications for the program in question, its international third-party model, and the theory, practice and evaluation of peace

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public discourse of the US leadership from the time of John Wallach’s death to the hiring of Leslie Lewin as Executive Director, from 2002-2009.

<sup>714</sup> Posner, “Teaching Peace in a Time of War,” 207.

<sup>715</sup> Author’s interviews with Eva Gordon, SOP Director of Strategic Initiatives, Portsmouth, NH, July 9, 2010; Washington, D.C., March 15, 2011.

education in the Israeli/Palestinian context and beyond. In conclusion, I will outline the significance of these findings in each of those spheres.

## CHAPTER NINE

# *Conclusions*

I draw three primary conclusions from this study's combined quantitative and qualitative findings. I will briefly summarize the conclusions, before relating them to existing studies and practice in the field.

First, that Seeds of Peace represents a complex case, in which an effective educational model is embedded in a problematic organizational model. It is a case that illustrates the importance of integrating conflict resolution principles not only into programming, but also into organizational governance and management - often neglected factors in methodologically and theoretically focused studies of the field.<sup>716</sup>

Second, that intergroup encounter-based peace education can have positive impact in situations of ethnopolitical conflict, but such impact will necessarily confront participants with intractable realities and profound dilemmas – the “peacebuilder’s paradox.”<sup>717</sup> This

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<sup>716</sup> For an example of focus at the organizational level, see Gawerc, “Israeli-Palestinian Peacebuilding Partnerships.” Note that the “effective program model” is to be understood as beginning with the camp, and continuing with pluralistic, responsive, sustained follow-up in context. See chapter three conclusions for more detailed discussion of SOP educational program.

<sup>717</sup> Abu-Nimer and Lazarus define the “peacebuilder’s paradox” in the following paragraph: “Inside the encounter, they are all human beings. Outside the encounter, their freedoms, protections and status - or lack thereof – are determined not by common humanity, but by the different identity cards they are issued by the authorities. Inside the encounter, they face each other armed only with powers of communication and hope. Outside the encounter, lethal violence and hopelessness is an everyday expectation, with machine guns on ubiquitous display in public places. Inside the encounter, ground rules encourage empathy, openness, and respect to foster a “safe space” for all. Outside the encounter, they are divided by barriers erected in the name of security for some. Inside the encounter, discussion leaders mandate equality between participants. Outside the encounter, power structures dictate that they live in separate, unequal societies. Inside the encounter, they can see that in terms of emotion and psychology, they are mirror images of each other. Yet outside the encounter, reality does not adapt itself to their newfound understanding. The dissonance between the epiphanies of genuine dialogue and the realities of intractable conflict places a paradox at the heart of efforts to build peaceful relationships between Israelis and Palestinians. In deep-rooted cycles of conflict, making peace means more than negotiating cease-fire agreements between armed forces. Where conflict has stratified the social order and shaped the collective consciousness, making peace requires complementary social and psychological transformation – and you can’t have one without working for the other. This is the grassroots peacebuilder’s ‘Catch-22’” (Abu-Nimer and Lazarus, “The Peacebuilder’s Paradox and the Dynamics of Dialogue,” 19).

implies that programs must include mechanisms for *pluralistic, responsive, sustained follow-up* in context – of which the present case provides some examples.<sup>718</sup> This is a challenging task, as their content is often incompatible with “conflict-promoting societal beliefs” propagated by mainstream educational institutions and youth movements.<sup>719</sup>

Third, in international peacebuilding contexts, impact evaluation provides an opportunity – much like an intergroup encounter – to either reinforce or transform cultural barriers and hierarchical relationships within an international organization. Given that peacebuilding interventions span global divides and occur in volatile situations, a thorough impact assessment demands the depth of local perspective provided by qualitative research and open-ended participant testimonies. Impact cannot be defined solely in terms of quantitative indicators established by intervenors, in advance and/or out of context.

*1. Seeds of Peace represents a complex case, in which an effective educational model is embedded in a problematic organizational model.*

In this study, the majority of graduate interviewees testified that their experiences in the program had meaningful, positive and lasting educational impact for them, in terms of communication skills, confidence, critical thinking, intercultural and international exposure, social networks, global social capital, political perspective, and lasting uni-national and sometimes cross-conflict relationships. These sentiments were widely expressed by

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<sup>718</sup> See chapters one-three; For the most comprehensive illustration, see Maddy-Weitzman, “Waging Peace in the Holy Land.” For vivid portraits, see “The Olive Branch Youth Magazine,”; see also Al-Jundi and Marlowe, *The Hour of Sunlight*; see also Lazarus, “Jerusalem Diary.”

<sup>719</sup> Shai Fuxman, “Learning the Past, Understanding the Present: Adolescents’ Interpretation of Israel’s Collective Narrative” (Paper presented at the Association for Israel Studies Annual Convention, Waltham, MA, June 15, 2011); Bar-Tal, “Societal Beliefs in Times of Intractable Conflict.”

Palestinian and Israeli interviewees, including many who are no longer active in SOP and/or peacebuilding, and those who are critical of “the organization” or the field.

This aspect of their testimonies strongly contradicts common critiques of “contact,” “dialogue” or “encounter” methodology per se, which allege that “such programs” are universally either a) impotent - ineffectual, insincere, superficial and quickly forgotten by participants - or b) insidiously influential - inherently biased to “serve the interests” of one party through “brainwashing” or co-optation of the other.<sup>720</sup> This long-term empirical study, by contrast, reveals such portraits to be caricatures of a diverse set of programs, critically informed facilitation methodologies and participant experiences.<sup>721</sup> For most SOP graduates, “encounter” participation entailed meaningful educational and experiential content and multi-faceted outcomes that evolved over time in relation to dynamic personal, organizational and political contexts.<sup>722</sup> It is crucial to emphasize, moreover, that this complexity should not imply indeterminacy in terms of impact. The majority of alumni researched, Palestinian and Israeli, clearly and often emphatically described program content as educationally and experientially valuable, and unavailable to them in other forums.

In methodological terms, this study’s findings support Salomon’s suggestion that the extended encounters enabled by international programs have greater potential impact than

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<sup>720</sup> Kalman, “Few Results From Mideast Peace Camps”; Jeff Halper, “Our Agenda is to Work Together to End the Occupation,” *Palestine-Israel Journal* 12, no. 4/13, no. 1 (2005-2006), 102; Salim Tamari, “Kissing Cousins: A Cautionary Note on P2P Projects,” *Palestine-Israel Journal* 12, no. 4/13, no. 1 (2005-2006), 15-19; PACBI, “Palestinian Youth United Against Normalization with Israel”; “To Be Continued,” *60 Minutes*.

<sup>721</sup> For example, Kalman’s September 2008 article in the *San Francisco Chronicle* asserts that, “Long-term impact, if any, fades”; “activities expire with the end of the first meeting,” “programs have failed to produce a single prominent peace activist,” all assertions clearly contradicted by the findings of this study and Maddy-Weitzman, among others (Kalman, “Few Results from Mideast Peace Camps”).

<sup>722</sup> On facilitation methodologies at Seeds of Peace see Sonja Arsham Kuflinec, *Theatre, Facilitation and Nation Formation in the Balkans and the Middle East* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2009); Maddy-Weitzman, “Waging Peace in the Holy Land”; Maddy-Weitzman, “Coping with Crisis”; on critically-informed methodologies in the field see Halabi, *Dialogue Between Identities*; Maoz, “Does Contact Work in Protracted Asymmetrical Conflict.”

brief or sporadic interactions.<sup>723</sup> Additionally, this study seconds numerous scholars' recommendation of a "mixed method" approach addressing both individual and collective identity, interpersonal and intergroup/political dynamics.<sup>724</sup> Genuine "humanization" cannot be achieved by denying human agency and complexity, or excluding essential aspects of identity. As Maddy-Weitzman explains it, "At certain points in the encounter, expression is allowed for discovering similarities and relating as individuals, whereas at other times, interaction is based on collective identities with emphasis given to conflict issues and power relations."<sup>725</sup> This dissertation extends that recommendation from "the encounter" to "the encounter program," meaning that emphasis on interpersonal and intergroup aspects should be holistically integrated throughout the culture and curriculum of the extended program - in follow-up activities, in mission statements, in publications, in private and public events.

Thus, the nature of "dialogue" or "encounter" was predominantly a positive aspect, and rarely the crux of the problem, for SOP graduate interviewees. Their encounters with the organization's internal governance, by contrast, were almost universally described as a disillusioning experiences, often emphatically so – including and especially by the adult graduates most active in SOP and peacebuilding. Their critiques centered on interactions with the US-based executive, fundraising, and management branches of "the organization," from which multiple alumni expressed alienation in harsh terms, applying labels such as "a corporation," "a company," "a business," and "a commercial enterprise."<sup>726</sup> Active graduates

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<sup>723</sup> Salomon, "A Summary of Our Findings," also suggested in his lecture "Beyond Coexistence – Teaching Peace."

<sup>724</sup> Abu-Nimer, "Education for Coexistence and Arab-Jewish Encounters in Israel"; Bar and Eady, "Education to Cope with Conflicts"; Bar-On and Kassem, "Storytelling as a Way to Work Through Intractable Conflicts"; Maddy-Weitzman, "Waging Peace in the Holy Land"; Maddy-Weitzman, "Coping with Crisis"; Maoz, "Peacebuilding in Violent Conflict"; Maoz, "Does Contact Work in Protracted Asymmetrical Conflict."

<sup>725</sup> Maddy-Weitzman, "Coping with Crisis."

<sup>726</sup> See chapter eight, sections entitled "The War Within" and "Corporatization," for detailed quotes.

grew acquainted with “the organization” over time, through participation in US fundraising events and by working on the program staff as adults. These interactions gave many the sense that, in the words of one alumna, “Who governs this organization are Americans, and they don’t understand what it means to be Israeli, what it means to be Palestinian and what it means to live in conflict”<sup>727</sup> – despite working for a Middle East-focused conflict resolution initiative. Moreover, a series of acrimonious internal crises, firings and resignations, deepened the sense that “the organization” did not practice what the program preached.<sup>728</sup>

This finding should emphasize, to funders and practitioners throughout the field, the vital importance of modeling conflict resolution norms in internal organizational communication and management. The specific dynamics detailed in this chapter evolved in a manner unique to Seeds of Peace, but analogous conflicts have plagued at least two other North American initiatives, and numerous other peace education programs and international development and peacebuilding projects.<sup>729</sup> They are rooted in asymmetries of culture, power and politics present in the wider fields of both Israeli-Palestinian and international peacebuilding. Previous studies have cited these issues as inherent challenges for a) Arab-Jewish dialogue programs in Israel; b) Israeli-Palestinian peace education initiatives, and c) international interventions directed from the “global North,” yet impacting the “global South.” Three phenomena identified by scholars in similar contexts were salient in this case.

In studies of indigenous Israeli-Palestinian peace education programs, Abu-Nimer and Posner conclude that the costs outweigh the benefits of partnership with official Israeli

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<sup>727</sup> The quote is from an Israeli alumna; see full quote in chapter one, section entitled, “SOP in the Middle East: Global Power, Local Knowledge.”

<sup>728</sup> As Posner explained, “The Seeds of Peace management and staff, all of whom work for an organization that exists to teach respectful dialogue and treatment of others, ironically did not enact these codes-of-conduct with one another” (“Teaching Peace in a Time of War,” 286).

<sup>729</sup> Author’s interviews with multiple directors, staff and participants of other programs, not for attribution; Gawerc, “Israeli-Palestinian Peacebuilding Partnerships.”

and Palestinian educational institutions.<sup>730</sup> They found that the presence of government officials reduced participants' safety and freedom of expression, and exacerbated the inherent asymmetry of power between Israeli Jews and Palestinians. In the case of SOP, officials of both Israeli and PNA Ministries hectored participants in order to reinforce "conflict-promoting societal beliefs," while Israeli officials intervened in SOP's organizational conflicts and sought to exert control over Palestinian citizens of Israel.<sup>731</sup>

In a study of Israeli-Palestinian peace education initiatives during the second intifada, Gawerc finds that nothing less than organizational survival depended on taking substantive measures to compensate for inherently asymmetric Israeli-Palestinian power relations. Those joint NGOs that took steps to balance internal power relations, and to address the acute legitimacy crisis faced by Palestinian peacebuilders, weathered the storms of the second intifada; those that did not were consumed by conflict and often ceased to exist.<sup>732</sup>

Neufeldt describes a similar phenomenon at the international level, in which global asymmetries of power and organizational policies reinforce structural inequalities between intervenors and participants in peacebuilding and development initiatives:

There are frequently hierarchical relations between donors, non-governmental organizations and communities which affect the local community members' abilities to make decisions about things that affect their lives. While these concerns are not new or unique to peacebuilding, they are of particular concern because of the importance of building solid relationships based on trust and authentic engagement in situations marked by immense distrust. Power inequities can undermine efforts to build relationships, local decision-making processes, and reinforce and model processes that actually undermine peacebuilding efforts.<sup>733</sup>

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<sup>730</sup> Abu-Nimer, *Dialogue, Conflict Resolution and Change*; Posner, "Teaching Peace in a Time of War."

<sup>731</sup> Abu-Nimer, "Education for Coexistence in Israel," 249; Fuxman, "Learning the Past, Understanding the Present."

<sup>732</sup> Michelle Gawerc, "The Dance of Legitimacy: Israeli/Palestinian Peace Education Organizations" (Paper presented at the Association for Israel Studies Annual Convention, Waltham, MA, June 15, 2011); Gawerc, "Israeli-Palestinian Peacebuilding Partnerships."

<sup>733</sup> Neufeldt, "Circling and Framing Peacebuilding Projects," 15.

Mary Anderson also emphasizes the deleterious effects of “implicit ethical messages” sent by international aid workers in conflict contexts – particularly “disrespect, mistrust and competition” within and between aid agencies, differential value for international and local staff, and prioritization of public relations – all issues cited by SOP graduate staff.<sup>734</sup> As the present study and these examples illustrate, systematic attention to power relations and organizational conflict are key components of organizational effectiveness, not to be confused with altruism on the part of “superiors.” This is especially important for programs sharing the international model of SOP, which span global and local levels of asymmetry.

This should also be a concern for proponents of the “professionalization” of peacebuilding; the legitimate goals of promoting accountability and transparency cannot be served via the imposition of adversarial, hierarchical norms of American commercial/professional culture.<sup>735</sup> These are incompatible with a program, and a field, whose purpose is, “promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behavior changes that will enable children, youth and adults... to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level.”<sup>736</sup>

Hammack rightfully emphasizes international and cultural aspects of asymmetry in his critique of American peace education for Israelis and Palestinians as “identity

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<sup>734</sup> Mary Anderson, “Reflecting on the Practice of Outside Assistance: Can We Know The Good We Do?”, Posted March 30, 2001, *Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation*, Accessed July 9, 2011, [http://www.sle-berlin.de/sleplus/files/SLE%20PLUS%20Downloads/2009\\_CPCM\\_Scripts/Conflict\\_sensitivity.pdf](http://www.sle-berlin.de/sleplus/files/SLE%20PLUS%20Downloads/2009_CPCM_Scripts/Conflict_sensitivity.pdf).

<sup>735</sup> See Mari Fitzduff and Cheyanne Church (eds.), *NGOs at the Table: Strategies for Influencing Policies in Areas of Conflict* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004). This is not meant to imply that Fitzduff and Church advocate imposing these norms, only that the legitimate goals of “professionalization” can be manipulated – as occurred in this case – into a means of imposition and a driver of organizational conflict.

<sup>736</sup> Susan Fountain, “Peace Education in UNICEF,” Working Paper, Education Section, New York, June 1999. Available at UNICEF: <http://www.unicef.org/education/files/PeaceEducation.pdf>. Accessed May 26, 2011.

intervention.”<sup>737</sup> SOP graduates’ dichotomous assessments of “program” and “organization,” however, posit an important corollary to his conclusions. This study strongly confirms Hammack’s finding of a subtextual “culture clash” between American intervenors and Middle Eastern participants, both Palestinians and Israelis. However, Hammack locates the cultural incompatibility in the humanist “cosmopolitan” ethic promoted by peace education programs, which John Wallach called “humanization of the conflict.”<sup>738</sup> Hammack describes “humanization” as a fundamentally American value inappropriate for contexts of ethno-nationalist conflict:

The American quest for identity intervention in this case is most misguided. It is, in fact, more likely connected to our own psychological needs and to our own national narrative, with its particular problem of multicultural accommodation. What is most problematic about American interventionism in practice – here represented by the cosmopolitan attempts of these coexistence programs – is that it fails to recognize the cultural psychology of identity, the idea that identity carries with it deep cultural meaning and serves a pivotal role in the reproduction of a social order. American interventionism seeks, in its universalistic quest for a cosmopolitan accommodation of “difference,” to overlook the narrative particularity of cultural identities.<sup>739</sup>

In the case at hand, Hammack’s analysis quite accurately describes the conflict between the pedagogical messages of Seeds of Peace and the Ministries of Education; it does not, however, reflect the responses of many Israeli and Palestinian participants.<sup>740</sup>

To the contrary, as amply illustrated in this chapter and throughout this dissertation, SOP graduates often identified with the ideal of “humanization,” interpreting it in their own terms, working to express their own hybrid visions of it in their home contexts *and* within the SOP organization. Numerous graduate interviewees articulated passionate identification with this idealized vision of the program: “It’s in our blood”; “We *are* Seeds of Peace – the

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<sup>737</sup> Hammack, “The Narrative Stalemate”; see also chapter two.

<sup>738</sup> Wallach, *The Enemy Has a Face*; “Give Peace a Chance,” *60 Minutes*.

<sup>739</sup> Hammack, “The Narrative Stalemate,” 411-12.

<sup>740</sup> See chapter four.

good part of it”; “We have been living Seeds of Peace for so many years”; “We believe that Seeds of Peace is ours.” Moreover, some of them explicitly articulated this sense of ownership in terms of a struggle with a competing “American” ideal, stating that “I’m not very proud to be part of the organization that represents the people in the States, but I’m proud to be part of the group of graduates... I do make this distinction between *the people who are active in Seeds*, and *the organization*”; or simply, “*they* can’t take [SOP] away from *me*.”<sup>741</sup> Their conflict was *not* with the “humanizing” educational ethos – but with failures to live up to it. The “American” culture that active graduates criticized at SOP was not the program’s universalist message or dialogical methods, but the more parochially American professional culture and Middle East politics they encountered in “the organization.”

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<sup>741</sup> See chapter eight.

*2. Intergroup encounter-based peace education can have positive impact in situations of intractable conflict, but that impact will necessarily confront participants with profound dilemmas – the “peacebuilder’s paradox.”*<sup>742</sup>

As amply illustrated above, graduates valued the SOP program for generating experiences, opportunities, perspectives, resources, training, and cross-conflict and international relationships that would otherwise have been inaccessible for them.<sup>743</sup> Many of them framed the program's impact at the personal level in superlative terms such as "life-changing" and "the best thing that happened to me." The content of these effects, however, was neither static nor plainly positive or negative; it was instead complex, multi-faceted and defined in evolving relationship to changing personal, organizational and political contexts. The larger Israeli and Palestinian political contexts, in particular, became increasingly hostile over the duration of the study to the "humanizing" discourse, cross-conflict relationships and peacebuilding activity encouraged by Seeds of Peace.<sup>744</sup> And while SOP proved capable

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<sup>742</sup> Abu-Nimer and Lazarus define the “peacebuilder’s paradox” in the following paragraph: “Inside the encounter, they are all human beings. Outside the encounter, their freedoms, protections and status - or lack thereof – are determined not by common humanity, but by the different identity cards they are issued by the authorities. Inside the encounter, they face each other armed only with powers of communication and hope. Outside the encounter, lethal violence and hopelessness is an everyday expectation, with machine guns on ubiquitous display in public places. Inside the encounter, ground rules encourage empathy, openness, and respect to foster a “safe space” for all. Outside the encounter, they are divided by barriers erected in the name of security for some. Inside the encounter, discussion leaders mandate equality between participants. Outside the encounter, power structures dictate that they live in separate, unequal societies. Inside the encounter, they can see that in terms of emotion and psychology, they are mirror images of each other. Yet outside the encounter, reality does not adapt itself to their newfound understanding. The dissonance between the epiphanies of genuine dialogue and the realities of intractable conflict places a paradox at the heart of efforts to build peaceful relationships between Israelis and Palestinians. In deep-rooted cycles of conflict, making peace means more than negotiating cease-fire agreements between armed forces. Where conflict has stratified the social order and shaped the collective consciousness, making peace requires complementary social and psychological transformation – and you can’t have one without working for the other. This is the grassroots peacebuilder’s ‘Catch-22’” (Abu-Nimer and Lazarus, “The Peacebuilder’s Paradox and the Dynamics of Dialogue,” 19).

<sup>743</sup> See chapters three and six; see also Lazarus, "The Political Economy of Seeds of Peace."

<sup>744</sup> See Arian, Herrman et al., “Auditing Israeli Democracy”; PACBI, “Palestinian Youth United Against Normalization with Israel”; Yael Sternhell, “Empathy Toward the Palestinian Side Evokes Hatred and Distrust,” *Haaretz*, July 7, 2011, Accessed July 9, 2011, <http://www.haaretz.com/print->

of generating transformative experiences at the individual level, this of course did not prevent the collapse of negotiations, the escalation of violence, the entrenchment of occupation and the hardening of public opinion that have defined the macro-political context of this generation.<sup>745</sup>

As a result, the impact of the program was embedded in a deepening "peacebuilder's paradox": The more *effective* SOP was in terms of inspiring individual Israeli and Palestinian graduates to engage in peacebuilding, the more its *effects* placed them in opposition to aspects of the dominant consensus in their societies.<sup>746</sup> Hence, active graduates often also articulated the impact of SOP on their lives in terms of dilemmas, dissonance and perpetual struggle. Hence, being a "Seed of Peace" constituted a source of "social capital" in elite and Western milieu, but a social stigma in much of the Middle East. In certain crucial contexts, such as military units for Israeli Jews, or university campuses in the West Bank during the second intifada, alumni experienced cognitive dissonance and intense pressure to keep SOP t-shirts - literally and figuratively - "in the closet." And indeed, these contexts eventually discouraged the majority of graduates from continuing active engagement in SOP or peacebuilding. For a significant minority, however, multi-dimensional "follow-up" programs helped them to sustain or renew peacebuilding activity into adulthood.

This implies that encounter-based peace education programs must include mechanisms for pluralistic, responsive, sustained follow-up in context – of which the present

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edition/features/empathy-toward-the-palestinian-side-invokes-hatred-and-distrust-1.371874; Smooha, "Arab-Jewish Relations in Israel: Alienation and Rapprochement."

<sup>745</sup> See Dowty, "The Impasse that Remains"; Khalidi, "Stateless in Palestine"; Yaacov Bar Siman-Tov (ed.), *The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: From Conflict Resolution to Conflict Management* (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2007).

<sup>746</sup> As Kelman observed regarding participants in his original Israeli-Palestinian workshops, "Advocates of a softer enemy image and of communication with the enemy open themselves up to intense suspicion and often accusations of treason" ("The Interdependence of Israeli and Palestinian National Identities," 591).

case provides some examples.<sup>747</sup> Pluralistic and responsive means adaptive to the asymmetrical needs and realities and changing contexts of Israelis and Palestinians and individuals, including uni-national and cross-conflict components – understanding, as Salomon says, “one size does not fit all.”<sup>748</sup> This is challenging task, as most initiatives have limited time and resources, and their content is often incompatible with the “conflict-promoting societal beliefs” propagated by mainstream educational institutions and youth movements that might otherwise provide support.<sup>749</sup>

An effective solution outside the formal educational system is suggested by Susan Allen Nan’s vision of coordination between inclusive conflict resolution networks: Deliberate cooperation between peace education programs and local peacebuilding initiatives and networks, such that the provision of “follow-up” becomes a shared opportunity, not the exclusive responsibility of any single program or peacebuilding approach.<sup>750</sup> The objective of remaining “non-partisan,” a legitimate position for an international educational program, is best pursued through engagement with diverse local peacebuilding initiatives – not through disengagement from local actors and issues in the name of remaining “non-political.” Through such a strategy, youth participants would be connected to expansive networks and exposed to diverse forms and forums of peacebuilding activity – bolstering their sense of

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<sup>747</sup> See chapters one and three. For the most comprehensive illustration, see Maddy-Weitzman, “Waging Peace in the Holy Land.” For brief portraits, see “The Olive Branch Youth Magazine,”; see also Al-Jundi and Marlowe, *The Hour of Sunlight*; see also Lazarus, “Jerusalem Diary.”

<sup>748</sup> Salomon, “A Summary of our Findings,” 12. It is important to emphasize also, that while there are well-established general patterns of distinction between Israelis and Palestinians that reflect minority/majority and conflict dynamics in other situations, in every group one also finds individual exceptions to these general trends. Among the subjects of this study there are Israeli Jews who prioritize political action over relationship and reflection; there are Palestinians who deeply value cross-conflict relationships and open forums for reflection and expression of individual identity.

<sup>749</sup> Fuxman, “Learning the Past, Understanding the Present.”

<sup>750</sup> Susan Allen Nan, “Conflict Resolution in a Network Society.”

legitimacy, multiplying sources of inspiration and support, and ensuring that international “peace camps” serve as resources for local political “peace camps,” and vice versa.

*3. In international peacebuilding contexts, impact evaluation is an “intergroup encounter” between global and local actors, or “intervenors” and “participants”; this provides a similar opportunity to either reinforce or transform cultural barriers and hierarchical relationships.*

Given that peacebuilding interventions span global divides and occur in volatile situations, a thorough impact assessment demands the depth of local perspective provided by qualitative research and open-ended participant testimonies. Impact cannot be defined solely in terms of quantitative indicators established by intervenors, in advance and/or out of context. Indicators derived *through contextual experience* – such as long-term peacebuilding activity in this case – can provide meaningful information. Yet evaluation must always interpret quantitative measures in terms of effectiveness and complex effects, local relevance and long-term sustainability.

A meaningful evaluation process can do much more than provide “numbers” for fundraising; it provides a rare and valuable opportunity to engage “intervenors” with the perspectives and lived realities of participants, ultimately breaking down internal barriers to communication and hierarchical relationships between intervenors and participants. Participant testimonies can reframe goals and outcomes in terms previously inaccessible to intervenors, can bring to light unexpected or unintended impacts, and provide a platform for dialogue within and between the disparate communities linked through the intervention. International peacebuilding initiatives can benefit substantially from mainstreaming

methodologies for empowering participants within the intervention, such as “Action-Evaluation” and “Most Significant Change.”<sup>751</sup> In the case of Seeds of Peace, the dialogue mechanisms established through such methods might have surfaced internal asymmetries and mitigated the organizational conflicts that contradicted the program’s positive impacts.

International peacebuilding, cross-conflict dialogue and impact evaluation all present rare opportunities for communication across cultural, political and social/structural divides. Each contains the potential to challenge – or reinforce – existing barriers and hierarchies. The degree to which these processes inspire and empower participants to engage in local peacebuilding struggles, over the long-term, must be the ultimate measure of “success.”

### *Final Evaluation*

These conclusions have implications beyond the case at hand. They demonstrate the potential of international peace education if and when the third party remains truly “international,” rather than representing a particular national identity or Middle East policy.<sup>752</sup> Cultural and structural asymmetries are inherent challenges, but not insurmountable obstacles, to positive educational impact. The cross-conflict encounter remains a potent pedagogical forum in which to contrast common humanity with asymmetrical power relations, and to expose youth to alternative versions of politics and history. International auspices allow for an extended, intensive “encounter” process that can

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<sup>751</sup> Rothman, “Action-Evaluation in Conflict Resolution”; Davies and Dart, “The Most-Significant-Change (MSC) Method.”

<sup>752</sup> At the level of organizational governance, this could be accomplished through deliberate attention to the diversity of Board membership as well as staffing, and through clear separation between the equally crucial but substantively distinct roles of donors and program directors. Spaces could be reserved for graduates and conflict resolution/peace education experts on the Board, or separate advisory councils established.

provide powerful short-term inspiration. When combined with sustained follow-up in context, this model can indeed empower youth to see, to rethink, to critique, to challenge, to oppose, to protest – if not themselves to “break” – the “cycle of violence.”

While Israeli and Palestinian participants often interpreted “humanization” differently from each other and from American directors and staff, many drew inspiration from the impossible conversations and relationships they derived through the program, and felt empowered to articulate their own interpretations. These graduates valued the creation of a “third space” to engage across these differences.<sup>753</sup> As one graduate explained, “Seeds of Peace creates contradictions that don’t exist in reality”; yet he ultimately construed that as the program’s greatest contribution. The same graduate has spent adult life working as a dialogue facilitator, activist and peace educator, within and beyond Seeds of Peace – striving to create ever more “contradictions” to an unjust and untenable reality.

The intense dilemmas experienced by SOP graduates raise the question of whether it is effective or ethical to “educate for peace” in a context of intractable conflict; some scholars have cast doubt on both accounts. The majorities of SOP graduates’ peers have moved away from the values of “humanization” and the prospect of conflict resolution, as indeed have some SOP alumni. A profound commitment of resources was and remains

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<sup>753</sup> Jon Van Til, *Growing Civil Society* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000); cited in Posner, “Teaching Peace in a Time of War,” 290-91: “NGOs may have the best chance of succeeding in a difficult asymmetric conflict if they continue to occupy that ‘third space’ outside of state and market, serving as an alternative to the status quo.” This usage of the term “third space” here is not precisely commensurate with its original use by post-colonial theorist Homi Bhabha, which is nonetheless also relevant to the present discussion. Bhabha famously used the term to designate spaces of “hybrid” reinvention of identity in post-colonial contexts: “The third space which enables other positions to emerge,” (Jonathan Rutherford, “The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha” in Jonathan Rutherford (ed.), *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 207-221. Ilan Pappé uses the term in reference to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict: “The third space seeks to reconstruct an individual story within the collective story produced by the national narratives of the occupier and the occupied” (Ilan Pappé, “The Bridging Narrative Concept,” in *Israeli and Palestinian Narratives of Conflict: History’s Double Helix*, edited by Robert I. Rotberg (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 200).

necessary to continue this work effectively. Yet while there is no question that peace education becomes an uphill battle in such a context, it becomes all the more worth fighting.

Bar-Tal states that in a context of mass conformity to a nationalist “ethos of conflict,” the primary purpose of peace education must indeed be to go against the grain, to encourage critical thinking. In his words, “the package of values in peace education—tolerance, openness, human rights, minority rights, pluralism, democracy, humanism—have become the province of a minority [in contemporary Israel]... but history shows that majorities can lead countries and peoples to horrific deeds.”<sup>754</sup> In such a situation, Bar-Tal urges inspiring students to “cast doubt, to ask questions, to seek knowledge.”<sup>755</sup>

This spirit echoes in the testimonies of adult SOP graduates who have themselves become peace educators. An Israeli alumna stated that her encounters with Palestinians in the program inspired her first questioning of Israeli policy – in her words, “the first time I realized we’re not a *tallit* (prayer shawl) that’s pure azure.”<sup>756</sup> A Palestinian graduate took pride in “creating a more complicated understanding of the Israeli people, a more comprehensive understanding... I’ve come to the conclusion that no matter what, if we don’t talk, it’s even worse.” Another Palestinian graduate spoke in universal terms:

It doesn’t have to be about peace and love and love your neighbor... in my opinion this is not the point. The point is you are teaching kids how to accept anything that’s different than them whether it was another nationality, whether it was another idea, whether it was a way of approaching a problem, a problem solving skill and it’s the way you listen, something that we’re not so great at. You learn that you need to listen to the other side, to put your feet in the shoes of the other person, this is a skill for life... it’s carried on with me until today, everything I do.

After one Israeli interviewee spoke at length of the cognitive dissonance she and other Israeli graduates experienced surrounding military service, I asked her directly whether it was ethical

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<sup>754</sup> Harpaz, “Interview with Daniel Bar-Tal,” 36.

<sup>755</sup> Ibid.

<sup>756</sup> In Hebrew, “*anakhnu lo tallit she-kulo tkbelet.*”

to confront youth with such dilemmas. She replied immediately, “it’s a gift,” declaring that, “My educational ideology is to teach children to ask questions and to doubt. It’s to educate a generation of people that doesn’t take for granted the dictates of their society. The fact that it’s confusing, that’s not bad – it’s good. The fact that it’s difficult, and that it makes you a more conflicted young person... my own children, I’ll definitely educate this way.”

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