

8-29-2003

Overcoming Political Strife: A Case Study Based on Training Jewish and Arab Educational Counselors

Daniela Kramer

Follow this and additional works at: <https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp>

 Part of the [Defense and Security Studies Commons](#), [International Relations Commons](#), [Near and Middle Eastern Studies Commons](#), [Other Political Science Commons](#), [Other Psychology Commons](#), and the [Peace and Conflict Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Daniela Kramer (2003) "Overcoming Political Strife: A Case Study Based on Training Jewish and Arab Educational Counselors," *International Bulletin of Political Psychology*: Vol. 15 : Iss. 1 , Article 2.
Available at: <https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp/vol15/iss1/2>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in International Bulletin of Political Psychology by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact commons@erau.edu, wolfe309@erau.edu.

International Bulletin of Political Psychology

Title: Overcoming Political Strife: A Case Study Based on Training Jewish and Arab Educational Counselors

Author: Editor

Volume: 15

Issue: 1

Date: 2003-08-29

Keywords: Arab, Conflict Management, Israel, Jewish, Kramer, Palestinian

About the author. This article was submitted by Dr. Daniela Kramer, counseling psychologist and a senior lecturer at the Oranim School of Education of the Kibbutz Movement in Israel. Dr. Kramer heads the masters' program in educational counseling as well as the clinical section of the animal-aided therapy program. She is also an experienced family therapist and group facilitator.

Group activity is often characterized by stratification, as well as by the creation of subgroups. The latter are a fertile ground for an "us vs. them" differentiation (see Moore, 1993). The potential for such a process exists in every group, starting with the family, through various secondary groups, and ending in nations, cultures and societies:

-In families it can take shape in the coalition of parents vs. children, men vs. women, successes vs. failures, scientists vs. artists, mother's children vs. father's children etc.

-In secondary groups, say at the work place, the split may reflect management vs. rank-and file, higher vs. lower status jobs, office vs. field workers and many more.

-Within a society, too, any seemingly significant characteristic may serve as the basis for differentiation: political view, religion, social and economical status, skin color, age, standing on opposite sides of the law and so on.

My perspective is that of the educational counselor. This professional's work entails coping with strife while working alongside psychologists, teachers, other counselors, parents, etc. No less important is the counselor's ability to teach students skills of conflict management. One of the most conspicuous areas of conflict encountered at all these levels is based on ethnic diversity.

[I[The "Us vs. Them" phenomenon[/I]

The creation of an "us" serves several needs. In terms of Maslow's hierarchy, "us" can satisfy safety needs, needs for love and belongingness, the need for self-esteem. "Them" also has an important use: It serves as an often legitimate outlet for displaced hostility and aggression, and solidifies the identity of "us." If it were not for "them," the "us" would be in danger of splintering into several subgroups.

The split between us and them may well be based on primeval conditions of tribal existence, where the correct differentiation between friend and fiend was a matter of survival (cf. Lederer & Jackson, 1968). It has been reinforced throughout the ages by the teachings and the practice of several world religions (see Kramer & Moore, 2002a; Moore & Kramer, 2000) that find "them" of a different faith negative, unworthy, threatening, and in need of either conversion (that is, incorporation into the "us" against still other "them") or annihilation. Nationalism, racism, apartheid and other social ills, having been the direct

International Bulletin of Political Psychology

cause of endless strife and suffering, are all based on a similar perception of social grouping. It is hardly surprising then that following the events of 9-11-01 (itself stemming from a tragic us vs. them schism) we constantly encounter a good vs. evil splitting of the world's nations (with the labels changing according to the source).

Many competing hypotheses have been offered for the ultimate source of this propensity:

-The basic tendency to separate edible from inedible and its generalization to those providing for the fulfillment of our needs vs. those who frustrate them. This may have evolved into tribal, and subsequently nation-state, fight for survival, especially during times of scarcity of food and territory (e.g., Simpson & Yinger, 1972).

-The need to find loved vs. hated objects is a derivative of the Freudian dichotomy of Eros vs. Thanatos, or love and life drives opposing those of hate and destruction (see Freud, 1920/1955).

-The separation-individuation process (Mahler, Pine & Bergman, 2000) entailing the cessation of symbiosis, and the generalization of the distinction between self and non-self (Erikson, 1963).

-The primary perception of figure and ground and its generalization to social perception (Hilgard, 1957): us and ours are in focus, while the rest of the world serves as background. This process may lead to perceiving social relationships on the lines of "You're O.K., I'm not," or "I'm O.K., you're not" (Harris, 1967).

-The related need to gain cognitive control by organizing the perceptual world in categories of familiar vs. unfamiliar (Wilder, 1986).

-Generalization of family homeostasis (Minuchin, 1978) to the group: Enmeshed families define themselves in terms of their demarcation from the rest of the world. Historically (as well as in some contemporary societies) there is no clear boundary between tribe and extended family.

Several psychological processes, including some perceptual distortions, serve to maintain the "us vs. them" attitude:

-The development of cohesion through unification against an enemy, accompanied by an ignoring of differences within the subgroup and by a false consensus (see "groupthink" in Janis, 1982).

-The creation of judgmental myths around "them," stemming from the displacement of anger toward strangers.

-Dehumanizing "them" refusing to empathize with those different from "us."

-Overgeneralization (see Beck, 1976, p. 94) of a few prominent traits of "us" and "them," leading to stereotyping.

-Acting on the basis of an external locus of control, thus shedding responsibility for our actions.

-Projecting anger and guilt (cf. extragression in Rosenzweig, 1978).

International Bulletin of Political Psychology

-Using "bookkeeping" (Kramer-Moore & Moore, 2002b, pp. 77-86; see also Guerin and Guerin, 1976, p. 98) in order to justify negative feelings and to hold on to anger.

-Belittling "them" so as to raise "our" self-esteem (see Satir, Stachowiak & Taschman, 1975).

Our tragedy is that we are unable to get rid of this basic dichotomous thinking in a world that is not dichotomous. We are all trapped, at both micro- and macro-levels, by simplistic slogans that direct us to divide the world into friends and foes. This tendency is especially obtrusive whenever one's physical or psychological well-being is threatened. Then we constantly ask this: does the "other" contribute to our basic security or diminishes it? Camps that formerly had little to do with each other unify into an "us" against a common enemy. (See, for example, Kuwait and the U.S. vs. Iraq, as well as France, Germany and Russia vs. the U.S. during the 2nd Gulf War).

Another possible correlate of the open conflicts between groups and individuals, the us vs. them dichotomy, is the creation of internal conflicts. When the child of divorced parents is torn between loyalty to each, and is made to take sides (that is, to declare the other parent as "them"), s/he becomes confused and hurt. When, at the time of political upheaval, Arab Israeli citizens must demonstrate loyalty to their country on the one hand, and to their religion and social group on the other, they experience an internal conflict; any decision may cause heavy losses. (A similar process is developing in post-Saddam Iraq.)

The us vs. them type thinking is inevitable, for it has both ontogenetic and philogenetic sources. Hence the question is not how to avoid or whitewash it. Instead, we need to search for ways to bridge between different groups, to encourage mutual respect, to develop tolerance, and to permit coexistence. We need to find in our differences a chance for growth, rather than an opportunity for mutual destruction. A sanitogenic society must adopt an "I'm OK, you're OK" attitude.

[I]Educational Counseling and Pluralism[/I]

How does this relate to educational counseling? Among the many areas of educational counseling an important one deals with mediating between individuals or groups in conflict. In order to achieve this, counselors have to possess skills for the creation of effective communication between two or more opposing sides. Such groups often represent multi-ethnic populations. "Conflict resolution without violence," "Improving classroom climate," "Education for equality," and "Life skills" are all rich and multi-faceted programs activated by counselors in schools. These programs are designed for tension reduction between groups of students, adolescents and their parents, and teachers and students. Their goal is to reduce violence and to rid participants of stereotypical, adversary perceptions of "them," and to create a bridge of communication and closeness, based on pluralistic thinking that respects those different from "us."

In order to train educational counselors to effectively function in this area under all circumstances (i.e. in both relaxed and tense conditions) they have to personally experience such difficulties, become aware of their own attitudes and cope with them. This brings me to describe a specific case at the Oranim Teachers' College.

[I]Description of this case study[/I]

[I]Background[/I]

International Bulletin of Political Psychology

In October 2000, the college opened a program in educational counseling, specifically intended for Arab and Jewish Israeli students. This event took place a few weeks after the beginning of a tragic era in Israel, during which both Arabs and Jews suffered both physically and psychologically (the so-called 2nd intifada, in which many Jews, as well as 13 Israeli Arabs lost their lives). This program offered to the holders of certain masters' degrees re-training in educational counseling. I shall describe in detail this program whose participants spent two years at Oranim. I have received permission from the students to share their experiences with others. Most of my description is based on the written summary of some 20 students, 10 of whom were Jewish, 8 Muslim or Christian Arab, and 2 Druze. (Unless otherwise stated, I shall refer to the non-Jewish students as Arabs). They were asked to analyze the development of group processes during their studies, divided into the various stages of the program.

[I]Pre-opening: Selection interviews[/I]

Most of the interviews were held prior to the intifada's outbreak. In these group-interviews no between-group conflicts were observed. The tension that existed was attributable to each individual's need to enter the program. The 20 participants were selected out of 43 candidates.

[I]Opening[/I]

By the time the group started, terror attacks had already taken place. Most of the students have reported some apprehension at the opening stage of the program, including feelings of suspicion as to the other subgroup and the need to find friends in their own. Many students of both subgroups felt "the calm before the storm". At least they would show a cold shoulder to each other; more likely there would be outbursts of anger and enmity. The seating arrangement mirrored this feeling: The Arabs and the Druze on one side, the Jews on the other. While the meetings were held in Hebrew, informal conversations were held in Arabic and in Hebrew, respectively. Both groups were angry, suspicious and felt vulnerable. Some of their interpretations for these feelings will appear below.

During the opening activity group members were asked first to introduce themselves, then to share the feelings they experienced that morning in the new group. Soon hard, tough, cautious words were heard: fears, suspicions, inferiority, attempts at appeasing and ingratiating, self-justification and blaming. At the end of the meeting there was a sense of heaviness and tension. I have subsequently learned from the participants' summaries that I, as the facilitator, was included in the feelings of uneasiness. Some of the Arab students felt that they had to be very cautious, for I had opened dangerous topics from the very beginning, leading to heated arguments. Some Jewish students were frightened by the releasing of open anger and blaming on the part of the Arab students; they felt they had to somehow adhere to the professional goals they had come to achieve, without opening subject that can cause unrest. Participants asked me at this stage why I had not begun teaching, rather than giving vent to dangerous personal statements. Some of them reported unwillingness to continue, anger at me, and serious doubts about my method.

[I]The 1st year[/I]

Generally speaking, the 1st year may be characterized by cautiousness. It became clear to all the participants that the teaching staff included some excellent Arab lecturers. Thus, in addition to the conflict-resolution workshop, students participated in a one-year course on multi-ethnic counseling, taught by an Arab professor. Jewish students received this with appreciation and joy; Arab students

International Bulletin of Political Psychology

report that they were somewhat relieved and felt very proud. The staff was no longer "them" as opposed to "us," but rather a "mixed" group performing team work. Working patterns started to develop within small, mixed subgroups; friendships were created, based not on ethnicity but rather on common study assignments and preparations. Basic trust started to develop, along with communication. This communication was more open during meetings, with a staff member present and mediating, even providing a safety net, than during breaks, where the conversation was about "safe" topics. Even so, there was a new division of "us" vs. "them" during the breaks: smokers and non-smokers. The former shared cigarettes and met in the smokers' corner, leaving all the non-smokers outside this boundary. The group agreement, created at the beginning of the workshop, was adhered to with strictness. There was no great amount of intimacy in the group, but there was mutual respect and an ability to work together.

Then an unusually cruel bombing occurred, killing 21 Israeli adolescents in a Tel Aviv discotheque. This event opened all the wounds in both subgroups. Anger, fear, and tension were very high during the meeting that immediately followed. The group was paralyzed by horror and suspicion. The Jews were openly blaming, the Arab participants felt victimized for something they were not responsible for, all the signs of "us" vs. "them" re-surfaced. During empathy training exercises, anger was displaced by terrible pain in both subgroups; they shared their pain, frustration, and helplessness as well as fear. Their ability to listen steadily increased at this stage. By the end of the meeting they sat together, mourning the fact that in addition to its other terrible consequences, this bombing might destroy the delicate bridge built in our group. This fear meant that everyone had something to lose if such events were not coped with directly and immediately. This fear of ruining the fragile friendship, so cautiously built, was expressed in the group, leading to an atmosphere of sadness and gloom. For the first time students articulated a new "us": "Us," the group of counseling students, opposed to "them," external factors threatening to separate "us."

The group continued to function efficiently and without major crises. Parting at the end of the 1st year occurred in a friendly, encouraging atmosphere. There was a feeling that they would miss the "us" that had been created, and that they looked forward to another academic year.

[I]The 2nd year[/I]

The return for the 2nd year of studies was again accompanied by acts of terrorism within Israel and the retaking of Palestinian territories by the Israeli army. Though the start of the academic year was somewhat hesitant, there was joy at meeting again, with much more openness than a year earlier. The 1st year saw the establishing of basic security; this year was characterized by becoming close. The group turned into an intimate circle where individuals were willing to share extremely personal matters, and to give to and receive support from other group members. Just as parents know when their developing children do not need their support every minute, the mediating role of the staff lessened as the group became more independent. There was no need any more to emphasize the need to work in "mixed" groups." Group rituals resembling those of a family started to develop. At every meeting another participant brought food which was then shared by all. Birthdays and other events were celebrated with gifts and salutations; the pregnancy and giving birth by one of the students was closely attended. When the baby was born there was tremendous excitement. Both Moslem and Jewish holidays were noted and celebrated by common meals. The group learned how to love and how to work, demonstrating by these Freudian criteria its mental health, in spite of huge crises.

[I]Termination[/I]

International Bulletin of Political Psychology

The end of the program was characterized by a strong feeling of cohesion. The group served as an extended family: There were subgroups within the larger entity, formed according to shared interests and tasks, rather than according to ethnicity. Every meaningful event (the Ramadan meal, Sabbath ceremonies, a wedding, etc.) was prepared and celebrated by the entire group. At the informal end-of-the-year celebration small, symbolic gifts were exchanged, along with personal farewell cards and an exchange of addresses and phone numbers. The atmosphere at this meeting was warm and loving, tearful participants hugging each other. Promises were made to have an annual reunion. Since then two such reunions have indeed taken place, in addition to many encounters occurring when the counselors meet professionally. Many of the participants have kept in touch with the facilitator as well.

[I]Analysis of selected aspects of the case study[/I]

[I]The facilitator[/I]

As the sole facilitator of this two-year workshop, I was greatly worried about the fate of the program, fearing that the events of the street will be reflected in the group and will not permit an honest dialogue. I knew that, despite my experience in group facilitation, I had no magic recipe for coping with the potential for hostility, hatred and tension stemming from political strife, present in the classroom, and likely to burst out with any injury to either Jews or Arabs. I was worried that, instead of forming a cohesive group of counselors, participants would be drawn into bitter political arguments and would thus thwart the realization of their potential. On the one hand, I was aware of violent confrontations among students on several university campuses (including Oranim). On the other hand, I decided to rely on Carl Rogers' work with groups in conflict in Ireland and in South Africa (see Thorne, 1992).

My basic rules were the following:

-We are all equal; no one's pain is greater; no one's attitude is more just.

-The encounter is between individuals and not between attitudes. Therefore, every statement that concerns individuals is legitimate, while the use of political slogans and programmatic statements is not. This stance requires talking about "I" and "you" (singular) and precludes the use of "us" and "them."

-A group agreement must be reached that will protect every participant's rights and spell out their duties. It should define boundaries, acceptable and unacceptable behaviors, and provide for a climate in which group work is possible. It is my task as a facilitator to see that the rules set by the agreement are adhered to.

-Group work will be done only in mixed subgroups.

-I must constantly reiterate my credo, based on the humanistic approach, so that it can influence the group and soften feelings of enmity and anger.

-There are no taboo subjects; however, everything will be discussed using the above rules.

-My role is to work with the group as I would have worked with a family in conflict. This includes assisting them in identifying their difficulties and in talking about them; teaching them how to listen to

International Bulletin of Political Psychology

their inner voices (which facilitate human encounter) rather than to external ones (which are threatening and liable to create distance in times of conflict).

-Every participant is entitled to unconditional acceptance, non-domineering warmth, maximal sincerity and empathy.

-And above all, I must continue in my belief that given a respecting and encouraging climate, everyone will realize his or her positive nature.

[I]Initial attitudes of Arab students[/I]

-Anger because Arab citizens' life seems to have a lower value than that of Jews. Fear that they will encounter this inequality during their studies at a predominantly Jewish college, that they will be considered 2nd class citizens.

-Alienation as well as curiosity vis a vis the Jewish subgroup; often a first opportunity to know them better; unease at being associated with terrorism without examining their attitudes, and at being stigmatized.

-A feeling of being unwanted and even rejected as individuals, while being exploited as a group by the establishment (the program was funded in response to an urgent need for Arab counselors).

-The group is divided between us and them. The teaching staff, and I as their coordinator, belong to "them."

-There is no hope that anyone will understand their plight as a minority; it is therefore preferable not to voice it. It is more important to be practical and to strive for the counselors' diploma.

-They will never be invited to hold a dialogue based on equality with the Jews. The Jewish society at large is patronizing; one is better off staying at a distance.

[I]Initial attitudes of the Jewish students[/I]

The majority of the Jewish students initially felt that:

-The Arab students are distant and unfamiliar; they certainly won't become more familiar during these hard times.

-Every Arab student is suspect of at least "Freudenschade" at the escalation of security problems in Israel.

-Loyalty to Arab culture and religion creates a wall that prevents true dialogue.

-Jews are always and unalterably perceived by Arabs as belligerent.

-Every Jew is accused of the difficult status of Israeli Arabs.

-Even though previous experience shows that there are "good Arabs," one must be careful, not knowing who is a friend and who is a foe.

International Bulletin of Political Psychology

- The group is composed of us and them, and the college and the teaching staff belong to "us."
- The loss of control over day-to-day security on the Jewish streets gives "them" a lot of power.
- The Jews are victims again, the beginnings of the Holocaust are being reenacted.

[I]Druze students[/I]

The Druze constituted a small minority. They were confused and ambivalent. On the one hand, their language and culture is closer to the Arabs than to the Jews. On the other hand, they serve in the Israeli Army (unlike most of the Arabs). Thus they have some feelings of "us" toward both subgroups, mixed with anxiety at being regarded as traitors by both. Their situation at the beginning of the program was not unlike that of a child, whose parents demand loyalty at the expense of each other.

[I]Final attitudes[/I]

An analysis of students' summaries at the end of these two years shows that in contradistinction to the beginning, now they expressed the same attitudes, regardless of their ethnicity:

- We are all human beings with a potential and a need for human closeness.
- Such closeness can be achieved through communication between equals.
- Many of the difficulties of the past derived from ignorance and lack of communication, as well as from listening to the "voices of the street" that discourage dialogue.
- These difficulties disappeared entirely during regular, quiet days, and reappeared during crises. If such a problem was addressed and openly discussed, it served the needs for closeness; if it was ignored, it left a bitter taste and a sense of division.
- Every pain can be understood if it is talked through. Hence topics that initially appear as forbidden for group discussion are especially suitable for creating closeness.
- The key to every closed door is "I-messages" (Gordon, 1975) and the recognition of one's own responsibility, instead of blaming the other.
- Where there is intimacy a satisfying and pleasurable "us" is born, with the virtual disappearance of the original subgrouping.
- The group has become a family in the strict sense of that word.
- As the group's intimacy and independence developed, the role of the facilitator and the teaching staff as socializing agents became marginal.
- What was learned in this setting was applied to extra-group settings, as well.

International Bulletin of Political Psychology

-This experience lowered participants' anxiety to cope, as future counselors, with groups in conflict. Some of them voiced their need to specialize in this aspect of educational counseling.

[I]Stressful Events[/I]

During the 2nd year several events endangered the group's cohesion:

Rituals of the Jewish subgroup, such as Holocaust Day and Military Day of Remembrance are very difficult events for Israeli Jews. People are withdrawn, experiencing pain and anger, with almost everyone having suffered personal losses. At the Oranim College, ceremonies are held with the Jewish students as the audience, while the Arab students elect to wait on the quad or in the coffeehouse for the next class. Only after I read the students' summaries did I realize that I had been blind: these days were very difficult for the Arab students, too. All the group members reported that these events created distance between the subgroups, and that the ceremonies served as a dividing wall. The Jewish students were entirely sure that their Arab colleagues kept their distance and could not conceive of the intensity of the pain; the Arab students felt rejected from the ceremonies: "We hadn't been invited; no one talked to us about pain. Unlike our open talks about other pains, we were not allowed to ask questions or to offer support. Of all events, the Holocaust Day, which is not associated with the Arab-Jewish conflict, could have been a good basis for closeness and understanding, had the Jewish subgroup not monopolized it as something we had no right to touch." I have realized that, as a facilitator, I should not have given way to the grief I also experienced that day. Rather, I should have continued seeing the pain of others and sharing it with the entire group. I assume now that I made many mistakes during those two years, but I feel that this was the gravest, for I could have used this occasion to bring the group together, rather than allowing the gap to widen.

An entirely different scenario developed around the Yitzhak Rabin Memorial Day (Israeli Prime Minister, assassinated for his quest for peace). Here the ceremony was shared by all. The dialogue regarding the loss of hope for peace connected both subgroups. It became clear that we either all win or all lose, for no one will gain from the defeat of the other. There was sadness and even despair in the group, based on a shared feeling that we are heading together for inevitable disaster.

During this period there were several terror attacks against public transportation, with suicide bombers killing and wounding scores of passengers. Traveling by bus became dangerous and frightening for all, regardless of ethnicity. After each such attack group members made phone calls to inquire about each other's safety. Calls were dictated by geographical location (i.e., closeness to the attack) rather than by membership in the two subgroups.

"Mothers' dialogue" is a good example of overcoming political strife. Group members came to realize that mothers have a special difficulty during these days of "Sturm und Drang" in Israel. Jewish mothers felt uncomfortable, knowing their sons served in the military, daily confronting Palestinian Arabs. Arab mothers felt uncomfortable because their family members and even young children were led by the anger of the street to identify with suicide bombers. For a while this remained a taboo topic, then it burst out with great pain. The group revealed a surprising ability to empathically listen and to contain this painful issue without judgment or increasing distance. The group reached a point where mothers from both subgroups shared their fear that their sons might be forced to kill or might lose their life in a violent confrontation. The ability to be afraid together and to express this fear with no apprehension of being rejected, while crying on each other's shoulder, was the summit of human closeness. The "us" of the grieving mothers was strong and supportive, and reached far beyond what is commonly observed in

International Bulletin of Political Psychology

support groups. (But compare with a highly similar experience Carl Rogers, 1977/1989, p. 439, had in a Wyoming town). The group proved that it had learned how to use pain and fear as factors that nurture intimacy and reduce distance, rather than ones that increase it.

[I]A summary of factors that reduce distance[/I]

Some of the factors reducing distance between the conflicting subgroups were dictated by external conditions:

- Creating and honoring the group agreement
- Tasks requiring the cooperation of heterogeneous small groups
- The smokers/non-smokers division (cutting across subgroups)
- Shared rituals, such as preparing meals and sharing them, celebrating members' birthdays, being involved in the pregnancy and giving birth by a group member, participating in Rabin's memorial day
- The staff being heterogeneous (composed of representatives of both subgroups)

Other distance-reducing factors were more internal in nature, and were based upon increasing intimacy between group members:

- Empathy training activities
- Exposing and sharing fear and pain, as in "mothers' dialogue," talking about fear of the present and fear of the future, fear of losing friends because of ideological differences, sharing the pain of the families in Jenin and in Tel Aviv through a simulated dialogue, sharing the fear of using public transportation
- The growing feeling of an unconditionally accepting family within the group

[I]A summary of factors that increase distance[/I]

These factors were largely external ones:

Acts of terror and retaliation, conflicting media reports, "the voice of the street," the language barrier between speakers of Arabic vs. Hebrew, non-shared rituals of each sub-group, such as Holocaust Day and Military Remembrance Day.

The internal factors increasing distance between subgroups consisted of:

Unprocessed expressions of anger and inequality either between students or between students and staff, and secrets. Secrets clearly caused division. Arab students (aware of the potential criticism of their fellow Arab participants) chose not to talk about family members having been killed in terror attacks on Jewish targets in Tel Aviv and Haifa, in order not to condemn these acts. Jewish mothers had difficulty sharing their anxiety around their sons' military service. Arab mothers were hard put to share with the group anti-Jewish opinions voiced in their homes and in the streets (see Mothers' dialogue, above).

[I]Costs and benefits of overcoming strife[/I]

International Bulletin of Political Psychology

The great benefit of this experience was learning to know, listen to, respect and form close friendships with members of a different ethnic group which has appeared threatening for decades. Another clear benefit was the birth of optimism and hope at a time when utter pessimism and hopelessness invaded both the Arab and the Jewish outlooks in Israel. All summary papers included words to the effect that "What has happened here gives us hope for change! Conflicts in general and this conflict in particular, can be resolved". A third positive outcome had to do with the manifest goal of the program, namely, the acquiring of professional skills of mediating between groups in conflict.

This closeness and "we" feeling involved some costs, as well. The sense of a family within the group came at the expense of other groups to which the participants belonged. To a certain extent, the creation of a new "us" was achieved at the expense of all outsiders to the group: Students from both subgroups were angry at the opinions and the lack of openness of their own ethnic group. A new distinction appeared: "We who can see" vs. "they who are blind." This created some isolation for the participants in their own social circles.

An analogous process took place at the family level. Some students expressed the pain they felt on discovering that many of their other relationships could not be characterized by such intimacy and empathy. This caused them loneliness, made them critical and distant in their families. This was more apparent among the Arab students than among the Jews.

[I]Conclusions[/I]

Accompanying the group, seeing the two subgroups during such difficult times, unite and grow from antagonism to friendship was an exciting and remarkable experience for all concerned. The "us" of the group became stable, its cohesion and openness made group work and sharing possible. The chasm of the beginning provided the basis for empowering and supportive group dynamics. I am certain that each of the counselors trained in this program has developed an ability to cope with intergroup conflicts, founded on their having experienced group work between equals. As a final thought: It was the Rogerian approach that made the development of the group possible, and made this entire experience so enlightening. It was Rogers' principles which sustained the group in overcoming the many pitfalls of these harsh times: Unconditional acceptance and non-domineering warmth; sincerity and openness toward the other; empathy and mutual respect.

(See Beck, A. T. (1976). *Cognitive therapy and emotional disorders*. New York: International Universities Press; Erikson, E. H. (1963). *Childhood and society*, 2nd ed. New York: Norton; Harris, T. (1967). *I'm OK -- You're OK*. New York: Avon;

Freud, S. (1955). *Beyond the pleasure principle*. The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud, V.18. London: Hogarth Press. (Originally published 1920); Gordon, T. (1975). *P.E.T. Parent effectiveness training : The tested new way to raise responsible children*. New York: New American Library; Guerin, P. J., & Guerin, K. B. (1976). *Theoretical aspects and clinical relevance of the multigenerational model of family therapy*. In Philip J. Guerin (Ed.). *Family therapy*, pp. 91-110. New York: Gardner Press; Hilgard, E. R. (1957). *Introduction to psychology*, 2nd ed. New York: Harcourt, Brace; Janis, I. L. (1982). *Groupthink: Psychological studies of policy decisions and fiascoes*, 2nd ed. Boston : Houghton Mifflin;

Kramer, D. & Moore, M. (2002a). "Women are the root of all evil": The misogyny of religions. *The Secular Web*: www.infidels.org 17 pp.; Kramer-Moore, D. & Moore, M. (2002b). *Life imitates art – Encounters between family therapy and literature*. New York: Solomon Press; Lederer, W. J., & Jackson

International Bulletin of Political Psychology

D. D. (1968). *The mirages of marriage*. New York: Norton; Mahler, M. S., Pine, F., & Bergman, A. (2000). *The Psychological Birth of the Human Infant: Symbiosis and Individuation*. New York: Basic Books; Minuchin, S. (1978). *Psychosomatic families*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; Moore, M. (1993). 'Where ignorant armies clash by night': A review of misperceptions and mirroring in intergroup relations. In K. S. Larsen (Ed.), *Conflict and Social Psychology*. London: Sage, pp. 71-80; Moore, M. & Kramer, D. (2000). *We are too weak to walk unaided: A family therapist view of the pathogenic aspects of prayer*. Modern Library: http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/michael_moore/weak.html, 28 pp.; Rogers C. (1989). On resolving international tensions. In H. Kirschenbaum & V. L. Henderson, (Eds.). *The Carl Rogers reader*, pp. 438-445. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin. (Originally published 1977); Rosenzweig, Saul (1978). *Aggressive behavior and the Rosenzweig picture-frustration study*. New York: Praeger; Satir, V., Stachowiak, J., & Taschman, H. A. (1975). *Helping families to change*. New York: Aronson; Simpson, G. E., & Yinger, M. (1972). *Cultural minorities*, 4th ed. New York: Harper & Row; Thorne, B. (1992). *Carl Rogers*. London: Sage; Wilder, D. A. (1986). Social categorization. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 19, 291-355.)