THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM

Challenges and Opportunities of Bilingual and Multicultural Education in Conflict Ridden Societies: The case of Integrated Palestinian-Arab and Jewish Schools in Israel:

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'originality' is one of the basic expectations of modern control of subjectivity (Mignolo, 2009)

... please do not expect any.

The state of Israel is no easy place to live, especially not if you are Palestinian, or Ultraorthodox, or an Arab Mizrachi Jew.

Israel's ascribed accommodations based on group membership benefit the Jewish majority in all that relates to immigration, settlement, and development.

The Palestinian minority, within the internationally recognized borders of Israel, is largely excluded from these accommodations and have been granted certain group rights.

- Arabic is recognized formally, and only formally, as an official language.
- A separate public Arab speaking school system has been created for Palestinians, one which chronically succeeds in failing them, and
- Palestinians, except for Druze, are exempted from army conscription which in turn exempts the Palestinian minority from benefiting from the benefits all conscripted benefit from with the exception, again, of the Druze who are conscripted but do not benefit, as Jews do, from their service in the army.
- Palestinians in the occupied territories are excluded from all.

Moreover, in all that relates to religious law, Israel adopted the Ottoman millet system. The state is a Jewish state (some insist it is also democratic) and it then recognises the Muslim (in all shapes and forms) but for the Druze which are recognized as a separate community (one which not necessarily they believe to be) and ten Christian communities, though the number can grow at any moment, for dividing minorities seems to be the main interest of the Jewish hegemonic powers in Israel.

Each community is granted exclusive jurisdiction over their own religious courts and matters of marriage and divorce and other matters of personal status are ruled according to their own norms.

These arrangements can be interpreted as multicultural accommodations which partially grant autonomy to the religious communities, not as individuals but as groups.

Yet, given that no individual civil arrangements exist as an optional exchange for group religious rights you end up having a situation in which the state co-opts the individual to a group irrelevant of the individuals preferences.

So dear Latvian friends if you think you have educational troubles (educational is to be understood as an euphemism for political) in Latvia now that you know a little more about Israel you hopefully have a better sense of proportion.

What I will argue relates somehow to the fact that I do anthropology in education

Anthropology also known as the science of the anecdotal veto.

Anthropology bases its findings on facts yet; we should remember that for Luigi Pirandello facts are “like a sack which won't stand up when it is empty. In order that it may stand up, one has to put into it the reason and sentiment which have caused it to exist” (1922)

It also relates to some traditional concepts in the social sciences about which it's worth remembering that George Orwell argued that…

'The worst thing one can do with words, is to surrender to them.' If language is to be 'an instrument for expressing and not for concealing or preventing thought,' he continued, one must 'let the meaning choose the word, and not the other way about.'

In the following I will say something about:

1) The theoretical underpinning of prejudice development and possible ways of managing it

2) Bilingualism and Multiculturalism in education

3) Some of the realities I encountered while doing ethnographic research at the integrated Palestinian Jewish schools in Israel

and

4) Will conclude by making a few critical comments on all of the above

Stephan and Stephan (Stephan and Stephan 1996) suggest four types of threats as the main causes of prejudice - realistic, symbolic, intergroup anxiety, and negative stereotypes – which separately or together may cause prejudice depending on the existing relations between the groups involved. All four could be involved in open conflict situations while at lower levels of conflict negative stereotypes and intergroup anxiety might be the main causes underlying conflict.

Berger and colleagues (Berger et al. 2016) suggest three main theoretical models through which to approach educational frameworks which's goals are the bettering of intergroup relations. Each relate to well established theoretical frameworks. The contact hypothesis, the socialization and social learning theories, and the social-cognitive developmental theory.

The ‘contact hypothesis’ (Allport 1954) is the basis of most educational efforts towards integration. According to the contact hypothesis, promoting contact between members of different racial and/or ethnic groups will reduce tension, resulting in more tolerant and positive attitudes. The contact hypothesis suggests that intergroup contact—when it occurs under conditions of equality and interdependence that permit sustained interaction between participants as well as friendships in situations legitimized through institutional support — might help alleviate conflict among groups and improve negative intergroup attitudes (Allport 1954, Amir 1976, Pettigrew and Tropp 2006).

Social learning theories propose that attitudes towards outgroups are shaped by information and knowledge gathered from immediate social contexts as well as form multiple media channels. Both intercultural training (Stier 2003) and anti-bias information (Bigler and Liben 2006) are seen as capable of breaking down negative generalizations.

Social cognitive developmental theory establishes that children's attitudes are based on the developmental stage of their cognitive skills (Aboud, Mendelson, and Purdy 2003); moreover research in this field has argued against a unidirectional understanding of prejudice development anchoring it in complex variables as these relate to social contexts and relationships with others that make particular conflictual relationships between groups and group identities highly salient or place an emphasis on the universal application of moral principles of fairness and equality (Killen, Elenbaas, and Rutland 2016).

Furthermore, Bar-Tal (Bar-Tal 2013) points at the socio-psychological repertoire (i.e., collective memories and an ethos of conflict, and collective fear, hatred and anger orientations) which make intractable conflicts especially difficult to resolve while emphasizing their societal or collective character and the role that a shared political culture plays in their genesis and reproduction. These socio-psychological structures paradoxically work both to enable better adaptation to the conflict conditions, and also to help maintain and prolong the conflict. Thus, even when the parties to the conflict find a peaceful resolution to the existing conflict the socio-psychological repertoire does not change overnight. For it to change, Bar-Tal states, what is needed is a long process of peace building, which requires thoughtful planning and active efforts to overcome the narrow vision which have evolved and which exclude incongruent information and alternative approaches to the conflict.

Ppsychological theories provide some answers to prejudice development by suggesting their socio-contextual and socio-cognitive dependence while suggesting that reducing prejudice can be accomplished through the promotion of intergroup contact, inclusive common identities and social norms, social-cognitive skills training, moral reasoning, and tolerance (Aboud and Levy 2000, Cameron and Rutland 2008, Crystal, Killen, and Ruck 2008).

As for bilingualism...

Research findings in bilingual education are mostly unambiguous regarding both the positive effects of bilingualism on;

1) children's awareness of language and cognitive functioning (Howard & Christian, 2002), and

2) the close relationship between bilingual students' academic development in their first and second languages (Cummins, 2000; Thomas & Collier, 2002)

The above is true mostly in situations and contexts where students are encouraged to develop both languages in Bilingual Immersion models, or Two Way Bilingual Programs.

Still bilingual education remains a controversial and frequently misunderstood field.

BECAUSE

Situations and contexts where students are encouraged to develop both languages are yet not well researched and thus not well understood

Ricento (2000) and others point at the macro sociopolitical, epistemological, and strategic factors which have shaped language policy considerations.

Bissoonauth and Offord (2001) and others Gallois, Giles, 2015)suggest that the association of language with high status and prestige influences language use in multilingual societies.

Obeng (2000), Bekerman, (2005, 2016) and others shows how attitudes encompassing a wide spectrum of values, beliefs and emotions concerning language influence participants' perspectives towards languages in general and towards educational bilingual initiatives in particular.

In bilingual programs, intergroup and power relations are important in reproducing or overcoming conditions that subordinate language minority students and their communities (Wright & Tropp, 2005; Paulson, 1994; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996; Valdes, 2016).

Others have argued that the language practices of educational institutions are caught-up in the legitimization of power relations among ethno-linguistic groups (Martin-Jones & Heller, 1996).

Recent ethnographic studies have shown, that context highly affects people's judgments and opinions about languages and their use (Obeng, 2000; Saville-Troike, 1997; Smith-Hefner, 1990, Fairclough, 2014).

Yet, for the most part, studies in language attitudes have paid little attention to these political and historical contexts (Bradac, 1990) or, when partially attending to these contexts, have largely done so through restricted descriptions (Bourhis & Sachdev, 1984) .

As for multiculturalism in education.

The challenge of balancing diversity and unity is intensifying as democratic nation-states in the west become more diversified and as racial and ethnic groups within these nations try to attain cultural, political and economic rights (Banks, 2016). These challenges become even more accentuated in regions suffering from protracted conflict where at times the diversity of the in-group is denied for the sake of nation building and the difference with the out-group is accentuated to prevent their full inclusion. This double process of alienation carries many dangers for on the one hand students from marginalized groups became alienated from their family and community while at the same time these same students may became socially and politically alienated within the national civic culture.

Multiculturalism has been defined as a method whereby culturally diverse groups are accorded status and recognition, not just at the individual level, but in the institutional structures of society (Parekh, 2002). Multiculturalism involves the endorsement of harmonious and constructive relationships between culturally diverse groups (Cashmore, 1996).

How much has been achieved in America and in Europe by way of these reforms is yet unclear (McLoyd, 1990; Slavin & Cooper, 1999). The little that is known of the impact of multicultural educational reform is not always encouraging (Freeman, 2000; Hanna, 1994; Lustig, 1997; Freeman, 2000; Whitehead & Wittig, 2004)). Though sustained by a wide variety of theoretical knowledge, practical guidelines, and curricula (Banks, 1995; Bennette, 1990; Sleeter & Grant, 1987), multicultural education has seen its fair share of debate and criticism.

Multicultural reform has been seen as endangering national/social cohesion and supporting rather shallow intellectual perspectives (Bloom, 1987; D'Souza, 1992; Ravitch, 1990; Schlesinger, 1991) and has been criticized for some of its underlying assumptions and its particular focus on and conceptualization of identity and culture (Bekerman, 2003a; Hoffman, 1996; Urciuoli, 1999, Sleeter &Carmona , 2016).

Coming from a variety of theoretical perspectives, these critiques point to the fact that multicultural education, in spite of its relatively long history, is still ill-defined and lacking in clarity regarding both its disciplinary boundaries and the possible contextual influences on its application.

It has become apparent that true multiculturalism cannot be affected simply by the addition of more culture(s) (Arvizu & Saravia-Shore, 1990). Superficial understandings of multiculturalism risk sustaining monocultural ideological perspectives while ignoring critical approaches which would uncover the underlying assumptions that sustain it (Hoffman, 1996; Wallace, 1993; Ngo, 2010).

Such uncritical applications of multiculturalism risk aggravating the interethnic tension they hoped to alleviate. Eldering (1996) argues that a proper understanding of multiculturalism in a society implies distinguishing between dimensions related to objective reality, ideology, official policies, and processes of practical implementation. Disregard for these dimensions might put us in a situation in which even well-intentioned multicultural initiatives end up delivering shallow renditions of an otherwise worthwhile educational endeavor (Schoorman & Bogotch, 2010).

Traditional multiculturalism and citizenship education offer a solution to distinctions that engender problems in a modern world in which many cultures are situated in one social space. We maintain that such distinctions are problematic and even erroneous. Modernity did not give rise to a multiplicity of cultures but rather to extensive cultural/social variation. The acceptance or rejection of a particular cultural shade has never been a part of an all-or-nothing package deal demanding total rejection or total assimilation. Those who claim otherwise, do not portray the historical world realistically but rather perpetuate an ideological school that previously served identity and culture with the purpose of consolidating priority for the ruling authority (Hall, 1996; Zizek, 1997) to identify those who resemble them and to incriminate all others. The ruling group's reasoning is obvious: Accounting for otherness is preferable to accountability for it.

From a critical perspective as the one adopted here, in calling for appreciation and recognition of cultural variety, multiculturalism adopts an essentialist approach to culture. Although it aims to improve society, it misses the mark by assuming that each group has a defined number of participants that become similar to one another and different from other groups by virtue of the circumstances of their birth or early processes of socialization (a Jew is a Jew and not a Christian; Chinese are Chinese and not French). In its most extreme formula, multiculturalism assumes that each person has one legitimate and authentic culture whose legitimacy is acquired by biological heredity and from whence the demand for and right to ownership is derived by its heirs (Verenne & McDermott, 1998). As such it debilitates citizenship educational efforts.

Let us now move back to Israel and review some of the ethnographic data I've gathered at the integrated Palestinian Jewish schools.

These data will reflect some of the issues we have raised above regarding the challenges of multiculturalism, bilingualism, and prejudice reduction and show them in their reality not just as abstractions.

Six integrated, bilingual, and multicultural Jewish-Palestinian/Arab schools operate today in Israel serving about twelve hundred students. Though few in number their experience is worth researching for they challenge the basic national religious segregationist premises which dominates and controls the Israeli educational system (Resh and Dar 2012).

A system which, under the dictates of the 1953 State Educational law, is divided into two main branches: the Arab sector and the Hebrew sector-- with the latter being divided into secular and religious sectors. The ultra-orthodox Jews, the Druze, and the kibbutzim have autonomous educational enclaves.

It can be said that the socio-political conflicts are reflected in the Israeli educational system (Sprinzak et al. 2001). The integrated schools offer an outstanding opportunity for testing the potential of education to help sooth tensions in societies involve in intractable conflicts.

The schools are recognized as non-religious schools supported by the Israeli Ministry of Education.

They use the standard curriculum of the state non-religious school system, the main difference being that both Hebrew and Arabic are used as languages of instruction.

These educational initiatives have to confront what Spolsky and Shohamy (1999) have characterized as being a Type 1 monolingual society: one in which a sole language (Hebrew) is recognized as associated with the national identity while other languages (i.e. Arabic), though officially recognized as a second language for education and public use (Koplewitz, 1992; Bernard Spolsky, 1994), have been marginalized.

- For over twelve years I have been conducting, an ethnographic research project at the integrated Palestinian-Jewish schools in Israel. The project in its different faces has included:
- In-depth interviews with a variety of stake holders, teachers, parents, ministry of education officers, graduates and school principals.
- Observations and video recordings on a variety of classroom activities, and less formal settings.
- Observations and video recordings gathered at in-service teacher training projects on issues related to historical narratives, teachers' perceptions of alterity, teachers perspectives on bilingualism and multiculturalism, etc.
- A longitudinal (in-depth interviews) study of children at the bilingual schools and children at monolingual schools regarding their perspectives on bilingualism, multiculturalism, identity and cultural negotiations, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, etc.

Regarding Bilingualism our records show that:

Palestinian children have many reasons to learn Hebrew quickly and well and so they do. In the first grade, they are the first to experiment with writing their names in Hebrew. They realize very quickly that in order to talk to Hebrew speakers in class they will have to speak in Hebrew because their peers will not learn much Arabic.

Jewish children are outspoken about not understanding what their Palestinian teacher is saying when speaking in Arabic. On many occasions, using a rather loud voice, they would pronounce abruptly, “I do not understand”. We have no record of Palestinian children reacting this way.

Not all Jewish children, but many, seem to be lazy about learning Arabic. Some students would keep asking about how to write particular words, in Arabic, even after the Palestinian teacher had written them in Arabic on the blackboard.

When a Palestinian girl, in the first grade, approached a Jewish peer and asked in Arabic for an eraser. The Jewish girl made signs of not understanding and the Palestinian reacted with some pantomime to show what she wanted. The hand motions worked and she got what she wanted. Nevertheless, if she learns how to say “please lend me your eraser” in Hebrew, the interaction would be faster. And so later in the year, she will.

For Palestinians, learning Hebrew is economical and adaptive, for Jews it is not. During many instances when the third grade was having a lesson conducted in Arabic and the teachers asked the Palestinian students to help their Hebrew speaking peers, we saw Jewish children ready to have their work done by others rather than to try and learn how to do it themselves.

A first analysis of turns of talk taken by teachers during 12 hours of classroom interaction in the 1st and 3rd grades shows that out of a total of 8889 (100%) turns the;

Jewish teacher = 2511 = 28.25%

Palestinian Teacher = 2230 = 25.09%

Jewish students = 2608 = 29.34%

Palestinian students = 1540 = 17.32

The gap in turn taking among the teachers was not steady and does not seem to allow for the use of ethnicity as its explanation. In the first and the fourth grades, the gap was inverted. The Palestinian teachers took 30.90% and 39.95% turns talking while the Jewish teachers took only 28.33% and 13.67% of the turns. When considering that in first and the fourth grades, the Palestinian teachers are experienced, have strong personalities, are much appreciated and are long time participants in the system, personality and seniority seem to be better explanations than ethnicity.

The gaps in turn taking among the students always favours the Jews, fluctuates very little, and is never reversed.

The gaps seemed to be reduced when the Palestinian teacher taught alone in class.

Since we are lacking analysis of more particular situations related to the presence of specific teachers, it is difficult to draw serious conclusions. However, we can say that it seems that the presence of a teacher of similar background helped the Palestinian students to feel more comfortable participating; if this relates to language competency or personality ‘traits’, more detailed analysis would need to be conducted.

Our last example related to language shows conversational give and take among 4 children in the third grade. Three Palestinians (2 girls and 1 boy) and a Jewish boy are working together on an assignment where they were asked to relate to some experiences from the vacation that had just ended. The example clearly shows the pattern of language use that regularly developed among mixed groups. Even in this specific case, where 3 out of the four participants were Palestinian, the lingua franca used by the group is Hebrew.

From our first analysis of this scene, we tried to identify the conditions under which Arabic might make its appearance. The following points became apparent:

Arabic seems to be used when one of the Palestinians involved in the interaction does not understand the activity which has been assigned. Most of the strings of conversation in the segment are started by one of the Palestinian girls explaining to the Palestinian boy what needs to be done.

When such a situation occurs and another Palestinian student joins the conversation, there is a good chance he will join in speaking Arabic.

When the Jewish child is involved in the conversation, all three Palestinians speak Hebrew.

These rules are not fixed. However, they represent fairly well many of the events we recorded during formal activities in class (for informal activities i.e. breaks we have less information although when playing in mixed groups, Hebrew seems to dominate).

Under the present circumstances, shaped by the wider socio-political context (i.e. the monolingual policies which characterize Israeli life) it is indeed difficult to perceive of Arabic as a choice.

And what about what children say …

In the 1st grade Jewish children seemed to have a pretty realistic assessment of their knowledge of Arabic.

“learning Arabic is very important because there are Arabs around“

“Amir knows better Hebrew than I know Arabic…but he needs it”

“I love the Arab language I just don’t like learning it”

1st Grade Palestinians stated

“Hebrew is easy Arabic is more difficulty in Hebrew the letters need not be connected“

“because if I learn a lot (of Hebrew) I will feel like a Jew later“

“knowing Hebrew is important for it will help us succeed”

“Hebrew is helpful in order to get along with security people“

In the 3rd Grade Jews stated…

“Arabic is difficult to learn but it is also important because it helps us communicate with the Arab population”

“learning Arabic is important because many citizens in Israel speak Arabic and knowing Arabic helps us know them better and it is just”

And Palestinians said…

“I have to know Hebrew to speak to my friends , hear the news , I’m Arab and I need to know Hebrew “

“Jews do not like Arabic it is difficult for them to learn it, but for us Hebrew is important to study at the university”

And what do parents say?

Jewish parents support bilingualism as long as it does not harm educational excellence. They seemed satisfied with an educational initiative that allows them to substantiate their liberal positions and to offer their children cultural understanding and sensitivity towards the “other”. If these goals were achieved, the lack of success in bilingual achievements can be forgiven.

Palestinian parents sending their children to the school are after the best education they can find for their children in the present Israeli sociopolitical context. Israel's present sociopolitical conditions make it almost impossible for parents to dream about a soon-to-arrive top-down multicultural multilingual policy. It is also not totally clear whether the parents would adopt such a policy if imposed. As members of the upper-middle socio-economic sector of society, they perceived education as a means to mobility in a world going global. Thus, they preferred an English lingua franca and high Hebrew literacy in order to achieve the dreams for their children's future.

The children are doing their job and fulfill their parents liberal dreams.
Jews participate patiently in a context which offers recognition to the Arabic language without ever needing to learn it as a functional language and Palestinians learn Hebrew, the key to their future mobility.

The ethnographic study exposes multiple contextual levels embedded in bilingual education. Ignoring such contextual constraints prevents the development of successful bilingual programs which can bridge the gap between ideal/ideological aims and actual realities. The importance of understanding contextual limitations in bilingual education cannot be overstated and it is essential that these perspectives inform educational initiatives, governmental or otherwise.

At present, bilingual projects seem primarily to serve political agendas, within the realm of the nation-state. At times, these agendas are sincerely in search of developing minority groups or confronting mainstream hegemonies. At other times, such agendas are just paying lip service to political correctness. For whatever the reasons, these initiatives seem, in the best of cases, not to be accomplishing their goals, and in the worst cases, oblivious of the reasons for their failure.

We could easily find fault with the teachers and parents involved in our program.

We could blame them for, consciously or unconsciously, conveying negative messages about the minority language in spite of their overt efforts to create a school environment and a curriculum that represents a balanced bilingual option. But this would be clutching at straws. If placed anywhere the “blame”, should more likely be placed on an adaptive, wider, sociopolitical system, in which Arabic carries little symbolic power. To reference Bourdieu (1991), it can be said in general that in Israel, speakers of Hebrew have more cultural capital in the linguistic market place than those who speak Arabic .

Let us move now to data relating to multicultural issues

- At the bilingual integrated Palestinian-Jewish schools, educators and parents, have chosen an educational model which emphasizes both a high emphasis on individual identity and a high emphasis of national/ethnic group identification.

- The following examples exemplify the emergent ways in which identities (ethnic, national, cultural, and religious) are treated by the school communities.

- In interviews with parents, they expressed a concern that the schools might threaten their children's ethnic national identities.

- A Palestinian parent explained, "We want our children to get to know about and be sensitive to the other . . . and to be and remain Muslim."

- A Jewish parent referred to the central idea that to "bring the two people together . . . they have to be strong in their own identities."

- Teachers often expressed the need to support the goals stated by parents.

- “I am not asking to turn the school into a religious school, but I would like to strengthen the Jewish identity of children,” said one Jewish teacher.

- Palestinian teachers expressed similar views: “The wider context is mostly Jewish . . . [so] we have to be careful not to allow the weakening of our students' sense of identity.

- Because parents' and teachers' concerns, regarding the children's "proper" understanding of their own national, religious and cultural traditions, some curricula and ceremonial events were segregated.

- For example, on a single day separate ceremonies were held for Memorial Day and the Nakbe. Children were not encouraged to attend the "other" group's ceremony.

- Yet when one of the Palestinian children persistently requested, and was ultimately allowed, to participate in the Jewish commemoration ceremony his father in a later interview stated "I knew where I was sending Isam, but when hearing what had happened I was shocked. . . . I did not expect my child would do something like this. . . . I need to think about the future."

- The attitudes of adults and children seem to reflect very different understandings of the construct of identity and its relevance within the social context.

- While adults seem captive to the hegemonic essentialized identity perspectives that create (in part) the protracted nature of the very conflict they are trying to resolve; young children, seem **not** to hold to an understanding of identity as a boundary marker.

- Data from my studies confirm these observations.

- In the kindergarten our recordings show clearly that the children, regardless of ethnic affiliation, exhibited same affinity to both the Palestinian and the Jewish teachers. We observed both Jewish and Palestinian children approaching and hugging their teachers or attending to their directives, regardless of their teachers' ethnic identities.

- Even when young “future philosophers” discussed theological issues, the alignment around an argument could not be predicted along ethnic or religious lines. Such was the case when Ari, a Jewish boy, asked his friends sitting near him (a Muslim, a Christian, and another Jew), “Who believes in God?” Then he immediately added, “I do not believe in God because I believe we came from the monkeys.” The Christian Palestinian boy, Basel, answered in agreement, "Me too, I believe we came from the monkeys and do not believe in God either." All the children reacted with agreement to this statement.

- Even in events were children recriminated each other for their actions never ethnically denigrating innuendos in naming the "guilty party” were invoked.

- This is not to say that children have no consciousness of, or respect for, their ethnic/religious affiliation. In fact, they have an awareness and even feel free to play with their identities.

- For example, on one occasion Olfat and Nadia, two Palestinian girls, were playing together with Noah, a Jewish girl. Olfat told one of the researchers that Noah “is an Arab,” to which Noah responded by saying, “She is lying, I'm really Jewish.” After this, they all laughed and continued playing cards undistracted.

- In higher grades, ethnic/religious differences seemed to affect children's interactions, but they did not precipitate conflict or disagreements.

- Hayim was a nine-year-old Jewish boy who was well known for his efforts to fast with the Muslim students during Ramadan. All the children knew him as an exception, but he seemed to suffer no negative peer consequences for his decision. At times we overheard a Palestinian or Jewish child joking about Hayim’s idiosyncratic choice, but they accepted his decision to join Muslim practice, some days, in the month-long fast of Ramadan.

- Yet teachers usually actively marked his behavior. When the Palestinian and Jewish teachers blessed the children in the morning with the traditional “Ramadan Karim,” they added “and to you, Hayim, too.”

  There seemed to be a double play in these short statements.

1. by drawing explicit attention to Hayim each morning, they seemed to actively mark the fact that there was one Jewish exception to the unsaid rule against crossing identity borders.

2. this comment demonstrated a liberal perspective by offering active recognition to the choice of the child who, in this case, preferred to cross such a border.

- Identity, then, is treated in a complex fashion; the teachers simultaneously reify the idea of clear group differences while implicitly sanctioning a student’s choice to traverse the identity border.

Theoretically, these positions warrant exploration.

- It has been argued that racial or ethnic identity research has failed to adequately address the importance of situational contexts in relation to identity development (Sellers, Smith, Shelto, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998).

- Researchers have pointed at situational characteristics (traditional meals, festivals, family celebrations, etc.) as being responsible for fluctuations in feelings of ethnic salience (Yip and Fuligni 2002; Hitlin, Brown, & Elder 2006).

- These findings lead to debates about the extent to which school leaders should highlight or obscure race, religion, or ethnicity in educational settings and about what form such saliency (or dimness) should take.

- Historians, sociologists, culturalists, and even psychologists have argued that conceptions of "identity" are the key building blocks of the most universal of modern structures and ideologies: the nation-state and nationalism. Schools are the main technology developed to achieve this ideology (Billig, 1995; Gellner, 1983; Giddens, 1991; Smith, 1992).
- Teachers, though involved in initiatives geared toward interrupting these othering processes, are still heirs to everyday practices that persist in their immediate contexts and make it difficult to escape from particular forms of national(istic) socialization.
- They have come of age in circumstances that supported the formation of an "us and them" mentality accomplished through "myth-making," which idealizes one's own group and demonizes others (Aho, 1994; Zembylas, 2008). In this sense, they have grown accustomed to settings in which there is no recognition of diversity (Blee, 2002).

- The haunting question that lies at the core of this research (and, indeed, any research on identity formation and issues of difference, prejudice, and conflict) is whether schools and teachers are really in a position to model for children the backgrounding of ethnic/religious identity when the context of the nation-state actively foregrounds it.

- When trying to answer this question I ask you to…

- Imagine a child approaching a teacher and asking,

  “What is a Jew?” or “What is a Palestinian?”

  The teacher may be inclined to offer as a response some culturally descriptive and benevolent characteristics of the groups in question.

- This response might seem appropriate for those working in peace and coexistence educational initiatives. However, I believe that such a response reinforces, rather than challenges, the basis on which interethnic conflicts develop in the first place. A better answer would be a correction of the epistemological basis that, though potentially unknown to the child, substantiates his or her question.

- **Thus, a more appropriate answer might be, ‘Palestinians/Jews are not a ‘what’ but a ‘when’ and a ‘how.’**

- What I’m suggesting is a move in educational practice away from epistemologies that emphasize the notion of reified and abstract, views of identity (Sampson, 1993; Todorov, 1984). Instead, I argue for understanding identities as negotiated definitions that recognize individuals as coparticipants in complex socio-historical-political contexts.

- I recognize this step—away from “what” and toward “when” and “how”—as necessary but not entirely sufficient. Putting an emphasis on the constituted nature of identity does not offer solace in conflict situations where deep suffering arises from rigid labels of identity that create a marginalized status with very real consequences.

- We need more. We need to allow the social to predominate over the ideological without ignoring the power relations involved, which often make the social and the ideological difficult to distinguish.

- We need to help our children become ingénues about the ways in which social categories are constructed and engineered by nation-states.

- We need to teach our students to become *artists of design*, explorers who uncover the ways society is organized and have the knowledge and skills to envision alternative designs (Bekerman, Zembylas & McGlynn, in press).

- Helping our students expose the ways present societies are organized entails making visible the flattened (psychologized) topography of identity theorizing (Billig, 1995) while helping them recognize the crucial influence of nation-making structures in the shaping of individual and group identities (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001).

- A student should not be labeled with ethnic, national, or racial labels. Rather, attention must be directed toward those spheres of localized interactions in their historical trajectories through which categories like “Palestinian” and “Jew” are enabled.
- The struggle for nation-building in our schools, the discourse of individuality in our media, and the unequal distribution of resources in our society have to be identified, described, and offered to all participants as tools through which desired changes can be made.

- To better future efforts as the ones described we need to

1. Seriously research children's subculture and the ways in which they organize the world through more flexible identity categories than the ones dictated by present national paradigms.

2. Consider how these new understandings could influence curricular undertakings, and

3. As adults be clear about what we mean when we say integration and be articulate about its goals.

- Sustaining children's cultures is a possibility adults need to consider, being clear about educational goals is needed too, especially if we want to offer openings for overcoming some of the greatest ailments that trouble our society and are conducive to engaging intractable conflicts.

To summarize – focusing on Peace education

When multicultural/peace education is set in the ground as a universal utopia it hides that which stands at the basis of conflict – the multiple representations of truth and, the various understandings of justice. It also disregards the tight connections between conflict and the present national neo-liberal order and the global division of work. In short, it disregards the social arrangements that institutionalize inequality and injustice. As such multicultural/peace education cannot be a good formula to encourage integration or peaceful accommodation.

If indeed multicultural/peace education is serious about the verbiage that sustains it – the affirmation, recognition and rehabilitation of that which is 'other' - it needs to start by critically approaching the epistemological and metaphysical certainties of western modernity (Bekerman, 2007).

When these elements are not accounted for in multicultural/peace educational efforts, they risk consolidating that same reality they intended to overcome. Multicultural/peace education is in urgent need of reviewing its paradigmatic foundations while problematizing the political structures which sustain the conflicts it tries to overcome.

We should not expect multicultural/peace educational initiatives to be able to offer solutions to longstanding and bloody conflicts that are rooted in very material unequal allocation of resources. Unfortunately, many times societies/governments find it easier to support such initiatives rather than work hard towards structural change.

Lastly, we should remember that change cannot be reached by decree, especially if it runs counter to hegemonic interests. We are in need of realistic and modest aspirations as well as a profound understanding of complexity, and even more so a deep understanding of the paradox suggested when applying Darwinian understandings to the possibility of change; for in his evolutionary view Darwin suggested that it is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives, but the one that is the most adaptable to change.

Freeing the imagination to take new educational paths and/or research approaches might imply adopting the old Hypocritical adagio “cura te ipsum” (take care of yourself first) while struggling to confront our paradigmatic perspectives so as to expose and try to overcome the structures and practices that have established the present conflict. Even if this is done it would be good to remember that the long standing and bloody conflicts that peace educational initiatives hope to remedy are grounded in and sustained by the very material unequal allocation of resources more than in the heads of troubled individuals.

In way of short conclusion I offer Bourdieu

Those who seek to defend a threatened capital, be it Latin (Multiculturalism, Democracy, Tolstoy, etc.) or any other component of traditional humanistic culture, are forced to conduct a total struggle ...they (us) cannot save the competence without saving the market i.e. all the social conditions of the production and reproduction of producers and consumers (Bourdieu 1977: 651-2)

Science, the Social Sciences, should not assume that people are dead; nor should it help to choke them to death with categories that do not reveal the rich lives and multiple struggles of all who appear to be alive.

For our purposes, boundaries are the product of the people who must pay attention to them, both those who enforce them and those who try to sneak around them. Boundaries and other spaces are artifacts of history, the products of culture as it makes conditions by which human action must abide. They are constructed and being so, though with difficulty, might be also taken apart.

On pessimism, hope, and education

The modern rendering for Marx's maxim on religion as the opium of the masses (Marx & O'Malley, 1977) would read 'hope is the opium of the masses'. We should reject educational hope/optimism/good-will in as much as it drives us to stay attached to our illusions regarding the conditions in which education evolves.

Hope should be regained in as much as hope allows for the search of plans to change the conditions for education not to require illusions.

I had another title for this presentation which I introduce now when leaving the floor.

“What happens when adults find solutions to problems children do not have”


"That's all Folks!"