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Culturally Responsive Teaching in a War-Affected Area:

Lesley University in Israel – 1979-2014

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Abstract

The article begins by assessing the theoretical issues raised in the literature regarding teaching in another culture and, in particular, teaching in a conflict zone. It then goes on to describe the specific conditions under which Lesley University's program operated in Israel. A large portion of the article outlines the teaching and community outreach activities of Lesley University in Israel since 1979, and how they met the challenges of culturally-responsive teaching in a war-affected area, focusing on its work training therapists, educators and community activists, organizing conferences and launching community outreach programs. The article discusses issues such as preparing faculty for travel, conducting course rituals, reacting extemporaneously to cultural differences, suggesting curative and developmental solutions for the traumatic experiences borne by the students and their society, and balancing the desire to teach and uplift with the humility to recognize the wisdom of those being taught. The article concludes with lessons learned and thoughts for the future.

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Introduction

Lesley University, based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, offered programs of study in Israel from December 1979 through May 2014. It began as an initiative of one enterprising graduate working collaboratively with the Dean of the Institute of Arts and Human Development in Cambridge, and over the years it had a significant impact on Israeli society, training more than 3,500 graduates to integrate the arts into the fields of the expressive and creative arts therapies, creative arts education, and interdisciplinary studies in the areas of group leadership, women's studies, and holistic health.

The experiences of Lesley's instructors and administrators, those based in the U.S. as well as those in Israel, were never simple. Operating an extension in a foreign country, with a different value system, cultural infrastructure, and educational organization, raised many challenges. Administering and teaching programs in Israel required Lesley's faculty and staff to address and overcome numerous obstacles. Most prominent among these obstacles was, and continues to be, the constant state of war that characterizes Israeli society and the effects of this on students, faculty, and administrative staff at the Netanya and Cambridge campuses.

This article begins by assessing the theoretical issues raised in the literature regarding teaching in another culture and, in particular, teaching in a conflict zone. It then goes on to describe the specific conditions under which Lesley's program operated in Israel.

A large portion of the article outlines the teaching and community outreach activities of Lesley University in Israel since 1979, and focuses on the ways that the institution dealt with the challenges related to preparing faculty to travel to and educate students in an atmosphere of conflict. The article demonstrates how the Lesley Extension Program in Israel has fulfilled the university's mission of preparing "socially responsible graduates with the knowledge, skills, understanding and ethical judgment to be catalysts shaping a more just, humane, and sustainable world" (Lesley University, 2014). The article concludes with lessons learned and thoughts for the future.

Literature Review

Operating the Lesley extension in Israel raises a number of theoretical issues.

Primary among them are:

- Teaching in a different cultural environment
- Teaching in a war-affected area

The academic literature extensively addresses both of these subjects.

Teaching in a Different Cultural Environment

Many researchers demonstrate that students perform best when culturally-sensitive instructors use culturally-appropriate methods (Au & Kawakami, 1994; Hollins, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 2009). To describe the methodology for teaching students of different cultural backgrounds, Gay (2000) introduces the term "culturally responsive teaching," which she defines as:

Using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively. It is based on the assumption that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference of students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly (Gay, 2002, p. 106).

Theorists note that specific goals in teaching in a different cultural environment include empowerment and transformation. While the “learning process is negotiated, requiring leadership by the teacher, and mutual teacher-student authority,” the instructor must actively attempt to encourage “self and social change” while contributing to “public welfare” (Shor, 1992, pp. 15-16). Teachers guide students, “to become social critics who can make reflective decisions and implement their decisions in effective personal, social, political, and economic action” (Banks, 1991, p. 131).

In practice, preparing to teach in a cultural environment that significantly differs from the teacher’s own raises many difficult questions. These relate to culture shock, the aspects of the new environment that differ from the home environment, the applicability of the instructor’s content, material, achievement metrics, and the instructor’s style in the new location (Barnhardt, 1990; Czerka & Mechlińska-Pauli, 2009; Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence and Educational Innovation, 2014).

Teaching in a War-affected Area

The literature also addresses theories and techniques related to teaching in war-affected areas, though this topic appears more frequently in professional publications

(Aguilar & Retamal, 1998; Crisp, Talbot, & Cipollone, 2001; Kirk, Mundy, & Dryden-Peterson, 2011; Retamal & Aedo-Richmond, 1998; Save the Children, 2004; Smith & Vaux, 2003; Tawil, Harley, & Braslavsky, 2004) than in academic ones. Many of the peer-reviewed journals that deal with the subject focus on issues of children (Jensen & Shaw, 1993) and the psychological aspects of educating them (McCloskey & Southwick, 1996). There are few studies of educating children in conflict zones (Kalksma-Van Lith, 2007, p. 13) and even fewer related to adult education.

Sinclair (2007) outlines the material difficulties educators face when teaching in war-torn regions. They include: damaged school buildings, displaced students, students and teachers leaving the region or the country, interruption of paying teacher salaries, general lack of funding, and inability to conduct proper supervision and evaluation. Moreover, the students, faculty, and administrators face severe health and psychosocial problems that often prevent learning from taking place. Students in conflict areas often suffer from war-related wounds as well as infectious diseases (Fitzpatrick, Johnson, Shragg, & Felice, 1987). However, more significant, difficult to remedy, and long-lasting are the psychological and social problems from which students suffer (McCloskey & Southwick, 1996). Psychosocial aspects of studying in conflict zones include post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Garbarino, Kostelny, & Dubrow, 1998; Kinzie, Sack, Angell, Manson, & Rath, 1986), psychiatric disorders (Williams & Westermeyer, 1983), anxiety (Ziv & Israeli, 1973), and poor school performance and behavior (McCloskey & Southwick, 1996).

Dealing with the material problems that arise during war is largely beyond the scope of educators. However, Sinclair (2007) lists a number of objectives relating to the

psychological and social aspects of education in war-torn areas such as providing hope, a sense of normality and “a safe space” for teaching and learning (pp. 52-53). Other objectives include supporting psychological healing, conveying life skills and providing protection for marginalized groups.

Kalksma-Van Lith (2007) describes principles for education in war-affected areas. She outlines two educational methods. The *curative approach* “is primarily concerned with resolving trauma and healing the wounds of war” (p. 4). It focuses on the mental health of the students. Another method, the *developmental approach*, “sees people as part of a wider social fabric of relationships and structures” (p. 4). It focuses on the resources and protective factors that help students cope with their surroundings and build resiliency.

Some articles chronicle the challenges faced by educators working in war-affected regions. Marusic (1994) describes how during the Yugoslavian civil war, administrators of Croatian medical schools struggled to maintain the continuity of their students’ education. Critical instructor-related issues included: “faculty experience[ing] an added fear of travelling to war-affected areas,” difficulty getting to the teaching site, and “concern for their own survival” (p. 111). Administrators deliberated whether it was morally acceptable to send faculty to teach at campuses in violence-ravaged areas. One solution they devised was for groups of teachers to travel together to the conflict zone and teach condensed courses over the course of a week. The teachers who made it to these campuses sometimes learned that because of the conflict, many of their students were unable to get to their lectures. However, when they were able to teach in these situations, it gave them a great sense of satisfaction. After a successful lecture that

immediately followed an air raid, one faculty member wrote, “I was as proud and happy as I have ever been in my life. We went outside and took a picture of our class, undaunted by another general alert” (p. 112).

However, this was not the norm. Usually the violence made focusing on the curriculum difficult, and at one point the fighting came so close to the campus in the city of Osijek that the Dean of the medical school was forced to move all classes to a safer site located 400 km (250 miles) away.

The inability of senior faculty members to get to the campuses created academic and accreditation issues. Solutions were found whereby more junior, local faculty taught courses and administered exams in the presence of the school’s branch manager who had a more senior academic ranking.

Even after the conflict subsided, students and faculty worked under heavy pressure fearing another outbreak of hostilities. A significant number of students had origins in Serbia (Croatia’s adversaries in the war). Many students left during the fighting and never returned. Those who did return found that the “level of bitterness...regardless of their nationality, was amazingly low” (p. 113).

Historic Overview of Lesley University’s Culturally Responsive Teaching in War-Affected Israel: 1979-2014

Operating Lesley University’s programs in Israel over three decades required great attention to issues of culturally-responsive teaching and education in a war-affected area. While Israelis largely espouse Western values, significant differences exist between

the two cultures. Shachar and Kurz note their “differing norms, expectations and behavior patterns” (1995, p. 83).

More significantly, the conflicts raging across national, political, religious and cultural axes influenced how classes were taught and how the extension functioned. Israel has been in a general state of war since its founding in 1948. Gunfire, bombs and missiles have exploded short distances from the campus (including at times when U.S.-based faculty were teaching). In addition to the external conflict, frictions between people of different religions (as well as those within different denominations of the same religion), ethnicities, countries of origin, and political orientation frequently led to vociferous confrontations, though not necessarily to physical violence. These factors continue to affect even simple everyday experiences, like driving an automobile. One never knows when the stress level of the next driver will reach its breaking point. Life is thus experienced in a constant state of extreme potential tension.

This is the atmosphere in which Lesley’s extension functioned for over thirty-five years. Lesley’s programs in Israel began in 1979, when a group of Lesley alumni returned from their studies at the parent university and found a strong interest in learning about expressive therapies that was not being met by Israeli academic institutions. Founding director Professor Vivien Marcow Speiser created a non-profit organization for the purpose of teaching expressive therapies and established an affiliation relationship, in which students would train in Israel and then travel to Cambridge to finish their degrees. In 1997, the program became a full-fledged extension of Lesley University and at its peak taught about 300 students a year studying in 5 master's degree programs at its campus in Netanya. Its graduates have gone on to top positions in Israel’s therapeutic and

educational communities and the institution has become synonymous with quality arts-based education and training. Today, due to regulatory issues, Lesley has completed phasing out its programs of study. An Israeli institution, The Academic College of Society and the Arts (ASA), will continue the work that began as a Lesley extension program. The Academic College of Society and the Arts currently employs many of Lesley's Israel-based instructors and teaches similar programs of study to those offered at Lesley University.

In the war-affected region in which it operated, Lesley trained therapists, educators and community activists in culturally-responsive programs of study. These graduates have gone on to excel in nearly every area of Israel's cultural, therapeutic, educational, and political life. Lesley has organized conferences and provided workshops and seminars, which disseminated this training to an even wider audience of Israelis and Palestinians. In addition, Lesley University engaged in community outreach projects within the Israeli/Palestinian and Ethiopian communities. These experiences, described below, highlight the sensitive environment in which Lesley operated.

Training Therapists, Educators and Community Activists. Since 1979, Lesley offered training programs for Israeli students in the expressive arts therapies, education, women's studies, group leadership and holistic health. By design, these were areas of inquiry that were believed to be particularly suited to contributing to Israel's conflict-riven society. Israeli faculty (most of whom were also Lesley graduates) taught two-thirds of these programs of study and one third was taught by U.S.-based instructors who travelled to Israel. Travel generally occurred during the summer or over Israeli national

holidays to offer intensive versions of the courses the U.S.-based faculty members taught in Cambridge.

These U.S. faculty members began their interactions with the cultural divide long before they first arrived in Israel. A tension always existed between wanting to provide the Israeli students with new information, methods, and techniques that might allow them to cope better with their lives in a conflict zone, and doing so according to Gay's principles of "culturally responsive teaching."

In order to facilitate this, the authors made a point of briefing the prospective instructors about what they could expect and how it would likely be different from what they had experienced teaching students in the U.S. A typical pre-course briefing would note:

I tell them that on the one hand, they should be prepared for students who will violate all the conventions of the faculty student relationship. Most importantly, when the students walk into the classroom, they haven't adopted the most basic educational assumption, that the teacher has something to teach them. On the other hand, I tell them that they have probably never taught more open, engaging, challenging or heart-warming students in their careers. After the course, I check with the faculty, and I am usually right on both counts (Marcow Speiser & Schwartz, 2011, p. 141).

Indeed, following their teaching many faculty remarked that when the students ceased being uncooperative, they turned into some of the most interactive, expressive, and giving students that they had ever taught. The students were fully engaged in

conversation, enriched the discussion with poignant personal examples, and challenged the faculty in ways they believed brought out their best.

U.S.-based faculty members sought ways to deal with the cultural differences. Successful U.S. faculty responded to these unfamiliar customs and behaviors in culturally-responsive ways. They often began their teaching each day with a check-in session geared to coordinating expectations about the material that would be covered and the learning methods that would be used. Irle Goldman, who taught courses for more than a decade in the M.A. program in group leadership through the arts, opines that the opening rituals in teaching a class are an important element of building a constructive learning community. He notes:

When the students later might challenge my teaching or my competence (a frequent occurrence when teaching in Israel, especially as compared with the sometimes overly deferential attitude of American students) these beginning gestures provided a bond that contained the connection between us and often helped us to get through those conflicts successfully (2012, p. 76).

Despite pre-course preparation and carefully thought-out opening rituals, instructors were sometimes still surprised by the way many familiar aspects of academic behavior are different in Israel. Culturally, it is not considered (as) rude for students to conduct private conversations while their instructors or class-mates are talking. Shaun McNiff, who was instrumental in the founding of the Israel program and has frequently taught there noted in remarks to the others, “The Israeli idea of group process is everyone speaking at the same time”. Every aspect of the course becomes a subject of negotiation

and debate, from on-time arrival at the beginning of the day to at what time the class will break, to assignment length and due dates.

Faculty learned to acknowledge the ways in which their attitudes were at variance with those of the class and were able to adopt an approach that was firm on core issues but willing to discuss aspects of difference that were less critical to the functioning of the class. Using the arts to bridge cultural gaps was very effective. McNiff notes that:

[I]t is important within arts and healing communities to honor individuation, critical expression, and an ongoing dialectic of viewpoints, even when they are difficult to accept. The institutional power of the arts in therapy need to keep a careful eye and ear to our shadows, making sure we do not repress and curb the creative process that we hold out to the world as a way of healing and change. (2012, p. 50).

While sensitively combining such a firmness with flexibility was no mean feat, those instructors who did so were rewarded with a highly meaningful teaching experience. They became both mentors and friends of their Israeli students who often presented them with gifts, poems and personal mementos at the conclusion of the class (J. G. Byers & Forinash, 2004). Most faculty maintained contact with their students after they returned to the U.S. and if they came back to Israel to teach the following year they generally had multiple invitations from their former students who brought them to their homes to share a family meal or took them to out of the way locations to see a less-travelled part of the country (Powell, 2002, p. 19).

The programs at Lesley's Israel extension were also designed to meet the psychological and social objectives described by Sinclair (2007) for teaching in war-torn areas. Studies at the extension often served as an island of sanity, peace and tranquility for the students. Students, administrators and U.S. and Israel based faculty all worked to transform the classroom into a "safe space," where a variety of opinions and positions could be explored and expressed.

Mary Clare Powell, the former head of the Creative Arts and Learning program notes that Israeli students told her, "Lesley is an oasis for us, a normal place; we are glad to be spending a week in this course" (p. 19). During the country's most tumultuous periods, the hours spent at Lesley provided immersion in arts-based training that did not just distract from the painful and ubiquitous personal and national psychic assaults. The time spent at Lesley also healed and enriched those who worked and studied in Israel, while providing hope for a future with less trauma and suffering.

This dynamic was reflective of both the curative and developmental approach outlined previously by Kalksma-Van Lith (2007). Instructors needed to remind themselves that the students were not their patients. They constantly checked to ensure that class meetings did not turn into therapy sessions. Due to the trauma the students bore, this was a difficult mission to uphold. In addition, the nature of the subject matter and the methods of instruction (especially when related to the arts) intrinsically provided the students with some therapeutic benefit, as per the curative model. More directly applied was the developmental approach, which explicitly aimed to provide the students with tools and knowledge that would enhance their resilience.

Mitchell Kossak, former head of the Expressive Therapies division, traveled to teach in Israel more than a dozen times. He notes that while he attempted to teach his Israeli students resilience, these interchanges worked both ways:

It is because of this resiliency that I continually return. It is this resiliency that feeds me in some way and restores my sense of what it means to feel alive. The arts in general always have at the core the intent to define the human condition. This goal of awakening and illuminating the human condition is always embedded in the teaching and training of expressive arts therapists. In Israel, this sense of awakening is always present (2012, p. 75).

Lesley's instructors and administrators were gratified that their experiences on campus helped students distance themselves from the most painful parts of their realities. However, they never believed that the goal of learning at Lesley is to cut one's self off from the events going on in the wider community. On the contrary, they have been proud to teach the skills that prepare students to confront and overcome external hardships and to help others to do this as well.

This potential for resiliency has been translated into action by generations of Lesley graduates who have spread the learning they acquired at Lesley to all corners of the country. Lesley alumni have risen to the top echelons in Israel's government, non-profit organizations and private initiatives. They are recognized for their contributions in the fields of therapy, education and community activism. Some of Lesley's graduates have achieved national recognition and often mention to the public and the media the important influence that Lesley's training has had on their careers.

In addition to training leaders in the subjects taught at the extension, Lesley also has made more direct contributions to Israeli society by focusing the knowledge and experience of its instructors, students and administrators to the most pressing problems facing Israeli society. In the framework of its practicum training, Lesley sends its students to assist at-risk populations in various public and private frameworks. Lesley's students work with a wide variety of clients across all populations including: the mentally and physically ill, abuse victims, the developmentally and physically disabled, at-risk youth, Ethiopian and Russian immigrants, victims of eating disorders, and prison inmates.

Conferences. Lesley's contributions to Israel as a war-affected society did not stop with the education it provided to its students. The extension wanted to teach a much wider audience how to use the arts to educate, heal, and advocate for those around them. The primary vehicles for the transmission of this knowledge and these skills were conferences and seminars that Lesley organized both in Israel and Palestine.

In 1982, Lesley organized the First International Conference in Expressive Therapies at Kibbutz Shefayim on Israel's Mediterranean coast. This professional gathering, co-chaired by Marcow Speiser, and Pnina Rappaport, one of the Israel program's first graduates, brought world authorities in the field to Israel for the first time and raised the profile of expressive therapies in the country. Marcow Speiser notes:

The reason this conference was so important was that it was a pivotal moment in the history of the country. Israel was fighting in Lebanon and many of the conference participants were in uniform. The late Professor Peter Rowan mounted

a psychodrama with a protagonist soldier that was one of the most powerful pieces of work I have ever witnessed (Marcow Speiser, 2009, p. 11).

In April 2006, to mark Lesley's 25th anniversary in Israel, Lesley University sponsored an international conference entitled, "Imagine: Expression in the Service of Humanity - Creative Approaches to Working with Conflict in Groups." The idea for the conference emerged when:

[T]he second Intifada was in full swing, suicide bombings in the areas were on the rise, and the cycle of violence, occupation and retaliation was intensified. We felt we needed to do 'something' to help professionals working with the pain and the trauma of both the Israeli and the Palestinian populations and to show support for creative action in the face of uncontrollable political events (Serlin & Marcow Speiser, July 2007, p. 280).

The conference attracted 350 participants, including a group of 60 Palestinians. Most participants came from the fields of counseling (including psychologists, expressive arts therapists, group psychoanalysts, social workers, and healers) while educators, artists and grass roots activists represented large minorities of conference attendees. Throughout the lectures, seminars, panels, artistic presentations, there were "deep, difficult, and always meaningful dialogs" (Serlin & Marcow Speiser, July 2007, p. 282). For the most part, political slogans were put aside and participants engaged in people to people communication, sharing their insights concerning healing traumatized populations. In an article summarizing the conference, the author recalled, "While many of the underlying

tensions came to the surface it was a great opportunity to also talk, sing, dance and create together” (Marcow Speiser, 2009, p. 13)

The camaraderie between the participants was intense and professional collaboration continued in the months that followed. Israeli and Palestinian scholars who met at the conference maintained their relationships and went on to engage in cooperative research projects and published joint academic articles (Joubran & Schwartz, July 2007).

Since the success of *Imagine*, Lesley organized an academic conference in nearly every subsequent year, at which hundreds of participants presented and attended. These included the 2009 conference, sponsored together with Israel’s union of expressive and creative arts therapists, entitled “Creative Arts Therapies Approaches to Working with Conflict and Trauma.” In 2011 and 2012 Lesley organized international conferences on the subject of Arts and Social Change. These conferences featured a number of unique speakers and presentations that aimed to spread knowledge and share tools that would transform Israeli society and mitigate the effects of war and conflict.

The 2011 conference featured the screening of an original film produced by Lesley entitled, “Studying Together: An Unexpected Story of Success” (Ziegman & Schwartz, 2011). The movie (abridged English version online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2NH2KjIUGCM>) tells the story of a cohort of students studying in its Master of Education program in Integrated Teaching Through the Arts. In 2009, a heterogenous group of 15 Arab and Jewish students began studies in this program, presenting a unique and social challenge. The film follows the group through

their program of study and features classroom footage highlighting the integration of the arts into curricula as well as interviews with faculty, students, and administrators.

At the 2012 conference, Lesley released the book *The Arts and Social Change: The Lesley University Experience in Israel* (Schwartz, Marcow Speiser, Speiser, & Kossak, 2012). The book provides a theoretical framework for understanding arts and activism in Israel and highlights the specific contribution of some of Lesley's Israel-based faculty, students and researchers over the past three decades.

The Lesley Extension in Israel sponsored an international conference entitled, The Arch of the Arts in Healthcare, together with the Global Alliance for Arts and Health, in 2013. The conference was hosted by the Ruth and Bruce Rappaport Faculty of Medicine, at the Technion Israel Institute of Technology, in Haifa, Israel. The field of Arts and Health, encompassing the creative arts therapies and medical humanities is a relatively unknown field in Israel. Just as Lesley introduced the idea of expressive therapy in Israel in 1979, as its parting gift, it opened the dialog on arts and health. An entire edition of the *Journal of Applied Arts and Health* is devoted to this conference where according to its editors:

It brought together participants from Israel and abroad in the fields of medicine, allied health, the healing professions, expressive arts therapy, studio art, architecture and others, to discuss recent professional developments that link the applied arts and health. The conference was the first of its kind in Israel, a country in which currently there is no professional organization dedicated to the issues of arts and health. (Schwartz, Marcow Speiser, & Wikoff, 2014, p. 238)

Community Outreach Programs-with the Ethiopian Community and on Israeli-Palestinian Co-existence. In addition to its academic programs of study and its conferences, Lesley attempted to achieve the objectives for work in conflict-riven areas through community outreach programs with a variety of communities on a diverse array of subjects. The two most extensive and long-lasting programs dealt with Israel's Ethiopian immigrant community and the issue of Israeli-Palestinian co-existence.

The Lesley extension launched a multi-year initiative partnering with Israel's Ethiopian community to assist in their acculturation. In 2006, Lesley began a community organization project in cooperation with the Nes Ziona, Israel municipality in order to improve the quality of life of the city's Ethiopian immigrant population. Lesley began by studying the problem, holding numerous fact-finding meetings with various office holders and employees in the Nes Ziona municipality.

In 2007, Lesley University sponsored a leadership training seminar for Ethiopian youth following their mandatory military service, led by long-time faculty member Avi Hadari. This group was identified by the municipality as most at-risk for social alienation. The extension followed up in April 2008, by conducting a day-long seminar at a Nes Ziona middle school with a large Ethiopian student population on the subject of "Imagining the Future: Building Dreams." The day-long workshop focused, among other subjects, on building rapport between the Ethiopian and Israeli students in the school. A team of musicians, artists and creative arts educators joined Lesley faculty in leading students through various arts based workshops aimed at inclusion and creative conflict transformation through the arts.

In the spring and summer of 2008, Lesley conducted an art therapy support group for young Ethiopian mothers of small children. This workshop served not just to help the participants process their issues through the arts; it also helped bridge the gaps between the Ethiopian immigrants and the Israeli establishment.

In addition to the work with the Ethiopian community in Nes Ziona, Lesley began working with Ethiopian immigrants at the Hadassah Neurim Youth Village's boarding school, located to the north of Netanya. In the spring of 2008, Lesley conducted a "Building Dreams" workshop on the Neurim campus and in the Fall of 2008, the extension organized for some of the school's Ethiopian students to travel to the U.S. for a women's empowerment seminar. In 2012, Lesley led a weekly African percussion workshop for the pupils who board at the school.

Another major focus of Lesley's community outreach was on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In the mid-nineties, then program director of AIPI in Israel, Talila Mor, together with Marcow Speiser organized arts based seminars and workshops with a variety of Israeli and Palestinian co-existence groups including Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam and Givat Haviva.

Over the course of many years, Julia Byers, former expressive therapies division director, used the arts to work with trauma sufferers in Gaza and the West Bank, including with the children of suicide bombers. She believes that, "Art as communication, therapy or psychotherapy offers a recontextualized role of validating traumatized people's experiences in a meaningful and healing way" (J. Byers, 1996, p. 239).

Marcow Speiser and her husband, Phillip Speiser, conducted a year-long research project focusing on Lesley graduates and other mental health professionals who worked in Israel and Palestine with those affected by the stress and trauma of the on-going conflict. They conclude that:

Israelis and Palestinians alike are suffering from the conflict and it is our fervent hope that being able to look at and confront some of these painful acts and the ways in which clinicians are working with these issues, we can open a doorway into recognizing our common humanity so that future generations might be spared some of the horrors of the past (Marcow Speiser & Speiser, 2007, p. 257).

Lesley graduate, Judith Yovel-Recanati, co-founded NATAL: The Israel Trauma Center for Victims of Terror and War. In its more than 10 years of operation, NATAL has treated tens of thousands of trauma victims through its individual and group therapy sessions, and telephone hotline. For her efforts in founding and running NATAL, Judith was awarded second prize as "Israel's community innovator of 2005," and in 2007 she received Lesley University's Alumni Community Service Award.

From 2005-2008 Lesley University ran cooperative programs with the Palestinian Al Quds University. Lesley faculty members teaching at the Israel extension would frequently meet with Palestinian faculty members and students at the university's East Jerusalem, Abu Dis and Ramallah campuses. Joel Ziff taught psychotherapeutic workshops at Al Quds and notes:

I ended this brief but quite intense experience feeling both despair and hope. I felt despair at the depth of the split between these two worlds, of their different perspectives and understanding, despair at the limited impact that any of us could

have to create a different reality of cooperation, despair that we could make a difference. At the same time I felt hope, hope in seeing that I could cross that barrier and that others could meet me in spite of the war that had erupted around us all, hope that in the underlying common humanity of our biology, that the more each of us is able in our different worlds, to calm those instinctual urges to fight, flight, fright and freeze, that we can awaken to a higher sense of our humanity and of the possibilities for creative solutions to problems that appear to be insoluble. It is my prayer that we can build bridges to surmount those barriers (Ziff, 2009).

Conclusions and Lessons Learned

As noted, the needs of culturally-responsive teaching and teaching in a war-affected location sometimes conflict. Those working at the Israel extension and at the home campus were constantly aware of this tension and endeavored to find the right balance.

The Lesley faculty and administrators who founded the Israel extension and who worked there for over three decades explicitly aimed to achieve some of Sinclair's (2007) objectives for teaching in a war-affected region. In addition to providing an atmosphere of tranquility where students could escape the harshest aspects of their realities, the extension tried to pass on to those who studied there, or participated in its conferences and outreach programs, the information, skills and techniques that would enable them to offer healing, convey coping skills and provide protection for the marginalized. These students and participants themselves were the first beneficiaries but as shown, Lesley takes great pride in the way program graduates applied their knowledge and experiences in ways that transformed their whole societies.

Providing the students in war-affected areas with information and techniques to improve their situation that would otherwise be unavailable to them is a worthy goal. However, the means of transferring this knowledge and these experiences needed to be culturally sensitive. Lesley's staff were aware of the various dangers involved and attempted to avoid them.

The faculty and administrators tried to elude "mirror imaging" fallacies whereby it was assumed that the students and participants at the extension's programs would be just like the ones they worked with in the U.S. At first, this did not appear to be an insurmountable obstacle, but upon setting foot in the classroom, the instructors were challenged by some of the culturally-different aspects of the teaching. While recognizing the cultural differences, instructors found that old habits and approaches are quite ingrained. Despite the superficial understanding that those with whom you are working have vastly different experiences and are using different paradigms, it is easy and seductive for a teacher to fall back on the tried and true methods that worked for decades. Lesley's faculty needed to be on constant guard to keep the teaching "culturally sensitive." As a rule, they were.

A related, but possibly more pernicious danger, was a patronizing thinking that the information and skills that the instructors possessed could provide neat resolutions to the complex problems which developed under very different circumstances. The faculty members all approached their work with a spirit of mission, sincerely wanting to improve the lives of those they touched through the use of their skills and through the sharing of their knowledge. Therefore, in a pre-emptive manner, they constantly reminded

themselves that there are many ways to solve problems, that their methods might not be appropriate in this cultural and historical environment, and that the students themselves are probably the best suited to envision the appropriate solutions.

By and large, the Lesley instructors were successful in finding the right balance between their desire to contribute to the improvement of their Israeli students and society and doing so in culturally sensitive manner. The faculty generally summoned the appropriate blend of outreach, respect and humility to achieve their and their students' educational goals. The combination of preparing intensively, learning from and correcting mistakes, and bringing their open hearts and loving spirits went a long way to avoiding the most serious pitfalls.

Today, the Lesley University Extension program in Israel has concluded its 35 years of formal operation. It has created a legacy of culturally sensitive teaching in a conflict zone, which continues the work of Lesley's graduates and faculty. As noted, many of these graduates teach in the newly established "successor" institution in Israel, the Academic College of Society and the Arts (ASA). Lesley University remains affiliated with ASA and continues to build joint research projects with it and other Israeli institutions of higher education such as the Achva Academic College.

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