Promoting Change within the Constraints of Conflict:
Case Study of Sadaka Reut in Israel

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This article explores the approach to transformative education utilized by Sadaka Reut, a binational civil society organization in Israel that works with Jewish and Palestinian youth. I examine three central tools Sadaka Reut uses to achieve its goal of educating youth for social change: using personal experiences as the basis for discussion; emphasizing personal-structural links; and implementing uninational activities within a binational framework. I argue that though the organization's approach holds potential for appealing to a broad audience and for fostering transformation amongst participants, the strength of dominant discourses in Israeli society places significant constraints on Sadaka Reut's work and limits possibilities for widespread success.

The Work of Sadaka Reut

On a January evening in 2011, I joined Sadaka Reut's Bat Yam[2] group for its weekly meeting and a discussion of self-portraits taken by the group's members—Jewish young women in the 9th through 11th grades from lower-middle class families of Moroccan descent. Inana,[3] one of the group members, described two pictures taken outside her military training school, explaining that they depicted students at rest following a mandatory end-of-the-day formation. Michal, the group's facilitator, a 23-year-old Jewish woman, asked Inana and the rest of the group about these photographs: "What does this picture tell us about you and about your school environment? What is the ratio of boys and girls in the school? Why do you think are there fewer girls than boys studying at a military school?"[4]

Over the next hour, the group discussed this and related issues. From the question about the boy-girl ratio emerged several comments about contexts characterized by significant gender imbalance, and who is advantaged and disadvantaged by such situations. When Sivan, another participant, mentioned that women face a difficult choice about careers in Israel's military, saying, "You can't be a mom" in that context, Michal suggested, "[These choices] are structurally constrained. In other words, personal desires are influenced by external factors, and not only internal ones: what we decide, or what we want, is structured by our society and our environment." Michal emphasized the personal-structural connection repeatedly throughout the discussion, asking how power relations in Israeli society influence personal choices. As the session drew to a close, another participant, Gavrielle, said, "You can't generalize. Society defines who is a man or a woman—but it doesn't mean that he or she will be exactly the way society says they should be." Michal responded. "That's exactly how I think we should summarize today's discussion—thinking about the roles that society sets for us, and yet, how each of us as individuals fit (or don't fit) into those roles."

I share this vignette as a starting point to highlight the work of the Israeli civil society organization, Sadaka Reut. The vignette embodies Sadaka Reut's programmatic approach, implemented with the overarching goals of helping youth develop critical awareness of structural issues in Israeli society and fostering engagement in activities aimed at challenging policies that create advantages for some groups while systemically discriminating against others. Sadaka Reut's approach has allowed it to survive within an environment characterized by conflict-laden relations between Jews and Palestinians,[5] and unequal opportunities for Israeli minorities. Moreover, this approach has enabled Sadaka Reut to permeate the formal education system while maintaining a critical ideology challenging messages disseminated in Israeli schools. Yet, I argue that even as it has adopted approaches designed to mitigate constraining factors and facilitated significant change among its participants, dominant societal discourses limit Sadaka Reut's potential for contributing broadly to social change in Israel and thus its success as an educational initiative.

Background and Context

Inter-group conflicts have characterized Israel since its founding in 1948. Prime among these conflicts is antagonism between Jewish and Palestinian citizens, related to but distinct from Israel's conflict with Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. While the latter conflict is primarily over territorial sovereignty, the Jewish-Palestinian conflict *within* Israel is a reflection of the status of Palestinian citizens as a "trapped minority" (Rabinowitz, 2001) and as a group subject to overt and implicit discrimination at all levels and in multiple sectors (Al-Haj, 1995; Human Rights Watch, 2001).

Israel's founding documents serve as a basis for the tensions between Jewish and Palestinian citizens. The State is defined as both Jewish and democratic, according to its Declaration of Independence (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1948), a dual definition raising fundamental questions about the nature of Israel's democracy and the potential for Jewish and Palestinian citizens to enjoy equality within the polity. Palestinians exist "in a circle peripheral to the core" of Israeli society (Shafir & Peled, 1998, p. 254), sharing the individual rights of liberal citizenship without the benefits of citizenship as an ethno-national collective (Ghanem, 2000). Moreover, the dominant ethno-national discourse in Israel—disseminated in the media, in the education system, and via other societal institutions—privileges beliefs that emphasize Jewish victimization and promote Israel's historical and contemporary claim to land (Bar-Tal, Halperin, & Oren, 2011). Simultaneously, dominant discourse also de-legitimizes the Palestinian historical narrative, for example by preventing discussion or instruction about events important to the Palestinian nation within Jewish and Palestinian schools (Abu-Saad, 2008; Golan-Agnon, 2006).[6]

As a result of both explicit and implicit discrimination, tensions simmer constantly under the surface of Jewish-Palestinian relations. Since Israel's establishment, Palestinian citizens have reacted to these tensions in different ways, including, since the 1970s, coordinated protests against the government. While these protests declined in the 1990s, disappointment and frustration grew at the end of the decade after promises of increased support to Palestinian localities failed to materialize (Yiftachel, 1999). In September 2000, frustrations among Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip led to an uprising that became known as the Al-

Aqsa Intifada. Within the State of Israel, antagonism between Palestinian and Jewish citizens exploded soon after the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, when 12 Palestinian citizens and 1 Jew were killed following protests held in solidarity with Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The October 2000 events were a warning signal to Jewish citizens about the degree of alienation felt by their Palestinian counterparts (Or, 2004). Yet, more than a decade later, the situation in Israel has not improved—indeed, there are indications that Israeli society has become more polarized. For example, recent protests decrying relationships between Jewish and Palestinian citizens indicate the degree to which Jewish Israelis view their Palestinian counterparts with suspicion (Hadad, 2011; Levinson, 2011). Furthermore, numerous instances of anti-Palestinian vandalism, graffiti, and physical violence instigated by Jews (e.g., Boker, 2013; Kubovich, 2013; Lidman, 2013) have further damaged inter-group relationships. Within this context of segregation and animosity, any initiative bringing Jewish and Palestinian citizens together or emphasizing education for Jewish-Palestinian partnership is viewed as "political," regardless of its objectives (e.g., Bar-Tal, 2011).

Although the predominant conflict within Israeli society is between Jews and Palestinians, other minority groups suffer from systemic discrimination, as well. Within the Jewish community, the disadvantaging of the Mizrahi[7] community in relation to Ashkenazi[8] Jews has been well documented (Shohat, 1999), as has the discrimination faced by Ethiopian immigrants (Ben-Eliezer, 2004). In recent years Israel has seen an influx of non-Jewish immigrants and asylum seekers from parts of Africa and Asia; these groups, too, suffer from institutional discrimination and widespread racism in Israeli society (Bartram, 2011; Willen, 2010).

Conceptual Issues and Related Research

Against this background of tension and conflict, inter-group encounter programs are one approach to improving relationships between groups in Israeli society. Such programs, focusing primarily on the Jewish-Palestinian rift, have been implemented in Israel since the 1950s, with the overarching objectives of promoting mutual respect and awareness of multiple narratives (Abu-Nimer, 1999).

Studies of inter-group encounter programs in conflict contexts—most but not all of which focus on Israel-Palestine—fall into two primary categories. First, a number of studies examine cognitive and affective change among participants. For example, using questionnaires completed prior to and following participation in an encounter program, Maoz (2003) examined changes in attitude toward Palestinians among Jews with different political affiliations. Research using a similar approach has also examined: gender differences in the outcomes of encounter program participation (Yablon, 2009); ethnic differences among Georgian and Abkhaz youth in encounter program effects (Ohanyan & Lewis, 2005); and long-term change in empathy toward the "other" among Tamil and Sinhalese Sri Lankan youth (Malhotra & Liyanage, 2005).

A second line of scholarship focuses on the encounter process itself. For instance, several studies examine the nature of interaction between participants in a Jewish-Palestinian encounter program and the way that participants' language use in the encounter is reflective of their views related to

the conflict (e.g., Steinberg & Bar-On, 2002; Maoz et al., 2002; Bekerman, 2009). Other research has examined perceptions of dialogue facilitators regarding the encounter process (Bekerman, Maoz, & Sheftel, 2006; Maoz, Bekerman, & Sheftel, 2007).

Taken as a whole, scholarship points to different perspectives regarding whether, how, and under what conditions encounter programs are successful in promoting change (Bar-Tal, 2004; Maoz, 2011; Salomon, 2006, 2009). Yet, with few exceptions, literature on encounters between conflict groups measures change among individual participants using a model that treats the encounter itself as a black box, mostly ignoring how programmatic choices—for example, whether greater emphasis is placed on structured activities or informal opportunities for cross-national conversation—might influence individual-level outcomes.

Moreover, much of the research in this field fails to take into account the broader socio-political context in which encounters are implemented and how this environment shapes possible outcomes, both at the individual level and with respect to transformation on a larger, societal scale. Bekerman and Zembylas (2012), however, argue that attempts to "build peace" within a nation-state must take into account the nation-state's influence in what happens in these endeavors.[9] In contrast, scholarship providing guidance on *how* to educate for social change (e.g., Anyon, 2009), including in contexts characterized by long-standing inter-group conflict (Jansen, 2009), says little about the outcomes of the approaches suggested. Definitions of success, in other words, do not take context into account.

I use Sadaka Reut's work as a case study to address these gaps in the literature and to raise a central question about what it means to educate for social change in the Israeli context. Specifically, I ask whether and how approaches such as those utilized by Sadaka Reut can facilitate transformation among individual participants. I then contextualize these approaches within Israel's socio-political environment, examining how the intersection between organization and environment limits the potential for larger-scale change.

Sadaka Reut: Goals, Structure, Staff, and Programs

Established in 1983, Sadaka Reut is one of Israel's veteran organizations bringing together Jewish and Palestinian youth. The organization is guided by an overarching mission of educating and empowering "Jewish and Palestinian Israeli youth and university students to pursue social and political change through binational partnership" (http://en.reutsadaka.org/?page_id=627, accessed July 5, 2013). Two principles lie at the heart of Sadaka Reut's work: educating youth for social engagement, out of the belief that "a single person has the ability to impact change in important issues" (Sadaka Reut's facilitation manual, 2000, p. 5); and providing a model of joint Jewish-Palestinian partnership, based on the assumption that "only real and honest partnership between the two nations can bring about significant social change for a different future" (Sadaka Reut's *Ma'arachim* facilitation manual, 2005, p. 1). Above all, Sadaka Reut emphasizes partnership as a tool for confronting and overcoming systemic inequalities in Israeli society.

Sadaka Reut implements a range of programs targeting individuals from late junior high through adulthood. At Sadaka Reut's core is its original, flagship program, *Building a Culture of Peace* (BCP)—the program referenced in the opening vignette. BCP is made up of local groups from

around the country (usually including 10-20 participants each) that meet weekly over the course of at least one, but often two or even three academic years. In its first year, each BCP group is uninational (made up of Jews *or* Palestinians), but joins other BCP groups monthly for binational (joint Jewish-Palestinian) activities and periodically for weekend seminars. BCP groups in their 2nd or 3rd year often expand to become regionally based, binational groups. Participants also take part in an annual 3-day summer camp focused on engaging in activism around a specific political issue.

BCP's overarching mission of bringing Jewish and Palestinian youth together in a way that encourages constructive partnership, critical awareness, and skill-building has remained the same throughout Sadaka Reut's history. However, the program's approach has shifted over time. For instance, in the years following the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, Sadaka Reut staff came to the conclusion that, as the Palestinian co-director told me, "the real work of consciousness raising happens in uninational meetings." In comparison, she explained, binational meetings, if not preceded by extensive uninational work, almost always reinforce dominant power dynamics in Israeli society. This is why BCP groups are initially formed uninationally, rather than, as was the case for many years, in binational format. In addition, BCP's original emphasis on fostering inter-personal ties between Jews and Palestinians has been replaced by an emphasis on addressing power dynamics between groups in Israeli society and empowering participants with respect to both their personal and collective identity claims. Finally, in the last ten years, Sadaka Reut has placed a greater priority on recruiting BCP participants from marginalized population groups within the Jewish population, such as Ethiopians and Mizrahi youth.

BCP follows a flexible curriculum in which each group, over the course of the year, develops an action agenda based on an issue they deem important to their community (e.g., housing demolitions, inter-group relations, social services). Regardless of the focus, a similar overarching structure characterizes each group. For example, the year begins with activities aimed at establishing relationships among group members before shifting into discussions related to personal and collective identity, democratic principles and equal rights, and the Jewish-Palestinian conflict.[10] These discussions, as I explain below, focus on the individual experiences of participants and are molded to fit the overarching topic of each group's focus. All facilitators are provided with a curricular manual that describes the organization's mission, vision, and pedagogical rationale, in addition to providing information on the general structure BCP groups should adhere to throughout the year and examples of different activities that facilitators can draw upon in their work.

Each year the BCP program reaches 200-300 youth by opening approximately 20 groups (10 Jewish and 10 Palestinian)—over 5,000 youth have participated since Sadaka Reut was established in 1983. Participants are recruited through another Sadaka Reut program called *Ma'arachim* (literally, "lesson plans"), which brings facilitators into both Jewish and Palestinian classrooms to implement workshops about issues ranging from racism to gender to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.[11] *Ma'arachim* coordinators try to market the program to schools in the areas where BCP groups meet; however, many workshops are implemented at the invitation of individual teachers or principals who wish to take advantage of Sadaka Reut's expertise in and interactive approach to addressing social issues. The specific content of *Ma'arachim* workshops is decided upon jointly by Sadaka Reut staff and teachers, with input from students regarding

which social issues are most relevant to their lives. These workshops range from single, two-hour sessions to weekly meetings that take place over the course of several weeks. My discussion in this paper focuses primarily on BCP and *Ma'arachim*.

Each of Sadaka Reut's programs is jointly administered by Palestinian and Jewish co-coordinators, just as a Jew and a Palestinian co-direct the organization overall. Coordinators oversee Sadaka Reut facilitators; each uninational BCP group is led by a facilitator with the same ethno-national background as the group's participants, and *Ma'arachim* facilitators are likewise of the same ethno-national background as students in the classrooms where they implement workshops. When BCP groups meet binationally, they are always led by a pair of co-facilitators, one Jewish and one Palestinian. These facilitators, the immediate contact for BCP and *Ma'arachim* participants, are university students or young professionals in their early- to mid-20s, many of whom are former BCP participants.

Methodology

The analysis in this article is based upon data collected between August 2010 and April 2011. During this period, I conducted approximately 100 hours of observation of Sadaka Reut activities, including staff trainings and meetings, weekly meetings of one Jewish BCP group,[12] monthly regional activities, and one weekend retreat bringing together all Jewish and Palestinian BCP participants. I also conducted interviews with 20 former and current Sadaka Reut staff and board members, and collected and analyzed educational materials (including facilitation manuals and staff training guides) developed and used over the past three decades.

My analysis also draws upon life history interviews conducted with 43 Sadaka Reut alumni—individuals who participated in BCP and/or in *Community in Action*, Sadaka Reut's one-year intensive leadership program for high school graduates, in the years between 1983 and 2009. I utilized a mix of quota and snowball sampling to recruit participants, interviewing approximately equal numbers of Jews/Palestinians and males/females, as well as approximately equal numbers of participants from the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. Interviews began with a request for participants to "Tell me about your life," with additional questions emerging naturally during the conversation. Topics addressed in most interviews included: experiences as participants in the organization's programs, family background, beliefs and activities related to social change, education, and professional experiences. I conducted additional interviews with several participants and one focus group interview with Sadaka Reut staff members during a follow-up visit to Israel in April-May 2012.

Achieving the Vision: Programmatic Approaches

In implementing the BCP and *Ma'arachim* programs, Sadaka Reut emphasizes a number of approaches that guide facilitators in their engagement with youth, as well as reinforce the organization's core principles of educating youth for social awareness and engagement and embodying a model of joint Jewish-Palestinian partnership. These approaches are also used to try to make Sadaka Reut's work more palatable with stakeholders in Israel's current socio-political environment. They include: using participants' experiences as the starting point for discussion;

fostering awareness of the connection between personal choices and structural constraints; and engaging in uninational activity within a framework emphasizing binational partnership.

Working from the Personal Outwards

Sadaka Reut places a priority on utilizing participants' interests and experiences as the core material upon which discussions are based. For instance, weekly BCP meetings often begin with the facilitator framing the discussion generally around some topic and then eliciting commentary about participants' experiences related to this topic, or using comments made at the start of a session to generate broader discussion. This approach can be seen in the opening vignette, with Inana's comments on her photographs and school experiences leading into a discussion about the military and structural opportunities in Israeli society.

The approach is also reflected in a meeting I observed of this same group earlier in the 2010-2011 academic year, during which Michal, the group facilitator, had participants read two short stories on the topic of group identity, and then asked them how these stories related to issues in their own lives. One participant, Danya, commented that the inter-group relations in the stories reminded her of feeling uncomfortable while walking around a nearby park, because of the groups of *arsim*[13] congregating there at night. Michal pushed Danya and other group members to explain how they defined *arsim* and what made them a group. As the evening continued, the discussion remained focused on specific groups with which the BCP participants interacted. Yet, over ensuing months, conversations about group identity and stereotypes expanded beyond Danya and other group members' direct experiences toward more abstract issues, such as the symbolic importance of identity in conflict. Eventually, this group also discussed the importance of thinking about these issues as a way of understanding and changing social realities—an important discussion in the weeks preceding Sadaka Reut's summer camp, an annual event during which BCP participants collectively engage in confronting social justice issues.

Sadaka Reut's approach of starting with participants' experiences holds true for *Ma'arachim* as well as BCP. As a Jewish *Ma'arachim* coordinator explained to me, "[Our fundamental principle] is to address, first of all, what the students see in their own reality: what sorts of groups exist, what kinds of relationships exist between those groups." She continued, explaining why this approach is so important to Sadaka Reut's work:

> We start from the assumption that in order to try to create change in others one needs to understand oneself, what is important to oneself, to what one connects— you need to help individuals create a connection between themselves and their community. You can't come in and impose something upon them. So [the *Ma'arachim* program] is very focused on providing a space for [youth], for their worldviews, and also for their racism . . . and that, in many ways, is our power, both pedagogically and ideologically. That is, in order for someone to understand the world in a critical manner, and understand the other, and identify with the other, one needs to understand one's place, one needs to learn and act within the reality in which one lives.

As the quote above suggests, Sadaka Reut's emphasis on utilizing participants' experiences as the basis for discussions is ideologically rooted. As an organization committed to empowering

youth to pursue societal change, it uses participants' personal experiences as a starting point for creating connections to systemic issues. This emphasis also means that an individual's first experience with the organization—often via a *Ma'arachim* workshop implemented in his/her classroom—is one that connects Sadaka Reut to him/her personally. In theory at least, this provides Sadaka Reut with a broader basis for recruiting participants into BCP.

Emphasizing the Personal-Structural Link
Sadaka Reut's emphasis on using personal experiences as the basis for discussions is related to its focus on linking those experiences to systemic issues within Israeli society. In the opening vignette, this comes across in Michal connecting the scenes in Inana's photographs to gender-based societal constraints. Other Sadaka Reut activities I observed also focused on making participants aware of connections between individual opportunities and broader power dynamics.

For instance, during an activity implemented at a BCP-wide seminar, facilitators distributed post-it notes to participants, each of which had written on it a different "identity" (e.g., an Ashkenazi male, a young Bedouin woman,[14] an older Ethiopian immigrant). The facilitators read out statements about situations that might arise in Israeli society, such as studying at the university or buying a home, and asked participants to physically step forward if they felt this situation might apply to the "character" whose identity they had been given.

In the discussion following this activity, facilitators guided participants' comments about individuals toward examining how these situations might apply to groups as a whole. Raniah, a Palestinian participant who was asked to take on the identity of a Mizrahi male, said that she thought if he tried hard, a Mizrahi male could obtain a university degree. Iris, a Jewish participant, disagreed. Rahim, one of the facilitators, encouraged this discussion, gently reminding group participants about systemic disadvantages faced by Mizrahi citizens that might make obtaining a higher education difficult.

During my conversations with Sadaka Reut staff and former participants, many discussed the importance of being able to critically reflect on structural constraints as a first step in developing strategies to work against them. Comments by Sadaka Reut alumni attest to the organization's success in helping foster this awareness. For example, Efrat, a Jewish woman who participated in Sadaka Reut activities during the late 1980s, explained to me: "Everywhere I am, I read the reality in a critical manner . . . and that's something that I learned from Sadaka Reut. It's like a pair of glasses that became my eyes—they're not glasses any more. I can't take them off. It became the way I see the world."

Likewise, Anna, a Jewish woman who ended her participation in Sadaka Reut activities only a few months before we spoke, told me that she had joined the organization as a social outlet, with no awareness of socio-political issues. Commenting on what she learned in the Sadaka Reut program, Anna said,

> I mean, if we're talking about "divide and conquer," then Sadaka took away the divisions. As soon as I saw that there exists [in Israel] another reality aside from the hegemonic reality, I understood that there are so many things that are happening here—I started to see them . . . I started to see what is oppressed and

what is empowered, and how that happens. And I started to examine myself within that.

Anna's comments, like those of Efrat, illustrate her ability to perceive systemic issues in Israeli society, and also link that perception to participation in Sadaka Reut activities. Anna's comments are also a particularly salient example of her ability to understand the link between personal and structural issues.

Uninational Activity within a Binational Framework
Finally, the opening vignette highlights who is missing from the discussion as well as who is present: Palestinian youth participants. The vignette thus illustrates a third principle upon which Sadaka Reut bases much of its work with *Ma'arachim* and BCP participants, discussed in detail above: uninational activity.

The premise underlying uninational activities centers on challenging dominant socialization processes in Israel's segregated schools and other institutions. Specifically, according to Sadaka Reut's facilitation manual, uninational activities are conducted in order to address:

> Differences in how Palestinian and Jewish youth are socialized with respect to their identities: the strengthening of a unified collective Jewish identity among Jews, in contrast with the demolition of a Palestinian collective identity through a breaking of the connection between the past and present. This necessitates uninational work in order to strengthen Palestinian collective identity and question the presentation of Jewish identity.

In other words, Sadaka Reut conducts separate activities for Jewish and Palestinian participants so that when they do meet binationally, in regional/national activities or as a continuing binational group, they can interact on a more equal basis, and so that they are capable of understanding the way external power dynamics can disrupt group processes meant to be built on a foundation of equality.

What is the significance of uninational work within an organization explicitly committed to binational partnership? First, it is important to reiterate that binational meetings among Sadaka Reut participants *do* occur in the form of regional and national events, where Jewish and Palestinian BCP participants mingle informally and activities are designed explicitly to mix different groups. More importantly, however, Sadaka Reut models binationalism at an organizational level. In the words of one Palestinian staff member: "We want [our work] to happen in a binational framework . . . because we believe that the real change, the deep change that can happen in this region, is a change in both of the nations together." She continued:

> Even if we don't have a dialogue process between the two sides in the conflict, we achieve our objective of being binational. Because our thinking is unified, our work as an organization occurs in partnership, and also our youth, the longer they are here with us, are able to find partners on the other side and to understand what partnership means.

That is, in addition to working to help participants develop a strong ethno-national identity, Sadaka Reut models an *overarching* identity as a binational organization.

Ultimately, the concept of partnership serves as the bedrock of Sadaka Reut's work, and within the organization there is unanimous agreement about the importance of utilizing Jewish-Palestinian partnership as a vehicle for challenging existing inequalities within Israeli society. I observed one meeting that was open to all Sadaka Reut staff, participants, and alumni, where the agenda entailed discussing binationalism as an organizational ideology. During this meeting, it was evident that disagreement exists within Sadaka Reut about what binational partnership should look like.[15] However, every individual expressed a belief in the importance of joint Jewish-Palestinian endeavors, in particular initiatives using partnership as a framework for working to end systemic injustices, rather than focusing on Jewish-Palestinian encounters as an end unto themselves. Haggai, a Jewish Sadaka Reut alumnus, told me, "I think that . . . the most radical thing that one can do in this country is to bring together Jews and Arabs. Because all of the strength, all of the effort of the hegemony and of the authorities is directed at separation." Indeed, he and another 10 of the 43 Sadaka Reut alumni I interviewed suggested that this belief that Jewish-Palestinian partnership is an important vehicle for social change was facilitated by Sadaka-Reut participation, and by the organization's modeling of an alternative to the normal routine of everyday (segregated) Israeli life.

Troubling the Vision: Constraints and Limitations

Shifts over time in Sadaka Reut's programmatic approach have prioritized the three elements discussed above, enabling the organization to better achieve its overarching goal of educating youth for social transformation within the framework of binational partnership. These shifts also form the basis of Sadaka Reut's attempts to broaden its appeal to a wider variety of youth and establish relationships with the formal education system.

Yet, Sadaka Reut's work takes place within a context that legitimates exactly those structural inequalities and the continuing violence that the organization seeks to transform—and this reality serves as a significant constraint. For instance, a number of individuals characterize Sadaka Reut's approach as political, even radical. In and of itself, such a categorization is not necessarily problematic. In fact, among Palestinians I heard praise for the organization's approach and even, from a few alumni, complaints that Sadaka Reut's work is not radical *enough*. However, within Israel's socio-political reality, Sadaka Reut's "radical" attempt to embody and promote Jewish-Palestinian partnership and equality has led some Jews to characterize the organization as promoting a Palestinian agenda.

For example, during my informal conversations with individuals in Israel whose work focuses on implementing Jewish-Palestinian encounters, several expressed surprise that I chose to use Sadaka Reut as a case study for research on binational endeavors. A government employee who works with many organizations bringing together Jews and Palestinians told me explicitly that Sadaka Reut is not so much a binational organization as a Palestinian one. Likewise, a former staff member at another organization implementing joint activities for Jewish and Palestinian youth told me that Sadaka Reut is "branded as a Palestinian movement." In other words, for

them, the organization's approach of challenging systemic inequalities equates to political activism to benefit Palestinians.[16]

Such a perception among a portion of Jews with whom I spoke illustrates the difficulty Sadaka Reut faces in its efforts. The organization *does* work to empower Palestinians and bring the Palestinian narrative into Israeli discourse, out of a conviction that doing so is critical for achieving a just future for *both* Jews and Palestinians. Yet within Israel's current socio-political reality, attempts to promote equality by embodying it are perceived as antithetical to dominant societal narratives, thus resulting in accusations of promoting a Palestinian agenda. Ultimately, it appears that the organization's image diminishes its ability to reach out equally to both Jews and Palestinians—more specifically, to Jews whose views fall into the mainstream.

Such a perception can also hamper Sadaka Reut's relationship with schools in the Jewish sector.[17] Most individuals affiliated with the organization stated that difficulties working within schools are rare, precisely because of the elements of Sadaka Reut's approach that emphasize individuals' experiences rather than placing the Jewish-Palestinian conflict front and center. Indeed, a former Jewish *Ma'arachim* coordinator explained that this approach evolved, in part, "So that schools wouldn't kick us out after the first meeting, on the one hand, and on the other hand, so we could do deep work, so we could bring up the issues we wanted to address." Even so, Sadaka Reut has experienced problems working in Jewish schools. Another former staff member, a Palestinian who oversaw the *Ma'arachim* program during its inception, told me:

> I think it's become more difficult to enter schools, to enter formal institutions. There is a lot more suspicion. [School officials ask]: "Who are these people? What are their political perspectives?" One of our coordinators was yelled at in a school because somebody there saw that we had an activity against the [2009 Gaza War]. So she was yelled at, "You present yourselves as a dialogue organization, and then you speak out against the military!"

This comment captures the dual set of suspicions Sadaka Reut faces within the Jewish community: first, as an organization challenging the segregation typical of Israeli society by bringing together Jews and Palestinians; and second, due to its pro-peace perspective, which is a marginalized perspective within the Jewish Israeli community (Hermann, 2006). Taken together, these suspicions can hamper Sadaka Reut's ability to enter Jewish schools and therefore potentially limit its ability to recruit youth to BCP.

The perception of Sadaka Reut as an organization promoting a Palestinian agenda also illustrates the degree to which Sadaka Reut's discourse differs from the dominant Jewish Israeli narrative. Potential difficulty in entering schools is therefore only the top of the iceberg. It is critical for Sadaka Reut to overcome this discursive gap in order to successfully recruit individuals to its programs, and the challenges it faces in doing so are not insignificant. For instance, despite emphasizing a focus on photography in order to attract participants, only four individuals in the Bat Yam group I observed committed to attending all the weekly meetings. Although the size of this group was somewhat atypical, Sadaka Reut's Jewish BCP groups are generally made up of 10 or fewer participants, suggesting that it is difficult to recruit Jewish participants.

A salient question to ask, given the challenges faced by Sadaka Reut, is whether we might view the organization as successful in its attempts to promote social change in the Israeli context. At an individual level, I believe the answer is yes: of the 43 alumni I interviewed, nearly two-thirds are actively engaged with civil society initiatives aimed at changing Israeli society by promoting equality for all Israelis. Among others, alumni endeavors include: establishing a women's leadership program in a rural Palestinian village; organizing the founding of a joint Jewish-Palestinian kindergarten in Haifa; and establishing a community center for low-income Jewish and Palestinian youth in Jaffa. Moreover, many alumni attribute the motivation for their activism to their participation in Sadaka Reut. For example, Dafna, a Jewish alumna who is active in several organizations focusing on the rights of refugees in Israel, spoke about Sadaka Reut's role in helping her develop a belief that, "what you do has an influence, even if it influences in a small way—that is something that is definitely a fire under my feet." Likewise, Bayan, a Palestinian woman who participated in the BCP program during 2006-2009, said that as a result of her involvement in the program, "I thought that I can change things. They give you the feeling of, you want to change things, change them."

Additionally, the narratives of all alumni I interviewed explicitly critiqued institutional policies that enable ethno-national discrimination. Here, too, individuals credit Sadaka Reut for providing them with the awareness that facilitated development of a critical perspective. For instance, Anna, who as stated above joined Sadaka Reut with no political background, told me:

> My awareness grew exponentially, in a way I couldn't possibly have imagined, and my knowledge expanded so much during the three years [during which I was a participant in *Building a Culture of Peace*] . . . because I was in an environment that constantly addressed questions and topics that [other forums in] Israeli society don't   address.

Anna emphasized that her awareness resulted from being pushed constantly by organization facilitators to ask questions about the reality around her. This illustrates how Sadaka Reut helped participants develop the ability to understand and critique structural dynamics and constraints in Israeli society. Critical awareness cannot be equated with action, of course. Yet, views promoting ethno-national equality in Israel contrast significantly with the dominant perspective among Jewish Israelis (Hermann et al., 2011), suggesting the role Sadaka Reut can play in facilitating the transformation of consciousness that is a necessary precursor to activism (McAdam, 1982).

Even among those alumni who were ideologically aligned with Sadaka Reut prior to joining, most came to the organization with significantly less socio-political awareness than they acquired through BCP participation. Indeed, more than one-third of my interviewees said they had limited awareness of socio-political issues prior to joining Sadaka Reut, and most of those with some prior political awareness explained that they obtained much more nuanced perspectives through BCP. In other words, even for those who were drawn to the organization because it meshed with their own ideological stance, Sadaka Reut enabled a much deeper level of awareness than they previously held.

Still, while Sadaka Reut has successfully developed a cadre of critical, active alumni, it reaches

only a few hundred individuals annually. In the words of Akil, a Palestinian alumnus, "[What Sadaka Reut does] is very important, but unfortunately it isn't going anywhere because it works at a very, very small level." Likewise, Efrat reflected: "Where I think that [Sadaka Reut] has failed is in the fact that the change is relatively small. We have access to 200 [or] 300 youth in the best-case scenario, and we create change with them. And it's possible to make that change larger."

Thus, even as Sadaka Reut's programmatic approach has shifted to emphasize personal connections to systemic issues, and in ways that enable the organization to work in formal education settings, Sadaka Reut faces significant challenges in finding participants. This challenge can be attributed to a number of factors, among them seems to be the difficulty of reaching out to mainstream youth when mainstream society is shifting further to the right.

So how can we characterize Sadaka Reut's potential to educate for social transformation? A close analysis of the organization's work highlights the tension it faces between its mission and its environment. On the one hand, as my interviewees suggest, Sadaka Reut's model has been successful in contributing to individual change and motivating participation in social change endeavors. On the other hand, Israel's socio-political context places severe constraints on and challenges for Sadaka Reut—particularly in terms of its ability to recruit greater numbers of participants.

Thus, this analysis points to the necessity of re-examining what it means for programs aimed at social transformation to be "successful," particularly within areas of ongoing conflict. As discussed above, much of the scholarship on such programs asks whether they enable shifts in the knowledge, attitudes or behaviors of individual participants. By this measure, Sadaka Reut is successful. However, this question ignores the socio-political conditions that can facilitate or constrain programmatic work—conditions that, for Sadaka Reut, can make promoting large-scale social change seem like a futile task.

For us to truly assess the contribution of both formal and, in Sadaka Reut's case, non-formal education to social change, we must investigate more than the relationship between intervention and individual outcome. We need to pay greater attention to the ways societal forces shape educational endeavors. Doing so can help us, as scholars and practitioners alike, reflect on the work that has already been done, and more effectively imagine possibilities for moving the project of progressive social change forward.

Notes:
[1]. This article was written with significant input from the co-directors of Sadaka Reut.
[2]. Bat Yam is an Israeli city south of Tel Aviv.
[3]. All names utilized in this article are pseudonyms.
[4]. All quotations in this manuscript were translated from Hebrew by the author.
[5]. I refer to Israeli citizens of Palestinian descent as Palestinians because during my fieldwork, it was the term most individuals utilized to define themselves. The official government designation for this group is "Israeli Arab," or just "Arab."
[6]. With the exception of a handful of schools where Jewish and Palestinian citizens study together, the education system in Israel is segregated, and the curriculum utilized differs

among the four streams of education: secular Jewish, religious Jewish, ultra-Orthodox Jewish, and Arab.

[7]. Mizrahi, or from *Edot HaMizrah* (literally: "Communities of the East") is a term referring to Jews of North African and Middle Eastern descent, as well those whose families immigrated from the Caucasus.

[8]. Ashkenazi is a term utilized to categorize Jews who are of Central and European descent.

[9]. Bekerman and Zembylas (2012) focus on peace education as it is implemented within the context of formal education, that is, schools bringing together students from different sides of conflict (Jews/Palestinians and Greek Cypriots/Turkish Cypriots). However, peace education as a whole includes both formal education and non-formal endeavors such as the encounter programs implemented by Sadaka Reut.

[10]. At a facilitator training I attended in the summer of 2010, one of the sessions focused explicitly on developing yearly curricula for each group within this flexible structure.

[11]. *Ma'arachim* groups are by nature uninational because of Israel's segregated education system.

[12]. I did not observe a Palestinian group for several reasons. First, my Arabic skills were not advanced enough for me to understand much of what would have been said in these meetings. Second, I felt that as a non-Palestinian, my presence could shift the dynamic of the group in a potentially negative manner.

[13]. *Arsim*, plural for *ars*, is a pejorative slang term in Hebrew used to refer to a stereotype of low-class young men.

[14]. The Bedouins in Israel are a semi-nomadic group indigenous to the Negev Desert in the south of the country.

[15]. One salient difference expressed in the discussion was about the significance of binational partnership for Jews and for Palestinians, and how these differ. Several Jewish participants in this discussion, for example, suggested that the space for binationalism in Jewish society is so constrained that when Jewish participants end their affiliation with Sadaka Reut, their options are "basically to leave the country or to return to the mainstream." While several Palestinians commented that the openness within Palestinian society towards binational endeavors is also limited, they agreed that constraints within Jewish society are much greater. Other differences of opinion during this discussion related to whether binational partnership should be a *tool* or a *goal*, and whether Sadaka Reut as an organization is *using* binationalism or *developing* binationalism among its participants.

[16]. Similar perceptions can be found among individuals affiliated with Sadaka Reut, as well. For instance, one alumna told me, "Sadaka Reut tries to balance out what happens on the street, but if the street is super on the side of the Jews, Sadaka is super on Palestinian side."

[17]. I was told repeatedly, by numerous staff members, that Sadaka Reut has had no difficulties entering Palestinian schools, for two reasons: first, *Ma'arachim* workshops present one of the few opportunities available in these schools to address, either directly or indirectly, issues connected to the Palestinian narrative. Second, Palestinian youth on the whole have fewer opportunities to engage in extra-curricular activities than their Jewish counterparts, which makes Sadaka Reut's presence in schools as a recruiting tool for BCP a welcome one.

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