

# A Pedagogy of Social Justice Education: Social Identity Theory, Intersectionality, and Empowerment

AARON J. HAHN TAPPER

*This article explores a theoretical and practical understanding of social justice education through an examination of a US-based intergroup educational organization running conflict transformation programs since 2005. Based on in-depth interviews conducted with and surveys completed by administrators, educators, and student participants of the organization's programs, this article analyzes a case example of social justice education that integrates Freirean thought, social identity theory, intersectionality, and experiential education, including empowerment and responsibility education. Offering different programs aimed at distinct constituencies yet all based in the same pedagogy, the organization's primary goal is to empower participants to engage in social justice activism.*

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Over the past few decades, practitioners and theoreticians in the fields of conflict resolution, conflict transformation, education, and service-learning have begun using the term *social justice education* in increased numbers (Enns and Sinacore 2005; Zajda, Majhanovich, and Rust 2006; Adams, Bell, and Griffin 2007; Furlong and Cartmel 2009; Adams et al. 2010; Cipolle 2010; Zajda 2010; Sensoy and DiAngelo 2011). Among those focusing their efforts on intergroup work in particular, also referred to as intercommunal dialogue, some argue that without integrating elements of social justice education into models aimed at reducing, managing, and resolving conflict between groups, programs will fail; discord between groups will inevitably continue despite practitioners' best efforts. Many in the field of conflict transformation—more specifically, among those who assert that the best way to ensure conflicts do not reemerge is to confront and reshape the conflicts' root causes—critique programs that are based in conflict resolution that do not use social justice educational methods (Redekop 2002; Fisher et al. 2007).

But what is social justice education? One common, but certainly not ubiquitous, idea is that it explicitly recognizes the disparities in societal opportunities, resources, and long-term outcomes among marginalized groups (Shakman et al. 2007, 7). Others use different terms in its place, such as *anti-oppression education*, *diversity education*, and *multicultural education* (Cochran-Smith 2004; Sleeter and Grant 2007). At the end of the day, definitions for social justice education run the gamut; this term has no single meaning or use. Although this is not necessarily a problem—the heterogeneity surrounding an idea can potentially add great depth to its meaning—when a term is used without simultaneously offering a definition, its meaning can become inconsistent or even superficial.

One way to deepen our understanding of social justice education is to look at the ways it manifests in terms of ideology and application. This article explores a single case example—one understanding of a social justice pedagogy used by an intergroup educational organization based in the United States. Founded in 2003 and running programs since 2005, this organization currently offers five intergroup programs firmly ensconced in social justice education. As the organization's founder and co-executive director since its establishment, I have been intimately involved in each of these programs. Although this creates an obvious partiality, the goal of this article is not to evaluate the extent to which this organization has succeeded or not in terms of its pedagogy. Rather its intent is to describe the

institution's rare approach to social justice education in both theory and practice. This article does not hope to heighten the stature of the organization, offering its model of social justice education as the yardstick to which others should compare themselves or even aspire. Instead, it explores one form of social justice education in an effort to add to the larger field. In this light, my relationship to the organization is not a hindrance but makes me exceptionally well situated to carry out this task.

This analysis is based on in-depth interviews conducted with and surveys completed by administrators, educators, and student participants of this organization's intergroup programs. Using these data, I first look at three of the educational pillars on which the organization's pedagogy is based: Paulo Freire's approach to education and social justice, social identity theory, and intersectionality. For each one, I briefly touch on how it manifests in the organization's programs. Second, I describe the organization's programs and programmatic goals in greater detail, adding an examination of their approach to experiential education, including empowerment and responsibility education, the fourth and fifth pillars of their pedagogy. In this section, I also examine how five programs with distinct structures working with a variety of constituencies can have the same pedagogical underpinnings. Third, I briefly discuss the long-term effects of intergroup programs in general, underscoring the nascent stage of the field's development. Although the jury is still out on the sustainability and efficacy of social justice educational programs of this kind, the very question, Do they work? must always be on our horizon.

## Theory

### *Paulo Freire, Education, and Social Justice*

For renowned Brazilian pedagogue Paul Freire, education is the key to enacting social justice (Freire 2006). Freire contends that education provides venues for students to achieve freedom, both intellectual and physical—the “indispensable condition for the quest for human completion” (Freire 2006, 47). This, he says, should be a primary pedagogical goal of all educational activities. Drawing from his own life experiences as someone born into socioeconomic poverty, Freire asserts that education either domesticates or liberates students and teachers (Rozas 2007). For this reason, more often than not education plays a major role in perpetuating the status

quo, especially in terms of power, something he thinks needs to be challenged and transformed (Freire and Faundez 1989). In his own words, “It is impossible to think of education without thinking of power . . . the question . . . is not to get power, but to reinvent power” (cited in Evans, Evans, and Kennedy 1987, 226).

As for how to understand the dynamics in a given classroom, in his monumental treatise *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2006), Freire explains the role that identity plays in the shaping and implementation of education. One of his most important arguments is that students’ identities need to be taken into account in all educational settings. They should not be approached as if everyone in the classroom, including the teacher, is starting from the same place in terms of social status and identity. Although virtually no one discounts the central role that teachers play in a given classroom, Freire extends this point, expounding on how a teacher’s social identities play as much of a role in a classroom environment as anything else. He says that an ideal educational experience exists between a teacher and students rather than emanating from a teacher to students. A teacher needs to create experiences with, and not for, students, integrating their experiences and voices into the educational experience itself (Freire 2006). Teachers’ and students’ identities are thus tied to one another in an interlocked relationship (Rozas 2007).

Unfortunately, he laments, most educational milieus solidify patterns of inequality, ultimately reinforcing and regenerating domination. A common way this happens is through the banking system of teaching, where educators try to “deposit” a set amount of information into students’ minds (Freire 2006, 109). Such a form of education fails its students because, among other reasons, it does not take into account their realities, their “situation in the world,” especially in terms of social status (Freire 2006, 96). Instead, it ignores this critical element of teaching in an effort to impart or impose “knowledge” on them (Freire 2006, 94).

Freire does not merely critique the field of education; he also offers ways to transform it. He asserts that one way to move students toward freedom is to create an educational structure whereby both teachers and students engage in habitual, critical reflection, a model that takes into account their identities. In his own words, “Authentic thinking, thinking that is concerned about reality, does not take place in ivory tower isolation, but only in communication. If it is true that thought has meaning only when generated by action upon the world, the subordination of students to teachers becomes impossible” (Freire 2006, 77). An educational experience, such as long-term, intensive educational programs, must strive to

embody the very ethos to which it aspires for its teachers and students to internalize and enact.

Basing their educational methodology in Freirean thought, among other things, this organization's pedagogy focuses on the social identities of the students and staff (whether teachers, facilitators, or coordinators), as well as the power dynamics that exist in relation to these signifiers and roles. Above all else, their programs aim to transform, not perpetuate, the status quo. They strive to reshape the state of relations between the macro-social groups of the participants in a given program. They do not try to impart an ideologically-based set of information onto their students. Rather, their primary goal is to have students teach one another about social identities and intergroup dynamics using critical thought. Teachers and facilitators are understood to be guiding, rather than leading, students through this process, assisting in steering the experience while not actually piloting it in a top-down, dictatorial manner, always using and reinforcing academic methods of critical thinking along the way.

#### *Social Identity Theory and Intergroup Encounters*

One of the first theories to emerge in the field of intergroup education was the contact hypothesis (Allport 1954). According to this supposition, if individuals identifying with particular groups in conflict interact with one another in a positively structured environment, they have an opportunity to reevaluate their relations with one another such that one-time enemies can become acquaintances or even allies. Understood in its most austere way, this theory assumes that the primary reason groups have discord with one another is the negative perceptions each has of the other, something that can potentially be overcome through affirmative contact. If people are able to deconstruct and even eliminate these negative stereotypes, the conflict between them can be resolved.

Among the best-known research supporting the contact hypothesis is the Robbers Cave experiment (Sherif et al. 1988). In this study, a group of teenage boys meeting one another for the first time was split into two subgroups. Each team was then given a task and instructed to defeat the other team in the assignment. Once they began this pursuit, relations between the two subgroups exacerbated. When the two subgroups were instead given a common chore that necessitated their cooperation, their relations improved dramatically. This led researchers to conclude that the contact hypothesis has the potential to lead groups in conflict to cooperate or even reconcile with one another (Billig 1976; Maoz 2000a).

One of the foci of this approach is that in creating opportunities for intergroup cooperation and teamwork—activities that have the potential to lead participants toward the perspective that because they all have a shared humanity, they can focus on this common bond instead of their differences, thus marginalizing the seemingly superficial conflict between them—participants are able to have personal interactions with one another that shatter their group conflicts (Allport 1954). A number of other experiments point to the positive aspects of programs based on the contact hypothesis (Turner et al. 2007). For example, scholars have conducted research showing that the contact hypothesis model can reduce intergroup anxiety (Paolini et al. 2004), create positive shifts in in-group norms with respect to out-groups (Wright et al. 1997), and lead to a heightened ability to engage in self-reflection (Turner et al. 2007).

Over time, however, more scholars have critiqued this theory than have supported it. One basic criticism is that if the conditions of an intergroup encounter are not ideal—whether they are “unfavorable” (Amir 1969) or simply not as constructive as they can be—relations between groups can actually worsen as a result of contact. Such arguments maintain that if an intergroup encounter is superficial, the interaction will at best be problematic and at worst will leave the two groups in a state of poorer relations than before the contact took place, thus perpetuating the status quo of power relations between the groups such that the subordinate group prior to the interaction will have its subordinateness reinforced (Amir 1969; Jackson 1993). Sometimes such nonideal environments create situations where an intentionally designed encounter results in physical violence between two groups where previously there existed only verbal aggression or no visible relation whatsoever.

Many claim that one way to avoid such pitfalls is to structure intergroup encounters so that they reflect, if not altogether exemplify, equality (Allport and Kramer 1946; Allport 1954; Maoz 2000b). Without this component, these scholars say, an activity based on the contact hypothesis cannot succeed. Still others assert that even if an experiment based on this hypothesis can theoretically be based on the ethos of equality (i.e., equal numbers of students from the two groups, equal opportunities to offer ideas if the two groups are given an intergroup task), the reality outside the room cannot be controlled, which will inevitably shape power dynamics within any given experiment for the worse. Societal inequalities linked to participants’ social identities play a role within the confines of any intergroup trial, something that is impossible to regulate or ignore (Liebersohn 1961).

Those arguing that encounters between two groups based on the contact hypothesis are not only ineffective but potentially harmful commonly say that the following core elements are missing from these interactions: an exploration of social identities (in contrast to individual identities), power relations, and the relationship between the two (Sonnenschein, Halabi, and Friedman 1998; Abu-Nimer 1999; Maoz 2000a, 2000b; Halabi 2004b). These assessments usually point instead to an approach called social identity theory (Tajfel 1978, 1982; Tajfel and Turner 1979, 1986). For all of these reasons and more, this organization's pedagogy is firmly rooted in social identity theory (SIT), not the contact hypothesis. This said, it is committed to a moderate form of SIT rather than an orthodox one.

SIT posits that intergroup encounters must be approached in and through students' larger social identities. This theory assumes that structured intergroup encounters reflect or are influenced by the dynamics that exist between the communities "outside the room," that is, in the larger societies in which the encounter is embedded. Ellemers and Haslam (2012) describe SIT in this way:

Social identity theory is a "grand" theory. Its core premise is that in many social situations people think of themselves and others as group members, rather than as unique individuals. The theory argues that social identity underpins intergroup behavior and sees this as qualitatively distinct from interpersonal behavior. It delineates the circumstances under which social identities are likely to become important, so that they become the primary determinant of social perceptions and social behaviors. The theory also specifies different strategies people employ to cope with a devalued social identity. Social identity theory is a truly social psychological theory, in that it focuses on social context as the key determinant of self-definition and behavior. People's responses are thus understood in terms of subjective beliefs about different groups and the relations between them, rather than material interdependencies and instrumental concerns, objective individual and group characteristics, or individual difference variables. After its initial formulation as a "theory of intergroup conflict" in the 1970s, the theory has undergone many expansions, refinements, and updates. (379)

SIT maintains that human beings are social by virtue of their relationships with one another, an existence embedded within a vast web of networks that are constructed based on identity-based associations. Everyone,

to one degree or another, is a member of a multitude of social groups that are shaped in relation to ethnicity, gender, nationality, religion, socioeconomic class, and other categories. People normally relate to one another through the entry points of the social groups to which they belong, sometimes regardless of whether other individuals actually identify with these groups (i.e., when one person perceives a second person as part of a group with which she does not identify). Perhaps most important, SIT contends that when individuals relate to one another, actions are usually perceived, first and foremost, as being representative of the assorted social groups to which they belong rather than as individual examples of behavior. Consequently, individuals have group identities that they choose, as well as group identities that are imposed on them. People-to-people interactions exist within this context. In fact, says SIT, participants' behavior is shaped more by their collective identities than personal identities.

Scholars of SIT attribute the establishment of this theory to Tajfel (1978, 1982; Tajfel and Turner, 1979, 1986), who posits that social groups regularly express special attributes or characteristics that define certain behaviors. Such conduct is linked to individuals who identify with collectives, which often manifest in terms of how particular groups interact with one another in society at large (e.g., dominance or subordination). SIT also speculates that groups favor "their own," frequently at the expense of "the Other" (Goar 2007).

Because social identities are one of the primary criteria through which power is enacted, SIT-based models focus on intergroup, and not interpersonal, dynamics, perceived within both given groups of students and the sphere of macroreality (i.e., in settings that exist outside of, yet are directly related to, the intergroup experience, such as in the given society in which participants live). SIT presupposes that in intergroup encounters, the social relations (including power relations) that exist outside the working group will appear within the group and emanate from it as well, often manifesting in terms of asymmetrical power (Pettigrew 1998; Halabi 2004b). This model also presumes that the way to transform a given encounter is to focus on the local-cultural characteristics of the groups involved, as opposed to using a Western or third-party methodology that manifests in a top-down approach while claiming to be neutral or objective. Most SIT-based intergroup facilitators identify with one or more of the primary social groups represented by the participants; alternatively, they often find it incredibly difficult to connect with students in terms of social identity and may be viewed as outside parties altogether.

This organization uses SIT. All of its programs approach encounters as examples of larger intergroup macropatterns. But it also differs from other SIT-based practitioners in fundamental ways. Because SIT assumes that interactions between individuals are primarily shaped by their group affiliations—ethnic, national, or religious, for example—practitioners in the field of intergroup work sometimes take this idea to a logical, yet extreme, place, running encounter programs through the lens of group identities (and their own interpretation of the relationship between the involved communities) alone. This prohibits individual perspectives from surfacing and locks students into the very group identities the encounter program is ostensibly working to transform. Such programs do not allow for individual interactions because students are seen only through their larger social identities.

For example, if an organization using a narrow understanding of SIT was working with students from group A and group B, it would not tolerate participants' framing and conceiving the intergroup interactions as anything other than a product of larger intercommunal patterns between the groups. The two groups would be pigeonholed into interacting only with one another as members of group A and group B and nothing more. In contrast, those using a more moderate SIT-based approach, like the organization examined in this article, counter by saying that people have numerous social identities. Reducing members of group A and group B to groups A and B only is simplistic and at times harmful (Northrup 1989; Steele, Spencer, and Aronson 2002; Cuhadar and Dayton 2011).

Another basic problem with such a myopic, orthodox SIT-based approach is that such practitioners can interpret the enactment of power in rudimentary and incorrect ways. For example, if in a given intergroup encounter, one community clearly has more power than another, facilitators will probably intuit that these power imbalances will be reflected in the encounter itself. But if they are interpreting power only through overt signals—seeing such dynamics only through the identities of group A and group B, for example—they would no doubt misread the way certain subordinate groups enact power, such as in much more subtle ways. Dominant groups generally exert power overtly, in forms such as the application of social pressure, and subordinate groups regularly do this in latent ways. But this is not always the case (Moscovici 1985; Mugny and Perez 1991; Maoz 2000b). Sometimes dominant and subordinate groups use silence to reflect power (Smith and Bekerman 2011). Whatever the case, inflexible practitioners of SIT commonly misinterpret intergroup relations, which can lead to destructive ends.

It is important to add that groups using the contact hypothesis to its extreme—bringing groups together without creating a space to talk about social identities and allowing them to interact with one another only through the lens of participants' individual identities (e.g., students Jamie and Pat are understood only as individuals and not as Jamie who identifies with group A and is therefore a reflection of group A, and Pat who identifies as group B and is therefore a reflection of group B)—are equally reductionist. Such approaches usually result in encounters taking place for the sake of the encounter, something that serves the political interests of one group only, and most often the dominant group (Billig 1976; Bargal 1990; Pettigrew 1998; Sonnenschein et al. 1998; Abu-Nimer 1999; Maoz 2000a, 2000b; Halabi 2004b; Finley 2010). In sum, whereas maximalist versions of SIT reduce individuals to larger collectives, maximalist versions of the contact hypothesis reduce individuals to being isolated human beings, prohibiting an exploration of social identities. When used in a rigid way, neither approach creates sustainable social change beyond, at best, an infinitesimal number of participants.

Another important critique of SIT lies in the problematics inherent in even having group identities. For example, merely telling someone that she is part of a group, even if she never had a prior relationship to or exhibited dominant characteristics of the group, can often be enough to trigger her bias toward that group and against other groups, something referred to as minimal group paradigm (Tajfel et al. 1971). Although this points to the fluid and imagined nature of social identity (Anderson 1991), something that is important for participants to internalize, this also highlights the extent to which students can be persuaded to embrace new identities at the expense of others. Simply because group identities develop in relation to other group identities does not mean that they need to arise at the expense of other ones.<sup>1</sup>

The organization that is the topic of this article is unique (though not extraordinary) among SIT-based institutions in that it does not embrace SIT in an extreme form. Instead it posits that although macropatterns inevitably manifest within intergroup relations, all intergroup interactions cannot be reduced to larger social identities. For example, if it is running a program for students who identify as members of group A and group B, each time that Jamie from group A interacts with Pat from group B their dynamic should not always be condensed to their merely playing out the macropatterns seen in relations between the two groups. They could also be relating to one another as members of group C and group D.

Furthermore, it is critical to create the space to interpret elements of their interactions as also being interpersonal. Perhaps Pat reminds Jamie of Pat's older sibling and so interacts with Jamie in a similar manner. Perhaps Pat and Jamie both like Rock Band Z, and after discovering this commonality they begin to experience closeness for the first time. In other words, participant interactions within intergroup settings are often a reflection of interpersonal dynamics or social group interactions or a combination of the two. Those who are facilitating intergroup encounters, both intergroup and intragroup (Dovidio, Saguy, and Shnabel 2009), need to take these dynamics into account.<sup>2</sup>

### *Intersectionality and Intergroup Encounters*

Although intergroup and intragroup dynamics are critical to this organization's pedagogy, their ultimate goal is for participants to embrace the notion of intersectionality, perhaps best understood through the oft-quoted statement made by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice anywhere" (2000, 64). Intersectionality posits that oppression in one place is intricately linked to oppression everywhere else. Because oppression primarily exists in terms of structures, and because these structures are linked to social identities (e.g., white, black, gay, straight, and so on) and their relation to power, oppression is the by-product of unequal structures built around power and identity. Such dynamics privilege particular social identities over others, permitting people from one group to have more power than another based simply on their group identities (Adams et al. 2007, 2010; Hahn Tapper 2011).

One important component of intersectionality is the concept of deexceptionalization. Although this organization approaches each participant, each episode of oppression, and each conflict as a distinct entity, it also maintains that there are widespread patterns found across people, instances of subjugation and intergroup dissonance. This comparative analysis-based approach presupposes that similar patterns can be found in a range of intercommunal clashes, whether taking place in the Balkans, the Middle East, or elsewhere. To paraphrase Kluckhohn, every person and every conflict is in some respects like all others, like some others, and like no others (Kluckhohn and Murray 1948). In this sense, no participant is *sui generis* and no conflict is entirely one of a kind. By deexceptionalizing students and the conflicts they are part of, participants are able to reexamine, reunderstand, and reimagine ways to transform themselves, their groups, and their intergroup conflicts.

In addition, by deexceptionalizing conflicts, participants are taught, in the words of Audre Lorde, that “there is no hierarchy of oppressions” (Tatum 2010, 8). This intersectionality-based view is an important piece of social justice education because it is not uncommon for students to internalize that they are “victims” and that the other group are the “perpetrators” (also understood as “oppressed” and “oppressors,” respectively). The false binary trap that members of groups in conflict are either innocent or guilty is all too common in intergroup work (Sonnenschein et al. 1998; Zembylas 2008). In contrast, this organization’s approach emphasizes that all groups, to various degrees, are victims and perpetrators, innocent and guilty. All of us play active and passive roles in the structures of oppression in which we live (Scheff and Retzinger 1991; Sonnenschein et al. 1998; Tryfonas 2000; Berlak 2004; Zembylas 2008).

Because an intersectionality-based approach presumes that no intergroup situation exists in complete isolation, irrespective of any other, even the organization’s two programs that focus on exclusive social identity groups do not reduce participants to those identities alone. (The other three programs are open to students regardless of their social identities; students with any social identities are permitted to participate.) Instead, students learn to embrace the notion that each of us has several social identities—identities based in relation to ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, and so on. In addition, each of us has an individual identity—a unique personality shaped in relation to our manifold social identities. In this manner, the pedagogical foundation of all five programs is one and the same.

The organization maintains that all group dynamics taking place between two specific groups are also manifesting within a context where an assortment of other intergroup dynamics is also emerging, both implicitly and explicitly (Kelman 1993; Bornstein and Ben-Yosef 1994; Bar-Tal 1997). Practically speaking, this means that a program built around participants identifying with groups A and B does not focus on only social identities A and B because many other identities are playing roles in the groups’ interaction. Despite this fact, most intergroup encounters focus on two social identities exclusively (Maoz 2000b).

To be more precise, one of this organization’s programs works exclusively with Palestinians and Jews. If, for example, one of the Palestinian students identifies as a twenty-two-year-old, upper-middle-class, heterosexual female who was born in Jordan and raised in Southern California; does not have any special physical needs; identifies as a “person of color”;

and so on, the program is not framed such that she is limited to exploring her Palestinian identity alone. Although it is accurate to say that her Palestinian identity is critical to the process of deepening her self-understanding—and this may be more of the case for a participant exploring her identities in relation to Jewish students in the same program—the organization does not assert that *de facto* the Palestinian and Jewish identities of participants in this program are more important than any others. Differences in gender, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status, for example, may be more important. It largely depends on the group itself—how it manifests itself in terms of participant dynamics—and the group's needs.

At the same time, this does not mean that the Palestinian and Jewish identities of students in this program are intentionally marginalized. The organization maintains that relations between Palestinians and Jews are at best remarkably bad. However, its approach is not based on the notion that in order to transform the intergroup relations of Palestinian and Jewish students it must look at only these aspects of the students' identities. Rather, there are multiple layers to Palestinian-Jewish relations, which are related to ethnicity and nationalism, as well as gender, socioeconomics, etc. Although this single program is explicitly open only to students who identify as Palestinian or Jewish, and although it is unambiguously shaped in order for students to primarily explore these particular identities, it does not aim to look at these identities at the expense of, but rather in relation to, other identities.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, the organization's approach is that there is more to a student than, for example, her being an individual who identifies with social groups linked to definable ages, ethnicities, genders, nationalities, socioeconomic classes, sexual orientations, and so on. In addition, there is her personal identity; that is, each student is also understood to be a unique individual human being with a mixture of social identities, as well as all of the personality traits that she embodies. She has group identities of several kinds, as well as an individual identity. Although it is not uncommon for SIT theoreticians to point out that members of dominant groups tend to see themselves as individuals with personal identities and not parts of larger collectives, this organization's approach does not allow advantaged groups the luxury of avoiding communal responsibility (Adams et al. 2007). Rather, they focus on social identities while also creating the space for personal identities to be explored as well. This is quite different.

It is critical to briefly explain how intersectionality differs from the contact hypothesis if for no other reason than that there are people in the field

of intergroup education who may interpret this explanation of the former term as too close to the latter. Although there is one central similarity between intersectionality and the contact hypothesis—both are universalist in their outlook insofar as both can be used to generalize intergroup dynamics from one case example to all human relations—the approach of the contact hypothesis is much more rudimentary. It does not presuppose that problematic or deconstructive dynamics are found at the core of all intergroup tensions. Instead, the contact hypothesis focuses on the shared humanity of individuals in an intergroup program rather than the structures of oppression in which the program is embedded. In addition, it does not create spaces for participants to explore their social identities; as a substitute, it reduces people to their unique individualities alone. In contrast, intersectionality approaches intergroup encounters by focusing on intergroup and intragroup dynamics, structures of oppression, and collective social identities. Intersectionality is not reductionist but sophisticated and multiperspectival.

Furthermore, as for the issue of whether a program focusing on Palestinian-Jewish relations should not spend more time focusing on students' Palestinian and Jewish social identities, even if at the beginning of such a program students primarily orient toward one participant in and through her Palestinian identity alone, this program teaches that this actually does not necessarily tell them much about her other than that she uses the signifier "Palestinian" to emplace herself in the world. Students discover that knowing this piece of her identity at best reflects the dominant narrative of the Palestinian community, which is transient in its own right. That is, like other SIT-based intergroup programs, this organization presupposes that all communities have dominant narratives: communal stories that groups tell themselves and others that shift according to time and place. Yet a given student might not accept the dominant narrative of the communities with which she identifies, such that even if she identifies as Palestinian, and this social identity is core to her being, students need to engage and interact with her in order to determine what this means for her.

In addition, because intersectionality is the core of the organization's pedagogical ethos, if Palestinian and Jewish students spend virtually all of their time together exploring gender relations within the group rather than interethnic (Palestinian-Jewish) relations, the organization would consider this to be a constructive and successful use of time. The two programs open only to identity-specific individuals are not about a single intergroup conflict exclusively due to the expansive connectedness of structures of oppression in relation to intersectionality. In other words, the program it offers to

Palestinians and Jews alone is not solely about Palestinian-Jewish relations or the Israeli-Palestinian conflict because all intergroup dynamics, and all intercommunal conflicts, are integrally related to one another.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not a conflict that exists irrespective of other international conflicts, irrespective of the rest of the world. If Palestinian and Jewish students explore their Palestinianness and Jewishness in and through the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a myopic fashion, and do not also look at how their other social identities are connected to the conflict, or how their social identities are connected to other international conflicts, or how gender dynamics connects to all of these things, the organization would consider itself to have failed such a group of students. Although students do not have enough time in a program to examine all of these things, it is crucial for them to internalize how intersectionality is core to social justice.

Some encounter programs impose identities on participants and prohibit discussions around any other social categories. In contrast, this organization's approach allows participants to include whichever identities they themselves choose, simultaneously allowing students to reclaim and redefine what they consider to be the meaning of the groups with which they identify (Patterson, Bigler, and Swann 2010). It also creates a space for their personal identities to be a central part of the interaction because individuals are known to sometimes project personal characteristics onto the collective groups with which they identify (Brewer 1991; Patterson et al. 2010).

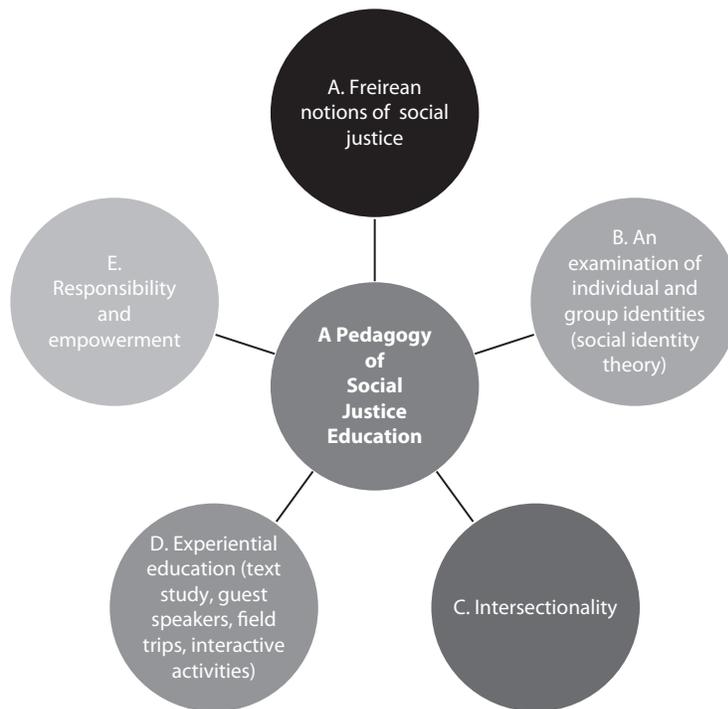
By framing students' experiences through the lens of intersectionality—the organization explicitly underscores its commitment to this theory—participants of all five programs discover that intergroup relations are affected by multiple factors simultaneously (e.g., gender, socioeconomics), in addition to the social dynamics that occur between the communities.<sup>4</sup> It also allows them to see that other intercommunal conflicts—such as those taking place in the Balkans, Cyprus, Israel and Palestine, the Sudan, and the Western Sahara—are related to one another. All of these conflicts are integrally linked to social identities and involve asymmetrical power relations.

## Practice

### *Social Justice Education: Case Example*

In an effort to better understand this single, case example of social justice education in theory and practice, we need to look at the programs in

Figure 1. The Core Pillars of the Organization's Pedagogy of Social Justice Education



greater detail. Figure 1 offers a visual representation of the diverse components that make up this pedagogical form of social justice education, including three of the pillars already discussed. Each one is layered on another, beginning with A and moving in a clockwise manner.

**Program Descriptions.** The organization currently offers five intensive programs. Program A, which recently ended its seventh consecutive cycle, is a ten-month after-school program, running from September through June, that works with Muslim American and Jewish American fifteen to eighteen year olds. Students meet in uni-group and bi-group (i.e., single-group and two-group) classes one to three hours each week and meet in bi-group settings five to six Sunday afternoons in sessions that last approximately six hours. Program B, just ending its sixth consecutive year, is a ten-month program that works with Palestinian and Jewish eighteen to twenty-eight-year-olds studying or working on university campuses in Israel, Palestine (Gaza and the West Bank), and the United States. It begins with a three- to four-week summer program (in June and July) in the former Yugoslavia (Serbia,

Kosovo, and Bosnia-Herzegovina) and continues with two four-day conferences, held in November and March, and activities directed through social media, formally carried from August through April (and informally going on for years thereafter, run by student participants themselves).

Program C, offered twice since 2009 and taught in partnership with two American universities, is an eighty-hour facilitation training course that teaches and trains students of all backgrounds in the organization's intergroup facilitation methodology. Program D, which just ran for the third consecutive summer, is a three-week summer program open to students of all backgrounds that takes place in Israel and Palestine. Program E, which was recently designed but has not yet been implemented, is a two-week summer program offered to students of all backgrounds that takes place in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Between September 2005 and July 2012, the organization graduated 403 students from these five programs.<sup>5</sup>

Programs A and B are only for students identifying as Muslim, Jewish, Palestinian, and/or Israeli. Programs C, D, and E are for students of any background (i.e., they can participate regardless of their social identities). Programs A and C take place in the United States, and programs B, D, and E are international (with the minor exception that program B's four-day conferences take place in the United States). Despite these differences—working with different constituencies in different locations—all of these programs are based on the same integrative pedagogy, interweaving Freirean notions of education, SIT, intersectionality, and more. (A final distinction worth mentioning is that programs C and D do not focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict specifically. Yet because the organization's expertise is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Balkan conflicts, it uses these conflicts to teach about larger patterns of intercommunal discord elsewhere. Similarly, program E does not focus on the conflicts in Bosnia-Herzegovina *per se*.)

All five programs explicitly seek to

1. explore students' understandings of their individual and group identities;
2. deepen students' awareness of the existence of social inequalities;
3. assist in developing students' conception of the interconnection between social inequalities and social identities;
4. examine the roles students play in both perpetuating and working against patterns of inequality; and
5. empower students to work toward societal transformation in and through their identities.

(Program C also trains students in the intergroup facilitation methodology that the organization uses.) Because the programs all focus on the social identities of the students who are participating in a given year, the core pedagogical goals are not exclusive to any social identities but rather to collectives in general. This said, obviously programs A and B explicitly focus on Muslim, Jewish, Israeli, and Palestinian identities.

All of the programs seek to teach students how people function within the context of social identities and power relations, the latter as they exist in and through interpersonal and intercommunal interactions. In fact, what the educators of these programs are trained to work toward is students' gaining a deeper understanding of their social identities—all of them—while also internalizing that although social identities play a major role in shaping how people interact with one another in society, this does not necessarily need to be the case. Indeed, conflict transformation is rooted in the idea that current realities can be changed into something else entirely.

Aside from the groups of students served and the location where the programs take place, the programs' educational structures are quite similar. All of them have four components: classes focusing on the exploration of academic texts, guest speakers from relevant communities, field trips (for programs B, D, and E the entire program is an experiential field trip), and group discussion and analysis, which the organization refers to as group process (Abraham's Vision, 2012).

**Group Process.** Intergroup and intragroup group process sessions are the most important component of all five programs, although they are used in assorted ways in each one. (Even in program C, which is a training course more than a participatory course, the students engage in group process the first half of the course, spending the second half analyzing the pedagogical underpinnings used during this experience.) Each of these interactions is an opportunity for students to meet with others in real time, not virtually, while engaging in deep and often contentious issues. Each group process is approached as if what goes on between the students is a reflection of the larger political realities in which the given program is entrenched, using both what is in the room and outside the room as central elements of the educational experience. Contrary to many who use the contact hypothesis, these sessions are never solely for the sake of encounter. Instead, participants are always confronted with difficult questions, such as, "Will this program change anything in the larger scheme of things? If so, how? What do you plan on doing about social injustice once the program ends?"<sup>6</sup>

In group process sessions, cofacilitator teams of two work to place the relationship between individuals and groups at the center of the educational experience rather than to explore political developments as something separate from students. Through this process, students deepen their understanding of what it means for each of them to be part of group A or group B while simultaneously holding onto an individualistic identity (i.e., as a unique human being) and identifying with many other social groups. This exploration involves an intricate method where students learn about the other students, their social identities, and their personal identities.

In other words, they learn about a number of things simultaneously: their individual identity, their group identities, other participants' individual identities, and other participants' group identities. The organization considers this political education, not in terms of what it means to be an Israeli or Jew or Palestinian or Muslim according to given academic sources, but rather based on the understandings of these social identities by people in the room who identify as such. Students are approached as if each participant is a living text, so to speak.

In group process, participants are brought together into a space where they can literally talk about anything. Facilitators strive for these sessions to enable participants to behave freely, such that through their intergroup and intragroup behavior they can delve into the assumptions on which their group and individual narratives are based.<sup>7</sup> This state of being, where one feels an independence of thought, no longer experiencing the confines of social norms, is liberating, even in transient doses.

As part of this process, facilitators are responsible for reflecting back to participants what they perceive to be the intergroup, intragroup, and one-on-one interactions taking place in the room (McNamee and Gergen 1999a, 1999b; Maoz 2000a; Halabi 2004b). The intent is for students to gain new insights into the roles they play in these interactions, roles they also play outside the room in their normal lives. By gaining such a self-understanding, students begin reconsidering what they want to do with themselves once the program ends in terms of their social identities and larger patterns of social injustice.

More precisely, with this method, students are taught about intersectionality because facilitators integrate this theory into their reflections. If a discussion revolves around Palestinian-Jewish relations as they relate to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, facilitators underscore the method of comparative conflict analysis, drawing connections between this conflict and other ones. If a session focuses on the roles and responsibility Americans have in

relation to the Balkan conflicts, facilitators shift the students' attention from social inequalities in the Balkans to those in the United States. Because of the way dominant and subordinate roles manifest in and through social identities, regardless of the content of a given conversation, facilitators are able to consistently assist students in connecting their learning about dynamics in one place to considering archetypal patterns found elsewhere and vice versa.

These sessions are led by "facilitators" rather than "teachers." Facilitators are professionally trained in intergroup dynamics, particularly in a school of thought that is SIT-based. "Teachers" are trained professionals who are able to guide students through texts and meetings with guest speakers and on field trips, rather than knowing how to analyze and reflect on the relationship students have with one another (and perhaps a guest speaker) in terms of group dynamics. To put it differently, facilitation focuses on process rather than content only—the process of how participants relate to one another. In contrast, teaching centralizes content.

Aside from fleshing out these dynamics, facilitators also focus on the way power manifests in the room. The organization understands power to be enacted in different ways (Adams et al. 2007). Obviously it can manifest materially (e.g., based on capital). But in group process sessions power is most often enacted discursively (e.g., privileging one form of knowledge or information over another), which directly connects to how this organization addresses semantic knowledge. This does not necessarily mean that all intergroup cohorts will act the same, playing out larger dominant narratives of the communities with which they identify in identical ways. Although it is common for students to interact with one another in and through their social identities—not only in relation to Muslims, Jews, Palestinians, or Israelis but also through gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, and so on—it is not unusual for students to enact power as a result of their personal identities as well (i.e., sometimes individuals have dominant personalities irrespective of their social identities; Adams et al. 2007, 2010).

Sonnenschein et al. (1998, 602–607) has posited three stages in intergroup encounters using a SIT-based model: the initial "good manners stage," where participants avoid conflict; the "group struggle stage," where the two groups that emerge as dominant battle with one another for power (i.e., if the Jewishness of students emerges quickly, so too will students' Palestinianness, as opposed to the Jewishness emerging and other students responding with their identities connected to sexual orientation); and the "intensive dialogue

stage,” which is most difficult to achieve and, arguably, the only stage through which students can be led to real intergroup transformation (Steinberg and Bar-On 2002).

It is important to note that this organization does not approach social identities using a “primordial approach,” as if identities are based on deep, inherent, and incredibly difficult-to-change characteristics (Isaacs 1989), elements of collective personhood with which we are born. Rather they believe that social identities are constructs susceptible to change based on shifts in dominant narratives, personal experiences, time, and place (Barth 1969; Waters 1990; Anderson 1991). Individuals’ group identities may start off as expressing themselves simplistically. But over time, especially during adolescence, they mature (Phinney 1989, 1990; Phinney and Rosenthal 1992; Halabi 2004a). Supported by studies conducted by Cross (1978) and Helms (1989, 1990a, 1990b), this organization goes one step further, contending that social identities develop in relation to one another, especially when in conflict with others.

When two isolated social identities are understood in relation to each other, more often than not, one is dominant while the other is subordinate. In such situations, both groups’ intracommunal dominant narrative develops in relation to one another, such that, as in the case of Jewish Israelis and Palestinians, one cannot understand one group without taking into account its relation to the other. Whether a group identity is understood in terms of ethnicity, race, nationality, or something else altogether, this organization’s approach is that collectives’ dominant narratives are shaped in relation to other collectives.

***Content-Based Learning.*** Although this organization highly values individual and group participant experiences, it also uses other creative forms of education, such as content-based or semantic learning. While group process encounters are the core of the model, it also integrates text study into all five programs, including academic texts, such as those used in university courses, and sacred texts that are central to the communities with which they work (e.g., the Christian Bible, the Hebrew Bible, and the Quran). It also includes movies and other forms of relevant media.

The organization does not bring this content into the learning environment with a goal of moving students toward a precise point of view or to deposit “knowledge,” like the Freirean notions of “banking” education. Rather, it introduces ideas that it considers to be central to the educational process of reexamining, challenging, or destabilizing the narratives with

which they came to the program. In short, all of the programs are experiential to various degrees; all of them integrate guest speakers, field trips, and intensive group activities, and three of them take place internationally.

The organization does not claim that its teachers and facilitators are “neutral” or its approach “objective.” One of the charges lobbed at this organization as well as other intergroup programs is that each has a partisan agenda. The organization professes to not having intentions about content-based knowledge or specific political orientations. At this stage in the development of intergroup encounters, this admission is much more the norm than the exception (Bargal and Bar 1990; Rouhana and Korper 1997). In a basic sense, this approach is pervasive in academia; it can be found on university campuses when professors teach students about a topic by introducing a range of perspectives as well as ways to think critically about the subject at hand.

What this means practically is that, for example, in program D, which takes students of all backgrounds to Israel and Palestine, students meet individuals who identify with players across the board: scholars of all stripes; soldiers in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF); Palestinian militants; Jewish Israeli settlers; nongovernmental workers staffing organizations committed to human rights or people-to-people encounters; Shoah (Holocaust) survivors; Jewish Israeli conscientious objectors (who refuse to serve in the IDF); rabbis; sheikhs; politicians representing the Israeli government or Palestinian Authority who identify with parties deemed left, center, right, or none of the above; Jewish Israelis of North African descent; and Palestinians with Israeli citizenship. Because program D gives students only three weeks to learn about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict experientially, the program has limits in terms of time. In this sense, the organization recognizes that by definition, every class, course, or experiential educational trip has a built-in bias, even if the partiality is multiperspectival. The organization also does not have a position with regard to the best way to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, for example (a two-state solution, one-state solution, etc.). Instead, it exposes students to a variety of Jewish Israeli and Palestinian opinions on what the best political resolution is, aiming for students to learn about the strengths and weaknesses of each position and to formulate their own opinion.

In short, the organization maintains that although ideological balance is challenging and ultimately imperfect, pedagogically the objective is to expose, examine, and teach students about the complexities of conflicts. It openly says that its two primary goals are to complicate students’ understandings—in the

case of Program D, of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—and leave them with more questions than answers. It helps students sharpen their critical thinking skills in order to develop their own thoughts rather than socializing them with a particular point of view, as do other programs (Kelner 2010).

**Equality.** Another core piece of this organization's approach is a commitment to equal partnerships across ethnic, religious, and gender lines. This is reflected in organizational structure, as well as long-term programs, workshops, and presentations. This method is similar to other organizations, focusing on intergroup education, such as the School for Peace at Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salaam (Halabi 2004b) and PRIME (Adwan, Bar-On, and Naveh 2012), among others. (Indeed program C was initially developed in partnership with the director of the School for Peace, and most of the organization's facilitators have been trained at this school.)

In practical terms, this means that for the past five years, the organization has been run by a Muslim Palestinian woman and a Jewish American man. Program A, which works with Muslim and Jewish students fifteen to eighteen years old, has been cotaught and cofacilitated by equal numbers of Muslims and Jews, and program B, which works with Palestinian and Jewish students eighteen to twenty-eight years old, has been cotaught and cofacilitated by equal numbers of Palestinians and Jews. Although the organization explicitly admits that its staff cannot embody complete organizational equality at all times and in all places—among other reasons because all societies privilege certain identities over others (e.g., males over females)—it constantly strives to attain this goal, if even briefly, and has a basic awareness when it is falling short.

As for programs C, D, and E, all of them open to students regardless of their identities: program C is cotaught by a Muslim Palestinian and Jewish Israeli cofacilitator-coeducation team; program D is run by Jewish and Palestinian educators and coordinators; and program E is run by Jewish, Palestinian, and local Balkan educators and coordinators. They also work with coordinators who are local to the region being studied (e.g., in program B, coordinators from the Balkans). The minor difference in how these three programs approach students, as opposed to programs A and B, is that students are exposed to situations where their social identities are compelled to emerge, after which time they are examined in relation to many conflicts (e.g., the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Balkan conflicts). Students are pressed to respond as to whether their identity has to do with whatever conflict is being studied. For example, students in

program D are challenged to address what role they as Americans have in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In programs A and B, the immediate social identities of being Muslim, Jewish, Palestinian, and/or Israeli emerge without effort on behalf of the staff.

Sometimes this means that students from programs C, D, and E explore whether they identify as members of third parties to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or the Balkan conflicts. Sometimes they look at what it means to visit a place as tourists (Isaac 2010; Kelner 2010; Chaitin 2011). Regardless of how students weigh in on such questions, they are repeatedly asked to look at what this means in terms of personal and communal responsibility. In fact, students from all five programs are always led to the following questions: “What is your responsibility in relation to this conflict? How is the system of social inequalities here [i.e., wherever they are] different from those elsewhere?” In other words, program D’s students, for example, who learn about and are exposed to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, are asked, “Why do the episodes of oppression you have seen here in Israel and Palestine upset you more than patterns of oppression back home?” All of the programs connect the immediate issues related to identity, power, and the abuse of power in one location to these same issues as they manifest elsewhere.

### *Responsibility and Empowerment*

In all of these programs, students are confronted with political realities as they exist both outside and inside the classroom. This model generally has two results. First, it develops students’ sensitivities to societal structures and the way they are linked to power and social identity. It also raises students’ awareness of the various components of society that exist within them. This awareness entails a realization that each of us plays a role, active or not, in how power and social identity manifest and are enacted in society. We are not separated from the societies in which we live even if we are physically taken out of them. Even if students are unable to grasp how this occurs in the macroworld, they are able to learn how these larger intergroup dynamics exist in the program encounter itself. Ideally students come to understand that each one of us has a responsibility to the people around us, both to the other participants and other members of society. Service-learning programs usually have similar outcomes (Cermak et al. 2011).

Part of the internalization of responsibility comes from an ownership (or lack thereof) of wrongdoings carried out by communities with which a participant identifies. Some scholars refer to this as an embracement of

shame. Most communities in conflict marginalize, if not altogether ignore, past acts that they are ashamed of. In fact, most such communities systematically attempt to inflate their group members' pride while eliminating discussions of shameful acts altogether. This is normally done through formal systems of education (Tawil 1997; Feuerwerker 2001; Salomon and Nevo 2002). The underlying assumption is that it is shameful for a community to admit past misdeeds. Communities more frequently try to sanitize their history (Zembylas 2008).

The second result of this model is that if a student is transformed, she becomes empowered to move society toward its potential both internally (i.e., within the communities with whom she identifies) and within the larger world. This is most successful when participants experience a transformation in one of the programs, a process that is radical enough in nature to continue once the program ends. When participants learn to take responsibility for the relationships they are building with the Other in the encounter, deciding whether to alter the power imbalances within the working group, they have already begun internalizing their responsibility to others more broadly. With newly found responsibility, they are confronted with the proposition of whether to engage in social activism.

## Program Effects

### *Effects on Participants*

As with all other intensive intergroup encounter programs, the ultimate challenges come once the program formally ends (Hammack 2006). Empirical research on the longitudinal success of this organization's programs has not yet been gathered, nor is it the goal of this article to address the programs' efficacy. Aside from questionnaires filled out at the beginning and end of each program and interviews with administrators and staff who were involved in the programs, currently the organization has only anecdotal data. Alumni have shared that the programs' strength is largely due to their experiencing the freedom to both reexamine and reconstruct their individual and group narratives—not at the expense of whatever identities they enter a program with but in and through a commitment to and relationship with such identities.

Students who learn to internalize the responsibility they have to change the world around them and feel empowered to do so are repeatedly reminded that social change is ultimately a lifelong process. They are taught

not to grandiosely expect the organization's programs to hold the secret to life. Rather, they are taught that each program's goal is to start this deeply reflective process but not to finish it. In addition, they are not tasked with the responsibility of changing the world overnight or by themselves. They are cautioned to strive for balance in their lives and are introduced to important ideas in the world of social justice such as activist burnout and compassion fatigue.

### *Ripple Effects beyond the Participants*

But whether falling under the umbrella of social justice education, human rights education, peace education, or activist education, all such programs aim to generate ripple effects beyond the program participants. Salomon (2011) argues there are two challenges with regard to creating social change through a program working with a select number of students. The first relates to the psychological effects on the students:

Whether ripple effects resulting . . . do actually take place, how potent they are, what mechanisms underlie them, and what conditions facilitate or hinder their creation. Are the mechanisms and conditions more or less similar to the ones observed in less conflicted contexts? Second, there are the more applied questions of how ripple effects can be created, facilitated, and sustained. We would also need to distinguish short- from long-term ripple effects. (49)

Although there are data to support the notion that certain educational programs definitively lead to minor and major transformations among participants (Salomon 2004), some of these positive results are measured immediately after a program ends, which does not address long-term effects. As for evidence gathered months or even years after a program concludes, there are scholars who contend that transformations seem to evaporate altogether (Kupermintz and Salomon 2005). Yet even these scholars admit that the “long-term implicit sleeper effect is, so far, an open question” (Salomon 2011, 50). Furthermore, Salomon contends, a program's success in creating individual and communal change has more to do with the differences across educational approaches; “peace education” is not a one-size-fits-all proposition (Salomon 2011). Aside from exceptional cases—such as an experiment conducted on a group of Sri Lankan alumni from an intergroup program, whose positive transformations were detected one year after the program ended (Malhotra and Liyanage 2005)—there is

research that supports the existence of long-term participant change when alumni participate in even minor follow-up activities (Leippe and Eisenstadt 1994).

Ultimately, aside from pedagogical differences, when evaluating the long-term efficacy of social justice education programs, the sociocultural context the participants return to (whether a war zone, a prolonged conflict, or something else) is as important to take into account as anything else. Furthermore, if students are returning to a so-called intractable conflict, there is evidence to support the long-term effects of these programs when there is simultaneous, positive movement from the related governmental bodies toward an intercommunal resolution. In other words, long-term participant transformations are more successful when both Track One (i.e., governments) and Track Three (i.e., these programs) change take place at the same time (Gallagher 2011). There is also evidence that integrated pedagogical methods have the most potential to change participants, pointing to the weakness of a one-size-fits-all approach. In short, the long-term effects of intergroup programs are as much related to different sociocultural contexts, distinct needs, and dissimilar pedagogies as anything else (Abu-Nimer 1999; Halabi 2004b; Weinstein, Freedman, and Hughson 2007; Osler and Leung 2011; Salomon 2011; Ty 2011).

## Conclusion

The organization examined in this article practices one form of social justice education. Using a SIT-based approach to intergroup work that also integrates a number of other methodologies (see Figure 1), each group is perceived as a microcosm of reality, whether or not a program is explicitly focusing on two particular groups (e.g., Muslims and Jews or Palestinians and Jews). Each group is explicitly linked to external reality as opposed to attempting to work with students as if their learning environment exists in a vacuum. Through this educational space, participants are taught to understand themselves as individuals and members of larger collectives. This helps them gain insight into the process whereby group identities are constructed through encounters with the Other.

This educational model aims to serve all parties involved, allowing participants to get to know each other—culturally, ethnically, nationally, personally, politically, religiously—through an exploration, rather than an avoidance, of their differences. Students are challenged to not only take responsibility for the way they enact their social identities within the program itself, but also to

commit to working toward social justice after the program formally ends. When successful, this empowers students to return to the communities they came from (as opposed to create new identities having nothing to do with their pre-program identities) and work from within to create change. The long-term effectiveness of this organization's programs has not yet been proved, but it is clear that the field of social justice education has come a long way in a short period of time.

### Notes

1. A final critique of SIT, which I do not explore here, is social dominance theory—the school of thought that embraces particular SIT characteristics while disposing of others (Sidanius and Pratto 1999; Huddy 2004; Rubin and Hewstone 2004; Sidanius et al. 2004).

2. Another point worth mentioning, and one directly related to interpersonal relations, is that this organization also integrates Buberian notions of dialogue into their pedagogy (Buber 1970). In his most famous work, *I and Thou*, Buber describes two basic types of relationships that individuals can have with another entity, whether a person, or something in nature (e.g., a tree), or God. An I-It relationship is inherently reductionist; one orients toward another in relation to its characteristics, whether, for example, based in physicality or personality. An I-Thou (or I-You) relationship is much deeper; one orients toward another regardless of any single characteristic. Instead the Other is embraced entirely, such that this separate entity to some degree even ceases to be a separate entity. Although I-Thou relationships are an ideal, Buber recognizes that without I-It relations one cannot participate in society in a realistic manner. In his words, “In all seriousness of truth, hear this: without *It* man cannot live. But he who lives with *It* alone is not a man” (34). In short, though it is not a primary goal of this organization to develop I-Thou relationships between participants, it is an ideal insofar as a student arriving at this place will also have learned the notion of intersectionality; in other words, the Other is an extension of the self, and the self is an extension of the Other.

3. Since the first year of this program, the organization has had student applicants who identify as Palestinian *and* Jewish.

4. As with all other educational programs, especially those run by organizations striving to reshape their own program structures and pedagogies, this organization has modified its teaching methodology a number of times since it was established. In its early years, it was not explicit about its commitment to intersectionality, despite the fact that this pedagogical underpinning was implicitly present. After a few years, it began to openly voice this commitment.

5. Over the next twelve months, the organization plans on launching a number of new programs (largely variations of program D).

6. Most times these particular challenges are not addressed head-on until the end of a program.
7. Obviously student behavior has limits. Students are not allowed to physically or emotionally intimidate other participants, and they must obey civil law codes at all times.

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**Aaron J. Hahn Tapper** is assistant professor of theology and religious studies at the University of San Francisco, where he holds the Mae and Benjamin Swig Chair in Judaic Studies and directs the school's Jewish studies and social justice program, the first academic program in the United States formally linking these two fields.

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