

Chapter 10

Friendship, Contact and Peace Education

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The Setting

I have devoted many years of my life to the promotion of conversation between Arabs and Jews in Israel. These days, however, I have noticed a new tendency on my part; avoiding Jewish-Arab encounters, and finding myself obsessed with the question, “How many meetings between Jews and Arabs are necessary before the Jews are convinced that peace and conquest do not go together?” Will another encounter with them or some additional explanation help the situation? ... Also, as to relationships between the Jews and Arabs of Israel, it is difficult to convince the Jews that discrimination and co-existence do not go together. [Our translation]. (Daviri, 2000)

This paper explores the relationship between contact, friendship, and peace education. The context is contemporary Israel, but the theory is universally applicable. The conventional view of the topic is that peace educators can set up situations such as those alluded to by Daviri that foster contact and conversation between groups that begin with hostile views of one another. These situations then lead to better understanding and possibly to friendship, which in turn leads to the possibility of lessening of tension between the groups, and of perhaps eventually establishing peace between them. Daviri now despairs of reaching understanding even among his friends in the academy. Other Arabs and Palestinians who developed friendships with Israelis as a result of organized encounters or joint work on peace negotiations now publicly declare that they cannot face their former friends. Perhaps this is a good time for hand wringing and cynicism. But it is

also an opportunity to carefully review the literature on friendships and social networks on the one hand, and the Allport (1954) "contact hypothesis" on the other to glean some insights into these phenomena.

Curiously, the sociological literature on friendship (see Adams & Allan, 1998, for a convenient review and bibliography) and the social psychological literature on the contact hypothesis (see Pettigrew, 1998, for a review and bibliographies), seem largely unaware of one another despite the fact that a major outcome of contact is friendship. Indeed, both literatures seek to define the conditions under which intergroup contact occurs and when such contact can lead to intergroup friendship. This essay seeks to repair this lack of correspondence between the two literatures in the hope that a greater understanding of intergroup contact and friendship will provide new possibilities for peace education. While the contact hypothesis literature deals with many possible outcomes, the emphasis here will be on friendship, from the point of view of a peace process: Friendship is perhaps the most fragile yet most far reaching consequence of contact.

Friendship

We begin with friendship that despite its ubiquity is much misunderstood as a social phenomenon. Though friendship is frequently thought of as dyadic, an understanding of friendship "acknowledges the fact that personal relationships do not operate independently of one another, but instead are influenced by social communication patterns and interactions taking place between the relationship participants and important others in their lives" (Sarason, Sarason, & Pierce, 1995, p. 616). That is, an entire

network is involved even in seemingly isolated relationships (Wellman, Carrington, & Hall, 1988). This network tugs and pulls on the friendship dyad. Networks influence friendships "because the large majority of friendships are derived from some sort of ongoing focused activities (Feld & Carter, 1998, p. 137). This "embeddedness" (Granovetter, 1985) stems from the fact that all informal networks such as friendship relationships are pegged to, or draped around, formal, institutional arrangements (Kadushin, 1976). These formal arrangements can be organized foci of activities "including families, work places, voluntary organizations and neighborhoods" (Feld & Carter, 1998, p. 136) and importantly, for present purposes, schools. These "all have the common effect of bringing a relatively limited set of individuals together in repeated interactions" (Feld & Carter, 1998). Repeated interaction leads to the creation of a dense network of relationships some of which are friendship relations but some of which can be mandated by the formal, institutional structure such as doing reports or papers together or formal, work relationships. This dense network of embedded relations leads to solidarity (Bleiszer & Adams, 1992; Fischer, 1982) or intensity (Milardo, 1986): Individuals are influenced by the opinions of others within their network and thus develop common opinions and common norms. As a result, highly embedded, personal relationships tend to follow the norms of the group in which they are embedded (Feld & Carter, 1998, p. 139). Further consequences of dense and solidarity networks are high levels of mutual support (Hall & Wellman, 1985) but also social pressures that limit free choice (Festinger, Schacter, & Back, 1950). On the one hand, dense, embedded relationships provide the means for resolving seemingly irreconcilable conflicts between friendship dyads. Conversely, friends with few, mutually overlapping networks often have their

conflicts escalate because their separate networks of friends tend to hear only one side of the story, and thus their differences are reinforced rather than diffused. Further, because the networks are separate, their members have little stake in the maintenance of a relationship with a person they do not know (Feld & Carter, 1998, pp. 39-140). We have obviously reached the point of *deriving* from a series of propositions the very quotation with which this essay began.

A further, critical point about friendships is the tendency for people to form friendships with those who are like them in some way. This quality has been termed homophily (Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1978). Homophily is defined statistically as a greater than expected chance of a network having a higher proportion of units with a similar characteristic than would be expected from the distribution of that characteristic in a particular population (Verbrugge, 1977). Pairs can also be said to be homophilous if their characteristics match in a proportion greater than expected by the population from which they are drawn. Lazarsfeld and Merton distinguished between status-homophily that can be ascribed (e.g., age, race, sex) or acquired (e.g., marital status, education, occupation), and value-homophily (e.g., attitudes, stereotypes), which has also been termed homogeneity (Hall & Wellman, 1985). Numerous studies have documented the tendency towards homophily in a variety of social networks (Fischer, 1982; Huckfeldt, 1983; Lauman, 1973; Moore, 1990; Verbrugge, 1977). Most studies document only one or two forms of homophily, with a few exceptions (Verbrugge, 1977).

There are two reasons for a virtually universal tendency toward homophily. First, psychologically, people tend to prefer relationships with others who are like them (Byrne, 1971; Condon & Crano, 1988). Second, as we saw, people tend to form friendships with

those with whom they have had contact. But this contact occurs either in situations of "focused activity" (Feld & Carter, 1998) or in situations of geographic proximity such as neighborhoods or housing developments (Festinger, Schacter, & Back, 1950; Huckfeldt, 1983; Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1978). Indeed, intergroup friendships are more likely to be formed in situations of close proximity and easy access (Nahemow & Lawton, 1975): as daily access decreases, homophilous friendships are more likely.

Focused activities are socially structured to involve people of both similar statuses and similar attitudes and values. For example, work groups in the occupational sphere tend to bring together people with common qualifications who usually share common backgrounds (Fernandez & Weinberg, 1997; Lin, Ensel, & Vaughn, 1981). Schools tend to be segregated by race, class, ability, and formerly by gender. The findings of Black-White relationships in American schools are uniformly that cross-race friendships are extremely rare (Epstein & Karweit, 1983). Members of voluntary organizations are self-selected to have common interests and social backgrounds (McPherson & Smith-Lovin, 1987).

In all modern societies, neighborhoods and housing tend to be segregated by class and ethnicity. This has been well documented for the United States (Massey & Denton, 1993). In Israel, "...90 percent of Arab Israelis reside in exclusively Arab towns or villages. Even the 10 percent who do live in mixed cities occupy separate, residential areas." (Ben-Ari & Amir, 1986) Thus, homophily is the result not only of individual preference but also of social structures and pressures.

Finally, the very idea of friendship and what it entails depends on the cultural and historical context (Adams & Allan, 1998). Male sociability, especially in working class

culture, tends to revolve on sports activities, drinking in bars, and other masculine interests. Feminine sociability, in Western societies, has traditionally been focused on more intimate interests and the sharing of confidences. As Western society becomes more oriented to professions, information, and psychological awareness, male friendship tends to acquire more attributes of female friendships (Adams & Allan, 1998).

Contact

We now review the contact hypothesis, though our summary of the friendship literature suggests that because of the tendency towards homophily, social contact is far from being a random event. Rather, contact with others follows social, structural rules. The social contact hypothesis has been claimed as social science's major contribution to reducing intergroup bias and conflict (Gaertner, Dovidio, & Bachman, 1996), representing a union of both social science research and social activism (Stephan & Stephan, 1996). In its simplest form, the contact hypothesis states that one avenue to reducing prejudice and intergroup hostility is through the creation of situations in which members of an ingroup have positive interactions with members of an outgroup. The earliest formulations of the contact hypothesis were framed during the post-World War II period in which social scientists were reacting to the horrible consequences of racism embodied by the Holocaust and to segregation and racial prejudice in the United States. Unquestionably the most influential conceptualization was provided by Gordon Allport in *The Nature of Prejudice* (1954), although similar ideas were proffered by other researchers and interventionists seeking to understand how to ameliorate discrimination (Deutsch & Collins, 1951; Williams, 1947). A belief in the positive effects of social

contact became part of the debates and evidence culminating in the 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education* (U.S. Supreme Court, 1954) decision to desegregate public schools.

The majority of empirical studies testing the contact hypothesis have been conducted in field settings, such as schools, summer camps, and residential housing, but a good number have been conducted in laboratory settings. It is well accepted in the social contact research that contact does not invariably lead to friendship or, consequently, to attitude/behavior change. Allport in fact (1954) identified four necessary conditions for intergroup contact to result in positive, attitude change. First, the individuals from the two groups in the contact situation must be of equal status. If members of one group have an inferior role or status, then it is likely that existing ingroup stereotypes will be reinforced. Although equal status between participants can be created in laboratory or field experiments, the homophily principle suggests that unequal, status distinctions outside of the contact situation may exist, thus attenuating the effects of positive, intergroup contact. This is a particular concern when group membership is associated with socioeconomic status, education, or privilege. Subtler but perhaps even more important are status differences caused by unequal access to networked resources thus multiplying the gaps caused by contact biases in the first place. These networked resources have been called “social capital” and there are considerable differences between Arabs and Jewish Israelis even of the same nominal status. As Nan Lin (Lin, 2000, p. 793) summarizes the matter, “Social groups (gender, race) have different access to social capital because of their advantaged or disadvantaged, structural positions and associated social networks... Inequality in social capital, therefore, can be accounted for largely by structural constraints and the normative dynamics of social interactions.” Daviri, above, complains

about Israelis' discriminating against Arabs and essentially "not getting it." Individuals who have equal status prior to entering the contact situation are more attuned to similarities between one another, which can strengthen social contact effects (Stephan & Stephan, 1996). Conversely, the less visible but important differences in social capital can exacerbate relations even when there is contact.

A second condition is normative support by respected authorities. For example, the decades since Civil Rights' legislation have witnessed the establishment of normative support for intergroup contact between Blacks and Whites in the U.S. military, business, and religious institutions. Such support can be problematic, however, when the authority figures do not include members of both the in- and outgroup (Stephan & Stephan, 1996). Again, Daviri's complaint is germane.

The two remaining conditions concern the presence of a common task for contact situation participants. Participants should share a common goal and tasks in the contact situation should be cooperative. Instances such as participating on an athletic team or in study groups for school can potentially provide these conditions. Task situations have also been contrived for studying social contact effects, such as running a simulated railroad (Cook, 1978, 1985) or a winter, survival task (Pettigrew, 1997). A considerable body of research supports the relationship between intergroup cooperation and improved, intergroup relations, particularly in educational settings [see review by Johnson, Johnson, & Maruyama, 1984]. Aspects of the task such as the competence of each member, role within the task and success in achieving the task also can affect perceptions of outgroup members (Cook, 1978, 1985).

Research within both laboratory and field settings has generally supported the

effectiveness of Allport's four conditions. Some studies have found a positive effect for contact despite the absence of one or two of the prerequisite conditions (Cook, 1985; Pettigrew, 1998; Stephan & Stephan, 1996); other studies have been offered as disconfirmation of Allport's hypothesis, although they often lack one or two of these conditions.

In addition to the *Allport four*, researchers have since suggested a number of other conditions required for social contact to achieve its desired effects. As a result, some researchers have argued that the growing list of conditions may render the contact hypothesis untestable: The creation of situations that embody all of the proposed conditions would require considerable effort (Pettigrew, 1998). However, one of these additional conditions, acquaintance potential, requires further consideration. In Pettigrew's view, contact that leads to cross-group friendship is mostly likely to have positive effects. "The contact situation must provide the participants with the opportunity to become friends." (*italics in original*) (Pettigrew, 1998, p. 76).

In various formulations (Amir, 1976; Cook, 1978, 1985), researchers have argued that individuals in the contact situation must have sufficient time and opportunity to learn informally more about each other and to become potential friends. Acquaintance potential may be important for several reasons (Brewer & Brown, 1994). First, such opportunities provide the chance for participants to acquire more information about one another and to get to know one another as individuals. Cook (Cook, 1978, 1985) suggests that social contact situations must promote association of a sort that will reveal enough detail about members of the disliked group to encourage seeing them as individuals rather than as persons with stereotyped group characteristics. Such

individualizing information also may disconfirm existing, negative stereotypes about outgroups. The positive reactions engendered by forming new acquaintances and friendships may generalize to the outgroup as a whole. Finally, and perhaps more importantly, acquaintances formed within a contact situation may lead to the formation of friendships that transcend the contact situation. Rather than treat acquaintance formation as a requisite condition of social contact situations, we consider the formation of friendships a key consequence of contact. Cross-group friendship can materially aid in the creation of conditions for peace.

Conclusion: Friendship, Contact and the Prospects for Peace Education

We are now in a position to summarize the conditions under which contact might produce friendship. We further explore the implications of the Allport hypothesis and the implications of the network literature for peace education.

First, in naturally occurring contacts – in situations that are not specifically manipulated to promote intergroup relations – homophily reduces the chance for positive contact. That is, contact between groups such as Arabs and Israelis is unlikely in the first place, and if it does occur, contact is unlikely to lead to friendship. Geographic co-location or propinquity is rare although Falah (1996) found that urban, Israeli Jews and Arabs often shared functional proximity – that is, they had contact in their daily life. On the other hand, acquaintances and friendships were highly homophilous. Although proximity is present, this situation lacks the other requisite conditions for social contact (e.g., equal status, cooperative task) to lead to positive outcomes. Further, networks that link Israeli Arabs to each other and Israeli Jews to one another have very few cross-links

bridging Arabs and Jews. The result is that the existing, informal, social networks in which people are naturally embedded produce centripetal forces rather than centrifugal ones, thus pulling Arabs and Jews even further apart.

The situation with formal networks is if anything even more circumscribing. Voluntary associations and situations that might bring Arab and Jews together are almost entirely lacking. Although employment is putatively voluntary, in terms of the goal of bringing outgroups together, the workplace can be considered an involuntary, contact situation. Most Arab-Israeli, workplace relations are those in which Israelis far outrank the Arabs, thus violating one of Allport's conditions for contact to be effective. Another involuntary, contact situation is school, but at the elementary and high school levels geographic segregation as well as the ethnic-religious tracking systems of the Israeli education system largely preclude any contact at all. The one exception is the Israeli university system in which both Jewish and Arab Israelis participate on a relatively equal footing, though Jewish students are said to complain that Arab students are ill prepared.

Haifa University has 20% Arab students, the largest proportion of Arab students in Israel. This high proportion is due to the university's location in Northern Israel, the area of the highest density of Arab population within Israel. Since students stay at a university for a relatively long time period, there is a chance for acquaintance to develop into friendship. But homophily and network structure principles seem to operate here as well, best captured by a recent tendency of Arab students to call themselves Palestinian and to refrain from voluntary association with Israeli Jews.

Since natural occasions for contact in Israel as well as elsewhere seem to doom the creation of cross group friendships to the rare occasion, conscious manipulation of

contact seems to offer the only choice. Mindful of the barriers to the conversion of contact into friendship that are noted in this paper, we can still suggest some network principles that might increase the probability of contact developing into friendship. The most hopeful aspect is the tendency of modern society to be composed of crosscutting social circles (Kadushin, 1966; Simmel, 1922). This means that unlike rural society in which statuses are highly clustered – ethnicity, geographic location, social rank, occupational statuses and the like are highly related to one another – in contemporary, urban society the link between statuses that might form homophilous relationships is much weaker. Thus contacts between academic Arabs and Jews in Israel can be (and have been) constructed to emphasize their common, professional statuses and de-emphasize other status as being less relevant to the contact situation. A circle of professionals/academics interested in peace can be (and has been) formed which ignores other statuses the participants might not have in common. Whether the common status and task is expertise in health, water supply, energy, political polling or sociology, for example, in the past it has been possible to emphasize these commonalities rather than the ethnic differences and the record shows that substantial friendships have been made. Peace education has tended to capitalize on this strategy that flows directly from the principles of network theory and the contact hypothesis.

This strategy has, however, run into difficulties as suggested by the quote from Daviri, an Arab psychologist, with which we began. It is obvious that another status, nationality, not shared by friends, has become more salient, swamping the shared statuses. What may be less obvious is the strong support such swamping has from the network structure of Arabs and Jews in Israel. First, the precondition of crosscutting

circles of modern societies is largely true only for secular Jews, the overwhelming majority of whom live in urban settings. Arabs in Northern Israel tend to live in rural villages where their networks can exert concerted pulls away from their professional and modern statuses. To the extent that their reference is village society, then friendship too has different meanings from the ones more common in modern, Israeli society (Adams & Allan, 1998). Interestingly, the radical, religious right among Jews shares many of the village network characteristics we have attributed to Arab, rural society in Israel. Not surprisingly, these Jews are not in the forefront of attempts to create dialogue and contact between Arabs and Jews.

Peace education always begins at home. Despite the strong, environmental situation pulling Jews and Arabs apart, more can be done in Haifa University to create support for the four Allport factors proven to be conducive to transforming casual contact into friendship. Since the Jews are the majority and the management of the university is exclusively Jewish, it falls upon Jews to change the situation, however recalcitrant the Arab minority might appear to them to be. To repeat: Equality, normative support (at least in the university context), common goals and cooperative projects are less common in the university than the Allport contact hypothesis calls for. The best empirical source for testing the prevalence of these factors is obviously the minority, Arab student body, not the majority, Jewish administration, which almost by definition is less motivated to addressing these issues and probably less sensitive as well. We do not, however, underestimate the pull apart created by existing, Jewish and Arab networks. To counter them, the university might consider embarking on a radical solution which empirical studies (Newcomb, 1961) have demonstrated might work: Subsidized, integrated, Arab-

Jewish, student, living facilities in Haifa.

Nonetheless, there is a need for more research regarding the environmental effects on friendship dyads. The Newcomb College experiment has not been repeated and the housing project studied by Deutsch and Collins (1951) has in fact been razed. A survey of the literature pertaining to intergroup friendship formation as it relates to social contact indicates that relationships are strongly shaped by their social environment. Relatively little research, especially longitudinal, is available on how these influences play out across the phases of friendship formation and what network properties may be most important. The present impasse in Arab-Jewish relations is also an opportunity to explore this topic both to the benefit of research on peace education but also to the benefit of social science generally.

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