Assessing the Beyond Words educational model for Empowering Women, Decreasing Prejudice and Enhancing Empathy

.Nitsan Gordon - Giles MA DT,   Wafa Zidan M.S*c*

Abstract

This study examines changes in the attitudes towards sex roles, needs and obligations of Arab women studying early childhood education and changes in emotional awareness of both Arab and Jewish women and men studying education. The intervention experienced by 94 students over the course of one or two semesters is a multidisciplinary approach called *Beyond Words*. The participants were measured at two points – a week after the beginning of the course and two weeks before its completion and were compared to a control group that did not undergo the intervention. Significant differences were found in the first part of the study dealing with attitudes towards sex roles both in the before and after measures and in comparison with the control group. Women in the experimental group became more confident and more liberal in how they viewed themselves and their ideal role model. The qualitative questionnaire findings clearly advise of the emotional change experienced upon the completion of the course. According to these personal testimonials it seems that the course significantly increased emotional awareness and flexibility in thoughts and feelings as well as acceptance and empathy towards others.

Introduction

> *The holiest spot on earth is where an ancient hatred*
> *has become a present love*
> A Course in Miracles, p. 562

History reveals that Jews, Muslims, and Christians lived in peace and harmony in Palestine until the 1880s (Pappe, 2004). Hostility, strife, and violence surfaced as Jews, Arabs, and Palestinians began to develop national identities (Awad, 2007). For over sixty years now, Jews and Arabs have been living side by side in the Middle East, yet have failed to create an integrated community based on equality and mutual respect for the other. We understand that "Jewish" and "Arabs" are not equivalent terms but for the purpose of this paper, we will keep this terminology. For Jewish we intend the Jews who live in Israel, and for Arabs we intend all the people who share

the same Arabic language, Palestinians, Druze Arabs, Bedouins, Circassians, Christian and Muslim who live in Israel.

The inability of the two peoples to truly understand the other's daily reality, hopes, dreams and needs, engenders prejudices; alienation and antagonism, which often lead to violence (Halabi, 2000). The prejudice and acts of violence within Israel, and in Gaza and the West Bank continue feeding on one another in a self-destructive cycle that would be easier to break if women were not oppressed and if there was more equality in the division of resources and responsibilities (Amnesty International, 2005). It would also be easier if there were more positive meaningful situations where Arabs and Jews could interact, listen to each other and work through the personal and national wounds so these do not continue to control behaviors towards one another. As it is, we are faced with an extremely difficult backdrop for transforming prejudice and moving out of this seemingly endless cycle of violence (Audergon, 2005; Awad, 2007; Halabi, 2000).

In order to change the prejudiced attitudes and beliefs that feed the fire of violence, revenge and hateful behavior, we must try to understand the roots and causes of these emotions and how to best access and bring them into the open so they can be transformed and healed.

Prejudice

Prejudice is defined by Allport (1954) as "an antipathy based upon a faulty and inflexible generalization. It may be felt or expressed. It may be directed toward a group as a whole, or towards an individual because he is a member of that group" (p. 9). Prejudice is based on feelings more than logic, and therefore remains unchanged even in the face of opposing evidence. "Underlying prejudice is a deep fear of being a lonely individual. Prejudice represents an escape from such loneliness and thus becomes an ego strengthening experience" (Bettleheim, 1964, p. 53).

Ethnocentrism, which is one form of prejudice, is defined as an emotional attitude that one's own race, nation or culture is superior to all others (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2009, par 12). According to Sanford (1973),

> Crucial for the development of the character structure within which ethnocentrism has a functional role is an authority which is at once stern, rigid and unaccompanied by love. The hostility aroused by this authority, instead of being directed against the strong and–the child must believe– 'good' people who wield it, is suppressed and displaced unto substitutes; and eventually with some assistance from parents and educators—onto outgroups (p. 67).

Living with an authority who behaves in a stern and rigid manner, is sometimes associated with a mother and sister who are oppressed.

Projecting our negative feelings and thoughts unto others helps us feel temporarily better about who we are. "By making distinctions and urging exclusions (Blacks vs. Whites, Jews vs. Arabs, and Protestants vs. Catholics) our own place becomes clearer and more desirable" (Hirsh, 1955, p. 33).

Mentioning studies by Tajfel (Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) the "father" of the "social identity theory," Plous (2003b) states:

> What Tajfel discovered is that groups formed on the basis of almost any distinction are prone to in-group bias. Within minutes of being divided into groups, people tend to see their own group as superior to other groups, and they will frequently seek to maintain an advantage over other groups (p. 9).

Based on these findings, Tajfel (Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) hypothized that this group identification and the belief that our own group is better than other groups helps us in maintaining our self-esteem.

Bruno Bettleheim (Bettelheim & Janowitz, 1964), the Jewish refugee from Austria who later became a child psychologist, takes the theory a step further when he contends that a prejudiced individual may function temporarily better in society than they would without their prejudice. This is because prejudice helps the individuals release some of the anxiety they may be feeling at certain times in their lives, and find the balance, control or sense of self that they need in order to function in this society. It seems that the more anxious an individual is, the more prejudiced he is, because the inner pressure of the anxiety weakens his ability to control his emotions. Prejudice serves as a relief; it reduces anxiety by enabling the release of aggression. Once

aggression is released, our inner angst also decreases and thus, at least temporarily, we feel better.

Plous (2003a) indicates that when people experience a drop in self-esteem, they become more likely to express prejudice. Fein and Spencer (1997) found that 1) after verbally expressing prejudice, participants' self-esteem was increased; 2) when asked to remember something of value, and write about it, prejudice decreased. "Thus, at least one effective means of decreasing prejudice may be to address the sources of insecurity that underlie it" (Plous, 2003b, p.10).

In other words, at least momentarily, prejudice allows individuals wounded by particular childhood circumstances to feel less lonely, better about who they are, and decreases fear and anxiety by providing an outlet for hostility. Since most of us would rather not experience our fears and anxieties and are longing to feel loved, accepted and worthy, it is easy to see why prejudices are so difficult to give up. This is especially true in places rife with economic and social injustice, political unrest and daily violence. All these outside conditions re-stimulate past wounds and insecurities, thus increasing the need for security and a sense of belonging, and consequently creating a fertile ground for prejudice.

Projection

From a psychoanalytic perspective, projection and projective identification are defense mechanisms underpinning prejudice. Prejudice "restores internal equilibrium or balance in the face of conflict or threat. It's an attempt to preserve the integrity of the mental world. Prejudice aids our striving for coherence or balance in the face of internal or external threat" (Fonagy & Higgitt, 2007, p. 66). If prejudiced attitudes and beliefs temporarily support the emotional wellbeing of some members of society, why should we try to transform them? What are the dangers of prejudice?

The Dangers of Prejudice

Following the aftershock of WWII there was a great deal of research on prejudice as social scientists tried to understand how an event with the magnitude of the Holocaust

could have occurred. Allport (1954, pp. 14-15) enumerates five degrees of prejudice from the least energetic to the most:

1. **Anti locution**: Talking about the prejudice with like-minded friends.
2. **Avoiding members of the disliked group**: In this case the bearer of the prejudice does not directly inflict harm upon the group he dislikes. He takes the burden of accommodation and withdrawal entirely upon himself.
3. **Discrimination:** Here the prejudiced person makes detrimental distinctions of an active sort. He undertakes to exclude all members of the group in question from certain types of employment, from residential housing, political rights, educational and recreational opportunities, churches, hospitals or some other social privilege. Segregation is an institutionalized form of discrimination enforced legally or by common custom.
4. **Physical attack**: Under conditions of heightened emotions prejudice may lead to acts of violence or semi-violence.
5. **Extermination:** Lynching, pogroms, massacres, ethnic cleansing, and the Hitlerian pogrom of genocide mark the ultimate degree of violent expression of prejudice

Activity on one level makes transition to a more intense level easier. In the last century the Jews and Arabs who have lived in this area have suffered from most of the negative actions caused by prejudice as described above. Clearly, if not transformed, prejudice can become very dangerous, as witnessed not only in Israel and the Middle East, but also in so many other conflict-ridden regions throughout the world.

It would seem then that if we want to heal the need for prejudice and prevent dangerous behaviors that arise from biases, we need to teach alternative benign ways to deal with emotional pain which can arise in times of conflict or threat.

Childhood Wounds and Transforming Prejudice

Pain that is not transformed is transmitted
Richard Rohr (Calhoun, 2006, p. 228)

Most people we have worked with over the years, including ourselves, have experienced prejudice, some more than others. For some of us it is related to growing up in this precarious country, Israel, while carrying years of historical suffering on our young shoulders, while for others it has to do more with how we were treated when we were very young, and often enough it is a combination of both.

In our work we chose to focus primarily on transforming and healing the childhood wounds and traumas that create the need for prejudice. We teach the participants of our courses alternative ways of dealing with the emotional pain that arises almost daily in reaction to living in this volatile part of the world. In conjunction, we work with women on healing their fears so they could become a source of strength and leadership both within their families and in their communities. Our hope is that one day these empowered women, who are no longer guided by their fears, will help transform the social, political and economical situation so that we will finally live in harmony and peace.

Since the major cause of prejudice has to do with how we were treated as children, it is possible to explain how two people who grew up in similar socioeconomic and political situations can experience the world very differently. One can be more tolerant, accepting and loving of themselves while the other is more insecure, angry and hateful. This dichotomy is very evident in Israel. What are those childhood wounds that give rise to the need for prejudice and how are they formed?

Mistreatment of children that can give rise to emotional wounds and the need for prejudice include emotional and physical abuse (neglect, physical punishment, sexual abuse, oppressive behavior etc.). In addition but less obvious is the violence, physical and emotional abuse in the child's home and community even when not directed towards the child. According to a study published by the Social Work Department at the Israeli Ministry of Health (2002) about 600,000 children in Israel are exposed to violence within the family.

We know today that anxiety can begin in the womb of the pregnant mother who may be terrified by the violence around her or fearful for herself or her unborn child. Bolen (2005) explains: "Cortisol, the stress hormone, which goes up in traumatized pregnant women, crosses into the placenta and affects the brain of the fetus. These mothers then give birth to infants that are often premature and small, who grow into children with a predisposition toward poor impulse control, inattention, learning, and behavior problems. These propensities would be made worse by witnessing violence and being a target of anger and abuse themselves. Violence does beget violence" (pp. 23-24).

Crenshaw (2006) points out that, "the stress response system is of crucial importance to all living beings; it enables the efficient and adaptive response to threat and danger. If, however, a person, and particularly a young child, who is more vulnerable due to emerging development, is exposed to extreme or long lasting stress, alterations in the neural circuits and biologic systems involved in response to stress are likely to take place" (p. 23).

Perry and Pollard (1998) note that since the brain is developing and organizing at an explosive rate in the early years of life, experiences during this period have more potential to shape brain organization in both positive and detrimental ways. Chronic exposure to threat, danger and violence can lead to the persistence of fear-related if not terror-related neuropsychological patterns that impact emotional, behavioral, cognitive and social functioning.

Wipfler (1990), the founder and director of the Parents Leadership Institute who has been working with parents and children for twenty five years, explains that the hurts we experience as children, unless transformed, clearly affect our behavior as adults: "When children get hurt by thoughtlessness, mistreatment or circumstance, they are saddled with emotional tension caused by the hurt. Children interpret incidents that hurt them in a very personal way. They assume that the troubles that befall them are a sign that there is something very wrong with them. Unhealed hurts leave scars in the form of rigid, irrational behavior" (p. 17). Prejudice is often described as a rigid, irrational attitude or behavior.

Eisler (2004), who started SAIV (Spiritual Alliance Against Intimate Violence) describes the devastating link between intimate and international violence. She writes:

> . . . a pioneer in the study of the neurochemistry of abused children, Dr. Bruce Perry, tells us that what matters is what happens during a child's early formative years. Children who are abused not only often become abusers, their brain neurochemistry also tends to become programmed for fight-or-flight at the slightest provocation. Yet, while there is much talk about the economic and social factors behind warfare and terrorism, the link between intimate violence — in home and school — and international violence — in terrorism and war — is barely mentioned anywhere (p. 35).

It has been highly documented that most oppressors, including Hitler, "who seek to intimidate or exercise control over others felt humiliated and were often traumatized as children or adults by people who had power over them" (Bolen, p. 23, 2008).

Miller (1998), a psychologist and author of many books, noted for her work on child abuse says:

> In order not to die, all mistreated children must totally repress the mistreatment, deprivation, and bewilderment they have undergone because otherwise the child's organism wouldn't be able to cope with the magnitude of the pain suffered. Only as adults do they have other possibilities for dealing with their feelings. If they don't make use of these possibilities, then what was once the life-saving function of repression can be transformed into a dangerous, destructive, and self-destructive force (par. 5).

In other words, being oppressed, mistreated, or having experienced fear due to intimate or external violence can cause deep wounds in children that may later manifest as low self-esteem, rigid behavioral patterns such as prejudice and a tendency to use aggression and violence to resolve life issues.

This connection invites us to consider a profound question. If the deep emotional pain of our childhood keeps us in the cycle of fear and violence, how can we transform this pain and work through our prejudices so we can finally take major steps on the road to reconciliation and peace?

As discussed above, we are proposing two interconnected paths for this transformation. The first one is aimed at increasing emotional awareness of adults, which in turn enables them to make decisions based not predominantly on emotions, but also on rational thinking. Understanding our own emotions also enhances our understanding of and empathy towards the feelings of others, Goleman (1995) calls this transformation *increased emotional intelligence*.

The second path for transformation is geared toward the empowerment of women and stipulates that empowered women are better equipped at standing up for their own rights and the rights of their children and creating a more benevolent living environment for everyone. Eisler (2005), who conducted a study of eighty-nine

nations, shows that "the status of women can be a better predictor of the general quality of life then a nation's financial wealth" (p. 32). She found that life quality indicators were higher where the status of women is higher.

Other Studies

There have been a few studies in the United States showing the relation between certain interventions and the reduction of prejudice. A study by Dovidio and Gaertner (1999) found that: "Understanding the nature and basis of prejudice can thus guide, theoretically and pragmatically, interventions that can effectively reduce both traditional and contemporary forms of prejudice" (p. 158).

In addition, research on empathy and role-playing suggests that reversal in perspective can reduce prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination (Batson et al., 1997; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000; McGregor, 1993; Stephan & Finlay, 1999).

Batson and his colleagues (1997) specifically report that "results of three experiments suggest that feeling empathy for a member of a stigmatized group can improve attitudes towards the group as a whole" (p.105).

Allport (1954) hypothesized that:

> prejudice (unless deeply rooted in the character structure of the individual) may be reduced by equal status contact between majority and minority groups in the pursuit of common goals. The effect is greatly enhanced if this contact is sanctioned by institutional supports (i.e., by law, custom or local atmosphere), and provided it is of a sort that leads to the perception of common interests and common humanity between members of the two groups (p. 281).

This approach known as the "contact hypothesis" has been widely researched. Pettigrew and Tropp (2000), in a review of 203 studies from 25 countries, involving 90,000 participants, found that 94% of studies supported the contact hypothesis, which means that 94% of the time, prejudice diminished as inter-group contact increased (Plous, 2003a).

The problem with this approach is that in order for it to work Allport's conditions have to be met, otherwise the contact with the other group may have the opposite

outcome of increasing prejudice. One example in Israel is evident with the Druze minority who serve in the Israeli military where they have a chance to make contact with the majority group in the pursuit of a common goal sanctioned by institutional support. This contact leads to the perception of common interests and common humanity between members of the two groups. While this contact often reduces prejudice on an individual basis, in times of crisis and tension many Jews often revert to grouping the Druze with other Arabs and seeing all of them as possible threats to the existence of Israel.

According to Plous (2003a) the key is to craft situations that will lead to cooperative and interdependent interactions in pursuit of common goals, shifting people to re-categorize from "us and them" to "we" (Desforges et al., 1991; Dovidio & Gaertner, 1999; Sherif et al., 1988). This is one of the reasons we have chosen to work with women. It seems that with women the shift from "us and them" to "we" happens quickly when we realize that we all have much in common as women, mothers and wives. Yet to ensure that the prejudice does not return every time there is a crisis in Israel, which happens quite often, we need to address the root causes of prejudice based in our childhood wounds, and learn new ways to deal with the emotional pain that do not involve directing our hostility towards minority groups.

No published studies were found connecting the empowerment of women to the reduction of prejudice. In 1993 we conducted a study to understand the affect of dance/movement therapy on Arab women studying to be childcare givers. We were curious to see whether the movement sessions would affect the way they moved and interacted with one another. Forty Arab women participated in the study, twenty were in the intervention group, and twenty in the control group.

We filmed the two groups of women moving with a dance/movement therapist, unaware of the goals of the study. Then Gordon (one of the authors) worked with one of the groups for an hour per week during the whole school year, twenty-four meetings in all, while the other group did not go through the program. At the end of the school year we filmed both groups again working with that same dance/movement therapist and sent the film to a certified movement analyst (trained in Laban Movement Analysis) asking her to compare the before and after results of women in

both groups. She did not know the purpose of the study nor did she know which was the experimental and which the control group.

Her first impression reflected what we had been sensing for years:

> . . . in particular, I am struck by their (both control and experimental groups) lack of weight effort or the passive attitude towards weight expressed mostly in limpness. Whenever weight effort appears it is usually light. Appearance of strength is rare. In the Laban Movement Analysis framework weight effort is associated with asserting oneself and making an impact in the world. It is about determination and claiming of self. For some reason, these women do not assert themselves through movement (D. Yahav, personal communication, July 18, 1995).

Perhaps this is a reflection of how they also do not assert themselves in their worlds. At the end of the year while the women in the control group did not exhibit any change on a movement level, the women in the experimental group exhibited a definite change. Yahav (1995) noted:

> Out of the seven women observed and analyzed all made noticeable changes in effort/shape qualities, body connections and use of space. This included greater postural involvement and support of gestures, more crystallization of effort elements; enhanced sequencing of movement and a diminished intensity of the limpness and concavity so prevalent among both groups of women (p. 13).

Because, as you will read later, many women living in this part of the world are still oppressed and otherwise abused, regaining the use of the weight effort can lead to their ability to create real lasting changes in their lives. As Hillman (1964) writes: "the body is the vessel in which the transformation process takes place. The analyst knows that there are no lasting changes unless the body is affected" (p. 146).

Barrky (1980), who worked with abused women, noted: "Without active use of weight there is little hope that these women will ever be able to stand up for themselves" (p. 135). Chang and Leventhal (1995) describe what happens to a woman who is asked to push against a partner and realizes, with the support of the therapist, that she is not a "pushover." These interventions encouraged her "to interact more assertively with the important figures in her life and begin to perceive herself more positively" (p. 62).

Increasing Emotional Intelligence

The desire to experience or not experience an emotion motivates much of our behavior
 Anonymous

De Martino and colleagues (2006) described a breakthrough which seems to indicate that our emotional system processing (localized in the amygdala) plays a critical role in biasing rational decisions. Damasio (1994) suggests that the brain stores memories of past decisions, (like those we made when we were very young) and the memories of those decisions are what drive people's choices in life. In order to stop behaving based only on our past experience or decisions, and using rationality based on present situations, something needs to change in the way we relate to our emotions. He explains that what makes us rational people is not that we repress and hold back what we feel, but that we know how to deal with our emotions, whichever they might be, in a constructive manner. He also mentions that our schools and educational system overlook the role that our feelings play in how we learn and the choices we make in our lives.

Damasio (1994) also notes that people who lack emotions because of brain injuries have difficulties making decisions at all. If emotions play such an important role in the decisions and choices we make in our lives, it seems especially important to transform our most painful emotions, so they do not continue to guide our choices and behavior and create havoc and destruction in our lives and the lives of those around us.

Transforming the emotional pain is similar to increasing emotional intelligence. Part of Goleman's (1995) definition of emotional intelligence has to do with the ability to control our impulses and read emotions in ourselves and others which leads to the ability to empathize with them.

According to Goleman (1995), courses that have attempted to increase emotional intelligence have shown several benefits. Participants become more aware of their

own emotions and are better able to identify what causes these emotions. By learning to differentiate between "feeling" something and "acting" based on a feeling, their ability to control their emotions increases and they are better able to just feel anger or emotional pain, for instance, without immediately doing something about it, or acting it out. Once students become aware of their own emotions they are also better able to empathize with others, better listen to them and see their differing perspectives. They also improve their capacity to be in relationship, resolving conflicts and communicating their needs better. Ability to share, being cooperative and dealing more democratically with others also increase.

Thus, we developed a course which takes into account these processes, hones the participants' emotional intelligence and ultimately aids them in improving their communication skills, their cooperation and their understanding of democratic values.

Empowering Women

> *The dormant power of women together is the untapped resource needed by humanity and by the planet.*
>
> Jean Shinoda Bolen (2005, p. 28)

Now that we have discussed how mistreatment and abuse of children can lead to rigid, prejudiced or violent behavior in adults, we would like to consider how all this is related to the oppression of women and whether the empowerment of women can lead to a less hurtful, more open and loving atmosphere in the rearing of children.

Eisler (2004) noted that: "Throughout history, and cross-culturally, the most violently despotic and warlike cultures have been those where violence or the threat of violence, is used to maintain domination of parent over child and man over woman" (p. 35).

Amnesty International (2004, 2005) calls the statistics on violence against women, a human rights scandal: at least one out of every three women has been beaten, coerced

into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime. In Europe, domestic violence is the major cause of death and disability for women aged sixteen to forty-four. In the United States, a woman is raped every 6 minutes; a woman is battered every 15 seconds.

Nekar (2006) found that one out of every ten Jewish and Arab women in Israel suffers from intimate violence–about 200,000 battered women. Since 2000 there has been an increase by about a third of the number of women and children murdered by their partners or family members. This parallels the increase in violence and security threats in the last eight years as well as an increase in economic distress and poverty. In the last two years there has also been a 15% increase in the number of women who seek help due to sexual abuse. According to research 80% of the men who beat their wives witnessed intimate violence in their homes as children or were themselves subject to violence. 60% of the battered women grew up in homes where there was violence.

Based on the research and statistics it seems clear that children who experienced violence in their childhood have more tendencies to revert to violence as adults; that tension, economic issues and political conflicts increase violence against women, and that many women themselves have come to support and believe in the system that oppresses them. Many women live in fear within their own homes. "A good wife must live in fear," is the actual headline of an article in Asia News (2007) describing the women in Saudi Arabia. "Due to this culture women live in constant fear," says Maha Al-Hujailan (Asia News, 2007, par. 5) while Hasna Al-Quna'ir (Asia News, 2007, par. 7) adds: "The woman is the victim of this insular culture, and her only salvation would be a reorganization of the cultural structure of the entire society."

When a woman lives in fear for her life or fear of pain and the abuse of her rights, when she is not educated to understand that her life could and should be different, when she does not have the support of other women "sisters"— she begins to believe what she is told about her role and place in life and becomes an accomplice in the authoritarian rearing and educating of her own children. Bolen's (2005) notes: "Disempowered and fearful mothers cannot protect their children no matter how much they may love them" (p. 25). This might explain why and how some women

allow and participate in their daughter's genital mutilation (120 million girls worldwide–with 2 million new girls at risk every year), or stand by as their daughters are sold to become a sex slaves (2 million girls between ages of 5-11 are introduced to sex slavery each year), or take it upon themselves to commit acts of violence, killing daughters or sisters to protect the family's honor (Amnesty International, 2004).

When a woman permits her son to have more rights than her daughter and to give orders to the women of the house, she is modeling for him that the system of male domination is an accepted way of life. When she stands by and says nothing as he is teased for his fears and tears (which are considered a weakness) and receives corporal punishment or is oppressed by older males, she takes part in the process of his alienation from his own feelings. This inevitably leads to a decrease in emotional intelligence, and an inability to understand and control his emotional impulses and feel empathy for others.

As Bolen (2005) states:

> . . . if a mother cannot protect them or provide for them, children feel deeply betrayed, not just by the mother, but by the world. Powerless mothers instill mistrust and devaluation of women in boys and girls (p. 25).

> Without an adult or a society to protect them, children are vulnerable to whatever bad happens. Boys wait their turn to be men with the upper hand; girls become acculturated to becoming powerless women (p. 24).

Holmes (2004, par. 12) reports that

> . . . when women and girls are empowered, the overall health and wellbeing of a society is greatly improved and this includes: decreased population growth; faster economic growth; less corruption in governance; increased agricultural production; more children go to school; health hazards are reduced; and there is lower childhood malnutrition and lower child mortality.

We believe that personal transformation can begin in supportive women's circles. As women are educated about their rights and begin to work through their fears and to encourage one another they realize that their lives could be different. Gradually they become stronger and better able to stand up for their own rights and the rights of their

children. As their self-confidence and awareness increase they become capable of creating a more open, loving, respectful and accepting atmosphere in their homes. Consequently their children grow up treating others with more respect, empathy and compassion and realize the many choices they have to solve every problem that do not include aggression and violence.

The Beyond Words Educational Model

We can always perceive ourselves and others as either extending love or giving a call for help.
Ababio-Clottey and Clottey (1999, p. 193)

In our work, empowering women means enabling women to reconnect with and use the power they were born with. Many of us have lost touch with our power due to our conditioning and the process of socialization that we experienced as young girls. Both the fears we have soaked in and our inherent power are still present within our bodies. To access our fears and release them and to experience our inner strength we have chosen a path which begins with the body (Gordon-Giles, 2008).

Our approach, named *Beyond Word*s, uses both nonverbal and verbal interventions. This combination seems to work extremely well in quickly breaking down barriers and creating an atmosphere of trust and acceptance. Within this safe space old wounds can be healed, hidden strength recovered and emotional understanding and empathy enhanced.

Our groups consist of Arab and Jewish women who meet on a regular basis and work with the *Beyond Words'* unique interventions together. This experience provides an opportunity for the participants to see that beyond all the differences in culture, tradition and religion–there is so much more that they share as women, mothers, and wives. Once they become aware of their similarities and learn to understand and respect their differences they can work together to create a change. In a society where the struggles between Arabs and Jews have lasted for so many years, there is an incredible potency when women from the two sides of the conflict are able to work

together rebuilding trust, encouraging diversity and promoting reconciliation and peace.

We use dance/movement therapy because complex emotional wounds and traumas require complex healing, "involving the body level, emotional and aesthetic expression, social interaction, symbol and metaphor" (Lumsden, 2006, p. 29). Dance/movement therapy often involves or initiates a cathartic process and as Bernstein (1995) notes: "catharsis through dance releases unexpressed feelings and memory and is an important part of trauma resolution" (p. 54).

Dance/movement therapy also involves the ability to practice taking action and broadening or expanding our movement style and patterns. Taking action helps "to remedy patterns of helplessness, ambivalence and inactivity" while "broadening movement patterns is another way of introducing new behaviors [. . .] directly linked to changes in self-concept and interpersonal dynamics" (Chang & Leventhal, 1995, p. 62).

Our meetings start with an opening circle followed by a movement experiential set to music, movement games, theory and practice of listening partnerships, healing touch and finally, a closing circle.

Circles

We begin and close each meeting sitting in a circle. These two circles usually encompass the more cognitive component of our meetings. In conducting these circles we often use techniques borrowed from the *Way of the Council* developed at the Ojai Foundation (Zimmerman & Coyle, 1996) which include: speaking and listening from the heart, speaking only when holding the talking piece and being spontaneous, nonjudgmental and aware of the time.

Opening Circle

The opening circle is designed to welcome participants to the group while enabling the facilitators to verbally and kinesthetically gauge the mood of the group and become aware of relevant issues group members are dealing with. In the opening

circle each participant shares of herself–how she feels that day and perhaps some of her experiences during the week. She may also talk about something good and new that recently happened in her life. Because we later deal with traumas and painful emotional wounds, it is important that we remind ourselves that the positive in our lives also exists. Usually after a couple of meetings participants start looking for good and new events that they could share with the group and are surprised that each week these events seem to increase.

Dance and movement

The dance and movement section is designed to reawaken a sense of childlike wonder and joyfulness of being in our bodies that many of us had as children, to increase body awareness, encourage the use of weight and other efforts, uncover old wounds stored within the body and begin releasing them. When a woman can find her strength through bodywork within the group, it can encourage her to "interact more assertively with the important figures in her life and begin to perceive herself more positively" (Chang & Leventhal, 1995, p. 62).

After the opening circle we begin to move and dance, using skills learned and techniques borrowed from dance/movement therapy. Movement is a form of expression we begin to use even before we are born. We react to the world through movements and sounds much earlier than through language and speech. After sitting in a circle and sharing verbally with each other we return to the world of the nonverbal. We may begin laying down, sitting or standing, sometimes staying on the same level and other times moving from one level to another. Usually we begin by moving on our own, sensing our bodies, listening inward. Later we shift to working in pairs or in small groups and sometimes with the entire circle.

Like a dance, the facilitation of this part of the meeting flows. The leader begins by listening to the needs of the group during the opening circle, being aware of those needs and aware of her own goals, she then suggests movements, borrows ideas from group members and creates a dance where it is not always clear who is leading and who is following. What does become clear by the end of the session is that some form of healing transformation has occurred.

Dance/movement therapy is "the psychotherapeutic use of movement as a process which furthers the emotional, cognitive, social and physical integration of the individual" (ADTA, 1966, par. 2). In our model we use dance/movement therapy towards integration by accomplishing three objectives:

1. To help the participants explore new ways of moving in space that can affect how they think, feel and behave;
2. To access and bring out into the open the emotional pain stored within the body; and
3. To enable and support the beginning of a cathartic process.

Exploring new ways of moving in space

Very early in our lives we develop movement patterns also known as "muscle memory" that are ways of moving and standing in the world. These movement patterns gradually evolve as a response to events in the outside world and become a part of the way we express our emotions. Because our external circumstances change as we grow older these movement patterns and muscle memory are sometimes out of tune with our present life situation. (Berger, 1972; Feder & Feder, 1981).

Prejudiced attitudes can also be seen through certain movement patterns. Gordon (1986) found that the range of movement of adults who tested as having higher prejudice was more rigid and restricted than those who were less prejudiced. In other words our feelings and attitudes can be reflected in our movements.

During the dance/movement therapy part of the meetings participants are encouraged to explore new ways of moving in space or experience again movements they used as young children and have since forgotten. These movements increase awareness of their bodies, what feels good and what hurts, what is comfortable and what is uncomfortable.

As they become more aware and try on new movements their ability to express emotions, moods, attitudes and ideas also expands. Sometimes they may even realize

that when they change the way they move and stand they can also change the way they feel about themselves and relate to others.

In other words, there has been more and more evidence showing that the ways in which we move not only reflect our thoughts but actually our movements often precede and create our thought processes (Feder & Feder, 1981; Gallese, 2005; Rizzolatti, Fogassi & Gallese, 2001).

Accessing and bringing out emotional pain

Moving in new ways through the space gives rise to emotions and memories that apparently reside not only in our heads but are also held deep within our bodies: "a central principle underlying the practice of dance/movement therapy is that all of our thoughts and emotions are inextricably interwoven with physical movement" (Feder & Feder, 1981, p.159). The connection between our minds, bodies and emotions has now been proven at the neuropsychological and bioneurological levels (Winters, 2008).

Our innermost thoughts are often betrayed by our unconscious movements or gestures (Feder & Feder, 1981), while manipulation and movement of specific muscles as well as pressure or touch on particular body parts can often stimulate memories, sensations and emotions (Berger, 1972; Damasio, 1994; Feder & Feder, 1981; Rubenfeld, 2000; Van der Kolk, 1994). It is very hard to hide our emotions in our bodies. When we are silent and guarded they are communicated through our movements and stance, when we are touched in certain ways memories and feelings begin to emerge. Even if we don't tell anyone, our body is still talking. Perhaps through the chattering of fingertips or the raising of an eyebrow–our secrets are being revealed to the keen observer. Freud (1959). It is therefore plausible to presume that these feelings are far more accessible when we invite their expression in movements rather than in words.

Enabling and supporting the beginning of cathartic release

Catharsis is the release or discharge of emotions that facilitates the healing of traumas and wounds from the past. Sometimes this process is assisted by certain movements

and exercises used in dance/movement therapy such as pulling on a stretch band, stomping on the ground, playing hug or snake tag, or hitting pillows with a tennis racket. In many cases individuals who are inhibited in their verbal expression of anger, fear or anxiety may feel safer acting out their emotions in this manner. The emotions that surface during these activities find further release in the next part of the healing process which we refer to as Listening Partnerships.

Listening partnerships

"Listening partnerships" include emotional release and listening techniques we gleaned from Jackins (1982) and Wipfler (1990). During the dance/movement therapy session as participants become more aware of emotions stored within their bodies, a cathartic process may begin. We then move to creating a space for the release and integration of the emotions that have surfaced. "Listening partnerships" introduce a new level of listening helpful in transforming our own and others' emotional pain related to past and present hurts and traumas. The emotional release that occurs in this section enables participants to re-evaluate old issues in a new light.

Heider (1974) explains that a cathartic process, such as crying while talking about a painful memory, is often followed by a sense of relief and wellbeing. After experiencing catharsis, the possibility for growth, healing and transformation increases tremendously, some of the psychosomatic symptoms disappear and new insights about the way we conduct ourselves in the world flow simply and naturally. A sense of oneness and interconnectedness with nature and other human beings also occurs. Many dance therapists agree that physical release can lead to a condition of receptivity to therapy, growth or self awareness but also stress the importance of a complimentary cognitive component (Feder & Feder, 1981). "Listening partnerships" provide both the place to continue with the cathartic process and later the possibility for a cognitive integration as we become able to re- evaluate our present distress.

The first stage of this process includes learning to listen to one another in pairs. Time is divided and each one gets a turn to be on the receiving end of a type of listening we do not normally encounter in our everyday lives. This means listening without judgment, without telling our own stories, interrupting with our reactions or asking

questions to satisfy our curiosity. As one partner's hurt feelings begin to surface, we help her release the pain related to that hurt by keeping her focused on the painful event and by using a technique called contradiction. Wipfler (1990) describes the benefits of the emotional release that occurs within the "Listening partnerships" context: "Like children, when adults laugh, cry, tremble and perspire, have a tantrum, or yawn while they talk about their troubles, emotional tension lifts. Their ability to think and act more flexibly is restored. They become more reasonable, more fun-loving, more sure that they are good people, inside and out" (p. 19).

The lifting of the emotional tension which previously controlled our behavior allows us to think more flexibly and find new solutions to problems that seemed insoluble. In the beginning, while listening to each other and moving together, both Jewish and Arab women usually realize there is much more they have in common as women, mothers and wives than that which tears them apart. As their ability to listen to and acknowledge each other's pain increases a sense of empathy and trust develop and they become allies in supporting each other's empowerment. Thus, when divisive issues arise later in the process, they do not pull the participants apart but rather strengthen their connection and enhance their ability to be even more honest with one another.

After the first few months, once their listening skills have improved and a strong bond between the women based on their common experiences has began to form, we explore the hardships of being a Jewish or an Arab woman in Israel. Issues begin to arise: "This is the only place in the world that we as Jews have as a home, you have so many other Arab countries why don't you move there and leave us alone" or "We were living on this land for hundreds of years and then you came, took it from us and turned many of us into refugees. It is not our fault that so many Jews were killed in the Holocaust, why do we have to suffer?" or "Most of your leaders supported the Nazis and then did not agree to a partition and attacked us, also many of your people left their homes voluntarily, sure that the Jews would lose in the war so you brought this upon yourselves." And "Maybe our parents and grandparents made mistakes, it was a different time. Why do we have to suffer for those mistakes now, why can't we be treated equally?"

Because they know their stories will also be heard and acknowledged, they are able to listen to one another and hear the pain, anger, sadness, hopelessness and longing beyond the words without becoming defensive or hostile. Those who are sharing their pain feel, perhaps for the first time in their lives, that they have been truly heard and seen. This acknowledgement enables them to begin letting go and release some of the emotions that have been controlling their attitudes and behaviors and open up to new possibilities of thinking and being.

One way to encourage further honesty and release of pain related to our past and present as Jews and Arabs is to work in separate groups some of the time so we can first gain a sense of safety to talk about the most painful issues with those who have suffered from similar life circumstance. Then we return together and are able to share with one another more easily the pain caused by existing side by side with the other group.

Holistic touch

As our painful emotions surface and resurface, we introduce touch because it seems to help us feel more connected to ourselves and one another and because it is another way to reach and transform some of the pain related to the emotional hurts. Montague (1971) explains that touch is a basic need shared by all human beings and recounts the suffering caused to babies and children who were not held and touched. Rubenfeld (2000) who has helped people heal through the use of touch for almost fifty years writes that: "touch is crucial to life itself, not only in infancy, but through all your years [. . .] the combination of touch and words represents the highest form of communication" (p. 18).

We ask the women to divide to pairs, and while one of them lies on the mat, the other is guided to gently massage her back, shoulders. hands, feet or forehead. Then they switch. We find that this type of touch helps us relax and feel good. The relaxation of our bodies affects our minds and we tend to be able to be more open to seeing our problems in new ways. In addition touching another person helps develop nonverbal listening skills. As we touch we become more aware of the other and what feels good to her and what does not–as well as where tensions are held. We also become more aware of what feels good to us and where our own tensions are held. Thirdly, because

touch is such a basic need and most of us are rarely touched enough, touching one another helps foster a sense of wellbeing and intimacy. Receiving this type of touch is a nurturing experience for women who have little or no time to nurture themselves. It reminds them of the importance of taking the time to care of their own needs, which is a key component of empowerment.

As Borysenko (2000) notes: "touch is one of the best ways of facilitating the alchemical transmutation of wounds into wisdom" (p. x). Thus, healing touch assists in the integration of the emotional work and enhances our listening capacities while encouraging a sense of intimacy and connectedness.

Closing Circle

Finally, the closing circle is a time of cognitive assimilation of the insights acquired during the meeting as participants are asked to talk about which parts of the meeting were meaningful for their daily lives.

The Study

Seek Peace and pursue it
Psalms 34:14

Due to the current situation in Israel we felt it was extremely important to conduct a study in order to measure the effect of the *Beyond Words* program on the empowerment of women as well as on reducing prejudice and enhancing empathy, and secondly, in order to introduce a strategic workshop design that could be replicated and adopted effectively by other programs.

Hypothesis

We wanted to test if the *Beyond Words* educational model may allow Arab women's perception towards sex roles to become more liberal, and thus increase empathy among both Arab and Jewish participants. We divided this hypothesis into two major feasibly-tested objectives:

1. After participation in the courses using the *Beyond Words* model, the women students at the Arab College will become more liberal in their attitudes toward sex roles as compared to their own prior scores and to the scores of the control group.
2. Based on their own self-reporting, there will be an improvement in their emotional awareness, intimate relationships and ability to understand, empathize with and accept those who are different.

Method

Beyond Words (BW) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to promote the empowerment of women, the healing of emotional wounds, traumas and the undermining of prejudice as a path towards building peace.

In the *Beyond Words* organization we have created an educational model that attempts to increase emotional intelligence and promote the empowerment of women. In order to assess our success in achieving these goals, we chose a quantitative measure, the Maffer questionnaire and a qualitative one, a reflective journaling which the students were asked to write during the course. This study took place during the school year of 2005-2006.

Participants

Arab women who were assigned to the researcher's classes were enrolled in the program. The researchers are assigned random classes each year; one researcher had the control group while the other got the intervention. A total of 71 cases were included: 45 experimental and 26 in the control group. The experimental group were from second and fourth years of school, while the control group were first year students. The Maffer questionnaires were administered to both experimental and control group, while the reflective journal was administered just to the experimental group.

A mixed college of Jewish and Arab students participated with one class of (23) Jewish and Arab students. Students were asked to write their reflections in their journals according to specific criteria.

Instruments

The Maffer Inventories

The Maffer Inventories of Feminine and Masculine Values are self-administered scales designed to measure male and female attitudes towards sex roles. The measurement (dependent) variable is sex role perceptions. Each of the inventories consists of 34 statements, each of which expresses a particular value or value judgment related to women's activities and satisfactions. The respondents indicate their attitudes toward each item on a five point scale; ranging from "completely agree" through the midpoint of "no opinion" to "completely disagree." To avoid habitual fixation at any point on the scale, half the items were stated positively and the other half are stated negatively.

The 34 inventory items are value-charged statements bearing on women's needs, rights and obligations in their relationships with men, children, and the world in general. Half the items delineate family-oriented values (traditional); the other half depict self-oriented values (liberal). The inventory has two sections: the first one corresponds to how females view themselves, their own attitude towards sex roles; the second one corresponds to how females view their ideal role model's attitude towards sex roles. Students were asked to fill in the first form, and then instructions were given to point out the purpose of the second form.

Examples:

For family oriented: Traditional

Item 31: "I am sure that what a woman gains from marriage makes up for the sacrifices"

Item 3: "A woman who works can't possibly be as good a mother as the one who stays home"

Item 21: "The greatest help a wife can give her husband is to encourage his progress"

For self oriented: Liberal

Item 3: "A woman should have interests outside the home"

Item 20: "A working mother can get along as well with her children as a mother who stays at home"

Item 12: "I argue with people who try to give me orders"

The purpose of these inventories is to distinguish between family-oriented and self-achievement oriented values among females. The data generated by the instruments aids us by presenting the overall scores for comparative analysis of the subjects' responses in terms of family or other-oriented, traditional or liberal. A value of -68 indicating acceptance of self achieving role meaning extremely liberal and +68 indicating the rejection of self achieving role meaning extremely traditional.

The Reflective Journal

The students were asked to write their impressions of the different meetings. They were given distinct aspects to consider when writing as well as points to be addressed, such as: what was challenging for them, and why and what did they learn from those meetings? They were also asked to talk about the high points of the course and explain why these were meaningful for them.

Data coding

Well written instructions were read to the students, and then they were given time to fill out forms, during both the pre- and the post- periods. Data was then collected by the two authors. The Maffer data was coded by research assistants, and was analyzed using the SPSS Statistical Analysis Package. The qualitative data was coded into Word documents and was grouped into specific attributes.

Procedure

The data for the pre-test was collected at the second week of the school year to insure maximum enrollment. Students are allowed to change their majors and classes during the first three weeks. The post-test data was collected two weeks before the end of the semester. Obviously those who changed majors during the academic school year, did not have two sets of data (pre- and post-) and therefore were dropped.

The meetings at the Arab College lasted an hour and fifteen minutes over two semesters. The staff of the *Beyond Words* organization taught two courses at the college using the *Beyond Words* Educational Model described above. The students were asked to fill out a background form, the Maffer questionnaire, and to write in their journals.

Results

This study took place during the school year of 2005-2006. Arab students arrived from urban and suburban sections of the country. Table 1 gives a general overview of demographic characteristics of the students.

Table 1

Arab Students' background information (n=47)

	Control	Experimental	
Year of Birth	0	42.3%	births before 1983
	100%	57.7%	births between 1984-1987
Study Major	5%	46.2%	Special Education
	0	53.8%	Early Childhood
	95%	0	Science
Marital Status	0	34.6%	married
	76.2%	38.5%	single
	23.8%	26.9%	engaged
Living status	10%	0	lived alone
	90%	100%	lived at home (with parents)
Work & Study status	9.5%	53.8%	were working
	85.7%	88.5%	want to continue work after marriage
	85.7%	88.5%	planning to continue studies after marriage
Upbringing affiliation	81%	73.1%	conservative
	0	26.9%	religious
Closeness to the	33.3%	34.6%	closer to the father

parent	57.1%	65.4%	closer to the mother
Discrimination	14.3%	38.5%	answered yes, it exist
among sibling	81.0%	61.5%	answered no discrimination exist

To test the research hypothesis that female students at the Arab College who participated in the courses using the *Beyond Words* model would become more liberal in their attitudes toward sex roles as compared to those in the control group, data were analyzed using change scores (the difference between pre- and post- measures) for both the true and ideal sex role perception variables.

 Descriptive statistics:

After dropping all cases containing missing data, we were left with a sample of N=26 (55.3%) in the Experimental group, and N=21 (44.7%) in the Control group.
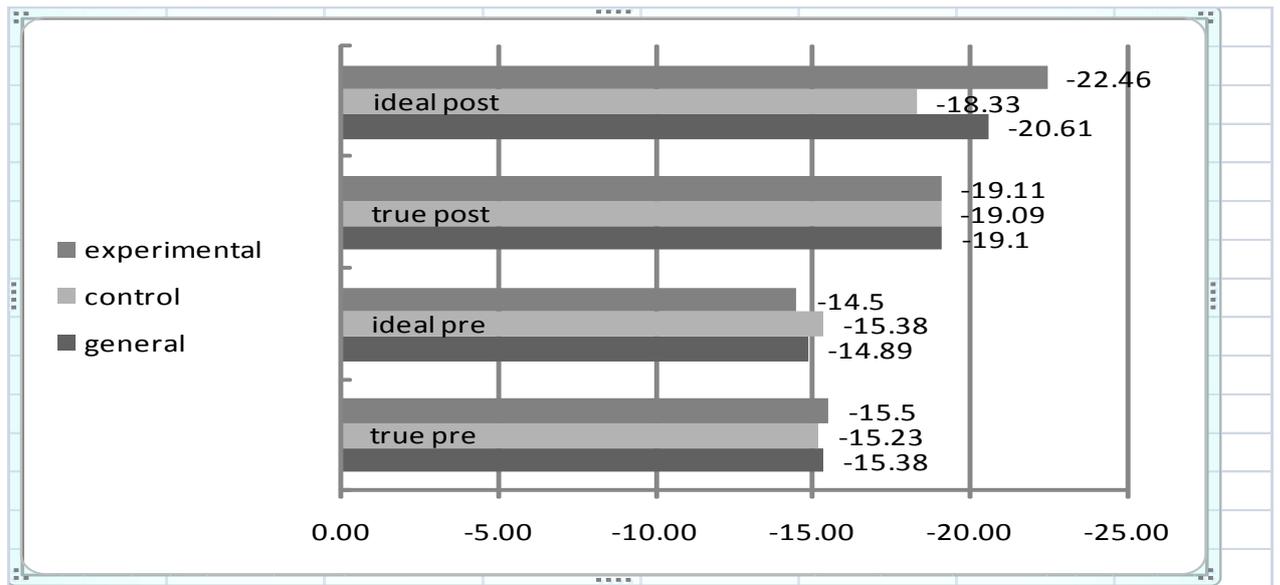
Table 2

Scores at pre- and post-test for True and Ideal Sex Role Perception

	Pre		Post	
	True (*M, SD*)	Ideal (*M, SD*)	True (*M, SD*)	Ideal (*M, SD*)
Experimental	-15.50, 9.69	-14.38, 12.42	-19.11,10.98	-22.46, 12.50
Control	-15.23, 9.19	-15.38, 9.46	-19.09, 10.26	-18.33, 16.08
Total Sample	-15.38, 9.37	-14.89, 11.09	-19.10, 10.55	-20.61, 14.20

Figure 1

Distribution of sample means of Ideal and True Sex Role Perception

The scores for each participant at post-test minus their scores at pre-test revealed "True difference" and "Ideal difference;" two variables that were calculated to reflect how much each person changed between pre- and post- tests.

Table 3

Scores for difference pre- and post-test of True and Ideal Sex Role Perception

	Truedif	*Idealdif*
	True (*M, SD*)	True (*M, SD*)
Experimental	-3.6154, 6.31871	-7.9615, 11.28709
Control	-3.8571, 7.61765	-2.9524, 13.49621

Statistical inferences

The groups were not statistically significantly different at pre-test on either true sex role perception (t (45) = 0.93, p = .93) or ideal sex role perception (t (45) = -0.29, p = .79), indicating equivalence of the groups prior to the classroom intervention. While there was no significant difference indicated between the ideal pre-test value of the sex role perception and the post-test value within the control group; (t (20)= 1.002, p =0.328), there was a significant difference between the pre- and post-test values of true sex role perception variable within the experimental group; (t (25)= 2.918, p

=0.007), the mean of the post value of the true sex role perception (M =-19.11) is less than the mean of the pre (M =-15.50). The students had a change in attitude toward the true sex role perception variable; they became more liberal toward the end of the study.

There was also a significant difference between the pre- and post- values of ideal sex role perception variable; (t (25) = 3.597, p =0.001) within the experimental group. The mean of the post- value of the ideal sex role perception (M =-22.46) is less than the mean of the ideal pre- (M =-14.50). The students had a change in attitude toward the ideal sex role perception variable; they became more liberal toward the end of the study.

Results for the t-tests comparing the change scores for the two groups can be found in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Statistical analysis of change scores

	Mean (SD)	t	p-value*	Effect Size(r)
True				
Experimental	-3.62 (6.32)	-0.119	.906	.02
Control	-3.86 (7.62)			
Ideal				
Experimental	-7.96 (11.29)	1.386	.173	.20
Control	-2.95 (13.50)			

Table Note: * 2-tailed test

Reflective journals: Qualitative data analysis

This part of the research dealt with the second objective of the study:

- Based on their own self reporting, there will be an improvement in emotional awareness, intimate relationships and ability to understand, empathize with and accept those who are different.

The journals were analyzed and the themes produced will become a basis for later research hoping to build a new theoretical frame. The content analysis of the reflective journal was conducted in four steps:

1. Thorough reading and rereading of the journal helped the researcher have an in-depth understanding of the perceptions, thoughts and emotions expressed in the students' writings.

2. Identification process and coding of the relevant and significant parts of the journals was achieved (Shkedi, 2003). Sayings, and expressions were subcategorized into primary themes reflecting primary conceptualization (Strauss, 1987). This part ended when a saturation of all research themes was achieved.

3. Systematic coding was used. The primary coding tried to systematically match each subject to one or more of the codes. The themes were grouped and brought up to a more general level that became the conceptual frame to the research findings. These themes created an organized idea to explain the research subject.

4. In this final phase, the researcher tried to form the relation between the themes by comparison, in order to build a conceptual model that will help us understand the relations between the themes, and form a basis for future study.

Meaningful changes

Because this study involves the possibility of emotional and behavioral changes that are not easily described using only numbers and a few chosen words, we decided to ask the participants themselves about what was meaningful for them and the changes they experienced in their lives that are connected to their participation in the course. We found no previous studies to recommend themes for this section, so we used themes and categories culled from the students' reflective journals (Table 4).

TABLE 4: Themes for student's meaningful changes

Coding category	Examples
Feeling the transformation	more open, deep sense of relief, no longer afraid to communicate, more focused and centered
Listening ability	better listener to myself and others
Acceptance of oneself and other	accept my self, feel wholeness, it is OK to cry, decreasing of prejudices
Relationships	improvement of relationship, trust
Feeling empowered	have integrity in relationship, ability to say NO

The responses were overwhelmingly positive, and the effects were evident. Student's Responses to Interviews and Qualitative Questionnaire were analyzed and coded. Analysis of the reflective journal revealed that students developed:

- improved awareness of their own emotions and possibilities for transformation;
- greater ability to accept themselves and others;
- improved listening skills;
- greater empathy for themselves and others in difficult moments;
- improved new relationship and conflict resolution skills;
- greater sense of empowerment.

Discussion

True and Ideal Sex Role Perception

There was no significant difference in the change scores of the *True Sex Role Perception* variable ($p = 0.906$), nor in the change scores of the *Ideal Sex Role Perception* variable ($p = 0.173$). Therefore there was no statistically significant evidence of the treatment effect.

These interesting findings may have resulted from the small sample size to start with, and the large variation in the data collected. The control group sample consisted of 21 first year single students while the experimental consisted of 26, second and fourth year students; half of them were married and some were engaged. These social factors affect the sex role perception of the women in society. While single women tend to have a more liberal perception, a married woman could be facing the

traditional reality. Therefore, to test whether the intervention of the *Beyond Words* model was effective within the experimental group, a paired t-test was administered.

Experimental Group

Within the experimental group, a mean effect emerged for the true sex role perception variables at the end of the study, after the intervention. For both the true sex role perception there was a mean difference over time ($p =0.007$), as well as for the ideal sex role perception ($p =0.001$).

This indicates a true effect for the *Beyond Words* educational model within the experimental group, whose students have a more traditional social network. They are attending school while taking care of their families at home. Trying to understand these findings, we looked at cases that had a change score of the true sex role perception < -5, to identify which items had the highest frequency. Interestingly enough, we found that the items indicating liberal attitude had the highest frequency. The following is a listing of those items which received a higher frequency score than 14.

Sex Role Perception *True opinion of herself*

Item	N	Choice
An ambitious and responsible husband does not like his wife to work	21	Strongly disagree
A woman has a conflict in what she has to do as a woman and what she wishes to do for herself	16	Agree
Sometimes I feel that I must do everything myself, that I can accept nothing from others.	16	Agree
I am not sure that the joys of motherhood make up for the sacrifices	18	No opinion
I argue with people who try to give me orders	16	Agree
Marriage and children should come first in a woman's life	16	Disagree
It is unfair that women have to give up more than men in order to have a good marriage	15	Agree
A wife's opinion should be as important as a husband's opinion	19	Strongly agree
How I develop as a person is more important to me than what others think of me	18	Strongly agree

A woman should have interests outside the home   16   Strongly agree

Sex Role Perception *opinion of an Ideal woman*

Item	*N*	*Choice*
A wife's opinion should be as important as a husband's opinion	18	Strongly agree
A women's place is at home	18	Strongly disagree
I am not sure that the joys of motherhood make up for the sacrifices	17	No opinion
A woman should have interests outside the home	16	Strongly agree
Single women need personal success, but all a married woman needs is her husband's success	17	Disagree
It is unfair that women have to give up more than men in order to have a good marriage	15	Strongly agree
A woman should get married even if the man does not measure up to all her hopes	20	Strongly disagree
Modern mothers should bring up their boys and girls to believe in absolute equal rights and freedom for both sexes	22	Strongly agree
A working mother can get along as well with her children as can a mother who stays at home	15	Strongly agree
How I develop as a person is more important to me than what others think of me	15	Strongly agree
An ambitious and responsible husband does not like his wife to work	16	Strongly disagree

Further remarks

Qualitative reports also indicate a significant change due to attending the *Beyond Words* educational program.

What is it about the *Beyond Words* approach that helps in creating this transformation? Below are a number of factors that we attribute this effect to:

- Even under difficult conditions (see description of challenges below), due to its flexibility, sensitivity and ability to meet people where they are in their lives, the *Beyond Words* educational model is a powerful transformative tool.

- The nonverbal techniques (movement, games and touch) that bypass the verbal defenses assist in creating a sense of connectedness and a safe space for transformation to occur more quickly.
- Most of the students rarely experience the type of deep listening and attention that they do as part of the course. Several times the facilitators felt as if students had been waiting for years for this type of attention and were so willing and ready to use it to their benefit.
- Our facilitators have high emotional awareness and were able to create a caring, accepting atmosphere within their small groups.
- Our Arab facilitators, a Muslim and a Christian, provided a model of empowered women whom the Arab students trusted, admired and tried to emulate.

Challenges we encountered during the program:
This course is taught in a manner similar to how it was taught in 2004 at the Peace Studies Department at Goucher College in Baltimore, Maryland, where twenty students participated in the class. There, the room was quiet and comfortable with space to move, space to lie down on mats and comfortable chairs to sit on, the lighting could be adjusted and there was no noise or people walking in from the outside. Each meeting was three hours long and the course lasted one semester.

Unfortunately, many of these conditions were not replicated in the current study and therefore optimal results were possibly compromised. For example, at the Jewish College we met for three hours in an ordinary classroom where we had to move the tables prior to each meeting and move them back quickly at the end of the meeting. The floor was not carpeted and no mats were available. It was difficult to work in small groups because of the noise.

At the Arab College we met instead for one hour and fifteen minutes throughout the school year. The room we were given was the gym. It was huge and made it quite difficult to create safe boundaries and a sense of intimacy. There was no way to lower the lights during the healing touch portion of the program or to lock the door so

people would not walk into the space in the middle of our activities. Even during the testing women walked in and out. During the movement part it was difficult to work with the large group and dividing into small groups was challenging because of the huge space with no sound barriers.

Furthermore, our facilitators also had to deal with their prejudices and projections. In our work as facilitators, we encountered our own fears and anger. Sometimes we became confused between our own fears and angry feelings and those of the group members. Disconnected from our bodies, our clarity lost, we had to struggle to understand our countertransference so that we could work through it, and thus regain awareness of the dynamics involved in the group work.

Conclusion

Despite all the challenges, the course and the *Beyond Words* educational model succeeded in creating a difference. Based on the ongoing feedback during the program, the Maffer questionnaire and the reflective journals our participants provided, we can safely assume that the *Beyond Words* course is significant in empowering women. The participants showed definite signs of becoming more liberal, open and better able to voice their thoughts and feelings as well as stand up for what they believe in. In addition, according to the journals and events within the class there seemed to be marked improvement in their listening abilities as well as in their emotional awareness and ability to feel empathy for others.

It would be highly beneficial to conduct future research under better conditions to look at the long term effect of the *Beyond Words* approach. A year, two and three years later would there still be a difference? Would the effect be maintained? Would it help to continue the work in monthly or bi-weekly support groups? Would the *Beyond Words* program combined with the work of other organizations dealing with trauma and crisis situations create an even more significant change? Future research will focus on all these questions.

References

Ababio-Clottey, A., & Clottey, K. (1999). *Beyond fear: Twelve spiritual keys to racial healing*. Tiburon, CA: H J Kramer.

ADTA, (1966). Who we are. Retrieved January 2009 from:
http://www.adta.org/about/who.cfm

Allport, W. (1954). *The nature of prejudice.* Cambridge MA: Addison-Wesley.

Amnesty International (2004). *Stop violence against women: It's in our hands*. London: Amnesty International. Retrieved January 2009 from:
http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/ACT77/001/2004/en/dom-ACT770012004en.pdf

Amnesty International (2005). *Israel: Conflict, occupation and patriarchy–Women carry the burden.* Retrieved January 2009 from:
http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE15/016/2005/en/dom-MDE150162005en.html

Asia News (2007). A good wife must live in fear. Retrieved from:
http://www.asianews.it/index.php?l=en&art=9182&size=A

Audergon, A. (2005). *The war hotel: Psychological dynamics in violent conflict.* London: Whurr Publishers.

Awad, G. (2007). Prejudice between Palestinians and Israelis. In H. Parens, A. Mahfouz, S. Twemlow, D. Scharff (Eds.), *The future of prejudice: Psychoanalysis and the prevention of prejudice* (pp. 181-200). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Barrky, C. (1980). *A comparison of the movement profile of battered, ex-battered and non-battered women: A pilot study*. Unpublished master's thesis. Hahnemann Medical College, Philadelphia, PA.

Batson, C. D., Polycarpou, M. P., Harmon-Jones, E., Imhoff, H. J., Mitchener, E. C., Bednar, L. L., Klein, T. R., Highberger, L. (1997). Empathy and attitudes: Can feeling for a member of a stigmatized group improve feelings toward the group? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *72*, 105-118.

Berger, M.R. (1972). Bodily experiences and expression of emotion. *American Dance Therapy Association*, Monograph 2, 191–230. Columbia, MD: ADTA.

Bernstein, B. (1995). Dancing beyond trauma: Women survivors of sexual abuse. In F. J. Levy (Ed.), *Dance and other expressive arts therapies: When words are not enough (*pp. 41-58). New York: Routledge.

Bettelheim, B. & Janowitz, M. (1964). *Social change and prejudice.* London: London Free Press.

Bolen, J. S. (2008). *Urgent message from mother: Gather the women, save the world.* San Francisco: Conari Press.

Borysenko, J. (2000). Foreword. In I. Rubenfeld, *The listening hand* (pp. ix-xi). New York: Bantam Books.

Calhoun, A. A. (2006) *Spiritual disciplines handbook: Practices that transform us*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Chang, M. & Leventhal F. (1995). Mobilizing battered women: A creative step forward. In F. J. Levy, (Ed.). *Dance and other expressive arts therapies: When words are not enough (*pp. 59-68). New York: Routledge.

Crenshaw, D. (2006). Neuroscience and trauma treatment implications for creative arts therapists. *Expressive and creative arts methods for trauma survivors* (pp. 21-38). London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Damasio, A. R. (1994). *Descartes' error: Emotion, reason, and the human brain*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.

De Martino, B., Kumaran, D., Seymour, B., & Dolan, R. J. (2006, August 4). Frames, biases, and rational decision-making in the human brain. *Science, 313*(5787), 684-687.

Desforges, D. M., Lord, C. G., Ramsey, S. L., Mason, J. A., Van Leeuwen, M. D., West, S. C., & Lepper, M. R. (1991). Effects of structured cooperative contact on changing negative attitudes toward stigmatized social groups. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *60*(4), 531-544.

Dovidio, J. F. & Gaertner, S. L. (1999). Reducing prejudice: Combating intergroup biases. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 8*(4), 137-163.

Eisler , R. (2004). Breaking the devastating link between international terrorism and intimate violence. *World Pulse Magazine, Premiere edition*. Retrieved January 2009 from: http://www.saiv.net/docs/devastatinglink.pdf

Eisler, R. (2005, Winter). Spare the rod. *Yes! A Journal of Positive Futures*, 30-32.

Encyclopædia Britannica, (2009). Retrieved January 2009 from: http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/488030/race

Erikson, E. (1959). Identity and the life cycle: Selected papers. *Psychological Issues*, *1*(1), 5-17.

Feder, E. & Bernard, S. (1981). *The expressive arts therapies*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice–Hall.

Fein, S., & Spencer, S. J. (1997). Prejudice as self-image maintenance: Affirming the self through derogating others. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 73*(1)*,* 31-44.

Fonagy, P. & Higgitt, A. (2007). The development of prejudice: An attachment theory hypothesis explaining its ubiquity. In H. Parens, A. Mahfouz, S. Twemlow, D. Scharff (Eds.), *The future of prejudice: Psychoanalysis and the prevention of prejudice* (pp. 63-79). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Freud, S. (1905), *Fragments of an analysis of a case of hysteria* (Collected papers ed. Vol. 3). New York: Basic Books.

Freud, S. (1905). Fragments of an analysis of a case of hysteria. *Collected papers* (Vol. 3). New York: Basic Books (Reprinted in 1959). 13-146

Gaertner, S. L., Rust, M. C., Mottola, G. R. Dovidio, J. F., Nier, J. A., Banker, B. S., Ward, C. M., & Houlette, M. (1999). Reducing intergroup bias: Elements of intergroup cooperation. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology, 76*(3), 388-402.

Galinsky, A. D., & Moskowitz, G. B. (2000). Perspective-taking: Decreasing stereotype expression, stereotype accessibility, and in-group favoritism. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *78*(4), 708-724.

Gallese, V. (2005). Embodied simulation: From neurons to phenomenal experience. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences, 4,* 23-48.

Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*. New York: Bantam Books.

Gordon, N. (1986). *The creation of a nonverbal prejudice scale*. Unpublished master's thesis, Department of Expressive Arts Therapies, Goucher College, Baltimore, MD.

Gordon-Giles, N. (2008). Encouraging diversity: Empowering Arab and Jewish women to promote peace-building in Israel. *Proceedings from the 43rd Annual ADTA Conference*, 47-52.

Halabi, R. (2000). *Israeli and Palestinian identities in dialogue*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Heider, J. (1974). Catharsis in human potential encounter. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 14*(4), 27-47.

Hillman, J. (1964). *Suicide and the soul*. New York: Harper and Row.

Hirsh, S. (1955). *The fears men live by*. New York: Harper and Brothers.

Holmes, J. (2004*). The girl child: The future depends on her.* The Hunger Project. Retrieved January 2009 from: http://www.thp.org/resources/speeches_reports/speeches/girl_child

Israeli Ministry of Health (2002). *Violence against women by their partners.* Retrieved January 2009 from: http://www.macom.org.il/stats-violence.asp

Jackins, H. (1982). *Fundamentals of co-counseling manual for beginning classes in re-evaluation counseling.* Seattle, WA: Rational Island Publishers.

Lumsden, M. *(2006).* The affective self and affect regulation in dance movement therapy. In S. C. Koch & I. Brauninger, (Eds.). *Advances in dance/movement therapy: Theoretical perspectives and empirical findings* (pp. 29-39). Berlin: Logos Verlag.

Mar'i, M. & Mar'i, S. (1985). The role of women as change agents. *Women's Worlds*, 251-259.

McGregor, J. (1993). Effectiveness of role playing and antiracist teaching in reducing student prejudice. *Journal of Educational Research*, *86*, 215-226.

Miller, A. (1998). *Adolf Hitler: How could a monster succeed in blinding a nation?* The Natural Child Project. Retrieved January 2009 from: http://www.naturalchild.com/alice_miller/adolf_hitler.html

Moore, C. A. (2005). Dance movement therapy in the light of trauma: Research findings of a multidisciplinary project. *American Journal of Dance Therapy*, *7*(1), 37-47.

Montague, A. (1971). *Touching: The human significance of the skin.* New York: Harper & Row.

Nekar, Y. (2006). Violence against women: A report. *The Knesset Information Library*. Retrieved January 2009 from: http://www.miki.org.il/wpcontent/uploads/2008/11/violence.doc

Pappe, I. (2004). *A history of modern Palestine: One land, two people*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Perry, B.D., & Pollard, R. (1998). Homeostasis, stress, trauma, and adaptation: A neurodevelopmental view of childhood trauma. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics of North America, 7*(1), 33-51.

Pettigrew, T. F., & Tropp, L. R. (2000). Does intergroup contact reduce prejudice? Recent meta-analytic findings. In S. Oskamp (Ed.), *Reducing prejudice and discrimination: Social psychological perspectives* (pp. 93–114). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Plous, S. (2003a). (Ed.), *Understanding prejudice and discrimination.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Plous, S. (2003b). The psychology of prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination: An overview. In S. Plous (Ed.), *Understanding prejudice and discrimination.* (pp. 3-48). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Rizzolatti, G., Fogassi, L. & Gallese, V. (2001). Neuropsychological mechanisms underlying the understanding and imitation of action. *Nature Reviews Neuroscience, 2,* 661-670.

Rubenfeld, I. (2000). *The listening hand*. New York: Bantam Books.

Sanford, N. (1973). The roots of prejudice: Emotional dynamics. In P. Watson (Ed.). *Psychology and race* (pp. 57-75). London: Penguin Education.

Schmais, C. (1974). Dance therapy in perspective. In K. Mason (Ed.). *Dance therapy: Focus on dance VII* (pp. 7-12). Reston, VA: AAHPERD.

Sherif, M., Harvey, O. J., White, B. J., Hood, W. R., & Sherif, C. W. (1988). *The robbers cave experiment: Intergroup conflict and cooperation*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Stephan, W. G., & Finlay, K. (1999). The role of empathy in improving intergroup relations. *Journal of Social Issues*, *55*, 729-743.

Shkedi, A. (2003). *Words of meaning: Qualitative research-theory and practice*. Tel Aviv: Ramot.

Strauss, A.L. (1987). *Qualitative analysis for social scientists*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Tajfel, H. (1981). *Human groups and social categories.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In S. Worchel and W. G. Austin (Eds.), *Psychology of intergroup relations* (2nd ed.; pp. 7-24). Chicago, IL: Nelson-Hall Publishers.

Van der Kolk, B. A. (1994). The body keeps the score: Memory and the evolving psychobiology of PTSD. *Harvard Review of Psychiatry, 1*, 253-265.

Van der Kolk, B. A. (2003). The neurobiology of childhood trauma and abuse. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics of North America, 12*, 293-317.

Winter, A. F. (2008). Emotion, embodiment, and mirror neurons in dance/movement therapy: A connection across disciplines. *American Journal of Dance Therapy*, *30*(2), 84-105.

Wipfler, P. (1990). *Listening partnerships for parents*. Palo Alto: Hand in Hand.

Yahav, D. (1995). *Movement assessments of two groups of Arab women from Acco.* Unpublished manuscript.

Zimmerman, J. & Coyle, V. (1996). *The way of council*. Putney, VT: Bramble Books.

Appendix A
Response to the Qualitative Questionnaire
(culled from the Reflective Journals)

Many of the students reported changes on both physical and emotional levels. For example **S**. writes, "…several times I arrived to the class feeling cold, rebellious and shut down. By the end of the meeting I found myself feeling softer, gentler and more open to the suggestions and ideas of the course." **A**. adds," "After one session with Aura (one of the facilitators) where I talked, cried and was angry, I was able to be focused and centered and experienced a deep sense of relief." **M**., a man, writes about his insight into crying, "Crying is not shameful and it is not embarrassing, it is a need … A baby does not only cry when he needs to eat, many times he cries in order to release what he feels inside. I feel a need to cry in order to get out and melt the pain that has built up inside me over the years."

H. explains her experience, "There were many meetings to which I came feeling confused and when I listened to myself talking I understood a great deal. I went into the depths of my soul and suddenly things seem clearer and simpler. This is a tool I will take with me my entire life believing that I will listen to others and through that listen better to myself." **A**. describes her experience, "I learned to know and accept myself despite the feelings that I have deep inside me." **T** writes, "There were many classes to which I arrived with a great deal of criticism towards myself and left happy with who I am, with a feeling of wholeness." **Y**. notes the dance she did in front of her group as part of one of her assignments, "Deep inside I wanted to do a dance but I felt shame and fear and did not think I would have the courage. A few days before the course I decided to go for it despite all my fears. Because of the course and the atmosphere of acceptance and possibilities, I decided to try on something I have never tried before … Doing it gave me a feeling of more wholeness."

Others wrote about becoming better listeners or understanding the benefits of humor and laughing at some of their own patterns in order to release the fears or discomfort around them. A religious young woman shared that, "The listening created a sanctuary for me when I felt unaccepted, unloved or disrespected by those around me." She noticed improvement in her relationship with her father after they started listening to one another.

Others stress the sense of safety and trust that was created for them within the group, **D**. writes about an experience she had in the middle of the semester, "The moment I entered the class I felt safe and secure enough so that my tears could come out and I began to weep. For me it was a discovery. Such an amazing thing to be able to cry in a room full of people (some of whom know me … which makes it even harder), to allow myself to let go of some of my need to be constantly in control knowing that this control issue is blocking my path to self actualization, stopping me from feeling fully alive and from breathing freely."
O. writes that, "Sharing and receiving support from the group strengthened me and helped me deal with things that have been bothering me for a long time in a safe and pleasant manner." **T**. writes about a short session she had with one of the men in the class where she shared for the first time how difficult it is for her to talk to men.

Still others report an increased sense of self awareness. **N**. explains, "I felt comfortable because I finally understood why I feel a need to put a wall between me and the others and I could face it and enjoy the meeting." And later, "… I talked about my difficulty to cry for myself and how I understand crying as a weakness or as falling apart."

Others spoke about changes in relationships such as a better ability to communicate with life partners and other family members. **D**. writes about her experience of sharing a listening partnership with her life partner, "The listening partnership enables us to stop for a moment. Listen, look at and share with one another what is really going on in our lives. As far as I'm concerned taking the time to stop, listen and connect is most basic and important in a relationship with a partner."

Others actually spoke about more awareness of and actual changes in their prejudices. **N**. explains, "I am originally from Tel Aviv. I have not had the opportunity to meet an Arab person and get to know him or her…. I had this feeling that there is a wall between us that I have a hard time going through and that my whole relationship with them is hypocritical. During the course I understood that I have been going through this journey that is very big and natural and that I am just in the beginning of the journey and I don't have to push myself but that through my own personal growth, change will come and it will be a real change, not superficial. **G**. who served in the Israeli military police force and had very negative experiences with Arabs from the Occupied Territories and was on duty as a medic when some of her friends were killed in a terrorist suicide bombing in Beit Lid describes her experience, "This course has helped me a great deal, it's the only thing that changed my prejudices about people. Due to this course I learned to love them and to love myself."

T. felt very uncomfortable with one of the women in the group. Something about her reminded **T**. of how aggressively she was treated by her brother while growing up and how she received no support from her mother. In one of the meetings when this

woman cried **T**. was able to see her humanity, stop feeling fear around her and begin feeling open to a connection with her. She writes, "This course helped me in feeling more accepting toward myself and others. I feel like I criticize others less even if I don't agree with them. Because I have become more accepting of others with their problems, I am also better able to accept myself."

Another aspect that was mentioned again and again is how they shared the knowledge they received in the course with their friends. **H**. who participated in the course and another woman who did not listened to one of their male friends, "He began talking about the issue that was most difficult for him. After a while there was emotional release and he felt much better. My woman friend was so excited by her own ability to fully listen without asking questions, that the following day she told me how she listened fully to two other people. I felt wonderful." **I**. describes how she listened to her sister who never had anyone listen to her for a full ten minutes and how her sister shared things they never spoke about before. "The more she talked the more she opened up." This experience brought them closer to one another. One pregnant woman was so happy to be participating in the course before giving birth, "I feel my baby is gaining both from what I am experiencing in this course and the different way I will treat him or her once they are born. I have shared my experiences with my mother and let her read the course materials and she was very moved and wanted to start practicing listening partnerships."

Finally some spoke about a sense of empowerment, an ability to have more integrity in their relationships because they are no longer afraid to communicate what they really feel. One woman **H**. describes a change that occurred in her relation with her mother. "After returning from the one day meeting I sat down to write her a letter but did not give it to her. Since then I feel our relationship has changed a bit. I started being able to tell her things that hurt and bother me. It was very difficult to tell her that she hurt me but afterwards I felt a deep sense of relief. Yesterday I felt angry again and noticed how once again I keep it inside and go up to my room to cry. A few hours later I met her by chance and told her everything, even what I wrote in the letter. I was very proud of myself at being able to confront her, something I had never done." One Arab woman describes a change she went through, "I learned to say *No* out loud and that I don't always have to say yes especially when I am not happy about something." Her husband concurs, "*No* is one of the most important words in any language and until we learn to say no, our yes will not be a yes."

Upon meeting the students, months and even a year later they still described the course as a transforming event in their lives. They talked about meeting other students who had gone through the course with them and how they look at one another with different eyes and talk on a much deeper level. The connection remains. Most spoke about wanting to learn more and go deeper and how it changed their relationships with their spouses and children.

APPENDIX B

Stories from *Beyond Words*

One day during the warmup I noticed once again that the group of Arab students seemed to be ungrounded and having a difficult time using the weight effort. So we played a game. I asked them to push against each other with the palms of their hands one saying yes and the other no. Then I asked them to gradually raise their voices and allow the sounds to emerge from deep within. One woman, 24 years old and a mother of three, who married her cousin when she was 17, had a hard time. The sound that emerged from her throat was weak and lacked conviction. I stepped in and asked her to push against me encouraging her with my own voice. Slowly an aching sound began to surface gradually growing into a deep roar. It seemed she had never been allowed to raise her voice as a young woman. Her scream went on and on. The other students looked over giggling nervously, surprised at her audacity. Then some of them joined in. Later she referred to that moment as "the day I found my voice."

This same woman has a beautiful singing voice and years later when she became one of our facilitators she would sing a song that the group loved, called "Hope." She also insisted, even though everyone spoke Hebrew, that the Arabic language be spoken along with Hebrew in all our meetings. At times this was hard for the Arab women to accept. Some would say, "Why does she want us to speak Arabic? Does she think we are stupid and can't understand Hebrew?" As part of internalized oppression speaking Arabic, their own mother tongue, became connected with being stupid. Often in our groups the Arab facilitators would support the Arab women in working through these issues and announcing to the whole group in Hebrew and Arabic that "I am a proud Arab woman."

****

In another group of Jewish and Arab women, feelings began to surface during the dance and movement intervention. One woman, whose mother was in the hospital, started sobbing and was soon being held in the arms of a facilitator. Soon afterwards, another Jewish woman, Amira (not her real name), who was wavering, not knowing if to continue in the group, volunteered to work on her painful memories in front of everyone with Tamar, a facilitator.

Almost immediately she began talking about being sexually abused as a young girl by one of her relatives and how people in her family knew but no one intervened to stop it. Embracing her, Tamar listened, reminding Amira that she is not alone . . . that things are different now and that she has support . . . Amira began to sob. The circle of Arab and Jewish women seemed to breathe together and create a gentle cushion for this tender moment. Then one woman in the circle, Wafa (not her real name), an Arab leader, began to cry too. Tamar and Sylvi (the facilitators) saw this and so did Amira.

Slowly Tamar released Amira and watched as she walked towards Wafa. For a moment they exchanged a tearful glance and then opened their arms to hold one another. Wafa began to speak. She had been on the other side. She had known about a woman relative who was being abused and yet she had done nothing to stop it. Nothing. As their tears intermingled it seemed that the whole circle was joined by an invisible thread of human love and that Spirit was present . . .

Before she left, Amira said to Tamar, "I would like to thank you twice . . . as a teacher and as a human being."

****

In another group of Jewish and Arab teachers from several years ago, Noa (not her real name), a Jewish teacher, spoke about her son who had just turned 14. He was waiting at the kibbutz gate for his girlfriend, also 14, who was on her way to visit him. She lived on another kibbutz and her mother was driving her over. He waited at the kibbutz gate. An hour passed and still she did not come. He walked home to try to call her but there was no answer. Then he found out that two terrorists had infiltrated into Israel through the fence from Lebanon, hid in the bushes next to the road, and shot and killed both the mother and his girlfriend as they passed in the car.

Noa did not come to the next group meeting. When we (the facilitators) came to visit her and sat on her front porch looking at the green hills, so beautiful in the evening sun, so innocent. We listened and she shared with us the pain she and her son were experiencing.

A couple of weeks after our visit Noa returned to the group. After the movement she began to talk about what it felt like to have a fourteen-year-old son who just lost the girl he loved. She said she wants to comfort him but does not know how. He often tells her, " Mother don't get too close to me, because you may lose me too." He visits his girlfriend's grave every week and stands by the gravesite talking, while she, his mother, stands at the gate of the graveyard feeling helpless.

By the time she finished her story we were all weeping with her. Holding her close, with tears running down her face, was one of her good friends, an Arab teacher who was also member of the group.

APPENDIX C

A Jewish facilitator's experience
In one session, an Arab woman brought a poem that she had written. The poem described how she had found her voice after Arab friends of hers, citizens of Israel, were killed and injured by the Israeli police in October 2000 during a demonstration in support of the Palestinians. She described her anger with the Jews for what they had done and that she was no longer going to let them keep her from expressing her anger. In other meetings especially after the interventions relating to experiencing their weight, Arab women spoke about being second class citizens and having their land seized by the Jews. Sometimes it seemed and sounded like they were personally blaming me, Nitsan, for what had befallen them. Was this transference, projection or was this my own countertransference or projective identification?

My first reaction to these feelings shared by the participants was both empathy and guilt. I empathized with their incredible suffering and saw them as victims of the Jewish oppressors, my own people. I realized that, we Jewish people, were no longer the victims of oppression as we had been for thousands of years, now we were the oppressors. With all the suffering we experienced over the years there was also a sense of being the righteous people who pursued justice and peace. And now I was hearing firsthand (not only on the news) of the suffering we cause others. I felt ashamed and wanted to show them I was different.

At first my reaction was embraced since the Arab women felt heard and understood by a Jewish woman and were able to talk about things they and their parents were afraid to talk openly about with Jews for so many years. But at some point my feelings of guilt became a burden. My over identification encouraged them to stay in the role of victim instead of allowing them to work through their anger and fear and recover their inner strength.

Another reaction I had at times was anger that came up, especially after I had read more and more about the history of the conflict, saw the aftermath of a suicide bombing or heard about how Arab society was still oppressing women (honor killings, polygamy, difficulties in divorce courts as well as intimate violence). At these times I became very angry and once again had difficulty being fully there and supporting the healing process.

What helped me deal with these issues was that I rarely facilitated the groups alone. Before the meeting started we would allow a few minutes for a listening partnership so we could work through some of the issues that came up. By doing this we were "walking our talk" and as one of our facilitators said, "the most important part of leading a group is how *present*, we the facilitators, are able to be." Crying, laughing or shaking and releasing our own pain enabled us to be there more fully and present for the group.

Sometimes in the middle of a meeting, I felt overcome by a strong emotion and no longer able to be there authentically and fully with the group. In those cases, I would ask them to pair up for listening partnerships while I sat with my assistant or co-facilitator to work through some of the feelings coming up for me. Then I was once again able to be fully present and at times even share my own pain with them in a way that would elicit empathy and encourage openness instead of guilt or anger.