Israeli Arab-Jewish Sandtray Group Work: Creating a World Together

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ABSTRACT *Jewish and Arab Israeli group facilitator trainees participated in an experiential sandtray workshop. Recapitulating the basic Israeli conflict over contested lands, Arab-Jewish dyads were given a contained piece of land (a sand tray) in which to create their 'shared' world using miniatures. The container was just large enough to hold a standard ream of paper, and was half-filled with sand. As the method involves tactile play and giving the unconscious a voice, we could observe the interactional process and products. Would the unconscious provide new solutions where dialogue had become stuck in anger and alienation? The observed outcome of the group work was three distinct styles of coping with the difficult and sometimes painful task of sharing: conflict, domination and co-existence. This paper examines how participants negotiated sharing a limited piece of 'land' with the hope that this concrete task can provide new ways of understanding the unspoken and unconscious aspects of the conflict as well as suggesting new possibilities and a way toward constructive and respectful solutions. Copyright © 2010 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.*

Key words: Arab-Israeli conflict, sandtray group, conflict resolution

PREFACE

As Rokaya and I write this article, we struggle with choosing the words in the title to identify the Arab participants in the group. The discomfort stems from the need to define a group of people by either their language or their nationality, when those within the target group may not agree on the defining criteria. We want simplicity, an understood shorthand, but it is not simple, and we do not wish to define people in ways they would not choose to define themselves. The Arabs in the group may refer to themselves as Palestinians, Israelis, Bedouin, Arabs, or Muslims, mirroring the complexity of variegated identities in the region. Rokaya adds that sometimes language gets in the way of communication, and we only struggle to understand each other out of our belief that we will benefit from the interaction. Trust is an important prerequisite to understanding. We struggled not only with terminology, but with language itself. Rokaya and I use Hebrew to communicate, a second language

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to both of us. We have decided to use the term 'Arab' to distinguish the Arabic speaking participants with Israeli citizenship in this article from their Israeli counterparts of Jewish descent, but it is important to remember that the Arab participants may also be Muslim or Christian, and/or Palestinians and Bedouin, and likewise the Jewish participants may be observant or non-observant, born in Israel or immigrants.

SUMMARY

A month or so after the Gaza war, I was asked to present a tool to a group facilitators' course for Jewish and Arab encounter groups in Israel in an effort to get through some of the impasses the war had created. I chose to present 'Sandtray', an expressive therapy technique, as the tool. I had a two-hour slot to give a practical experience with a basic theoretical explanation of the sandtray method and its uses to bring non-verbal, non-rational thought out in the open, to be examined and better understood. Sandtray was developed by Margaret Lowenfeld, an English paediatrician, in the late 1920's as a way of allowing children to use play to express their concerns (Turner, 2005). Through work with parents, it was later discovered that adults benefited as much as children from the technique. 'An unconscious problem is played out in the sandbox, just like a drama. The conflict is transfered from the inner world to the outer world and is made visible.' (Kalff, 2003). While both the facilitators and the participants may understand its deeper meaning, the safety of talking only in the metaphors that evolve from the process allows individuals and the group 'to process material which may be too painful to talk about directly, and still gain a sense of closure or reconciliation' (Camastral, 2010).

Dr De Domenico, the originator of Experiential Sandtray-Worldplay, called the Sandtray 'laboratory of the world' where individuals may learn to access, express, and understand the depth of their personal, social, and spiritual experiences and which is 'a transformational method that supports growth, development and healing in diverse psychotherapeutic, educational, spiritual, legal, business, familial, communal, nature and intercultural settings' (De Dominico, 2004). There are many different ways of using the sand tray and miniatures, including a Jungian theoretical understanding of the process, called Sandplay. 'Sandplay enables the three-dimensional tangible expression of inchoate, unconscious contents' (Weinrib, 2004). People feel drawn to specific objects. 'It chose me', a Jewish woman said about her selection. While the theoretical conceptualizations of practitioners using a sand tray may differ, practitioners from a wide range of professional backgrounds and cultures agree on the benefits of working in this medium to reach depths of understanding beyond the linearity and self-censorship of verbal dialogue.

Recapitulating the basic Israeli conflict over contested lands, Arab-Jewish dyads were given a contained piece of land (a sand tray) in which to create their 'shared' world. The container was just large enough to hold a standard ream of paper, and was half-filled with sand. As the method involves tactile play and giving the unconscious a voice, we could observe the interactional process and products. Would the unconscious provide new solutions where dialogue had become stuck in anger and alienation? The observed outcome of the group work was three distinct styles of coping with the difficult and sometimes painful task of sharing: conflict, domination, and co-existence.

BACKGROUND

The group that participated in the session was made up of five Israeli Jews and four Pales-
tinian Arabs with Israeli citizenship who had been studying together for a year-and-a-half.
Three others were not able to attend. They were members of a two-year program that trains
group facilitators for Jewish-Arab encounter groups and participants in joint Jewish-Arab
programs devoted to the promotion of pluralism and dialogue within Israeli society.

 The war in Gaza was an emotional bomb for this group. The complete group, Arabs and
Jews, had experienced difficulty being together as a whole group during the Gaza war, and
the Arab participants chose to meet separately to grieve together. According to the media,
95% of the Israeli population supported the war, making it difficult for the Arabs to face
their Jewish partners. The two groups continued to meet separately for seven sessions, the
Jewish group led by the Jewish facilitator, and the Arab group led by the Arab facilitator,
Rokaya Marzouk, who has participated in the writing of this article. During the separate
group work, Rokaya witnessed a movement of identity in the Arab participants. Before the
war, some of the Arabs identified more as Israelis than Palestinians, and the war brought
their Palestinian identity to the foreground of their thinking and solidified it. They were
made to confront their connection to Gaza, as everyone had some relative, close or distant,
living there, and they could not separate themselves from what was happening across the
border. The Jews were frustrated about the separation; the war increased the need for what
the course offered – opportunity for connection and to meet with their Arab colleagues.

 My presentation took place during the groups' second meeting together following a dif-
ficult separation. Thus I entered a group that was in the process of coming back together,
but had a range of unresolved issues and a heightened sense of mistrust. The Jewish facili-
tator was not present, and Rokaya took a back seat to my presentation and facilitation. I am
a Jewish American, and conducted the workshop in Hebrew, a second language for many
of the participants: for all Arabs and for the Jews not born in Israel. The language barrier
accentuates the importance of using a primarily non-verbal method of communicating
needs, desires, conflicts and fears.

THE SESSION

Introductory exercise

After personal introductions, I had the group sort the miniatures that I brought into catego-
ries: people, animals, natural things, human-made things and transportation. In order to
fulfil this task, they had to handle the figures, examine them and classify them. As I had
no time to set up the collection in an organized manner as is customary, this was my way
of engaging the participants with the collection as a whole in a non-threatening way.
Through the communal sorting process, they came to know what figures were available,
and began to feel resonance with particular items, and occasionally entered into dialogue
with each other about proper classification. For example, was the mermaid a person or an
animal, or actually a human-made object? Was the Buddha a person or a statue of a person,
thus a human-made object? Was the skeleton in the casket a person, a natural thing, or
a man-made thing? The group was unable to come to consensus on these items, and
they were left in the centre. I was intrigued by their comfort level with not coming to some

resolution, seeing a parallel to their resignation at living with the long standing unresolved issues between them.

Interestingly, the group did decide as a whole that the creepy crawlies, the snakes, spiders and insects needed to be separated into an additional category. The group was not able to place them with the animals. Was the group trying to separate out their more primordial, primary process feelings? Were they trying to contain their most destructive impulses and separate them from the more neutral energy in the room? Was this their way of containing their fear of the dark side, or what disgusted them in the other, so they could do the work together? Notably, no one placed an item from this category in the trays. The creepy crawlies may be about 'invisible or partially visible agents, conspirators, etc. who are frustrating everyday life … The desire to purge all the creepy crawlies is precisely the problem, and disturbingly this [may be] a shared desire' (email correspondence with Robert Bachelor, 9 May 2009).

I used categorization to make a tentative intervention. I revealed how I categorized the ambiguous objects as one possible logic to reflect that here we didn't need to get stuck with indecision and the fear of getting something wrong. With these materials, we are free to made decisions on how we see them, and those decisions are likely to vary, and maybe even change; different interpretations are acceptable. The aim of the exercise is to gain an understanding of ourselves and how we view our world, as opposed to figuring out an objectively 'right' answer.

Experiential exercise

The participants worked in pairs with an observer, thus creating three groups of three. I asked that each 'sandplayer team' be made up of one Arab and one Jew. Someone interjected that that was obvious and didn't need to be stated; that was how they work. The groups organized themselves and chose one member to be the observer. In order to promote a spirit of equality and facilitate movement in the beginning, I then gave the direction for each sandplayer to choose three objects in turn. When a pair had chosen their six items, they were instructed, 'Build your world.' Once all teams had begun to build their world, I notified the sandplayers that they could now choose as many items as they wished, and add and return items as they pleased. They had 20 minutes to work together on the sand trays.

One team worked quietly and calmly together speaking softly and privately, one team worked in virtual silence, and one team argued over what was allowed in the tray and where. I gave a five-minute warning before time was up, and then I asked the group as group facilitators, where would they suggest I take this exercise? The team that argued wanted to be able to talk about other people's worlds, an observer wanted to discuss the process of joint creation, and another observer wanted to use his observations of all the groups and compare their building styles. Overall, the participants seemed to want to deflect away from their own activities and to look outside their own world to judge or evaluate the others. I asked that people focus on the world they have created for themselves and to share the process with the group. It was important in this process to acknowledge that the creator of the world was the expert and that as observers we could only guess about the meaning of what others had done, and participants were strongly discouraged from interpreting others' creations. This restraint was important in order to create an environment where people

could express themselves without feeling a need to become defensive. After each of the teams had talked about their work, three distinct patterns of building a world in the sand tray emerged, solutions parallel to the problem of sharing land: struggle to assert one's self (covert conflict), dominance and submission, and co-existence.

ANALYSIS

During the session, although many interactions had an impact on me, being an unknown facilitator with an emotionally fragile group, I did not offer any interpretation of what I saw. I took my cue from Jungian sandplay therapy, where clients are asked to build whatever comes into their minds, and interpretation is often not given until long after the end of therapy to give the ego time to grow strong enough to assimilate the information that comes from the unconscious. With sandtray, when choosing figures, we are working with the unconscious or preconscious, and bypassing the intellectual defences. People are drawn to symbols before understanding why – it may be the colour, texture, shape or connotation that is meaningful. It may be deeply personal and private. I wanted to respect the trust that the group had bestowed upon me with their willing participation in this activity. At the end of the session, the group allowed me to photograph their sand trays before dismantling them. The names and identifying information in this article have been changed to protect confidentiality.

The individual figures and miniatures available for selection have layers of symbolic meaning including that which is unique to that person's experiences as well as universal meanings. A symbol can have opposing meanings – for example a cage can be both protective and constraining, both a method of keeping at a distance and holding dear. Directionality of the objects is important too – do they look in the tray or out, do they look towards or away from others? What is the energy of the tray, and what was the sandplayers' energy during the creation? What feelings does the scene evoke? Does it tell a single unified story, or is it a collage?

In paired sandtray work, there are different ways to share the contained space. Often, the sandplayer will imagine that their personal space extends to the half of the tray closest to them, and the other half belongs to their partner. When working under this assumption, it follows that one who places symbols on their teammate's side of the tray is somehow imposing themselves on the other's world in order to influence it. Things placed in the centre can be shared. The centre of the tray is also where we often find the symbol the sandplayer most identifies with. Not all pairs will imagine a line dividing the tray into 'yours' and 'mine'. There are those that dominate, seeing all of it as rightfully theirs. Some pairs see no mine and yours, but an 'ours'; what can be included are the parts of us that we agree upon. Each pair will define the space according to their own development and their relationship to their partner. Bert Meltzer, a founding member of the Israeli Sandplay Therapists Association, views sharing as a fundamental experience that has its own developmental stages, similar to Piaget's stages of cognitive development and Kolberg's stages of moral development. 'It is at the heart of relationship: from the early sharing of the mother for siblings … to sharing toys … to evolving concepts of what is relationship and partnership etc. It is a developing concept that moves from the concrete literal divisions of things and space to increasingly more abstraction' (email correspondence with Bert Meltzer, 7 November

2009). Where individuals are in their personal development will affect how they are able to negotiate the task at hand, and indeed will influence their politics. What follows is a discussion of the three sand trays that were produced and more importantly the process of building them and sharing them with the group.

GROUP 1: COVERT CONFLICT – RELIGION, GENDER RELATIONS, THWARTING ASPIRATIONS OF OTHERS

This tray (Figure 1) does not show aggression or overt conflict. It seems relatively calm, with a border of trees and religious symbols and other non-aggressive figures. 'Maybe because of the tidiness, it looks kind of cold and alienated in terms of interaction. Like a picture that's really nice and aesthetic, but when you look at it closely it's all broken inside' (email correspondence with Ruth, the Jewish sandplayer of this tray, 27 January 2010). Observing the construction of the tray, conflict was evident, as both sandplayers tried to control the content and placement of the items in the tray by grabbing, removing, and changing form, and were clearly frustrated by the other's input and lack of support for what they wanted in their world. Ruth told me, 'It was important to me that we both get to include the objects we wanted, but apparently it wasn't as important that we do it jointly and out of real partnership. So the outcome looks like two worlds put together and not like one unified world. Like formalistic, rather than essential partnership' (email correspondence with Ruth, 27 January 2010).

Religion

While building their world, Ruth spoke to Nimla, her Arab partner, in Arabic; she was the only Jew to communicate in her partner's mother tongue. Nimla put in three monotheistic symbols- a mosque on her side, a Jewish hamsa symbol on Ruth's side, and a Christian symbol of the Bible in the centre creating a link between the two, lining up the religions chronologically. Ruth did not want religious symbols in, but allowed them. In response to the offending monotheistic religious symbols, Ruth added an altar with a fruit offering,
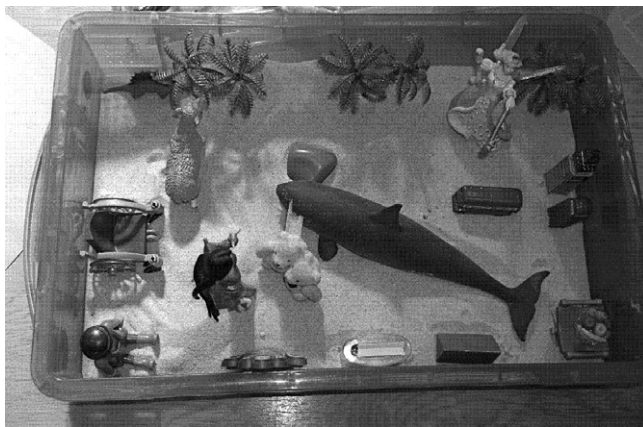

Figure 1. Group 1's tray.

representing Buddhism that is an anathema to many Muslims, and placed it in the corner closest to Nimla. Nimla didn't object. The fruit bowl reminded me of the Arab custom of offering visitors fruit. It could be this symbol carried a very different positive personal meaning to the two women. Nimla later explained quite passionately that she put the religious symbols in because she hated religion's influence on her, yet she could not deny it or escape it.

Ruth chose a pig and tried to put it in the tray. The Arab woman, in headscarf, said no, she didn't want a pig in her world. Ruth pressed several times for the pig to gain entry, requesting a reason for its exclusion, and the Arab woman insisted it not be allowed, although she was unable to explain why.

> It became more significant [to have the pigs in the world] when Nimla objected it (which I somehow hadn't foreseen). I think maybe I was identifying with the pigs, who were excluded and deemed despicable, for no fault except for belonging to a certain biological species. And in MY world, nothing is categorically 'impure' or despicable. And I was hurt because I was thinking: If this is our world, both of ours, then it should include whatever either of us wants to put in it. For instance, I'm not religious and I'm not very fond of religion, but I was fine with Nimla putting religious symbols in our world, because there's room in it for both her world and mine. So why would she veto things that I want to have in my world? And I was annoyed that she wasn't even open for discussion or sensitive enough to see that it was important to me. But I could also see where she was coming from and I felt more aware of how things are different – more complex – when dealing with such strict and well internalized set of values such as religion. The whole thing made me think about different things, like the boundaries of discourse.' (Email correspondence with Ruth, 27 January 2010)

During the group session, I made a mistake in not asking Ruth what the pig meant to her, and why it was important to have it in her world, assuming that it was her way of imposing secularism on the world. In response to the group's rejection of the pig, Ruth collected all the pigs she could find and kept them near her as if mothering unwanted orphans.

Gender

Later, Nimla chose a male figure, stating 'We need a man in our world.' Ruth didn't agree to the concept of 'needing a man' and took it from her hand, changed it from standing to a seated position, and put it in the corner closest to herself. Nimla then put a wheelchair next to the seated man. She later explained that she had worked with disabled people and the wheelchair was a symbol of this important aspect of her life. Perhaps she saw the seated man as disabled and somehow demasculated, in need of help. The women played out their non-acceptance of each other's cultural stances through figures representing gender and religion, while expressing their own relationship to the masculine.

Wishes

Ruth said she put the fairy in because it was 'kitsch and funny'. A fairy is a symbol of wish-fulfilment. She pointed the fairy's wand towards her central object, the whale, which could symbolize a wish for transformation. This was not explored during the session. Nimla then put a bus in front of the fairy's wand, and later explained that the bus represented LA, where she wished she could live in a big American city. Was her intention to steal her

partner's wish, or to share the fairy's magic with her? After the last group talked about their tray, Nimla changed her mind, and no longer felt comfortable anywhere in their joint tray. She said she wanted to be in Munir's tray, a tray that a Jewish woman let the Arab man, Munir, dominate and dictate what would go where, thus fulfilling her wish for a man in her world.

Sharing process mirrors building process

When I told the group time was up and to sit back from building, this team was obviously experiencing some difficult feelings with each other. There was a heavy feeling between them. When I asked them to tell the group about their world, Ruth elected herself as the spokesperson for their group. When she finished, Nimla started to speak, and Ruth interrupted her almost immediately to question her. I asked that each speaker be allowed to finish their narrative without interruption before asking questions. When Ruth continued to interrupt Nimla, I reminded Ruth to allow Nimla to finish several times and pointed out that Ruth was having a hard time listening to Nimla without interrupting. Nimla told me, 'That is what it is like here.' Nimla did not confront Ruth directly and ask for a chance to express herself, and I found myself stepping in to protect her, viewing her as victim. Later, when discussing this with Rokaya, I was surprised that Rokaya had opposing feelings to me, and had empathized with Ruth, who had made outstanding efforts to accommodate Nimla.

Self

Often what is put in the centre of the tray can be a representation of self. Ruth put the big grey whale in the centre with the tail end in Nimla's side of the tray. Nimla put a smooth grey stone near the centre touching the whale, and said it was to ward off evil, a good luck symbol for her. Rokaya notes that the stone has another meaning in Israeli society. It is the weapon of the Palestinian uprising against the Jewish state.

Despite their difficulty in working together, they both chose symbols similar in colour to centre their world, the colour grey being one of non-involvement or detachment. We can also read the middle of the tray as a 'grey area', 'an area or part of something existing between two extremes and having mixed characteristics of both' (*Collins English Dictionary,* Complete and Unabridged. Harpercollins Publishes 2003, London, www.the-freedictionary.com/Gray+Areas). This definition so clearly describes what these two women were trying to create together, demonstrating how colour is also an eloquent form of expression in sand tray.

When focusing on this joint centre, the whale seemed to me to take up too much room and was out of place, 'a fish out of water' – my projection of Zionist imperialism – and the stone seemed to Rokaya to be an implicit threat – her projection of Arab duplicity. I found it interesting the strong feelings this pair brought up for Rokaya and me, as facilitators. While I was aghast at Ruth's chutzpah, Rokaya was annoyed by Nimla's subtle manipulation – we were each rejecting of our own cultural stereotype of aggression and passive aggression, while ironically able to accommodate that of the 'other'. 'The problem with dealing with such loaded content [the Middle East conflict] is that everyone gets

entangled with their social-political agendas, even someone attempting to be an "honest and independent" broker' (email correspondence with Bert Meltzer, 7 November 2009).

Despite their inability to create a shared world, in Ruth's email correspondence with me almost a year following the exercise, she asks that if I use her words, to do so in a way that would not cause offense to Nimla, who is a dear person to her. Other group members who corresponded with me spoke of the strong, warm feelings they hold towards their sandplay partner. This demonstrates the need for more such sessions and that the individuals had the emotional capacity to further develop their dialogue in symbols.

GROUP 2: SUBMISSION/DOMINANCE

Domination

Munir placed most of the items in the tray, not questioning his authority to do so, or consulting with Yaffa. The team worked fairly silently. His choices had the goal of creating a world that was equal and included some centralized services: a hospital, a veterinarian and a cooking pot. The director of a children's hospital, and a male Arab, Munir was very familiar with having ultimate authority over his domain, and exercising that power for the common good, and the protection of his 'children'.

Munir and Yaffa's tray has a feeling of diagonal symmetry with lots of pairings. Each side has a fenced area with domestic animals, Yaffa's side has house pets, trusty dogs, and Munir's side has work animals: a horse, a cow and a camel. It was Munir 'who put the fences, which might be necessary but quite against my personal tendency' (email correspondence with Yaffa, 23 January 2010). The two sets of small white animals, rabbits and hens are diagonal from two evergreen trees. Two dark females face the pot of food cooking in the centre of the tray. Munir placed a male guard on his top corner and a female guard on the opposite corner nearest Yaffa. When talking about his tray later, he laughed, and said he hadn't realized at the time that he had chosen a female warrior. As a Bedouin male, Rokaya adds, it would have been inappropriate for him to choose a female warrior, but the

Figure 2. Group 2's tray.

fact that he did unconsciously suggests that he believes in gender equality and the strength of women to defend themselves. The guards walk the walls of the town, aiming their weapons to the outside world. Munir has placed a tower on his diagonal side, but Yaffa's vertical side, overlooking Yaffa's figures, reminiscent of the Jewish towns built to overlook Arab villages called 'Mitzpim' or vantage points. The fact that this tray seems to be 'sliced' two ways, both diagonally and vertically makes it unclear whose space is whose, although there is a discernible sense of separateness. Rokaya adds this is very fitting for how the Bedouin male conducts himself outside the tribe. A Bedouin will not tell things about his personal life, his feelings, and will sometimes give no expression of feeling, especially when he does not feel secure, and usually a Bedouin only feels secure within his own tribe. This lack of trust to be open about one's intentions beautifully mirrors the actual conflict and resulting 'solutions', and is consistent with the stage that the group found itself after the war, at a time when trust had been disrupted and the group was just coming together again after seven separate meetings.

Yaffa placed some things outside the tray. It appeared there was not enough room in the tray for Yaffa; possibly, she felt squeezed out by Munir. After Munir told about the tray, we asked Yaffa to talk about her part in creating the world. She told us, through laughter, that though she 'did not see the need for the guards' that Munir placed along the walls, she did not object. 'Let it be', she said, with a wave and a laugh, to show she did not take the exercise seriously, but my feeling was that she did care, but had decided to give in because of what I believe was her 'political sensitivity' and sense of political correctness; she would rather allow Munir to have his world as he wished than to argue about it, stifling the important Bedouin member of the group. Rokaya adds that Yaffa was clearly uncomfortable with the situation and the world that Munir had created for her, yet instead of confronting or negotiating with him, she resolved her difficulty by expanding beyond the confines of the allotted area. This expansion beyond borders mirrors the fact that the majority of Bedouin settlements are unrecognized by the Israeli government, expanding beyond the boundaries of the land allocated to them by the government. It seemed that it was easier for her to defy the facilitator's boundaries (going outside the box) than confront her partner about what is in the box. Rokaya noted that her self-sacrifice was congruent with how she portrayed herself in dealing with her relationships outside the group. 'I can't really remember the process of designing this sand tray, but being myself a person with very little needs, whose well-being isn't really dependent on material circumstance … it's very likely that I let Munir be the main designer of our common little world' (email correspondence with Yaffa, 23 January 2010). The dynamic process between them in creating their sand world portrays a distinct polarization: two sandplayers: one who dictates and one who gives in – domination and submission. The gender roles in the scene are traditional: the women cooking serve, while the male doctors 'operate on', or service, their world, reflecting the roles that each sandplayer had taken in their personal lives, as well as in their tray.

Apparent submission

The team members had each considered whether to have two pots of food or one and agreed that one was enough for their world. This shows the trust that Yaffa and Munir had for each other that their basic needs, their survival, was not threatened by the other. While Yaffa

touched on being disappointed with some of the things Munir put in their world that she felt were not necessary (the tower, the guards on the walls and the fences specifically), she saw it as a basically safe and providing space that she could tolerate, mirroring how many Arabs in Israel felt before the Gaza war. She also moved beyond the boundary of the tray to address her unmet needs, as the Bedouin set up villages without the government's approval. (Jewish settlers do this as well, but receive support from the government once the settlement is established.) Munir felt he was providing well for her, mirroring how many Jewish Israelis feel about the government's treatment of Arabs within Israeli borders. This experimentation with role reversal was possible because of the imaginary nature of the exercise.

Yaffa said she saw herself in the rooster, which she perched on the roof of a building looking towards the empty space and evergreen trees in her side of the tray. In this sense, being the rooster may be about taking that elevated position and somewhat dissociating oneself from participation or the action below. Yaffa wrote that she wanted 'an option of belonging and not belonging at the same time to this little universe' (email correspondence, 23 January 2010), which explains her moving outside the confines of the tray. Yaffa had managed to create some free, natural space of her own during the building phase, and the rooster focuses on that, turning his back on the world of things Munir had created, much as many Arabs in Israel tend to be more involved in their local communities, and often do not realize the extent of their entitlement as citizens. Rokaya adds that Yaffa was the clock of the group, punctuality is important to her, and she got very frustrated when others were late. It is interesting that she chose a self symbol as a familiar male symbol of the Bedouin landscape, the natural alarm clock of a bucolic society, to represent herself to Munir. In this sandplay, the Arab overlooks the Jewish land, and creates public services, and the Jewish sandplayer accepts that the Arab sandplayer will make the decisions about allocation of land and services, and in a bid to get autonomy, disregards the confines of the allocated space. It was as if these sandplayers tacitly agreed to take advantage of the exercise to live the other's experience.

Alchemy

Jung relates the drive of the individual for self-knowledge to alchemy. What is being cooked in the centre is a luminous mineral, and cooking is related to alchemy. Both Munir and Yaffa have joined the course to learn and transform Israel society to a more just, 'higher' state. This is the onerous, yet altruistic central task that they share, despite their difficulties in finding a respectful process so far. Yaffa wrote to me, 'As to Munir and me, I loved Munir from the first time we met, and consider him a lovely, delicate and sensitive person' (email correspondence, 23 January 2010).

GROUP 3: CO-EXISTENCE

Sharing their world

This team was the only one where the participants consulted each other on who should speak first. Also interesting to note, when I asked for permission to publish the photographs, the Jewish woman from this team, Mara, was the only one to make her permission

Figure 3. Group 3's tray.

conditional on her partner granting permission. There is a real sense of unity here. The first spokesperson, Mara, shared their joint process. 'We learned, through building this tray, that we both loved the sea, and wanted to live near it. This is our house where we live.' It is interesting that one house was sufficient for their world. She did not say, 'This is where we live *together*', which brings up a feeling that the house is not representing an individual dwelling, but perhaps something more abstract, like a homeland. 'About the single house – your interpretation is interesting. I don't think we had that in mind at the time. It's probably true that the two of us feel we can personally share a homeland with each other, but I don't know if that means anything about the collectives we're part of' (email correspondence with Mara 25 January 2010). Amira, the Arab woman, placed the wizard figure behind the house. 'He is the co'ach (power, force, strength, energy)', she explained. He looks out of the tray, holding his fire high for outsiders to see, with his staff directly behind the house, as if providing protection.

Opposites in harmony

Though the observer referred to this world as 'colourless and minimalistic', on closer examination it is complex, holding many opposites in a unified manner. The juxtaposition of light and dark can be seen with the pairs of pale shells and dark sea creatures, occupying land and water like the yin yang symbol of wholeness, shadow and light. The octopus's potential threat is countered with the shells' protection, there is a balance between masculine and feminine energies and acknowledgement of hidden emotional depths of the ocean, the mystery. There is a division of land and sea, but two figures are present in both places. The sea is to the left which is where it is geographically located in relation to Israel.

The masculine Buddhas and the feminine Mary are symbols of spirituality, love and calm. Though they are religious spiritual symbols, they are not significant religiously to either the Muslim or the Jewish sandplayer – they are universal and neutral in this instance, not personal. Rokaya adds that the placement of these symbols was a non-verbal dialogue between the women about their shared spirituality beyond the dogma of their differing religions. Mary looks over to the house, and the Buddhas surround Mary, as if worshiping

her on her gold podium. This is fitting to the work that the two women are engaged in, to find balance in a calm, thoughtful way. Rokaya adds that their work is a reflection of a key aim of the group, to find balance, which she and the Jewish facilitator endeavoured to model for the group throughout the course. Also, while a Jewish woman would be uncomfortable putting Mary in her tray, it is forbidden for a Muslim to show an interest in Buddha. In this way the women complement each other in bringing to the tray for the other an inexpressible wish or need, reminiscent of an archetypal mother and father and their supporting each other to widen their acceptance of the world.

Duality

There is evidence of many twos here, and the twos stand side by side and opposite each other. Rokaya was moved by the prayer beads used by both Muslims and Christians, draped half in the tray and half outside the top wall. It reminded her of the Palestinians, Muslim and Christian, that live inside the border of Israel, and those that live outside, those within and those beyond the 'wall', but remain connected like the beads, nonetheless.

There are two shells towards the centre of the tray, very close together, but not touching. In the sea are two animals of similar colour and shape, both with many arms/legs. Arms are for doing, acting on the world. Legs are for being grounded, unlike fish, which have less control over their environment. Rokaya adds that the Arab-Jewish conflict is over land, and both women selected a creature that lives in the sea yet can cling to the sea floor, unlike the other sea creatures available to choose from. They are both different animals with commonalities, as are the Arab and Jewish people.

The twin palm trees cast a shadow in the centre of the tray. The tree is a symbol of life – or family tree, ancestry. Here, two trees are joined at the base reminiscent of the common ancestry of Jews and Arabs, going back to Abraham the father of Isaac and Ishmael. The tree is very significant symbol to both cultures as a life force.

Essence of co-existence

This pair was able to share house, share power, share life, and use a range of spiritual influences from Buddhism, Christianity and Islam, and perhaps Judaism, as represented by the fire or Ner Tamid, eternal light. This sandplaying pair had a transcendent experience creating their tray, and were simultaneously calmed and energized by their work together, learning about each other, and deepening their respect for one another. Like a dance, the two were attuned to one another, responding to each other and allowing the other space for their values.

Their tray represents the existence of themselves as two females, Arab and Jew, more alike than different, yet it also incorporates the coexistence of opposites, difference, and the acceptance of both dark and light aspects of self and other, fire and water. The goal of the Buddha is to understand unity and reach enlightenment. The repeated archetypal pairing of male and female as portrayed by Buddha and Mary, house and wizard, shell and armed creatures, contains the sense that any object intimates the existence of the other, the opposite. One exists in relation to the other; one's existence is evidence of the other's existence as well. This intertwining of I and thou is the cornerstone of true co-existence.

VALUE OF THE EXERCISE

This sandtray work provided a tangible, metaphorical task of sharing a limited space with no 'right' answers during a time when Palestinian Israeli Arab and Israeli Jew were struggling to continue their political dialogue. For 60 years two societies have tried unsuccessfully to find a solution to each other's ambition to have control of this limited space called at once Israel and Palestine. 'The task of creating a shared world in a small sand tray by two individuals who also consider themselves to be representative of the two opposing societies seems like a near perfect microcosm of this sixty year struggle' (email correspondence with Bert Meltzer, 7 November 2009). Each solution had its own validity and recapitulated social-political issues and problems. This experiment demonstrates that while it is relatively easy to talk the talk of pluralism and democracy, when people are faced with a concrete and limited space, with real choices and concrete actions that at once commit and exclude, the non-verbal actions reflect a range of competing motives and attitudes that may be very different to our highest social ideals. Subjects in this experience identified with the ideals of co-existence, but their actual operation reflected struggles over power and control, domination and submission, acquiescence over political correctness, and some instances of evolving ideas of sharing. More importantly, the actual processes revealed that the highest social ideals exists only with its opposite. Following this type of task, we can examine our feelings and reach a greater understanding of what needs to be done on a personal level, reflecting, at once, cultural, social and national levels before an agreeable resolution to this longstanding problem can occur on the collective level.

CONCLUSIONS

From the initial task of classifying the items, we saw that the participants had a high tolerance for lack of closure, which can be related to the Middle East conflict itself. This generation has been born into unresolved conflict and therefore perceives lack of resolution as the norm, and perhaps the only conceivable reality for many. This resignation, or unarticulated premise that the problem has no solution, makes it difficult to shift resources and energy from destructive to constructive action. The participants united in the self-initiated task of separating out all the creepy crawlies often associated with early developmental stages of repulsion and fear towards that which is not actually life-threatening or physically dangerous. This suggests that everyone involved had the underlying desire to distance themselves from the more primitive instinctual responses, and a desire to meet the other on a 'more evolved' level. Yet the physical act of separating out the creepy crawlies was not sufficient to remove them from the room, or from the relationships between the individuals of the two groups. Even the facilitators found themselves at times struggling against and succumbing to distorted perceptions of the motivations and intentions of others based on stereotypes. Despite the pitfalls to creating a safe space to allow creativity, the array of solutions to the idea of 'shared space' were as diverse as the number of participants. The ultimate value of the task is a chance for each side and each pair to see a reflection of their issues of living in a shared space in a safe forum that can foster greater sympathy and compassion for their own conflicts and those of the other.

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