

## The Multi-Dimensional Model

The title of the Jerusalem Inter-religious Educational Leadership Program indicates several identities shared by the program's target population (educators, living in Jerusalem), and at the same time, differentiates between them on the basis of religion. This differentiation highlights the uniqueness of this particular program in comparison to the variety of other dialogue programs between Israelis and Palestinians which have been in existence for many years.

This uniqueness is expressed in the multi-dimensional model, which is an ongoing developmental process taking place between the program founders, staff, participants, and professional evaluators, who have followed the program from its inception. The chances of success in the realization of the program's goals grow the greater the compatibility between the program's different components – goals, targets, basic assumptions and mode of action chosen for their accomplishment.

Thus the multi-dimensional model was developed for the purpose of raising the compatibility between the basic assumptions of the program and the program's components (activities and methodologies), designed for the realization of these goals, as will be detailed below.

- Dialogue as the means to achieve the program's goals – the central means chosen to achieve the program's goals is through dialogue. The definition of "dialogue" - "a reciprocal conversation between two or more persons". According to Martin Buber,

"true dialogue expresses an essential aspect of the human spirit, when we listen and respond to one another with an authenticity that forges a bond between us."

- Dialogue between identities – dialogue between people is in fact dialogue between the identities they each hold. The concept of "identity" has a variety of possible meanings which are based on different disciplines such as philosophy, sociology, psychology, theology, etc. From a psychological point of view, identity is perceived as an internal, holistic, and steady process (Erikson, 1959; Marcia, 1976; Gleason, 1983). From a sociological point of view, identity is perceived as a type of social label, or roles played by the person in different contexts. The point of view of classical philosophy perceives identity as having essential qualities, beyond the historic, social and cultural contexts in which the person lives. In contrast, the constructionist approach claims that human identity is formed and created within these contexts, and emphasizes that people's identities are the story they tell themselves in the historic-cultural contexts in which they live.

- Multiple identities – the participants in dialogue have multiple identities. William James, the founder of modern psychology, stated already at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that:

“A man has as many social selves as there are individuals (or groups) who recognize him and carry an image of him in their mind...we may practically say that he has as many different social selves as there are distinct groups of persons about whose opinion he cares... From this there results what practically is a division of the man into several selves”.<sup>1</sup>

Hints of these perceptions are found in the work of scholars only towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, Davenport & Yurich (1991) claim that scholars must progress beyond their preferences to observe others through a single lens - such as gender or ethnicity - and instead must examine the interactive nature of the various influences on the person. In this spirit, Frable (1997) calls upon contemporary scholars of identity “to see people as a whole”, and to see identity as a “personalized social construction that includes multiple social categories”.

The supporters of the multiple identity approach direct criticism, both theoretical and methodological, at each of the single identity models. They state that this criticism derives from the limitations common to all these models, regardless of the identity (Hall, 1997). Accordingly, the multi-dimensional model advances beyond single identity models, and refers to the existing interaction taking place between a variety of identities (see details in following paragraph – identity types). This is done while attempting to understand the complex relations between the identities, and the tools required for managing the consequences of these relations.

- Identity types and hierarchy between identities in dialogue meetings – The program’s target population has a number of distinct identities: ethnic-national identity as Jews and Arabs, political-territorial identity as Israelis and Palestinians, religious identity as Jews and Muslims, professional identity as educators, local identity as Jerusalemites, gender identity as men and women, a family identity as spouses, parents, children and siblings. The majority of dialogue programs currently taking place in Israel in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and education towards peace, refer almost exclusively to the national-political component of identity, and not to its religious or cultural aspects. This phenomenon derives from the secular character of the modern/Western society to which the program participants belong, as a direct result of the political situation in the Middle East in general and in Israel in particular, which make the national-political identity more emphasized and approachable than other identities.

- The religious-cultural identity in dialogue – the program founders claim that the focus on the national-political identity often dominates dialogue processes, and thus prevents the discussion of the deeper roots of the conflict – the religious-cultural roots. Therefore, one of the guiding principles of the multi-dimensional model is the focus on religious and cultural content related to both participating groups, through the meeting between religious people, study of texts, holding religious rituals (like prayer, for ex.), meetings with Muslim and Jewish religious scholars, visits to religious sites, discussions of the religious aspects of common issues (such as the status of women, the

attitude towards the Other, etc.). The theoretical literature discusses at length inter-religious dialogue although it refers generally only to the religious-cultural identity. While the multi-dimensional model emphasizes this identity, it does not disregard the political context in which the religious identities live, and also uses the psychological language, in addition to the religious one.

The relation between identity and language – Each of the multiple identities of the person has its own language. Of course, there is an overlap between the different identities and languages, and they also contrast each other. For example, there is a contrast between an ethnocentric religious identity, and an interest-based national identity; or, for example, a civic democratic dialogue on equality of rights as opposed to a religious dialogue, which grants the Other some limited, but unequal rights.

This brings to the understanding that each identity has its own language/manner of communication. Therefore, according to the multi-dimensional model, which refers to the process taking place in the program as a dialogue among multiple and various identities, the situation requires the use of a variety of languages/methodologies. For example, the use of methodologies of mediation when approaching a dialogue on the territorial conflict, and the use of the religious language methodologies (for ex. the study of texts, encounters with religious scholars) when discussing the land rights of the peoples from a religious-historical perspective.

- Personal and social identity – In the social-psychological and sociological literature there is a distinction between personal identity, which refers to unique characteristics of a person, which set him apart from others, and a social (or “collective”) identity, which is defined as :

“one that is shared with a group of others who have (or are believed to have) some characteristic(s) in common; Such commonality may be based on ascribed characteristics, such as ethnicity or gender, or on an achieved status, such as occupation or political party;”

According to Turner & Tajfel (1978), any human trait can be described by its place on a spectrum, whose ends are: 1) the interpersonal, where interaction between people is determined by the individual characteristics of the participants (for example, interaction between a couple); and 2) intergroup, where interaction between the people is determined by the characteristics of the group to which they belong (for example, soldiers in battle). Various studies on dialogue among conflict groups, among them the evaluation study following the Mosaica program, show that both groups' members move along the spectrum, with the Muslim participants tending towards the intergroup end while the Jewish members tend more towards the interpersonal end. This consistent finding derives from the relations between the groups themselves – rulers and ruled, majority vs. minority. The multi-dimensional model uses a dynamic psychological language as a basic component of dialogue in order to bridge between the personal and social identity. The possible contrast between the different languages and identities within oneself result in the

multi-dimensional dialogue not only addressing the intergroup conflict, but also a collection of intrapersonal conflicts.

To conclude, the multi-dimensional model refers to the encounter between groups as a dialogue process between religious, cultural, historical, ethnic, national, political, professional and other identities, which requires the use of a variety of languages and methods suited to these identities. In order to enable the program participants to maximize the potential of inter-religious dialogue and to raise the chances of attaining the program's goals, the multi-dimensional model includes the following languages:

1. The religious language – which provides the sides with a common basis due to its consisting of ethical and moral characteristics and behavioral codes.
2. The national/political language, which refers to the conflict-related historical narrative and to current political and other events
3. The cultural language – which emphasizes both unique and common cultural aspects of the different sides.
4. The professional language – which emphasizes the commonalities between the participants – both sides are teachers dealing with similar issues concerning educating future generations on peace, while confronting continual conflict and harsh events faced by the students and communities to which each side belongs.
5. The language of gender – based on similar phenomena in different cultures and religions.
6. The psychological language – based on group-dynamics processes, and intra- and inter-psychological processes.

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<sup>1</sup> James, W. (1890), p.281-282. See also Mead (1934): "We carry on a whole series of different relationships to different people. We are one thing to one man and another thing to another... We divide ourselves up in all sorts of different selves with reference to our acquaintances... A multiple personality is in a certain sense normal (p.142); Frable (1997): The current challenge is to see identity as a continuously re-created, personalized social construction that includes multiple social categories and that functions to keep people whole."