

Chapter 6

Conclusion

During the summer of 1999, the Jerusalem Link was at the verge of dissolution. The challenges facing the organization seemed insurmountable. The Palestinian and Israeli women sensed that political differences challenged their joint work. They were aware, for example, that their disagreement over the participation of Jewish settlers in dialogue groups derived from differing attitudes towards settlements. But the JCW and the Bat Shalom activists whom I interviewed seemed confused about the political implications and the potential resolutions of this debate and others.

After three months of fieldwork with the activists of the Jerusalem Link, I have suggested “peace with justice” and “peace with care” as models intended to add a degree of clarity, coherence, and parsimony to the rifts within this organization. By providing a meta-framework for the current peace activism of the Link, these two models offer a new insight, enabling the women to begin to distill their differences. Ultimately, despite the differences between the Palestinian and Israeli peacemaking discourses and strategies, both groups of peacemakers share certain objectives: securing Palestinian rights, ameliorating Palestinian conditions, and generating greater tolerance between the two peoples.

The women on the ground have responded enthusiastically to these two models. The leaders of the Jerusalem Link are now redefining the objectives of their partnership and clarifying the role of a women’s peace organization within the Israeli and Palestinian political contexts. They appreciate the insights provided by

the comparison between peace with care and peace with justice. This comparison should contribute to the women's next task — a possible reconciliation of the two models.

On a theoretical level, the convergence of justice and care in each peacemaking model informs the debate about the relative role of Kantian ethics and Humean feelings in the shaping of moral principles. The embedded stories, anecdotes, and sentiments of the Israeli and Palestinian women add texture to this theoretical discussion. The Israeli peacemakers' sense of duty to help Palestinians, which they often passionately described, is not fully consonant with the Kantian depiction of duty as an abstract and universalizable basis for moral action. The Palestinian women's principles of justice — laden with care for the Palestinian nation, land, and people — offer a real-world example to the feminist theorists intent on synthesizing the ethic of care and the ethic of justice.

Yet the current political climate may limit the reconciliation of and the negotiation between Bat Shalom's peace with care approach and the JCW 's peace with justice approach. I have argued that the convergence of care and justice in each model provides a starting point for reconciling the two but ultimately each approach to peacemaking serves a distinct political purpose.

To the Israelis, peace with care — although motivated by the duties and underlying sympathies discussed in Chapter Five — remains in part a strategic position. The societal wide Israeli desire for normalization and reduced hostility among Palestinians (and all Arab neighbors) derives from their historical experience in the past fifty years. Living under a constant state of war, without

recognition, acceptance, or friendship extended by their Arab neighbors, has created an Israeli discourse focused almost solely on defense. Peace with care responds to this long-standing, collective Israeli sense of siege by attempting to build caring relationships with the Palestinians. On the most basic level, Israelis hope that building relationships with the Palestinians will lead some Palestinians to recognize them. Palestinian recognition would validate Israel's political existence and the legitimacy of the Zionist experiment.

The Israelis are aware that a secure peace in the region will require Israeli acceptance into the Palestinian and Arab Middle East.¹ Because security is Israel's primary political precondition for peace, reducing hostilities, dispelling stereotypes, and changing opinions among Palestinians — all characteristics of the relationships built through peace with care — are essential. Forging such caring relationships, however, will take time.

In the short-term, other-regarding care may be in large part the privilege of the less vulnerable partner. The emphasis in the peace with care model on sympathy with the "other" is afforded to the Israelis both by their relative power as the occupiers and by the relative stability of their state. To the Palestinians, building a relationship of care with the Israelis means implicitly accepting much of the political status quo. Yet the status quo with regard to land transfers, settlements, borders, refugees, the status of Jerusalem, security, and other issues is

¹ Israel's focus on security in its political peacemaking position cannot be overemphasized. Although this thesis has dealt with the grassroots peacemaking models, the international peace process negotiation have often been impeded by Israel's insistence on security measures and breaches to security in the form of terrorist attacks. Security plays an almost existential role in shaping Israeli attitudes towards the conflict, as a result of the experience of living under a state of siege.

unacceptable to the Palestinian people. As a result, in the short term, the Palestinians prioritize rights over other-regarding care. Thus, for the Palestinian women of the JCW, participating in a dialogue group with settlers is not only humiliating but also, far more importantly, indirectly recognizes the legitimacy of the settlements. To Palestinians, as the less powerful party petitioning for rights and concrete land concessions, the acceptance of the status quo implicit in peace with care does not advance their cause of justice.

The Palestinians understand peace in terms of short steps — tangible rights — that they must obtain. Because to the Palestinians I interviewed peace depends fundamentally on the implementation of these short-term steps, many are angry with the Israeli government when the rights promised to them in accords and agreements are not implemented. Reconciling the two models will depend politically on integrating the two time frames: the long-term process of understanding, coexistence, and building relationships and the short-term implementation of Palestinian rights.

Can women contribute *as women* to this effort of reconciliation? In the Palestinian and Israeli responses to the question on the gendered ethic of care (reported in Chapter Two and Chapter Three), some women saw potential commonalities between the two groups of peacemakers. They did not usually phrase these commonalities in the language of the gendered ethic of care, but rather recounted the experiences of both groups of women in traditional societies. Both Palestinian and Israeli women peace activists are objects of their national historical

experience. Allowed limited access to political power, each group has gravitated towards the grassroots and in that process has discovered commonalities.

I do not want to under-emphasize the degree to which commonalities, both perceived and real, have brought the Israeli and Palestinian women of the Jerusalem Link together since the beginning of their partnership in 1989. In traveling back and forth between the Bat Shalom and the JCW offices, I often overheard parallel conversations among the two office staffs — discussions of female political appointees and debates over gender equity issues ranging from marriage laws to women's health. Both groups share a deep concern for women's issues within their communities.

Sexism, in political and private domains, is a common experience shared by both groups. Many Palestinians and Israelis talked of their greater comfort level in all-women's settings, whether dialogue groups, board meetings, or political protests. As the only all-women's joint Palestinian-Israeli organization, the Jerusalem Link thus provides some women a comfortable niche for political involvement. At the two joint Palestinian-Israeli programs of the Jerusalem Link that I attended, the atmosphere was informal and congenial. When Bat Shalom and the JCW members talked about pregnancies, educational opportunities, culture, and other personal interests, they often seemed to be interacting simply as women, rather than as representatives of national collectives.

The task now on the ground is to test the possibility of reconciling these two models of peacemaking. The activists might begin by recognizing the underlying constitutive elements of peace with justice and peace with care. Western feminist

theory may unexpectedly contribute to this task by challenging the justice-care dichotomy. Recognizing the synthesis of justice and care in each model will enable the women peacemakers to become more accepting of their partner's model. Rather than blaming the other for engaging in peacemaking differently, the women should recognize the sources of commonality within that difference.

Peace with justice and peace with care are not visions of peace limited only to the grassroots Palestinian and Israeli activists. They are born from and inform each national group's collective experience. They have ultimately shaped both the Palestinian and Israeli communities' approach towards peacemaking. The peacemakers of Bat Shalom and the JCW, as the "vanguard," have the chance to lead their respective communities through the current period of difficult peacemaking negotiations, especially as the September 2000 final status agreement deadline nears. The Jerusalem Link peacemakers must not embrace peace with care and peace with justice as mutually exclusive ideals. Each model has much to add to the other's conception of and approach to peace. The peacemakers of Bat Shalom and the JCW are beginning to recognize how the two models collide. Perhaps they will soon begin the process of reexamining their own model as well as their partner's. We may look forward towards a new, redefined model of peacemaking, useful to the peacemakers at the top as well as to those at the grassroots.

