

Critical and Radical Social Work

Relationships and Reciprocity in learning; A Palestine Field Trip for Social Work and Youth and Community Students --Manuscript Draft--

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First Author:	Steven Lucas
Corresponding Author:	Steven Lucas, Ph.D Liverpool Hope University Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffs UNITED KINGDOM
Corresponding Author Secondary Information:	
Corresponding Author E-Mail:	lucass1@hope.ac.uk
Other Authors:	Kellie Thompson Tracy Ramsey
Order of Authors Secondary Information:	
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Author name(s) and affiliation(s):

(institution affiliation and country only, no department details required)

Steven Lucas
Liverpool Hope University, UK

Kellie Thompson
Liverpool Hope University, UK

Tracy Ramsey
Liverpool Hope University, UK

Abstract

For over 10 years now social work, and youth and community students from a university in England have travelled to Palestine to be hosted by families and conduct a study tour of the West Bank. They have visited Governors in the West Bank; Community Centres; Camp Committees; Art Centres; social work agencies; museums, and faith and political heritage sites across the West Bank and Jerusalem.

This paper reports on the reciprocity between host families and university staff in addressing student learning for social justice in a community which seeks international recognition and action in respect of the injustices of an illegal occupation. We argue that the goals of the host community in respect of extending their voice and reaching a constituency beyond their borders is compatible with experiential learning goals for students in developing political and cultural awareness through engaging with community experiences of responses to social injustice.

Key messages (if applicable):

(Summarising the main messages from the paper in up to four bullet points)

1. Transformational and experiential pedagogy requires that the reflection required from participants on field trips must be rooted in the processing of personal experience and observation supported by a group process of respectful dialogue between partners.
2. A formal capabilities framework to social work education can be enhanced by experiential learning in field trips where local communities are engaged as partners in the learning process.
3. Host Communities may have a strong agenda in terms of social justice which can be a powerful resource for student learning and for oppressed communities' voices to be heard.
4. Host communities have a variety of aims and goals which need to be acknowledged in field trip arrangements to facilitate sustained and productive relationships over time.

Key words/short phrases:

Social Work Education, Youth and Community Work Education, Field Trips, Experiential Learning,
Social Justice

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Relationships and Reciprocity in learning; A Palestine Field Trip for Social Work and Youth and Community Students

Introduction

Every two years for 10 years now social work and youth and community students from a university in the North of England have travelled to the West Bank of Palestine to be hosted by families and conduct a field trip or study tour of the West Bank. There have been five trips in total. They have visited key figures in the Palestine Authority (PA) within the West Bank; visited Community Centres; Camp Committees; Art Centres; social work agencies; social service providers for disabled young people; and visited museums, faith and political heritage sites across the West Bank and Jerusalem. The 10-day trip generally involves around 20 students and three to four staff members from the school of social science.

This paper reports on qualitative research with five host families in Palestine. We examine family member responses to questions around the reciprocity between host families and the university programme in addressing student learning goals and community impacts for the host community seeking international recognition and action in respect of the injustices of occupation. We also report on comments made by the Governors of two Palestine Authority (PA) administrative Governates in the West Bank. We consider the kinds of pedagogies that can form an experiential link between host community and students providing them with opportunities, through the stories and examples of everyday living they encounter in Palestine, to reflect and learn about social justice and human resilience. The issue of reciprocity is an important element for sustainability for the field trip. Communities are partners in such a project and as such the field trip is an exercise in co-production where the goals, motivations and aims of staff, students and the host community need to be addressed in an inclusive way. We argue that in the context of occupation and resistance in the West Bank the goals of the host community in respect of extending their voice and reaching a constituency beyond their borders is compatible with experiential learning goals for students in developing political and cultural awareness through engaging with community experiences of responses to social injustice.

In social work education there is evidence of a growing interest in international social work (Gray, 2005; Healy, 2008; Healy and Link, 2012; Cox and Pawar, 2017; Ferguson, Lavalette and Ioakimidis, 2018) although there is no accurate up to date information on the numbers of qualifying courses that offer international fieldwork experiences and what those opportunities are in the UK. There is a significant and growing interest around the role of international placements in relation to student learning around cultural competence and

1 human rights in the USA, Europe, Canada, and Australia (Lutterman-Aguilar and Gingerich,
2 2002; Razack, 2002; Panos *et al.*, 2004; Wehbi, 2009; Cleak, Anand and Das, 2016; Matthew
3 and Lough, 2017; Askeland, Døhlie and Grosvold, 2018; Jönsson and Flem, 2018; Mapp and
4 Rice, 2019). This literature suggests there has been sustained interest during this millennium
5 for international student social work fieldtrips in the wealthier nations at least, particularly
6 the USA, although we found there is little evidence to indicate that there is a significant
7 trend in the UK.
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11 The UK is not insulated however from the growing interest in international social work as
12 part of the knowledge agenda (Dominelli, 2010; Ferguson, Lavalette and Ioakimidis, 2018;
13 Lyons, 2018) and meanwhile the international organs of global social work have initiated an
14 agenda for an international social work that sets out a range of goals for universal human
15 rights and sustainable wellbeing across all the globe that carries with an expectation for
16 social work educators in bringing these issues into professional training (International
17 Federation of Social Workers, 2020).
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23 Here we consider the extent to which the use of international fieldtrips to further learning
24 aims in terms of human rights, decolonisation or social justice in the most general sense
25 depends on the establishment of reciprocity in relationships with host communities as
26 partners in field trips as sites of experiential learning. Social work education in the UK is
27 based on a competency and capabilities framework while a more experiential approach to
28 social justice, we argue, can offer a powerful additional opportunity, potentially
29 transformational, with critical benefits to student learning particularly around social justice
30 and human rights.
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37 The evidence from the host families in Palestine suggests that, what Rone (2008) terms the
38 immersive field trip (extended over 5 days at least), allows an exchange between host and
39 students participants that addresses the host families' goals in finding 'honest messengers'
40 and obtaining a recognition of their struggle under oppressive occupation and meets
41 academic aims to engage students in learning about the experience of occupation, suffering
42 and struggle but also about resilience, cultural diversity, and strategies of active resistance.
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49 The field trip

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52 The supplementary field trip is one approach from a range of measures that can be used in
53 internationalising the curriculum in social work and across related disciplines in the social
54 sciences (Cox and Pawar, 2017; Lyons, 2018). Exchange visits, volunteerism and field study
55 trips all appear in a growing literature exploring cross-national educational experiences in
56 social work and more generally (Rone, 2008; Lough, 2009; Cleak, Anand and Das, 2016;
57 Mapp and Rice, 2019).
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1 In the UK the social work practice placement is subject to the professional capabilities
2 framework (PCF) administered by the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) so social
3 workers are required to demonstrate capabilities designed for general fieldwork practice
4 (BASW, 2021; Lucas and Acar, 2021). There is significant evidence to suggest that the
5 international experience may offer specific enhancements and opportunities as well as
6 challenges for learning that the domestic field work placement may not (Dorsett, Larmar
7 and Clark, 2019). Indeed there is also a growing set of studies exploring benefits and
8 opportunities as well as challenges for this kind of cross-national educational exchange
9 (D’Cruz, Gillingham and Melendez, 2005; Lindsey, 2005; Gilin and Young, 2009; Greenfield *et*
10 *al.*, 2012; Bell and Anscombe, 2013; Cleak, Anand and Das, 2016; Beck, *et al.*, 2017; Bell,
11 Moorhead and Boetto, 2017; Askeland, Døhlle and Grosvold, 2018; Dorsett, Larmar and
12 Clark, 2019). In this paper, rather than focus on direct benefits to student learning we
13 consider the element of reciprocity from the local host community and explore the ways in
14 which a partnership approach to the field trip may address the goals and motivations of
15 hosts, students, and the University.
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24 Partners as stakeholders

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27 In Askeland and Payne's (2001 p.263) discussion paper they argue that there is a need to
28 move beyond a, naive 'travel broadens the mind', approach to cross-national field education
29 in social work. Unwelcome outcomes may also result. Figures for the growth in this sector
30 may be sketchy at best globally but there is reason to believe in this century an explosion of
31 poverty tourism and a saviour mentality, rather than a respectful engagement is very much
32 in evidence (Mapp and Rice, 2019). The extent to which this reinforces and trades on the
33 perceived helplessness of poorer nations serves to continue the relationships of colonialism
34 and global oppression that characterise political and economic relations across the globe.
35 More formal cross-national field education programs in social work and public
36 administration and liberal arts is also a growth industry, perhaps only temporarily checked
37 by pandemic restrictions, and can also be subject to powerful critique in terms of its
38 exploitative potential (Gray, 2005; Grusky, 2000; Lough, 2014; Mapp & Rice, 2019; Perold *et*
39 *al.*, 2013; Wehbi, 2009).
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48 Despite evidence of gains to be made it is also clear that there is an imbalance here in terms
49 of the opportunity and potential to benefit from cross cultural travel, exchange and study.
50 The means, context and freedom by which the richer nations can visit and sample poorer
51 nations, is in contrast to the ways in which the poorer nations can afford to sample the
52 richer nations. There are concerns and challenges to ethical practice in a world of unequal
53 power and resources. Grusky (2000 p.858) warns that study programmes, 'may easily
54 become small theatres that recreate historical cultural misunderstandings and simplistic
55 stereotypes and replay, on a more intimate scale, the huge disparities in income and
56 opportunity that characterise North-South relations today'. The drive towards charity
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1 models or social action projects can result in tokenistic efforts at change that instead
2 reinforce the impact of global structural inequalities on individual and community identities.
3 Much of this critique is laid at the door of contemporary trends in volunteerism, particularly
4 of young travellers from wealthy nations (Grusky, 2000; Lough, 2014; Mapp and Rice, 2019).
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7 In terms of the more measured interventions of more formal social work programmes of
8 field practice and education Gray (2009) discusses three axes of indigenisation, universalism
9 and imperialism and the difficulties in achieving clarity around where the focus of
10 intervention, learning and social change lies. International social work has to decide where
11 the universal values of a global profession reflect a greater or lesser degree of imperialism
12 and where indigenisation can strengthen local capabilities and strengths.
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15 In considering the field trip Askeland and Payne (2001) refer to the 'ringmasters' and the
16 other stakeholders. Ringmasters are those who fund and provide institutional legitimacy
17 that allows the cross-national project to take place at all, whilst stakeholders are the
18 participants and planners who design and carry out the project to completion. These
19 stakeholders include students who have vested interests in learning outcomes and future
20 professional careers, and the tutors and staff whose professional and personal interests
21 provide an axis that includes personal and professional commitments to social justice and
22 are bound to professional responsibility for student learning. But the host community is
23 equally a stakeholder in this model. For the purposes of this paper, we have adopted the
24 more relationship focussed term, 'partner'. Communities have no obligation to take part.
25 They may be induced through instrumental benefits or offers underwritten by other
26 partners. Local communities also will have complex motivations and provisos that form part
27 of the constellation of goals and aims that will in turn ultimately provide for the desired
28 student learning experiences and the sustainable relationships between partners that affirm
29 and allow for continuity for field trip programs over time. The potentially exploitative and
30 ethically compromised effects of a programme are perhaps less likely to be a facet of less
31 powerful community partners although it could be that local inequities and politics could
32 have a bearing on access to perceived benefits from facilitating a field trip.
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35 An experiential field trip can facilitate student learning but how does it address goals for the
36 host community as partners? To proceed we need to consider the aims and prospects of
37 partners and associated pedagogies for student learning.
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40 Learning pedagogy, students, and host community 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48

49 The cross national field trip can be an exercise in opening new insights and perspectives for
50 students (Lindsey, 2005; Gilin and Young, 2009; Bell and Anscombe, 2013; Beck, V. *et al.*,
51 2017; Pawar, 2017). Pawar (ibid) underlines that the lack of routine, the struggle in respect
52 of unfamiliar language and culture removes students from the embedded expectations of
53 the classroom and the routinised reflections of our own culture and heritage. The
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1 experiential theory of John Dewey is commonly drawn on by contemporary scholars where
2 learning is understood to take place in the novel situation rather than the routinised and
3 familiar, and in this way extends the lived experience of the learner through a process of
4 reflection and analysis (Lutterman-Aguilar and Gingerich, 2002; Rone, 2008; Roholt and
5 Fisher, 2013; Pawar, 2017). Rone (2008) found that students could be as researchers and
6 experience the 'emic' role of the insider perspective and a greater respect for indigenous
7 cultures. In this sense cultural sensitivity and responsiveness is essential an experiential
8 phenomenon which is observed in a sense of reciprocity often between the dominant
9 paradigms of colonial powers and the decolonialisation struggles of the colonised (Bessarab
10 and Wright 2020).
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16 The student participant learner has the opportunity to reflect on abstract concepts such as
17 knowledge, power, injustice, inequality, in real and practical application outside their
18 assumed frame of reference and connect those experiences with the emotional and lived
19 experience of informants and stakeholder participants. Ledwith (2020) and others stress the
20 impact of the personal stories of others and their power in exposing the experience of
21 injustice and in overcoming the justifications and contradictory positions of the powerful.
22 This experiential learning pedagogy lends itself to the insights of Freire (1970) where it is
23 acknowledged that education is never a neutral experience but puts knowledge in touch
24 with values, politics, culture, lived experiences and life choices. Theories of experience and
25 learning from Dewey (1897) onwards including the reflective learning cycles of Kolb (Kolb,
26 1984; Passarelli and Kolb, 2012) and others stress the role of action and reflection and
27 action either in cyclical reflective models. Other influential theorists of professional social
28 work practice include the central reflective action axis between thought and knowledge and
29 practical experience and it forms an important part of the supervision relationship in social
30 work (Fook and Gardner, 2007).
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40 The need for a supportive presence from tutors before during and after to help students
41 process experiences and reflect on their significance is supported widely in the literature
42 (Razack, 2005; Mathiesen and Lager, 2007; Wehbi, 2009; Nuttman-Shwartz and Berger,
43 2012; Cleak, Anand and Das, 2016; Matthew and Lough, 2017; Askeland, Døhlle and
44 Grosvold, 2018). Learning about culture and context in advance is frequently supported as a
45 crucial means of addressing student preconceptions and issues of motivation for joining the
46 field trip. However, we must consider how the hosting community facilitates the learning
47 opportunity available to students and how their position and participation as partners is
48 facilitated before and during the field trip.
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55 In the account below we explore the family hosting relationship in the Palestine field trip
56 and the interchange between student and family members as a crucial and central part of
57 the educational opportunity for all partners.
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Methodology

The historical and contemporary social injustices of the Palestinian struggle are well documented (Amnesty Int 2021, Horton 2013, Pappè 2006). The Palestine Field trip grew out of earlier research into the circumstances and challenges of being a young person in the West Bank (Jones and Lavalette, 2011). There have been five trips and the relationship between the host community and staff at the University has deepened involving the co-writing of two book chapters with one community leader and hosting of a delegation including several young people at a global youth conference in the UK (Big Hope 2, 2018, Lavalette, Ramsey and Amara, 2018). In 2021 an online exhibition of Palestinian school children's artwork was opened after the global Covid pandemic stymied plans for a synchronous live exhibition in both countries (LHU, 2020). The research discussed in this paper was initiated to explore the impact and potential of the relationship and the field trips for future benefit of stakeholders and students.

In Palestine, students and tutors stay for 10 days and are hosted by local families in a West Bank refugee camp and surrounds. They take part in normal family life in the morning and evenings while they will generally be taken out to tour specific sites of interest during the day. Some host family members will accompany the students in addition to the staff and local tour organiser. The local organiser for the trip is a community leader who hosts staff from the University and members of his family may also accompany the students on the daily trips out of the camp. There is an extensive itinerary from social work projects to arts centres and community action groups as well as local governmental authorities.

An application was made to the University research ethics committee and formal approval for a qualitative project obtained involving interviews and focus groups with host families and students and local politicians, subject to all appropriate consents and risk assessments for participants. Five individual student interviews were completed and 3 student focus groups by staff who had been on at least one previous trip to Palestine. The student interviews will be reported on elsewhere whilst this paper reports on the two interviews that were undertaken with governors in the West Bank and 5 family interviews with host families and one interview with the main community organiser managing the Palestinian side of the field trip. The Palestinian interviews were conducted in host family homes in and around the West Bank City refugee camp in 2019 by University tutors, and engaged a range of extended family members, all of whom had been involved in hosting with the exchange programme for a period of years. Often during interviews family members would come and go and discussions were informal and where necessary, speech was translated by the main Palestinian trip organiser.

1 The interviewers worked with the Community Organiser as interpreter in three interviews
2 where families did not speak English and in the interviews with the governors. All names of
3 people and places are anonymised.

4 The findings were analysed subsequently by the researchers at the University in the UK
5 through a thematic analysis using NVivo software.
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10 Findings

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12 Families were all asked a similar schedule of questions around why they hosted students,
13 the perceived benefits and challenges, and their expectations of the students during and
14 after the conclusion of the visit. Families were also asked to reflect on and make any
15 suggestions regarding the preparation of the students for the visit and how the visits could
16 perhaps be improved as a program for future occasions. Additional questions were around
17 the impact on the immediate community or friends and neighbours included in the wider
18 local community. These questions allowed a general discussion over the space of an hour
19 approximately with repeated interviews on two occasions. The interviews, were recorded,
20 transcribed and a thematic analysis undertaken based on the schedule questions. Here we
21 report on the main emerging themes from these interviews.
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29 Hospitality and cultural exchange

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31 The opening discussion in interviews focused on the families' motivation to be involved, and
32 the benefits and challenges in their experience. Here a common thread was cultural and
33 three families mentioned a religious duty or obligation to be welcoming and offer hospitality
34 to strangers. One family in addition mentioned a duty to offer their homes out of respect for
35 the Palestine side organiser of the field trip programme. Some of these opening statements
36 are offered in the following extracts.
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43 *Because of our traditional attitude to guests and welcoming, as Arabs, when we*
44 *receive guests, we have a good chance to exchange culture. To see how you live and*
45 *vice versa towards us. Amir-Household 1*
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49 Some other reasons were included by young people and one father in particular, which
50 related to the potential to increase knowledge capital within their own families to the
51 benefit of young people. This included improving English language acquisition, learning
52 about University life in the UK and learning about young people from the UK in terms of the
53 freedoms they inherit and their attitudes and values more generally.
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57 The following extracts can give some flavour of this.
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My kids have never been outside Palestine. They have never seen the sea or been to the beach, owing to the lean budget to fund such trips.

Yes, these groups will give my kids a new experience. Also, to learn about the University - the subjects, their ambitions. They compare what they have and what they have themselves. For example, this had encouraged my kids to understand English language. Just to have better contacts. Omar- Household 2

And from his son

I felt that it was a good opportunity to learn from them. Also, we were able to keep in touch with their culture, beliefs, values and traditions. Because they are also young we believe that we have a good chance to stay in touch and to create understanding and awareness.

Also, because they are students we are of the same ages. I believe these students were in touch with the needs we have. Comparing with their lifestyle their freedom to move everywhere where we are not able. So, they know that and understood that. Without these visits they wouldn't know that. Yousef-Household 2

Honest messengers

However, the reason most strongly communicated for taking part in the exchanges was with having students fulfil an 'honest messenger' position with respect to seeing and hearing the oppressive features of life under occupation in Palestine and carrying that message home. This was a consistent theme amongst all host families and, whilst nuanced to some degree, has to be regarded as a primary reason for families aims in taking part in the field trips, opening the family homes and entering into the relationship in such an intimate way. Here we give some extracts expressing this in general terms before looking in more detail at some of the host family responses.

To send messages everywhere through your group - to explain the reality and tell everybody about our life. So the students will transfer - will not change the reality, but at the same time they will talk to friends, neighbours and families and spread the stories. Amir- household 1

And again,

In one sentence - we trust you are honest messengers to transfer the truth of what you are hearing and seeing, it is enough. This is your next country. You can go anywhere see anything and do not hesitate to ask questions...it is your responsibility to be the honest messenger and by yourself to judge. I would like you to be non-aligned and to see and tell everyone the truth. We don't want to exaggerate or build

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*images that is not really the truth...no, no, no, we want the reality. Khalil -Local
organiser-Household 3*

The 'honest messenger' who makes up their own mind and can ask any question was important and the asking and answering of questions is a core activity addressed by all participants. For that message to be an effective one the families wanted to allow students to make up their own minds about what they saw.

They have received many questions from them about traditions or political situation or work or study. Either to me or to my kids or my wife. And these are questions according to their interests. This makes us think they are interested. We feel when we respond there is an interaction from them. So, during these times we feel we come closer to each other. Omar- Household 2

Social Justice

We now turn to other ways the time spent with families may impact the development of professional ethics and thinking where it comes to notions of social justice, respect for diversity and building of understanding about individuals and groups. This includes the need for students to consider, through listening to the stories of family members, how a given community and the individuals within it can be presented in fundamentally opposing ways by some international and domestic mass media.

We feel it is important because Israelis explain and use their own stories, dreams and rights to persuade people. We believe it is our right to explain our story and show our story. It is important not just to hear this but to see with your eyes. Even we believe that you along with the trips do not see the whole story about what goes on. It is the situation itself that has to influence you not just what we say. You have to see for yourself. Ibrahim- household 4

There was a theme here of being seen and recognised from the Palestinian families. They wanted to be seen not through other eyes in a wider global media context but first-hand in their homes. Families sought the revealing of the truth that would speak for itself through close relationships, friendship and hospitality. This was also a political agenda not just at a micro level but on a wider stage in a historical context. The historical role of Great Britain and the Balfour agreement runs deep in the cultural memory, but the issue of responsibility was carefully distanced from the student visitors and staff. However, there was still a sense of a duty of consideration of that historic role in discussing the expectations of families. This was frequently acknowledged.

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When the groups come from London. There is difference when American or British come even in our subconscious mind. Because, first of all, we feel uncomfortable because the Americans support Israel in everything, so it depends on the nationalities sometimes, even if sometimes they are caring and coming to see what is going on. Ali - Household 5

This generation of young British students was seen as a new positive development to nurture. The educational job from the Palestinian side was about righting a historical wrong as explained below,

Also, one of the benefits of the group's visits... is, can, strengthen the relationship between people in Palestine and people in Britain. Feedback through the history books and our historical studies is that UK is responsible for our catastrophe. It can change the perception so that UK can have a positive side as well.

So, your visits is the way to change the history - people in UK do not agree with what happened and people in UK can have the intention to change the situation and what happened. Amir- Household 1

The students are not burdened with a heavy duty of action by host family members but are expected to ask, question, listen, look, and judge with their own eyes and ears. Families hope they will learn from what is happening around them and speak of that experience when they return. This involves differentiating between the commonly traded media stories of violence in Palestine and the actual everyday experience of daily domesticity and life within local communities of work and school, living, loving, and learning. Equally this means seeing the impact of the occupation on all areas of Palestinian life, through forced removal from their lands, checkpoints, raids, shootings, and imprisonment. Although students were not held responsible for historical wrongs, they are placed in a position of weighing that sense of responsibility for themselves and coming to terms with it. There is an appeal to act in some way to tell others what they have seen but the families can only hope their experience is understood, their sense of injustice validated, and the honest messenger will spread the message.

First that we hope we did the best and they left us satisfied. This is what we hope. And also that when they go home, they are not aligned to us. Just to say what is the truth and the reality. And to take their responsibility in defending the right and the truth. Amir- Household 1

Also, responsibilities come from their own beliefs. They can decide their own responsibilities, and no one can carry more than they can. Ibrahim - Household 4

Challenges to learning

The main challenges families perceived to the learning process were around firstly, the language barrier. Only a minority of students would understand or speak any form of Arabic and none were familiar with Palestinian Arabic. Many of the local community have some elementary English and some are accomplished English speakers. A common language was only one aspect of this problem but in a busy itinerary the balance of time at home learning and taking part in family life has to be balanced with the daily round of community visits. One or two families felt that students were too tired to socialise much after daily trips. Here the data underlined the message from students that this was a demanding field trip and not a relaxing holiday. The intensity of this social contact, the struggles over language, the realisation that this is a real life of adversity, political and social oppression and the information students are offered as they are introduced to community life engages all the senses.

For me and the families it can be difficult because of communication. Language the barrier. But they continue -this is the sweet thing- to help each other. Amir- Household 1

First, I really have sympathy for the group because you have an intensive programme...they are exhausted. So the members of the groups come back tired. Most of the time this caused a lack of, or short meetings with them in the evening. Showers, then sleeping. Sometimes we don't find enough time to talk. We apologise to them for that. But that doesn't mean that we don't have anytime to talk. Sometimes there are flexibilities like when the group stay in [West Bank City] and they can talk then. Omar- Household 2

The families were mostly content with the preparation of the students prior to coming. there was some concern that students might be shocked at things they would see. It was felt necessary to have some idea of local cultural conditions and the political situation.

I think when you are preparing them they know it is not a trip for having fun. It is a trip to see the true evidence. Like when you tell them I will bring you to see in the camp and how people get on where they are living. Most of them they are prepared. And sometimes cry. Maybe one or two not taking serious. This is a normal thing. You can't have 20 persons and all of them are positive. If you take me to [English City] you can't guess how I will react. Perhaps I miss my family and I cry, - you can't know. Amal - household 5

Our behaviour here in Palestine is a reflection of many local conditions. Our behaviour here is a mixture of happy and terrifying. If you are happy in your home

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outside your home you will be afraid of checkpoints, or of what happens the street, maybe soldiers. Danger all the time. Confused all the time. The difference between people. We keep smiling. Ali- household 5

Yes. I know you are working hard to prepare them and explain culture and tradition. This is a good sign that the students are interested to come with their basic knowledge about the community and the social life that we have. This is highly appreciated. This eases the contact. Khalil -Household 3

A general idea about political social and economical situation...traditions, values, halal, haram. Because you have your own environment and we have ours. We respect both but we have to know each other before...the main idea is to know about the occupation. Amal -household 3

The Governors

In addition to the daily round within the refugee camps, students on the field trips; visit the different governate areas within the West Bank, hear perspectives from elected Governors and community leaders, and visit sites of social and political significance. It is through these means that a greater understanding of the historical political struggle impacts the daily life for families in the camps. It is on such trips that students learn about, military checkpoints, the dividing wall from Israel, and restrictions on travel and other more detailed restrictions for economic life. This includes the system of permits needed for movement, the state support of illegal settlements and the powerless experienced by officials and local businesses over issues around economic development, planning and control over basic utilities and essentials for an economic life for a growing population.

The meetings with governors from the Palestine Authority that are part of the scheduled field trip programme for students involve a large group meeting with the Governor and PLA officials and a tour around significant sites in the locality. Students learn of the unsustainable nature of the West Bank administration of community development and of the injustices of the Israeli planning restrictions and permits used to deny essential planning for future health, wellbeing, and vital economic development for a growing population. The interviews undertaken with governors make clear that the Governors' approach to field trips reflects that of the host families. The strategy is to inform and hope that the messages can make an impact elsewhere and bridge the gap between Palestinian communities and a wider international community, bypassing the mainstream global media.

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One Governor stressed the importance that he gives the visits from foreign students.

Palestine is beautiful but destroyed by occupation. Despite this Palestinians continue to resist and the education of students is a vital part of resistance...our demand is that you raise your voice and tell your governments that these things are happening and result in a cycle of violence...we will not surrender. Governor West Bank City 1

And from another region,

So, we need witnesses to come to Palestine and see with their own eyes and hear with their own ears without any influence from our side but to transfer the truth to the other side to see and hear what they are doing. We need clean hearts and clean minds to tell the truth as it is. Governor West Bank City 2

For students to hear the Palestinian story is a battle against misrepresentation and it is seen as part of a propaganda war.

For me as a Palestinian individual I am so interested to receive daily students from, from Britain from all over Europe Universities coming to see and check the truth as it is.

So it will be very helpful to meet and discover the Israeli propaganda and to reveal their stories. And because we are the target of the Israelis and we are the weakest side. We are in need for support from parliamentarians and human rights organisations and students and everybody. Governor West Bank City 2

Discussion

These findings from the interviews with host families, and governors in Palestine, make a powerful declaration around social justice aims that are sustaining the fieldtrip as a venture based on mutual trust and longstanding relationships between stakeholders. It is not presented here as evidence of a relationship of symmetry, or even equality of power, but there is evidence of mutuality of aims in exploring political and cultural realities, values, and lived experience across the two communities of students and host families. In this case the family members in the interviews have outlined the kinds of outcomes they are hoping for, and that underlie their positive engagement and agency in the exchange. As we have shown these are a variety of personal and community goals relating to political understandings and cultural exchange. These goals for host families are commensurate with goals for student learning and represent a reciprocity underlying the field trip as an enterprise.

1 Unlike professional capabilities that we see set out for professional student social workers in
2 the UK (Higgins, 2016; BASW, 2021) the families seek a capacity from students that is more
3 loosely defined by a request for honesty and openness to the Palestinian experience of
4 political oppression. For the families, topics around educational goals, the ambitions of local
5 young people and language skills are part of an agenda for social and cultural capital. The
6 main thrust, however, is for visiting students to ask questions, to observe with an open
7 mind, and to a tell others what they have witnessed when they go home. In addition, it is
8 hoped they will, language barriers notwithstanding, engage in family life in mutual respect,
9 friendship, and solidarity with community members, and particularly, other young people.

14 Practically, the evidence from the host family interviews is that they are conscious of the
15 important role in student learning that falls to them, and they are looking for that
16 opportunity and engagement. There is no formally structured tutor time, classes or
17 seminars during the field trip, and accompanying tutors need to be ready to offer mediating
18 support to families and students in opportunist and often reactive ways reflecting on
19 'teachable moments' so that learning is facilitated in a way that reflects the commitment to
20 highlighting social issues. Transformational learning cannot be achieved for another but is a
21 personal process of thinking through and adjusting to new information and experience and
22 the learning is a mutual experience between hosts and visitors. Tutors may facilitate and
23 help students think through incidental learning experiences, but families are also engaging
24 with students daily, exchanging views, answering questions and by example dealing with
25 daily routine under their specific circumstances.

34 Notwithstanding this focus on the experiential there is opportunity for learning that the
35 University supports through direct teaching and student and community activism in the UK
36 before field trips and upon return. A further paper is planned to expand on this aspect of
37 the field trip and report on the data from students in respect of their learning and the
38 impact of the field trip experience.

43 Returning to the earlier discussion of experiential and transformational learning pedagogies
44 the learning relationship is defined by two main constituents (Lutterman-Aguilar and
45 Gingerich, 2002; Roholt and Fisher, 2013; Ledwith, 2020). Firstly, the relationship between
46 participants being one of exchange and secondly, engaging some form of personal critical
47 reflective process. The tradition of social work education has held the critical reflective
48 process as a central defining element to the development of professional practitioners
49 (D'Cruz, Gillingham and Melendez, 2005; Fook and Gardner, 2007). It is important that
50 students are then prepared and supported to reflect on experiences, thoughts, and feelings
51 throughout the trip. On the Palestine trip the University group leader and host leader will
52 both address students as a group each day contextualising daily visits and providing
53 orientation to historical or contemporary circumstances.

1 Support for students includes an opportunity to consider the personal motivation for
2 making an international trip (Wehbi, 2009). Equally then, engaging a recognition of issues of
3 colonialism with regard to dominant western narratives presents an important opportunity
4 for educators to explore these and related themes with students as part of preparation for
5 the field trip. Related themes with respect to faith, constructions of race and ethnicity,
6 family life, including gender relations, sexuality, individualism are issues for a respectful
7 approach to living with host families and to minimise the application of a dominant western
8 narratives (Pawar, 2017).
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14 Conclusion 15

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17 The global international agenda for social work has historically sought to embody a
18 commitment to the liberation of peoples. There is now enough evidence from research in a
19 variety of settings across the world to demonstrate the value in international fieldtrips for
20 student learning informed by experiential and transformational learning methodologies.
21 Transformational and experiential pedagogy requires that the reflection required from
22 participants must be rooted in the processing of personal experience and observation
23 supported by a group process of respectful dialogue between partners. Whilst research has
24 confirmed benefits to student learning from international fieldtrips, there needs to be
25 reciprocal understandings and support to deal with expectations and priorities of host
26 communities. This will include the political and cultural inequalities that form the basis of
27 colonial heritage. A social justice perspective is then inherently called for as a condition of
28 any fieldtrip project. The findings from the Palestine fieldtrip serve to underline the
29 knowledge and learning exchange relationship as a prerequisite for the field trip but equally
30 that this immersive experience within host families offers a learning experience that carries
31 with it hopes for a wider recognition of voice in a hostile world for the host community. The
32 stories we exchange as participants in daily life with others offer a rich resource for support
33 and solidarity as well as professional learning for students. This need not be a challenge as
34 such to a professional capabilities approach to professional practice that has formed the
35 trajectory in contemporary social work education for a state regulated profession. However,
36 there is to date little evidence that social work education in the UK is opening to this
37 opportunity in the same way the international field trip has been growing in other lands
38 overseas. While the international agenda for social work is articulated as a response to a
39 range of issues from human rights to climate change and inequalities it remains to be seen
40 whether UK social work education is ready to explore a less formal but deeply engaged
41 experiential educational experience for the coming generations of social workers.
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