



Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Faculty Activism Newsletter

The Israel-Hamas War

October 2023 - July 2024

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Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Faculty Activism Newsletter – The Israel-Hamas War

October 2023-July 2024

The Faculty of the Humanities and Social Sciences at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev has dedicated much of the recent academic year to a wide variety of activities designed to contribute to Israeli society. This newsletter describes some of the highly diverse activities of members of our academic, administrative and technical staff. Following the painful shock experienced by the Israeli state and society on October 7, one of the most heartwarming phenomena is the cross-sectoral spirit of social contribution, to allay the difficulties and help individuals and entire communities cope.

Hope springs from the Negev!

Nirit Ben-Aryeh Debby – Dean
Avital Edri – Director of Administration
Ayelet Harel – Vice Dean

Social Activism

Much of our activity was focused on the social area, informed by our knowledge and experts in different areas of the humanities and social sciences, and our experience as active citizens in society.

These activities have been fully voluntary in order to promote Israeli society.

Prof. Sara Offenberg; Marganit (Niti) Cassapu (PhD candidate); Eli Revzin (Teaching Fellow)

Department:	The Arts
Project title:	Bring Back the Colors
Project type:	Social initiative
Duration:	November 2023 - until all the hostages return

Project Description

"Bringing Back the Colors" is an interactive installation by artist Eli Revzin who teaches at the Department of the Arts, which calls for the return of the kidnapped hostages. It is curated by Marganit (Niti) Cassapu from the same department. In the central space of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev's Senate Gallery there are 215 adult chairs and 30 children's chairs, all colored in grey. Each chair is equipped with a bottle of paint and a brush. When a kidnapped person is released, one chair is painted in color. These painted chairs will later be publicly auctioned, with proceeds donated to support the kidnapped individuals.

Adjacent to the chairs is a digital sign displaying the time elapsed since October 7 – a staggering reminder of those abducted and absent from home.

Artist Eli Revzin reflects, "Upon receiving a request from the university's rector, Prof. Chaim Hames, to create an installation about the hostages, I aimed to convey optimism during this challenging period. The installation was completed in a dedicated campus space. After collecting 215 chairs from various campus locations and acquiring additional children's chairs, I spent several days painting. It's during this process of individually transforming each chair that one truly grasps the enormity of the tragedy. The most hopeful moment came at the end –painting the five chairs of the released hostages and placing them amidst the waiting sea of grey.

You can observe part of this painting process on [Instagram](#) with the hashtag #bring_back_the_colors

Prof. Maayan Amir

Rank: Associate Professor
Department: The Arts
Project title: Retreat for Artists and Students
Project type: Social initiative
Duration: July 2024

Project Description

The Department of Arts at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev organized a professional retreat for artists and art students who were affected by the terror attack on October 7 and the ongoing war's consequences.

The retreat took place on July 10-11, 2024 at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and included master classes, workshops, a pop-up exhibition at the Trumpeldor Gallery, group meetings with curators, and discussions about contemporary art issues and the "Aesthetics of Care."

The initiative was developed in response to the need for a time and space for professional interactions and aimed at provoking contemplation on creation in the present time, with an emphasis on providing personal enrichment opportunities and developing future collaborations.

Prof. Tehila Refaeli

(part of the activity was with Prof. Ephrat Huss)

Department:	Charlotte B. and Jack J. Spitzer Department of Social Work
Rank:	Associate Professor
Project title:	"In a place where there are no men, strive to be human": Social work in an emergency
Project type:	Social initiative
Duration:	October - November 2023

Project Description

Early in the war I was contacted by a volunteer who told me about a hotel in Tel Aviv that hosted evacuees but offered no professional services. I immediately prepared to go there, and also recruited Prof. Ephrat Huss from my department. In two hours, I prepared a list of professionals from various areas. Upon arriving at the hotel, we realized that the one of the parents' central needs was help with the children, and Ephrat and I started conducting various activities with them (such as "war bingo", with good and bad words related to the situation). Since we lacked expertise in this area, we recruited professionals who arrived each day to spend time with the kids. I became a volunteer manager.

Subsequently, the hotel manager let us know that all parents had undergone very difficult events on October 7, and that we should talk to them. Every parent who was interested could talk to us or to other professionals for a preliminary working through of their experiences. At the mothers' request, I also facilitated other types of assistance, including collecting donated clothes and recruited volunteers in the alternative medicine area.

After several days we were contacted by another hotel, to which I appointed a volunteer manager from my list and recruited a team. When yet another hotel contacted us, I appointed one of my volunteers to coordinate the activities in the first hotel and went on to volunteer there. At this point, fundraising and rights take-up became an important part of our work. I helped people take up various rights, including the integration of children in Tel Aviv schools. Our activity ended in early November when a municipality representative informed us that the local welfare services would take full responsibility for the evacuees at the hotels.



Dr. Ofer Edelstein

Department:	Charlotte B. and Jack J. Spitzer Department of Social Work
Rank:	Senior Lecturer
Project title:	Eat something: Cooking in wartime
Project type:	Social initiative
Duration:	October 8 2023 - ongoing

Project Description

On the second day of the war, my wife and I felt we could not stay at home without helping out. After we saw a post by a commando soldier reporting they haven't eaten for two days, we started a cooking group. From a small group of 23, we grew to 210, and collected donations in Israel and worldwide. We cooked over 15,000 hot dishes for reservists without access to military kitchens.

We are in contact with a variety of units on the Gaza front or along the northern border. Every Friday, we deliver 250-550 meals. The dishes are cooked in the group members' houses. They are brought to the lobby of my building, where my daughters and I pack everything in crates and deliver hot, fresh and health food to the units. We recruited several local businesses here in Ness Ziona, and joined forces with a group of women preparing Jachnun – a traditional Yemenite dish. We will be there for the fighters until the war ends.

[Link](#) to a Hebrew news story about the project

Dr. Talia Schwartz-Tayri

Department:	Charlotte B. and Jack J. Spitzer Department of Social Work
Rank:	Lecturer
Project title:	Social workers for war victims
Project type:	Social initiative
Duration:	October 7, 2023-July 2024

Project Description



Already on October 7, Dr. Talia Schwartz-Tayri and Efrat Levi started a group of social work first responders, trauma specialists, and social workers experienced in general intervention. At the same time, WhatsApp groups were created, which included thousands of social workers countrywide, within days. Several days later, the group joined forces with Snir – an NGO promoting equal opportunities, and another group led by former member of parliament social worker Yifat Kariv.

The group is divided into two teams. One team coordinates psychological first aid for evacuees throughout the country. This team's work began early on, when victims of the attack on the Israeli communities along the border with Gaza were being evacuated. The second team, coordinated personally by Dr. Schwartz Tyri, provided immediate assistance to trauma victims: families of missing persons, survivors of the music festival massacre, and families in the cities bordering on Gaza whose members showed severe signs of distress. The team coordinated between social workers and cases requiring immediate and/or ongoing assistance, according to their professional expertise. In addition, social workers, including Dr. Schwartz Tayri, provided immediate assistance to IDF mental health officers and commanders in the various sectors, including in the north, to members of the Military Rabbinate as well as those employed in identifying bodies, and to social workers of the commando NGOs in Tel HaShomer and Soroka hospitals. The volunteers contributed significantly to the system's operations in the first weeks of the war.

Dr. Talia Schwartz-Tayri

Department:	Charlotte B. and Jack J. Spitzer Department of Social Work
Rank:	Lecturer
Project title:	Ongoing resilience training for IDF mental health officers at Regional Clinic South
Project type:	Social initiative
Duration:	From the third week of the war to July 2024

Project Description

Given Dr. Schwartz-Tayri's involvement in providing immediate assistance to war victims and their families, she was contacted by social worker Oren Amsili, Head of the IDF's Regional Clinic Mental Health Officers Division, in order to provide formal emotional and professional support for the mental health officers in Regional Clinic South, including Soroka hospital. This support included three main aspects. The first was a refresher day at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev which included the formation of a support group, professional enrichment and relaxation activity with Prof. Ephrat Huss, managed by Dr. Schwartz Tayri. On that same day, a "train group" was launched; an open therapy group for emotional and professional resilience which accompanies the mental health officers to this day, facilitated by Dr. Schartz Tayri. The train group was complemented by training days at the Simulation Center with the help of Dr. Oren Wacht, Head of the Emergency Medicine Department.

Dr. Talia Schwartz-Tayri

Department:	Charlotte B. and Jack J. Spitzer Department of Social Work
Rank:	Lecturer
Project title:	Preliminary emotional support for witnesses testifying for Israeli Spirit – the Civil Advocacy Center at Ben-Gurion University
Project type:	Social initiative
Duration:	During the first three months of the war

Project Description

As part of Israeli Spirit – the Civil Advocacy Center at Ben-Gurion University, active under the auspices of BGU Radio, an ongoing project was undertaken for more than three months. The project involved video testimonies by survivors of the massacre in the Israeli communities on the border with Gaza and the nature festival party. Under the guidance and supervision of Dr. Schwartz Tayri, supportive procedures were conducted to prevent recurring symptomatology prior to and during the testimony. This support was provided by social workers, graduates of the Social Work Department, as well as by an MSW student supervised by Dr. Schwartz Tayri, during three consolidated days of testimonies.

Another initiative grew out this project, where social workers supervised by Dr. Schwartz Tayri provided support for families from the university community who have lost their loved ones. This support will be provided as part of a commemorative project by the university led by Dr. Buzi Raviv, director of the radio and project.

Dr. Tal Litvak Hirsch

Department:	Conflict Management & Resolution
Rank:	Senior Lecturer
Project title:	Psychological first aid for victims of the Nova Nature Festival massacre
Project type:	Social initiative
Duration:	From the first month after the outbreak of the war to April 2024

Project Description

As part of an activity to provide psychological first aid to communities particularly affected by the events of October 7, I helped the survivors of the Nova Nature Festival massacre. As a clinical psychologist, I volunteered on a hotline created by a team of volunteers, medical and therapeutic professionals, called NovaHelp. My main activity was Zoom conversations with survivors in their homes, to conduct preliminary assessments of their condition and needs.

Dr. Tal Litvak Hirsch

Department:	Conflict Management & Resolution
Rank:	Senior Lecturer
Project title:	Psychological first aid for evacuees from the Gaza front in hotels
Project type:	Social initiative
Duration:	First month after the outbreak of the war

Project Description

As part of an activity to provide psychological first aid to communities particularly affected by the events of October 7, I helped families evacuated from their homes along the border with Gaza to various hotels, mainly in Eilat and the Dead Sea area. As a clinical psychologist, I volunteered and travelled to Eilat on several occasions, each time for several days, where I met face-to-face with families (mainly parents) evacuated from the Gaza border area and Ashkelon. The project was sponsored by Hosen.

Prof. Oren Yiftachel

Department:	Environmental, Geoinformatics & Urban Planning Sciences
Project title:	Strengthening the infrastructure for Jewish-Arab collaborations in the south
Project type:	Social initiative
Duration:	October-December 2023

Project Description

As part of civil society, and of the Regional Council of the of the Unrecognized Bedouin Villages in the Negev in particular, I played a leading role in a series of meetings on first aid (emergency center in Houra, led by AJEEC-NISPED – Arab-Jewish Center for Empowerment, Equality, and Cooperation – Negev Institute for Strategies of Peace and Economic Development); violence prevention (meetings of joint organizations with Shatil, leading social change in Israel); education during crisis (presenting data to teachers and principals, led by AJEEC); and meetings on planning and development.

[Link](#) to one of the events

Ms. Sharon Toledano-Ofir

Department:	Communication Studies
Rank:	Administrative Staff
Project title:	Kvi-Sa, or Mama's Laundromat
Project type:	Social initiative
Project Description:	A mobile laundromat serving soldiers on the front
Duration:	November 2023 - present

Project Description

As the war began, with hundreds of thousands of reservists and army regulars who did not go home for long stretches of time, the basic needs of the soldiers became a concern. One of those basic needs was having clean clothes. We were then struck with the idea of purchasing washing and drying machines and mounting them on a mobile flatbed truck along with gallons of water and a generator. Thanks to donations from citizens and the university we were able to realize our plans, create a mobile laundromat, and start traveling along the southern front lines. The non-profit organization "Alon and Ella" took it upon themselves to raise more funds for the ongoing operation of the laundromat, mainly fuel expenses. Thanks to their efforts, the laundromat is operative to this day. The laundromat reaches a variety of training bases, gathering areas, encampments, schools and settlements in which soldiers are stationed, operating as a 'stand alone,' independent of any infrastructure. The heartfelt reactions we receive encourage us to continue working as long as it is needed. Today, there are volunteers from all over the country who wait to hear where the laundromat is headed so they can come and help. It is a joy to see that what we do is so greatly appreciated by those who risk their lives for all of us.

[link](#) for further information and videos of the projec



I would like to thank the university for supporting this project from the very beginning, which gave it the first push. And of course, I would like to thank the man who initiated, planned, built and operates the laundromat daily- a friend from the moshav- Ilan Katani.

Dr. Noam Tirosh

Department:	Communication Studies
Rank:	Senior Lecturer
Project title:	Radio workshop for evacuee students from Nofei HaBsor High School
Project type:	Social initiative
Duration:	December 2023

Project Description

As part of the workshop, I held sessions with 10th- and 11th-grade students from Nofei HaBsor High School in the Eshkol region, who had been evacuated from their homes and studying in the school's extension in Ein Yahav. In collaboration with BGU Radio, the university radio, the students worked on a special program where they were able to express their thoughts and feelings, and at the same time, studied several basic principles from the area of communication studies and social studies in general.

[Link](#) to the radio program

[Link](#) to a university post on the project

Dr. Moshe Schwartz

Department:	Communication Studies
Rank:	Teaching Fellow
Project title:	Transportation services, Alon & Ella NGO for civilian assistance
Project type:	Social initiative
Duration:	October-December 2023

Project Description

[Alon & Ella](#) – Building a Better Community Together – was founded by my wife, Shlomit Harel-Schwartz, and her partner Alon Brickman, during the COVID-19 epidemic. It commemorates our daughter Ella, who had died shortly after her birth. The NGO connects volunteers and those in need of its help. Following the events of October 7, the NGO, which by this time included thousands of volunteers, directed its existing infrastructure to new population groups, including evacuees, soldiers, victims and their families.

Every day, we transported equipment across the country: clothes and hygienic products for evacuees and those who chose to remain near the frontlines, personal equipment and warm clothing for soldiers, dry food products for civilian kitchens for soldiers, tablets and kits for the wounded, and learning materials and games for temporary daycare centers and schools. At the same time, I discovered that Sharon Toledano, the coordinator of my department, was starting a mobile launderette for soldiers. The NGO immediately joined in and raised the funds required (after an initial grant by the university).

In those hectic days I met the people of Israel in their finest hour. The hi-tech professional who picked up supplies for evacuees, the educator who made deliveries for soldiers, the entrepreneur who started a support system in hospitals, the company owner who loaned us his trucks, the former Bedouin fighter who drove all across the country, and the pensioner who called every morning to ask how she could help. As a researcher of communication and civilian participation, I ask myself now, how we can enlist this Israeli spirit revealed in the war and combine it with academic knowledge to move from disagreement to dialogue. How can we get out of the social media echo chambers and shape our collective future together?

Photos



Volunteers at the logistics center



clothes at the Alon and Ela organization's logistics center



Sorting and packing goods for distribution



Donated goods awaiting sorting



Donated goods all packed and ready for distribution to evacuees at hotels in Eilat

Dr. Galia Plotkin Amrami

Department:	Education
Rank:	Senior Lecturer
Project title:	Hostages Forum
Project type:	Social initiative
Duration:	October 2023 - May 2024

Project Description

I have been supporting the family of a hostage on behalf of the Hostages Forum. I maintain ongoing contact, mainly with his two parents who live in Ashkelon. His mother is confined to a wheelchair. I am involved in providing various types of assistance to the family. Sometimes there is need to provide, translate and mediate information between the Forum and the family (they speak mainly Russian); sometimes there is need for emotional support; and there was also a need to find temporary housing after a rocket fell on Ashkelon, damaging his parents' apartment and property. Moreover, there is the need to promote awareness of the urgency of freeing the hostages by translating texts for a delegation to Russia, or to promote various initiatives by connecting to private businesses. The support given to the family is more than practical assistance – it enables to prevent or minimize the marginalization of his parents as migrants undergoing the toughest time in their lives without sufficient cultural capital to cope.

Dr. Elon Langbeheim

Department:	Education
Rank:	Senior Lecturer
Project title:	Teaching at a school for evacuees from Shlomi
Project type:	Social initiative
Duration:	October 20-December 25, 2023

Project Description

I volunteered for two months as a science teacher at the Kol Israel Elementary School opened in Jerusalem for evacuees from the town of Shlomi in northern Israel. The school was opened as a joint initiative by the municipality and the Kerem Teacher Training Institute. It was based on several teachers who arrived from the north, soldier-teachers, and volunteers like me. I taught the children twice a week until the (delayed) start of the academic year.

Dr. Elon Langbeheim

Department:	Education
Rank:	Senior Lecturer
Project title:	Sparks – A Different Lesson
Project type:	Social initiative
Duration:	December 10-present

Project Description

Since mid-December I have been volunteering and providing weekly afternoon private lessons at a learning center in Moshav Zru'a near Netivot, in southern Israel. The youth from this area had not been evacuated, but did not attend school for nearly two months. Some enrolled in other institutions after their school, Sha'ar HaNegev, had shut down. These lessons were designed to help them compensate for the resulting learning gaps.

Prof. Eran Bar-Kalifa

Department:	Psychology
Rank:	Associate Professor
Project title:	Field clinic for treating October 7 victims
Project type:	Social initiative
Duration:	December 9, 2023-February 11, 2024

Project Description

The Community Clinic of the Psychology Department was established in 2018 by clinical faculty members in order to contribute to the welfare of the communities in southern Israel and provide high-quality clinical training for the department's clinical doctoral students. It offers empirically supported innovative psychotherapy and develops trailblazing research directions in the area. The team includes ten senior clinical psychologists and eight interns who are doctoral students at the department.

Since the outbreak of the war, the clinic became involved in supporting the southern communities by providing therapeutic interventions relevant to the current crisis. Specifically, the clinic has led three main activities:

1. Field clinic in evacuee hotels: Over the first three weeks of the war, a team of two faculty members and five doctoral students went to the hotels in Eilat and the Dead Sea area to provide clinical psychological first aid to the evacuees.
2. Three sessions of free online psychological first aid for civilians and soldiers with distress reactions.
3. Resilience therapy in Ofakim: For four months, a team of two faculty members and four interns arrived for a weekly day to provide voluntary treatment for dozens of people in Ofakim, near the border with Gaza, affected by the events of October 7.

Research Activities

The faculty's main activity is research. Some of its researchers, in the relevant disciplines, initiated up-to-date and innovative studies right after the outbreak of the war, in areas related to the war and Israel's coping with it ,in order to learn how to provide relief, learn lessons, and study our society optimally and immediately, rather than only retrospectively.

Liore Lander, Prof. Ephrat Huss, & Prof. Ayelet Harel

Departments:	Charlotte B. and Jack J. Spitzer Department of Social Work; Conflict Management & Resolution
Ranks:	Social work graduate student (MSW) and senior academic faculty members
Project title:	Combat reservists in emergency duty and their coping with transitions
Project type:	Research
Duration:	January 2024

Project Description

Upon the outbreak of the war in October 2023, more than 300,000 reservists were drafted for emergency duty. This called for analysis of the cyclical nature of reserve duty. In all militaries, reserve duty is described as cyclical, ambivalent, and complex and as involving traumatic elements. However, little has been written about how the soldiers themselves define their experience within specific social contexts. The article analyzes soldiers' transitions from their call to service, through their engagement in battle, to their return home, to learn lessons related to their reintegration in civilian society. Our findings are based on interviews with twelve reservists. The main theme arising from the interviews is a deep conflict between collective versus individual cultural narratives that raises dilemmas and stress at each of these stages of transition. The narrative framework and culturally contextualized, rather than trauma-related, focus of the findings shed new light on the experiences of combat soldiers, self-identified stressors, and their relationship to specific sociocultural contexts. The article proposes solutions for intervention and providing an appropriate space for working through these complex experiences, and most importantly, sharing them.

[Link](#) to the article (Hebrew with English abstract)

Dr. Tal Litvak Hirsch

Department:	Conflict Management & Resolution
Rank:	Senior Lecturer
Project title:	Perception of home and coping with displacement among divorced mothers – interviews as part of supervising Rinat Avziz's PhD
Project type:	Research
Duration:	Since the outbreak of the war and ongoing

Project Description

This is a research project of Rinat Avziz, a student in the Conflict Management and Resolution Program who studies perceptions of home and the coping of divorced mothers who have left their homes near the border with Gaza during the first week of the war. This qualitative longitudinal study is still ongoing.

Nitzan Eilon & Prof. Orna Braun-Lewensohn

Department:	Conflict Management & Resolution
Ranks:	Doctoral student & full professor
Project title:	“Good luck, you’re on your own”: The border communities and how they survived the October 2023 catastrophe
Project type:	Dissertation
Duration:	October 2023-September 2025

Project Description

My name is Nitzan Eilon, I live in Netiv HaAsara on the border with Gaza. On October 7, I had terrorists in my garden... Since then, I’m an “evacuee”, with questions on how to cope with everything that’s happened. Pretty soon I realized that the answers to my questions will be found in the community. I’ll try to understand how its members survive this round of hostilities, and perhaps the next. What enables them to hold their heads high? Is the answer to be found in their childhood and in their attachment figure? Do they benefit from a coherent worldview that provides them with meaning? Perhaps it is the community’s resilience that enables them to apply an effective coping strategy? And how are all these affected by the crisis of trust in the IDF?

My dissertation entails a longitudinal study of the individual and collective resources and coping strategies of the Israeli rural communities bordering on the Gaza Strip in the aftermath of October 7. I began distributing the first questionnaires 100 days into the war, and within two weeks, 651 forms were returned to me from residents of some twenty communities, including Netiv HaAsara, Kfar Aza, Be’eri, Nir Oz, Nahal Oz, Zikim, Karmia, Sa’ad and Erez. Preliminary analysis indicates significant differences between members of the founding generation (around age 60), with their strong community resilience, coherent worldview, and trust in the military, compared to the younger generation (up to 40). Combined with other fascinating findings, this will perhaps help me crack the genome of Zionism...

Naama Bar, Prof. Orna Braun-Lewensohn, & Dr. Stav Shapira

Departments:	Conflict Management & Resolution; Dept. of Emergency Medicine, Faculty of Health Sciences
Ranks:	Doctoral student & senior academic staff members (full professor & senior lecturer)
Project title:	Women with a history of sex abuse exposed to ongoing political violence: Optimal coping strategies and resilience factors
Project type:	Dissertation
Duration:	2021-2025

Project Description

My name is Naama Bar. About 30 months ago, I began writing my dissertation under the supervision of Prof. Braun-Lewensohn and Dr. Stav Shapira on women experiencing security threats who have a history of sexual victimization. The initial findings suggest that women with such intersectional experiences experience more post-traumatic symptoms and reduced resilience. This study grew out of my clinical work as the Director of the Unit for Treatment of Victims of Sexual Violence at the Eshkol Regional Council, near Gaza. In the course of my work, I treated women for whom military hostilities in the neighboring area triggered memories of sexual assault.

Ever since October 7, women all over the country are increasingly exposed to security threats. Rape crisis centers report a significant rise in calls, as well as increase in PTSD symptoms among victims. I lecture to teams in government services and in NGOs dealing with sexual victimization on the characteristics of wartime victims. I have also developed a treatment protocol based on my initial findings and clinical experience.

In addition, I have been working for about a decade in a Resilience Center treating victims of anxiety related to military hostilities. Since the outbreak of the war, I have been treating evacuees from the Gaza area, including victims of sexual violence. The clinical work with women with a history of such victimization, who witnessed the terrible events of October 7 and are now coping with the intersection of their victimizations lends strong support to the importance of my study and the applicability of its findings.

Prof. Orna Braun-Lewensohn & Dr. Khaled Al-Sayed

Affiliation:	Conflict Management & Resolution; Kaye Academic College of Education
Ranks:	Full professor & senior lecturer
Project title:	Emotional reactions and coping resources among Bedouin adolescents in the Negev against the backdrop of the Israel-Hamas war
Project type:	Research
Duration:	November 2023 – for a year

Project Description

The present study examines emotional reactions and coping resources among Bedouin adolescents living in the Negev against the backdrop of the recent Israel-Hamas war. The Bedouin society in the Negev numbers some 300,000 people, 52% of whom under the age of 18. It lost 17 of its members in the war, and five are still held captive by Hamas. In most of its communities, the infrastructures are run down, and they have no shelters. Specifically, in the so-called “unrecognized villages” there are no rocket sirens, and the defense system does not intercept rockets heading towards them as they are considered uninhabited. Upon the outbreak of the war, Bedouin society witnessed a sharp increase in the number of those requiring mental support.

Eight hundred adolescents aged 13-18 from various Bedouin communities in the south, including towns, recognized and unrecognized villages, participated in the study. They completed self-report questionnaires in January and February. The questionnaires addressed coping resources (sense of personal coherence, national resilience, community resilience, hope, and trust in elected officials), as well as emotional reactions and individual and collective identity.

The findings, currently under analysis, will help understand the distress of Bedouin adolescents, and accordingly serve as important input for an intervention program that will allow them to cope effectively with complex wartime situations.

Prof. Orna Braun-Lewensohn, Prof. Sarah Abu-Kaf & Dr. Tehila Kalagy

Departments:	Conflict Management & Resolution; Dept. of Public Policy & Management, Guilford Glazer Faculty of Business & Management
Ranks:	Full professor, associate professor & senior lecturer
Project title:	Coping resources and emotional distresses among various cultural groups in Israeli society During the Israel-Hamas war
Project type:	Research
Duration:	December 2023-June 2024

Project Description

The present study examines emotional reactions and coping resources among various cultural groups in Israeli society against the background of October 7 and the ensuing war in order to identify differences in the exposure of the different groups to these events, as well as resources that can help each group cope optimally with the current stressful situation. Self-report questionnaires were completed by 1,020 Jews (334 ultra-Orthodox, 330 secular, 186 national-religious, and 170 traditional) and 404 Arabs (236 from central and northern Israel, and 168 Bedouins from the south). The questionnaires addressed the degree of exposure to political violence, sense of coherence, community, social and national coherence, quality of family life, trust in government authorities, and emotional reactions to stress – anxiety, depression and somatization.

This study follows upon a series of studies on Israeli society in various stress situations. The findings of the present study are currently being compared to those of a similar study of the same populations during COVID-19. The comparison of these studies will provide profound insights into differences and similarities between the two stress situations – pandemic and war. In addition, this study will provide insights regarding similarity and difference in Israeli society with regard to coping with wartime stressors.

Prof. Meidad Kissinger

Department:	Environmental, Geoinformatics & Urban Planning Sciences
Rank:	Associate Professor
Project title:	Evaluating UN sustainable development goals in the Negev area
Project type:	Research
Duration:	From January 2024 throughout the year

Project Description

The Negev, and its western area in particular, is characterized by a range of strengths and weaknesses in various characteristics that affect the quality of life of local inhabitants, the environment, and their interrelations. The rehabilitation of the Negev after the end of the war can and should contribute to the area's future prosperity, and it is important to ensure that this development is conducted based on sustainability principles. The present project, by the Negev Sustainability Center, will map the various aspects of life (according to the UN sustainable development goals (SDGs)) among the members of the various communities living in the Negev in the past few years until the war.

Prof. Meidad Kissinger

Department:	Environmental, Geoinformatics & Urban Planning Sciences
Rank:	Associate Professor
Project title:	Developing a regional resilience index and examining various aspects of resilience in rural/peripheral communities in Israel
Project type:	Research
Duration:	From January 2024 throughout the next two years

Project Description

The rural space in Israel is responsible for a variety of elements essential to the well-being and sustainability of all its citizens: growing and supplying food, preserving landscapes and open spaces, producing energy, and providing security. The resilience of this space and the communities that comprise it is affected in ordinary periods, and all the more so over the past year, by a range of social, political, environmental, economic and security factors. This study develops a measurement system that includes a range of indicators for assessing various aspects in the resilience of settlements and communities, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and pointing out ways to strengthen this space.

Dr. Sarai Aharoni

Department:	Gender Studies
Rank:	Senior Lecturer
Project title:	War, welfare and resilience: Insights from professionals in the shadow of war
Duration:	November 2023-January 2024

Project Description

I assisted the NGO Ad'ar –The Professional Forum for Combatting the Murder of Women – in conducting a study and compiling a professional report. Written by Lamma Mansour, the report examines the experiences of Israeli professionals, including social workers, during the war, with particular emphasis on Arab social workers in the Bedouin communities in the south and the evacuated communities in the north. The report reviews the literature on the roles of social workers in emergencies and crises and the implications of the recent war for the Israeli welfare system, and specifically its Arab citizens. The report is based on interviews, data from calls to a hotline, observations of support groups, and participation in civil society forums.

The first part of the report focuses on the needs of families and individuals who have sought the assistance of welfare services during the war, and the war's effect on gender violence. The second part focuses on the experiences of social workers. It emphasizes their unwavering commitment to their clients and their communities, despite the challenges of the war, and their personal experiences, among other things as residents of areas threatened by the war. The shared reality of the social workers and their clients is described as a double-edged sword: it strengthens their empathy as well as burdens them emotionally. Finally, the report addresses the challenges of working in mixed Jewish-Arab teams during the war, particularly given the general atmosphere of silencing and intimidation.

[Link to the report](#)

Dr. Dafna Yeshua-Katz

Department:	Charlotte B. and Jack J. Spitzer Department of Social Work
Rank:	Senior Lecturer
Project title:	Digital coping with traumatic loss following October 7
Project type:	Research
Duration:	2023-24 academic year

Project Description

The digital age poses many challenges to people who have lost their loved ones, as they encounter the digital remains of the deceased in social media profiles, WhatsApp voice messages, digital photos and films. These challenges include the emotional impact of unexpected reminders, fears of losing access to and a perceived need to manage the online content of the deceased, and decisions regarding the digital heritage. All these can lead to uncertainty and distress among those left behind. Nevertheless, digital media also provide opportunities for processing traumatic loss, such as continued contact with loved ones through the digital remains.

Through in-depth interviews with parents and partners who have lost their loved ones in the war, this study examines strategies of digital coping with traumatic loss. Based on the continuing bonds model of grief processing, this study examines the challenges and opportunities produced by digital remains: voice messages from the last minutes, videos made by the dead and by Hamas assailants, written messages, and social media profiles.

The study of digital coping with traumatic loss is essential for the understanding of contemporary grief processes and for the management of digital heritage. It addresses modern grieving practices, ethical dilemmas related to digital privacy and consent, and the impact of digital heritage on mental health and cultural norms. This study emphasizes the significant role of digital remains in our life, and the importance of navigating them sensitively and ethically. In terms of practical implications, it can contribute to the design of digital platform and therapeutic processes adapted to the needs of the bereaved and respectful of the memory of the deceased.

Dr. Gideon Dishon

Department:	Education
Rank:	Senior Lecturer
Project title:	“School grammar” in evacuee schools: Organization of time and space, teaching and learning practices, and socioemotional work during the Israel-Hamas war
Project type:	Research
Duration:	2023-24 academic year

Project Description

For years we have been hearing people say that schools never change despite the progress in the rest of society. Nevertheless, recent years brought two major crises – COVID-19 and now the war – that required schools to reinvent themselves. These crises were deep because they undermined the “school grammar”: pedagogy, the organization of time and space, and the relationships that characterize schools in their routine. This study examines an extreme case – the need to build schools from scratch for families and children evacuated from their homes. This examination is designed to map the variety of solutions developed in those schools, and to identify practices and models of school organization and priorities at a time of crisis. Finally, educators’ decisions regarding the characteristics of the school grammar they want to retain or change can touch upon more fundamental questions regarding the essence of school, relevant to emergencies but also to ordinary times.

Dr. Maha Sabbah Karkabi, Prof. Sarab Abu-Rabia & Prof. Rachel Erhard (TAU)

Department:	Sociology & Anthropology; Education
Rank:	Senior Lecturer; Associate Professor; Emerita
Project title:	The voice of Arab faculty members in wartime
Project type:	Research
Duration:	November 2023 to July 2024

Project Description

The discipline of sociology examines academia critically as an equal space for minority groups. In recent years, Israeli studies have identified the structural and cultural barriers facing Arab students in campuses, as part of programs to promote higher education. Few studies, however, have examined the experiences of Arab faculty members in Israeli academia, let alone in the shadow of war and a severe national crisis. This study examines the encounter between the national and civilian identities of Arab faculty members in Israeli higher education given the war, and the implications of that intersection for their academic identity.

Twenty seven semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with faculty members in all Israeli universities. Preliminary analysis of the findings reveals practices of institutional racism and covert and overt silencing of expressions that are inconsistent with the hegemonic discourse during the war. It also reveals the sense of helplessness and guilt attendant on the silencing of the voice that represents the faculty members' Palestinian national identity. The findings point to an inherent contradiction between the Arab lecturers' professional and national identity, particularly at a time when Israeli academia is enlisted to the war effort and adopts a patriotic Zionist narrative which excludes the Arab faculty members.

Dr. Idit Fast & Dr. Rotem Trachtenberg-Maslaton

Department:	Education
Rank:	Lecturer & Senior Lecturer
Project title:	Jewish teachers' coping with the events of the war with Jewish and Arab students in a Jewish public school
Project type:	Research
Duration:	February-June 2024

Project Description

In response to the Ministry of Education's call for studies related to the war, the study addresses the coping of Jewish teachers in a Jewish public school with mixed classes of Jewish and Arab students during the war. We rely on two distinct sets of literature that have hitherto not been integrated – on teachers in wartime and on teachers in heterogeneous classrooms – to ask what are the challenges faced by teachers in terms of managing students, their relationships, discussions about the war, and their personal feelings when teaching in a mixed classroom? What practices do they apply to navigating these situations? What resources are available to them in coping with these situations, if any, and how is it possible to help them?

The study is conducted in a uniquely Israeli context, where Arabs study in Jewish schools in mixed towns, and therefore the classroom includes students supposedly representative of the two warring parties. This context has hardly been studied. The study is designed to develop tools and support for teachers placed in this challenging position, to enable them to support Arab and Jewish students optimally. The study's conclusions are of theoretical importance to the literature on teachers' coping with heterogeneous classes and teachers' wartime coping, as well as of practical importance for the Israeli context of mixed schools and the wellbeing of teachers and students in them.

Prof. Florina Uzefovsky, Prof. Naama Atzaba-Poria, Prof. Ariel Kushmaro & Dr. Yuval Saar-Heiman

Departments:	Psychology; Charlotte B. and Jack J. Spitzer Department of Social Work
Ranks:	Senior academic faculty members
Project title:	Emotional situations during the Israel-Hamas war
Project type:	Research
Duration:	January 2024 and ongoing

Project Description

The events of the war are extreme stressors, and as such, they cause a variety of reactions on the emotional, behavioral, physiological and medical levels. The ability to assess the levels of stress and related morbidity in the population is critical for planning the various interventions for the populations that need them most.

Sewage water can tell us about the mood of entire populations, because it is possible to measure levels of cortisol (a stress hormone), nicotine, caffeine, and more. Nevertheless, it is not yet clear how well, if at all, cortisol levels attest to stress levels in the population. To examine this, we examine participants from two populations subjected to different levels of security threats, in the cities of Beersheba and Dimona in southern Israel. The participants complete a questionnaire battery on their own emotional, physiological and medical condition, as well as a demographic questionnaire related to the nature of their exposure to the October 7 events. They also provide a hair sample allowing us to measure their cortisol levels over the past months. This combination of information sources – from the emotional and behavioral level to the level of sewage water measurements – is unique and allows us to assess both intergroup and interpersonal levels in the response to the war. Should the hypothesized relations be found, this will open up a new way of assessing stress levels in populations.

Prof. Florina Uzefovsky

Department:	Psychology
Rank:	Associate Professor
Project title:	The development of empathy in preschoolers during COVID-19
Project type:	Research
Duration:	January-February 2024

Project Description

Following the events of the war, we returned to the participants of a study conducted in the Bio-CEED laboratory at BGU on the development of empathy among preschoolers (in May 2020, at the height of COVID-19), for a fifth measurement. Originally, mothers and toddlers (aged 10-18 months) had been invited to a longitudinal study on socioemotional development. At present, these children are about five years old. The purpose of the current measurement is to understand what changes the participants experience due to the war, and how these are related to the mothers and children's emotional condition.

The mothers complete a battery of questionnaires about their own and their children's emotional condition, as well as a demographic questionnaire related to the nature of their exposure to the October 7 events. The participants also provide a hair sample to enable us to assess the levels of the cortisol stress hormone in their bodies over the past months.

The study is designed to contribute to science but more specifically, to understand the emotional needs of children, parents and families these days, in order to help decision makers identify those in need and allocate resources accordingly.

Documentation Activities

The events of October 7 and the ensuing war are obviously historic. Nevertheless, we need to ask how they will be remembered in the following decades and centuries? At the Faculty of the Humanities and Social Sciences, we are already coming up with projects dedicated to documenting the war and its various aspects. Documenting the present will certainly influence future reality and the way history will be studied in the future.

Dr. Roni Mikel-Arieli

Departments:	Conflict Management & Resolution; Sociology & Anthropology
Rank:	Teaching Fellow
Project title:	Forum for leaders of war documentation initiatives – Promoting the professionalism of the documentation of October 7 and the war
Project type:	Documentation and social initiative
Duration:	January 2024

Project Description

Immediately after October 7, multiple civilian initiatives emerged to document the war in many different ways. The forum was established by six documentarians, given the acute need to form a community and home for the multiple initiatives. The forum is designed to enable joint thinking, coordination, networking and collaborations between the multiple documentation initiatives. Our main purpose is to streamline the documentation activity and make its outputs more accessible by providing professional support: documentarians, archivists, historians and cultural scholars, legal experts, therapists, and PR and media teams. NATAL – Israel Trauma and Resiliency Center – supports the forum with regard to the psychological aspects. We also have legal experts who advise us on copyrights, privacy and internet, as well as on international law, and the laws of war and crimes against humanity.

The forum's steering committee includes Ruti Frensdorf, an independent documentarian; Dr. Roni Mikel-Arieli, Director of the Oral History Division, Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and teaching fellow at BGU; Dr. Margalit Bezherano, Chair of the Israeli Oral History Association; Sharon Rapaport, a documentarian with therapy training specializing in personal documentation of trauma and migration communities; Peleg Levi, documentarian, photographer and production manager of "History of Israel"; and Arie Halivni, founder and CEO of "History of Israel". On February 19, there were 354 members in the forum, active in 105 different documentation initiatives.

[Link](#) to information about the project

[Link](#) to the list of initiatives

Prof. Ayelet Harel

with Justice Saviona Rotlevy (ret.) and Prof. Shir Daphna-Tekoah (Ashkelon Academic College)

Department:	Conflict Management & Resolution
Rank:	Full Professor
Project title:	Women lookouts, combat supporters and soldiers in frontline war rooms on the Gaza front
Project type:	Documentation
Duration:	November 2023-present

Project Description

In the current war, details are emerging regarding women lookouts, combat supporters and soldiers in frontline war rooms on the Gaza front who are responsible for defending the border and on warning against any hostile terrorist activity posing a threat to state security. Initial findings suggest that before the war, these women warned against security threats and that part of their warnings were not treated seriously. The purpose of this documentation project is to give voice to women and their parents and to commemorate their contribution through a systematic gathering of testimonies of (1) women soldiers who are no longer with us (through their parents); (2) those who have survived that catastrophe; and (3) those who had served at this front and were discharged shortly before October 7. It is essential to convey this accumulating evidence to the public, so as to learn lessons and prevent future disaster. A voice documented now, soon after the events, and given publicity, is a voice that commemorates the women soldiers and recognizes the importance of their role. This documentation has tremendous importance for the State of Israel and specifically for the status of women soldiers in the IDF and their contribution to state security in the present and future. This documentation will serve as a basis for future lesson learning and understanding of the severe failure, for a state commission of inquiry, as well as for productive academic research.

Dr. Sarai Aharoni

Department:	Gender Studies
Rank:	Senior Lecturer
Project title:	Group for studying and documenting gender violence on October 7
Project type:	Documentation and research, civil society
Duration:	October 2023-present

Project Description

Since October 2023, I have been leading a team of researchers documenting sexual and gender violence during the Hamas attack on October 7. The team collects information from different sources, preserves and catalogues it systematically, so it can serve as a reliable source of information for survivors and families of victims, journalists, and local and international investigators. We are creating two databases that will form part of the "Women, War and Peace" archive at BGU: a public database, and a closed database with specific information about various sectors and patterns of violence. Since its establishment, the team has held multiple meetings with local and international experts and organizations (the press, representatives of international organizations, Knesset members, first responders, legal experts, and archives); formed contacts with other documentary groups; and held public lectures (such as a symposium at the Hebrew University). In the near future, the group seeks to publish articles in Hebrew and English and expand its collaborations with international scholars.

[Link](#) to an interview with me in *Haaretz*

Teaching Activities

Together with academic research, teaching is an essential aspect of our academic activities. How can we rally the students for learning and practice in this area? How can we process and mediate the events in an optimal way? The researchers' knowledge is conveyed to the students and together we are a huge learning community. The war has given us new opportunities for teaching and for open, instructive, and profound discussion.

Dr. Yodan Rofe

Department:	Environmental, Geoinformatics & Urban Planning Sciences
Rank:	Senior Lecturer
Project title:	Planning Ofakim as a pedestrian-oriented town
Project type:	Planning workshop
Duration:	First semester, 2024

Project Description

This is one of the required planning workshops in the Regional-Urban Planning track. We chose to deal with Ofakim and the rural space around it that were damaged on October 7, but are located outside the area bordering on the Gaza Strip, and hence receive much less government support in the aftermath of the attack. As part of the workshop, the students plan according to the concept of the town as a pedestrian and public transportation-oriented human space. The goal is to examine possibilities to develop and strengthen the community in the town space by connecting it to the natural, agricultural space around it, as well as to the metropolitan space of which it is part. The planning also addresses aspects of security and community resilience as part of the process of rehabilitating damaged neighborhoods.

Prof. Meidad Kissinger

Department:	Environmental, Geoinformatics & Urban Planning Sciences
Rank:	Associate Professor
Project title:	Graduate workshop in the Urban and Regional Planning Track: Resilience, quality of life, and urban sustainability
Project type:	Planning workshop
Duration:	First semester, 2024

Project Description

As part of the workshop, the students develop a system for assessing different aspects of urban activities in various neighborhoods. Against the background of recent events, the students have asked themselves what enables urban resilience and to what extent issues of personal and national security affect various aspects of the quality of life of the inhabitants of various neighborhoods.

Prof. Gal Arieli

Department:	Politics & Government
Rank:	Associate Professor
Project title:	Democracy and Democratic Erosion
Project type:	Course
Duration:	2024 academic year and ongoing

Project Description

Over the past few years, the public and political discourse in Israel has reflected a deep disagreement over the very idea of democracy, with many claiming that we are witnessing an erosion of democracy. This issue is not unique to Israel – it is central to the discourse in many other countries. Since 2017, [an inter-university course](#) on this subject has been held on this subject in more than sixty first-rate universities and colleges from different countries, mainly the US. Inspired by and in collaboration with the international course, the [Israel Political Science Association](#) has been offering, since the 2024 academic year, an enrichment course open to all students. The course is designed to understand democracy and democratic erosion from a theoretical and historical point of view, and from a broad comparative perspective. The course team relies on the learning and evaluation approaches of the international course. In addition, it prepares a wide range of learning materials in Hebrew for use in teaching. Thus, for example, you can view a lecture on [political polarization](#), on the measuring of democracy and on [how to measure democracy](#), as well as interviews on a variety of issues, such as [the democratic erosion in Hungary](#).

In 2024, the course has been given at BGU as a general course attended by over 90 students of all faculties. It is also provided in other institutes of higher education: the Tel Aviv, Bar-Ilan and Reichman universities, the Western Galilee and Tel Aviv-Jaffa colleges, and the College of Management. We plan to reach out to additional target audiences and deepen the course team's collaborations.

[Link](#) to the international course

[Link](#) to the Israeli course and the institutions offering it

Interdisciplinary Projects

Many of the projects are interdisciplinary in being related to both research and activism. They rely on the faculty experts' previous knowledge and are implemented to achieve various goals – to improve the condition of individuals and communities, to develop research and practical knowledge, and to lead Israeli society to a normal course of life, as much as possible given the complex reality.

Prof. Ephrat Huss

Department:	Charlotte B. and Jack J. Spitzer Department of Social Work
Project title:	Series of meetings for students of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Project type:	Social initiative / course
Duration:	October-November 2023

Project Description

I volunteered to give a multidisciplinary creativity lesson from the points of view of the humanities and social sciences. The lesson was given via Zoom every Wednesday evening, and was open to students from the entire faculty. We practiced creative tools in order to gain inspiration, a sense of togetherness, and tools for coping with stress. Each lesson, we studied a concept – such as “symbol”, “hope”, “narrative”, or “safe space” – according to theories from the humanities and social sciences, and then engaged in creative activity in order to experience it. The lessons were packed with students. Afterwards, I added an enrichment and self-care lesson for art therapists, social workers, and psychologist, where we also learned about and practiced creative tools.

Dr. Talia Schwartz-Tayri & Nurit Cohen Inger

Departments:	Charlotte B. and Jack J. Spitzer Department of Social Work; Software & Information Systems Engineering
Ranks:	Lecturer and doctoral student
Project title:	EmoBot: A psychological first-aid bot for victims of anxiety attacks
Project type:	Social initiative / Research
Duration:	December 2023-present

Project Description

Psychological first aid (PFA) plays an essential role in promoting the wellbeing of people affected by traumatic events. Nevertheless, many first responders are not trained to provide PFA in real time. The importance of providing PFA in real time lies mainly in the negative relationship between treatment of anxiety symptoms and the emergence of PTSD following the violent incident. Within a minute, the bot, embedded in WhatsApp, provides adjusted instructions for the case reported by the first responder. These are based on accepted PFA models (such as the World Health Organization model and the 6Cs model commonly used in Israel). The project has won partial funding its launch.

[Link](#) to information on the project

Prof. Dorit Segal-Engelchin & Prof. Orly Sarid

Department:	Charlotte B. and Jack J. Spitzer Department of Social Work
Project title:	CBART emergency intervention
Project type:	Social initiative / Research
Duration:	October 11-19, 2023

Project Description

Previous studies we have conducted in emergency and disaster situations (e.g., the 2012 and 2014 hostilities with Gaza and the first COVID-19 lockdown) have demonstrated the effectiveness of CBART (cognitive behavioral and art) interventions. This short-term intervention reduces stress in emergencies and disasters, and is conducted in small face-to-face or online groups. It uses paintings and the writing of memories, thoughts and feelings.

We publicized the workshops in the university, and about forty staff members and advanced-degree students registered. Six workshops were held, two hours each. Each included three stages: (1) Stress painting – accompanied by a verbal description and a numerical ranking (from 0 = not at all to 10 = very much) of feelings and emotional distress related to the war; (2) Resources painting – accompanied by a verbal description of the psychological and social resources enabling the participants to cope with the implications of the war in the present; and (3) Integrative painting, which combines the stress and resources paintings. Using artistic devices, such as reducing the size of the stress images and changing their location in space over the page, the participants reduce their levels of emotional distress.

Our findings indicated that by the end of the workshop, stress levels dropped by an average of five numerical ranks. These findings lend support to the findings of our previous studies, showing that stress in disaster situations may be reduced using this intervention tool.

Links to information on previous projects:

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11469-015-9623-5>

<https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/17/7/2287>

<https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/18/4/2057>

Prof. Oren Yiftachel

Department:	Environmental, Geoinformatics & Urban Planning Sciences
Project title:	Think Tank at the Van Leer Institute: Palestinian-Israeli partnership
Project type:	Documentation / research
Duration:	November 2023-July 2024

Project Description

Following a thinking and writing group active over the past year at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, I led (together with Limor Yehuda and Amir Fakhouri) the formation of a new and expanded group, which started a series of meetings and theoretical and practical discussions about the lives of two nations in the same country following October 7 and the Gaza war. Hitherto, four meetings have been held, and a large conference is planned for May.

Links to information about the project:

- [Conference link](#)

Dr. Sarai Aharoni

Department:	Gender Studies
Project title:	Ofakim as a case study in neglect: The Mizrahi Civic Collective
Project type:	Social Research
Duration:	October 2023-present

Project Description

Following a previous study conducted on local security in Ofakim, I returned to the town in late October 2023 to meet local women who has experienced the Hamas attack on October 7. In the months that passed since, I was active with a group of researchers and social activists in the Mizrahi Civic Collective in writing a detail report on the situation in Ofakim based on information from external sources and on visits and conversations with locals. As part of this activity, I also held lectures and meetings on issues related to insecurity, neglect and state (ir)responsibility. The report will be used to raise awareness of the complex needs in the process of rehabilitating Israel's southern periphery.

Dr. Dafna Yeshua-Katz

Department:	Charlotte B. and Jack J. Spitzer Department of Social Work
Project title:	Digital parental coping seminar with third-year students
Project type:	Research / course
Duration:	2024 academic year

Project Description

The constant presence of digital media in our lives raises the need to understand the ways individuals and communities cope with stress using social media. In this research seminar, students supervised by the lecturer develop an individual and community digital coping index using cognitive interviews. The objective of this index – informed by the salutogenic approach, which defines health holistically and focuses on health-promoting factors – is to capture the multifaceted aspects of digital copings and reflect them reliably through self-report. This index will form the basis of a study (to be conducted together with Dr. Stav Shapira of the Public Health School and Prof. Orna Braun-Lewensohn) that will examine the implications of the October 7 war by examining the relationship between the degree of usage of digital support groups, individual and community resilience, perceived social support (both online and face-to-face) and mental health.

Understanding the role of digital apps in coping with stress situations and wars can teach us about strategies to enhance the resilience of communities in conflict areas. Moreover, the study's insights can guide policymakers in developing technological support systems that enable improved interventions for those living in conflict areas.

Prof. Dana Vedder-Weiss

Department:	Education
Project title:	Teacher in-service training on coping with challenges with students and parents in times of mourning, crisis, and war
Project type:	Research involving educational intervention
Duration:	January-May 2024

Project Description

As part of the activities of the Department of Pedagogy and Teachers' Learning, and in collaboration with a large high school in Beer Sheva, we are developing and facilitating training for teachers dealing with the school staff's coping with challenges with parents and teachers in times of mourning, crisis and war. The goal is to support the teachers in coping with the difficulties typical of this period and develop knowledge about the ways professional development can help. Some thirty teachers and administrative staff members took part in ten meetings during the year, some within the school and others at the BGU Simulation Center. During the training, we discuss a variety of educational situations unique to this period (such as students finding it difficult to resume their ordinary routine, emotionally charged discussions in class, and expressions of racism toward Arab students).

The training is conducted according to an innovative model based on developing scenarios for simulating real-life scenarios. Developing the scenario includes examining the teacher's pedagogical emotions and adopting the parent/student's point of view. At the Simulation Center, the teacher experiences the scenario with an actor playing the student/parent, and then discusses that experience with the other teachers. The entire process is documented on video as part of a larger research project funded by the Ministry of Education, together with Dr. Khaled Al-Sayed, Dr. Idit Fast, and Dr. Gideon Dishon. The training is facilitated by Karin Tzarfati Shaulov.

Prof. Liat Tikotzky

Department:	Psychology
Project title:	Didi project
Project type:	Therapeutic research
Duration:	November 2023-January 2024

Project Description

The project is designed to help families with children aged 3-8 who have experienced distress as a result of the war. It includes a brief psychological intervention, based on the child's imagination and playfulness abilities. The intervention is designed to promote the child's resilience and support them in times of stress. The intervention was provided by coaching parents using films. The parents provided the intervention at home. In the course of the project, we collected data on stress symptoms before and after the intervention, in order to evaluate its effectiveness. The project was conducted jointly with Dr. Michal Kahn and Orna Wassermann and Yair Wairauch of Tel Aviv University.

Prof. Liat Tikotzky

Department:	Psychology
Project title:	The contribution of sleep to children's resilience
Project type:	Therapeutic research
Duration:	December 2023-June 2024

Project Description

The Parenting, Child Development and Sleep Lab studies parents' role in the development of their child's sleep. In addition, we examine the sleep patterns of the parents in the post-delivery period, and the implications of sleep disturbances and deprivation on their cognitive and emotional functioning, and on their relationship with the infant. During the war, we provided counselling to the Health Unit in the Ministry of Education on preparing a presentation and an activity, to be delivered by elementary school teachers, on the importance of sleep and ways to cope with difficulties sleeping at wartime, in order to improve the quality of life of many families.

Dr. Ron Ben-Tovim, Prof. Ephrat Huss, Roni Meisels & Prof. Ayelet Harel

Departments:	Foreign Literatures; Social Work; Conflict Management & Resolution
Project title:	Expressive Writing Workshop for Discharged Reservists
Project type:	Social Initiative
Duration:	January 2024 – for one year

Project Description

Reservists discharged after an intensive tour of duty are under extreme emotional strain, having to cope with complex transitions between the military and civilian worlds. The multidisciplinary project team has initiated, planned and begun to implement expressive writing workshops for reservists, students returning to the civilian “routine”, trying to adjust to realities on the home front. These workshops have therapeutic, creative and participatory value – creating a community safe for expression, ventilation and sharing – using professional literary tools. Subsequently, the team members will study the workshops in retrospect.

After the call for candidates was sent to the university students, we received dozens of replies, and currently we have a waiting list. The workshops meet a significant need among former reservists. One of their responses was “This was the most significant and suitable initiative offered to us”. The workshops will be offered in the following academic year as well.

Prof. Haviva Ishay

Department:	Hebrew Literature
Rank:	Associate Professor
Project title:	"Is it so?" – a special issue of "Tzrif" magazine following the October 7 events
Duration:	January – July 2024

Project Description

The "Tzrif" is an annual literary magazine that accepts submissions from writers and artists, whomever they may be, and is dedicated to the publication of prose, poetry, and other creative works, including visual arts and even musical compositions.

The editorial board of the magazine consists of students from the creative writing course at the Department of Hebrew Literature.

Together with our students, we decided that this year's issue should be dedicated to the October 7 events. We published an open call for students of the university and the general public to submit their creative works on the subject. The response to the open call was great, and all contributions were voluntary.

[Link to the special issue](#)