The Telling of Peace Education: Narratives of Peace Educators in the Context of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

by

Sedigheh Minachi

B.A., The University of British Columbia, 2002

M.A., The University of British Columbia, 2004

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

The Faculty of Graduate Studies

(Cross Faculty Inquiry in Education)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

September 2011

Abstract

Telling of Peace Education documents the narratives of five peace educators who use dialogical interactions among their students to create a culture of peace within the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The overall intentions of these peace educators are to promote critical thinking, dialogue and to empower their students to make decisions for themselves. I use narrative inquiry to examine deeper understandings of people-to-people engagement of peace education at the community level. As such, I present the narratives that represent the experiences of the peace educators I interviewed for this research. In addition, my field notes document my own narrative as the researcher, traveling back and forth between Bethlehem and Jerusalem to conduct the interviews. My intention for conducting this narrative research is to learn:

(a) What stories can peace educators tell us about their efforts in the context of Palestine and Israel?

(b) How do they implement peace education programs in their communities?

(c) What are their fears, hopes, and aspirations?

(d) What challenges do they face in the development and delivery of peace education?

I include a literature review of peace education in polarized societies, followed by perspectives in critical pedagogy, which frame this study. Also in the thesis, I outline historical aspects of the conflict, crucial to understanding the existing conflict, and in the end, improving relations between Palestinians and Israelis. Finally, I provide a literature review of youth involvement in political violence in the Middle East in which I analyze the ideology of political Islam and its impact on youth.

In addition to presenting the full narratives of the peace educators, I discuss several themes that emerged across the interviews which include *self* and *other*, *occupier* and *occupied*,

the impact of suicide missions on the Israeli public, reconstructing of textbooks and support for a

two-state solution. I further postulate dichotomized relationships between the two highly

polarized nations, as well as analyze how peace educators challenge this current conflict situation

in ways that shape/transform the recognition of the *other* in light of the existence of the

separation wall, and Israel's "no return policy."

Preface

As this dissertation is based on the narratives of Israeli and Palestinian peace educators, I interviewed several individuals directly involved in peace education in Jerusalem and Bethlehem. I adopted narrative methodology because my aim was to understand the concept and practice of peace education directly from research participants. Rather than collecting data only for the purpose of interpretation and analysis, narrative methodology gave me the flexibility to gain knowledge from the actors directly. Since the nature of my work dealt with human participants, I completed a tutorial and obtained the UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BREB) certificate. My BREB certificate number is H07-02074.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Acknowledgements

I am thankful to many individuals, without whom this dissertation would never have been possible. I cannot say enough to express my deep appreciation to Majid[1], and his staff for trusting me and allowing me to use their resources to conduct this research. Their generosity in sharing their knowledge with me and their commitment to advancing critical thinking and peaceful resolutions among their students/community members in this volatile time is beyond expression in words. I thank all the Palestinian and Israeli peace educators and scholars for sharing their knowledge and information with me during my field work, and for encouraging me to continue with this work. This dissertation could not exist without their participation, involvement and support.

I am deeply grateful to Dr. Karen Meyer, my advisor who encouraged me throughout this journey to finish my dissertation. Without her continued support, critical insight, helpful suggestions, and invaluable advice and guidance, this dissertation could not have taken shape. I am also grateful to my supervising committee members Dr. Graeme Chalmers and Dr. Jennifer Chan for believing in my capability to work on peace education in Palestine and Israel. I am particularly indebted to Dr. Graeme Chalmers for believing in my potential to become an "emerging scholar" and also for remaining on my committee despite his health problems and retirement from UBC in 2008.

Finally, I want to take this opportunity to thank the love of my life, Brian Hauk for his devotion, companionship and presence throughout this journey. Without his on-going love and support, I would not be able to pursue my dream of applying to graduate school and pursuing this research over several years.

---

[1] Majid is the pseudonym for the director of the agency that provided me with a letter of support to conduct my field work in Jerusalem and Bethlehem. I also used a pseudonym for this agency and explained about it in Chapter One.

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to all these individuals who made a difference in my life:

To my devoted parents,

To my supportive companion, Brian Hauk,

To my inspiring mentors, Karen Meyer and Graeme Chalmers

To the courageous Palestinian and Israeli peace educators who bring hope, friendship and

peace to their communities and beyond.

Notes from the Field: the Window

Nov 23, 2007: From the small windows of my dorm room in Santure, close to the border of Jerusalem and Bethlehem, I see the long winding concrete wall that separates these two cities. Its height and length, as far as my eyes can follow, are unbelievable. This eight-meter-high[2] grey wall stands apart from the gold desert and the white-marbled houses that appear prominently throughout the region, separating each from the *other*[3].

It is my third day in Jerusalem and I decide to test my first border crossing to Bethlehem with three Canadians (one is an intern with a Palestine-Israel Centre for Peace Education and the other two are tourists). I make sure I have all my Canadian IDs, including my passport. As I walk, I am not surprised by the gazes of several Israeli soldiers at the checkpoint armed with heavy machine guns. Although several Palestinians are in the lineup, a soldier separates us from the rest of the Palestinians and asks us to go to the booth. The four of us are relaxed and calm. We put our bags and other belongings at the x-ray desk. Then one by one, each of us hands our passports to a young soldier who is sitting in a small booth. The young soldier (of Ethiopian ethnic background) looks at me curiously for a few seconds and asks me why I am going to Bethlehem. I respond that I am going for a tour of the city. He looks at my passport and asks me to pass through the gate, which I do. There are electronic sensors and surveillance cameras everywhere until I reach the Bethlehem side of the border along the wall. It is obvious that everyone is watched carefully at this militarized checkpoint.

---

[2] There is no definitive wall length because different sources provide different length estimates, and also the length of the wall constantly changes due to security issues.

[3] The *other* is the person who is other than oneself. I apply the italic font to *other* throughout this thesis for emphasis. I also apply the italic font to *self* as the person who is distinct from the *other*.

Once we reach the Palestinian side of the border, there are no soldiers or other military presence. Instead there are Palestinian civilians and a row of old taxis with middle-aged drivers who wait for passengers. They look friendly. I hear the word "welcome" from several drivers. The road along the wall is dusty and full of big potholes. Poverty is noticeable. The wall has impoverished this historic city. I see several murals on the wall; some have words in Arabic such as "freedom" and "end the occupation." I also see an artificial leg stuck in the wall (unfortunately, this particular picture did not turn well in my camera). I get the impression that the Palestinians use art and humor to criticize the wall that restricts their ability to travel freely within the West Bank, which limits the dialogue between the *self* and the *other*.

Figure 1: The Window

The cities of Jerusalem and Bethlehem are separated by the wall. This picture was taken from my

dormitory room in Santure[4].

---

[4] The pseudonym used for my dormitory in Jerusalem.

Chapter 1: Introduction

I hear news about Israel and Palestine often in the mainstream media. Almost all the time, the news either informs me about an incident of violence, the demolition of Palestinian houses for the expansion of Israeli settlements or about top-down negotiations between their leaders. The ongoing media focus on the conflict gives one the impression that no peace building efforts are taking place between community members themselves in these polarized societies.

My interest in this conflict focuses on the unique individual men and women who do in fact go beyond their daily work responsibilities to make their communities better places to live through dialogues of peace building. My research documents the narratives of five peace educators whose stories tell us how the new generation[5] of Palestinians and Israelis cope with conflict in their daily lives and continue to promote dialogue. This research is not an evidence-based study (i.e., what impact do these peace educators make?). Rather, the purpose of this research is exploratory in nature and tells their stories based on their own perspectives and lived experiences regarding their practices of peace education and the challenges they encounter in implementing dialogue and understanding the *other* inside and outside their communities. As the researcher, I do not take the position of either side, or demonize either as the cause of pain, suffering and fear. Instead, I present the words of these five men and women, three Palestinian and two Israelis[6], who promote peace and human rights education in their polarized communities.

---

[5] Since three of my participants were in their early thirties during their interviews, and since their peace education work involves children and youth, I use the term "new generation" throughout this dissertation.

[6] My third Israeli peace educator did not want to conduct a formal interview and did not sign the consent form. However, he answered to some of my research questions which I took notes. I provided the reader a field note based on this interview. Please see: Field Note: Meeting with Professor Salomon (p. 162).

Promotion of peace and human rights education has been defined differently around the world. In many Western countries, it is about the challenge of ethnocentrism and the promotion of cultural diversity. In Northern Ireland, it is about education for mutual understanding between Catholics and Protestants. In African and Middle Eastern countries, it is about disarmament, anti-militarism, and the promotion of human rights and conflict resolution programs (Salomon, 2002).

Although peace education has been interpreted differently around the world and use a variety of activities to achieve its goal of dealing with relations between groups or individuals, almost all of these programs in polarized societies focus mainly on the interpersonal aspect of conflicts that aim to change behaviours, perceptions, attitudes and feelings, while dealing with fostering certain social skills that include listening, mediation, and negotiation techniques (Salomon, 2002). An important aspect of peace and human rights education in societies affected by conflicts is in the context of promoting dialogue between ethno-national groups and individuals. In this regard, peace and human rights educators play significant roles in the creation and implementation of dialogue between people, particularly young people.

My field work started in November 2007[7]. I chose Bethlehem and Jerusalem as the geographic locations for my field work for three reasons. Firstly, these two major historic cities have been at the heart of the conflict and critical to the history of the Middle East. Secondly, the Israeli and Palestinian participants who I recruited for the interviews lived in either Bethlehem or Jerusalem. Thirdly, it was safe for me to travel back and forth between these two cities with my

---

[7] In my UBC ethics application, I explained that my project focus was to interview several Palestinian and Israeli peace educators affiliated with a particular NGO. Since this project did not intend to involve children and youth, the UBC certificate was approved as minimal risk. My field work lasted about one month. Collecting the narratives required most of my time, and my research design did not involve evaluating their work or participating in their workshops or classrooms. My observation included participation in several activities and visitations of District Coordination office and checkpoints, some of which have narrations in my field notes.

Canadian passport. Throughout my trip, I learned that foreigners traveling to other parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip (or anywhere outside Jerusalem and Bethlehem) face tougher security screening upon their departure from the Tel Aviv airport. Given that my Canadian passport indicates Iran as my place of birth, I did not visit Ramallah for example, a city in the central West Bank located ten kilometers north of Jerusalem, to avoid possible complications upon my return to Canada from Israel.

My intention for conducting this narrative research is to bring the peace educators' experiences and contexts around peace building and peace education in a region that has a long history of conflict. Questions that guided the research are:

(a) What stories can peace educators tell us about their efforts in the context of Palestine and Israel?

(b) How do they implement peace education programs in their communities?

(c) What are their fears, hopes, and aspirations?

(d) What challenges do they face in the development and delivery of peace education?

I use narrative inquiry as a methodology to provide a deeper understanding of people-to-people engagement at the community level. That is, through telling their stories, I draw attention to the concepts of *self* and the *other* in ways that give voice to the narrators' concerns so that the reader may understand each side's experiences and challenges. Social scientist Cindy Horst (2006), who studied Somalis' lives in a refugee camp, states the following about research by an outsider:

> As such, the idea of social science attempting to arrive at an objective truth may need to be replaced with a vision of constructed, partial, fluctuating and conflicting truths. I agree with Haraway (1991:190) that social scientists cannot

arrive at anything but partiality in their attempts to describe and understand the

world they are part of. According to her, this is not something they should try to

transcend. Rather, the highly specific, wonderfully detailed and different pictures

of the world should be investigated. The only way for a researcher to find a larger

vision is by being somewhere in particular, by locating one's partial and critically

situated knowledge ... (pp. 10-11).

In this study, through the peace educators' perspectives I arrive at a "constructed" description

and understanding of efforts, implementation, aspirations and challenges in their delivery of

peace education.

Narrative research refers to any study using narrative materials in which the data can be

collected through interviews, and researcher field notes (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber,

1998). In this regard, narrative researcher Parin Dossa (2004) argues, "Our first point of entry

must be that of location of our positions as researchers. Who we are and what motivates us to

undertake research at particular sites are issues that must be contextualized … (p. 15)."

Reflecting on my reasons for focusing this research on the narratives of Israeli and Palestinian

peace educators will help to locate myself (as the researcher) in this study. In the following

section, I present my own story as part of this study.

1.1   The Researcher's Narrative

I was born and raised in a secular family in northern Iran in a resort city by the Caspian

Sea. I was fourteen years old when the 1979 Iranian revolution happened. Immediately after the

victory of the Islamists in Iran in the early 1980s, harsh attacks against women's rights in

particular and fundamental human rights in general traumatized me and many other youth who

resisted the oppressive conditions. Many Iranian youth and young adults lost their lives resisting

the establishment of political Islam[8] in Iran or were killed because they advocated having a secular/democratic government in Iran, and rejected the Islamist's cultural, social and political authority. Similar to many other Iranians, I experienced suppression of my beliefs and activities by the regime beginning in 1981[9] when I feared being killed or arrested. I then decided to leave my country of birth to survive when possible.

In September of 1987, I was twenty-two years old. Without telling any of my family members, I obtained a passport, bought a bus ticket to Turkey, packed a few essentials, and started my journey abroad. I had to keep my departure from Iran secret because my parents would never have allowed me to leave the country on my own. Furthermore, knowledge of my journey might have put my safety in danger. The moment I arrived in Turkey, I applied for asylum at the office of the UNHCR[10] in Ankara. I am grateful that Canada has been my adopted country since 1988, and never returned to Iran due to its unstable and unsafe social and political climate.

While my memory of Iran is filled with memories of Islamist political issues resulting in violence against its own people, I have always been interested in learning about the stories and contributions of those individuals who take part in social and cultural changes in their societies. I am grateful that I am able to pursue my Ph.D. in Education whereby I have been able to expand my knowledge and contribute to education on the consciousness-raising role of peace education in transforming individuals' negative and prejudicial attitudes towards the *other*.

---

[8] Chapter Four argues extensively on political Islam.

[9] When Islamists institutionalized their power in Iran in 1981, they declared non-Islamists groups illegal and started arresting, torturing and killing their supporters (Moghadam, 1992).

[10] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

While in Palestine and Israel, I was frequently asked why I, an Iranian, chose Palestine and Israel for my research. At first, I speculated that this question was asked because Israeli and Palestinian peace educators did not initially trust me as an outsider—especially one from a country with a regime that allegedly supports terrorism and the use of violence to deal with conflict within and outside Iran. Although I have always expressed my regret and shame for a government that does not represent millions of Iranians, I often explained that I am a Canadian citizen and cannot visit Iran unless that country goes through a democratic transformation. This statement seemed to engender a sense of trust between participants and myself, and I was able to share my views and experiences freely with people I met during my stay in Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

1.2   Writing about the Context of this Research

Since I am not able to visit Iran, my plan originally was to focus my research in refugee camps in Eastern Turkey[11], but I could not find an agency there to support my work. During a conference in November 2006 in Antalya, Turkey, I met the director of education programs for UNRAW[12] in Jordan and he agreed to assist me in my field work in a Palestinian refugee camp in Amman-Jordan. When I sent my official research proposal to him, he informed me that UNRAW's working committee thought it was not safe for me to conduct my research with Palestinian refugees in Jordan. I did not want to give up on my search for an agency that could support my research, and continued looking for an NGO or a UN agency to obtain the initial support for my graduate research in a Middle Eastern country. I decided to focus my field work on Palestinian and Israeli peace educators' narratives.

---

[11] Turkey has the greatest number of Iranian refugees and Jordan has the greatest number of Palestinian refugees.

[12] The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

I used Google Search as my last resource. There I found the Palestine-Israel Centre for Peace Education, PICPE[13]. I sent my research proposal to its director, Majid[14], and he agreed to send me a letter of support. This letter was crucial to get approval for this research from my academic institution; it also helped me prove to the border officers at Tel Aviv airport that I was in Israel for my graduate field work. During my intense research into PICPE's peace education work, I discovered that in addition to conducting peace education workshops and seminars for the Palestinians and Israelis, this agency has evaluated and reformed Palestinian and Israeli high school textbooks, so that each side is able to learn to some extent about each other's way of life, history, culture, and language.

Going into this project, I had three assumptions on peace education for people living in a conflict zone. First, peace education has the potential to form a circle of dialogue with those individuals who experience marginalization and who share similar stories. Second, peace education has the potential to help these people develop skills to overcome their sense of frustration and anger. Finally, peace education is capable of raising awareness about the negative impacts of stereotypes by fostering respectful attitudes and beliefs toward the *other* side of the conflict.

Overall, my familiarity with Palestinian culture (language, religions, food, music, etc.) and also my interest (as study) with their social and political situation (political parties, political leaders, and governance) made it possible for me to connect to local people simply by engaging in political discussions with those who could communicate in English. My Iranian identity and the experience of oppression I faced under the Islamic fundamentalist regime in Iran and its well-

[13] PICPE is a pseudonym.

[14] As mentioned in the acknowledgment, p. ix, Majid is the pseudonym for the director of the agency that provided me with a letter of support to conduct my field work in Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

known support for Islamist groups like Hamas, Hezbollah[15], and Al-Jihad[16] in the region, kept my mind busy throughout my field trip to Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

From day one of my stay in Jerusalem, I visited East Jerusalem several times and felt safe walking around on my own. I observed that East Jerusalem was densely populated by Palestinians, and was happy to see that Palestinian women had the choice of whether or not to wear a head scarf in public[17]. I felt relaxed walking on the streets with my western style clothing. On several occasions, I went to a busy market filled mostly with men. I had to press myself through the crowd in order to continue my walk, but did not experience a single incident of sexual or verbal harassment. This was contrary to my experience years ago using public transit or walking on busy streets in Tehran, Iran, where I could not escape unwanted touching by men of all ages.

1.3   Collecting the Data

In Chapter Two I describe in detail how the narrative researcher collects data and produces knowledge. In this section, I highlight the important role of the peace educators I interviewed as those who foster dialogue, and 'recognize them as producers of knowledge' (Dossa, 2004). As such in the thesis, I present their stories verbatim so that to some extent their stories are able to speak for themselves as narrative scripts. As the researcher, my primary role was to listen and facilitate the dialogue between us and also to reflect on the invaluable work they do at a grassroots community level.

---

[15] Hezbollah is the name of the Shi'a Muslim militant movement in Lebanon and Iran.

[16] Al-Jihad is the name of the Islamic political party that started from Egypt and spread its movement throughout the Middle East region.

[17] Women have been forced to cover their hair in public in Iran since 1981.

In my interviews, I encouraged each participant to talk about their backgrounds, the ways they contributed to peace education in their communities, and the challenges they encountered as teacher, advocate, and as an activist living in violent and tense political situations. All of the participants are passionate about peace education and have extensive knowledge and experience in the field.

As mentioned, my initial contact person was Majid, the founder of Palestine-Israel Centre for Peace Education (PICPE). I arrived at Tel Aviv airport around 3:00 a.m. and went through an intense two and a half hour security check. An Iranian-American woman who identified her religion as Baha'i sat beside me on the plane from Frankfurt to Tel Aviv, and told me that every time she and her husband return to Israel, they go through an interrogation process at the airport, even though they have been living in Haifa-Israel for three years[18].

Throughout my entire trip, I did not have difficulties communicating with people, including the research participants, because many Israeli and Palestinian people who I engaged with were fluent in English. Therefore, I conducted all the interviews in English with the exception of one man who brought his own translator/interpreter. When I initially contacted him via email and telephone conversation to explain my research and set up an interview time, we were able to understand each other in English. To my surprise, he invited a young woman as his interpreter when we met at his office. The interpreter was a Palestinian French teacher in a Catholic school and was not fluent in English. In my professional opinion, she did not interpret accurately[19]. I noticed this when the interview participant spoke longer than the interpreter, and

---

[18] The Baha'i faith has its headquarters in Haifa-Israel and adherents from around the world visit its temple in Haifa.

[19] I work occasionally as a volunteer interpreter for Health Care and Social Services in Vancouver.

vice versa. Therefore, upon my return to Canada, I hired an Arabic speaking student to transcribe the tape for me.

During my research trip, I participated in several public lectures organized by the Palestinian and Israeli peace activists in Jerusalem. I also visited an Israeli District Coordinating Office (known as DCO) with two advocates from Peace Watch[20] and observed the way the group members advocated for the Palestinians who do not receive entry permits to visit their relatives[21] in Jerusalem.

The intensity of life in Palestine and the high level of security in Israel affected me enormously throughout my fieldwork and a few months after my return to Canada. For example, I experienced nightmares numerous times and had difficulty sleeping for a while even after my return to Canada. I realized that my sleeping difficulty was caused by the stress of witnessing the difficult conditions, including the intense reactions of people experiencing heavy military presence at checkpoints, the humiliation and denial of entry into their ancestral land, the poverty and sense of isolation among Palestinians living in refugee camps in Bethlehem[22], and overall, the exclusion of thousands of individuals based on their identity, ethnicity, and religion. My mind was constantly preoccupied by two particular questions while I was there and upon my return to Canada: How can Palestinian and Israeli peace educators change negative historical

---

[20] Pseudonym for a local human rights watch group composed of Israeli activists who visit Israeli checkpoints and provide advocacy for those Palestinians who do not get a permit to enter Israel. According to Israeli laws, Palestinians can enter the Israeli side if they are seriously ill, or their relatives who live on Jerusalem or other parts of the Israel are dealing with a life or death emergency, or to participate in a funeral. Even for these reasons, Palestinians can get denied entry into Israel.

[21] According to the Israeli laws, the Palestinians are allowed to enter into Israel when they have a medical emergency, or to attend the funeral of their immediate relatives; however, there is no guarantee that they can enter into Israel based on the above reasons.

[22] These refugees were expelled from their homes since the occupation of Palestine in 1948.

perceptions against the *other* among their community members? In what ways are these educators able to build sustained peace and justice for all Palestinian and Israeli peoples?

On both sides of the border, interviewees who I met during my field trip were frustrated with the ongoing conflict and polarization in their communities. On the Palestinian side, peace educators felt insecure in their lives because they were imprisoned in their own homes by the separation wall and Israeli checkpoints. On the Israeli side, peace educators that I met felt insecure in their lives because of the safety issue inside and outside their own communities, and also because of the division between the two societies. For example, Israelis cannot travel freely to the Palestinian territories, not just because their state forbids them, but also because of the fear of violence.

1.4   Reflecting on the Interviews

For me, the connection between the discourse of critical pedagogy and the work of peace educators promoting critical thinking among their students is significant. The works of critical pedagogues (Giroux & McLaren & Freire, 1995) have provided me with deeper insight into the ways the *other* can be constructed or deconstructed among conflicting nations. I have become more aware of the critical work of educators attempting to "empower the powerless and to transform social inequalities and injustices" (Giroux, 1995, p. 29).

From the first day of my field work to the last day, I met several brave and committed peace educators whose work has greatly helped the process of building dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians, particularly among youth. Each interview with a peace educator brought a unique perspective and knowledge to this narrative-based research. For example, in my interview with Majid, he tells me that an understanding of each side's history is the framework for building respect and trust, and is the basis for deconstructing prejudiced perceptions against the *other*. His

teacher training curriculum for peace education focuses on building trust between the two sides, enabling them to freely share their narratives of pain, suffering, hope and aspirations with each other. Sharon's narrative highlights the damage done to the solidarity movement by Israeli extremists and by Palestinian suicide bombers, together responsible for many people losing hope for bridging peace between the two nations. However, her involvements with the peace watch and on-going advocacy work for the Palestinians at the checkpoints and the DCO remind me of how individual Israelis are attempting to build peace and prosperity between the two nations from scratch.

The narratives of Rahel, Yadi and Jila's[23] tell us that their generation is determined to transform their community members' perception of the *other* through dialogical encounters between the *self* and the *other* despite the pain and suffering they, as well as their family and community members, have been enduring daily. As Palestinians, they have adapted to living with their Israeli neighbors in peace. As peace educators, they are able to teach their community members non-violent skills and activities. These narratives tell us that this generation of Palestinians is tired of aggression toward the *other* as self-defense, and would like to rely on the *other* to be a partner for building sustained peace and prosperity in their shattered communities.

I include the full stories shared by each participant to help the reader understand who these individuals are, what they do in their professional lives, how they promote peace education and peace building in their communities, and why it is important for them to carry on their front line work. Each participant represents herself/himself in a unique way and tells the story beyond boundaries created by the separation wall or by the corridors of power and conflict. Therefore, as expressed by Dossa (2004) these stories represent "genuine attempts towards reinterpreting and

---

[23] Rahel, Yadi and Jila were in their thirties at the time of the interview.

remaking the worlds in which they live …." (p. 18). By listening to the narratives of peace

educators in conversation form, I am reminded of Dossa's statement emphasizing the power of

storytelling as part of creating knowledge.

My interest in peace education is also inspired by the critical work of Gabi Salomon, an

Israeli scholar who initiated a peace education research centre at the University of Haifa and

peace education programs, bringing Jewish and Arab Palestinian students and scholars together

in the search for peace and prosperity in their communities. My meeting with Professor

Salomon[24] gave me a better understanding of the potential for peace educators to transform

negative societal perceptions, and a better understanding of dialogical encounters between

Palestinian and Israeli civilians (see field note 6.1). Salomon (2002) describes peace education in

regions of intractable conflicts (such as Palestine and Israel) as an education that "often entails

elements of antiracism, conflict resolution, multiculturalism, cross-cultural training, and the

cultivation of a generally peaceful outlook, but it can neither be equated with these nor reduced

to them; it has its residual, unique character that transcends these elements" (p. 7).

Recently, I learned about the work of a joint Palestinian and Israeli NGO called 'Peace

Research Institute in the Middle East' (PRIME). This inspiring institution pursues mutual

coexistence and peace building through joint research and outreach activities. Its directors,

Professor Sami Adwan (a Palestinian) and Professor Dan Bar-On (an Israeli) initiated the Israeli-

Palestinian shared history project. Through this project, they brought Palestinian and Israeli

teachers and historians together to jointly develop a school textbook focusing on the narratives of

key historical events as viewed by the Israeli and Palestinian communities[25]. This project created

---

[24] I met Professor Salomon at the University of Haifa during my field trip in Jerusalem and Bethlehem in 2007.
[25] http://vispo.com/PRIME/goldbergprize.htm last viewed on June 18, 2011.

booklets (three parts) that include the Palestinian and Israeli narratives of three important historical events: the Balfour Declaration, the 1948 war and the 1987 Palestinian Intifada (Adwan and Bar-On, 2004). I believe that the PRIME project's inclusion of historical narratives in Israeli and Palestinian textbooks is an important project in the peace building efforts between the two nations and deserves attention by educators.

Bakhtin's (1981) position in dialogical interactions between individuals and social groups through which memories and social experiences can be documented, is an important point that I have connected to the theoretical framework of this research. In situating dialogical perspectives relative to my research, Bakhtin's theory helped me understand the context of narratives from different lenses. This approach meant that I, as the researcher, needed to be aware of my role as the facilitator in order to listen and record multiple voices of Palestinian and Israeli peace educators without judging them or taking any side. I was very careful in the selection[26] of my interview questions prior to the interviews, which were meant to elicit their experiences. Throughout my interactions with the participants, I did not interrupt them and asked relevant questions when I felt it was appropriate.

However, I felt there was something that separated us. I was the graduate student conducting the research, and they were the participants for this research. Within this context, I felt there was a hierarchy between us. In order to minimize this hierarchy, I adopted the "reflective position" whereby I viewed the context of the study with a broader lens and attempted to put my assumptions aside. In other words, as stated by Swanson (2004), I was able to become "alert to the untold stories as much as to those that are told, and to attend to the 'narrative secrets' in self-consciously discussing selectivities and limitations in the narrative inquiry

---

[26] These were general questions; more specific ones unfolded as to gain clarity.

process" (p. 45). For example, I paid attention to moments of silence during my interview with Yadi when he talked about his younger brother's suicide mission. When he first started talking about his brother's suicide act in a shopping centre in Jerusalem, he looked at me for a few seconds without saying anything. Whether I call that particular instance a moment of silence or whether I call it a space between told and untold story, I actively listened and engaged in the conversation without reacting in shock while hearing his story, and did not make any judgmental statements.

1.5   Palestine-Israel Centre for Peace Education (PICPE)

PICPE was founded by Majid. He was born in the United States and became a citizen of Israel in 1978. In my interview, he primarily identified himself as a social justice activist. His office wall was covered with posters promoting peace and cooperation between Palestinians and Israelis. He and his staff were very welcoming and provided me with a key to an office, a desk, and a computer through which I had 24-hour Internet access.

Majid's aim in creating PICPE is to implement the idea of a two-state solution and work cooperatively with Palestinians towards the advancement of peace and security in the region. From Majid's point of view, the First Intifada in 1987 was an eye-opening event for him as he realized a need to establish a joint Palestinian-Israeli NGO. PICPE's goals are well defined and clear in its mission statement, which is to promote understanding, cooperation, and conflict resolution in peaceful ways through joint actions with Israelis and Palestinians on a daily basis. PICPE's prospect for creating a peaceful society in the Middle East region is through providing socio-historical resources for everyone irrespective of their religion or ethnic affiliation, through promotion of mutual respect for Palestinian and Israeli citizens, as well as through promotion of tolerance and acceptance of the *other* in all aspects of the society.

Since its establishment until the beginning of the Second Intifada[27] in 2000, PICPE reported that it implemented about 200 lesson plans linked to peace education in over 70 Israeli and Palestinian schools, and provided peace education workshops to over 4500 students. The Second Intifada put a halt to PICPE's delivery of peace education workshops and lesson plans in Palestinian schools mainly because of travel restrictions between the two borders. Although PICPE still offers its educational workshops and conferences at least twice a year in Jerusalem, its staff is required to apply for entry permits for Palestinian participants from the West Bank. For this reason, PICPE has maintained a good relationship with high ranking military officers so that they can facilitate the issuance of 24-hour entry permit to Palestinians who register for these workshops.

Aside from obtaining entry permits for its peace education workshop participants, PICPE staff is involved in advocating for Palestinian citizens who cannot get permits to visit the Israeli side of the border. For example, one afternoon, I went with one PICPE Israeli staff to an Israeli District Coordinating Office where Palestinians from the West Bank apply for entry permit to visit their relatives in Israel. I witnessed a young Israeli soldier refusing a Palestinian man's request for an entry permit. The Palestinian man's reason for visiting Jerusalem was to see a sick relative. As soon as this incident came to the attention of PICPE staff, the staff member phoned the military officers and after several hours of negotiation over the phone, managed to obtain the entry permit for the young Palestinian man. On another occasion while we were at this same District Coordinating Office, an Israeli university student wanted entry permits for eight Palestinian art teachers to attend a conference in Jerusalem, but the Israeli soldier denied his

---

[27] The Second Intifada (uprising or shaking off) is also known as Al-Aqsa Intifada (Al-Aqsa is the name of an ancient mosque in Jerusalem) and started in late September 2000. This uprising started when the then Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon visited Temple Mount, an area known to Arab Muslims as Al-Haram Al-Sharif (Ghanem, 2010). I also visited www.wikipedia.org, (last visited on Dec 28, 2010) regarding the correct spelling of al-Haram Al-Sharif.

request. Once again, the Israeli PICPE staff called the military officers and negotiated for about three hours in order to obtain permit for seven of them.

A PICPE peace education workshop usually follows this pattern: First, the facilitators brainstorm concepts of *self* and the *other* relative to oneself, then the *other* relative to one's own community, and finally, the *other* across the two national borders. The purpose of the first step is to gain awareness and understanding, and to cultivate tolerance for Palestinian and Israeli participants. The participants form small groups to share their personal experiences with each other and listen to each other's narratives. The goal of this step is for each group to focus on the values they believe in and base their lives on, and acknowledge the conflict and issues of violence from both sides' viewpoints. In the final stage, each group recommends reconciliatory ways of living together peacefully. One example is the use of positive language of peace and negotiation (rather than talking about occupation, conflict, violence, pain, and suffering) in their daily lives as well as in their classrooms. In this part of the workshop, participants commit themselves to maintain ongoing dialogue with the *other*, who are their allies and colleagues across the two borders.

As mentioned, I chose PICPE as the primary source of contact for this study because its goal is to establish and sustain peace and cooperation between the two sides of the conflict by recruiting and training young teachers to deliver these programs to the new generations of Palestinians and Israelis.

I was thrilled to have the support of PICPE during my field trip to Jerusalem. On the day I arrived in the city, I met a young Palestinian teacher who also worked as PICPE's outreach coordinator. She provided me with contact information for about fifteen other Palestinian

educators[28]. When I sent an email to all of them inviting their participation in this study, only two of them responded. Fortunately, both participants referred me to other peace educators and I was able to recruit several of them. On the Israeli side, I met five peace educators who were either university professors involved in peace-related research and education or involved with policy change and community advocacy work. Almost all of them were affiliated with PICPE in some way. Overall, my interview choices for Israeli peace educators were more limited compared to the Palestinian side.

Prior to the interviews, I faxed a copy of the research proposal to each participant in which I explained the research objectives. I also faxed the consent form and collected the signed form at the beginning of each interview. To respect and protect the anonymity of the participants, names used in this research paper are pseudonyms. I tried not to ask questions regarding their extra-social or political activities because I did not want to invade their privacy or give the impression that I was spying on them, particularly for the Palestinian participants. In one case, prior to and during an interview with a Palestinian participant, I sensed that she was very tense. I discovered that she had an argument with her mother prior to our interview. She told me that her family home is on the hill in Bethlehem overlooking Jerusalem where the wall creates a border between the two old cities. She explained that the Israeli soldiers constantly overlooked her family home, which made her nervous and uncomfortable on an ongoing basis. She said she was not able to make phone calls from her home because, apart from the phone lines often being down, her phone conversations could be picked up by the Israeli military. Prior to our interview, I learned that her parents were originally from Jerusalem and were forced to leave the city due to

---

[28] I recruited research participants based on their national identity such as Israeli Jew or Palestinian Arab. Some of the participants referred to their religious identities (e.g., Jila and Rahel) during the interview and some did not (e.g., Yadi). Also, I did not have any research question based on the participants' religious affiliation and do not emphasize their religious identity.

the Israeli occupation in 1967. At the time of the interview, she had a pass that allowed her to

visit the Israeli side of the border. However, similar to other Palestinians, she had to go through

much frustration at the checkpoint each time she crossed the border.

The staff of PICPE and its co-founder Majid made it easy for me to connect to Palestinian

and Israeli peace educators. Overall, I conducted and tape-recorded seven formal interviews with

signed consent forms. The interviews included three Palestinian Arabs from Bethlehem (two

women and one man), two Palestinian Arabs from Jerusalem (one man and one woman), and two

Israeli Jews from Jerusalem (one man and one woman). I spoke with five other peace educators

(two women and three men) informally because they did not want to sign the consent form for

the interview. Nevertheless, they provided me with invaluable information, which I recorded in

field notes. These five individuals were mainly involved in academic research in peace education

at the university level: one peace educator/researcher from the University of Haifa, one from the

University of Hebron, and three Israeli Arabs with Jewish backgrounds.

I conducted all the interviews in English, except the one interview with an interpreter[29].

Prior to the interview, I had been introduced to this participant through word of mouth. Shortly

after we met, he gave me a tour of the refugee camp where he and his parents grew up. He still

lives in the same camp and periodically sends me emails about his peace education work and his

family.

1.6 Dissertation Structure

I changed the structure and chapter order of this dissertation several times prior to its

final draft. I found it to be a complicated task for the following reasons. Firstly, I did not want to

locate the participants' narratives in one large traditional "data" chapter, which situates the

---

[29] I have mentioned this incident in section 1.4. of this chapter.

participants' voices late in the dissertation, and thus privileges theoretical, historical and

methodological literature. Some of these narratives do in fact speak of theoretical and historical

context related to peace education. Secondly, it was necessary to establish the overarching

narrative of the research itself documented in my field notes. They too required situating.

Thirdly, I considered how critical the order of theoretical, historical and methodological

underpinnings are for the reader in terms of background content and contexts, even prior to my

review of peace education in polarized societies.

In the end, I decided to attach participants' narratives to different chapters. Nonetheless,

it was a challenge to decide which participant story fit most appropriately with which chapter.

After several attempts at creating a structure that would make sense to the reader, I decided to

scatter field notes in different chapters and ascribe a particular participant's narrative to the end.

In this way, the reader could have access to the research narrative, what the peace educators had

to say, as well as the social and political environment in which they practiced.

Chapter One began by focusing on the research process, including my role as researcher,

my intentions in choosing peace education in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and the context of the

data collection. I also provided a brief introduction to PICPE and its role in training the new

generations of Palestinian and Israeli peace educators. Lastly, I include the first interview and

reflection with Rahel (she was my first interviewee).

The first part of Chapter Two begins with a theoretical review of peace education and

critical pedagogy. I link these two frameworks because, in my opinion, the goals of peace

education are to stimulate critical thinking among students and also to empower students to make

decisions for themselves regarding the influence of political ideologies that encourage the use of

violence toward the *other*. The second part of this chapter discusses narrative methodology and

the different methods I used during my fieldwork. In this chapter, I also draw on the works of

Bakhtin (1981 & 1984a), and Freire (1993 &1992 & 1972) to discuss the role of language and

dialogue in engaging conflicting parties. After a field note, I include my interview with Sharon.

Chapter Three brings a historic lens to this study. At the beginning, I provide the reader

with a brief narrative of the displacement of an Israeli individual and of a Palestinian individual.

Their histories are based on conversations I had with people during my field trip to Jerusalem

and Bethlehem, and are also based on scholarly literature about the region. While the Palestinian

and Israeli storytellers are fictitious characters, the historical events and the locations of the

stories are based on literature and my data collection. My intention in including both the

Palestinian and Israeli points of views is to bring "historical" perspectives from both sides to this

dissertation. Palestine has a centuries-long history of war and displacement. The city of

Jerusalem was the centre of attention for three Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity and

Islam) long before Israel's 1948 war. At the end of this chapter, I tell Majid's story.

Chapter Four covers the youth involvement in political violence in the Middle East. I

examine ways the *other* has been framed in Israel and Palestine, and how the *other* is perceived

by the *self*. To provide a theoretical review of youth involvement in political violence in the

Middle East, I analyze the ideology of political Islam and its impact on inciting political violence

among youth. These scholarly reviews of political Islam provided me with the opportunity to

learn from scholars in this field. I include my interview with Yadi and then with Jila at the end of

this chapter.

Chapter Five starts with a field note based on my visit with Professor Gavriel Salomon at

the University of Haifa. This chapter focuses exclusively on discussion and analysis of the

themes I draw from the data collected throughout my research in Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

Through the themes, I postulate dichotomized relationships between the two nations, and further analyze the notions of *self* and the *other*. I discuss the challenges to peace education and conclude with several major obstacles such as travel restrictions, the existence of the separation wall, and Israel's "no return policy." The last part of this chapter describes the implication of this research study.

Interview 1: Rahel's Story

I met Rahel at PICPE's office. At the time of the interview, she was the outreach coordinator for the peace education program at PICPE's office in Jerusalem. She also is a high school teacher in a refugee camp in Jerusalem. Rahel received her BA in English Literature from a Jordanian university and her Masters degree in Middle Eastern Studies from the American university in Cairo. Her Masters thesis was a case study in a refugee camp in Jerusalem, tracing the history of its residents from 1948 up to the time of her study.

Rahel became involved with peace and civic education because she thought it was important for Palestinians and Israelis to meet in person and talk about their experiences of oppression as a way to resolve the conflict between each other. I learned from Rahel that in her peace education workshops, she brings together Palestinian and Israeli students from various schools to facilitate discussions on their differences, difficulties, historical reasons behind the root causes of conflict between them, the reasons behind the displacement of the Palestinian people in the refugee camps, and the reasons behind Israeli settlement in the occupied territories. Given all these important topics, she also shared with me that at the final stage of her workshops, she explores with her students various ways that the two nations could live together peacefully. In her classrooms, Rahel introduces the values of tolerance, equality, and active citizenship to the participants. She believes that implementing peace education is crucial among Palestinians and Israelis because it opens up dialogue and communication between them, and deepens understanding and tolerance toward the *other*. In her own words, she explained why she became involved with peace education:

I think this is very important in this kind of situation we are living in where conflict is the norm, and if we don't engage in such programs, the results will be that we may end up keeping stereotypes without really understanding what's behind our traditional cultures. From my experience for instance, with the school that I teach, I know that the students are involved in peace education camps in the summer. During their travel, they get engaged with the other. As far as I know, NGOs and the civil society institutions are very much involved in bringing the students in those kinds of encounters. They tend to support programs that deal with the other. This means the two sides of the encounters such as the Palestinians and Israeli are involved.

I asked Rahel whether the impacts of peace education workshops on the participants are long-term or short-term and she responded as follows:

Personally, I went through the same process at school as a student who had her own stereotypes about the other, because all I saw on the TV for instance during the Intifada[30] or what I experienced on the ground was that the Israelis were killing the Palestinians and those were the images that were alive for me. It took me a while to kind of feel sympathy for those people that were victimized by suicide bombers or other forms of bombings. Because from my early age, I saw the other as the oppressor, a lot of their actions still are oppressive, and it is hard to kind of you know, to be tolerant and to continue dialogue when you see all those oppressive

---

[30] Intifada means uprising.

actions continuing on the ground. However, I recognize that the violence

is from both sides. It took me awhile to kind of figure out and understand

there are violent actions that exist from the other side that are violating

the human rights of my people and that there are actions from my

community that are violating the human rights of the Israelis or the other.

But the important thing is to keep the dialogue open, because once you

confront the other and make them acknowledge the wrong things that they

are doing then there is the possibility for a change.

It is often hard to directly talk about human rights education in my classes

and workshops, as the issue involves a lot of national narratives, cultural

beliefs, and sharing of personal experiences. Our students are not stupid.

They see things for themselves on the ground. Changing things requires a

process, and to be able to convince them what's going on, and how to deal

with the attitude change in this type of situation is also important in peace

educational work, you don't oppress others and you don't violate the

human rights of others. You can try and find constructive ways to let out

your emotions or anger and so on. The particular program that I'm

involved in, does not directly teach peace education in that sense. I mean

we don't directly deal with the conflict between the Israelis and the

Palestinians; rather we focus on certain values, which are tolerance,

equality and active citizenship. For example, some of them deal with the

issue of understanding like the inter-connection between the Christianity,

Judaism, Islam and the ways that the other has to deal with the concept of

diversity, accepting the other, and ways to deal with the individuals in the

society who are different or who have certain physical disabilities. So, we

try to look at the root causes of problems from talking about the students'

daily life experiences at home and with their friends, to putting things into

a wider perspective that challenges their lives.

Although Rahel did not directly respond to my question regarding the short term or long-term impacts of peace education programs on the participants, the significant point that she made was the issue of violent attacks from both sides. She also made remarks about suicide bombing. Therefore, I asked Rahel's feedback on this issue. She shared the following:

I believe that there have been organizations like Hamas or Al-Jihad[31]

behind the youth suicide bombing in Israel. When you look at the issue,

most of the suicide bombers were young women and men, and most of

them were students. There is a film about this issue called 'Arnas

Children'. This movie focuses on young people who are suicide bombers,

and a Palestinian woman, Arnas, who was supposed to take care of these

children. The documentary shows how through Arnas's acting class, these

young people's lives changed and how some of them became suicide

bombers. There is another film called 'Paradise Now', and that one

largely touches the economic issue. An economic issue that leads them

into feeling frustration. These young people feel like they don't have an

aim in life, and they are hopeless in whatever they do. So, they resort to

---

[31] Al-Jihad is an Islamist group that functions in Lebanon and Palestine.

violence, and so on. Of course, an organization, like Hamas, with this

ideology, would attract these types of young people. But then at the same

time I believe as long as that feeling of disappointment, despair, and

aimlessness in life exists, the Palestinian youngsters will be attracted to

activities like the suicide bombing.

The creation of new, tight boundaries by the Israeli state with the aim of keeping

Palestinian suicide bombers away from the Israeli state symbolized the boundaries of

suffering, and stress for Rahel. She could not abide the ideology that assumes every

Palestinian individual is a suicide bomber. She expressed her frustration with the

discourse of hegemonic views that made her Palestinian identity a threat to the *other*

nation. As a result, she and thousands of her fellow citizens had to suffer humiliation at

the Israeli checkpoints on a daily basis. She understood that as an outsider (from the

Israeli point of view), she was assumed to be and was categorized as a suicide bomber

every time she had to pass a checkpoint, despite the fact that she publicly spoke out

against the use of any form of violence to regain freedom of movement within the Israeli

and Palestinian boundaries.

Rahel expressed her disappointment with the Oslo Accords, and questioned her

state of hope:

Since the Oslo agreement, with the increase in number of checkpoints, and

the separation wall, sad things are happening. In my Masters degree, I

looked at case studies and observed a kind continuous refugee experience.

You feel that you are continuously being uprooted, and migrating from

one place to other place is not easy. These refugees were residents of West

> *Jerusalem and then after 1948 they were uprooted and were placed in the*
> *old city of East Jerusalem, then from the old city in 1967, they've been*
> *moved to the refugee camps in different parts of the West Bank and Gaza*
> *Strip.*

According to Rahel, the Palestinian refugees who lost their homes harbor anger and frustration.

> *Increased poverty among them and over population has added to the crisis*
> *among refugees. Before the Intifada, Palestinians were allowed at a*
> *certain extend to work in Israel, and now they are not allowed to enter*
> *into the Israeli side of the border. So for them it's disappointment on*
> *different levels. They feel their leaders have kind of betrayed them, the*
> *world has betrayed them, this whole peace process did not bring any hope,*
> *and instead it brought many other difficulties on a daily basis, and so on.*

As expressed by Rahel, the marginalization of Palestinian youth, combined with many limitations in a life under occupation, gives an opportunity to Islamist groups such as Hamas to foster an ideology of *self-sacrifice* among youth and manipulate them into violent activities such as suicide bombings. Rahel was critical of fanaticism and committed her work to raising critical awareness about the political culture of sacrifice within the ideology of political Islam. As a Muslim woman who grew up in a refugee camp in Jordan, Rahel rejected suicide bombing and did everything in her power to teach the younger Palestinian generation to distance themselves from any ideology that promoted martyrdom.

When Rahel was seven years old, the First Intifada started. She shared her

experience of life during those years.

> *I remember the experience of tear gas and so on, you know like hearing
> about the demonstrations, the stone throwing, and most schools were
> closed down. We sat at home and basically were watching the news all the
> time. You know watching Israelis killing Palestinians. I grew up with kind
> of a very strong sense of patriotism. As a child, I wished some kind of
> power could stop the massacre. Even people like my own brother went
> inside Haram El Shareef mosque[32] during the Intifada and wanted to
> throw stones toward the Israeli soldiers. After the Oslo agreement, things
> changed both negatively and positively. There was the talk of peace, but at
> the same time the checkpoints started being built. And since then, many
> more check- points have come into existence, and that made the
> Palestinian community to feel very disappointed, and I think they felt very
> disappointed of the Palestinian leaders. They felt very disappointed by the
> attitude of the Arab world, and they felt they are in a compressed
> community, and they felt like the oppression has been increased…. So, I
> grew up with that, with all of these things. You know, I started to engage
> in programs like peace education. Because before I only saw soldiers and
> so on, but now I encounter the other, talking with the other and so on.
> What you of course encountered problems, which are basically the two
> completely different national narratives. Specially regarding the issue of
> 1948, and the Palestinian refugees. We call 1948 the Nekba, the big

---

[32] Haram El Shareef is an ancient mosque in East Jerusalem.

catastrophe. For the Israelis, it's the day that they established the Israeli

state. So you know, one narrative is success and the other one is the

feeling of being oppressed and persecuted and kind of expelled and

uprooted from their homeland. I mean those encounters just made me be

able to communicate with others on a human level and that's what I would

say and that kind of opened up possibilities that if you interact with those

people in a human level, and in a professional level.

Collaborating with the *other* through peace education

When I asked Rahel about how she implements peace education in her

classrooms, she said the following:

I think education has a role. If the society does not educate young people,

they can have wrong choices in their lives. In my workshops, in addition to

invoking critical thinking, I try to promote various skills like debate skills

and active listening. During the workshops, I don't kill any idea, and I let

students pick whatever issue they want, then I allow them to respond to

each other. This way they practice the process of dialogue and debate.

Regarding how the *other* is perceived in the Palestinian communities, Rahel said

that similar to many other nationalities, Palestinians have diverse views on dealing with

the *other*. Overall, the Palestinians living in East Jerusalem[33] are more integrated with the

Israeli society compared to the rest of Palestine and cooperation in the field of education

has been happening between the Israelis and the Palestinians living in East Jerusalem.

The same situation may not exist among Palestinian living in the West Bank and Gaza

---

[33] East Jerusalem is run by the Israeli state since its occupation in 1967.

Strip.

> *If you ask about my role as a peace educator from an extremist person,*
>
> *like a supporter of Hamas, they may not approve of me. Our students think*
>
> *that we should have a chance to speak about our own feelings, and to*
>
> *communicate with the Israelis regarding how they have oppressed us.*

At the time of the interview, most of Rahel's students were between the ages of fourteen and sixteen and their parents were supportive of their children's peace curriculum.

> *I know lots of Palestinian students who travel abroad with Israelis, and so*
>
> *on, and their parents kind of support these encounters. I'm speaking*
>
> *mostly about Palestinians who live in East Jerusalem; this is my*
>
> *experiences based on what I see.*

Since either side of the conflict feel oppressed by the *other*, Rahel realized that she and other peace educators need to keep pushing for the promotion of tolerance and dialogue among their community members and that these tasks require educators in her role to be open minded first and for most.

As the facilitator of peace education workshops in the Palestinian communities in East Jerusalem and Bethlehem, Rahel said she has never taken any side during the sessions and allowed participants to set the goals for the workshop. She remarked: *"….they can either reject or resist listening to the information, if they think there is a threat to their collectively held beliefs and their narratives."*
Regarding the perspectives and values of the workshops from a Palestinian point of view, she focused on her Muslim identity.

> *There are certain similarities between the concepts in our teaching and*

the participants' values. For example, when we talk about democracy, we

bring forward the Islamic point of view of democracy, because there is a

point of view for democracy from an Islamic perspective. So, we kind of

emphasize those values, and I always try to look for something similar in

our own culture, or in our own beliefs.

Rahel also highlighted her Palestinian identity in relation to her professional life as an educator within the borders of the Israeli state. Although she questioned her hope for peace between the Israelis and Palestinians, her presence in East Jerusalem as a teacher involved in consciousness-raising among Palestinian youth have brought the lived reality of hope to a society that has been challenged by fear of violence and ongoing conflict. It was evident to me that Rahel represented a generation of Palestinians with a clear focus. Her focus was to transform the perception of the *other* from both sides of conflict through dialogical encounters between the *self* and the *other*.

Figure 2: New Israeli Settlements

This picture was taken from a refugee camp in a Bethlehem suburb prior to my interview with Yadi. As shown, in this picture, the wall separates this camp from an Israeli settlement.

Notes from the Field: my Last Border Crossing from Bethlehem

My last interview with a Palestinian peace educator is in Dheisheh Refugee Camp (suburb of Bethlehem). I start the interview in early afternoon and my plan is to leave the camp by 5:00 p.m. so that I can take the public bus from the checkpoint to Jerusalem to meet with my Israeli friend. The interview takes longer than I planned and I have to rush to the checkpoint in order to catch the last bus at about 7:00 p.m. As I arrive to the checkpoint, it is quite dark and there is hardly anyone there except for several Israeli soldiers. Fear comes to my mind. I regret being late in the middle of nowhere. I walk fast through the pathway leading to the checkpoint structure. While holding a cell phone in my hand, I go through a revolving door, but am not able to get out because the soldier in charge has locked me in. I call my Israeli friend right away and say hastily that I am trapped in the revolving door. Suddenly I hear an Israeli soldier shouting at me through the microphone above the revolving door, asking me in English to turn the cell phone off. I did so immediately. Then he asks me to hold my passport toward the camera. I cooperate with what he asks.

The door is open. I walk fast to get out of the area. Once again, I am locked in another doorway and there is only silence for about five minutes. I call my Israeli friend again and quickly tell her that I am trapped again and disconnect the cell phone immediately. Finally, after several minutes, the door opens and I am able to walk toward the area where an Ethiopian looking Israeli soldier is sitting. After I answer several security questions, I am free to leave the checkpoint area and go to the Jerusalem side of the border. I am relieved to see a Palestinian man who is waiting for a bus to go to East Jerusalem. We wait for about twenty minutes in the cold windy weather and decide to

walk toward the first intersection after the checkpoint to hitchhike. First I hesitate, and

ask him some questions about the purpose of his trip and his profession[34].

       I feel safe walking alongside him for about twenty minutes. We are able to

hitchhike to an area between East and West Jerusalem where I am supposed to meet my

Israeli friend.

---

[34] He was a trauma therapist who had his training in Germany. He grew up in Bethlehem, but has been living in Jerusalem since his wife is from East Jerusalem.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Discussions of Peace Education

In this chapter, I first provide a literature review of peace education and an overview of ideas that position critical pedagogy in the context of this research. In the last part of this chapter, I discuss the narrative methodology and the different methods of inquiry used for this study.

2.1   Promotion of Peace Education in the Middle East

In recent years, there has been considerable institutional commitment to "peace education" by academics, educators, and humanitarian organizations worldwide. According to UNESCO (2000), there are about 580 peace study programs delivered at research and training institutions around the globe. These programs are being promoted by the United Nations and other agencies as one alternative to conflict and injustice resulting from war and violence in the Middle East and different parts of the world. Appendix A.1 provides a list of several Palestinian and Israeli agencies involved in ongoing efforts to implement peace education programs in the region[35]. Almost all of these agencies promote dialogue and coexistence among children and youth. The initiatives taken by these agencies are important steps toward the design and practice of programs unique to societies that face ongoing violence and hostility such as Palestine and Israel.

However, the continuation of division between these two nations testifies to the fact that the existing programs are not sufficient in themselves because they do not include a large segment of the population and also they are not a sustained intervention, which likely limits their impact (Kupermintz & Salomon, 2005). Israeli peace education

---

[35] I found these institutions and descriptions of their work on their websites through google search.

scholars Haggai Kupermintz and Gavriel Salomon (2005), who researched peace

education in the context of intractable conflict, state:

> Peace education in this context must deal with collective narratives
>
> and deeply rooted historical memories and societal beliefs. Research
>
> findings from a series of studies with Israeli and Palestinian students
>
> and teachers demonstrate the challenges of attaining durable and
>
> worthwhile effects through educational activities: short-term benefits
>
> may erode over time, ongoing violence and hostility may block
>
> attempts to understand the opponent's perspective, and power and
>
> status asymmetries may dictate incompatible agendas or prohibit
>
> a mutual common ground for constructive interaction. (p. 293)

In addressing the effects of peace education in societies impacted by ethnic conflict,

Israeli peace and conflict studies scholars Zvi Bekerman and Claire McGlynn (2007)

stress the role of the socio-historical contexts of conflict situations and how they affect

the implementation of peace education in schools. In this regard, Kupermintz and

Salomon (2005) argue that certain beliefs held by each side are deeply rooted in their

collective narratives and can be learned through collective historical narratives.

Therefore, peace education programs need to emphasize conflict resolution skills

between collectives and not only between individuals. In bridging historical narratives

between the Israelis and Palestinians, Sami Adwan and Daniel Bar-On (2004), through

the Peace Research Institute in the Middle East (PRIME), have developed dual historical

narratives for teachers and students. These dual narratives are considered to increase

understanding and empathy about each side's history.

In the presence of political conflict and hostility between the conflicting nations, implementing peace education is always a huge challenge. According to Bar-Tal (2002), the likelihood of having positive outcomes from peace education involving conflicting groups may be very small when the media, politicians, and different educational institution foster divisions among those who are involved in creating war and conflict. In this regard, Pettigrew (1998), in his approach to the impact of peace education on participants, encourages face-to-face meetings between members of groups caught in conflict. He recommends that in order for peace education to be effective, there must be:

- equal status between the conflicting groups

- sustained interaction between participants

- interdependence in carrying out a common task

- support from authorities

- potential for the development of friendships

Habermas (1984), a German philosopher who as a child experienced the horrors of Nazism during the Second World War, in his theory of "communicative action" offers a deeper understanding of dialogue and active communication for the purpose of creating a peaceful community in local and international levels. His emphasis on dialogue and mutual understanding implies a communicative rationality in which he refers to this type of approach in communication as "synchronous" or "two-way" communication between the two conflicting parties that is tied to dialogical interactions between them. This approach is similar to that used by peace educators with PICPE who take advantage of opportunities to create dialogical encounters between Palestinian and Israeli children and youth.

2.2   Critical Consciousness-Raising through Peace Education

Access to peace and human rights education in Palestine and Israel has the potential to create large layers of informed, socially conscious community members, an idea reminiscent of Freire (1993 & 1972) in which he focuses on promoting educational programs contributing to individuals' critical analyses of their situations. Freire argues that having a "critical consciousness" is a precondition for the development of positive attitude and behavior in peoples' lives, and for liberation from their own oppressive social conditions.

The Freirian (1993) notion of critical consciousness involves two factors. The first is the development of a critical understanding of the root causes of their condition, and the second is the active participation of the group in working collectively to change their conditions. According to Freire (1993), critical consciousness involves an "active, dialogical educational programme" (p. 19), where the marginalized learners are actively involved in critically reflecting on the circumstances that shape their lives. Following the work of Freire as one of the leading scholars in the field of consciousness raising critical pedagogy, as noted in the UNESCO (2006) document, one can draw attention to the potential role of peace and human rights education in creating a long-term sustainable fair and justice oriented society for present and future generations. This means that a fair society that values dialogue and solves any form of conflict through active communication.

Engaging interactions in which both sides of the conflict are able to freely express themselves, ask questions, and be open to dialogue in a non-manipulative form of symmetrical communication can be empowering to peace educators and the participants.

This type of interaction is what Habermas calls "concealed strategic action" (1984) characterized by conscious decision making ability to achieve certain goals. In applying Habermas' theory of "communicative action" through "concealed strategic action" in the discourse of peace and human rights education, one can say that this method might reduce misunderstanding and ease off the pattern of tension in highly polarized societies.

2.3   Principles of Peace Education

Prior to exploring scholarly writings on principles of peace and human rights education, it is important to point out its many definitions. According to a prominent American peace researcher, Betty Reardon (1997), peace and human rights education create possibilities for dialogue between people across borders. She explains that peace education serves to educate about the need to avoid and eliminate war, and provides nations in conflict techniques such as non-violence resistance and respect for human rights. Reardon points out that peace and human rights education prevent conflicts from erupting into violence, and this avoidance of violence makes possible the achievement of just resolutions honoring respect for human rights and human dignity.

Promoters of peace and human rights education maintain that implementing human rights principles enables all individuals to take active roles in building a peaceful society enriched with social justice values (Osler and Starkey, 1996). Peace scholars, Audrey Osler and Hugh Starkey (1996), credited for developing human rights curricula for different groups of people living in Western European countries, argue that today's complex societies demand educated citizens actively participating in making their communities safer, and that these active community members encourage the younger

generations to think critically and make decisions for themselves while also actively participating in the social and political affairs of their communities.

Douglas Ray (1994), an advocate in the field, stresses that peace and human rights education can reinforce democratic values within society in addition to providing protection against unfair treatment in schools and in society by authorities regardless of factors such as poverty, membership in a minority group, family social status, gender, and physical or mental disabilities. Ray's scholarly writing on the promotion of peace and human rights education focuses on building international cooperation between nations across the globe. In particular, Ray suggests that when everyone from the entire world achieves respect for each other through school programs and through societal values, problems like war, violence, and abuse of power could become largely historic.

An international human rights scholar, Garth Meintjes (1997) uniquely defines peace and human rights education as the development of an authentic critical consciousness and source of empowerment for individuals at the grassroots level. He writes, "Students who are empowered, however, become conscious of their own participation in the creation of knowledge and of their own critical ability to conceptualize and re conceptualize their experiences of reality" (p. 66).

Jaganneth Mohanty (2003), a promoter of human rights education in India, gives a practical perspective to peace and human rights education as a tool capable of leading society towards a peaceful, progressive and prosperous world order. He recommends that every individual in India needs to study peace and human rights education so that they can practice it on a daily basis. To Mohanty, peace and human rights education should

focus on teaching conflict resolution with an emphasis on dialogue and cooperation among citizens.

The United Nations General Assembly (1994) defines peace and human rights education as a life-long process by which people at all levels of development and in all strata of society learn respect for the dignity of others and the means and methods of ensuring that respect exist in all levels of societies[36]. The Assembly called upon every sector of civil society to globally concentrate their efforts on promoting the universal culture of democratic rights through peace and human rights education, training and public information during the ten-year period from 1995 to 2004 (United Nations, 1998).

Obviously, the campaign to implement peace and human rights education on the global level has not been successful for many reasons including the unstable political situation in Palestine, Israel, Iran and many other countries around the world. A simple example to support my statement is that during the time that I had been writing this dissertation (since 2008), the Israeli settlements grew in the West Bank, the separation wall was expanded throughout West Bank and Gaza, as well, Gaza was bombed by the Israeli military for more than ten days (approximately from Dec 26, 2008 to Jan 12, 2009) in which more than fourteen hundred mothers, fathers, daughters, and sons were killed.

2.4   The Discourse of Critical Pedagogy

The above literature review suggests that peace education engages community members in dialogue and critical thinking so that one can bring social and political

---

[36] General Assembly Resolution 49/184, 23 December 1994.

change through understanding the *other*. Henry A. Giroux (1995), a scholar and author of numerous books and articles on critical pedagogy defines it as the following:

> Pedagogy refers to the process by which teachers and students negotiate and produce meaning. This, in turn, takes into consideration how teachers and students are positioned within discursive practices and power/knowledge relations. 'Pedagogy' also refers to how we represent ourselves, others, and the communities in which we choose to live. The term 'critical pedagogy,' by distinction, underscores the partisan nature of learning and struggle; it provides a starting point for linking knowledge to power and a commitment to developing forms of community life that take seriously the struggle for democracy and social justice. (p. 34)

As highlighted above, the goal of critical pedagogy is to encourage marginalized people to become active members of their society. In this case, the concept of "empowerment" is a necessary condition for the transformation of the society**.** I adopt critical pedagogy for this narrative research for three reasons:

(1) It demands that the researcher critically examine historic elements responsible for the context of the study (in my study, the centuries-old conflict in Palestine and Israel).

(2) It directly reflects the lived experiences and perspectives of the participants (peace educators in Palestine and Israel).

(3) It views knowledge as transforming social life through dialogical interactions (Giroux, 1995).

The empirical and historical nature of critical pedagogy bases its knowledge on transforming the social conditions of individual lives through educating the community

members. This approach entails a condition that involves both the educators and the students to challenge the dominant ideological assumptions (McLaren, 1995). For this reason, critical thinking becomes a key component whereby the students are encouraged to resist "norms of mainstream social life and to render problematic the common discursive frames and regimes within which 'proper behavior, comportment, and social interactions are premised" (McLaren, 1995, p. 231). Thus, critical pedagogy encourages the deconstruction of historical assumptions that convey unequal relations and prejudicial behaviour/attitudes against the *other*. This approach can be considered as a cultural shift from the dominant beliefs to a system that promotes inclusivity and social justice.

Both Giroux and McLaren draw their theory on critical pedagogy from the work of Bakhtin (1981; 1984a) and Freire (1993; 1992; 1972). To Giroux, Bakhtin's work on the representation of language as a form of voice is significant because it considers language to be a powerful tool able to shape the engagement of people anywhere in the world. In the context of education, language has the ability to influence the construction of a peaceful culture capable of leading individuals to construct a respectful society valuing critical dialogue for multiple voices.

Freire emphasizes the pedagogical experiences within any society engaged in developing critical dialogue for the purpose of social change. To Freire, educators can transfer their critical knowledge and their lived experiences to their students. This means that the educators themselves must first develop their own knowledge and culture, and then transform this knowledge to their students. He describes the dialogical encounter as "a practice of freedom in which people critically engage each other in an effort to know more than they currently do…. In doing so, they embrace their historical vocation to

become more fully human" (Friere, 1970, pp. 81-82). Thus, to foster a greater

opportunity between groups in conflict, open communication between group members is

crucial so that each side understands the subjective reality of the *other*.

Giroux (1997) presents his discourse of critical pedagogy on the role of educators

as those who produce culture. He defines discourse as "… a set of experiences that are

lived and suffered by individuals and groups within specific contexts and settings" (p.

135). Giroux connects the concept of experience to cultural processes that develop into

the dynamics of production, transformation, and struggle for change. Furthermore,

similar to Freire, he views dialogue as the primary condition for social and political

transformation of a society.

Critical pedagogy as a form of critical democracy (Kincheloe & McLaren 2002)

commits itself to the development of a process that encourages the telling of stories and

listening to the stories of others. Robert Nash, Demethra Lasha-Bradley, and Arthur

Chickering (2008) who wrote a book on how to construct and carry out difficult

conversations from various vantage points in the academia, argue that learning to live and

respect the *other* begins with the "mutual sharing of all those wonderful stories that give

meaning to people's lives …" (p. 8). This means that when the researcher finds a

participant who tells a story relevant to the research topic, both the researcher and the

audience can form **a** sociopolitical reality of the situation.

Researching educators' perspectives and lived experiences in conflict zones of the

world demands listening to their stories first, and then reflecting on their voices and

knowledge in the body of the research. In this way, reflexivity plays a role whereby the

researcher seeks ways of demonstrating to her audience, her historical and geographic

"situatedness", her reasons for doing the research, her surprises and challenges in the process of the research, and the ways she reflects the voices of her subjects into the research report (Gregen, & Gregen, 2003).

Such forms of self "situatedness" make the possibility that allows the researcher to bring her/his own story (relative to the subject of the study) into the research and link the self-story to the stories of the research participants. Qualitative researchers Mary Gregen and Kenneth Gregen (2003) argue that researchers' personal histories enrich the research report because the reader finds that the subject/object binary confronts the self and reveals his or her work "as historically, culturally, and personally situated" (ibid, p. 579).

2.5   Epistemological Assumptions

The epistemology underpinning of this work does not conceive subjectivity as a passive mirror of the external world; instead, it assumes that the subject actively constructs the social historical world in which the mind enters the empirical process. Social science researchers Kevin Kelly and Van der Riet (2000) argue that concepts are the contextual side of human praxis: they are guides for transformation and modifications of the external properties. To Kelly and Riet, the word "praxis" is often used to describe the relation between understanding and practice: "Praxis may be defined as a form of social intervention which is at one and the same time an idea and an action" (p. 7).

In applying the concept of praxis to the theory of critical pedagogy, I argue that the peace educators in this study critically examine their perspectives and actions constantly in ways that place these perspectives in charge of their lives as well as their community members' lives. In this regard, Freire (1972) suggests that when community members understand their conditions of life, they are able to find creative solutions to improve those conditions because they can critically analyze the causes of negative or oppressive conditions in their society and take effective steps to change them. He writes, "The reflection leads to action but that action will only be a genuine praxis if there is critical reflection on its consequences" (Freire, 1972, p. 41).

This epistemology is in sharp contrast to an objective notion of research (i.e., positivism). Thus, I do not describe the "social reality" of the peace educators as "objectively constituted" (Wise, 1983), preventing me as a researcher from developing my understanding of the ways the Palestinian and Israeli societies can construct a culture of change. Rather, I present the educators' transforming work on critical awareness

(praxis) that is directed at understanding the historic perspectives on the root causes of conflict while being actively involved in critical reflection of intersubjectivity with all participants, and also while examining the social reality of their stories.

In linking critical pedagogy to the work of peace educators in Palestine and Israel, the subject of empowerment becomes a highlight in my thesis. The goal of empowering the younger generation of Israeli and Palestinian is to provide them with the freedom of choice to decide for themselves without being manipulated by political ideologies that encourages the use of violence and allow the demonization of the *other*. This goal requires that one of the foci of the educators be the encouragement of their students/participants to view problems as social rather than personal, and express their needs and aspirations through the active use of critical thinking, dialogue and communication.

In tense situations when two conflicting nations have extreme negative perceptions and stereotypes of each other, and when systemic barriers and the separation wall create physical and moral obstacles in peace building efforts, it is difficult to imagine a starting point for creating person-to-person engagement or changing individual perceptions of the *other*. However as Giroux (1995) describes, "… it becomes, rather, part of an ongoing struggle for counter public spheres where the language of public association and a commitment to social transformation emerge as concrete social movements for change" (p. 56). While the framework of critical pedagogy endorses, to a greater or lesser extent, the challenge of oppressive cultural norms that permit the use of exclusionary treatment of the *other,* it is able to transform conditions that create/promote human suffering (Giroux, 1995).

2.6 Rational Behind the Use of Narrative Research

We live in a world that is very different from the twentieth century, mainly because of the advancement in technology, improved mass communications/social network and easier transportation of people around the globe. As Peter McLaren (1995) states,

> These 'new times' are also reflective of the narratives we live by. They mirror the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves, stories that shape both the ecstasy and the terror of our world, disease our values, misplace our absolutes, and yet strangely give us hope, inspiration, and framework for insights. We can't escape narratives but I believe we can resist and transform them. (p. 89)

Narratives conceptualize our understanding of human knowledge and give meaning to the individual stories we hear from research participants during our field work. Narrative inquiry requires the researcher to hear diverse voices and transfer those voices directly into the research report. Researchers, who aspire to reflect on multiple voices including the voice of the researcher, seek for an approach that gives them flexibility during the field work. Furthermore, narratives commit the researcher to explore a social or human problem in a non-exploitative way for the audiences from diverse backgrounds (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

I chose narrative inquiry because I wanted to tell a collection of narratives about peace building in the lives of marginalized people. As mentioned in Chapter One, my inquiry was based on peace educators' experiences told in stories, rather than evidence or evaluations of their efforts. These narratives include the narratives of the peace

educators, the narrative of the research through field notes and my own narrative as the researcher to the reader/audience. Susan E. Chase (2003), who has written extensively on narrative research, states, "Narrative is a way of understanding one's own and others' actions, of organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole, and of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time" (p. 656). In my perspective, narratives are an effective way to engage the readers into the conversation with the story tellers. This approach is particularly useful for researchers who aspire to make meaning in the narrators' lived experiences.

In order to provide meaning to the research participants' lives through the complex historical, cultural, and political forms, Giroux (1997) writes, "… the discourse of lived cultures should interrogate the ways in which people create stories, memories, and narratives that posit a sense of determination and agency" (p. 140). The adoption of narrative research gave me the opportunity to communicate with the participants in order to gain firsthand knowledge from those involved in social change in Jerusalem and Bethlehem communities. Similarly, narrative scholars, Michel Connelly and Jean Clandinin (1990), define narrative approach as "… the construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of personal and social theories, emphasizing that we are all characters and storytellers in our own and other's life-stories" (in Swanson, 2004, p. 41). In other words, these scholars suggest that the participants are producers of knowledge who bring their personal stories into context, illuminating personal perspectives beyond so-called 'normal' societal views.

Interviews play a significant role in having a successful narrative based research. In this regard, Chase (2003) posits that for researchers who collect narratives through

interviews, the question is how to treat the interviewees as narrators, both during the interviews and while interpreting their stories as data (p. 652). The relationship between the interviewee and the researcher results in the creation of dialogue that represents multiple perspectives to the audiences from multiple backgrounds in which I, as the researcher, present/publish knowledge gained through the research. Furthermore, through narrative research, the researcher has the possibility of raising awareness about the story tellers' efforts in transforming their communities toward the development of trust and understanding each others' history, values, and so on.

As a research approach, narrative inquiry highlights the participants' stories and the meanings these stories have in their lives. Using reflexivity enables researchers to acknowledge their own positions in the research process, and to demonstrate the dynamics between researcher and research participant. In other words, as stated by researchers in health and social sciences, Linda Finlay and Brendan Gough (2003), reflexivity provides a space for the researcher to critically reflect on her assumptions and social background in the writing process. Dalene Swanson (2004), who wrote on the impact of reflexivity in narrative inquiry, takes a more postmodern approach in which she focuses on change, reflection, inclusion, sharing, understanding, practice, and positive communication in her definition of this approach. As one of the important elements of narrative research, reflexivity suggests ways researchers can be self-conscious of the participants' roles by creating non-exploitative relationships between themselves and the communities being 'researched.' In this sense, it is essential for the researcher to build trust between herself and the participants. As argued by Swanson, this sense of trust cannot be built unless there is dialogue, collaboration, and consultation between the

researcher and the participants, which may undermine the typical power relations between the two (pp. 12-20). In the context of my research, I tried to minimize power relations between us (the researcher and the participants) by empowering the participants to engage in a conversation while telling their stories and to acknowledge that the participants are the producers of the knowledge for my research.

2.7   Methods Used During my Field Trip

The methods I used during my field trip in Palestine and Israel included semi-structured interviews, observation through participating in local events about conflict and human rights issues in Palestine and Israel, observations at the checkpoints whenever I crossed the border between Bethlehem and Israel, field notes, and document collection. These data collection methods enabled me to understand the backgrounds of peace educators as well as hear their firsthand stories on the conflict between Palestine and Israel.

Interviews: My interviews with the peace educators were in conversation form and my purpose for conducting interviews was to ask questions, guide the conversations and record their information for data analysis. My intention was not to exploit the participants by being only an instrument of data collection. This implies that I was the listener after posing a question and interacted with them in a conversation form whenever it was appropriate. A feminist researcher, Ann Oakly (1981) describes non-exploitative interviews in which the interviewer interacts with those whose lives are being researched by guiding the conversation.

Informal interviews happened spontaneously with the aid of field notes, while more formal interviews were audio-recorded and carefully transcribed upon my return to

Canada.[37] I used a pseudonym for each participant in the transcribed document and also in the reports for this dissertation. The advantage of using interview process is that participants are able to easily share their experiences and knowledge with me, so that I might gain a clearer understanding of their practices of peace education and challenges that they encounter in their daily activities**.**

Observation through Participating in Local Events / Field Notes: By participating in several community events during my field trip, I developed an informal dialogue and relationship with potential participants affiliated with PICPE, and I gained some firsthand knowledge of the root causes of tension between the Palestinians and the Israelis. During this process, I took field notes to document examples of relationships between the Palestinians and Israelis working side by side at PICPE's office, the situation at the checkpoints, and the informal discussions I had with several peace educators from both sides of the conflict. My field notes also include my own thoughts and reflections about events and educational activities in Jerusalem. Feminist scholars/researchers Sandra Kirby and Kate McKenna (1989) believe that events and reflections described in field notes during participation at community events become part of research data, and that the researcher becomes more conscious of research question(s) when observing day-to-day activities relevant to the research focus.

Document Collection / Field Notes: During my daily visits to PICPE's office, I was able to collect information such as research reports on peace education by PICPE, as well as pamphlets, brochures, and books by which I gained a better understanding of different perspectives in the field. For example, by reviewing PICPE's report on Palestinian and

---

[37] I explained more about this process in section 1.6.

Israeli textbooks, I learned that the group was critical of the negative images each side

uses to portray the other. I also recorded my own observations and perceptions during my

visit to Jerusalem and Bethlehem. In order to understand the root causes of conflict and

its impact on individual Palestinians and Israelis, as well as its impact on peace activists,

I described in my field notes how the participants interacted with me, the military

presence at checkpoints, and the ways in which Palestinians were treated by the public in

Jerusalem.

Photographs: Throughout my field trip, I took pictures of events I participated in and

places I visited. Many of these photographs helped me to record images during the

research, which I could use to describe in the text related to different aspects of my field

work. With respect to UBC ethics policy, I included a few photos in this dissertation.

2.8   Advantages of Using the Narrative Research

As mentioned, one of the primary advantages of adopting a narrative research is

the relationship between the researcher and the participants (Chase, 2003), where the

researcher listens to the participants' narratives and is able to present their stories to a

wide range of audiences within various discourses. In particular, I find narrative inquiry

important within the context of education, when the emphasis is on transforming society

through raising awareness and empowering the participants. An aspect of narrative

research even more interesting to me is the use of the personal pronoun "I" when the

researcher and the participants engage in a storytelling form of narration (Creswell,

1998). In my perspective, the use of "I" highlights the emotions and feelings of the

narrators, enabling the researcher to show the uniqueness of their action and social

interactions.

Another advantage of the narrative approach is the presence of the active role of the narrator throughout the research; as stated by Chase (2003),

> .…when researchers treat narration as actively creative and the narrator's voice as particular, they move away from questions about the factual nature of the narrator's statements. Instead, they highlight the versions of self, reality, and experience that the storyteller produces through the telling. (p. 657)

The concept of voice makes sense when applied to the creation of knowledge from the narrator's telling of stories. This draws the narrative researcher's attention to recruit those participants whose stories fit within the research questions.

The reflection of multiple voices and perspectives directly from those involved in knowledge creation can be a significant advantage of using a narrative approach in qualitative research. In support of this, Swanson writes:

> Narrative opens up a space for addressing responsibly the moral, political and ethical paradoxes and dilemmas of the human experience through embracing pluralized perspectives in ways which give meaning and form to those experiences as lived. Such space encourages other envisioned possibilities of lived realities as a facultative act; one which empowers if not compels humans to engage autonomously in action towards personal and collective liberation. (2004, p. 40)

Acceptance of reflexivity or self-awareness can be also considered an advantage of this approach because the researcher actively learns from the participants' experiences and perspectives rather than being an "expert" who interprets the stories. In this regard,

Swanson (2004) suggests that the researcher's reflexive role can contribute to a better understanding of the cultural and political issues in communicative dialogues between ethnic groups in conflict, as well as it can improve educational strategies for the planning and implementation of dialogue-based encounters during ongoing conflict.

2.9   Limitations of Using Narrative Research

Although the use of any methodological approach to research contributes to the creation of knowledge primarily from the participants' perspectives, it has limitations, and narrative research is not excluded from having certain challenges. As argued by scholars (Squire, 2008; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), one of the obstacles to this approach is that the success of the research is based on the story that each participant provides. Moreover, the researcher can become preoccupied with the subject(s) of the study rather than social context. Narrative researcher, Corinne Squire (2008) believes that although postmodernist researchers reject the notion of neutrality in their work, they can be preoccupied with a socially-determined subject in a way that sometimes leads them into an individualized prescriptive-partial approach (pp. 53-54).

By keeping in mind Squire's critique on the limitations of narrative research, I was conscious of not falling into the worldview of cultural relativism. That is, in my analysis I did not interpret certain activities as a form of accepted culture within the Israeli or Palestinian communities. For example, instead of justifying the Palestinian suicide bombing of Israeli civilians as a form of Jihad accepted by the Islamic world, I critically analyzed the root causes of the extremist movement in the region and framed it as a phenomenon rooted in the ideology of political Islam.

In addition to the above limitations of narrative research methodology, the interviews may take time to finish, and the researcher does not know whether the "right" participant was recruited until the end of the interview. However, if the researcher conducts multiple interviews, this limitation does not greatly impact data collection. This was the case in one of my interviews in Jerusalem when I realized one participant was

more of a politician than a peace educator. I did not include this particular participant's story in this research after transcribing the interview.

2.10   Conclusion

The literature reviewed in this section, converges to the conclusion that peace and human rights programs whether through school curricula or through seminars and workshops in the community level, may improve the attitudes and communication abilities of those involved in conflict by enabling them to rise above stereotypes and negative perceptions that limit or prevent dialogue. According to several human rights scholars (Meintjes, 1997; Ray, 1994; El-Rifai, 2002; & Salomon, 2002), these programs provide opportunities for individuals to learn about and respect the rights of others, to develop critical thinking abilities, to promote understanding and tolerance, to cultivate non-violent and conflict resolution skills, and to change negative beliefs and attitudes toward the so-called *other*. For other scholars (Olser & Starkey 1996; Andreopoulos & Claude, 1997), peace and human rights education contributes to a collective sense of awareness of the root causes of oppression. This heightened awareness empowers individuals to gain more control over their lives as part of questioning and challenging the systemic power relations within their communities.

Critical pedagogy guided my understanding of several Palestinian and Israeli peace educators' lived experiences and perceptions on peace and human rights education. By reading the works of Giroux, Bakhtin and Freire, I learned that the notions of the educator's voice, the dialogical interactions between the conflicting parties, and their struggle to create inclusive and peaceful societies are the pivots of this transformatory pedagogy. I briefly draw attention to Bakhtin's work because he views language as an

important social and political act that links people to the world. Therefore, dialogical interactions between the educator and the students, where the educator helps students to make ways to express their aspirations and their frustrations without fear, can be a significant aspect of critical pedagogy.

By using narrative methodology I was able to link theory and praxis together by engaging research participants in generating knowledge for this research. As argued by Denzin and Lincoln (2003), everyone has a story to share, and everyone is a storyteller by nature; stories portray peoples' values, ideas and way of life and create engagement and solidarity between people to people and between the narrators and the researcher. However, meaningful and relevant stories make people listen, think and critically engage in a conversation. According to scholars (Salomon & Nevo, 2002; Swanson, 2004), narrative research can be a preferred strategy for a qualitative researcher who is interested in understanding people who live in polarized communities.

Dialogue as an effective tool in bringing conflicting parties into a mutual understanding plays a further important role in weakening the underpinnings of collective hatred, distrust, and fear in societies shattered by political violence (Nepstad, 2004). The notion of dialogue as a multi-voiced mode of communication can be explored in the context of Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the ways that peace educators try to use not only the language, but also memory, experience, and their past and present interactions with each other when conceptualizing their work.

As mentioned, the key concept in narrative research is hearing the lived experiences and perspectives of those involved directly in the field. Narrative scholars Clandinin and Connelly (2000) argue that the narrative inquirer retells the stories that are

open for inquiry and retelling (pp. 45-46). Dalene Swanson (2004) in her Ph.D. dissertation theorizes on narrative methodology extensively, and argues that the power of story from the narrator's point of view "presents a powerfully visible argument against neutrality" in research methodologies (p. 41). She believes that stories are about the nature of interrelated and interdependent events (plot), in relation to place, situational context, and time (setting), as well as the story teller making relative the elements of story construction (p. 41). I have echoed this point by evoking memories of all the peace educators I interviewed, particularly in the cases of Yadi and Sharon.

In summary, I would like to emphasize the importance of individual peace educator's experiences and perspectives in the form of narrative I collected during my field work, and view each participant as a critical pedagogue. In today's Palestinian and Israeli societies, all peace educators may not hold the same views and stories as I found while doing this research; however, I hope that eventually the practice of critical pedagogy in all schools in the Middle East will be the main starting point for exploring ways to promote and implement dialogical interaction between their diverse community members.

Interview 2: Sharon's Story

Sharon was 50 years old at the time of the interview. She was born in Haifa-Israel. Her father's side of the family settled in Israel from Germany prior to the Second World War[38], and her mother's side of the family was Christian-Palestinian. According to Sharon, the Palestinian side of her family was characterized as "left activists" and political discussion was always the centre of her family gatherings. She mainly grew up in her Palestinian grandmother's home, which was located on a street in Haifa where several prominent Palestinian activists lived.

> *We had a special neighbour who is the Palestinian national poet. His name was Mahmoud Darwish, and he was expelled from Israel in 1971, because he did not cooperate with the Israeli state. He lived in Paris for many years and was allowed to return to Palestine a few years ago and lived in Ramallah until he died. The war in 1948 caused Nakba for the Palestinians in which about one million Arabs were expelled from their homes. Under the Israeli occupation, the military regime ruled over the Palestinians and to this day, they are not considered as equal citizens. The end of the military regime was announced in 1965. The Israeli regime can investigate any Arab Palestinian or arrest them and put them in jail. As a young child and student, I was in trouble for having half of my family as Palestinian. For example, many children were told not be friends of mine, because of that I was kind of alone, isolated and excluded at school. Excluded just because my heritage wasn't good enough for them. On the*

---

[38] According to Sharon, he and his family escaped Nazi atrocities in early 1940th.

other hand, my father was German, he died when I was very young and my

grandfather and grandmother spoke German with me and they ran away

from Hitler just before the Second World War started. Part of my German

family members were killed in the Holocaust…. When I was nine, it was

the 1967 six days war and of course we heard the news in Arabic, and we

knew what the real story was. We knew that Israel was winning. There

was real fear of war being extended, and the Jewish people had very high

fear that all the Arabs are going to kill them one by one. I said forget it,

you are killing the Arabs now. But nobody believed me and I always had

trouble because I could understand what was going on.

Sharon obtained a BA in psychology and became a teacher in Israel for a few

years in the 1980s upon her university graduation. She worked on a special project which

focused on teaching children from economically marginalized families from Israeli and

Palestinian communities. Sharon started her work as the office manager at PICPE in

2007. Since the agency is small and survives on donations by individuals or other non-

profit organizations, she does everything, including the finances and bookkeeping,

secretarial duties, and also advocacy work, mostly for the Palestinians.

Sharon was not directly involved with peace education workshops at PICPE, but has been

active with a human rights advocacy group for the Palestinians called Peace Watch since

2003. She described her disappointment with the peace after it was disrupted by

Palestinian suicide bombers.

We lost our hopes for the possibility of peace between the Israelis and

Palestinians, because of the extremists in the Palestinian society. There

were a lot of explosions and suicide bombers, which really dispersed the

Israelis who wanted to believe in the possibility of having peace with the

Palestinians…. Most Palestinians are not extremists and the suicide

bombers do not represent the Palestinian population…. No matter what

happens, sooner or later, we will have peace with the Palestinians….

One negative impact of the suicide bombing in Israel was the intense restrictions in the

Palestinian movements from the West Bank and Gaza Strip to Israel, which trapped

thousands of Palestinian people in their cities and villages. Therefore, they were not able

to see their relatives who lived in Israeli cities and could not attend seminars or schools in

the Israel. Sharon constantly helped Palestinians who had so-called legitimate reasons to

enter Israel, but confronted denial at the Israeli Coordinating Office, DCO or at the

checkpoints. She could not bear to witness injustice without taking any action.

When there is little hope for peace between us, I don't want just to sit

somewhere and only talk about solutions theoretically. I want to do real

work with Palestinians and not to get involved in charity work or

humanitarian work, and Peace Watch is just what I was looking for.

As an advocate for human rights, Sharon, along with other Israeli women, go to different

checkpoints once or twice a week and through the waiting room area, observe the ways

that the Israeli soldiers treated Palestinians who were in need of entry visas. She and her

colleagues call high military officials on the spot, whenever a Palestinian is denied an

entry permit by a soldier.

My reasons for doing this work are to help Palestinians to get home or to

get to hospitals, or to visit their relatives in the Israeli side. So, I started

making connection with the high ranking Israeli army officials, civil

administration, and the front line soldiers responsible for the denial of

entry into Israel. I think the best people who can change the soldiers'

decision are through the high-ranking army officials. So, I have made a

connection with the Ministry of Defense through PICPE, because some

individuals within PICPE have good connection with everybody in Israel.

Like in Rahel's interview, Sharon pointed out the issue of suicide bombing at the

beginning of her interview, and therefore I asked her perspectives on the impacts of this

act in both Israeli and Palestinian communities, she shared her own analysis.

In order to find out how the Second Intifada started, you have to look back

to the murder of Yitzhack Rabin. The Palestinian extremists used the

murder of Yitzhack Rabin and started suicide bombings in Israel. The

worse year of these suicide bombings was in 1996. As the result, the

Israelis did all kind of actions against the Palestinian Arabs. For example,

the army went into the Palestinian schools and villages, and they

continued to occupy the Palestinian land. They are taking lands from the

Palestinians and adding them to the new Israeli neighborhoods for Jewish

people only. So, this has been kind of a very extreme deterioration of the

relations between the two people; then a Jewish extremist was chosen to

murder Prime Minister Rabin, and with that the Oslo agreement was

killed as well.

You see when I grew up with Palestinians, they were not very religious at

all, and they were very, very secular. They have lots of pressure from the

Muslim movement. Like people who I knew from five years ago, never, never fasted in Ramadan, now everybody is fasting, everybody! It's about 90 something percent of Palestinians, because they found that politically they have no solution so they are going back to the religion and really taking advantage of it.

Now what happened in the Second Intifada, it was the new year of the Israelis, so we couldn't go into the West bank; I used to work in a factory, which is beyond the green line, I quit work because we were not allowed to go to work outside Israel border and the Palestinians who used to work with us immediately were fired. This is the first step, so they lost their work, they needed special permits. They became prisoners in Palestine, I couldn't stand it and I started a solidarity work for them. The Palestinians can see those of us who care about human rights.

When I asked Sharon about the ways she contributes to peace education between the Palestinian and Israelis, she connected her human rights advocacy work (through Peace Watch) and peace education work (through PICPE):

I don't know how much I educate individuals for peace, and I don't know what to call my kind of work, whether it's street education, or its natural education....You see when we have the seminars for peace education at PICPE, both sides are participating....The big frustration of the peace movement is that when Rabin was murdered half a million people were supporting peace; all of these people disappeared in the Second Intifada. Many Israelis lost their hope for peace with the Palestinians, and they lost

faith in the peace process with the Arabs. So, no matter what we, the

activists are trying to do, it's very hard to reach the Israelis who used to

support peace with the Palestinians. These days no matter what happens

to the Palestinians, many Israelis don't care for them anymore; so some

Israeli individuals like myself try to be there for them, like having

connection with them, and having relations with different Palestinian

villages and they know that we are there for as much as possible, and to

have normal life under the occupation....

Sharon highly values building 'trust' as the fundamental source of establishing
relationships between the two nations.

Many Israelis are really nice people, but they don't trust the Arabs. Peace

education is a long process, and the basic thing that everybody like myself

know in psychology is 'trust', and first thing in education is to build

'trust'. There is such huge mistrust between the Israelis and the

Palestinians. We have to work on building trust between us; otherwise we

will not be able to solve the conflict.

Sharon deeply believes that the practice of human rights principles is closely linked to the
deconstruction of the *other*. When I asked about her experiences of *othering* and ways to
raise awareness about the culture of inclusion in both Palestinian and Israeli society, she
responded passionately, as follows:

I don't care what the solution is, I don't care if it's one state, two states, I

don't know, it's not for me to decide. The people will decide, I don't care

how they get peace; but eventually we have to learn to respect each other,

we have to learn to accept each other, we have to learn to understand that

we cannot dictate to the other side how they live their lives and how they

determine this and what they think. There should be morality which is

equal [in], its respect for human beings….

The big philosophy, is philosophy for human understanding, and where

there's human understanding, there is everything, there is more

understanding for the difference between us.

She spoke louder than usual in making the above statements. At this stage of the

interview I noticed how enthusiastic she was toward building a bridge between the two

sides of the conflict. Sharon told me how thousands of Israeli men and women have

worked very hard for several decades to bring the two sides together and live peacefully

with each other without militarized borders. However, despite these many years of

struggle for peace and justice for Palestinians and Israelis, Sharon is disappointed. Like

many Palestinian and Israeli peace builders, she struggles to build co-existence between

the two nations at least for now. As a listener, I admired Sharon's courage for continuing

her struggle to establish basic human rights in her two Israeli and Palestinian

communities.

I asked Sharon whether there are peace education programs within the Israeli

schools.

When there is so much propaganda on young Israelis to be brave soldiers,

it's very hard at the same time to educate them for peace. How can you

fight, how can you stop a person at the checkpoint if you learn to accept

the other; so you can't…. you can't do it. It seems like it is against the

policy of Israel. We constantly learn from our society that Israel has to

protect itself, because Palestinians are threatening us, we are under

threat, and we must protect ourselves, we must have a strong army…. ; so,

it's very difficult to teach children to accept the others and they are paying

a very high price.

One of the fascinating things that I learned in my international human law

class was that the Palestinians similar program has courses on human law

in every school led by the Red Cross. So, Palestinians are learning about

international human laws at their schools; but in Israeli schools there are

no courses like that, they don't teach it, it's a disaster. Instead, at the

Israeli schools, except for studying bible, they brainwash our students,

and teach them about religion rights for the existence of this holy land,

and teach them by law, God promised the Jewish people this land; this is

one of the many things that they teach us at schools. Then they say we

don't hate the Arabs, because they want to exterminate us, we have to

protect ourselves, and there is no hatred against the Arabs you know? And

this is what we hear over and over all the time at the Israeli schools….

One must be optimistic; one day a man who was having a political

discussion with me asked me, "Why are you here in Palestine?" First I

told him because nobody kicked me out of here. Then I told him because I

was born here, I have deep family roots here. I don't agree with the things

that the Israeli government says to justify our existence here, that's

wrong; I don't think that anybody should justify why they are here, and one way or the other, we have to live together. There is no other way. When a terrorist attack happens, the media and the politicians use it to create more fear among us and the Israeli government says that we have to fight with the Palestinian extremists. I say, each side has to fight the extremists, not the other side. There are extremists among the Israelis too; they are abusing the Palestinians all the time. Look at Europe, for example, the Germans and the French people may not love each other, but they learned that it's very worth while to live together peacefully and to trust each other because their communities are linked with each other.

Sharon's narrative on extremist views in Israeli society helped me understand how complex the context and practice of culture of inclusion between Arab Palestinians and Israeli Jews can be. This was because the nationalistic ideology of Zionism that flourished from the late 19th century is still fresh in the Israeli public. I learned from Sharon that as long as the Israeli state allows teaching of Zionist ideology both in the education system and during military service, and focuses on the Israeli nation rather than the human being, the Palestinian people will never be included, and the polarization between the so-called *self* and the *other* will be further deepened.

Sharon's unique identity as a Palestinian-Israeli woman guided her to value human rights and human dignity for all. Although primarily she identifies herself as an Israeli Jew, she expresses her deep attachments to her Palestinian roots, something that she had never hidden even as a child despite that she was treated as the *other* at her childhood school and was excluded by her peers.

What made Sharon different from other Jewish people I met in Israel is her strong sense of standing up for justice. She is frustrated whenever she notices any sign of unjust treatment or tension on either side of the conflict. For example, on one occasion, Sharon and I were walking through a historic site in East Jerusalem when we suddenly saw an Israeli flag from a distance. We walked closer to the flag and saw several young men wearing traditional Jewish clothing. Not only was I surprised to see these men in this part of the city, we also saw two Israeli soldiers guarding a small military structure and several small military vehicles around the structure. Sharon became upset when she saw these soldiers and started talking loudly with them in Hebrew. In response, the young soldiers gripped their guns more firmly towards us and replied to her in Hebrew. At that point Sharon was silenced and we walked away from the area quickly. Sharon then told me that a few meters away from that particular small Israeli army base in East Jerusalem, there was an ancient Jewish holy site. Pilgrim Orthodox Jews believe that by washing their bodies with that water, they become purified. According to Sharon, the Israeli government wants to gradually settle Jewish citizens in that area. For this reason, rich Israelis offer large amounts of money to Palestinians in order to purchase their homes. According to Sharon, very few Palestinians have so far sold their East Jerusalem homes to the Israelis, and those who do are condemned by their community members as traitors.

Sharon's narrative highlighted the experiences of a peace educator/activist who moves beyond the prescribed norm presented by her society. To me, she is an example of an educator who could use any space to express her story to multiple audiences. Her ongoing human rights advocacy work among her community members proves to me that she has never considered herself as a victim, but as a woman full of hopes and dreams

about the future of Palestinians and Israelis. Although she lives in an upper middle-class Israeli neighborhood in west Jerusalem and has access to many privileges as a Jew, her struggle to build trust and respect between her two community members is beyond expression through words.

Figure 3: Entry Permit

This picture was taken at the Israeli Coordinating Office, DCO where Israeli soldiers decide whether to issue an entry permit to Palestinians from the West Bank or not. Two Israeli peace activists/educators from Peace Watch witnessed the denial of the Palestinian entry permits by the Israeli soldiers.

Notes from the Field: Failed Interview

Sharon and I meet Navid at a public lecture in the Ambassador hotel in East Jerusalem two days prior to the Annapolis conference of November 2007[39]. He is sitting in the lobby of the hotel alone. As soon as he sees Sharon, he greets her warmly. I realize they have known each other for a long time. Sharon introduces him to me as a Palestinian activist. While shaking my hand, Navid greets me in Arabic, thinking that I can speak and understand his language. He is a tall man in his early fifties. His grey suit matches his hair colour and his mustache. He asks me several questions in English and expresses how much he would like to visit Iran one day. When Sharon and I walk toward the large meeting room, she tells me that Navid was a political prisoner in the 1980s.

The forum at the hotel is organized by PICPE and features a number of prominent Palestinian peace scholars and local Israeli politicians who talk about the future of Jerusalem and their perspectives on the two-state solution. A few minutes prior to the start of the public forum, I approach Navid and ask him about his peace building work. Through this informal conversation, I learn that he coordinated peace-building activities for youth in East Jerusalem, Bethlehem and several neighbouring West Bank villages funded by the Municipality of Jerusalem. Since we understand each other in English, I ask him whether he is interested being interviewed for my research. He agrees, and I hand him the introduction to my research and the consent form so that he can read them prior to our interview.

---

[39] The Annapolis Conference was a peace conference between the Israeli state and Palestinian authority held on November 27, 2007, at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, USA. The theme of the conference was a two-state solution to deal with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The next day, after receiving directions from Sharon, I go on my first trip to East Jerusalem. I arrive at Navid's office one hour early and decide to explore the neighborhood where Navid's office is located. The structure of the houses, the trees and the smoky smell of Downtown East Jerusalem remind me of working class neighbourhoods in Tehran during the time I lived there. It is a mild, sunny day perfect for this pleasant walk, which gives me an opportunity to reflect on my last four years of political life in Tehran before leaving for Turkey in 1987. I have mixed feelings of homesickness and happiness. My nostalgic feeling come from having grown up in Iran; however, I feel happy because I am no longer living under the jurisdiction of the ultra conservative-Islamic regime in Iran.

I arrive back at Navid's building ten minutes before our appointment. A young Palestinian man directs me to Navid's office. The room is packed with books and papers and there are several pictures of Yasser Arafat and other prominent Fatah leaders on the wall. During our conversation prior to the interview I learned that Navid joined the resistance against the Israeli occupation through the Fatah party[40] when he was in his early twenties. At some point he was arrested by the Israeli state and spent eight years in an Israeli prison. Since his release from that prison he devotes his career to promoting non-violent activities. He has become involved with PICPE since 1995 and has been implementing negotiation and peaceful resolutions between Palestinians and Israelis at the grassroots level as well as at higher administrative levels.

---

[40] As the largest political organization, the Fatah Party is a faction of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and is considered a moderate-nationalist party. The Fatah Party has not been regarded as a terrorist organization by any government since the Oslo Accords.

After exchanging our views and experiences about the mixture of religion and politics as well as the Islamic regime in Iran and Hamas in Gaza, we start our interview. I am excited about doing this particular interview and expect to learn a lot from Navid's experiences and perspectives in the field of peace education. However during the interview, I learn that he is more like a local Palestinian politician at the municipal level than a peace educator. I start transcribing his interview after I leave his office and realize there are some vague statements that need more clarification. For this reason I email him to ask if we could meet or talk on the phone. When I do not hear from him, I email him again and leave two phone messages, but don't receive any response.

I debate whether to include his interview in this dissertation or not. While reading its transcript several times, I decide not to include it. Most of his answers are short, and most of the time he does not answer several of my questions. Unlike other interviewees, I cannot get hold of him for clarification since I left his office.

Figure 4: The Pathway to the Checkpoint

This pathway outside this checkpoint is meters away from the border at Bethlehem where

Palestinians are subjected to intense security checks by Israeli soldiers. A close look at

this cage-like revolving door shows a man trying to leave.

Notes from the Field: the Experience of Humiliation

Sharon and I are standing in the Israeli side of the checkpoint where vehicles and their passengers are inspected at this border crossing. It is a sunny day and there is no shelter to protect us from the hot sun. From far away, we can see cars and their occupants being inspected by young soldiers. The checkpoint's surveillance camera zooms in on us and catches my attention. Every few minutes, the camera turns and zooms in on us for a few seconds, then turns to the other side.

We smell the strong exhaust of the occasional car quickly passing. Although we are getting tired of not knowing where our guests are, we are determined to wait there until we hear from them. We are waiting for the principal of a school for blind Palestinian youth, a Palestinian peace educator, and six young students between the ages of seven to twelve years. As part of her social activism, Sharon is there to call for help from the higher military administration in the event these individuals are denied entry into Jerusalem. All of them are coming to Jerusalem on a minibus to participate in a fundraising event for a school at a Scottish church located between East and West Jerusalem.

We wait three hours more than expected, and guess that the minibus carrying these guests is being thoroughly searched at the checkpoint. Once the vehicle with its frustrated passengers arrives, we have to wait for the teacher because she is sent to the foot passenger section of the border crossing. This teacher is the only Muslim passenger (the rest of the passengers were Christian-Palestinian). The inspection is done even though everyone had a permit to visit Jerusalem until midnight of that day.

Finally, when the teacher is free to come to the Jerusalem side of the border after undergoing an intense interrogation and inspection, she joined the rest of her compatriots in the minibus. Her face is red with anger and I also sense she is very frustrated by this ordeal. Once she sees us, the first words that come out of her mouth are "they just wanted to see me humiliated, that's all."

Chapter 3: A Brief History of a Long Conflict

Shortly after the 1993 Oslo[41] negotiation and return of Yasser Arafat to the

Palestine territories, the conflict between Israel and Palestine became tenser. Violent

events followed the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin in November 1995 by an

Israeli extremist who was opposed to Rabin's signing of the Oslo Accords[42]. Since then,

many local and international educators and human rights activists have become

increasingly concerned about the deepening tension and conflict in this volatile region of

the world. Can we blame individual Palestinians and Israelis for their lack of

understanding of each other? Or, should we believe that a lack of understanding of each

other side's history, concerns, needs and fears are the root causes of the conflict?

The ongoing revenge and circle of violence between the Israelis and Palestinians

and also the widening of the separation wall between Palestine (Gaza and West Bank)

and Israel have created further polarization, division, and distrust between these two

---

[41] The Oslo Accords was officially signed at a public ceremony in the presence of PLO chairman Yasser Arafat, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, and the U.S President Bill Clinton on Sept. 13, 1993. However, the Oslo Accords documents were signed by Mahmoud Abbas for the PLO, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres for Israel, Secretary of State Warren Christopher for the United States and Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev for Russia. According to Oslo Accords, Israel must withdraw its forces from parts of Gaza Strip and West Bank and to recognize the Palestinian right to self-government through the creation of a Palestinian authority. This agreement brought hope for people inside and outside Palestine and Israel. In September 1995, the Oslo Accords was followed up with an interim agreement (Oslo II), which expanded Palestinian self-rule by the withdrawal of the Israeli military from six large West Bank cities. The Israeli Army was replaced by Palestinian police forces, and elections for a Palestinian Counsel were held in 1996, during which Yasir Arafat was elected as the chair of the newly formed Palestinian territory. While the Oslo Accords was the start of a step toward peace in the region, the extremist groups on both sides did many violent actions to stop its implementation. For example, in February 1994, an Israeli settler named Baruch Goldstein killed 29 Palestinians at a mosque in the West Bank town of Hebron. This event was followed by the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin by an Orthodox Jew named Yigal Amir in November 1995. From February1996, the Islamic fundamentalist group Hamas, which had gained support after the signing of the Oslo Accords, conducted a series of suicide bombings in Israel that killed many civilians in shopping centers, restaurants, cafés, busy streets and public buses. The violent events from both sides made Shimon Peres, the acting prime minister to stop the peace talks. When Benjamin Netanyahu became the prime minister of Israel in 1996, the expansion of Israeli settlement in the West Bank started once again and the Oslo Accords was declared defeated. The above information was taken from www.answers.com/topic/oslo-accords last visit was on Dec 14, 2009.

[42] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yitzhak_Rabin, last visited on March 10, 2009.

nations since the Oslo Accords. The Palestinian people's resistance against the Israeli occupation of their land, the construction of an eight-meter wall by the state of Israel (around the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, and the West Bank), and travel restrictions on Palestinian and Israeli citizens are several examples of obstacles to building dialogue between these two nations, particularly since the early 1990s. Despite these obstacles to peace, numerous Israeli and Palestinian educators and peace scholars continue to seek solutions to the circle of violence among their community members through peace and human rights education. As discussed earlier, educators and peace scholars have developed peace education curricula, workshops and seminars to raise awareness and change attitudes and behavior in their polarized societies to ones that accept the value and the way of life of the *other*.

PICPE as one of the leading NGOs focuses its efforts on developing and applying educational curricula and activities that promote dialogue at various levels between the Israelis and Palestinians. Given the difficulties obtaining access to the region's community of educators and researchers that is mainly caused by Israeli travel restrictions, I approached PICPE's founder, Majid, to get his permission to visit his office in Jerusalem and focus my research on the perspectives and experiences of peace educators and peace scholars affiliated (directly and indirectly) with his agency.

3.1   Narrative History: The Story of Lillian[43]

I was impressed by a talk at Vancouver's Public Library by Lillian Boraks Nemets, a Polish-Canadian writer who came to Canada along with her parents as refugees after the end of the Second World War. During the presentation, she shared her painful memories of surviving

---

[43] As mentioned earlier, the story of Lillian is about an event that I participated at Vancouver Public Library.

the Holocaust during the Nazi occupation of Poland and the ways in which Polish society was polarized by the Jewish question. Anyone with Jewish identity was excluded, ghettoized, displaced, starved, tortured, and murdered with few doing anything to stop the ill treatment of these people. Lillian was only five years old when she witnessed the horrors of war and destruction in her community that forced her family to escape the Warsaw ghetto where the walls separated Jews from a portion of the city. They later escaped the ghetto and lived in a Polish village under a false identity until the war was over. Although she lost her baby sister during the escape, Lillian and her parents were one of the rare Jewish families who managed to survive the Holocaust.

The entire time that I was listening to her narratives, on the one hand, I could understand how devastating it must have been to be a Jew in Europe during the Second World War; and on the other hand, her narrative reminded me of the separation walls between the Israelis and the Palestinians, assuring me of how history repeats itself. Lillian portrayed her story of survivorship to the audience and almost everyone, including me, was silent for a few minutes when her talk was over. As stated by Dalene Swanson (2004) "*silence can speak of many things….speaking articulately also of what it does not say….*" (p. 9). In other words, silence from the audience can be interpreted differently, whether the audience wanted to show their sense of solidarity with Lillian, whether they were mixed with emotions caused by her story, or whether they were linking her past experiences to present situations in conflict zones of the world. My silence was caused by knowing that the end of the Second World War created a new home for many survivors of holocaust in Israel, but created a lost home for millions of Palestinians.

During the discussion, I wanted to comment on the similarities between the Warsaw wall that created a ghetto for the Polish Jewish people and the wall that separated Israel from the

Palestinian territories. I wanted to ask Lillian's opinion about the heavily militarized checkpoints between Israel and Palestine, but chose to remain silent like the rest of the audience. The aspect of power in the context of Lillian's story of thousands of Jewish people in Europe who were powerless and oppressed, and the fact that Nazis and their supporters were the oppressors, suggest how complex human relations can be when a nation is powerless and is considered as an outsider. While I was touched by Lillian's story, to me, her story of the Warsaw Ghetto was the shadow of a more than seven hundred kilometers wall, heavily militarized gates separating Palestinian territories from Israel and preventing their citizens from crossing over either side of the wall, as well as ongoing power struggle for the ownership of the land and control of the region.

The concept of power, privilege, and the sense of superiority of the Nazis and their supporters caused the destruction of millions of Jewish lives during the Second World War. The end of the war marked a victory for millions of Jews and non-Jews in Europe and around the world. More importantly, as mentioned earlier, it was a catalyst for establishing the state of Israel for the Jewish people with the support of World War II Ally countries[44]. However, this gain was at a huge loss to the Palestinian non-Jewish population marking the start of the occupation, militarization, expulsion, and displacement of millions of people from their own homes.

Lillian's story and the narrative experiences I gained from my field work in late 2007 in Palestine/Israel caused me to raise the following questions: When will humanity learn to avoid destroying others in their attempts to strengthen themselves? Can peace education stop the sense of superiority of one nation over another? Is peace education able to prevent violence and war in societies impacted by conflict?

---

[44] Primarily, the UK, The US and former Soviet Union

3.2   Understanding Historical Perspectives

I feel numb while passing the Israeli military checkpoint between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and think about how difficult life is for the Palestinians living in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. While I am aware that these feelings are caused by seeing a huge gap in terms of class and lifestyle between these two nations (the Israelis and the Palestinians) who live within kilometers of each other, who are separated by a long, nearly impenetrable wall, I know that the history of oppression and occupation in this region has existed for centuries prior to and after the creation of the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), which I elaborate in a brief history in this chapter.

Historians Dan McAdams, Ruthellen Josselson, and Amia Lieblich (2006) who wrote a book on narrative methodology, argue that conflicts, as well as many other features of narratives are deeply contoured by historical events and changing societal expectations (p. 7). This argument fits with my narrative studies of Palestinian and Israeli educators' understanding of multiple expressions of their historical events. In this regard, my narrative history of people in Palestine and Israel mainly focuses on stories based on the internal displacement of majority of Palestinians from their homeland since 1948, and the settlement and establishment of the state of Israel since then.

In attempts to understand the multiple historical events in Palestine and Israel and to voice the multiple narratives of the peace educators from two conflicting societies, at the beginning of my trip, I tried to pay attention to my surroundings both in the Palestinian and the Israeli societies. For example, during my field trip to Bethlehem and East Jerusalem, I saw several crowded Palestinian refugee camps with narrow streets and closely-spaced houses. The people who live in these refugee camps are mostly the new

generation of Palestinians whose parents and grandparents were forced out of their homes

since 1948 and were internally displaced in these camps. As mentioned at the beginning

of this thesis, I saw a long-winding wall separating the two nations for many years. Aside

from Palestinians who live in East Jerusalem under the jurisdiction of Israel, the

Palestinian population of the West Bank live on the east side of the wall whereas the

Israeli population live on the west side of the wall.

Each side of the wall has its own narrative[45], one focuses on the historical rights

of Jewish people in the region and their rights to settle in their ancestors' homeland; and

the other focuses on the war and occupation and aftermath of their expulsion and

displacement from their homeland (Abu-Zayyad, 2008). Each narrative claims ownership

of the land and the struggle to survive in order to maintain identity either Israeli or

Palestinian identities (Etkes, 2006). The long wall prevents ordinary people from both

sides to exchange dialogue with each other, and it is painful for me to witness the

continuation of this deliberate division and polarization between the two nations in this

twenty-first century.

In the following two sections (3.3 and 3.4), I narrate my own observations and

knowledge gained from my research participants, books and journal articles and I shape

them into stories to present multiple perspectives on the history of conflict in Palestine

and Israel. In the "A Palestinian point of view" section, Hadi's character is based on a

real person. He was one of my interviewees for this research. However, the historical

information was not part of our formal interview[46]. Eva's character in "An Israeli point of

---

[45] However, there is no separation wall between the Israelis and Palestinians in East Jerusalem at this time.
[46] Several days prior to my interview, I met with this individual in an informal setting and talked for several hours.
Please note that I use historical references (e.g., Yusuf, 2002) for this section.

view" is fictitious; however, historical narratives in both sections are based on factual

events.

3.3   A Palestinian Point of View

During one of my long walks from the Israeli checkpoint toward the old market in the centre of Bethlehem, a lemon tree in the front yard of a small house caught my attention. The house was probably more than fifty years old, and was located on a hill facing Jerusalem. Although the yard was small, there were several fruit trees such as lemon, olive, orange, and an old almond tree. While I was admiring the lemon tree, a young man in his early thirties came out of the house. As soon as he saw me looking at the tree, he opened the wooden gate while smiling and invited me inside the yard. Immediately, he picked a lemon from the tree and gave it to me. The smell of the fresh lemon reminded me of a story that I had read about Palestine prior to the Israeli occupation in 1948. The young man introduced himself as Hadi and said that his property had been in his family for several generations[47]. Hadi spoke English with a strong Arabic accent. He then invited me inside the house and introduced me to his wife, and their two young sons. The family was curious about my trip to Bethlehem, and Hadi immediately asked me about the purpose of my journey.

When I finished talking about my backgrounds and the reason for my visit to Bethlehem, he started to offer his interpretation of the 1948 war that was followed by an on-going occupation. He looked sad when he shared stories told to him by his parents and grandparents:

> *My parents were very young when the European settlers started the war*
> *with the native non-Jewish population, which resulted in the expulsion of*
> *about 800,000 Palestinians over the years. Within the first few months of*

---

[47] Bethlehem has the biggest Christian population in Palestine.

the war, more than 450 villages were destroyed, hundreds of mosques were demolished, and tens of them were converted into museums, shops, stables, and even nightclubs, with several Christian churches also being confiscated. People were forcibly evicted from their homes and they still have no right to return to them in the occupied cities from which they were expelled. Palestinians who have Israeli citizenship continue to live as second class citizens, in that they are still legally prevented from owning land and are not allowed marrying Israeli Jews.

My parents remember the sounds of the bombardment of Jerusalem, and the chaos, injustice, bloodshed, and violence following the occupation of our land. Palestinians who were expelled from their homes either were internally displaced in different parts of the West Bank and Gaza strip, or were forced to displace themselves in other countries around the world. Thousands of Palestinians were killed during the establishment of Israel, and millions of displaced people experienced humiliation and poverty in refugee camps, and also in the diasporas in the neighboring countries. Many Palestinians' homes were confiscated by the Israeli government for use by Jewish settlers, and up to today, they have been prevented from returning to their homes, villages and cities. The big wall created a big division between us as the Palestinians, and them as the Israelis.

While Hadi was talking, his wife and two sons were quietly listening to him and once in a while his wife shook her head and said something quietly in Arabic that I did not understand. The telephone rang and Hadi talked in Arabic with his older brother who

lived not too far from his house. He started to light a cigarette and in a nervous tone Hadi said:

>*I only have two brothers; the older one lives a few blocks away from our home, and a younger one is in an Israeli jail in Jerusalem because he participated in a rally against the Israeli occupation. My brother was frustrated by the way we were treated by the Israelis and was throwing stones to the Israeli soldiers when he was arrested.*

While smoking cigarettes constantly, Hadi switched the focus on his brother and began to explain the reasons behind the occupation of Palestine, starting with the history behind the establishment of Israel:

>*On November 29, 1947, the newly established United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution that Palestine should be divided between Jewish and Arab states and they should form some kind of economic federation. However, the resolution stated that the Jerusalem district should be internationally administered[48]. The resolution was accepted by a majority of 33 members of the UN General Assembly, while 13 members objected and 10 abstained. The Arab Palestinians rejected the resolution, but not surprisingly, the majority of Jewish population inside and outside Palestine and their organizations adopted it. Most Middle Eastern countries including Turkey opposed the proposal and most European countries, the US and the former Republic of Soviet Union adopted the resolution. Given the catastrophe suffered by millions of Palestinians,*

---

[48] The population of the Jerusalem district consisted of 105,000 Arab Palestinian and around 100,000 Jews (*Palestine-Israel Journal* 2002, p. 39).

today, many secular Palestinians regret the rejection of the UN General

Assembly resolution by our former leaders, because we could have had a

balance of power between the Palestinian Arab and Jewish settlers (Yusuf,

2002). Also, the resolution could have saved 43 percent of Palestinian

land from falling under Israeli control which would have meant that

Palestinians, like all nations around the world, could have their own

independent state (Yusuf, 2002). This also would have saved the lives of

tens of thousands of people and also could have prevented the

displacement of millions of our population. Unfortunately, our land and

territories continue to be occupied despite the international laws

prohibiting Israeli settlements from over expanding. In addition, our

towns and villages have been separated from the occupied territories by

an over 700 km wall that has isolated the Palestinians from the rest of the

world. There are a series of checkpoints where the Israeli military

prevents us from crossing the borders, except for medical emergency or

attending a funeral service of a relative in the Israeli side of the border.

Sadly, the Israeli independence has brought us nothing but Nakba

(catastrophe). This means that the end of the Jewish people suffering in

Europe has marked the suffering of non-Jewish Palestinian in our home

land.

During our talk, I learned that Hadi knew many peace educators in Bethlehem and

Jerusalem and he did peace education and conflict resolution workshops for youth in the

West Bank. He invited me to join him in his next workshop in the city of Ramallah.

3.4   An Israeli Point of View

On a rainy evening, while I was waiting to meet an Israeli friend in a coffee shop, a middle-aged woman wearing black cloth and thick glasses caught my attention. Her table was next to mine and she was staring at me. As soon as I greeted her, she smiled and asked where I was from. When I said my ethnic background is Iranian, her eyes opened wide and her smile disappeared. It seemed like my Iranian identity intimidated her, because of political tension between the Islamic regime in Iran and the Israeli government. In order for me to prove that my presence was no threat to anyone in the café or elsewhere in Israel, I immediately informed her that I left Iran in 1987 due to oppression by the Islamic fundamentalists and that I have been living in Canada since then. I also explained that I was in Israel to conduct my graduate research on peace education. At this time, her body expression immediately changed and I noticed a sigh of relief in her. She introduced herself to me as Eva.

Eva and I first talked about the Israeli food, and then we switched to talking about the current political events. I asked her whether she was willing to offer her version of Israel's history. She embraced the question and shared with me the following story:

> *To Orthodox Jews, this land was promised to Abraham and his Jewish descendants. I am not a religious person, but I support having a Jewish state. Every country is dominated by a religion or by a particular ethnic group, and Jewish people started having to re-establish their own country since 1948 after centuries of oppression and displacement. In my point of view, the Jews created a nation in the land of Israel, or Zion, over 3,000 years ago, and Jerusalem has been the center of Jewish national life for*

more than 2,000 years since its conquest by King David[49]. Almost all the Jews were expelled from the land of Israel by the Roman emperor, although some Jews remained in the area and the descendents of those who were expelled began returning to the four holy cities of Tiberias, Safed, Jerusalem and Hebron in the Middle Ages. Throughout the centuries, generations of Jews visited the region as a place for holy pilgrimages. For example, Jewish people living in diasporas always dreamed to return to Zion (Israel) permanently and their aspiration became clear only with the initiation of the modern Zionist movement at the end of the 19th century[50], during which a significant number of Jews from around the world began to settle in their ancestors' homeland, the land of Israel. In those days, it was also called Palestine. The process of our mass settlement started first with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the early 1920s, followed by the growing oppression against Jews in Europe as well as during the genocide by Nazi Germany that provided a perfect opportunity to us to re-possess our ancestors' land and form a Jewish state.

After the Second World War, with the creation of the newly United Nations, the UN General Assembly voted for Resolution 181, known as 'the Partition Plan' by agreeing to create two states, Israel for the Jews and Palestine for non-Jewish Arabs (Yusuf, 2002). The Jews accepted the

---

[49] Franken, H. J. (2000). Jerusalem in the Bronze Age: 3000-1000 BC. In

[50] Ibid. It is important to note that modern Zionist movement started in the late 1880s from Central and Eastern Europe.

Partition Plan and the international community supported them due to the

murder of over one million of Jewish people by the Nazis in the Holocaust

during WWII, while the Arab Palestinians rejected it (Yusuf, 2002). The

war between the Jews and the Arab Palestinians erupted in 1948, which

made possible the establishment of the state of Israel. Since 1967, Israel's

territory has been extended and a wall known as the Green Line surrounds

our country.

Historically, Jerusalem is important for the Jewish people in Israel and

throughout the world[51], because when for the second time Jewish tribes

(Israel and Yehuda) were kicked out of Knaan[52] in 70 AC, every Jew has

mentioned Jerusalem at least three times a day. In a Jewish book called

"Thilim", our people take an oath "if I forget Jerusalem, I loose my right

arm and I loose my ability to speak. I believe 90% of the children know

about this oath. Traditional Jewish wedding ceremonies include the same

oath to remember Jerusalem. On the 9th of the month of AV (the month of

August) we have our fourth fasting of the year as a memorial of the

burning of Temple of "Tishaa Be'Av"[53]. In Passover the fundamental holy

day of Judaism, the longest night of the year ends by saying "Leshana

Habaa BeYerushalim" that means 'next year in Jerusalem'. So, when the

---

[51] I communicated with one of the interview participant over the email and asked the following question in which she replied on July 21, 2009 and shared her version of the importance of Jerusalem to Jewish people.

[52] An ancient city in old Israel.

[53] The day of tragedy, a temple in Jerusalem that was burned a few times. The First Temple built by King Solomon was destroyed by Babylonian's King Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BCE. The Second Temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE. The city of Betar was captured and thousands of Jews were killed in 135 CE. The Roman emperor made a pagan temple on the site of the Temple and rebuilt Jerusalem as a pagan city in 136 CE (Caryn Meltz, . The information was taken from the website http://judaism.about.com on Aug 11, 2009

West wall (wailing wall) was occupied in 1967 that meant a lot to the

religious Jews in Israel. They felt that a miracle happened and that

messiah was on the way to appear on earth. I think this is what persuaded

a massive settlement of Jews from around the world in Israel and this is

how national Judaism and some wrong doings that we see today started.

Then all of the sudden Eva's history of the Israeli settlement shifted towards the impact

of the conflict on the mentality of the Israeli and Palestinian people:

Although within a short period of time Israel has achieved a great deal of

economic, social, and cultural gains, the conflict between the Israeli Jews

and the Arab Palestinians has created a lot of psychological, emotional

and economic damage on both sides. We have been traumatized by the

war and conflict. Non-Jewish Palestinians and their allies believe that we

have colonized their land and discriminated against Muslims and

Christians. As a result, the Israeli civilians have been subjected to

terrorist attacks by Palestinian extremist groups and individuals, and

many innocent people have lost their lives in the shopping centers, public

buses, restaurants, and cafés by the Arab suicide bombers.

Eva also expressed that the only solution that brings peace and prosperity between

the Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews is a two-state solution. This means forming an

independent Israeli state and forming an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank,

Gaza and East Jerusalem. By expressing her hope for peace and reconciliation between

the two nations, she rushed out of the coffee shop to pick up her old father from his

residence.

3.5   An Introduction to the History of Jerusalem

When we hear or read about war, displacement, political violence and conflict in Palestine and Israel, all we hear is the current conflict between the Jews and non – Jews which resulted in the colonial establishment of the state of Israel since 1948. However, historical evidence demonstrates that the context of war, displacement, mass murder and rivalries between different religions mark this region of the world, even many centuries before the creation of Islam.

The ancient city of Jerusalem has been the spiritual centre for three major religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) for many years. Why this old city continues to be the subject of conflict is what I explore in this chapter. However, the short answer to this question is the sacred nature of this city first for the Jews[54], then to the Christians and Muslims. As stated by historians (Khalidi, 2000 & Mendenhall, 2000 & Pappe, 2006), Palestine, particularly, Jerusalem, as an ancient-holy city, has had a long history of political, national and religious conflict and the destruction of Jerusalem and its foreign domination goes back to centuries before the birth of the Christ. For example, Jerusalem was invaded by the Assyrians in the seventh century BCE, by the Egyptians in the fifth century BCE, by Babylonians in the sixth century BCE, by the Persian Empire in the fifth century BCE, and by the Roman Empire during the third century BCE, and 63 BCE. Historian, John Wilkinson (2000), believes that up to 63 BCE, Jerusalem was the capital of a Jewish state with about two-thirds of its population Jews. The Jewish ethnic group was defeated by Romans in 70 CE and 135 CE; its population was reduced to one third from two-thirds due to war and the expulsion of the Jews. Instead, the region had become

---

[54] According to Rashid Khalidi (2000), Jewish link to Jerusalem is emphasized in Biblical and Quranic texts.

Christian by the end of the fifth century. Since the sixth century, the major invasions of

the city occurred by the Turkmen in 636 CE, by the Arabs in 637 CE, by the crusaders in

1074 and 1099, by Ottomans in 1516-1831, by Britain in the late 1930s, and by Jewish

Zionism since 1948 (Khalidi, 2000).

The rivalries between leaders from different religious backgrounds (e.g., Judaism,

Christianity, and Islam) can be considered as one of the driving force behind major wars

in the Palestine region for many centuries. Leaders, whether from the Christian faith,

Muslim faith, or Jewish faith in positions of power, eliminated the other for control and

dominancy of this region. However, the formation of Islam in the seventh century

brought a new era in the history of Jerusalem. Rashid Khalidi (ibid), who studied the

history of this city from its creation up to today, writes that Islam became the dominant

religion in Jerusalem and the neighboring countries after its conquest by Arabs in the

seventh century; and gradually, the majority of its preexisting Aramaic-speaking

population were Arabized, with most of them becoming Muslim and some remaining

Christian. According to historian Damon Little (2000), who studied the relations between

the Abrahamic religions from 1187 to 1516 AD, there were power struggles between

Muslims and Christians, but the small Jewish community in Jerusalem lived in peace

with Muslims and there was not fear or any threat to the Muslims over holy places.

However, there were rivalries and on-going strife over holy places particularly between

1187 and 1516 AD among the Christians and Muslims.

It is important to note that in the eleventh century, the persecution of the

Christians in Jerusalem were dictated by the rulers of the time called Fatimid caliph Al-

Hakim (dynasty of Al-Hakim), which concluded with a large mass murder of the

Christians (Hiyari, 2000, p. 130-139). At another time in history, the crusaders fought against the Muslims and Jews and seized Jerusalem. All these wars and conquests were followed by massacre of the citizens of this city. According to Middle Eastern historian Mustafa Hiyari (2000), during the siege of Jerusalem by the crusaders, almost all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, including men, women and children, were massacred in the streets, alleys, houses, and wherever they were found. Those who survived were expelled from the city or sold as slaves by their captives. As the result, a new population of Latins, native Syrian Christians and other oriental Christian minorities replaced the native Christian, Muslims and Jewish communities. In addition, a new political and administrative system was established, as well as the social organization of the city, its institutions, daily life, cultural celebrations and general festivities were also changed (Hiyari, 2000).

3.6   Formation of the State of Israel

The hatred against the Jewish people in Europe prior to 1945, and the Nazi genocide of Jewish people during the Second World War, drew thousands of Jewish people from Germany and other European countries into Palestine. The growth of the Zionist movement followed the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, and the Jewish population of the city increased as Jerusalem became even more the centre of conflict as community leaders from Christian, Jewish, and Muslim backgrounds (Hudson, 2000). Historians (Hudson, 2000; Khalidi, 2000) articulated different views for the formation of Jerusalem - from the Balfour Declaration of 1917 to today. For example, Michael Hudson (2000), who studied the transition of the population in the city of Jerusalem from 1917 states,

The transformation of Jerusalem that has occurred since General Edmund

entered the city on 9 December 1917 surely exceeds that of any period in

its eventful history. It has been a double transformation: on the political

level, the total replacement of indigenous Arab and Turkish Muslim rule

by that of Zionist-Jewish newcomers; and on the social level, the

establishment of a modern fortress city, whose physical aspects,

demographic 'revolution' and Western acculturation have enveloped and

almost overshadowed the Arab character of the city. (p. 249)

Khalidi (2000) believes that the Abrahamic tradition of the city of Jerusalem and "the

sense of spiritual closeness to the city" (p. xxiii) has significantly "tended to obscure a

great deal about the course of the city's history" (p. xxiii). As a result, the religious and

the nationalistic approaches have come out of the narratives of this Abrahamic tradition,

as he writes:

While some important historical work has come out of these two

approaches, the religious and the nationalistic, by and large the result has

been polemical, tendentious, and biased. In general, it has not resulted in

the writing of very good history. And in most cases, such writing on

Jerusalem has made questionable assumptions and ignored crucial realities

as a result of a single minded focus on one religious tradition or one

people. (p. xxiii)

As pointed out by Khalidi (2000), among three religious traditions (Jewish, Christianity

and Islam), there are two sides in the ongoing conflict between the Israeli and Palestinian

national movements. On the one hand, the followers of the Zionist movement believe that

the area was the historical site of the Jewish kingdom of Israel that was destroyed by the Roman Empire, and that this land belongs to the people to whom it was given following the biblical promise to Abraham and his descendants. On the other hand, Palestinians reject the notion of this biblical promise and assert that their ancestors lived in Palestine for thousands of years, and that their larger population is evidence of the fact that they lived in the area for many centuries despite war and conflict (Khalidi, 2000). In this respect, Khalidi writes:

> Historical writings in English over the past half century or so have tended to privilege a version of the history of Jerusalem that is strongly weighted in favor of Jewish and Christian religious traditions relating to the city, and that in turn has tended to reinforce and make more accessible to Western readers the Israeli side's approach in the national conflict over Jerusalem. The reasons for these tendencies are obvious: they include most importantly the far greater familiarity of English-speaking audiences with the Biblical tradition than with the Islamic ones; the sympathy of many people in Europe and the United States for Zionism and Israel, particularly in the wake of the genocidal atrocities committed against European Jews during World War II; …. (pp, xxiii-xxiv)

Since the historical narratives of three Abrahamic religions are beyond the scope of this research, I do not intend to analyze the merit of Hudson and Khalidi's viewpoints, and proceed based on having been inspired by Kamil-Jamil Asali's (2000) book on the history of Jerusalem. In doing this I offer readers a brief historical perspective of the conquest of Jerusalem leading to the formation of the state of Israel.

3.7   Jerusalem as a Divided City

Jerusalem as an ancient Middle Eastern city has always fascinated me in terms of its geography, its history and its diverse population. Although the city has been an important centre for three major Abrahamic faiths since the creation of these religions at different periods, the history of this city is loaded with political violence, war, expulsion of its native people, destruction and reconstruction of the city (Khalidi, 2000). As described briefly in this chapter, over the centuries Jerusalem survived several major devastating wars and foreign occupations and three major religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) claim ownership of this city. According to Historian Kamil-Jamil Asali, much of the modern Arab population of Jerusalem and the rest of Palestine is made up of the descendants of Jebusites, Amorites, Canaanites or Philistines and some may have emigrated from the Arabian Peninsula in earlier centuries. Asali (2000) further argues that after the Islamic conquest in the seventh century AD, the pre-existing Aramaic-speaking population and the dominant Greek language were replaced by Arabic language and the population was gradually Arabized, with most of them becoming Muslim and some remaining Christian and Jew. Further, Asali writes that in 758 AD, "With the advent of the Abbasids, the Islamic significance of Jerusalem grew. In emphasizing the Islamic character of the city, the new dynasty showed great respect for the Holy City" (p. 112). After about three centuries, in July 1099, Greeks took over Jerusalem once again and massacred all the inhabitants of the city, including men, women and children in the streets, alleys, houses and wherever they were found until the city was emptied of all its previous population (ibid, pp. 138-141). Asali, quoting another historian Schleifer states, "The new Latin population of Jerusalem lived in fear in

insecurity during the early period of the occupation" (p. 142). Some of the new Latin population eventually left the city not only because of the lack of security, but also because of economic conditions in the city. Most of its new inhabitants were from peasant backgrounds and Jerusalem was a city that was mostly dependent on the crafts and services needed by the pilgrims who came to visit holy places every year. According to Asali, in July 1187, the city of Jerusalem once again was captured by Muslim leaders (p. 165). Muslim shrines were restored and new religious institutions were established, making the city more appealing to all Muslims in the region. The historic Islamic symbols, such as the Dome and Al Aqsa Mosque and the existence of a large number of Muslims living in the city offered strong evidence that the city was dominated by Arab Muslims up to the occupation of Jerusalem by England in 1948 (Asali, 2000).

Since the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, the city has been gradually divided into two sections. The Israelis live on the West side of the city where the structures of the buildings and shops are more modern, and the Palestinians live on the East side where it is overcrowded with closely-packed houses, old low-rise buildings and small, old shops. Poverty, high population densities and simple lifestyles mark the city's East side, in stark contrast to its West side. Most historic sites and Holy places such as the Al Aqsa Mosque, Dome of the Rock and the Western Wall are located in the Eastern part of the city and give a sense of glory and national pride to the local people.

3.8   Conclusion

As discussed in this chapter, the concept and construction of the *other* and the existence of political violence and conflict are not new to the region's indigenous population. Each of the three major Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity and

Islam) claim ownership of the city of Jerusalem and bloodshed marks the history of this city. However, the Israeli occupation of Jerusalem followed by the establishment of the state of Israel, and massive migration of Jewish people from around the world to this region caused the displacement of local Jerusalemites into the West Bank and Gaza Strips, which further divided all the communities in this troubled part of the world.

Given that the city of Jerusalem has been the centre of attention for three major Abrahamic religions, achieving peace and co-existence has been a huge challenge for many generations. This suggests that in this twenty-first century there is a need for peace education enabling local people to work toward overcoming the intense division and conflict among diverse people of this region.

Interview 3: Majid's Story

Majid[55] is the director of PICPE and as mentioned, he was my initial contact person in Israel. He is a U.S. immigrant from New York State and settled in Jerusalem in 1979. His passion for social justice and his motivation to bring peace and justice between the Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews, gave him the idea to establish PICPE. During my interview with Majid, he talked about his story of settlement in Israel and explained his reasons for creating PICPE, a joint Israeli and Palestinian NGO.

> *I was born and grew up in Long Island in New York and moved to Israel*
>
> *in 1979. My initial activism in the Middle East started with the issue of*
>
> *Green Line[56], the wall that separates Israel from Palestine territory. I*
>
> *finished high school in 1978, and moved to Israel. I started my university*
>
> *education in Jerusalem and within one year that I was there, I did not*
>
> *encounter with any Arab Palestinian.*
>
> *I became an 'Intern for Peace' a project run by Teacher's College in*
>
> *Israel while going to the university. When I finished my work with 'Interns*
>
> *for Peace', I decided to devote my work on building positive relationships*
>
> *between the Israeli Jewish and Arab Palestinians. So I asked the*
>
> *government of Israel to hire me and I became the first employee whose*

---

[55] At the beginning of my interview with Majid, he opened a website and showed me his interview with an alternative social media that provides coverage of Palestinian and Israeli civilians working to end the occupation and conflict in the region. Majid looked at his bio on this website once in a while during our interview so that he could remember highlights of his work in building peace in the region.

[56] The term Green Line refers to the demarcation lines set in 1949 between Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria after the 1948 war that followed by the occupation of Palestine. The Green Line separates Israel from these countries and also from the Palestinian territories (West Bank, Gaza, and Golan heights. From: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_Line_(Israel) on Sept 18, 2010.

responsibility was to improve relationship between the Israelis and Palestinians. A year later, I developed an educational institute within the ministry of education for Jewish- Arab coexistence and I became its director.

When the First Iintifada started at the end of November 1987, I noticed the misunderstanding against Arabs that existed in the Israeli public. I decided to take the risk and meet Palestinians in Bethlehem one day in early March 1988. In those days, the Israelis could move around Bethlehem freely. I went to Dheisheh Refugee Camp and stopped in front of the UNRWA[57] school. Several Palestinians surrounded me; I talked to them in Arabic for a while, and then went to a Palestinian home and continued our talk.

After that meeting, I published an ad in Arabic in three newspapers in East Jerusalem. The ad said you can contact me, if you are a university graduate, and if you believe that the Palestinians and Israelis can work together to build peace. I received many calls and met with more than twenty individuals in the courtyard of a hotel in Jerusalem. I found my first opportunity to create a joint working group of Palestinian and Israelis; therefore, I quit my job at the ministry of education and started building the PICPE.

---

[57] **UNWRA,** United Nations Relief and Works Agency is a relief and human development agency that provides education, healthcare, social services, and emergency aid to approximately four million Palestinian refugees living in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria.

PICPE works on peace building. We define peace building as bringing the two sides to live and to work together. Over the years, we have worked on peace education programs and developed many lesson plans for students from kindergarten through grade twelve. We also evaluated some of Israeli and Palestinian textbooks and wrote reports on their improvements.

In our joint Israeli-Palestinian peace education workshop, initially, we focus on building trust between the participants, so that they can safely share their narratives among themselves. Sometimes during the workshops people cry, yell at each other or leave the room. When people realize that their differences are very sharp, then we look at how similar we are, and how we can be friends. Sometimes we split people into smaller groups and the facilitator gives them time to reflect on their sense of frustration and anger….

We trained a large number of facilitators who worked with our methodology, and worked with us. We produced materials, which are still good, and can be used by other languages. A Professor from the University of Haifa followed-up research on our many workshops. His conclusion was that the immediate impact of the program was very effective, but after a number of years it dissipated and disappeared. So it's clear that peace education on its own isn't powerful enough to change the Israeli and Palestinian societies.

The first step for PICPE to implement peace education in Palestinian schools was to critically evaluate their textbooks.

> *At the beginning of 2005, we started evaluating Palestinian textbooks. We thought that was an important work because there was so much criticism of Palestinian textbooks around the world, and most of those who were engaged in the criticism of Palestinian textbooks were doing it politically to demonize the Palestinian Authority and their educational system. We produced reports that found problems in the textbooks, but not nearly as bad as what was being brought by these mostly-Jewish right-wing groups whose aims were to demonize Palestinians. We also produced a book of 200 lesson plans for grades one through twelve that was written by Palestinian teachers in Arabic for their own schools. We were about to train teachers widely in the peace education program when the election took place and the Hamas took over the Ministry of Education. Wahat Al-Salam, the peace education conference that you[58] participated in Antalya, Turkey, brought people together from the field – our reputation in the field enabled us to be a gathering, a convening body, and we brought together 270 people and created the beginnings of a community of peace educators and we are now continuing that. There's been very little success in raising money over the past two years for peace education.*

---

[58] I presented a paper at this conference in 2006.

It just hasn't been able to find the support. So, now we've decided to launch these weekend meetings[59] that - even though we don't have direct funding for doing it – we did a survey amongst participants about whether they'd be willing to pay for themselves, and almost all were Palestinian teachers who don't have the money to pay for themselves.

For Majid, understanding each side's history is the basis for building trust, tolerance, and respect between Palestinians and Israelis. He commented on the reason for the importance of history in deconstructing stereotypes against the *other*:

One of the observations that we have is actually an observation made by an intern who was here evaluating our peace education program, and she asked "At what point in the curriculum that we're teaching in the schools do the kids learn about the other side?" In my opinion, it wasn't there. It was absent, because our peace education approach was based on values and dealt with generalities of tolerance, understanding, democracy, and human rights, etc. It is interesting to understand what history is, and to understand what the nature of narratives is. From a historical point of view, we weren't teaching Palestinian history, or Israeli history to the other side – we never really dealt with that, and in our going around looking at the other peace education programs in Israel and Palestine we noticed that no one does[60].

---

[59] PICPE holds a weekly public forum on important issues challenging peace in the Middle East.

[60] It is important to note that my intention was not to investigate whether there was similar peace education work in the region. Instead, as I said, my aim was to interview a few peace educators and learn about their experiences and perspectives.

An interesting aspect of PICPE is the recruitment of local and international interns. For example, during my stay in Jerusalem, I met a young university student from Calgary who started his internship with PICPE four months prior to my visit. Since rent in Bethlehem was far cheaper than in Jerusalem, he rented a room in Bethlehem and traveled back and forth between the two cities every day. I asked Majid about the role of interns in the implementation of peace education in his community and he replied:

> *We have interns all the time who are engaged in whatever it is that we're doing at the time. So we've had some interns over the years who come with their own agenda, and engaged in their own research and do their research here while working with us and helping us on other programs all over the world. At the peace education conference in 2005 in Antalya, Turkey, we had an American student who is from India. I think we had a few other interns at that conference, also. Currently, we have one from Canada, and soon we will be getting some more including one Palestinian intern.*

Majid is an example of an Israeli Jew who crossed the national borders during the first Intifada in order to hear Palestinians' first hand stories. This visit sparked his efforts to create dialogical encounters between Israelis and Palestinians. For him, establishing a two-state solution is a means to bring peace to the region and to empower both nations to break free of fear and instability. Through difficult experiences, Majid has learned that without establishing trust with Palestinians, peace and security is not possible in Israel. This was his initial motivation to get involved in building a new model of co-existence between Palestinian Arabs and Israelis.

During my stay in Jerusalem, PICPE's office became my home base for the entire field trip. There I noticed that Majid spent more time at his workplace than at home with his family. He was overloaded with big projects all the time related to building co-existence and reconciliation between the Arabs and Jews. Some of the activities that Majid and his centre were involved in included environmental issues such as a water shortage in Gaza and the West Bank, the review of Israeli and Palestinian textbooks, weekend peace education workshops and seminars, research studies, responses to Palestinians who experienced violations of human rights by Israeli soldiers, and the organization and participation in local and international conferences.

Notes from the Field: the Bus

During my first trip to East Jerusalem, I notice there are separate buses for the Israelis and the Palestinians. While the Israeli buses are standard big buses (similar to the buses in North America), Palestinian buses are more like mini buses. I take these crowded mini buses for my commute from Santure to East Jerusalem at least once a day. The times that I take the Israeli buses are when I go to West Jerusalem with my Israeli friend who acts as my guide during my stay in Jerusalem.

I am fine traveling on Israeli buses wherever I want as long as I do not reveal my Iranian identity. This evening, my Israeli friend and I take an Israeli bus. A mother and her young son (approximately six or seven years old) sit across from us. My Israeli friend starts to talk with the mother in Hebrew while her son stares at me constantly. My friend notices the son's gaze at me and immediately introduces me to the mother and son as a Muslim-Iranian woman! Not to my surprise, the child's eyes become quite wide and both the mother and the son look at me. The young boy immediately asks my friend in Hebrew what I am doing on the Israeli bus! I can understand this because of the fear of suicide bombers, Israelis become nervous having Muslims or Palestinian Arabs on their buses. I know my presence among Israelis on this bus could pose a threat. I feel alarmed by the label of Muslim attached to my Iranian identity[61] and have no idea why she introduces me as a Muslim-Iranian woman in front of all these Israelis even though she knows I do not identify myself as a Muslim or with any other religion. As soon as we get off the bus, I ask her why she introduced me as an Iranian Muslim. She responds that she knows I do

---

[61] In my experience, Iranians are perceived as Muslim by non-Iranians worldwide. However, similar to any other societies, Iranian society is diverse, and its people have different religious identities and opinions. Not surprisingly, some Iranians like me do not affiliate themselves with any religion.

not have any religious identity, but wanted me to experience how a Muslim presence in

an Israeli space can make ordinary Israeli citizens fearful and insecure.

Figure 5: Dheisheh Refugee Camp

This camp was established by the UN in 1948 outside Bethlehem and has become a permanent settlement for two and three generations of Palestinians. Some residents of the camp have been living there since they were displaced from their home in Jerusalem and other parts of Israel.

Notes from the Field: Empowering the Youth

I was invited by Yadi, the director/founder of 'Palestine Youth Centre[62]' to visit his office and meet with youth who regularly participate in its peace education activities. This office is located in the refugee camp in a suburb of Bethlehem. Doing this interview has turned out to be a challenge. We rescheduled this visit several times due to Yadi's busy schedule. I am excited to finally see this youth centre just days before the end of my field trip.

It is a hot, sunny afternoon, and as usual, my border crossing is intense. On the Bethlehem side of the border, I take a taxi and give the youth centre's address to the driver. The driver looks at me curiously and says something in Arabic that I do not understand. The road to the refugee camp is rough and bumpy, and rows of dense, small houses are endless. Judging from the outside of these houses, I assume that their occupants are suffering financially. There are hardly any trees or any green space in the community. Within about thirty minutes, the taxi stops in front of a two-story building. The sign above the front door reads, 'Palestine Youth Centre' in English and Arabic.

As soon as the youth hear the noise of the vehicle parked in front of the office, all of them come out. While they are staring at me, Yadi appears at the front door with a big smile. They greet me warmly, and after I am introduced to each youth, Yadi invites me to his office. The smell of fresh Turkish coffee makes the place more welcoming. The entire first floor is about 800 square feet. There are several chairs, small tables, and an old

---

[62] Pseudonym

computer in the youth activity area. Colored pencils on the tables and drawings[63] on the wall suggest that youth also do artwork at this centre in addition to peace education activities. The room has only two small windows and is relatively dark.

Among all the youth who surround me in the room, one young boy's sad looking eyes grab my attention. He looks like my youngest brother who joined me in Canada[64] just before my field trip to Palestine. I immediately tell him in English that he resembles my brother (Yadi translated to him in Arabic). Right away, Yadi tells me that this boy suffered a lot of trauma in his life. He then stops saying anything else for a few seconds and I assume that it is difficult for him to say things in front of these youth. Soon after the introduction, we start our interview and I forget to ask about the story of that particular young boy, however the memory of his sad look is still with me. Just before our interview, Yadi in broken English says, "…these youth are in pain and want to live normal lives. They want to heal and move forward, but they need emotional and psychological support to get through the sad memories of the humiliation that they and their family members endure every day because of the Israeli occupation. This place is the only place providing them some sort of hope and empowerment...."

---

[63] I remember some drawings were about their surroundings like houses, trees, and the river and some were about the presence of the military in their community like the tank, the military truck and the soldiers with guns at the checkpoint.

[64] My brother has been suffering from PTST because of the torture he suffered by the Iranian regime in Iran when he was seventeen years old.

Chapter 4: Youth Involvement in Political Violence in the Middle East

Youth involvement in political violence in the Middle East significantly shaped the peace process in the region from the early 1990s up to mid 2000. Although youth violence exists everywhere in the world, its nature is different in Palestine and Israel. For example, in Canada and the U.S., youth violence is mainly linked to gang activities or violence against individuals, but in Palestine and Israel, as suggested by several scholars, (Silberstein, 1993; Roy, 1998; Moghissi, 1999; El-Rifai, 2002; Flaherty, 2003; Hatina, 2006; Khashan, 2003), it is politically motivated due to the existence of occupied (Palestinians) and occupier (Israelis) relationships in the region. In the Israeli side, youth are trained in the Israeli army as soldiers[65] when they turn eighteen years of age, and their military activities confronting Palestinians are approved under the Israeli law. However, on the Palestinian side, youth direct involvement in suicide missions has been motivated by the Islamic fundamentalists that recruit angry individual youth and involve them in activities such as suicide bombings against the Israelis. In this chapter, through the lens of both an insider[66] and outsider, I present scholarly discourses on the causes of political violence on the Palestinian side, the complexities involved in the formation of Political Islam, its impact on youth, and its leading role in shaping the political, economic, and social landscape of the Middle East and elsewhere.

---

[65] According to the Israeli state law, when boys and girls are at least eighteen years of age, they must serve the army for three years.

[66] I was born and raised in Northern Iran and left my country of birth in 1987. Regarding Palestine, I consider myself as an insider because of my Middle Eastern background, and I consider myself as an outsider because I am not a Palestinian.

Although elements of fundamentalism exist in any religion including Christianity and Judaism, I decided to do academic research on the root causes of Islamic fundamentalism in the Middle East region, and to write this chapter because I witnessed the immediate emergence of the Islamic fundamentalists' political, cultural, social and economic hegemony following the 1979 revolution in Iran. As well, I witnessed the increased influence of this movement on some Iranian youth. While at a Friday prayer service in 1980, I remember listening to the speeches of the newly appointed Iranian Shiite political leaders who pledged to work with other religious extremists to globalize their movement and to export this example of Islamic revolution to the entire world. The theoretical research I have done regarding the ideology of Political Islam and the underlying political forces convincing some Iranian youth to getting involved in political violence reflect my own personal memories and observations of the public humiliation, intimidation and aggression used by the Iranian extremists in positions of power against those who resisted or questioned their authority. The circle of violence continues in Iran because the Islamic fundamentalists are still in position of power in this country and it continues in Palestine because the dichotomy of settler versus occupied continue to exist, and also, because the ideology of political Islam has been a dominant discourse in Gaza and among some Palestinians in the West Bank.

Iranian scholar Haideh Moghissi (1999), who studied the Islamic fundamentalist movement in the Middle East, suggests that Political Islam, as an alternative force among the Middle Eastern youth, has grown for two different reasons. The first reason is the emerging youth resistance to the western notion of modernity, while the second reason is the opposition against the values, beliefs and hegemony of mainly western countries that

aims to influence and change the Middle East. In exploring the causes of political violence in the case of Palestine and Israel, this chapter focuses primarily on the role of political Islam as an ideology in provoking some Palestinian youth to use violence against the Israeli settlers including the use of suicide bombing. Throughout this dissertation, I use the *other*, instead of the 'settler' as the same term was used by all my Palestinian participants.

4.1   Theoretical Review

With the exception of a few empirical studies of displaced Palestinians living in refugee camps (El-Rifai, 2002; Flaherty, 2003; Elbedour, 1998; Khashan, 2003), almost all academic papers used in this section are theoretically and qualitatively defined and analyze the phenomena of religious extremism, Political Islam, jihad, and the ideology of the fundamentalist movement in the Middle East. In my library research, I noticed that limited empirical data are available in linking youth involvement in acts of political violence, such as suicide bombing.

Generally, the findings of studies of fundamentalist movements characterize extremist behaviour as the reaction of ultra-conservative youth who fervently believe that all aspects of public and private life must be fully morally restricted, and who are appalled by people having freedom of choice. (Moghissi, 1999; Flaherty, 2003; Elbedour, 1998; & Khashan, 2003) The studies used in this chapter recognize that particularly since the turn of the twentieth century, the extremist ideologies have increasingly been successful in recruiting committed followers from different religious groups.

Although elements of fundamentalism, as a form of reaction against modern ways of life, exist in almost all major religions, Islamic fundamentalism has in recent years

been the dominant form of expression against the social, cultural, and political transformation of societies known as "modernist" (Moghissi, 1999) in the Middle East, North Africa and several former Republics of the Soviet Union. The re-growing Islamization of societies in the Middle East (e.g. Iran and Turkey) since the early 1980s has broadened divisions between people and movements that promote secular modernism and those promoting traditional ways of life. These deepening divisions are reflected across the region, most noticeably among youth and younger generations (Moghissi, 1999)[67]. Over the years, as suggested by Moghissi, different interpretations of Islamic ideas, symbols and laws in the form of Sharia (Islamic jurisprudence) have formed the political expression for some people in different Middle Eastern countries in which the use of violence have become the cultural symbol for this movement.

Conflict resolution theorist Johan Galtung (2002) defines cultural violence as those aspects of a culture, legitimized by its leaders, which promote violence as a way of responding to conflict. In other words, the leaders legitimize violence by linking it to the cultural beliefs and practices of their followers. They use culture to justify hatred and the dehumanization of those who do not fit within their norm, whom Galtung calls the *other*. In his method of analyzing the phenomena of conflict, Galtung introduces an analysis called the "Conflict Triangle" or the "ABC Triangle". This theory (2002), suggests that each conflict has basically three vertices:

Attitudes (A): refers to how the *self* perceives the *other* in a situation of conflict.

Behavior (B): refers to how the *self* in conflict seeks actions to inflict loss and pain on the *other*.

---

[67] Later in this section, I explain the reasons why younger generations are easier to be recruited into the radical movements.

Contradiction (C): refers to the causes of conflict between the *self* and the *other*. According to Galtung's theory, a political conflict may lead to frustration and polarization, resulting in each of the opposition groups perceiving the other in terms of vertex 'A' of the triangle. The *other* is dehumanized while the *self* is superiorized in terms of vertex 'B'; therefore, violent reactions may appear as a form of "normal response" against the *other*.

In linking Galtung's theory to the situation in the Middle East, I draw attention to the role of ideology in the widening polarization and the promotion of the dehumanization of the *other*. Particularly, in the context of Islamic extremists in the Middle East, the *other* is anyone or any group that does not believe in or follow the "Political Islamic" model (Roy, 1998). In other words, the *other* is not 'one of us.' Hence, the *other* is constructed as an outsider and can be the local population from the Middle East or the western people from non extremist Muslim backgrounds. Furthermore, through the lens of Islamic fundamentalist, the *other* can be the neighbors, or the people they interact with on a daily basis in public, but are framed as aliens and enemies of Muslims.

The dichotomy of *self* and *other* has amplified polarization and has increased direct acts of violence, not only from those in positions of authority, but also from the followers of this movement at the grassroots level. This is because negative perception of the *other* in any society reinforces stereotypes and institutionalizes mistrust between people, creating an opening for the extremist groups to take advantage of the situation by introducing prejudicial ideas among members of the inside community (El-Rifai, 2002).

In her fieldwork in Palestine and Israel, for example, Yasmine El-Rifai illustrates how

each ethnic group in Palestine and Israel perceives the *other*:

> A young Palestinian boy, Bushra, living in the "Al Aroub" refugee camp
>
> says he had the idea Israelis were only soldiers, with no regular
>
> population. He did not think they had families and children and parents,
>
> only soldiers with guns. He also thought all Israelis hate Palestinians. On
>
> the other side, Lidor, a young Israeli explains how in his school, the word
>
> "Arab" is an insult. When somebody played football really bad, the others
>
> would say "you play like an Arab", also when somebody is
>
> inappropriately eating or dressing. The word "Arab" is a synonym for
>
> "primitive" in Hebrew slang. Another young Israeli says that he used to
>
> speak about Arabs according to what he had read in Israeli books: women
>
> and men are separated and men drag women by their hair. (El-Rifai, 2002,
>
> p. 14)

The above example demonstrates how perceptions of the *other* are deeply rooted among

ordinary people in both Israeli and Palestinian societies and how easily these perceptions

have been inculcated in children and youth. Such stereotypes against the *other*

encouraged by leaders (e.g., through religious gatherings, textbooks and the media),

validate the use of violence among desperate and terrified people who feel justified in

using all forms of aggression to express themselves.

4.2   Identity of the Islamic Fundamentalism: Glorification of the Past

As stated earlier, religious fundamentalism has inspired some Middle Eastern

youth to participate in political violence since the institutionalization of political Islam in

Iran in the early 1980s. Martin Marty and Scott Appleby (1991) who studied the

worldwide phenomena of fundamentalism describe it as follows:

> A tendency, a habit of mind found within religious communities and
>
> paradigmatically embodied in certain representative individuals and
>
> movements, which manifests itself as a strategy, or set of strategies, by
>
> which beleaguered believers attempt to preserve their distinctive identity
>
> as a people or group…. Feeling this identity to be at risk in the
>
> contemporary era, they fortify it by a selective retrieval of doctrines,
>
> beliefs, and practices from a sacred past. These retrieved fundamentals are
>
> refined, modified, and sanctioned in a spirit of shrewd pragmatism: they
>
> are to serve as a bulwark against the encroachment of outsiders who
>
> threaten to draw the believers into a syncretistic, areligious, or irreligious
>
> cultural milieu. (p. 835)

In my experience, Marty and Appleby's general description of fundamentalism is

applicable to Islamic extremist groups such as Hamas, and Al Jihad. This has been also

argued by Moghissi (1999) whereby she emphasizes throughout her book on how Islamic

fundamentalists express hostility towards anyone promoting economic, political, social or

cultural change in their communities. They react defensively to ward off any and all

attempts, which if successful, might move society toward any form of secularization,

therefore downgrading their influence, power and authority as societal leaders. The

hatred these extremists have for those advocating modern concepts such as a secular

state, democracy and human rights, can be seen in these groups' brutal reactions such as

beheading of their enemies, suicide bombing, etc. in Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan and in

several Republics of the former Soviet Union (Silberstein, 1993). They consider the modernist concepts of western values as a threat to their interpretation of Islamic identities within their local communities (Silberstein, 1993). Hava Lazarus-Yafeh (1992), a professor of Islamic Civilization at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, who also studied the phenomenon of fundamentalism within Jewish and Muslim groups, suggests that most fundamentalists from these two religions view modernity as the great evil, and that they explicitly denounce "western democracy" and pluralistic values.

Moghissi (1999), in her definition of modernity, differentiates it from the process of modernization. According to her, modernity means legal, political, social and cultural advances in any society recognizing inclusivity, social justice, democratic rights, secularism, and the state's responsibility to protect the legal rights of its citizens; whereas modernization means economic growth, capital accumulation, and industrialization under the direct control of multinational corporations. Given the historical and current authoritarian nature of many governmental systems in the Middle East, one has to ask whether any Middle Eastern countries have ever come close to reaching this form of modernity. To answer this question, Moghissi (1999) argues that while almost all Middle Eastern countries have opened their doors to the capitalist form of modernization, led by a privileged minority elite serving the interest of the wealthy class, none of these countries has begun the process of modernity, even in a limited form.

Many Middle Eastern people who are critical of modernization reject modernity without knowing that these two concepts have different historical backgrounds. Indeed, as Moghissi (1999) remarks, modernization has resulted in a wide gap between the rich minority and the poor majority population. The most reactionary forces in these societies

have the ability to mobilize the poor sectors to revolt against modernity, as modernity is in contradiction to extremists' moral principles and exclusionary practices. The fundamentalist leaders in the Middle East who oppose modernity and individual freedom seem to have no difficulty embracing the capitalist market economy of the west; but they are against the ideals of western political democracy, individual autonomy, respect for human rights, and democratically run state systems (Moghissi, 1999).

As mentioned, since the rise of religious extremism in Iran and different parts of the Middle East in the early 1980s[68], Political Islam has been the primary ideology replacing secular-nationalist and anti-colonial movements in the Middle East (Ahady, 1998). Hilal Khashan (2003), a political scientist working at the American University of Beirut, refers to Political Islam as a movement aiming to create an Islamic state, mixing religious practices with civil law. Moghissi (1999), in her study of the cultural power of Political Islam in the twentieth century, remarks that the form of Political Islam shaped by Islamic fundamentalists opposes the separation of religion and politics while it essentializes cultural differences between the West and the East. The followers of this movement view western cultures and societies as corrupt and as a threat to the existence of the Islamic identity in the dominantly Muslim countries. For this reason the followers of political Islam are determined to use any means, including intimidation, terror and physical violence, to protect their movement from the so-called foreign influences.

In the context of Palestine, as referred by Middle Eastern scholar Khaled Hroup (2000), political Islam within the Hamas movement declares war on the Zionist

---

[68] The 1979 revolution in Iran that removed the monarch family, was supposed to form a free and democratic system in Iran, but was crushed brutally by the Islamic radical movement. As a result, the Islamic Republic of Iran formed and the Islamic fundamentalists have legitimized its power throughout the country since then.

colonialism in Palestine, because it views the existence of the state of Israel as a Jewish

enterprise that aims to undermine Palestine Islamic identity. Therefore, the movement

uses Islamic discourse to mobilize the masses against the state of Israel, and its leaders

criticize official Palestinian and Arab organizations for their positions on having peace

negotiations with Israel. Hroup, who studied the worldview of the Hamas movement in

Palestine, believes that Hamas's ideological war against Israel has been portrayed as

resistance to a foreign occupying power and Hamas's aim is to maintain the Islamic

identity in Palestine (pp. 1-11). In this context, Hamas has been using Islamic religious

education by emphasizing individuals' commitment to Islam in creating an Islamic civil

society in the Gaza Strip. For example, similar to other Islamic societies in the Middle

East, women including girls have to cover their hair in public space and schools, and also

Sharia law[69] has been established since June 2007 when Hamas took control of Gaza

Strip. Through Islamic education and sermons by religious leaders, Hamas and its

military wing such as 'Al-Qassam Brigades' have been promoting the ideology of

martyrdom for the sake of Islam as their primary strategy against their enemy. Therefore,

their primary goal is not to free their homeland from the settlers, but to maintain and save

the Islamic identity of the region.

Shay (2004), an Israeli scholar who studied 'martyrdom' within the religious

extremist movement argued that, Ayatollah Khomeini, the leader of the 1979 Islamic

revolution in Iran, provided the religious/ideological basis of Political Islam in the late

twentieth century and encouraged the use of jihad as a way to fight its enemy. In other

words, Shay regards Khomeini as the father of the theory of Political Islam who used his

---

[69] Sharia law or Islamic law is the Muslim code of conduct dealing with many economic, political, and social issues including family law, dress code for men and women, sexuality, diet, fasting and labour (Moghissi, 1999).

power to mobilize his followers from, within and outside Iran, resulting in groups of extreme Islamists killing both themselves and others through suicide bombings and assassination of their political/cultural opponents.

To the followers of Political Islam, the concept of truth is timeless and unchanging, and their role is to protect the divine (absolute truth) (Nepstad, 2004). For religious extremists, as stated by an American sociologist Sharon Nepstad (2004), religion is an end to itself, and its followers may sacrifice themselves in order to establish or preserve a religious foothold in society. In contrast, for religious peacemakers, "religion is viewed as a means to an end" (p. 300) and is a form of spiritual enlightenment and truth for their loyal followers in society. Nepstad (2004) suggests that the peacemakers' interpretation of religion is to integrate religiously inspired principles of justice and respect for all people into the fabric of society, whereas religious fundamentalists desire to establish a religious government or culture, and under those entities force everyone to conform to their norms (ibid).

Organized forms of political violence have caused polarization within the diverse communities of the Middle East particularly since the rise of political Islam[70]. In conflict zones of the Middle East like Palestine, some youth who are fed up with the living conditions of displacement caused by the Israeli occupation, experience a sense of powerlessness, hopelessness, and helplessness, which opens them to accepting the ideology of Political Islam (Khashan, 2003). Social scientist Ted Robert Gurr (1970), in his theory of frustration and aggression caused by political factors among youth, argues that frustration results from a discrepancy between expectations and gratifications and it

---

[70] Since the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in early 1980s.

has three phases: "The primary causal sequence in political violence is first the development of discontent, second the politicization of that discontent, and finally its actualization in violent action against political objects and actors" (pp. 12-13). Gurr's theory can be particularly relevant to the situations of Palestinian refugees because of their daily experience of harsh living conditions, separation wall, limited movement within their own boundaries, poverty, and discriminatory treatment by the occupiers. The situation of the displaced Palestinian population living in Lebanese refugee camps and their experience of widespread human rights violations within these camps, give rise to a mood of helplessness and heighten the refugees' sense of frustration, which pre-disposes them to accepting Political Islam (Hajjaj, 2000). In other words, all these experiences of on-going injustice in the societal level, and feeling of isolation makes particularly the Palestinian youth vulnerable in embracing the ideology of political Islam as a way to over come their hopeless situation resulting in death of themselves and innocent civilians.

4.3   The Recruitment of Suicide Bombers from the Islamic States

By looking at the ages of the suicide bombers, one can conclude that youth are the primary targets of the Islamic fundamentalist movement in the Middle East and elsewhere. As discussed by Flaherty (2003), this is because many youth in their late teens and early twenties seek to form their identity and are committed to changing themselves and the outside world. "Youth is a time when ideology plays a central role. Those who are searching for a place in the world are easily drawn to ideologies that promise to change their social reality and give them a meaningful role in it" (Flaherty, 2003, p. 54).

I feel stunned whenever I hear the words "suicide bombing" and it brings out memories of back home in Iran. At the beginning of my tenth grade year in 1981, I heard

this word for the first time in the media controlled by the newly-established Islamic state in Iran, whose rule began to strengthen with the start of the Iran-Iraq war. I remember watching teenage boys with heavy guns in their hands, bombs strapped to their waists, and green headbands bearing the word "ya shahid" (martyrdom) on TV, marching on streets prior to their departure to the front line of war in southern Iran (close to the border of Iran-Iraq). These teenagers (between thirteen to eighteen years of age) were told by the leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran that if they sacrificed their lives for Islam by exploding themselves in the Iraqi minefields, they would automatically enter heaven. Even though it was clear to me that these young people were manipulated by the Iranian ruling class, neither I nor anyone else living in Iran had the right to openly question their intentions and their right to use these youths as cannon fodder. Since then, the world has witnessed many examples of youth involvement in suicide bombings in different parts of the Middle East, South Asia, Central Asia, the U.S. and Europe. The tragedies of suicide bombings in various Iranian cities since 1982, the tragedy of September 11, 2001 in the U.S., in Madrid, London and in various Israeli cities, demonstrate how the safety and security of civilians are jeopardized by deadly actions of this movement. Thus, this movement is prepared to use the weapon of violence against anyone who is labeled as the enemy of Islam anywhere around the globe.

4.4   The Recruitment of Suicide Bombers from Refugee Camps

As one of the leading factors, political Islam played a major role in the expansion of the Hezbollah movement in Lebanon (backed by the Iranian Islamic regime), which resulted in the recruitment of the displaced Palestinian population living in Lebanese refugee camps into suicide missions against civilians throughout the Middle East region.

Using data gathered from interviews of 342 Palestinian refugees living in southern

Lebanon, Khashan examined multiple factors pertaining to suicide attacks: age, Political

Islam, self-esteem, social trust, optimism, and belief in the sanctity of life. Khashan

reports, "the compactness of refugee camps in terms of acreage and congested dwellings

enhances the preaching activities of the Islamic fundamentalists. Physical mobility

constraints and lack of recreational facilities add momentum to the spread of militia

teachings" (Khashan, 2003, p. 1063). In analyzing his data, Khashan poses that

Palestinian refugees in Lebanon strongly support suicide operations against the Israeli

state. In this regards, he writes:

> Many respondents expressed a willingness to transform themselves into
>
> smart bombs by detonating 20 to 30 pounds of explosives in the midst of
>
> Jewish assemblies. For them, this was the fastest way to immortalize
>
> themselves in Allah's heavens and the surest way to achieve a balance of
>
> terror with Israel's overwhelming military machine. (2003, p. 1061)

Kashan's research findings suggest that youth living in refugee camps in Palestine, and

Lebanon, are in a vulnerable situation because these youth are often targeted for

recruitment by forces seeking unquestioning obedient allies who can be manipulated to

work for militant groups under abusive and dangerous conditions in order to carry out the

terrorist acts of suicide bombing, kidnapping and hostage-taking.

4.5   Culture of War versus Culture of Peace

The phenomenon of suicide bombing and its expansion in the Political Islamic

movement in countries like Iran, Iraq, Israel-Palestine and Lebanon continues to this day.

Scholars (Rabinovich, 2002; Haydar, 1997; Silverman, 2002; and Krueger & Maleckova,

2002) who study this problem have different opinions regarding the mass appeal of the

fundamentalist Islamic movement on Middle Eastern youth. Anti terrorist researcher

Abraham Rabinovich (2002) who studied the root causes of suicide bombing among

youth, argues that poverty, along with other variables such as religious ideology and

nationalism, are important factors in youth committing suicide bombings. They suggest

that psychological distress caused by the desperate living conditions of displacement

makes some individuals suicidal, and that this is one reason why they are easily recruited

for suicide bombing missions. K. A. Haydar, a Middle Eastern scholar who studied the

phenomenon of suicide bombing among Palestinian refugees (1997) disagrees with

Rabinovich, and argues that the growth of militant Islamic terrorism in the Middle East is

a result of not only poverty, but also of unemployment, weakness of academic curricula

and a decline in educational institutions.

       Silverman (2002), in an in-depth analysis of the appeal of the ideology of Political

Islam to Middle Eastern youth, suggests the following three reasons for such an appeal:

- Extreme Islamic revivalist movements thrive in places that have undemocratic laws and politics e.g., Egypt, an authoritarian police state. The state and civil society has either failed or has never existed, e.g., Afghanistan.

- The leaders of Political Islam form a sense of identity among their adherents and construct non-Muslims as the source of Middle Eastern youth's anger and frustration, as in Iran.

- This ideology is often the only version of Islam taught at schools, religious institutions, and the public media, e.g., the teaching of Islam in Saudi Arabia and Iran.

In general, as argued by Flaherty (2003), radical movements do not appeal to all youth

living in equal socio-economic and political conditions. Instead they attract those youth

whose lives lack a sense of direction and meaning. He writes:

Cut off from their historical past and cultural traditions, living in the

shadow of the industrialized world, they have nothing. Extremist groups

are particularly likely to appeal to youth in such societies. By belonging to

these groups, youth put on the trappings of power and superiority by

adopting an ideology that tells them they are special, important, and have a

glorious role to play. The cultic aspects of extremist groups serve to

delineate group members from outsiders, who are seen as corrupt, unclean,

and inferior. (Flaherty, 2003, p. 51)

Political Islam is the product of a specific mindset that uses its interpretation of religious

ideology to justify acts of terror and violence towards its followers. Rohan Gunaratna

(2005), who has studied threats posed by certain ideologies, argue that ideology, not

poverty or illiteracy, is the key driver of terror in the world. According to Gunaratna

(2005), ideology frames organizational structure, leadership, membership motivation and

recruitment. In turn, they shape the strategies and tactics adopted by the group.

The profound appeal of the ideology of Political Islam among some youth can be

a complex phenomenon. Youth who experience unjust treatment in addition to inhuman

living conditions are more at risk due to the dominant presence of the fundamentalist

movement in the region (Khashan, 2003). This means that some youth aspiring to bring

social change to their societies may be influenced by the ideology of Political Islam in the

form of strict rules of Sharia laws drawn from the Koran, in addition to the promises of a

better life after death upon sacrifice for the sake of Allah (God) and Islam.

In order to analyze factors contributing to political violence in the Middle East

particularly in Palestine, it is important to examine the use of education and the role it has

played since the rise of Political Islam in the region. As stated by El-Rifai (2002), education is one of the most important tools influencing the advancement and transformation of any culture. In cases in which the educational system and mass media are controlled by those who promote the use of violence against the *other*, using the instrument of education to indoctrinate the population has always played a role in strengthening mistrust and hatred towards the *other*. For example, in the context of Iran, the teaching of the Sharia or Islamic law, which is based on not questioning the doctrine of Islam, is a core feature of the school curriculum, and everyone attending educational institutions in Iran must learn and accept it. Furthermore, the idea that all Muslims have a duty to take part in jihad in order to build an Islamic society is propagated in religion classes from elementary through post-secondary school.

Youth are constantly taught that in order to have a better life after death, they must be ready to sacrifice themselves for the sake of Islam, the Koran, and God. Textbooks do not mention concepts such as 'human rights' (human rights concepts are considered as Western values not applicable to the Islamic societies), and instead prescribe sets of social behaviors applicable to an Islamic society. Students are only subjected to religious "education" and regularly experience or witness abuse, humiliation, and cruel punishment including public lashings and executions (Minachi, 2003) if they resist or question the authorities.

When political leaders for example from Hamas or Hezbollah movements are engaged in acts of violence against their own citizens and commit themselves to expanding Political Islam globally, the cycle of violence may appear a societal norm, and an inescapable reality for some members of their own society, especially the young

population trapped and victimized as part of an ongoing battle for control of young minds in the region. Given that the use of violence against the *other* has been approved by extremist leaders in Iran and some parts of Palestine (e.g., Gaza), given that the separation wall has been expanded around the West Bank and Gaza strip, and given that the unstable political situation in the Middle East continues to exist, how can a culture of peace be promoted among youth or any other societal group in the Middle East? I discuss the answer to this question in the following section.

4.6 Discussion

The literature reviewed in this section, regarding the relationship of youth and political violence in the Middle Eastern countries where Islam is the dominant religion, suggests that the strong commitment to the ideology of Political Islam, combined with poverty, displacement, sense of isolation caused by settlement and expansion of the separation wall around the Palestinian region, unstable socio-economic conditions and a lack of quality education, cause some youth to participate in political violence against the *other*. The ideology of Political Islam has been the dominant ideology influencing youth movements particularly in Iran, Palestine and Lebanon since the 1980s, with this strengthening further after the end of the Cold War.

Individuals risk their lives by speaking out, questioning the unjust situation, criticizing and challenging this reactionary movement. However, in some countries like Iran, any form of individual or public resistance has been repressed (Moghissi, 1999). On the one hand, youths resisting this reactionary movement are treated as outsiders and are forced to live in isolation, in addition to risking their lives. On the other hand, youths accepting this reactionary ideology are motivated to join this movement because it often

adheres to the same version of Islam taught in schools (Silverman, 2002). In other words, there are social rewards for capitulation to the dominant ideology.

The rise of Political Islam as a way to resist modern political and cultural influence of the West has empowered the most reactionary forces of the Middle East to form an international network carrying out dangerous acts against humanity inside and outside the Middle East boundary. For example, the practice of suicide bombings as used by Islamic groups (e.g., Hamas, Hezbollah, and Al Jihad) has further inflamed conflict and tension in different parts of the world including in Palestine and Israel. The tragic impact of the ideology of Political Islamic encourages some youth to apply violent tactics against the individuals perceived as 'enemies.' Furthermore, Political Islam demonstrates how the leaders of this movement use their interpretations of Islam to legitimize and turn their hatred into violence toward the *other*, both within and outside their own communities.

Freire's book, *Pedagogy of Hope* (1992)*,* offers an alternative framework for change in places where many youth resist the culture of war. As Freire states, hope as an "ontological need" against sectarianism is essential to both our being and knowing. In deconstructing the rigid mentality of religious fundamentalism in general, it is important to understand the role of the political ideology of fundamentalism that exists cross-culturally within every religion. Despite similarities between all of them with respect to protecting the status quo and glorifying the past, there are contextual differences among various movements in this mindset (Silberstein, 1993). For example, within the context of Islamic fundamentalism, dialogue and negotiation has no place within this ideology.

Great efforts are needed to deconstruct the ideology of political Islam in the Middle East and elsewhere. It is essential to replace the mind set of jihad and martyrdom that so far has created the culture of hate, war and death, with peace education curricula that highly values respect for the *other* and respect for human rights principles. In order for this to happen, educators and peace builders have to first identify biased and hateful perspectives and then deconstruct these perceptions through school curricula, peace and human rights education related workshops and seminars. As recommended by El-Rifai (2002), educators need to prioritize human rights based educational opportunities for children and youth, and increase activities strengthening positive personal attitudes, perspectives, and behaviours. In this regard, peace and human rights education can be a useful element in promoting critical thinking, understanding, and respect for individuals from different backgrounds.

4.7   Conclusion

Aside from foreign interventions, the power struggle between the leaders of religious extremists to maintain the Muslim identity of the Middle Eastern countries has provided the context for the strength of Political Islam in the region. In their encounter with modernity, fundamentalists have been able to convince young followers to justify harm against the *other* in the name of God and in the name of Islam (Flaherty, 2003). As noted by Flaherty, many of the youth who join the extremists groups have low self-esteem and look for a sense of self and identity. In other words, the fundamentalist movement purports to value youth's inner worth and provide them with a sense of meaningful participation within their own networking circle.

Youth who feel a sense of belonging to the group by accepting the ideology of Political Islam, are convinced to form a strong commitment to carry out any form of activity against outsiders (Flaherty, 2003; and Moghissi, 1999). In this regard, I argue that the belief systems of extreme ideologies are not influenced by rational independent thought. Instead, such a belief system is based on the dehumanization of the *other*. Many Middle Eastern youth's opportunities to commit to a cause for positive social change and also for advancing their socio-cultural practices are limited due to the existence of authoritarian regimes like the Islamic Republic of Iran in the region. Therefore many children and youth inevitably grow up in conservative environments where some might instead devote themselves to the cause of a Muslim-hard line movement.

To eradicate political violence in the Middle Eastern countries dominated by the ideology of Political Islam, as emphasized earlier in this chapter, one can focus on consciousness-building at the grassroots level. This means that instead of negotiating with those leaders and politicians who are themselves responsible for the creation and continuation of violence and chaos in the region, educators need to develop programs in schools and other public institutions to deconstruct and reject hateful ideas and violent actions against those outside of fundamentalist socio-cultural norms. Obviously, this can put peace and human rights educators' lives at risk if the space for this type of education is not allowed to exist, or they may face extreme persecution when advocating or promoting peace and human rights related programs in a country like Iran where the ideology of Political Islam is the dominant force.

Given the specific complexities of historical, social and political context of the Middle East in general, and the on-going cycle of political violence in Iran, Israel and

Palestine in particular, it is a huge challenge to replace any ideology that promotes hatred and violence against the *other* with an ideology that uses education as a tool to teach non-violent strategies, and human rights values. Furthermore, to create a space for dialogical interaction and conflict resolution skills among people living in a conflict zone is a long running process for educators and advocates of human rights inside and outside the Middle East.

In the context of Iran, the entire society is run by an undemocratic, fundamentalist Islamic State having a long history of human rights violations and promoter of acts of political violence against its citizens and against those who are different. My personal experience regarding the Islamic regime in Iran has been frustrating, because while many youth and ordinary Iranians take part in opportunities to promote social justice and human rights through non-violent action in their struggle against their oppressor, the state in response uses extreme violence to suppress them. Therefore, peace educators have to deal with life and death situations in order to build a culture of peace with much caution. In my perspective, educators can be successful when the regime rejects the use of violence and intimidation against its own citizens and against those who are different, or when this authoritarian system can be replaced by one that respects dialogue, negotiation, and human rights inside and outside Iran.

The challenge for peace educators aspiring to promote a culture of peace in Iran and in other parts of the Middle East to help fundamentalist-minded youth and older individuals to view the *other* as human beings, and to practice dialogue, and peaceful

resolution among policy makers without risking their own lives is considerable[71].

Despite there being significant barriers to the implementation of a culture of peace in Iran and the entire Middle East, I remain hopeful that a struggle to restore freedom, social justice and democracy in the region and across many borders will succeed one day soon.

---

[71] Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have extensive reports about mass arrest, torture and execution of educators from different institutions throughout the country. Many of them are labeled as spies for Western countries.

Interview 4: Yadi's Story

Yadi[72], a young man in his early 30's, was a social worker and a community-based peace educator in Bethlehem at the time of our interview. He initiated a youth centre called "Youth Centre"[73], gathering Palestinian teenagers from a refugee camp outside Bethlehem. We met at his office located in the basement of a low-rise building within walking distance from his home. Yadi is a trained peace educator and has been teaching peace and conflict resolution programs mainly to Palestinian youth in the West Bank since 1998.

My interview with him was a few days before my departure from Palestine/Israeli. I was impressed by the quality of his work with Palestinian youth within a very limited budget. When I arrived at his office, there were about twelve Palestinian youth drawing and painting and talking to each other in Arabic. The large playroom area was dark and crowded with old chairs and small tables. Yadi and his interpreter Jackie[74] took me to a small office where we started the interview.

For Yadi, life was tough growing up in a refugee camp. He said that children and youth had no entertainment programs or recreational activities after school and remarked: "The world cared less about us and we felt like we were exiles in our own home." Therefore, when he grew up, he wanted to make a change and create a safe space for the new generation of Palestinian children and youth, so that their play ground was not just the narrow streets of the refugee camp. While showing me pictures of peace and conflict

---

[72] Yadi did not identify himself with any religion. When I met his wife, I noticed she wore an Islamic outfit including headscarf symbolizing her Muslim identity.

[73] A pseudonym

[74] A young Palestinian woman who identified herself as Christian.

resolution workshops for Palestinian youth in the West Bank, through the tone of his voice and intensity in his eyes, I saw his passion toward peace and justice for his community members.

Yadi also shared with me the story of his younger brother who committed a suicide attack on March 2002, killing himself and eight other Israeli citizens in a crowded mall in Jerusalem. There was a sense of pain and loss in his face while he talked about that tragic incident. The news of his brother's suicide act was not only a huge shock to him, but to the rest of the community members who knew him.

> *My brother was a happy and a dynamic boy. He was very open-minded*
> *and had a number of female and male friends. If I knew about his suicide*
> *attempt, I would have never allowed him to carry out such an action.*

According to Yadi, until two years after his brother's suicide act, the entire family lived in a three-story building. He lived on the first floor, his parents and his two younger brothers lived on the second floor, and the older brother and his family lived on the third floor. Yadi and the rest of his family had to pay a big price. On the second anniversary of his brother's suicide act, the Israeli army came to their house and ordered everyone to leave the place within twenty minutes and take their valuables before blowing up the building. While expressing his disbelief by the Israeli military, Yadi said:

> *I asked the Israeli officer to show me the court order; and the officer*
> *immediately responded 'what court order?' At the same time, my youngest*
> *brother who used to live with my family was arrested without any reason*
> *and he has been in jail without being charged with anything. Since that*
> *day, my son is suffering from chest pain and lung infection, because we*

were not prepared to leave our home and take our belongings along with

us. The child had to be in the cold and rain…. An American TV station did

a story about my brother, because he was neither a member of an Islamic

group nor poor. He was angry being trapped in a refugee camp and had

no hope for a better future.

Shortly after the destruction of their family home, Yadi and his older brother were allowed to build a new three-story house in the same property, but the Israeli military did not allow his parents to live there. A few days before I left Palestine/Israel, one of Yadi's brother's was released from the Israeli jail along with other 400 Palestinian prisoners. There was a big welcoming party at the refugee camp for all of them.

Achieving true peace between the Palestinians and Israelis would be a dream comes true for Yadi. Through 'Palestine Vision,' Yadi had a project called 'direct conversation' that provided Israeli and Palestinian children and youth a chance to chat with each other on the Internet. He told me that he occasionally organized face-to-face meetings between Palestinian and Israeli children and youth. In contrast, the Israeli government did not give permits to the Israeli children and youth to visit Bethlehem due to security issues, except once. Regarding the encounters he arranged between children and youth from both sides of conflict, Yadi commented:

As for the project itself, the kids from both sides talk about peace in their

daily lives, and also they talk about how they can create an environment to

co-exist. They talk about how to stand against governments working

against the peace process. The program started by recruiting 20

Palestinian kids and 20 Israeli kids. Then we taught them how to use

> *computers and chatting software as well as we taught them English. We*
> *are not expecting to harvest the fruit of our work now, but possibly in the*
> *future.*

While Yadi understood the systemic reasons behind the root causes of violence in both Israeli and Palestinian communities, he asked the governments from both sides to take responsibility for the circle of revenge against individuals. In this regard, he blamed the leaders for the continuing violence in the West Bank, Gaza, and Israeli societies. In his own way of analyzing the latter point, he shared a story from one of his workshops in Germany.

> *We had peace education training in Germany a few years ago. During our*
> *stay in Germany, the Israeli government assassinated Ahmed Yassein*
> *(Hamas leader). I was worried about the integrity of the meeting, so I*
> *asked to have some time with the Palestinians and told them (the*
> *Palestinian kids) that what we are doing here is to stop what is happening*
> *in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. We decided to have a funeral ceremony*
> *for Ahmed Yassein. When we went back to the large meeting, the Israelis*
> *apologized for what happened in Gaza and said that was the act of their*
> *government and not the act of the Israeli people. The next day, there was a*
> *Palestinian suicide attack against Israelis. This time we apologized to the*
> *Israelis who were at the meeting. In concluding our meeting in Germany,*
> *we realized that both sides are victims of our own governments' actions.*
> *My job in Germany's meeting was to act as an impartial dialogue*
> *facilitator.*

While Yadi was critical of the Palestinian extremist groups for their acts of suicide bombings and also critical of the Israeli government for using violence and retaliation strategies in dealing with the current crisis, his efforts in creating a support group for the youth is the best example of how individual Palestinians work hard to restore peace and prosperity in their communities. At the same time, it is a good example of how the states (Palestinian authorities and the Israeli state) shatter these community efforts within minutes by using military actions against the *other*, which only deepened the stereotypes and mistrust against Arabs and Jews in the region. As shared by Yadi however, the Israeli government has assassinated individual Palestinians over the years and confined the entire Palestinian communities into certain boundaries, while Arab Palestinians from different religious backgrounds or non-believers have been paying a huge price for the violent actions of suicide bombers in recent years. The highest price has been the restrictions on their freedom of movement even within their own territories. The intimidation and destruction caused by suicide bombings has given the Israeli state an opportunity to tighten the security, widen the separation wall, and increase the number of checkpoints. These actions have made all Palestinians prisoners in their own land, including those who reject the use of violence and accept the two-state solution**.**

Yadi's narrative shows that the stress of everyday life in a refugee camp took its toll on his family. His younger brother's suicide bombing further increased the marginalization of the entire family and also overshadowed Yadi's community work as a peace educator for several years. Yadi still carries the pain and despair caused by this tragedy for three reasons. First, he lost a brother. Second, the brother's act put more pressure on his family members' freedom of movement in addition to the demolition of

his parent's home by the Israeli military. Third, the Israeli government increased the number of checkpoints, making the Palestinians' external and internal mobility harder.

Yadi's narrative painted a picture of a suicide bomber in a very personal way. I found his ability to share his stories and perspectives during the interview extraordinarily powerful. He located himself within a different framework in challenging the existing order. He was engaged in teaching peace education and conflict resolution programs to his community members, as well as creating a gathering place for youth in his refugee community. Also, he was well aware of the fact that creation of dialogical encounters between individual Palestinians and Israelis was as important as the leaders' peace negotiation efforts. Yadi was hopeful that a bright future for the next Palestinian and Israeli generation could be possible if they have access to the right tools to peacefully build trust and cooperation between their community members.

Figure 6: Invisible Soldiers

This is the picture of the same District Coordinating Office where I visited along with two Israeli peace activists. Palestinians, who wish to enter into Israel for any reason, apply for entry permit at this office. The woman with a backpack is the Israeli human rights activist who was trying to talk with the Israeli soldier from behind the revolving door.

Notes from the Field: Entry Permit

Sharon's friend, an Israeli middle-aged woman of German descent, picks us up with her car to go to a checkpoint outside Jerusalem. She and her friend are members of a group called *Peace Watch*[75] , an organization of Israeli women who go to this checkpoint every day to observe interactions between Israeli soldiers and Palestinians civilians. This particular checkpoint issues permits to Palestinians (living outside Jerusalem and the West Bank) who want to visit Israel for medical reasons, or to visit relatives, or to attend a seminar/workshop). It is early afternoon and the sun is shining.

Once we exit the highway, we enter into a desert like area with no structure except the wall and a small checkpoint tower with security cameras. As soon as the car stops, Sharon gets out and goes toward six young Palestinian men who looked frustrated and helpless. While Sharon is talking with them in Arabic, her friend and I join them. Sharon listens to their stories and translates them into English for her friend and me. These men, who don't know each other, are from different parts of the West Bank. Through Sharon, I find out that their requests for entry permits have been denied by the soldiers.

Sharon and her friend talk in Hebrew, and go inside the building. The Palestinian men and I follow them. The main room we walk into is large and has several rows of empty chairs. This room is separated by four steps and a revolving door. I see a booth with a small window on the left side of the revolving door. We cannot see the soldiers inside it, but hear their voices through a microphone. While all of us are below the stairs, Sharon talks loudly with the soldiers in Hebrew. We don't hear any response. Sharon's

---

[75] In order for me to respect the anonymity of the individuals, a pseudonym has been used.

friend, whose husband is a retired army general, calls a high military official immediately. After about ten minutes, one of the soldiers calls a Palestinian man's name. This man, who is disabled, walks toward the revolving door with his crutches and falls while walking down the short flight of stairs leading to the revolving door. Everyone goes toward him to help him to stand up. The man again attempts to take the stairs, and again falls. Finally, two men lift him toward the revolving door. We initially don't see him once he passes it. However, after a few minutes, he reappears, reporting his entry permit has been denied.

While Sharon and her friend talk to other Palestinian men, I approach the man with the crutches and ask him whether he speaks English. He says he lived in the U.S. for six years, and his wife is American. They have two American born children. He explained that he was deported to Jordan but managed to travel to the West Bank where his parents and siblings live. He has been trying to go to the U.S. embassy either in Israel or in another country, but cannot get a permit and feels trapped in the West Bank.

We stay at the checkpoint for about six hours. Through the entire time, Sharon and her friend either talk to the Palestinian men, or the Israeli soldiers, or talk back and forth with high ranking Israeli military officials. Both Sharon and her friend are tense, and frustrated for not being able to help these young men to get entry permits. It is getting dark and windy. We feel tired, cold and hungry and decide to leave. Although the Palestinian men did not receive the entry visa to Israel by the time we decide to leave, they are happy to see that the denial of their cases has been observed by Israeli activists. They are hopeful to see human rights advocates like Sharon and her friend who at least

are able to report abuse by the Israeli soldiers to higher military authorities from the

checkpoint.

Interview 5: Jila's Story

My interview with Jila started three hours later than expected. While I was waiting for her in front of the Church of the Nativity, I noticed a big mosque across from the church and could hear the prayer in Arabic from the loudspeakers. The mosque was packed with mostly young Palestinian men, with many praying outside around a big square because there was not enough space to accommodate everyone inside. The mosque was in such close proximity to the Church of the Nativity that it seemed to be competing for believers. When Jila finally arrived, she looked frustrated and could not concentrate for a while. She told me that her mother had phoned her from the United States just before our interview and the call had been disconnected several times before they were able to finish their conversation. Her family home was on a hill right by an Israeli checkpoint where the wall separated the home in Bethlehem from the Israeli side of the border. She quickly drove me in her car along the old and narrow streets of Bethlehem. We went to a crowded Western-style café close to Bethlehem University.

Jila introduced herself as an English teacher at a private Catholic school in Bethlehem. Her parents lost their home in Jerusalem due to the Israeli occupation in 1967 and established their lives in Bethlehem where Jila and the rest of her siblings were born. All of her family members had permanent passes to visit the Israeli side of the border and also had Israeli passports. However, according to Jila, there was no guarantee for Palestinians like her to cross the checkpoint easily without any challenge. She received her BA in English and a second degree in education from Bethlehem University. In the last seven years, Jila has traveled to twelve countries attending international conferences on non-violence intervention and peace education. Jila believes that educated Palestinians

should live in Palestine to help their young community members and to re-build their country.

Like many other Palestinians, Jila lived through several major experiences and numerous ups and downs.

> *I was in fifth grade when the First Intifada started. As a ten year- old child, it was so difficult for me to see everything collapse in my community and most of that year, schools were closed. But then in 1993 when the Oslo agreement happened, I was in my teenage years, we were so happy; it was all about agreements and peace process that was supposed to last forever. And then again, in my young life, youth life, and as a young teacher, it was even much more difficult to spend all these years under the Second Intifada[76] which was armed, which was full of shelling and now, specially now, I'm living under a lot of stress because my house is right by the Israeli wall. My parents live in the United States and I am going to marry with my Palestinian-American fiancé in the following year.*

As mentioned, Jila started her career as an educator near the beginning of the Second Intifada. At the time, several NGOs were seeking teachers who were willing to implement peace education programs in their classrooms. As the result, Jila worked for five years at a public school and taught these programs to youth aside from her teaching job at the Catholic school. According to Jila, her original training for peace education was with an NGO in Germany. She also had training at Boston College in the U.S. in 2006 along with several Israeli peace educators, during the time that Israel conducted an air

---

[76] The Second Intifada started on September 28, 2000.

raid against Lebanon. At the time of the interview, she was connected to an NGO funded by the European Union and the Italian Embassy so that she could obtain further training and have access to related resources and materials to deliver peace education to her students. She was grateful for the help and support offered by foreign NGOs.

> *The agency running the program provides a lot of resources such as videos, magazines, and other related supplies. The focus of the program is on the tri – national level such as recruiting youth from the Palestinians, Israelis and Israeli Arab backgrounds. I also work for a program called the civic education that is similar to peace education and is with <u>the house of the Palestinian professionals of Ramalla</u> and this program targets students in their tenth grade. The program focuses on issues such as tolerance, non-violence, human rights, and also justice and peace. Without the help and support from the NGOs and the foreign Embassies, it is not possible to implement these programs.*

The new generation of Palestinians like Jila hopes they can be a driving force to challenge traditionally-held views such as revenge and retaliation. This generation seeks to find solutions and the path forward through mutual respect and understanding. She shared her perspectives on the impacts of peace education in her students.

> *Peace cannot be implemented from abroad or from outside, it comes from inside. This means that our community members' mentality needs to change and they need to pursue peaceful solutions to solve the conflict. No matter what happens, the Palestinians will continue to live here with the other. The Israelis will not leave, and the Palestinians will not leave*

either. The world community does not support our fight; therefore, the

Palestinians have to improve their condition of living and move forward,

and I think our people are getting much closer to this type of perspective.

The impacts of our peace education programs can be seen in a long run.

These programs give an opportunity to the Palestinians to meet with other

youth (Israeli youth) in order to share their experiences with each other.

Jila did not identify her role as a teacher who only lectured students. Instead, she uses technology

and visual arts to engage students in the subject, using this method to try to stimulate critical

thinking and enable them to be open-minded and reject the cycle of indoctrination.

My role is not to give information to my students, because they can get the

information from the internet, from the satellite, or elsewhere. My role is to direct

them how to use the information in their daily lives. I don't keep them sitting in

the class and just continue lecturing them, it will be really boring for them, and

this way, they are not going to be interested in the subject. Therefore, I use

audiovisuals, videotapes, DVDs, PowerPoint presentations, music, dramas and

even research activities through my peace education classes.

Jila's tone of voice was calm and soft when she was talking about her method of teaching peace

education. Her initial tension at the beginning of the interview had dissipated and, at this stage of

our conversation, she was more comfortable answering my questions. She also expressed her

love for working as an educator in her community despite many limitations and boundaries

caused by the ongoing conflict and violence in both Israeli and Palestinian societies.

The question of whether peace education challenges the status quo or tries to compromise

the existing situation in Palestine is not a concern for Jila, because she is aware that through

peace education, educators like her can work toward a future in which the new generation of Israelis and Palestinians can truly further the peace process in the region.

> *Criticism of peace education is not necessarily from the students or their families; it's more or less from the society in general. If they know that I have meetings with the Israelis or working with the Israelis, I don't care. I got used to it. I know how to defend myself, but I don't want to get my kids to be exposed to danger. Some individual Palestinians may accuse me of being a normalizer or making things normal. We don't make things normal, we talk about issues that make us frustrated or we try to resolve the problems. Sometimes within our community, people have lots of differences, some people agree, some people don't agree, and some people stay and live in peace here. But, in general, if you implement peace education in a practical way indirectly, they see it within themselves, within their community, within their class and among their classmates. You have to be smart, and not to tell them what your intentions are for having a peace education class; and at the same time, not to deceive them and tell them that it's not about giving them [a] lecture [on] how to live in peace.*

Jila's commitment to achieving peace entails a battle against the normalization of the status quo. In order to generate change in her students' attitudes and perspectives towards the other side of the conflict, she uses the power of dialogue and communication to overcome their anger and frustration caused by the separation wall, travel restrictions, and other barriers caused by Israeli occupation. Within seven years of working in the peace education field, Jila has accumulated tremendous strength in facilitating dialogical interactions within the Israeli community of peace educators. Jila believes that martyrdom is not the solution for fighting the Israeli occupation.

Sometimes we hear accusations from the community members that those of us who get permit and go outside our community to study, are collaborators. Nowadays, Palestinians who get the loan respond no, we have no other chance to get money, and we want to have good jobs and raise up our kids without poverty. Before, about 70% of my community members were ready to sacrifice their lives, but I think it's the opposite way around now. They think it's better if they stay alive and work a better future for themselves and for their kids than being martyrs. Also, before, the mothers were happy to see their sons to become martyrs, as they thought that they were going to be angels, especially in the Islamic perspective, but now mothers say "No, we want our kids to be raised up, we want them to be educated, so that they don't have to pass the checkpoints every single day to work as a laborer in Israel. I haven't made research about what I just said, but as a Palestinian, I can tell you, it is changing, and this is something expected, because people started working on peace education since 1995. And you can see a very slight change now, but the percentage will be higher in ten years.

Listening to Jila, I was filled with hope because I visualized the emergence of a new unbiased curriculum that could provide Palestinian students with a broader world view, one that could increase their potential to foster dialogue between people on both sides who were ready for change and to reach out for peaceful resolution, instead of destroying themselves and others. I could not believe my ears when Jila talked about Palestinian mothers who were happy to hear the news of their son's or daughter's martyrdom during the Second Intifada, when the culture of sacrifice was widely accepted.

I asked myself how this could be true. By researching the impact of the ideology of political Islam, I found I could answer my own question. In the words of Hroub (2000):

> The woman in the house of the Mujahid and the striving family, be she a mother or sister, has the most important role in caring for the home and raising the children with the ethical character and understating that comes from Islam, as well as training her children to perform their religious obligations and preparing them for their contribution to the Jihad that awaits them. From this perspective, it is necessary to take care that the schools and curricula educate the Muslim girl in order to become a religious mother aware of her role in the battle of liberation. She must have the necessary awareness and attentiveness in running a home. (pp. 278-9)

At the end of my interview with Jila, it was obvious to me that educators like her are role models for this new generation of Palestinians, who are aware of the limitations in their lives but ready to move on and equip themselves with critical thinking skills. The powerful message I learned from Jila's narrative is that peace education triggers a sense of hope in her students and community members, so they do not embrace jihad and the ideology of martyrdom for the liberation of Palestine. In other words, the efforts of peace educators like Jila not only serve the peace-building process for the new generation of Palestinian from different religious and economic backgrounds, it also connects the new generation of Israelis closer to the Palestinian youth.

Figure 7: The Peace Education Workshop

This is a picture of the peace education seminar for youth in a refugee camp in suburb of Bethlehem. The picture was sent to me in Aug 2010 by the person who is standing up in front of the audience. I met this peace educator in Bethlehem during my field trip to Palestine in 2007. Although I have permission from the sender to publish the picture in my dissertation, I blurred the faces due to UBC ethic policy on confidentiality.

Notes from the Field: Rally in Jerusalem

In order for me to observe some of the joint activities between Israelis and Palestinians regarding peace and human rights education in Jerusalem, I decide to attend several local events. On the evening of November 24, 2007, I show up at a peace rally and watch it from the sidewalk. About 300 peace activists gathered in front of the Israeli prime minister's residence. It is the night before the Annapolis conference in the U.S.

In their demands, the activists urge the Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert to have the peace talk with the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and respect a two-state solution. A significant number of Israeli police officers are here. They stand ready to defuse any attacks by the individuals opposing this peaceful gathering. I hear two middle-aged Israeli women yelling angrily at the rally participants. No clashes occur between the two sides. A separate gathering protesting the Annapolis conference happens the next day in Tel Aviv with about 15,000 Israelis participants. On the same day of this gathering, I see a picture of the rally on the BBC website focusing on a woman's sign saying *'Do not sell Israel to bloodthirsty Arabs'*[77]. As I compare the number of participants from each side at the two different rallies (one supporting the conference and the other opposing it), I am unsure whether the majority of Israelis want peace and reconciliation with the Palestinians. I ask the same question of my Israeli friend and she says that many ordinary Israelis, including many former peace activists, have turned their backs on the Palestinian cause because of suicide bombings that target the Israeli public. She shows me a nearby café and tells me that particular café used to be a gathering place for progressive Israelis and Palestinian intellectuals who supported a two-state solution. A suicide bomber in

---

[77] I viewed BBC Farsi sight on Nov 25, 2007, http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/

2003 targeted the café and not only killed many peace-loving activists, but also seriously

damaged the solidarity peace movement between the Israelis and Palestinians.

Figure 8: The School

This is the entrance to the boys' basic school in Deheisheh refugee camp in suburb of Bethlehem. The school is run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, UNRWA. I was not able to enter this school because I could not get a letter of permission from UNRWA.

Notes from the Field: Meeting with Professor Salomon

I met Professor Gavriel Salomon's (Gabi) at a conference in Antalya-Turkey in Dec 2007 and was inspired by his work on the concept of peace education in the conflict regions of the world. I am determined to meet with him in person while in Israel. My Israeli contact at the PICPE office arranges a meeting between Professor Salomon and me at the Centre for Research on Peace Education at the University of Haifa where he works.

I take the bus from West Jerusalem to Haifa and am fascinated by the mountains and green environment in this Mediterranean coastline city in Northern Israel. Since I have a few hours before my meeting, I decide to visit the Baha'i[78] Shrine and Garden in this old city. Along with other tourists there, I see about thirty young, male and female Israeli soldiers carrying guns and bullets around their waists. They are constantly either in front or behind me throughout my two-hour visit in the Garden.

After leaving the Garden, I easily find Professor Salomon's office and introduce myself to his secretary. While I wait for him in a room, the secretary comes in several times. Also during my meeting with him, the same secretary comes to the room without interrupting us several times. Professor Salomon tells me he is not ready for a formal, taped interview but agrees to an informal conversation with me regarding his work. During it he openly shares his knowledge and experience in the field of peace education with me. I take notes during it to remember all the important ideas.

---

[78] Baha'I faith has its international headquarters in Haifa and thousands of tourists from around the world visit its Shrine and Garden every year.

Professor Salomon tells me that peace education in Israel and Palestine is mainly practiced through collective dialogue and story telling at the workshops, seminars, peace camps, and through joint film-making. He believes that the military actions and political violence does not allow the sustainability of dialogue in the long run, and does not tell me which side he believes is responsible for it. He also believes that peace-related educational programs are not systematic and take place sporadically.

We talk for about two hours and just before I leave, he tells me that Israeli and Palestinian societies are highly politicized because of the dichotomy of settler/occupied; that this makes the beginning of the peace education workshops very emotional across all sectors of Palestinian and Israel societies. According to Professor Salomon, everyone blames the other side for the cause of violence and division in Israel and Palestine.

I go to the university's main cafeteria right after my meeting to write field notes and notice Palestinian and Israeli students sitting together at tables and engaging in conversations. Some Palestinian women are wearing traditional clothing including headscarfs while others wear Westernized clothing.

When I go back to the PICPE office, I tell the staff about the high presence of Palestinian students at the University of Haifa and their interaction with Israeli students. The Israeli staff tells me that the University of Haifa is the most pluralistic institution in Israel and the university mission promotes co-existence, tolerance, understanding, and mutual respect between Jews, Arabs and others.

Chapter 5: Discussion

> Stories must have a home in a community of listeners for whom the story makes a claim that will be remembered. The challenge here is to listen to the voices in a manner that allow us to capture the lived reality of the speakers while simultaneously to understand the shaping of this reality by the dominant system.
>
> (Dossa, 2004, p. 22)

Peace education programs have become increasingly recognized as having techniques to foster dialogue and understanding between people in Palestine and Israel (Bar-On & Kassem, 2004; Bekerman, 2007; Salomon, 2002). In this context, I argue that peace educators facilitate the delivery of programs that promote non-violent actions, understanding, and respecting the existence of the *other* in their volatile communities. While the narratives represented in this research are limited to five individuals, their voices "capture the lived reality" of dedicated educators directly engaged in transforming their communities towards a culture of peace. They are ordinary citizens living in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, however, their work is extraordinary, mainly because they are engaged in dialogical encounters based on people to people process, despite facing negative stereotypes and deep division between the communities. Each participant was motivated to become a peace educator from a sense of responsibility to transform their community members' perception of the *other*. Thus, the value of narrative inquiry in this research was to explore the possibilities and challenges of their efforts. Within this final chapter, I provide a summary for each of my research questions, which highlights the

participants' efforts, fears, hopes, aspirations and challenges. Later I discuss several themes from my findings.

Peace education program implementation: Each peace educator involved in this research study has a great wealth of knowledge and expertise in the subject matter and implemented inter-group dialogue between their community members in a unique way. As high school teachers, Rahel and Jila involve their students in peace education activities in classroom settings. They draw their students' attention to critical thinking activities relevant to attitude change toward the *other*, and to the rejection of violent actions against the *other*.

For Yadi, a social worker in a community setting, conducting and facilitating peace education workshops among youth is critical. His peace education activities focus on empowering Palestinian youth to transform social inequalities and injustices from their society using non-violent actions. He also encourages youth to use social media to engage in dialogue with Israelis since they have no access to face-to-face interactions with the Israeli population.

For Majid, teacher training and leadership training programs provide opportunities to start creating coexistence between Palestinians and Israelis. Although he organizes peace education conferences and workshops every few months by bringing both sides of the conflict together for direct dialogical interactions, he is more involved in shared projects between Israelis and Palestinians, promoting a two-state solution and policy development that fosters peace and co-existence between the *self* and the *other* (e.g., evaluation of the Israeli and Palestinian textbooks as a way to reform the image of

the other from each side, and also to reflect on each side's history in textbooks as the basis for building trust and understanding).

For Sharon, who is a human rights activist, implementation of peace education happens through her advocacy and outreach work for PICPE. She is actively involved in coordinating peace education workshops and seminars, applying/advocating for permit visas for Palestinian peace educators/activists, and raising awareness about peace education activities among both Israeli and Palestinian communities.

Peace Educators' Fears, hopes and aspirations: Although all participants hope to create peace and coexistence among their community members, they acknowledge that they still have a long way to go to achieve peace, mainly because their societies are segregated from each other. For the Palestinian participants, the existence of the separation wall is the strategy Israelis use to further exclude the Palestinians, retaining feelings of fear and mistrust between these two nations. It is evident in all the narratives presented in this dissertation that peace education programs bring hope to these educators who are tired of violent revenge against each other from both sides of the conflict. They aspire to find collective solutions to end the asymmetric power relations between the Israelis and Palestinians and initiate programs that intend to create a sense of understanding between both sides to foster respect for the existence of the *other* (Bar-Tal, 2002).

In my opinion, for a region having a long history of struggle between different ethnic groups and religions, hope for a better future is possible when the culture of peace is learned by everyone– from politicians, to policy makers, to educators and community members – involved in direct dialogue and communication with people at the grassroots

level. Every community leader must therefore be involved in the promotion of peace education and dialogical encounter.

Challenges Encountered by the Peace Educators: The peace educators in this research are aware that peace cannot be restored in their polarized societies as long as there are no direct dialogical interactions among both community members. In this regard, Jila and Yadi who lived in Bethlehem, expressed they have no political and social voices outside their small communities. They believe they are refugees in their own homes, and trapped in a large prison called a refugee camp. For example, on several occasions, Yadi expressed that he cannot visit the city of Ramallah easily because of travel restrictions on him, his brothers and his parents. Although educators like Yadi are hopeful for a better future, he is well aware that the transition to peace between the Palestinians and Israelis might not happen as long as the long wall and militarized checkpoints exist, and as long as neither side compromises with the *other*.

For the Israeli educators, the threat of suicide bombing, travel restrictions to the Palestinian side of the border, and a lack of understanding of their history by many Palestinians have caused challenges in their lives. Majid and Sharon and other Israeli peace and human rights educators/activists, and academics who themselves are members of Israel society, are critical of their government's policies toward Palestinians and constantly find ways to recommend reconciliatory solutions to resolve their political conflict with Arab Palestinians (Salomon, 2002). Given that Sharon's and Majid's work is clearly in opposition to the political agenda of some of their state leaders, and that Israeli society has been divided between a minority critical of their state policies and a majority supporting the actions and policies of their state leaders, it is problematic to

conclude that peace education is highly practiced in Israeli society.

Yadi and Jila, who lived in Bethlehem at the time of the interview, share their experiences of isolation and lack of opportunities for collaborative peace education work in Palestinian (outside Bethlehem) and Israeli schools. In my observation, Palestinian peace educators living in Jerusalem have better opportunities to engage with the Israelis compared to Palestinian peace educators living in Bethlehem who do not have the same opportunity, and who work almost entirely with Palestinian youth and adults in the West Bank communities. This limitation is primarily due to the lack of freedom of movement to the Israeli side of the border and by travel restrictions, even within their own West Bank communities.

I argue that if the above challenges and restrictions continue to exist, it will affect encounters between community members. Moreover, peace educators may not be able to achieve their goals in bringing change to their societies; and, the effects of their peace education programs on the new generation of Palestinian might be short lived. While these challenges create frustration and disappointment among peace educators, I believe they realize that with the current situation, one alternative is to transform the perception of the *other* in their own communities, given the complex political and social situation to this day.

5.1   Common Themes: Dichotomized Relations

I found two dichotomized themes in the narratives of peace educators, which include *self* and *other,* and *occupier* and *occupied*. Each of these themes points to the historically-based divisions and stereotype perceptions that exist among the Palestinian and Israelis.

Self **and the** ***Other*:** The process of *othering* by the Israeli state policies has created an essentialist idea that the *other* must not be integrated into the Israeli society; and for this reason, Palestinians have been excluded and expelled from the occupied land. Regarding the theme *self* and *other*, Sharon, an Israeli human rights activist, holds a binary identity and position. She identifies herself as a half non-Jewish Palestinian and a half Israeli Jew, which positions her in Israeli society as both *self* and *other*. During her school years in Haifa, her Israeli peers treated her as the *other*. Within the Palestinian community, she was not considered an insider since she spoke Hebrew fluently, primarily identified herself as a Jew, and lived in an Israeli neighborhood in West Jerusalem. Sharon, like other Israeli peace and human rights activists, believes in two-state solution as a key to achieving peace in the region. She supports the state of Israel and, at the same time, supports having a sovereign and independent Palestinian state. It should be noted that during her parent's generation, it was acceptable for the Jews to marry non-Jew-Arab Palestinians; whereas currently, the Israeli laws and policies discourage this type of relationship between the Israelis and the Palestinians. The Israeli Zionist project of *Judaizing* policies (Yiftachel, 2010) has completely segregated the Israeli and Palestinian nations from each other. As a result, it is almost impossible for the new generations from both sides to have binary identities. As stated by Yiftachel,

> The Judaization programme was premised on a hegemonic myth
>
> cultivated since the rise of Zionism, namely that 'the land' (*ha-aretz*)
>
> belongs to the Jewish people, and only to the Jewish people. An exclusive
>
> form of settling ethno-nationalism developed in order quickly to

'indigenize' immigrant Jews, and to conceal, trivialize, or marginalize the

Palestinian past. (2010, p. 283)

Similarly, Jila clearly stated that those Palestinians who want to assimilate into Israeli society are discouraged from doing so because of the strict Israeli de-Arabization of the country. The strategy of Judaization by the Israeli state is considered as the source of modern polarization between the two nations, and can be a major obstacle for both the Israeli and Palestinian peace educators. No matter how hard Israeli and Palestinian peace educators work in building trust and understanding, the Judaization policy blocks their work.

By reviewing the history of settlement in the Palestine territories since 1948, I did not find evidence of strong Israeli integration policy toward Arab speaking Palestinians. In fact, the lack of support for any form of integration of Arab Palestinians within Israeli society has also been reflected in the Israeli state's "no return policy" for Palestinians who moved away or expelled from their territories during the 1948 and 1967 wars. Policies similar to the "no return policy" make the peace building process very difficult for those Palestinians who believe in two-state solution, or who believe in transnational relations between them and the Israelis.

I noticed during my field work that Palestinians referred to Israelis as the *other,* and Israelis also referred to Palestinians as the *other*. For Palestinians who live in their own communities, the *other* is the Israelis who have occupied the *self*; and are in the dominant position. For Israelis, the *other* is the one who is not an Israeli Jew and who is not in the dominant position. According to Giroux (1997), the *other* is someone who is devalued, marginalized and inferiorized. As he wrote, it is imperative to see ".... how the

colonizing of differences by dominant groups is expressed and sustained through representations: in which Others are seen as a deficit, in which the humanity of the Others is either cynically posited as problematic or ruthlessly denied" (p. 156). As the narratives of this research show, peace educators from both sides believe that the experience of *otherness* can be transformed through understanding the opposite side's histories. Moreover, recognizing the *other* is the basis for changing negative perceptions and to move forward toward social and cultural transformation of their societies.

***Occupied* versus O*ccupier*:** The existence of *occupied* versus *occupier* was another form of dichotomous relationship, affecting Palestinians, including the participants of my research. Since the occupation of their country in 1948, they lost their right to Palestinian citizenship and some have been displaced in refugee camps for years, living uncertain lives with limited mobility. Most of these refugee camps are not suitable for agriculture, and space is very limited within these camps. The power imbalances between the two nations, where the Israelis are in dominant positions and the Palestinians are in subordinate positions, have created much stress and hardship for the Palestinians. Crowed-small homes, poverty and unemployment are evident in large parts of East Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and refugee camps that I visited during my field visit. Prior to the First and Second Intifadas, many Palestinians were able to work in the Israeli cities; however, these uprisings have ended it in which they continuously are denied entry into Israel.

5.2   Rational Behind the Dichotomized Relations: a Historical Perspective

Based on the historical contexts that I reviewed in Chapter Three, the main reason that these dichotomized relations exist in Palestine and Israel is not only the European occupation/settlement of Palestine since 1948, but the rivalries and power struggles between the three Abrahamic religions that slowly shaped the geography, culture, identity and way of life in the region (Khalidi, 2000). As discussed earlier, prior to the creation of Islam, with the widespread of Christianity in the region that followed with several bloody wars, many Jewish people who did not change their religion to Christianity were forced to dislocate themselves to the neighboring countries and later were dispersed to other parts of the world (Khalidi, 2000). Centuries later, with the establishment of Islam that was followed by the migration of the Turks and Arab populations to the area now known as Palestine and Israel, the process of mass Arabization/Islamization of the population happened and further made the Jewish population a minority in the region (Hiyari, 2000).

With the end of the Ottoman era by the British occupation in December 1917, the Zionist movement[79] implanted its aspiration in Palestine, which the Jewish people grew in the west and southwest of the Old City of Jerusalem (Khalidi, 2000). The genocidal atrocities committed against the Jewish people in Europe during the Second World War increased the Jewish settlement in the Jerusalem region, resulting in the formation of the state of Israel in 1948 (Khalidi, 2000; Ofer, 2005). Overall, the Israeli occupation of 1948 and 1967 resulted in millions of non-Jew Palestinians being forcefully displaced from their homes and initiated the Palestinian refugee crisis inside and outside Palestine (Pappe, 2006). In other words, Palestinians lost their home through the increasing

---

[79] Zionist movement sought to establish a separate Jewish society in Palestine and ultimately form its own political hegemony in the region (Khalidi, 2000).

influence of historical Jewish identity in the region (Mourad, 2003) and "their whole social, economic and cultural fabric was destroyed and uprooted" (Qaymari, 2005, p. 149).

While it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to provide a complete history of the Palestine and Israel existence, or to focus on the relations between the Abrahamic religions in the region, I feel it is important to highlight different scholarly viewpoints in terms of the role of history in the present day conflict in the Palestine and Israel regions.

5.3   Important Themes Drawn from the Interviews

In addition to the above dichotomized relations, I found three common themes raised in the interviews. These are: the impact of suicide missions on the Israeli public, restructuring of textbooks, and support for a two-state solution.

The Impact of Suicide Missions on Public Opinion: As shared by the participants, the rise of suicide missions against Israeli civilians has caused deeper mistrust toward Arab Palestinians in the Israeli general population. This mistrust has also caused the isolation and exclusion of even those Palestinians who are critical of political Islam and want to live peacefully with their Israeli neighbors. Therefore, the participants have adopted peace education as one way of enhancing human safety and security for Israeli and Palestinian civilians. For instance, Jila believes that the violent actions by the followers of political Islam not only provide the Israeli extremists the opportunities to punish the entire Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, but provides them the legitimacy to expand the separation wall between the two territories and further restrict Palestinian movements.

Although the Palestinian suicide missions have stopped in recent years, the intense security checks from the Tel Aviv airport to crossing the checkpoints continue to

exist. Any new visitor to Israel can easily conclude that many Israelis live in a state of fear and instability. In terms of safety and limited access to resources, this fear is also obvious on the Palestinian side, whether in East Jerusalem or in the West Bank.

Reconstruction of the Textbooks: During my field trip to Jerusalem, I heard from the director of PICPE repeatedly that one way the culture of peace can be promoted on an ongoing basis in violently divided societies is through reforming textbooks. Through a research project, PICPE reviewed and assessed Palestinian textbooks during Yasser Arafat's leadership. For example, PICPE's report I and report III[80] argue that the Palestinian ministry of education published biased historical facts in its textbooks in order to justify the use of violence to encounter the Israelis. The report suggests that textbooks can play contradictory roles. On the one hand, through textbooks, students learn critical thinking, and peaceful conflict resolution skills as well as mutual respect for the *other*. On the other hand, it can manipulate minds by glorifying war and hatred toward the *other* (Adwan & Bar-On, 2004). Given this, I argue that textbooks reflect the cultural values of a society that wishes to maintain and transfer its values to their future generations. Although the PICPE report on Palestinian textbooks recommends the Palestinian Ministry of Education to reflect on history from the Israeli point of view[81], my interviewees from the Palestinian side demanded their history also be reflected in Israeli texts books.

---

[80] PICPE, report I: Analysis and Evaluation of the New Palestinian Curriculum; Reviewing Palestinian Textbooks and Tolerance Education Program. Submitted to the Public Affairs Office U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem, March 2003. PICPI, report III: Analysis and Evaluation of the New Palestinian Curriculum; Reviewing Palestinian Textbooks and Tolerance Education Program; Grades 5 & 10. Submitted to the Public Affairs Office U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem, July 2006.

[81] The recommendation was given to the Palestinian Ministry of Education after PICPE completed its report on Palestinian textbooks in 2006.

I agree with Palestinian and Israeli scholars (Adwan & Bar-On, 2004) that both

sides should have the right to present their own version of history in their textbooks, and

that students must also know about the *other* side's history as a significant element of

collective dialogue and understanding of the *other*. This argument also has been

presented as "shared history" by Israeli and Palestinian authors, Scham, Salem and

Pogrund (2005), in which they propose that polarized societies need to understand *self*

and the *other* through historical narratives in their textbooks, "….Palestinians and Israelis

cannot attain a durable peace between them without some degree of understanding–on a

societal, not simply an academic level–of each other's historical narrative" (Scham,

Salem & Pogrund, 2005, p. 3). The point is that peace cannot be accomplished as long as

each side of conflict ignores the other side's history in its textbooks, and as long as

biased, prejudiced perspectives from its textbooks are not removed. Therefore, projects

similar to PRIME and PICPE's textbook reform that demand the reflection of shared

historical narratives in their school textbooks is a step forward in building peace and

reconciliation in the region.

The Support for Two-State Solution: During my field trip to Jerusalem and Bethlehem, I

realized that many Palestinians who do not support the ideology of political Islam and reject the

use of political violence against the Israelis follow the idea of Arab nationalism that aspires to

create a secular and independent Palestine territory, which means living peacefully with their

Israeli neighbor. This group of Palestinians recognizes that some Israelis do not equate

themselves with the Jewish extremists, and share the same aspiration and hope of having two

independent states. That has been the main reason that PICPE has supported two-state solution

for Palestine and Israel. This idea also has been echoed in Kenize Mourad's (2004) book, "Our Sacred Land" in which Mourad refers to a minority of Israelis who support two-state solution:

> On the Israeli side, I particularly wanted to give a voice to a minority from which one rarely hears, yet which represents hope for the Middle East: those few men and women who, in the face of everything, continue to fight for the rights of the Palestinians. They do so to enable not only a victimized people, but also their own country to survive since they know that the policies of Sharon and his ilk are ultimately suicidal. They are also fighting with a rare moral courage for universal human rights. Indeed, in their own words, they are fighting to be different from those who have persecuted them over the centuries. (p. 3)

My Israeli participants fit within this minority of Israelis who, in addition to what Mourad says, have been entirely devoting their lives to creating and implementing peace education with their students in order to challenge certain cultural beliefs and practices, and replace them with an education that is framed within the principles of human rights.

5.4   Conclusion

This dissertation is based on the narratives of Israeli and Palestinian peace educators who bring hope to the local and international communities. Narrative scholars (Dossa, 2004; McAdams, 1990) propose that people organize their lives through narratives and that individual and group existence is explained as a series of stories, producing multiple development paths. In characterizing this view, the connection of narrative and dialogue is not only about communicative language, but also about the participants' memories, experiences and

perspectives. My research contributes to an understanding of peace educators' perceptions within a socially negotiated context.

An important implication of this research is that the peace educators continuously engage in the process of building peace through multiple processes and with limited resources. Central to their work is the facilitation of dialogical interactions between their local communities. Thus, the Bakhtinian (1981) notion of dialogical interaction can be considered as discursive social interaction that not only benefits the conflicting nations, such as Palestine and Israel, but the world community, valuing the multi-voiced nature of all communicative efforts.

The findings of this study strongly suggest that peace educators' central efforts are focused on collaborative and shared activities between the two conflicting nations, despite the asymmetrical relations in their societies. In this regard, they recognize the urgent need to have on-going face-to-face dialogical encounters in order to implement change in their societies. Despite the efforts of peace educators to create direct dialogical interactions between their community members, they often have limited possibilities for such interactions due to obstacles that restrict such engagement. Salomon and Nevo (2002) argue the importance of engaging with the *self/other* prior to engaging in peace negotiation with the *other* side only. Moreover, these scholars argue that peace education workshops and seminars will not be successful unless peace educators and peace researchers from both sides work together in the design and implementation of these types of curricula.

Facilitating dialogical interactions among people living in conflict zones is not an easy task. It requires a critical pedagogy that uses the power of dialogue in teaching students how to live with the *other* with compassion, how to listen to the *other*

respectfully, and how to peacefully deconstruct ideas and perspectives that demonizes the *other* (Giroux, 1997 & Nash et al., 2008). Educators cannot successfully cultivate a dynamic culture and a critical understanding if they do not value critical pedagogy as a basis for challenging oppressive cultural practices, as well as for transforming the societal negative perception of the *other* (Giroux, 1997).

Overall, my understanding of dialogue in the context of peace education from the perspectives of the research participants is based on mutual recognition of each other's history, deconstructing stereotypes and transforming the hatred attitudes toward the *other*, as well as building trust, and sharing narratives with one another. As discussed earlier, bringing about change through implementation of peace and human rights education in societies deeply shattered by division, hate and violence is difficult, and requires a long-term process needing effort, care and patience, as well as interaction with all sectors of civil society including the military, government agencies and NGOs.

The need for an operational definition of peace and human rights education in societies divided by deep political violence and conflict in order to facilitate current and future research became apparent to me while I was reviewing the literature reported in Chapter Two. Based on this review, my definition of peace and human rights education involves an education that instills respect, equity, democracy and understanding for all members of society, regardless of differences based on race, ethnic background, beliefs, religion, gender and sexual orientation. Meeting the above definition offers individuals, particularly those living in high conflict areas of the world, goals developing respect for the *other*, problem solving, and negotiation skills beneficial to all conflicting parties. Peace education does not in itself produce peace, but encourages students to question

assumptions, respond to authority with critical attitudes and to reject violent activities (Shapiro, 2002).

Finally, the involvement of all sectors of society to understand and respect the *other* in a meaningful way may not be possible unless the power imbalance on local and global levels disappears and unless violent ideologies are undermined from societies affected by political violence.

5.5   Final Thoughts: Implications of this Research Study

By looking back at my field notes, the wall represents the symbol of boundary, and power/control by one nation over another. The long wall created by the state of Israel to separate Israelis from Palestinians is the symbol of a barrier that blocks the dialogue between citizens. While I am writing this passage, the separation wall between Palestine and Israel still plays a significant role in limiting dialogical interactions between the ordinary people and community leaders who have been working hard to break the barriers between their societies. When I review the engagement of peace educators with the new generation of Palestinians and Israelis, I feel optimistic about the process of change in both societies; however, I become skeptical when I see that the wall splits the potential for unlimited-open dialogue for the purpose of bridging the gap between these two conflicting nations.

To my knowledge, aside from several academics whose research focus is on the promotion of peace education/dialogical encounter between Israeli and Palestinian societies, and aside from Majid and his Israeli colleagues in PICPE who implemented joint projects with Palestinian peace educators and scholars, it remains unknown what percentage of Israeli teachers support or practice peace education programs in their

schools or communities, and if a large number of them do, what kind of effect they have in their community members' perception of the *other*. Future research that documents such information would provide a better understanding of the context and practice of peace education explicitly within Israeli society.

If, however, Palestinian and Israeli people have no chance to engage in open dialogue and have very limited opportunity to interact with each other, can these nations rely only upon their state leaders' negotiations for a sustained peace and coexistence in the region? In the absence of people's right to move freely between the two societies, peace educators have difficulty in approaching a wide range of youth in the region.

The risk involved in having the separation wall as a permanent barrier between Israel, Gaza and West Bank (as a solution to protect the Israeli civilians from suicide bombers) means disengaging the general population from achieving understanding each other and further violates both nations' fundamental rights. As stated by a Palestinian scholar, As'ad Ghanem (2006), "With the substantial land area confiscated in the name of security, not only has separation become impossible but the option of establishing a Palestinian state with geographical contiguity has become unrealizable" (p. 39).

Despite dealing with a huge obstacle of wall between these two nations, there is a small minority of educators from both sides who have made a huge difference in their community members' perspectives of the *other*. The Palestinian and Israeli courageous peace educators, who contributed to data collection for this research, understand the importance of fostering mutual respect and understanding among Israelis and Palestinians without weakening their national identities. In this context, they have asked their authorities to prioritize the improvement of peace education programs and have

demanded their ministries of education to make peace education curricula mandatory in their formal school systems, rather than focusing entirely on the obstacles caused by Israeli occupation, historical differences, societal mistrust, and many other logistical barriers. They understand that peace education, as an alternative way of educating their community members, can be used to allow critical thinking, and to distill respect and understanding between them.

Each peace educator I met during my field trip brought a unique narrative to the practice of peace education in his or her community. Without their contributions, hope for a better future for present and future generations is not possible in the region. No matter how many barriers these peace educators encounter, respect for justice, peace and human rights must be restored one way or the other, sooner or later.

References

Abu-Zayyad, A, (2008). Between the Political Solution and Exercising the right of Return. *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture, (15)*, pp. 7-133.

Adwan, S. & Bar-On, D. (2004). Shared History Project: APRIME Example of Peace-Building Under Fire. *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society,* Vol. 17(3).

Ahady, A.H. (1998). Saudi Arabia, Iran and the Conflict in Afghanistan. In M. William (Ed.), *Fundamentalism Reborn? Afghanistan and the Taliban.* London: Hurst & Company.

Andreopoulos, G. J., & Claude, R.P.. (1997). Introduction. In G. J. Andreopoulos, & R.P. Claude (Eds.), *Human rights education for the twenty-first century* (pp. 3-8). Philadelphia: PA.

Asali, K. J. (2000). Jerusalem under the Ottomans 1516-1831 AD. In K. J. Asali (Ed.), *Jerusalem in History* (pp. 200-227). New York: Olive Branch Press.

Bakhtin, M. (1981). Epic and Novel. In M. Holquist (Ed). *The Dialogic Imagination* (pp. 3-40). University of Texas Press, Austin and London.

_____, (1984a). *Rabelais and his world* (H. Iswolsky, Trans.). Bloomington: Indiana University Press. (Original work published 1965).

Bar-On, D. & Kassem, F. (2004). Story telling as a way to work through intractable conflicts: The TRT German-Jewish experience and its relevance to the Palestinian-Israeli context. *Journal of Social Issues, 60,* pp. 404–418.

Bar-Tal, D. (2002). The elusive nature of peace education. In G. Salomon & B. Nevo (Eds.), *Peace education: The concept, principles, and practices around the world* (pp. 27-37). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Bekerman, Z. (2009). Introduction to PART II. In C. McGlynn; M. Zembylas; Z. Bekerman and T. Gallagher (Eds.), *Peace Education in Conflict and Post Conflict Societies: Comparative Perspectives.* New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Bekerman, Z. & McGlynn, C. (2007). *Addressing Ethnic Conflict Through Peace Education: International Perspectives*, 1st edition, New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Carter, J. (2006). *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Chase, S. E. (2003). Narrative Inquiry: Multiple Lenses, Approaches, Voices. In N. K.Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds), *Qualitative Research* (3ʳᵈ ed. pp 651-680). Thousands Oak, London & New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Connelly, F. M. & Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry. *Educational Researcher, 14 (5)*, 2-14.

Clandinin, D. & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative Inquiry and Experience and Story in Qualitative Research*. San Francisco: Josses-Bass

Creswell, John W. (1998). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing AmongFive Traditions.* Thousands Oak: Sage Publications.

Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (2003). Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research. In N. K. Denzing & Y. S. Lincoln. (Eds.), *Qualitative Research* (3ʳᵈ ed, pp. 1-45) Thousands Oak: Sage Publications.

Dossa, P. (2004). *Politicas and Poetics of Migration: Narratives of Iranian Women from the Diaspora*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc.

Elbedour, S. (1998). Youth in Crisis: The Well-Being of Middle Eastern Youth And Adolescents During War and Peace. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 27,* 539-556.

El-Rifai, Y. (2002). Peace Education: The Key to Sustainable Peace in the Middle East. M. A. Thesis. Institute of Development Politics and Management, University of Antwerp.

Etkes, D. (2006). The Identity Conflict. *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture, 13*, pp. 78-82.

Flaherty, L. T. (2003). Youth, Ideology, and Terrorism. *Adolescent Psychiatry, 27,* 29-58.

Freire, P. (1993). *Education for critical consciousness*. New York: Continuum.

_____ . (1992). *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* Continuum: New York.

_____ . (1972). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

_____ . (1970). Freire, P. *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* New York: Herder & Herder.

Finlay, L. & Gough, B. (2003). Prologue. In L. Finlay & B. Gough (Eds.), *Reflexivity: A Practical Guide for Researchers in Health and Social Sciences*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Franken, H. J. (2000). Jerusalem in the Bronze Age: 3000-1000 BC. In In K. J. Asali (Ed.), *Jerusalem in History* (pp. 11-41). New York: Olive Branch Press.

Galtung, J. (2002). Conflict, War and Peace: A Bird's Eye View. In J. Galtung, C. G. Jacobsen & K. F Brand-Jacobsen (Eds.), *Searching for Peace: the Road to Transcend* , (pp. 3-15). London: Pluto Press.

Gergen, M. M. and Gergen, K. J. (2003). Qualitative Inquiry: Tensions and Transformations. In N. Denzin, and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues*. Second Edition. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Ghanem, a. (2010). *Palestinian Politics after Arafat: A Failed National Movement*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

_____. (2006). Unilateral Withdrawal: A New Phase in Israel's Approach to the Palestinian Question. *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economic, and Culture* 13 (2), pp. 35-41.

Giroux, H. (1988). Critical Theory and the Politics of Culture and Voice. In R. Sherman & R. Webb (Eds.), *Qualitative Research in Education: Focus and Methods*. New York: Falmer.

_____. (1995). Radical Pedagory as Cultural Politics: Beyond the Discourse of Critique and Anti-Utopianism. In Critical Pedagogy and Predatory Culture: Oppositional Politics in a Postmodern Era. (pp. 29-57). London: Routledge.

_____. (1997). *Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope: Theory, Culture, and Schooling, A critical Reader.* U.S.A: Westview Press

Gunaratna, R. (2005). Responding to Terrorism as a Kinetic and Ideological Threat. *Brown Journal of World Affairs, 11*, pp. 243-252.

Gurr, T. R. (1970). *Why Men Rebel?* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Habermas, J. (1984). *The theory of communicative action: Reason and the rationalization of society* (T. McCarthy, Trans.). Boston: Beacon Press.

Hajjaj, N.S. (2000). Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon: Until When?,
At http://www.shaml.org/publications/monon/mono-refugees_in_lebanon.html.
Last visited on March 12, 2007.

Hatina, M. (2006). The 'Ulama' and the Cult of Death in Palestine. *Israel Affairs, 12,* 29-51.

Haydar, K.A. (1997). Political Conception of the Islamic Groups' State. *Abu Dhabi: Markaz al-Imarat lid Dirasat wal Buhuth al-Istratijiyya, 8.*

Hicks, D. (1997). Conflict Resolution and Human Rights Education. In G. J. Andreopoulos, & R. P. Claude (Eds.), *Human rights education for the twenty-first century* (pp. 80-95). Philadelphia: PA.

Hiyari, M. A. (2000). Crusader Jerusalem 1099-1187 AD. In K. J. Asali (Ed.), *Jerusalem in History* (pp. 130-176) . New York: Olive Branch Press.

Horst, C. (2006). *Transnational Nomads: How Somalis Cope with Refugee Life in the Dadaab Camps of Kenya*. New York: Berghahn Books.

Hroub, K. (2000). Hamas: *Political Thought and Practice*. Washington, D.C: Institute for Palestine Studies.

Hudson, M. (2000). The Transformation of Jerusalem. In K. J. Asali (Ed.), *Jerusalem in History* (249-285). New York: Olive Branch Press.

Josselson, R, & Lieblich. A. (1993). *The Narrative Study of Lives*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Kelly, K. & Riet, M. V. D.. (2000). In M. Seedat & S. Lazarus & N. Duncan (Eds.). Theory, method and practice in Community psychology: South African and other Perspectives. Cape Town: Oxford University Press

Khalidi, R. (2000). Introduction. In K. J. Asali (Ed.), *Jerusalem in History* (xi-xxxi) . New York: Olive Branch Press.

Khashan, H. (2003). Collective Palestinian frustration and suicide bombings. *Third World Quarterly, 24*, 1049-1067.

Kincheloe, J. L. & McLaren, P. (2002). Rethinking Critical Theory and Qualitative Research. In Y. Zou & E. T. Trueba (Eds.), *Qualitative Approaches to the Study of Education* (pp. 87-138). Boston: Rowman & Little field Publishers.

Kirby, S. & McKenna, K. (1989). Experience, Research, Social Change: Methods from the Margins. Toronto: Garamond Press.

Klang-Ma'oz, I. (1997). A decade of structured educational encounters between Jews and Arabs in Israel. In D. S. Halperin (Ed.), *Shaping New Attitudes to Peace Through Education*. Paris, France: The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

Krueger, AB. & Maleckova, J. (2002). Does poverty cause terrorism? The economics and the education of suicide bombers. *The New Republic, 20*, 27-34.

Kupermintz, H. & Salomon, S. (2005). Lessons to be Learned from Research on Peace Education in the Context of Intractable Conflict. *Journal of Theory into Practice*, 44(4), pp 293-302.

Lazarus-Yafeh, H. (1992). Interwined Worlds: Medival Islam and Bible Criticism. Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press.

Lieblich, A. & Tuval-Mashiach, R. & Zilber, T. (1998). A New Model for Classification of Approaches to Reading, Analysis, and Interpretation. In A. Lieblich & R. Tuval-Mashiach & T. Zilber (Eds), *Narrative Research: Reading, Analysis, and Interpretation*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publication.

Little, D. P. (2000). Jerusalem under the Ayyubids and Mamluks 1516-1831 AD. In K. J. Asali (Ed.), *Jerusalem in History* (pp. 200-227). New York: Olive Branch Press.

Marty, M. E. & Appleby, R. S. (1991). *Fundamentalism Observed*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press.

McAdams, D. P & Josselson, R. & Lieblich, A. (2006). *Identity and Story: Creating Self in Narrative*. Published by American Psychological Association, Washington DC.

McAdams, D. (1990). Unity and Purpose in Human Lives: The Emergence of Identity as a Life Story. In A Rabin & R A Zucker & R A Emmons and S Frank, (Eds), *Studying Persons and Lives*, (pp. 148-200). New York: Springer.

McLaren, P. (1995). Introduction: Education as a Political Issue. In *Critical Pedagogy and Predatory Culture: Oppositional Politics in a Postmodern Era*. (pp. 1-29). London: Routledge.

_____. (1995). Critical Pedagoy and thePragmatics of Justice. In *Critical Pedagogy and Predatory Culture: Oppositional Politics in a Postmodern Era*. (pp. 229-259). London: Routledge.

_____. (1995). Border Disputes: Multicultural Narratives, Rasquachismo and Critical Pedagogy in Postmodern America. In *Critical Pedagogy and Predatory Culture: Oppositional Politics in a Postmodern Era*. (pp. 87-116). London: Routledge.

Meintjes, G.. (1997). Human rights education as empowerment: Reflections on pedagogy. In G. J. Andreopoulos, & R. P. Claude (Eds.), *Human rights education for the twenty-first century* (pp. 64-79). Philadelphia: PA.

Mendenhall, G. E. (2000). Jerusalem from 1000-63 BC. In K. J. Asali (Ed.), *Jerusalem in History* (pp. 42-75). New York: Northampton.

Minachi, S. (2003). Status of Women in Iran after the 1979 Revolution and the Role of Iranian Secular Women in the Movement. *Ampersand: working papers*. Vancouver: Published by the UBC Centre for Research in Women's Studies and Gender Relations.

Mohanty, J. (2003). *Human rights education* (pp. 154-158). Deep & Deep Publications LTD.

Moghadam, V. M. (1992). Revolution, Islam and Women: Sexual Politics in Iran and Afghanistan. In A. Parker. & M. Russo. & D. Sommer. & P. Yaeger, (Eds), *Nationalisms and Sexualities* (pp. 424-446). New York: Routledge.

Moghissi, H. (1999). *Feminism and Islamic Fundamentalism: The Limits of Postmodern Analysis*. London & New York: Zed Books.

Mourad, K. (2003). *Our Sacred Land: Voices of the Palestine-Israeli Conflict*. Oxford: Oneworld

Nepstad, S. E. (2004). Religion, Violence, and Peacemaking. *Journal of the Scientific Study of Religion, 43*, pp. 297-301.

Nash, R., Lasha Bradley, D., & Chickering, A. (2008). *How to talk about hot topics On campus: from polarization to moral conversation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Oakly, A. (1981). *Subject Women*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Ofer, D. (2005). The Holocaust, the Creation of Israel, and the Shaping of Israeli Society. In P. Scham. & W. Salem. & B. Pogrund, (Eds), *Shared Histories: A Palestinian-Israeli Dialogue* (pp. 135-147). Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Olser, A. ,& H. Starkey. (1996). *Teacher education and human rights*. London, England: David Fulton Publisher with the support of the Council of Europe.

Pappe, I. (2006). An 'Alleged' Ethnic Cleansing? In I. Pappe, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*. Oxford: One World.

Pettigrew, T. F. (1998). Intergroup contact theory. In J. T. Spence, J. M. Darley & D.J. Foss (Eds.). *Annual Review of Psychology , 49*, 65-85.

Primakov, Y. (2004). *A World Challenged: Fighting Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century.* Washington D.C. The Nixon Center and Brookings Institution Press.

Qaymari, A. (2005. The Holocaust in the Palestinian Perspective. In P. Scham, & W. Salem, & B. Pogrund (Eds), *Shared Histories: A Palestinian-Israeli Dialogue* (pp. 148-153). Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Rabinovich, A. (2002). Suicide bombers' psyches studied, Washington Times, 30 December, p. A8.

Reason, P. & Bradbury, H. (2001). Introduction: Inquiry and Participation in Search of a World Worthy of Human Aspiration. In P. Reason and H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook Of Action Research: Participatory Inquiry and Practice.* London, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Ray, D. (1994). Toward an international definition of education for social responsibility. In D. Ray, et al. (Eds.), *Education for human rights* (pp. 47-53). Paris: International Bureau of Education.

Reardon, B.A. (1997). Human Rights as Education for Peace. In G. J. Andreopoulos & R. P. Claude (Eds.), *Human rights education for the twenty-first century* (pp. 21-34). Philadelphia: PA.

Roy, O. (1998). Has Islamism a Future in Afghanistan. In W. Maley (Ed.), *Fundamentalism Reborn? Afghanistan and the Taliban.* London: Hurst & Company.

Salomon, G. (2002). The nature of peace education: Not all programs are created equal. In G. Salomon & B. Nevo (Eds.), *Peace Education, The concept, Principles, and Practices Around the World.* (pp. 2-14). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

Scham, P. & Salem, W. & Pogrund, B. (2005). Introduction. In P. Scham, & W. Salem, & B. Pogrund (Eds), *Shared Histories: A Palestinian-Israeli Dialogue* (pp. 1-12). Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Shapiro, S. (2002). Toward a Critical Pedagogy of Peace Education. In G. Salomon & B. Nevo (Eds), *Peace Edudation: The Concept, Principles, and Practices Around The World,* (63-71). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

Shay, S. (2004). The Shahids: Islam and Suicide Attacks. Translated by Rachel Lieberman. New Brunswick & London: Transaction Publication.

Squire, C. (2008). Experience-Centred and Culturally-Oriented Approaches to Narrative. In M. Andrews & C. Squire & M. Tamboukou (Eds.), *Doing Narrative Research.* London: Sage.

Schleifer, A. (1972). *The Fall of Jerusalem.* New York: Monthly Review Press.

Silberstein, L. J. (1993). Religion, Ideology, Modernity: Theoretical Issues in the
      Study of Jewish Fundamentalism. In L. J. Silberstein (Ed.), *Jewish*
      Fundamentalism in Comparative Perspective: Religion, Ideology, and the Crisis
      of Modernity. New York: New York University Press.

Silverman, A. L. (2002). Just War, Jihad, and Terrorism: A comparison of Western
      and Islamic Norms for the Use of Political Violence. *Journal of Church and*
      State, 44, pp. 73-20.

Swanson, D. (2004). *Voices in the Silence: Narratives of Disadvantage, Social*
      Context and School Mathematics in Post-Apartheid South Africa. Ph.D. Thesis,
      The Faculty of Graduate Studies, the University of British Columbia.

UNESCO. (2000). *World Directory of Peace Research and Training Institutions*.
      Paris: UNESCO.

_____. (2005). *Human rights education*. Retrieved Sept 15, 2005 from
      http://portal.unesco.org/shs

_____. website. Retrieved Oct. 24, 2006 from
      http://portal.unesco.org/search/ui/SearchServlet?formName

UN resolution A/RES/52/13: Culture of Peace (2000).

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (1996). *Convention and protocol:*
      Relating to the Status of Refugees. Retrieved July 17, 2006, from
      http://www.unhcr.org/cgibin/texis/vtx/protect/opendoc.pdf?tbl=PROTECTION&id=3b66c2aa10

United Nations General Assembly Resolution 49/184, 23 December 1994.

United Nations. (1998). Human Rights Education: Lessons for Life. Basic
      information kit no.4. New York and Geneva: The Office of the High
      Commissioner for Human Rights.

Wilkinson, J. (2000). Jerusalem under Rome and Byzantium 63 BC-637 AD.
      In K. J. Asali (Ed.), *Jerusalem in History* (pp. 75-105).
      New York: Olive Branch Press.

Wise, S. & Stanly, L. (1983) *Breaking Out: Feminist Consciousness and Feminist Research.*
      London: Routledge.

Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children. (2006). *Right to Education During Displacement: A resource for organizations working with refugees and internally displaced persons.* USA: New York.

_____. (2004). Global survey on education in emergencies. USA: New York. Wink, J. (1997). *Critical pedagogy: Notes from the real world.* New York: Longman

Weisbrod, B. (2002). Fundamentalist violence: political violence and political religion in modern Conflict. *International Social Science Journal, 54*, pp. 499-508.

Yiftachel, O. (2010). 'Ethnocracy': The Politics of Judaizing Israel/Palestine. In I. Pappe & J. Hilal (Eds), *Across the Wall: Narratives of Israeli-Palestinian History*, (pp. 269-306). London, New York: I. B. Tauris.

Yusuf, M. (2002). The Partition of Palestine (1947) – An Arab Perspective. *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture 9 (4)*: 39-49.

Appendix A: Organizations Involved in the Promotion and Implementation of Peace and Conflict Resolution Programs in the Middle East.

Name of the organization	Nature of the program
UNRAH	UNRAH provides extensive programs on peace, human rights and conflict resolution for Palestinian refugee children and youth living in Jordanian refugee camps.
UNESCO Office in Beirut and Regional Bureau for Education	The role of the Regional Office is to implement UNESCO's peace education programs in the Arab states including Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iraq and the Palestinian Territories.
Mennonite Central Committee (MCC)	MCC supports and provides workshops on peacemaking and conflict resolution in Lebanon, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and Jordan through the Council of Churches in universities and other public institutions, and promotes dialogue between Palestinian and Israelis.
The People's Voice	The goal of this NGO is to influence the leaders on both sides, including a mass signing of a joint Statement of Intentions that is based on the "two states for two peoples" formula. The

Name of the organization	Nature of the program
	leaders of the initiative are Ami Ayalon and Dr. Sari Nusseibeh together with public councils and field activists.
The Israel Palestine Centre of Research and Information (IPCRI)	IPCRI is based in Jerusalem, and works jointly with Palestinian and Israelis in promoting peace and conflict resolution programs. IPCRI develops/implements curricula and workshops for the Israeli and Palestinian students, teachers and community leaders. This agency is also involved in training teachers to deliver peace education programs in their communities
Peace Child	This group's promotes coexistence among Jewish-Arab teenagers who collaborate to produce an original drama.
The Seeds of Peace	This agency runs Arab/Jewish summer camps and other project promoting dialogue and peace.
The Middle East Centre for Non-Violence and Democracy	This agency is based in Palestine and teaches peace and conflict resolution programs to the local students.
Re'ut Sadaka	This group promotes dialogue and joint activities between Jewish and Palestinians

Name of the organization	Nature of the program
The Neve Shalom / Wahat El Salam School for Peace	This school provides peace education workshops and seminars for Arab and Israeli youth to promote dialogue between youth in the region.
Interns for Peace in Palestine	Operates projects in Israel, Palestine and elsewhere aimed at bringing together Israeli and Palestinian youth and women for joint community development projects and training in peace work.
UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)	Provides formal education to school children in collaboration with the ministry of education to raise public awareness on implementing human rights principles in Palestinian Territories.
Wiam	Wiam is engaged in bringing peace and conflict resolution to the region's traditional teaching methods to assist those working to eliminate internal violence in their communities in Palestine and Israel.
Youth Civic Responsibility and Peace Building (Save the Children in Lebanon)	The goal of this project is to empower Palestinian youth and strengthen their civic consciousness. supportive peer setting.
Play for Peace	Provides peace education through play and drama.