

EXPLORING THE INTERSECTION OF COLLECTIVE IDENTITY AND
PEACEBUILDING:
A CASE STUDY OF KIDS4PEACE JERUSALEM

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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Title: Exploring the Intersection of Collective Identity and Peacebuilding: A Case Study of Kids4Peace Jerusalem

This study examines the experience of Palestinian and Israeli youth involved in a coexistence organization Kids4Peace Jerusalem. This qualitative research investigates the questions: 1) What is the interaction between collective identity and experience in K4P? 2) In what ways do young people benefit or fail to benefit from Kids4Peace? 3) How do the larger power structures and power asymmetries impact youth perceptions of their experience in Kids4Peace?

The research explores the way in which collective identities of participants of Kids4Peace interact with individuals' experiences to produce group-specific results in regards to individual and group goals for contact, emotional themes, and responses to dialogue and programming, perceptions of power and peace. The findings detect a difference in perceptions of the conflict, power, and the meaning of peace.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Researcher's Statement of Interest

Two primary principles guiding this study are honesty and authenticity -- to the researcher (myself), to the research subjects, and to the context in which the research arose. With these principles in mind, I present my own background and interest as a researcher and individual to enhance an understanding of the motivations and mindset behind the research. None among us perceive the world without bias. Each is susceptible to the lenses through which they experience the world, shaped by individualized experience and collective socialization. Most of us arrive at the scene with preconceived notions and ideas about what is true and what is right. My journey to this research began with an exploration and questioning of the narratives passed down to me and of the preconceived notions contained within my own moral code.

My Jewish American roots are particularly important in the context in which I collected my research – in Palestine/Israel. In this land, I hold a privilege much like that which I hold in my own country -- with my white skin and upper middle-class upbringing. In the state of Israel, however, this privilege is explicitly named and presented at every turn. It is not hidden in official code, but rather embraced in the public discourse of much of mainstream Jewish Israeli society.

In order to maintain transparency and integrity, it is pertinent to explain my own positionality and relevant pieces of identity. As a researcher in this field, I cannot ignore the position I hold, and the way in which that may impact my experience and findings. I am a white Jewish-American woman raised in a majority white, Anglo-Saxon Chicago suburb. Although I long ago traded a sense of religiosity for one of spirituality and cultural Judaism, I hold these roots and this Jewish identity much deeper than I once realized.

I was raised in a Reform Jewish synagogue - a place I believed to incubate humanitarian values and compassion for those suffering around in the world. I lived by these values to the best of my ability and felt a sense of belonging to a community so strongly tied to ideals of universal love and compassion. My Sunday school teachers inculcated their students with a profound reverence for the land of Israel. We studied Israeli geography and culture. We danced to Israeli music and fried falafel. As we grew older, we gradually learned more about the politics of Israel/Palestine and about the conflict.

I vividly recollect the first time I learned about the conflict and the existence of the Palestinians. Our teachers taught us that there was another group of people living in what we

called Israel and that a “religious war” waged between the two populations. With this information, I felt confused and disturbed. I intuitively felt that a major part of the story was omitted. I asked myself, how could two peoples fight violently over something deemed so holy? What was the true nature of the conflict? How could two groups of people live side-by-side divided by a barrier? And most importantly, who is in the right? These were questions that plagued my conscience for years to come.

These questions led me to study Arabic, Islam, and the Middle East at the University of Madison-Wisconsin. I believed these academic pursuits would fill in the gaps missing in my education about Israel/Palestine and provide me with a different perspective on the conflict and Middle Eastern politics. I dedicated much of my undergraduate experience to the exploration of this conflict and to understanding the experience of Palestinians. I spent a semester at American University studying Peace and Conflict Resolution, through which I also spent three weeks in the Balkans studying post-conflict reconciliation first-hand. This led me to dream of doing similar work with Palestinians and Israelis.

As I gained a deeper knowledge about the conflict – the relevant structural and international factors at play -- and immersed myself in an activist community committed to supporting Palestinian rights, I became increasingly weary of some of the methods of modern-day peacebuilding. I heard criticisms of coexistence organizations that support the occupation and do not address structural change. Although I was still attracted to the idea of coexistence and dialogue, I wondered how the work could be done in a deeply transformative way. In 2017, I took a leap of faith and made the decision to take an internship at Kids4Peace. I hoped to learn first-hand how an organization like this works, and after years of study, to finally witness the reality on the ground. More importantly, I set out to discover how youth-centered coexistence work impacts the youth involved.

Although I began collecting the data I used in my research as an evaluation of the aforementioned impact of the program, I quickly discovered something much more interesting. The meaning that youth make of their experiences in this organization, how the unique intersections of personal identity and group affiliation interact with these experiences and contribute to this meaning-making process had a profound effect on me. The power dynamics created by an asymmetrical conflict show up in the youth’s experiences. It became evident that impact is non-linear, and that the youth and this organization exist as an interaction – affecting one another in a reciprocal relationship.

My research is centered around Kids4Peace Jerusalem, a youth-centered peacebuilding organization based in Jerusalem. Kids4Peace primarily integrates Jewish, Muslim, and Christian

Jerusalemite youth and their families in a self-proclaimed pro-peace community that promotes harmony and coexistence. In this city, holy to the world's three major monotheistic religions, Jewish Israelis live alongside Christian and Muslim Palestinians, largely segregated between what is now known as West and East Jerusalem. The background of this conflict is briefly be discussed in sections 1.7, and the ways in which Jerusalem's segregation continues to impact youth and their communities will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter II, section 2.7.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The conflict in Israel/Palestine has been referred to by many, as an intractable ethnonational conflict like those in Northern Ireland and Sri Lanka. Academics in the field of Social Psychology, Nadim Rouhana and Daniel Bar-Tal define intractable conflict as a conflict characterized by existential totality, meaning its reach spans more broadly to cultural, political, and social life on the ground (1998). This type of conflict concerns existential and basic needs such as recognition and security, both of which are critical for the survival and existence of the ethnonational groups in question. At its core, intractable conflict is protracted, central, violent, and involves a wide perception of irreconcilability among local and international actors (Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998).¹

In prolonged ethnic conflict, there is often competition between whose memory will be preserved and accepted locally and internationally. Rivalling national narratives compete for the hearts and minds of the region's youth. The version of history students receive in their most formative years significantly influences the future of a conflict. Therefore, the education system is an important agent of national memory through which narratives are kept alive, altered, or erased.

The beliefs and attitudes of the youth formed through their formal and informal education may determine whether the conflict remains intractable or whether it is transformed as the next generations take control of the national political agenda. The formative years of youth are a critical time in which socialization may either deeply embed values of social justice and equality or reinforce stories of trauma and separation through tribalism. For this reason, the intervention of integrated youth-centered peace programs may be instrumental in transforming the consciousness of youth in this conflict toward a social justice-oriented future. However, it is

¹ It is notable to mention that the situation in Israel/Palestine is not universally understood to be simply an intractable, ethnonational conflict in the classic sense. Defining the struggle in this region is contentious and will be discussed again in Chapter IV.

necessary to take a deep and critical look into these programs to understand their impact, minimize potential harm, and more intentionally design future programming.

Kids4Peace is a nonpartisan, nonsectarian non-profit organization that facilitates contact and dialogue between the Israeli and Palestinian youth and their families. The mission states a commitment to rejecting violence in all its forms, to challenging an unjust and unsustainable status quo, and to working together for long-term solutions. This study on Kids4Peace was originally designed to examine the effectiveness of the programs on multiple dimensions. I aspired to enrich the Kids4Peace evaluation process with in-depth interviews with the YAP (Youth in Action Program) participants. After moving through each phase of the program, I understood the wisdom of these young people to be invaluable to the organization.

The entry and exit surveys designed for an annual report to USAID (the primary funder of the organization) ask questions such as, “what is the relationship between participation in the Kids4Peace programming and tolerance for ‘the other’ for Palestinian and Israeli youth?” Although these questions provide quantifiable data with which the organization can justify its funding in a neutral inoffensive manner, I felt that there were other critical ways to understand the net impact of this program. I looked at the sources of criticism of coexistence program such as Kids4Peace. Although each program is unique, major complaints relate to either the unjustifiable re-traumatization of participants or point to the fact that the organizations are set up not to change the systems in place, but to maintain the political and social status quo. This paper will discuss the latter criticism in Chapter V.

While listening to the stories and responses of the young people involved in Kids4Peace, I noticed a variety of perspectives on the purpose and goals of the organization, what it means to be in Kids4Peace, and even on the definition of peace itself. I dug deeper into the evaluation interviews to explore issues surrounding identity, power, and privilege and the ways in which these elements do and do not impact the experience in Kids4Peace. This exploration led me to the research questions proposed in the following section.

1.3 Research Questions

I accepted the internship position at Kids4Peace with an open mind, attempting to leave my preconceived notions about peace work at the door. However, throughout my time there, I continued to wonder about the way in which this work affects the psyches of the individuals in unanticipated ways. The factor I found most pertinent was the role of the collective identities of

the individuals – their group belonging and the relative copower and resources that comes with it – in shaping the experiences gained within the organization.

My observations of the Kids4Peace program and my role as Evaluation and Monitoring intern led to me to the following questions: 1) What is the interaction between collective identity and experience in K4P? 2) In what ways do young people benefit or fail to benefit from Kids4Peace? 3) How do the larger power structures and power asymmetries impact youth perceptions of their experience in Kids4Peace?

The study explores the way in which collective identities of participants of Kids4Peace interact with individuals' experiences to produce group-specific results. These results vary in terms of goals, ways of processing identity, and output from dialogue. The findings of this study also explore a difference in perceptions of the conflict, power, and the meaning of peace. Through the lens of this dynamic, I examine youth perspectives on the meaning of their identities and responses to opposition around participation in the organization, in the context of the Kids4Peace experience.

1.4 Historical Background and Context of the Study

The highly contentious piece of land claimed by both Palestinians and Israelis represents existential stakes for the fate of these two peoples. The issue tears at the very core of the identities of both populations involved while simultaneously shaping the content and nature of these identities.

A Brief History of War, Conflict, and Occupation

The conflict between Israeli Jews and Palestinians emerged with the appearance of Zionism, a Jewish nationalist movement to establish a Jewish state. This movement motivated an influx of Jewish immigration to Palestine and a clash between indigenous Palestinians and the new immigrants. Although Jewish immigrants, many of whom had fled persecution in neighboring states and in Europe, desired the land of Palestine as the new Jewish state, Arabs living in the land of Palestine aimed for the creation of a Palestinian state.² The two peoples, via

² Some Jews already lived in the land of Palestine prior to immigration. These Jews were Arab, just like the Christians and Muslims living on the land. They shared many cultural customs local to the area, unlike new immigrants from Europe.

these nationalist movements, vied for self-actualization and a nation of their own on the historically and religiously significant land (Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998).

Muslims, Christians, and Jews all lived under Ottoman rule from 1516 to 1918 in the region that came to be called Palestine and later-on, Israel and Palestine. Under Ottoman rule, Jews and Christians were treated as second-class citizens and were discriminated against with special regulations. However, the conditions for Jews in Palestine improved in the 1840s and 1850s, and persecuted Jews from Europe began immigrating to the land in increasingly large numbers. With the rise of nationalist sentiments throughout Europe and the Middle East, both the Palestinians and Jews began vying for their own nation state on the land. The movements that carried these aims were Zionism and Arab nationalism. Both movements had humble religious and cultural beginnings but grew into political movements in the nineteenth century (Bickerton & Klausner, 2002).

The British government, hoping to build Jewish support for British ends in the Middle East in exchange for their protection, issued the Balfour Declaration in 1917. This declaration promised the land of Palestine to the Jewish people for a state of their own. However, from 1915 to 1916, the British high commissioner in Egypt, Sir Henry McMahon corresponded with Sherif Hussein of Mecca, one of the region's most powerful Arab leaders. The two leaders discussed British support for an independent Arab Caliphate under Hussein that would include the land of Palestine. At the same time, the British held secret meetings with their allied European powers. These meetings led to the Sykes-Picot Agreement, which divided the Levant and Iraq region between British and French control (Bickerton & Klausner, 2002). Ultimately, the Balfour Declaration was the only agreement that became actualized.

The British Mandate of Palestine lasted between 1920 and 1948. During this time, British on the ground maintained tight control over the local people. Intergroup fighting between Jews and Arabs increased, and the British began limiting immigration to Palestine. Jews and Arabs formed militias as a form of resistance against British rule (Bickerton & Klausner, 2002).

In 1947, the United Nations General Assembly voted to partition Palestine into two states: an Arab state (Palestine) and a Jewish state (Israel). This plan proposed a shared and autonomous Jerusalem under international supervision. The Zionists accepted this plan, but Arab leaders from neighboring countries rejected it as unsatisfactory. In place of accepting the partition plan, Israelis and Palestinian and Arab forces fought the 1948 war over the land (Bickerton & Klausner, 2002).

The 1948 war led to the creation of an independent Jewish state. This war is referred to as the War of Independence by Jewish Israelis and as al-Nakba (“the catastrophe”) by the

Palestinians, for whom this war represented displacement and devastating loss of livelihood, home, cohesion, and identity. This event caused the creation of over 700,000 Palestinian refugees (Bickerton & Klausner, 2002). As of January 2017, there were 5,340,443 Palestinian refugees registered through UNRWA, with the projected number of total refugees nearing seven million.³ Through the 1948 war, the land under dispute was divided between Israeli and Jordanian rule. Israel gained one third of the land and the West Bank and Jerusalem came under Jordanian control. Meanwhile, the Gaza Strip fell under Egyptian control (Bickerton & Klausner, 2002).

In 1967, Israel went to war with its Arab neighboring states: Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Palestinian guerrilla groups. Israel won the war and took control over East Jerusalem (including the highly coveted Old City), the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Golan Heights⁴. Thus began Israel's military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, which led to the creation and expansion of Jewish settlements in these territories in the years to follow (Bickerton & Klausner, 2002).⁵

In November of 1967, The United Nations Security Council put forth Resolution 242 to broker a peace deal between the Israelis and Palestinians. This resolution advocated for mutual recognition, withdrawal of Israeli troops from Palestinian territories, and a "just" settlement to the refugee problem (Bickerton & Klausner, 2002). This document, however, exhibited ambiguous language that left room for problematic interpretation. Land in the West Bank continued to be confiscated for settlements and the vicious cycles of violence between the two people continued (Baxter, 2018, Jan. 30).

Attempts at peace talks proliferated in the 1970's and 80's with no sustainable success. However, September of 1978 brought the monumental Camp David Peace accords, signed by Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israel's Prime Minister Menachim Begin and mediated by United States President Jimmy Carter. The Camp David negotiations normalized relations between Israel and Egypt and led to a few major decisions over how to allocate and govern Palestinian and Israeli land. "A Framework for Peace in the Middle East," the first agreement made at Camp David, delineated provisions that set the foundation for all proceeding peace talks.

³ About one-third of these registered refugees live in refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem (UNRWA, 2017).

⁴ As a result of this war, Egypt took over the Sinai Peninsula. The Sinai remains part of Egypt today.

⁵ The expansion of illegal settlements is one of the largest issues in Israeli-Palestinian conflict politics to date. These expanding settlements continue to push Palestinians out of their land and exacerbate key areas of tension (i.e. the Hebron Hills) where Palestinian villages and Israeli settlements clash up against one another. These expanding settlements also create "facts on the ground," which will make a Palestinian independent state with all of the land outside of the Green Line increasingly unlikely. Settlements are a "final status issue" in the peace negotiations between the two peoples.

The signers agreed to future negotiations between Jordan, Egypt, Israel, and “representatives of the Palestinian people” to resolve the issue of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Through these provisions, the decision was made to set up a self-governing Arab authority to take the place of Israeli military forces for five years while negotiations on “final status of the West Bank and Gaza” ensued. The second accord, “A Framework for the Conclusion of a Peace Treaty Between Egypt and Israel,” approved an Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai over a three-year period and a return of the land to Egypt. The agreement granted Israeli ships free passage through the Suez Canal (Bickerton & Klausner, 2002).⁶

The first Intifada (‘shaking off’) in 1987 was an extended uprising against the Israeli occupation that lasted until 1993. There was a major increase in both Palestinian and settler violence during this time and a rise in militant Islamic groups such as Hamas. The Israeli authorities responded with more suppression of the Palestinian people, heightening observation and restrictions on their freedoms with road blocks, check points, arrests, random tear gassing, and other extreme methods. The second Intifada in 2000 involved more violent tactics than the first, leading to more violence and suppression (Baxter, 2018, Jan.30).

Finally, in the 1990’s Oslo Accords, Yassar Arafat and Yizhak Rabin agree to mutual recognition and come to the table for bilateral negotiations with Palestinians representing themselves for the first time. Again, the documents produced failed expectations and left key final issues to be discussed (Baxter, 2018, Jan. 30). Ongoing periods of attempted peace talks and cycles of violence proceeded the first attempts at negotiations. Today, the history of this conflict profoundly shapes life in Israel-Palestine, and Jerusalem in particular. The conflict can be seen in the landscape of this contested city, in the culture of both Israelis and Palestinians, and in the politics and social structures of the nation.

Jerusalem

The contestation over Jerusalem and its holy sites is one of the most volatile hot spots of the conflict. Both Israelis and Palestinians claim the city as their capital, and it is home to some of the most sacred sites of each of the three major monotheistic religions: Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. The history of this city and of this conflict forms a hotbed of tension and mistrust between the Israeli and Palestinian populations.

⁶ Issues of Jerusalem and the Golan Heights were set aside during these negotiations.

Jerusalem has passed through the hands of numerous rulers over the centuries.⁷ In its most recent history, the city was ruled by the Ottoman Empire between 1516 and 1917, before the British Mandate took over the city post-World War II. The War of 1948, which created the state of Israeli, then divided the city between Jordanian rule over East Jerusalem and Israeli control of West Jerusalem (Bickerton & Klausner, 2002). During the 1967 War between Israel and surrounding Arab nations, East Jerusalem -- primarily populated by Palestinians -- came under Israeli occupation and has remained so ever since (Albin, 1997).

The most major recent conflict over Jerusalem's holy sites involves the Muslim al-Aqsa mosque compound (also known as Haram-as-Sherif, "the Noble Sanctuary"), which is said to be built over a Jewish holy site, the Temple Mount. Haram as-Sherif, located in Jerusalem's Old City, is home to both the Dome of the Rock and al-Aqsa Mosque. The Dome of the Rock is a Muslim shrine, built over a stone sacred to both Muslims and Jews. Muslims know this stone as the site where Prophet Mohammed rose to heaven on a winged horse during what is known as the "Miraculous Night Journey." For Jews, this stone is believed to be the place where God created Adam from dust and where Abraham prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac (Hammer, 2011).⁸

Conflict surrounds excavation done underneath these holy sites and speculation around found artifacts. Arguably more controversial is the question of who should serve as the authority of the Temple Mount (Hammer, 2011).⁹ This struggle over ownership of and authority over the Temple Mount reflects larger issues over which people should have Jerusalem as their capital and more generally, which collective identity group has a more legitimate right to the land. Issues over the Temple Mount are so heated that a September 2000 visit by Ariel Sharon (an Israeli politician who served as Prime Minister from 2001 to 2006), during which he made a speech stating that Israel would never give up Temple Mount, instigated the second intifada uprising.

⁷ Jerusalem's Temple Mount served as a "territorial prize" for centuries. This compound of sacred sites passed through the hands of an extensive line of peoples, including the Jebusites, Israelites, Babylonians, Greeks, Persians, Romans, Byzantines, early Muslims, Crusaders, Mamluks, Ottomans, and the British (Hammer, 2011).

⁸ Important to Jewish tradition, this is also where the First Temple was built by King Solomon circa 1000 B.C. and then torn down by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar 400 years later, when he sent the Jews into exile. King Herod was said to have built a Second Temple with the labor of the Jews who returned from banishment. These two temples are central and sacred to Jewish mythology. The Western Wall, the holiest Jewish site in Jerusalem, is a remnant of this Second Temple (Hammer, 2011).

⁹ The Waqf, the Islamic council that has authority over the compound, excavated an emergency exit to the tunnels underneath the compound (originally known as Solomon's Stables, but later converted into al-Marwani Mosque). However, Israeli authorities accused the Waqf of overstepping their permission to build an exit by bulldozing an extensive amount of land to build a large entranceway. They were concerned that Jewish artifacts were destroyed in the dig (Hammer, 2011).

This uprising, mentioned in the previous section, involved a period of intensified violence between Israelis and Palestinians (Bickerton & Klaus, 2002).¹⁰ Violent conflict continues to occur around the Temple Mount.

Conflict in the Palestinian neighborhood in East Jerusalem, Issawiya, has been a recent source of increased antagonism between Israeli and Palestinian communities in Jerusalem. Beginning in June of 2019, Palestinians living in Issawiya experience excessive police brutality and daily raids by Israeli soldiers (Deprez, 2019). Police have used physical force against students who they claim hurled rocks at them. Some, like the principal of Issawiya's junior high, assert that some of these accusations against students are false and that evidence has been planted on Palestinian youth in the neighborhood (Rasgon, 2020). Clashes continue regularly, each side accusing the other of instigation.

International involvement in Jerusalem's politics is yet another source of controversy. Although in 1980, Israel's parliament, the Knesset claimed a reunited Jerusalem as its capital. Up until December 2017, the United States and the rest of the international community had not recognized this to be so. All embassies have remained in Tel Aviv until this point, maintaining their position that it is Israeli's capital city. On December 6, 2017, President Donald Trump made a statement officially recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital. To signal this position, the American embassy was relocated from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem on May 14, 2018, thus exacerbating tensions between Israelis and Palestinians in Jerusalem.

1.5 Kids4Peace Jerusalem

Kids4Peace was founded in the summer of 2002 by a band of Jerusalemite parents representing the three major faiths of Jerusalem – Jewish, Christian, and Muslim – who envisioned a better future for their children. The parents hoped for a different reality for these youth than the one they experienced after the breakdown of belief in the Oslo Accords and subsequent violence. The program officially came to life when an interfaith group of Jerusalem youth (the children of these pro-peace parents) traveled to Houston, Texas for a two-week summer camp (*Our Story*, n.d.).¹¹

¹⁰ The Second Intifada, also known as the al-Aqsa Intifada, was a Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation that lasted from September 2000 to 2005. This was a period of intensified violence between Israelis and Palestinians that followed the failure of the 2000 Camp David Accords to reach an acceptable and lasting agreement between Israeli and Palestinian negotiators (Bickerton & Klaus, 2002).

¹¹ This endeavor was financially supported by a group of Episcopalians from the United States (*Our Story*, n.d.).

From 2005 to 2008, Kids4Peace existed as a community which gathered only for short summer camps, in which youth were able to learn about one another in a safe, respectful space. They shared their religious practices and beliefs and dialogued about similarities and differences between them. The youth were supplied a fun environment aimed at releasing the stressors of the outside world and allowing the youth to connect as youth – playing sports, swimming in the lake, creating art, and hiking in nature (*Our Story*, n.d.).

What started as twelve original families coalescing annually, grew into a program reaching nearly seventy youth each year by 2007. This group of dedicated families opened an office in Jerusalem with the support of the U.S. Consulate General. This office allowed the organization to grow into a larger year-round program. This program operated on the six-year model, supporting year-round dialogue, leadership training, community outreach, and activism. Currently in 2019, Kids4Peace involves over 350 youth, 150 parents, and a network of over 2,000 alumni of the program (*Our Story*, n.d.).

Kids4Peace programs in Jerusalem allow participants to progress through stages from a basic curriculum that provides a space for kids from all sides of the conflict to get to know each other to an action-based curriculum in which the older youth create projects together and advocate for change in Jerusalem. Each level of the program holds twelve meetings per year and peace camps over the summer, designed and facilitated by Kids4Peace to simulate an egalitarian and secure environment to the best of the ability of their directors and staff. This program acts to minimize the moderating factors that trigger intolerance. Although these factors will still exist after the participants return home, the hope is that the contact among youth in this environment will open the doors for a lasting tolerance and ultimately social and political change.

Youth participants enter the Pathways to Peace program in sixth and seventh grade. This stage of the program aims to promote friendships and allow participants to get to know about one another's religion and culture. In eighth grade, the youth discuss issues of identity and expand their knowledge of conflicts around the world.¹² In high school, youth join the Youth in Action Program (YAP). In YAP, participants begin to engage in political discussions and dialogue about

¹² Salomon and Kupermintz found that discussing the issues of a distant conflict can influence participants' perspectives on the conflict within their own lives. These scholars mention a program in which Israeli-Jewish students studied the Northern Ireland conflict without discussing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. After the program, students were asked to write an essay explaining the conflict from both the Jewish and Palestinian point of view. Jewish participants of the program were able to write well-balanced essays from the Palestinian perspective, whereas nonparticipants were barely able to write anything at all. They were unable to view the conflict from the Palestinian side. This research shows that discussing a remote conflict rather than the one in the participants' lives may actually be a more effective means of harmonizing narratives (Bernstein & Yusuf, 2015).

the conflict, focusing on social and political issues in Jerusalem. This program is divided into tracks such as tour guiding, Model UN (United Nations), social media, and advocacy. In this final action-oriented phase, the youth continue to cultivate their public speaking skills and co-create projects whose goals is to influence their environment.

Kids4Peace Jerusalem holds seminars and trips abroad for Israeli and Palestinian youth participants. As an intern of Kids4Peace in 2017, I attended and supervised a seminar held in Jaffa with YAP participants. During this seminar, students learned about the history of Jaffa, engaged in political and identity-based discussions and activities, and sat in dialogue with one another. Kids4Peace Jerusalem often sends students abroad on speaking tours, to camps, or to special international programs. For instance, in 2018, a delegation of high school students from the K4P attended a two week-long trip to Northern Ireland to study the conflict there. In addition to youth programs, Kids4Peace Jerusalem hosts a parents' program in order to provide them a safe space to discuss the program, the community, and how best to support their kids through the Kids4peace experience. The organization additionally hosts larger interfaith community events.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Definitions: Identity and Relevant Theory

The concept of identity, although elusively complex, is evermore salient and critical in a context such as the one studied in this paper - in an ethnic intergroup conflict in which two groups of people fight for legitimization and recognition of their group's identity and for the right to their group's own distinct nation based on that identity (Khalidi, 1997; Hammack, 2011). This section will define and delineate the difference between individual identity and collective identity, as well as explain the social-psychology theories that attempt to explain intergroup conflict and provide a basis for people-to-people conflict intervention.

Individual Identity

According to Philip Hammack,¹³ "identity is a process rather than a product of human development" (2011) and is defined as an ideology that becomes known through an individual's engagement with one or more discourses, made manifest in a personal narrative constructed and reconstructed across the individual's life course. This narrative is written in and through the individual's social interactions and social practice (Hammack, 2011). In this way, individual identity is perpetually intertwined with social identity and in turn, with collective identity as is defined in the following section.

Collective Identity

Collective identity refers to an individual's sense of belonging to a group, solidarity with this group, ability to differentiate from other groups, and a worldview informed by the history, values, and norms of the group. The collective identity of an individual fulfills basic psychological needs, such as belongingness, solidarity, meaning, and self-esteem (Aboud-Halabi & Shamai,

¹³ I borrow definitions and models from Phillip Hammack, scholar in the field of social psychology, due to his extensive and relevant research in the field of dialogue-based peace education programs. Hammack both worked for and researched youth-centered coexistence organizations Hands of Peace and Seeds of Peace. His research relies on ethnographic and narrative methods with a longitudinal study design (Hammack, 2018). Hammack's insights, methods and coined concepts, in part, inspired my own research on Kids4Peace.

2016). Collective identity is influenced by intra-group elements, the group's relations with adversary groups, and the social context in which the groups is situated (Kriesberg, 2003).

In terms of ethnonational groups, collective identity is a fluid and complex construct that responds to an ever-flowing interaction with external forces (Rouhana, 1997; Trujillo, 2008). Rouhana's model of collective identity describes a malleable structure constantly in flux in response to external stimuli. This structure consists of psychological attachments, preferences, and proclivities shared among group members, as well as social and cultural values and traditions, historical collective experiences and national heritage, and shared political views and goals (Rouhana, 1997).

Mary Trujillo points to three major forces which play upon the structure of collective identity among Arabs in Israel. One of these forces is a composite of the social and political - forces that emerge directly from the state and its institutions. Additionally, changes and evolutions within the group (i.e. families, subcultures, and influential individuals) (Hughes et al., 2006; Jennings et al., 2009) act as external forces upon the collective identity. Lastly, fluctuations and major changes in the regional and international field play a powerful role in shaping collective identity (Trujillo, 2008). This means that, although grounded in the systems and institutions of the state, this elusive structure is perpetually evolving with the times and in synergy with actors within and outside of the state.

In many collectivist cultures, it is difficult if not impossible to separate individual identity from its deeply rooted place in the collective. Hammack suggests that, "There is no 'consciousness' apart from social consciousness" (2011). In Jerusalem, and Israel/Palestine at large, it is even more difficult to speak about individual identity separately from collective identity, as these concepts are deeply intertwined due to the collectivist culture and circumstances of intergroup ethnonational conflict. In ethnonational conflict, collective identity is a critical part of individual identity due to the existential insecurity or perceptions of insecurity of the groups involved. The salience of collective identity becomes heightened when the group in question is under a physical or existential threat. Collective identity is a powerful tool in unifying and mobilizing individual members of a group. Symbols, heroes, and myths are invoked in intergroup conflict to evoke a strong sense of belonging and struggle for the group's goals (Rouhana, 1997).

The collective aspect of identity is particularly salient in collectivist cultures, societies in which the lives, motivations, and identities of individuals are strongly interconnected with the community in which they exist. Families and communities are tight-knit and heavily incorporated into the individual's goals and decisions. Palestinian society, along with other Arab

cultures, are known to rank extremely high in collectivism (Hofstede, 1991). Israeli society ranks lower in this dimension (it falls nearly in the middle of the scale between individualism and collectivism). However, Israeli society certainly holds more collectivist values and customs than mainstream society in the United States and Western European nations (Hofstede, 1991).

Palestinian society reflects a collectivist worldview – a “we-identity” rather than an individualistic personal identity (Augsburger, 1992). Palestinians value strong family connections and an interconnected society over individual goals (Zaharna, Hammad, & Masri, 2009). This is reflected not only in the way Palestinians deal with conflict, but in the way in which Israelis approach conflict with Palestinians. Collective punishment, for example, is a strategy most effective in collectivist cultures. In a collectivist culture, fear of an assault on one’s family and community is in theory more of a deterrent than fear of individual punishment.

Social Identity Theory

In understanding collective identity, it is helpful to understand social identity theory (SIT), developed by Henri Tajfel, which been instrumental in shaping theory of group processes and intergroup relations since its emergence in the 1970s. This in turn has influenced the way in which those in the field of conflict transformation have designed intergroup contact interventions (Hornsey, 2008).

The term “social identity” refers to the identification, definitions, and evaluations of a person in terms of the characteristics attributed to the groups to which that person affiliates. SIT describes how an individual’s self-concept is deeply associated with group membership and related to group and intergroup behavior (Hornsey, 2008). The processes surrounding social identities are at the core of understanding intractable ethnic conflict like that in Israel-Palestine, and Social Identity Theory is particularly relevant in examining why the source of control over group narratives is so contentious and impactful.

SIT asserts that social identities are tied to the functional explanation that all human beings hold a basic underlying need to maintain a positive self-worth or self-concept. Social identity processes are motivated by an attempt to fulfill this need with group membership (which involves meeting other basic human needs such as belonging, recognition, and security). Additionally, uncertainty reduction theory provides that humans desire a reduction of uncertainty about their social world, status, and expectations for behavior. Social identity reduces this uncertainty with the security of affiliation and through the development of prescriptive and

descriptive prototypes that define appropriate behavior for group members (Hogg & Abrams, 1988).

The process of making “us” and “them” distinctions salient drives people to enhance perceptions of similarities among members of their in-group and amplify perceived differences between themselves and the out-group. These distinctions lead to intergroup biases in behaviors, attributions, stereotypes, and memories that are part of a perpetual process that aims to achieve, maintain, and protect a positive self-concept. The self-concept is made of a person’s social categories and the emotional and evaluative consequences of group membership. Therefore, SIT explains the intergroup competition via narrative described below as it relates to securing a positive and secure self-concept (Hornsey, 2008).

SIT says that individuals define their selves through their relationships to and interactions with others as well as their social groups (Hornsey, 2008). The theory provides insights into the relationship between group identity and the self with explanation for why group identity is psychologically necessary to the wellbeing of the individual (Rouhana, 2011).

The tribal behaviors that arise from “us” and “them” (in-group and out-group) distinctions calls for a process which would allow members of a group to deconstruct biased beliefs about members of the out-group. For this reason, SIT has led to the development of Contact Theory, mentioned in section 2.6.

2.2 Identity and Citizenship in Jerusalem

Palestinian Citizens of Israel

The Palestinian Israeli collective identity group includes all Palestinians living inside what is known as the Green Line, the armistice line drawn between Israel and Jordan after the 1948 war. This group consists of Muslims, Christians (Armenian and Arab), Bedouins, and Druze (Berger, 2019). Although diverse in experience, the collective identity of these Palestinians in Israel is colored by their unique position as Israeli citizens embedded, in some ways to varying degrees, in Israeli society. This citizenship shapes, in part, attitudes in education, society, politics, and institutions (Berger, 2019).

As mention in Chapter I, the terminology used to describe this identity group is under negotiation between the state institutions, mainstream Israeli society, and Palestinian citizens of Israel who aim to take back the strength of their Palestinian identity. The choice of which label to use can be problematic. It is contested both within and outside of the group’s membership. Some Arab citizens of Israel refer to themselves as Israeli. Some refer to themselves as Palestinian.

Some offer different labels depending on their audience. Other terms used include Palestinians inside Israel, '48 Arabs, Palestinian Arabs, Palestinian Israelis, Arab-Israelis, and Israeli-Arabs (Berger, 2019). This is the struggle – to become active in the collective Palestinian struggle for self-determination on one end of the spectrum or to optimize their opportunities in the Israeli state by playing the “good Arab” on the other.

In theory, this group is to have the same rights as Jewish Israelis, but in practice, they have long faced institutional and social discrimination. Approximately half of the population lives below the poverty line, making them the group with the highest rate of poverty in Israel (Berger, 2019).¹⁴ This inequality is discussed further in the one of the following sections entitled “Inequality and Segregation.”

This collective identity is full of complexities, contradictions, and negotiations. Many Israeli Arab youth find themselves having to navigate two worlds – that of their Palestinian community and that of an Israeli society that includes a Jewish, Western hegemonic narrative and way of life. This often leaves them in a state of paralysis – unsure of how to represent their community while also taking what opportunities may be available to them via Israeli society.

The difficulties Palestinian Israelis face are represented in Hammack’s depiction of a scene from the Seeds of Peace camp in which participants were told to sing their national anthem. The Israeli anthem on the one hand, excludes the identities of the non-Jewish Palestinians (Hammack, 2011, pg. 85). On the other hand, many Palestinian Israelis, or Israeli Arabs did not know the Palestinian national anthem, having been fractured from the Palestinian territories living in Israeli, where outward expressions of Palestinian identity are anywhere from strongly encouraged to violently suppressed.

The dilemma experienced by many in this group involves a negotiation between the Palestinian national and cultural identity and a desire or need to be involved in the society in which they live – Israeli society. An inner struggle arises when some Palestinians feel as if their involvement in Israeli society may undermine their alliance to the Palestinian community and its struggle for recognition and statehood. There is a physical fragmentation of Palestinian society created by modern borders and security. This creates a rift between Palestinians living in the West Bank, Gaza, and those living in Israeli territory. Palestinians living in Jerusalem have a unique experience living in a city split into two segregated parts: East (Palestinian) and West (Jewish Israeli).

¹⁴ Even the Druze, who have been historically more integrated into Israeli society than other Arab Israeli groups, are targeted by the new nation-state law described in the section below, *Living in Inequality and Segregation* (Berger, 2019).

Jerusalem has been the focus of much of the conflict, and the weight of the conflict is easily felt while moving about the city and from one side to the other. Divisions run deep in a city of many cultures. Despite segregation, many Palestinians living in Jerusalem must cross from East to West for work, shopping, and entertainment. This illustrates the contradiction of living in Israel and participating in Israeli society, but not quite belonging. Experiencing racism and discriminations, while watching their Palestinian brothers and sister experience violent aggression and restriction of basic human rights in Gaza and parts of the West Bank.

Jerusalem Residents with a Blue ID

Not all Palestinians living in Jerusalem are Israeli citizens. Some live in the city with no citizenship, but rather hold a residency status represented by a blue identification card unlike the green ID held by Israeli citizens. These residents may vote in municipality elections but are not granted the right to vote in national elections.

Living as a resident in Jerusalem not only robs the individual of opportunities and equal rights, but this existence is precarious in many ways. Residency status can be revoked if a Jerusalem resident leaves the city and country for an extended period of time. The length of this period is not officially defined, so Israeli officials are essentially able to revoke this status at will (Shaham, 2018). Having this precarious status as a resident rather than the security of citizenship to a nation, exacerbates a sense of insecurity and uncertainty for members of this group.

Jewish Israelis

Despite often being grouped together as one “side” when it comes to the conflict, Israeli Jews (or Jewish Israelis) are heterogenous in ethnicity, opinions, and religiosity.¹⁵ To understand the position of Jewish Israeli youth in Kids4Peace, it is necessary to avoid viewing Israeli Jewish culture as monolithic, without giving weight to the diversity of subcultures which color the nation’s sociopolitical character.¹⁶

¹⁵ The terms Israeli Jews and Jewish Israelis are used interchangeably in Israeli culture, and I will use them as such.

¹⁶ This argument recommends an examination of the individual, group, and institutional interests that play a role in Israeli negotiating culture in addition to national interests (Wittes, 2005). This heterogeneity is seen most starkly in the dichotomy between the diplomatic subculture and the security subculture of Israeli negotiating. Although the security-centered mentality has dominated throughout Israeli history, there a

Aside from the issue of the occupation and the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, there are deep internal divisions between Israeli Jews themselves. Israeli Jews are deeply divided between left wing and the right wing, with some Israeli Jews falling in the middle. Among Jewish Israeli youth between the ages of 18-24, 69.9 percent identify as right-wing. 53.8 percent of young Israelis voted for right-wing parties. 29.6 percent of young Jewish Israelis support a peace deal based on a two-state solution. 40.2 percent of young Jewish Israelis support the annexation of all of the West Bank (Maltz, 2020).

One of the divisions creating upheaval in the social and political realms is the struggle between Jewish Orthodoxy and Secularism. Although there exist strong Leftist currents in Israeli society, particularly in its early days, the Orthodox establishment has gained control over Israeli politics in recent years. Young, secular, leftist Jews in Israel struggle against the state's ultra-Orthodox establishment and its power over the trajectory of the country.

Another source of division among Jewish Israeli is ethnic.¹⁷ The Jewish population is composed of Mizrahi Jews – Arab Jews who have local ancestry or have immigrated from other places in the Middle East and North Africa, Ashkenazi Jews – those who immigrated from Central and Eastern Europe, Sephardic Jews – with ancestry from Spain and Portugal, and African Jewish immigrants – many arriving from North and East African (i.e. Ethiopia, Sudan, Morocco, etc.).

Despite the aforementioned political divisions, nationalism remains a strong undercurrent in today's Israeli culture. Daily life involves nation-driven activities and security-inspired activities. The manifestation of a security culture (further described in 2.3) is a defense establishment that calls for mandatory military service for Jews (Wittes, 2005). Military service is a central aspect of Israeli life. All Israeli Jews at the age of eighteen are required to serve in the military, although national service is also an option (Levush, 2019).¹⁸

As discussed in the findings section (Chapter IV), the relationship between “Jewishness” and “Israeliness” is a complicated one and one without a consensus among Israeli Jews

diplomatic counter-discourse emerged in Israeli negotiations during the 1990s (Wittes, 2005). Ultimately, the security-focused rhetoric won out in more recent times in response to an escalation in violence between the Israelis and Palestinians in the last couple decades (Wittes, 2005).

¹⁷ Marginalized populations of African refugees face segregation and racism in Israel, similar to racism faced by refugees and immigrants in the United States and Western Europe. In 2018, Israel made moves to deport asylum seeking Jews from Eritrea and Sudan.

¹⁸ Ultra-Orthodox Jews (Haredi) and Israeli Arabs are exempted from the draft.

themselves (Auron, 2012). Although nationalist politics attempt to blur the lines between the Israeli identity and Jewish identity, many Israeli Jews develop their own process around discovering their beliefs about identity and coming to terms with their position on the land and in the conflict.

Inequality and Segregation

This section provides both an overview of inequalities between Israeli Jews and Muslim and Christian Palestinians – as well as the Druze minority – in Israel and a snapshot of inequalities and segregation specifically in Jerusalem.

Israel is considered an ethnic democracy, which structurally privileges those who practice Judaism or are of Jewish descent. Of this privileged class, Ashkenazi Jews from European countries are among those most privileged and powerful in Israeli society, relative to Mizrahi or Jews of African descent. Israel's controversial new Basic Law on Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People, dubbed more simply the "Nation-State Law", passed on July 19, 2019, symbolizes the institutionalization of this inequality and racism. The Nation-State Law serves to remind all who question the Zionist roots of the country that "the Land of Israel is the nation state of the Jewish People" and only the Jewish people. The law reinforces the Jewish nature of all national symbols and proclaims Hebrew to be the one and only national language, downgrading Arabic to a lower "special status" (Lis, 2019).¹⁹ Although this was already common practice, this move harms efforts to boost the status of Arabic in Israel and to equalize opportunities for Palestinians by bringing it into the greater social and political sphere.

The content and meaning behind this Nation-State law are nothing new to Israeli society. Living a Jewish life in Israeli is supported and subsidized by the government. Non-Israeli Jews are included in this elite class and hold special privileges in Israel. Jews from around the world (particularly from the United States and Europe) can become Israeli citizens by making 'Aliyah', which means "ascent". This is a fairly easy process, and the Israeli government actively recruits Jewish internationals to become citizens through programs such as Birthright, which provides free trips to Israel for Jews around the world. The combination of these institutional elements leads to systemic racism and discrimination, which oppresses non-Jewish Arabs in Israeli society.

¹⁹ The law also requires judges to regard the "Israel's Jewish character", not only individual rights and freedoms, in their decision-making process (Sommer, 2018).

Today the city of Jerusalem is largely divided into two physical land segments - the Israeli side (West Jerusalem) and the Palestinian side (East Jerusalem). From 1948 to 1967, East Jerusalem was controlled by Jordan in conjunction with the territory now known as the West Bank. The 1967 War led to Jerusalem falling under Israeli rule. The gradual encroachment of illegal Israeli settlements onto Palestinian territory assigned under the Armistice Agreement has led to an increasingly narrow physical connection between East Jerusalem and the West Bank. The loss of this connecting strand of the land has become an urgent issue for Palestinians who hope for a unified Palestinian state with a Palestinian capital in Jerusalem.²⁰ This loss of connection further fractures the Palestinian community, leaving Jerusalemite Palestinians more culturally isolated from Palestinians in the West Bank. Additionally, Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem,²¹ the demolition of businesses and homes, and surveillance of Palestinians in East Jerusalem victimize Jerusalemite Palestinians and reinforce the narrative of struggle against the occupation (Handel, 2011).

Israelis and Palestinians share the collective experience of existential insecurity but occupy distinct roles in the conflict. Jewish Israelis represent the occupying society of Palestinians in the occupied territories and the majority relative to the Palestinian minority living in Israel. Palestinian participants in this study (including both Palestinian citizens of Israel and residents of Jerusalem without Israeli citizenship) will be derived entirely from the latter group living in Israeli territory in Jerusalem. These Palestinians face discrimination and subordination within an ethnically and religiously defined Jewish state (Hammack, 2008).

Palestinians in the occupied territories have remain stateless inhabitants of territory subject to military occupation for over forty-five years. According to Giacaman, the social and psychological development of this group is characterized by collective frustration, humiliation and loss (Giacaman, et al., 2007). Although Jerusalemite Palestinians do not face some of the same challenges of their collective group members in the West Bank and Gaza, this struggle is contained in the content of the larger Palestinian collective identity through its master narrative and collectivist cultural values. Additionally, Jerusalemite Arabs face discrimination and socioeconomic disparities. As of January of 2020, Palestinians living in East Jerusalem made up thirty-eight percent of over 900,000 residents living in the city. Despite this statistic, the Jerusalem Municipality only invests ten to twelve percent of its budget into Palestinian neighborhoods (Rasgon, 2020).

²⁰ This is one of the final status issues in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

²¹ As of 2019, there are thirteen settlements inhabited by about 215,000 settlers in East Jerusalem (Israel and the Palestinians...”, 2019).

About 300,000 Jerusalemite Palestinians live as residents of Jerusalem with unequal status and citizenship to neither Israel nor the Palestinian Territories. Resident status can be revoked by Israeli officials for various reasons, and they must go through extra processes to gain travel documents to leave the country (Shaham, 2018).

Disparities manifest in one of the most important sectors of society – the education system. Jewish schools in Israel are provided state-funded extracurriculars, but Arab schools historically have not been provided the same programs (Rouhana, 1997).²² Because military service is integral to Israeli society, Palestinian Israelis lose access to the resources, opportunity, and mainstream participation which the military provides. Albeit, many Palestinian Israelis would not wish to join the military out of principle, this aspect of society deepens economic and sociopolitical disparities. For instance, many jobs have historically been closed off to Palestinian or Arab Israelis due to this fragmentation from mainstream Israeli society through lack of military service (Rouhana, 1997).

2.3 The Issue of Narrative in Conflict

Founded and solidified largely through the experience of conflict, the Palestinian and Israeli collective identities have been shaped dramatically by the way in which each has experienced and dealt with the struggle between the two peoples. The adoption cultural values and a collective belief system, along with the creation of narratives that uphold these values and belief systems, allows individuals to adapt to their larger environment (Ting-Toomey and Chung, 2011). These belief systems lead groups to create static images of ‘the other,’ keeping people separate from one another and living in fear of ‘the other.’ In this way, these belief systems exacerbate the conflict and continue to block people on the ground from working together to influence the larger political structures.

Narrative and Collective Memory

Narrative refers to the historical and cultural stories widely accepted and shared by members of a collective group identity. Individuals also craft personal narratives of identity that create meaning from everyday experiences. This meaning-making process involves interpreting raw

²² I discovered evidence for this phenomenon in interviews with both Jewish Israeli and Palestinian students. Two Jewish students in particular reported that they dropped out of the program due to the copious amounts of other activities available to them. These students also cited that Palestinian students on the other hand, do not have the same access to after-school activities.

experiences of emotion such as fear, anger, and frustration (Hammack, 2011). Collective identities in conflict adhere to these social constructs through which a coherent, interrelated sequence of historical and current events is built. These are “accounts of a community’s collective experiences, embodied in its belief system, that represent the collective’s symbolically constructed shared identity” (Biton & Salomon, 2006).

Narratives become the stories we tell ourselves as societies and individuals. Individuals within a group develop social identity through a process of integrating individual experiences with the stories of the experiences of the collective, a phenomena Philip Hammack describes as the ‘**master narratives of identity.**’ Hammack argues that it is the coalescence of the personal narrative with the master narrative that contributes to the cycle of conflict in Israel/Palestine (2011). Although there are evidently numerous other factors that contribute to this vicious cycle, it is this point that brings many to coexistence work in this region.

Collective memories, or the social representation of past events related to conflict and persecution, are building blocks within larger collective narratives (Nicholson, 2017). As an extension of this discussion, it is meaningful to examine how Palestinian and Israeli **collective memory** of the conflict and its pinnacle moments work together with cognitive coping mechanisms (which will be discussed in the following section) to produce powerful historical narratives. Cathy Nicholson’s ethnographic research on Israeli and Palestinian collective memory finds that interpretations of experienced historical events through a collect lens become incorporated into the groups’ collective memories and are used to justify and legitimize the groups’ actions and positions (2017).

The shaping and use of collective memory illustrate how conflict with ‘the other’ shapes the culture of each people in an interactional way. Stories of victimhood and legitimization of one’s group over the other becomes defining content of each collective identity. In this way, the collective identities of the groups in conflict are inherently interconnected. Each group – and the land itself -- is now intertwined with the other group’s collective history and evolution as a people, as each narrative is built on the negation of the other’s (Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998). The perception of the irreconcilability of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has very much to do with the narratives central to the collective identities of these peoples.

Ethos of Conflict

Intractable conflict generates a physically and psychologically unsafe environment for those most impacted by the conflict. Conditions associated with this type of conflict include

stress, anxiety, and physical and existential threat (Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998). Groups in conflict must develop coping mechanisms to deal with the steep psychological price of conflict. The adoption of cultural values and a collective belief system allows people to adapt to their larger environment (Ting-Toomey and Chung, 2011). Daniel Bar-Tal coined the term ‘ethos of conflict’ to describe the specific coping mechanism developed in this case. In conjunction with the larger cultural, social, and historical background, these coping mechanisms build the lens through which each of these groups perceive and respond to conflict.

‘Ethos of conflict’ is a “configuration of central, shared societal beliefs that provide a particular dominant orientation to a society and give meaning to societal life under conditions of intractable conflict” (Bar-Tal, 2000). It refers to a biased, selective, distorted, and simplistic narratives that develop from the societal beliefs and mindsets adopted under protracted conflict. Although Israelis and Palestinians experience this ethos in divergent ways based on their position of power within the conflict, they share this phenomenon (Shaked, 2016). A study on this ethos in Palestinians and Israelis shows that those who adhere more strongly to this ideology suffer less from psychological distress than those who were less committed to the ideology (Lavi et al., 2014). This finding suggests a functional quality to these belief systems despite their containing bias and sometimes distorted views.

For Palestinians and Israelis, the ‘ethos of conflict’ includes eight common elements: an unshakeable belief in the justness of the group’s goals, delegitimizing beliefs about the other’s humanity and morality, victimization beliefs, patriotism, a positive collective self-image, beliefs that involve self-justification and self-glorification, security beliefs, unity beliefs, and peace beliefs. Beliefs, ideologies, and assumptions about “the other” are engrained in the cultural consciousness as a mechanism for coping with protracted conflict. These elements have become an integral part of their cultural worldview, which in turn informs the way both Palestinians and Israelis deal with conflict in the present. In this way, conflict and culture unfold through a reciprocal process. Because they are directly related to each peoples’ identity and historical memory of the conflict, they are essential to understanding how they will interact with conflict in the future (Shaked, 2016).

Due to the ‘ethos of conflict’ and the battle for identity recognition, collective memory serves an incredibly important role in Israeli and Palestinian societies. It is critical to examine how Palestinian collective memory of the conflict and its pinnacle moments works together with an ‘ethos of conflict’ effect to produce powerful historical narratives. The term narrative in this case refers to “the social constructions that coherently interrelate a sequence of historical and current events; they are accounts of a community’s collective experiences, embodied in its belief

system, and represent the collective's symbolically constructed shared identity" (Biton & Salomon, 2006).

Palestinian Master Narrative

The shared Palestinian narrative involves a sense of loss, dispossession, displacement, and an existential insecurity initiated by the establishment of the state of Israel and persisting today through additional loss of land, lives, rights, and freedoms under occupation. The Palestinian collective memory holds the image of Palestinians forced out of their homes in masses during the 1948 war (Bickerton & Klausner, 2002). It contains records of land lost through the building of an apartheid-like separation barrier, of endlessly expanding settlements, and of the humiliation of check points and the permit regime. Through a stark evolution tied to conflict and life under occupation, the Palestinian identity is colored with pain, struggle, and sacrifice (Hammack, 2011). In the overarching Palestinian narrative, there is no moral legitimacy to the existence of the Israeli state (Rounhana & Bar-Tal, 1998).

The Palestinian shared narrative involves a sense of loss, dispossession, displacement, and an existential insecurity initiated by the establishment of the state of Israel (known to Palestinians as al-Nakba) and continuing through with the war of 1967, as well as loss and restricted freedoms occurring to this day. Living under occupation during the interim period after the Oslo Accords reinforced a sense of insecurity and helplessness, as Israel controlled most aspects of Palestinian life. Any kind of autonomy regarding their own political rights, status, or movement had been ripped away and held at arms-length indefinitely. They had no freedom to move between the divorced territories without permits issued by the Israelis. Palestinian access to resources such as water, electricity, and electromagnetic frequencies was almost completely under Israeli control (Wittes, 2005). Their identity was challenged and crystalized at every checkpoint and barrier, where a Palestinian identity was synonymous with restricted movement. These experiences add strength to the longing for Palestinian self-governance, autonomy, and national symbols representing only the Palestinian identity such as stamps, national armed forces, and a Palestinian presidency (Wittes, 2005). The desire for these symbols represents the deep intrinsic need for recognition and legitimization of the Palestinian people, which underlies the Palestinian approach to peace talks.

The experience during the interim period after the first Oslo Accords had a dramatic effect in shaping Palestinian negotiators from that point on. Although there was a lot of optimism and faith in the PA immediately after the agreement, the leadership lost the confidence of the

Palestinian people over time and the distance between the leaders of the PA and local leaders widened. This increased tension and divisions among the Palestinians. The elite leaders who returned from the negotiations attempted to monopolize power and silence opposing factions through authoritarian-like practices such as torture, detainment, and censorship. This undermined any sense of legitimacy the PA once had, creating distrust in the Palestinian Democratic system as a whole (Wittes, 2005). Inevitably, this affected the sense of trust in the negotiation process and in turn, the confidence of the negotiators at Camp David in 2000. As Hanan Ashrawi articulated, “The gods descend from Olympus, and suddenly we realize they’re frail” (Wittes, 2005). Once the elite leadership understood their need for a constituency that found them legitimate, they attempted to overcompensate by making bold promises they lacked the capability to keep, further delegitimizing them in a vicious cycle (Wittes, 2005).

This argument demonstrates how Palestinian collective memory of the conflict and its pinnacle moments works together with the previously described “ethos of conflict” effect to produce a powerful historical narrative. This master narrative plays a critical role in active and passive Palestinian modes of resistance.²³ This narrative has also acted as a political piece in negotiations. The Palestinian collective memory of being severed from their land, displaced, fragmented, and ultimately made to be second class citizens, supports the view that the Palestinian people had already made their historic compromise (Wittes, 2005). Given the political and material power disparity between the two peoples, conceptualizing the negotiations (Oslo Accords and subsequent negotiations mentioned in Chapter I) in this way felt crucial for the Palestinians.

Israeli Master Narrative

The dominant Israeli narrative emphasizes the Jewish experience in Europe, one that involves alienation, marginalization, persecution, and ultimately genocide. The Jewish people felt that the world had turned their back on them during the Holocaust. They particularly distrusted their Arab neighbors who demanded that the British block Jewish immigrants escaping from Europe during WWII (Bickerton & Klausner, 2002).

For these Jews, Israel symbolizes a place where the Jewish people finally have a home for themselves, a place to remain safe from antisemitism. The establishment of a Jewish state was seen through this lens as the liberation and empowerment of the Jewish people. The psyche

²³ See discussion on the social power of narrative in Chapter V.

that developed from circumstances of persecution and continued tensions with Israel's neighboring countries in the Middle East leads Israeli Jews to see themselves as the underdog in the region. They continue to feel victimized and in need of security (Bickerton & Klausner, 2002).

The Israeli collective memory maintains that the Arabs abandoned their homes in 1948 during the war, planning never to return. Allowing those people to return would cause a major security risk that Israel could not afford in a region surrounded by those who wish to delegitimize and disband their statehood (Bickerton & Klausner, 2002). Israeli citizens continue to see themselves in a state of insecurity and danger due to suicide bombings during the second intifada and bombs sent from Gaza. Those with this mindset maintain that the only way to keep Israeli Jews safe is to maintain the status quo and continue with extreme border security, a permit regime, and collective punishment for the families of suicide bombers.

The concept of security, or lack thereof, is a consistent trope in the Israeli master narrative. The idea of security represents the overarching trope that unites these experiential themes in the master narrative of Jewish Israeli identity (Hammack, 2008; Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998). When it comes to the conflict, one of the central, and arguably the most important, interests of the Israeli people is security. This need can only be fully understood through the long historical memory of persecution among the Jewish people, most significantly including the recent atrocity of the Holocaust. Present-day Israeli soldiers and citizens continue fear knife attacks, car-rammings, or other acts of violence (Eglash, Booth, & Cameron, 2015; Holmes, 2019; Lieber, 2020).²⁴ The sense of vulnerability is three-fold among the Israeli Jews, shaped by the historical experience of the Jewish people, of the Zionist enterprise, and the existential insecurity of the Israeli state since its birth. The Israeli people have felt under attack and without protection throughout each of these experiences (Wittes, 2005).

Coexistence Narratives

In order to achieve a sustainable peace, many peace workers and social psychologists believe that society must go through a deep cognitive transformation, shedding their conflict-dependent societal beliefs for ones that support the development of harmonious relationships with

²⁴ These attacks exist in a cycle of violence between Israeli and Palestinian people (including Israeli-Arabs and Palestinian residents of Jerusalem) in which Israeli soldiers victimize and oppress Palestinian civilians, and in turn, a few Palestinians a year attack Israeli soldiers and sometimes civilians.

the ‘other side’ (Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998). This would involve a process of changing negative beliefs about the other into ones that would promote harmonious interaction between the two peoples.

2.4 Education and the Socialization of Youth in Conflict

The Israeli education system is largely segregated by Israeli Jews and Arab Palestinian citizens and residents (Bieling, 2016).²⁵ The education system in Israel segregates students based on religious and ethnic divides. It is split into four tracks: state-secular (Mamlachti), state-religious (Mamlachti dati), independent religious (*Haredi* or *Hinuch Atzmai*), and Arab schools (*Types of Schools in Israel*, 2014). There are also private schools for specific sectors of Israeli society. Oftentimes private schools are set up for children of foreign nationals (i.e. the American International School in Israel).

In intractable conflict, education is often used as a means of social control rather than a tool for empowerment and social mobility. Nationalist politicians may curate textbooks and curriculum to reinforce conflict-supporting narratives. In addition to these narratives, school activities, field trips, and symbols instill nationalist sentiments in students (al-Haj, 2003). These narratives are intended to block understanding of the ‘other side’ of the conflict and motivate militaristic tendencies. Youth on both sides of conflict are indoctrinated with belief systems that may enhance their psychological resilience under the intractable conflict, but breed intolerance towards ‘the other’, building stronger group identity salience. This is where the strategy of intergroup peace programs enters the picture. Aimed at breaking down problematic national narratives and increasing tolerance and trust between young people, these programs hope to create a generation of peacebuilders and change-makers.

²⁵ “The system in its current form was established in 1953 with the State Education Law which provides the legal framework for the establishment of two sectors: a Jewish secular and a Jewish religious one. While the Palestinian minority is not mentioned in this law, the establishment of an Arab school sector that is separate from the two Jewish ones followed rather inevitably from it. The Israeli education system can be seen as a political tool used by the government to advance its goals of furthering the Jewish character of the state rather than to provide the best possible education for all citizens. Despite an amendment of the law in 2000, the Arab sector has no official legal standing, but exists alongside the two ‘official and recognized’ Jewish sectors as an ‘unofficial but recognized’ one. Thus, from the inception of the state school system in 1953, Arab Palestinians and Jewish Israelis were generally prevented from attending school together. Recent efforts of singling out the Arab Christian population in Israel regarding conscription and education suggest that the education system in its current form is more than just a provider of knowledge for the citizens of the state. The Ministry of Education has complete control over the school curricula of all types of schools – Jewish, Druze and Arab public and private, from kindergarten to high school” (Bieling, 2016)

Although most Jerusalemite youth in Kids4Peace have not been exposed to the same kind of physical violence and trauma of those in the Gaza and the West Bank or of their parents' and grandparents' generations, these youth have indirectly absorbed auditory and visual representations of this violence through the media, through stories of family and community members, through the education system, and in everyday images and symbols to which children are exposed. Children in conflict engage in informal and formal practices related to the conflict on a regular basis. These practices, which encourage children to form concepts, categories, impressions, understandings, and preferences, may include security drills in schools, bomb drills when a bag is left on or near a train, praising war heroes, and supporting nationalist symbols and memorials. Children in conflict environments learn the categorization of their in-group and the rival out-group. These categories gain salience through the everlasting bombardment of symbols and messages related to conflict. They gain conflict and war-related vocabulary in addition to their meaning and implications. They acquire an emotional repertoire of fear, insecurity, threat, and hatred related to the conflict (Nasie, 2016). In short, the three main agents of socialization for youth are family, media, and education.

Assuming a melioristic view of humanity, it might be natural to look to the youth as beacons of hope for a better more peaceful future amidst the darkness of conflict. One would hope that schools could provide a safe space for these youth to gain the tools and understanding it would require to come together to build a brighter, more peaceful future. Unfortunately, this is often not the case. In fact, the education system most often works to further socialize child and young people in a way that reinforces ethos of conflict, which exacerbates conflict.

In prolonged ethnic conflict, much of the underlying tension surrounds the competition between whose memory will be preserved as the national narrative. The role of these narratives in the realm of education is crucial to examine, as the way students are taught history in their most formative years significantly influences the future of a conflict. The school system is an important agent of national memory through which narratives are kept alive or transformed. Therefore, the beliefs and attitudes of the youth formed through their education will determine whether the conflict will remain intractable or whether it will be transformed as the next generations take control of the national political agenda. From a young age, in Israeli and Palestinian schools learn drastically different narratives regarding history and national identity. The education system is under the control of nationalist governments in the cases of both Israeli curriculums and the curriculums designed by the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. Jerusalem.

Textbooks in state sponsored schools contain the master narratives of the collective group identity, conveying the values and messages that will uphold that group's worldview and beliefs.

These curriculums ignore information that may provide alternative perspectives on the conflict and may lead to greater understanding of the ‘other side’ (Gur-Ziv & Mazali, 2001; Nasie, 2016). The Israeli curriculum brushes over or completely erases accounts of forced Palestinian displacement during and after the 1948 war. This curriculum claims that the Palestinians left their homes voluntarily. On the other side, the Palestinian curriculums often leave out any mention of the Holocaust or Jewish persecution in Europe, thereby leaving out a large part of Jewish history that led many to immigrate to Palestine. These narratives leave out pieces of both stories that would allow for a greater understanding of one another. The teaching of these different narratives coupled with the segregation of children from these two groups and prevalent feelings of insecurity among all leads to the dehumanization of “the other” (Lavi et al., 2014).

In addition to textbooks, modes of instruction, classroom discussions, nationalistic ceremonies, field trips, symbols in schools and classrooms, and other types of informal education work to reinforce the national narrative (Nasie, 2016).

Motivated reasoning describes the tendency of individuals to confirm their assessments of information to some goal or end irrelevant to accuracy. This ideologically motivated cognition has been described by studies as an adaptation rather than deficiency, in that it aims to promote the interests individuals have in signaling group membership and group loyalty as a means of achieving wellbeing (Kahan, 2013). This explains why the promotion of and widespread adoption of strong narratives in ethnic conflict is so prevalent and how, once entrenched at a young age, these narratives could be difficult to break. This is particularly salient for Israeli Jewish youth entering the Israeli Defense Forces, as group loyalty in military service is even more dramatically tied to an individual’s identity, goals, and tasks.

Naive realism is the idea that individuals assume themselves to be objective perceivers of reality and that others, if rational and given access to the same information, should share the same judgements and reactions to the same stimuli, issues, and events. If others with the same information do not share these opinions, those demonstrating naive realism will overestimate the bias of the other group or individuals in comparison to their own presumed objectivity. Furthermore, individuals experiencing naive realism may attribute the failure of others to perceive reality the way they do to a fundamental flaw in character, intelligence, or an intrinsically warped perception. They may consider the other lazy, irrational, or strongly biased by ideology or self-interest (Pronin et al., 2002). The content of the narratives taught in textbooks is a powerful tool, as the children taught in these schools grow into adults who assume that all others perceive this same reality. In prolonged violent conflict, these assumptions and judgments have the potential to create immense harm.

It is out of the scope of this paper to provide a more in-depth look at these cognitive biases. However, it is important to note that these mechanisms are at play and extremely successful in building a society intended to function within and perpetuate a state of war. In order to interrupt potentially harmful socialization, contact intervention is crucial in the region's population of youth.

Palestinian and Israeli Jewish youth in Jerusalem have historically learned from separate curriculums, except for a short time period when the Israeli administration controlled all school curriculums. In recent years, the Israeli government, under Education Minister Naftali Bennett and Jerusalem Affairs and Heritage Minister Zeev Elkin, approved a plan to take back control over curriculum in East Jerusalem. The plan coerced Arab East Jerusalem schools to adopt the Israeli curriculum over the Palestinian one (Skop, Hasson, & Rinat, 2017; Kashti & Hasson, 2016).²⁶

Given that the premise of Kids4Peace draws in a specifically peace-driven crowd, many of the youth who come to the program have already received a coexistence narrative from their parents or bi-national schools. A large portion of the students in Kids4Peace come from a mixed Palestinian-Israeli school called Hand-in-Hand. Students coming from the mixed school are familiar with their group's master narratives from interacting with their community outside of the school and taking in the country's cultures, but they also have access to a coexistence narrative shared with organizations such as Kids4Peace. Many of these youths have incorporated this narrative into their own worldview.²⁷

2.5 Contact Theory

As calls for peacebuilding organizations such as Kids4Peace and Seeds of Peace arose in response to frustration and declining belief in political leaders to solve the nations' crisis. Allport's Intergroup Contact Theory provided a basis for designing new grassroots people-to-people methods of peacebuilding. Contact theory, derived from social identity theory, outlines the necessary prerequisites for intergroup contact to lead to lasting attitudinal transformation (Pettigrew, 1998).

²⁶ Palestinian or Arab schools default to the *Tawjihi* curriculum, which preserves the national and cultural identity of Palestinians living in Jerusalem (Hijazi, 2015).

²⁷ During the study, youths from Hand-in-Hand School demonstrate higher levels of optimism for the future of the two peoples. Understandable, youth from this school find coexistence on a larger scale easier to imagine than those educated in segregated schools.

Allport claims that for contact to lead to true transformation, four conditions must be met. These conditions are that (1) intergroup contact be held in an environment that upholds equal group status for both parties, (2) there are shared goals among all group members, (3) intergroup cooperation is aimed towards achieving aforementioned goals, and (4) the contact be supported by authorities (Pettigrew, 1998). Allport's theory proceeds to outline four processes of change through which attitudinal change happens. In the first stage, the ingroup members learn about the outgroup. This learning process aims to debunk harmful beliefs about the outgroup, thereby reducing levels of prejudice (Pettigrew, 1998).²⁸

The next stage of the theoretical process of transformation involves "changing behavior". Intergroup contact ideally involves behavior modification as the precursor to attitudinal change. In this case, the behavioral change refers to acceptance of outgroup members and the integration and collaboration of members of the groups in conflict. In order to reconcile the dissonance of old attitudes and new present realities, contact theory presumes that humans will revise attitudes (Pettigrew, 1998).

The third process is that through which group members "generate affective ties". Positive emotions, particularly empathy, evoked by this ideal form of intergroup contact can influence and heighten positive intergroup contact effects. Forming meaningful friendships and sympathies between members from the different groups is critical for this stage (Pettigrew, 1998).

The final stage in this transformation of prejudiced attitudes is a process of "ingroup reappraisal," which involves redefining the ingroup to include members of what was formerly perceived as the outgroup (also known as deprovincialization) (Pettigrew, 1998). This idea of ingroup reappraisal is seen in coexistence organizations that form a new community. Kids4Peace does this by building a pro-peace community that harbor values of harmony and coexistence. The program of Seeds of Peace asks participants to strip themselves of their group identity for a new identity as a "seed of peace" (Hammack, 2011). This final stage is at the heart of the coexistence wing of the pro-peace movement.

Some research has disproven the effectiveness of some aspects of intergroup contact interventions. For instance, academics have come to acknowledge that this equal status is most often unachievable in these scenarios due to a larger sociopolitical power asymmetry outside of the contact intervention (Rouhana, 2004; Saguy, Dovidio, & Pratto, 2008). For this reason, more current critical approaches attempt to explicitly challenge the power asymmetries that exacerbate

²⁸ This first stage reflects the Pathways to Peace program for Kids4Peace sixth graders described in section 1.5.

the conflict, particularly when the powerful party does not explicitly recognize the asymmetry (Hammack, Pilecki, & Merrilees, 2013).

Despite Pettigrew's doubts about the validity and universality of contact theory, organizations such as Kids4Peace, Seeds of Peace,²⁹ and others like it continue to design programs based around these ideas. The aforementioned criticisms of the theory relate to some of the criticisms and problem areas of these organizations. Therefore, further research done on the impact of these specific organizations is critical to understand where the benefits and shortcomings lie.

2.6 Power Asymmetry in Conflict: A Structuralist Perspective

It is crucial to acknowledge that although the psychological mechanisms described in the previous section contribute to the perpetuation of the conflict, primarily by maintaining the power of narratives and their limitations on a full understanding of the conflict, this conflict is not purely psychological or cultural conflict by nature. This is a conflict over tangible resources such as land, water, and power. Basic human needs such as identity and security are central to this conflict and its resolution, as are critical structural changes that protect the basic human rights and freedoms of all peoples involved. It is important to address these oppressive structures that enforce social, political, and economic inequality (Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998)

As a peace activist and past intern of a coexistence organization, I believe in the power of the people to transform their nations with grassroots organization. However, I also believe in the importance of examining the exploitative power structures that limit this work. I entered the work with a critical eye for deeper underlying dynamics influenced by larger power structures. Through my time as both an intern for Kids4Peace and a researcher, I maintained a structuralist

²⁹ The organization Seeds of Peace is used occasionally as a reference point for Kids4Peace. Although Kids4Peace Jerusalem has not been extensively researched by academics, social psychologist and scholar Philip Hammack presents in-depth research on another youth-centered coexistence organization called Seeds of Peace. Hammack's research of Seeds of Peace in his book *Narrative of Politics* has inspired the beginnings of my own research on Kids4Peace (2011). The two organizations differ drastically in method and structure, but Hammack's model for studying the impact of Seeds of Peace proves useful in exploring the impact of this type of peacebuilding model organization on a participant's interpretation of their own identity and adherence to a belief system (2011). Seeds of Peace was founded based on contact theory mentioned above. The premise of the organization recognizes that war and conflict are conceived through and manipulated by governments and wealthy, powerful interest groups, not the people on the ground. The worldview supported by the organization assumes that most people can coexist in peace if they could transcend their identification with master narratives of their collective identity groups. Instead they would humanize and identify with 'the other' in order to build a new coexistence narrative in which the two peoples are positively interconnected (Hammack, 2011).

perspective while examining the program and its impact, even while staying present and open-minded during the experience. Scholars in relevant fields (of conflict resolution, social psychology, etc.) have come to recognize the importance in addressing these social structures when studying contact intervention as a mode of conflict transformation. Phillip Hammack admits that at the end of his time involved with grassroots people-to-people conflict interventions, critiques of the work arose within him. He stresses that these interventions often do not consider “in a truly meaningful way” the structural violence that frames the experiences of Israeli and Palestinian youth and thus influences their realities and personal narratives (Hammack, 2011).

In conflict intervention framed around contact, power asymmetries often mean that the groups involved have different motivations, goals, and preferences in content based on their advantage or disadvantage in the larger sociopolitical context. In studies done in randomized groups and on Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews in Israeli, members of the less powerful group indicated a greater desire to discuss power during the interaction than the group in power. Members of the advantaged group, on the other hand, demonstrated more of a desire to discuss commonalities between the two groups rather than discuss group-based power (Saguy, Dovidio & Pratto, 2008). This evidence has significant implications when deciding who designs the content of the intergroup interaction. The same study also found that members of the more politically powerful group who perceived the group’s advantage as illegitimate were more likely to want to confront the issue of power (Saguy, Dovidio & Pratto, 2008). This finding is reflected in my own research when speaking with young Left-wing Israeli Jews.

The reason for these differing motivations and preferences is that disparities in economic security, political power, and opportunities for social advancement within a society create completely different social realities for the advantaged and disadvantaged groups in conflict. These different realities shape the motivations group members have towards maintaining versus challenging the status quo. Members of the advantaged groups are more inclined to hope for the stability of a system which privileges them, rather than members of the disadvantaged group who are more likely to work toward systematic and social change (Saguy, Dovidio & Pratto, 2008).

Members of the advantaged group may uphold ideas that legitimize and naturalize the existing social hierarchy rather than mobilize for social change (Saguy, Dovidio & Pratto, 2008). One way to legitimize and maintain the status quo considered in the study done by Saguy, Dovidio & Pratto, is to emphasize the shared aspects of the groups in conflict. This focus on points of common ground may be useful in promoting a positive shared identity and positive relations between the groups (Dovidio, Gaertner, Niemann, & Snider, 2001). However, it may

also further embed problematic status relations by covering the reality of the privileges and powers held by one group over the other.

Although research shows that the less powerful group will likely uphold goals of deep social change and political transformation, this gets more complicated when we discuss the delicate system of opportunities that exist for Palestinian citizens of Israel living in Jerusalem. Given their different experience, this group may have different goals than those living as Palestinian residents of Jerusalem or those in the West Bank and Gaza. Could these opportunities change the group's goals for contact?

The insights brought forth by the research mentioned in this section is incredibly important to contextualize coexistence work, and the work of Kids4Peace in particular, within a greater system that promotes structural inequalities. That being said, I aim to avoid the oversimplification and generalization of the individuals within these groups. With the academic research outlined in this section as a reference point, I dig further into the motivations, goals, and preferred outcomes of the participants of Kids4Peace.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Principles

1. Do No Harm

In considering taking a role in the field of conflict transformation, it is necessary to live by a motto borrowed from the medical profession directing practitioners to “do no harm.” One can only be aware of an intervention’s possible impact by deeply understanding the cultural context and political and sociocultural dynamics in which the intervention will be positioned. This paper aims to lay the foundation for an elicitive process, as described by John Paul Lederach, by gaining some of the explicit and contextual conflict knowledge necessary to understand how conflict arises in this particular society, how it operates, and how to best address it (1995). This is the discovery phase of the elicitive approach (Lederach, 1995). Normally for the participants of the intervention, the purpose of this phase is to lay the foundation from which one can knowledgeably explore the field before drafting a process through which the conflict may be transformed in a meaningful way.

Participation in an organization such as Kids4Peace can be a sensitive issue in certain sectors of these communities. Oftentimes the larger community, in addition to friends and family, do not agree with the work of organizations such as Kids4Peace. To protect the wellbeing of the youth subjects and to prevent any undue harm, I keep their identities anonymous by using pseudonyms and attaching only vague descriptions. I refrain from using identifiable information such as exact ages, neighborhoods, and anything else that could lead to the identification of specific individuals participating in the study. This precaution should shield these youth from identification by those within or outside of the organization.

2. Authenticity and Transparency

This paper aims to represent the youth participants of the study and myself as researcher with the greatest amount of authenticity. By acknowledging my own biases (via my worldview, identity, and background), I hope to establish a trust with the research subjects and the reader. During the research process I established open communication with research participants – telling them about my own background and reasons for involvement.

It is important to present the voices of the individual research subjects in the purest way possible. Although I clear up some of the language in the quotations spoken by the subjects, I minimize this editing in an attempt to maintain the truest nature of the youth’s speech. At times

the youth subjects respond with broken speech patterns or break off mid-sentence. This may reflect the difficult and complicated nature of the subject matter. I aim to include these contextual clues to emotion and inner struggle in the data.

3. Empowerment and Agency of Subjects

Part of my intention in approaching this research was to give the youth who go through Kids4Peace the opportunity to tell the story of Kids4Peace through their unique lenses and to have an impact on the future of the organization. Throughout the interview process, I had a few of the participants acknowledge the therapeutic effect that the interview had. The interview process had a similar effect on me as I listened to the stories, insights, and struggles these youth presented with vulnerability.

4. Self-Awareness

I aim to acknowledge my own biases and shortcomings in the research and how my own position of privilege as a Jewish American woman impacts my experience in the field. I acknowledge that my positionality and lack of language skills may have constrained the fluidity of the research in some ways. Additionally, my own biases and the lens through which I perceive the conflict influences my interpretation of the data.

3.2 Research Paradigm

I used ethnographic methods with an idiographic approach to this research. This approach focuses on the individual and emphasizes the unique personal experience over setting generalizations. The idiographic approach often defers to case studies, unstructured interviews, and thematic analysis in order to an in-depth insight into individual behavior (Conner, et al., 2009). A deep understanding of the human experience can be discovered through the examination of the individual experience.

I model my research paradigm off the ethnographic and narrative-based research methods used by Philip Hammack in his approach to the study of classic social psychological intervention in the conflict in Israel/Palestine. Phillip Hammack is an American social psychologist and a leader in the narrative psychology movement. His model of identity presented in this article integrates cognitive, social, and cultural levels of analysis while focusing on content, structure, and process. Hammack argues for a narrative approach to the study of identity and culture in

order to combat the mainstream cultural psychology paradigm which focuses on the general over the unique (Hammack, 2008).

3.3 Research Process

Field Site

The field work for this study took place at Kids4Peace Jerusalem. A majority of the original interviews for Kids4Peace took place in the Kids4Peace office in East Jerusalem. Interviews took place in a private room away from other staff members to maintain privacy for the interview. Exceptions were made for interviewees who are unable to make it to the office, in which case I met these participants in a location more convenient for them (i.e. a coffee shop, cafe, etc.). To assure privacy during these interviews, I conscientiously chose secluded seating where the interview would not be overheard. For those who have moved from Jerusalem or will be out of town during the time of the interviews, I offer the opportunity to participate through a Skype or phone interview. I have conducted these remote interviews from a private location and instructed the interviewees to do the same.

Research Participants, Recruitment, and Sampling

For this study, I recruited a sample of 19 participants from Kids4Peace to interview for my research. I accessed the names of possible interviewees through staff members of the organization. The original population of interviewees includes two groups: high school students in the Youth Action Program (YAP), the ninth-grade program and recent alumni of Kids4Peace. The former group involves female and male youth between the ages of 14 and 18. The ages of alumni range from 19 to 22.

The first group of high school participants were selected by the director of the organization and the program coordinators. Additionally, I made an announcement asking for volunteers at the YAP town hall event. I also asked youth to spread the information about the study to their friends in Kids4Peace.

I was given a list of recent alumni by the director of the organization and by the Ninth Grade Program Coordinator. I sent the recommended participants messages through WhatsApp that briefly introduced them to the research and asked for their participation in the evaluation and in my own research.

The fact that staff pointed me towards participants who were most active and stayed involved in the organization created a selection bias. However, I believe by acknowledging this bias, I am able to look at the specific demographic of participants in a more direct light. These are generally the students who were most committed to the program and therefore most likely had deep processes around what this participation meant to them.

Certain groups overrepresented in my interview sample may also be overrepresented in the Kids4Peace programs. Specifically, a majority of my subjects are Palestinian citizens of Israel due to the disproportionately large number of members of this identity group who participate in the programs. Participants from this group also proved to be more responsive and available for interviews. Table 3.1 provides a demographic summary of the interview data.

The sample of Jewish Israelis participants in my study consist of both religious and secular Jewish youth but excludes ultra-Orthodox Jewish youth. My sample holds both right-wing and left-wing Jewish youth, although not in equal numbers. From my sample, left-wing Israelis appear more likely to sign up for Kids4Peace program.

The Tables below provide a brief demographic overview of the research subjects.

TABLE 3.1: Nationality/Identity Group

	Female	Male	Total
Israeli-Arab	5	6	11
Palestinian residents of Jerusalem	0	1	1
Jewish Israelis	5	2	7

TABLE 3.2: Current Participants/Alumni

	IL	ILA	PA	Total
Current Participants	2	5	1	8
Alumni	5	6	0	11

(IL – Israeli Jew, ILA- Israeli-Arab, PA- Palestinian Resident of Jerusalem)

TABLE 3.3: Religion

	Muslim	Christian	Jewish	Total
Current Participants	5	1	2	8
Alumni	4	2	5	11
Total	9	3	7	19

Original Role of Researcher as Intern for Kids4Peace

In my role as Monitoring and Evaluation intern, I was tasked with data collection in various forms for the 2017-2018 USAID report. This included both the collection, input, and analysis of data from entry and exit surveys for the year. The evaluation also included conducting interviews with some of the youth participants and alumni. The interviews for the evaluation, covered the indicators measured by entry and exit surveys in addition to background questions and some questions of my own interest. The interviews asked for youth comments and critiques of the organization's programs (See Appendix for the list of interview questions).

Interview Process

The initial interview process began on November 22, 2018. I conducted twelve initial interviews for the organization. I received WhatsApp contact information for potential research subjects and requested participation through WhatsApp message. For my research, I used these initial interviews that I conducted on behalf of Kids4Peace. After the research was approved, I solicited formal assent/consent from the interviewees to use the data for my research purposes. I ensured that all participants and parents of underage participants could understand the instructions and consent forms given. After the initial interviews and approval of this research, I continued conducting interviews and follow-up interviews remotely via skype using the initial interview questions.

A majority of the original interviews for Kids4Peace took place in the Kids4Peace office in East Jerusalem. Interviews took place in a private room away from other staff members to maintain privacy for the interview. Exceptions were made for interviewees who are unable to make it to the office, in which case I met these participants in a location more convenient for them (i.e. a coffee shop, cafe, etc.). To assure privacy during these interviews, I chose secluded seating where the interview would not be overheard. For those who have moved from Jerusalem or will be out of town during the time of the interviews, I offer the opportunity to participate through a Skype or phone interview. I have conducted these remote interviews from a private location and instructed the interviewees to do the same. I recorded the interviews with the permission of the participants and transcribed the interviews from the recordings.

First-Hand Experience and Observation as Additional Data

The data used in this research includes the insights that have been brought forth by friends, colleagues, and acquaintances I have met throughout my research and experience in the Middle East. I include my experience as an intern at Kids4Peace, as I observed programming first-hand and served as an additional supervisor for the 2018 local summer camp at Camp Ketura. I attended a YAP seminar in Jaffa, as well as a workshops and events throughout the year. In addition to the time spent with Kids4Peace, my time in Jerusalem provided me with a wealth of perspectives from those I befriended and those with whom I interacted. I absorbed information by witnessing interactions between Palestinians and Israelis and within these collective identity groups.

Data Analysis – Narrative and Coding Themes

I used content from the interviews as well as possible follow-up Skype interviews to analyze youth responses. I coded the interviews, finding common themes, and examined those themes against the backdrop of the organization and the conflict. I will look for differences and similarities between responses with a focus on differences between demographics (i.e. nationality, gender, age group, current participants versus alumni, etc.). I examined the stories of the youth to identify meaningful insights into the impacts of the Kids4Peace program and how the program interacts with collective identities of the youth in the organization. I also highlighted codes (motifs, reoccurring important topics and terms).

The analysis of this data extracts themes and motifs within the themes (also known as codes) to provide an impressionistic picture of the experiences of the youth in Kids4Peace. I use one to four quotations from the interviews to illustrate each motif within a theme. If the theme has no motif, I provide three to seven quotations to illustrate the theme. Not all subjects are represented under all themes. I chose the quotations that most strongly and intricately represents the core the themes and motifs. I do attempt to representations the largest number of youths possible in order to present a wide variety of voices and to honor the subjects who sacrificed their time and energy for the study.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Themes from the Research

I arrived at the topic of this study in a roundabout way. I originally conducted the interviews used in this study through my role as the Monitoring and Evaluation Intern for Kids4Peace. Therefore, the framework of my first batch of interviews follow the themes outlined by Kids4Peace staff and leadership for the purpose of writing annual reports for the organization's major donor at the time USAID (United States Agency for International Aid). The measurable outcomes outlined in the report left a major gap in understanding the real impact of the programs. That the evaluation of the programs was based solely on a document curated for USAID caused me to question whether the report was aimed at finding genuine results that would inform important and sustainable change. For this reason, I sought to fill in the gap in evaluative information with my own research.

My interest lies not only in how this organization impacts the greater community and sociopolitical structures, but also in how it lends itself as a filter through which participants interact with their own identity. Through a broader lens, I also aim to understand how the larger asymmetrical power dynamics between these identity groups manifest through the youth's experiences.

The original themes found by the organization's leadership and measured in the program evaluation are as follows: Personal transformation, negative externalities, positive supports, hope and perceptions (of the conflict), actions, social change, and ripple effect, knowledge and perceptions, and agency. I have borrowed from and adjusted some of these themes while analyzing the data. The following themes and motifs³⁰ are those which brought out the complexities of the interaction between collective identity and experience in Kids4Peace.

4.2 The Salience of Collective Identity and Assignment of Meaning

This section discusses collective identity and the complications of group belonging in Jerusalem. This issue is particularly complicated for Palestinian citizens of Israel (also known as Arab-Israelis or Israeli-Arabs) who have dual allegiances that provide various social, political, and economic benefits. Collective identity in Jerusalem, although strongly salient, is a source of

³⁰ The motifs, important concepts that reappear throughout the data, are highlighted by bold lettering throughout this chapter.

confusion and frustration for many youths, whether Palestinian citizens of Israel, Israeli Jews, or Palestinian residents of Jerusalem.

As I observed the Kids4Peace programming, I sought to make sense of what I heard, saw, and intuited from these interactions. The organization hosts a patchwork of cultures and sub-cultures, languages, and layers of power and privilege. This led me to question how the politicized collective identities (i.e. national, religious, and political) intersect with the experience of the youth participants of Kids4Peace.

This section will preface the themes from this research with an exploration of the complexity of each collective identity present and their salience in Kids4Peace as well as the other environments the youth encounter in their daily lives. The salience of identity refers to how a certain aspect of one's identity shows up with a particular importance in a given environment. The youth deal with the salience of their collective identities in a variety of ways, the nature of which depends on the sociopolitical position of the group.

“What are you?” The Dual-Identity Bind of Palestinian Citizens of Israel

The dual-identity bind refers to the conundrum Palestinian citizens of Israel (also known as Israeli-Arabs) face when confronting the two allegiances held inherently within their identity. These individuals belong simultaneously to the Israeli collect through their citizenship, but often more strongly to the Palestinian collective through their social, cultural, and political affinities. This is especially true for Palestinian citizens of Israel (Israeli-Arabs) living in Jerusalem. For some like Malik and Chris, this struggle moves from the external to the internal. These individuals present the problem of identity as an issue arising from assumptions and projections of others, not their own relationship with their identities. Both of these youths have a background in the Hand and Hand school in Jerusalem, a mixed school for Israeli Jews and Muslim and Christian Palestinians citizens of Israel.

Chris, a self-identified Christian Arab and citizen of both Israel and the United States, explains the paradox that arises in his answer to “What is your nationality and how do you identify yourself?” Chris responds:

Now, I think that's one of the most difficult questions ever in this issue. And that's one of the things I still struggle with until now. And I see other Arabs struggling with [it], especially when it comes to defining ourselves within this country. My nationality is technically Israeli -- also, American. I have an American passport and an Israeli

passport. But I'm neither of those things, to be honest. I'm not Israeli, but I'm technically Israeli. But I'm not an American. I've never lived in America.

Although Chris's situation is somewhat unique given his American passport, his example highlights the common position in which Palestinian citizens of Israel find themselves. It is often difficult for individuals from this group to know which piece of their identity to highlight. The setting of Jerusalem and the Hebrew University makes this challenge evermore present. As mentioned in Chapter II, Jerusalem is segregated between East and West, Palestinian and Jewish respectively. Simultaneously, there is interaction and interdependence between Israeli Jews and Palestinians living in Jerusalem.³¹ Chris continues:

I'm technically, between me and myself, I'm a Palestinian -- you know? -- it's who I am. I was born from this region. My grandfather would've defined himself as a Palestinian -- and his father before that. But when it comes to introducing myself, it's very difficult. Especially as a Christian more maybe than as a Jew or a Muslim, because a Muslim can say "I'm an Arab," and everyone understands that. And a Jew says, "I'm Israeli," and everyone knows that. But for me, if I go somewhere abroad and I talk, people are like, "Oh, where are you from?" And I say, "I'm Israeli." And then they assume that I'm a Jew.

Chris's last point in the quote above indicates that Palestinian citizens of Israel (or Israeli-Arabs) experience a marginality through the way others view the Israeli identity. There is an inherent "othering" in the remarks of those he encounters. If an Israeli is not a Jew, the assumption of mainstream society is that the individual is an "other". Outsiders (and locals) make normative assumptions about who Chris is based on the society in which he lives -- one that places Palestinians as second-tier citizens -- the miscellaneous category. He continues:

And if I tell them, "I'm a Palestinian," then they assume that I'm from the West Bank, which is also not true. If I tell them I'm an Arab, then they assume I'm Muslim, and they make some assumptions that go with that which are wrong. But they also don't apply to me, so I wouldn't want them to assume things that, you know, is not me... So it's very hard... Usually if I have to make a short introduction, I say, "I'm from Jerusalem." And that's a very clever way of saying it, because then you're not saying exactly what you are. But if I am getting to know someone closely, then I have to tell them, "I'm a Christian,

³¹ Many Palestinians work in West Jerusalem. Some Palestinians are involved in the culture there by frequenting clubs, bars, restaurants, and other cultural events. In this way, the line between cultures has begun to get blurry, but the stark reality of racism and conflict makes stating one's identity as an Arab or Palestinian in Jerusalem uncomfortable at the very least.

who is also an Arab, who is also living in Israel and Jerusalem. But yeah, I'm of original Palestinian origin," you know. So it's not fun to say all that.

The assumptions others have based on which identity Chris presents reveal the double bind of being a Palestinian citizen of Israel. I interpret his response to suggest discomfort, frustration, and potentially fear around the way in which these collective identities tell a story that is not his own. He offers a strategy for escaping this question – saying that he is from Jerusalem – but does not seem to find a comfortable solution to this predicament through his time in Kids4Peace or otherwise. Chris plays verbal gymnastics to answer the question in the most comfortable way possible.

As an individual, Malik appears to be relatively at peace with his two seemingly contradicting identities -- Israeli and Palestinian -- compared to some of the other Palestinian Israeli subjects of the study. He asserts that these identities could coincide harmoniously, if only both communities would accept that reality. Malik does not see his Israeli and Palestinian identities as mutually exclusive, but as two parts of his whole. He does not express feelings of confusion or shame, but rather identifies the conflict as the culprit of his fractured identity. Malik represents those who do not see Israeli and Palestinian identities as separate. He appears strong in his convictions and seems to know himself better through his time in Kids4Peace and other coexistence organizations. Malik says:

So I guess there's kind of a contradiction with how I identify myself. And how I identify myself, many would see as a contradiction - the idea of being both, identifying both as a Palestinian and as a citizen of Israel. But I don't think both of those things are mutually exclusive, and I think many people would identify similar to me. And I think that's a contradiction that was created by a political climate that shames and shuns people for identifying as Palestinians. I think it's also just that the war and conflict prevent people from identifying as part of both. I want to strive for equal rights in Israel among all citizens, but at the same time, I feel that's part and parcel of my Palestinian identity. I think that's something that can't be taken away from that.

Here Malik references the importance of the struggle for equal rights to his collective identity as a Palestinian. The concept of resistance and the struggle for justice are key concepts in the Palestinian master narrative and intrinsic to the Palestinian identity. To value resistance and struggle for equal rights in one's heart while simultaneously working to live harmoniously with those who represent an oppressive class may seem counterintuitive.

As mentioned above, Malik believes that stripped of the political implications, these identities could coincide without contradiction. At the same time, it appears unimaginable at this

stage to remove these political implications. An interesting contradiction arises from this assessment of the source of double bind of identity for Palestinian citizens of Israel. Although Malik asserts that Israeli and Palestinian identities could coincide harmoniously without the existence of the conflict, these identities are simultaneously shaped and reinforced by conflict.³²

The female students whom I interviewed holding both Palestinian and Israeli collective identities represented the complications associated with their identities in a simpler, reflective manner. These young women are explicit that although they hold Israeli passports, they do not identify with the Israeli collective identity. When asked to define her nationality and explain how she represents herself, Mariam laughs at the absurdity of the predicament in which she is placed. She answers:

Nationality... that is a tricky question. My -- uhh I don't know. Palestinian, I guess. Well the thing is the Palestinians -- well, because I live here - live in Jerusalem - that's like Israel. The Palestinians, they don't really say you're Palestinian. "Okay, you're Arab. And maybe you originally were Palestinian, but now you live there so..." And you have the Israeli passport, so they don't really accept you there. And here you're Arab and you're not Israeli, but you're not Palestinian. So it's a whole thing. And then your passport says "Jordanian," so you're just confused.

This interrupted speech pattern in Mariam's response exposes confusion and contradictions associated with the topic of her identity. She searches for a way to articulate her struggle and express the position of her identity. A broken speech pattern occurred frequently among subjects speaking of identity and other sensitive topics.

Mariam laughs again and admits, "So... I guess I say just I'm Arab." The frustration and confusion is evident in Mariam's speech and in the tone in which she laughs at the absurdity of her predicament. When asked how she represents herself, Mariam responds simply, "I'm Christian." She then expands on whether Kids4Peace strengthened or weakened her sense of collective identity:

Kids4Peace helped me ground my -- shape who I am as person how I see myself -- how I see others. But as a nationality, it really -- maybe it made me avoid calling myself a certain thing like Israeli or Palestinian, so I just go to the middle and just say Christian Arab. So, I guess both.

³² So much of modern Palestinian identity relates to the struggle for independence, autonomy, and equality. Likewise, much of the Israeli identity is shaped around an existential threat and need for security.

Chris articulates the complications of his own relationship with his collective identity and the heaviness of the question “what are you?” In Jerusalem, answering this question involves considering the connotations of all possible answers. Chris expresses the frustration at the psychological struggle Palestinians -- particularly those living in Jerusalem -- face when confronted with conversations around their identity:

You know, you probably say, "I'm an American" or something, and that's it... I'm just saying most of the world has something they can say that people understand. That, you know, like doesn't have a heavy heart to it. You know, like a heavy conversation that has to follow -- just where you're from.

Chris then reflects the issue of identity by acknowledging my position as an American studying identity and the complications around identity in Jerusalem. He exposes the fact that this is struggle I cannot fully comprehend given the existential security of my nationality. He contrasts his own experience of identity in a complex conflict environment with my experience of being an American.³⁴ Although the American identity carries its baggage, it provides those who hold it with extensive benefits. To Chris's point, that I do not have to question out of necessity how I present my nationality is an immense privilege. The fact that as an American, I am able to more easily separate my sense of self from my national collective identity is an expression of that privilege, as well as of a cultural upbringing that instills a sense of individualism.

Chris speaks to the complexity of his own identity, representing the dynamic, layered identities that have evolved in meaning and relationships to other groups over time but have nonetheless remained enigmatic. Chris illuminates the predicament of these group identities not fully fitting onto his own sense of self. This phenomenon of **imperfectly suited identities** rings strong throughout many of the interviews I conducted, particularly with Palestinian/Arab-Israeli youth. I found this to be a common theme among the Millennial and Gen X Jerusalemite Palestinians with whom I became acquainted during my fieldwork. Chris states:

I feel like that's a self-struggle [around identity], and has a lot of things between me... I define myself as a Palestinian, but I don't have a Palestinian nationality, so someone can tell me, "You're not a Palestinian technically." So it's very complicated. Like none of the identities that are given to me technically fit to me and it's not easy. But I don't know if Kids4Peace could help with that, even though they did make an effort to stress that idea of identity and who we are. But it gets harder.

³⁴ Hammack also emphasizes the contrast in psychological burden and identity salience between American versus Palestinian and Israeli youth (Hammack et al., 2014).

The theme of **loss or erasure of Palestinian identity** appears in my interview with Chris. He mentions the erasure of Palestinian culture and identity, which began and continues due to the conflict and the occupation³⁵ of Palestinian people and land. The Israeli state uses tools such as curriculum, manipulation of language, and state institutions to exclude Palestinian identity and narrative from the national character of the state and to “other” the identity of the Palestinians. Chris continues:

And part of the conflict here is the fading of the Palestinian identity and culture. Which in many ways caused a lot of people to forget about their national culture and stick to the religious culture, which started more of a religious conflict even within their community now. In the past ten years, you can see that there's more tension between Christians and Muslims [than] maybe 50 years ago or [that] did not exist at all 50 years ago. So now it exists because people lost their Palestinian identity, and now they're identifying with whether you're a Muslim or you're a Christian. And that's how there's more problems now. But, yeah. I don't know if Kids4Peace helped - to summarize in this aspect - but it's a very complicated aspect.

Although Chris remains ambiguous as to the part of Kids4Peace in this struggle between maintaining and erasing Palestinian national identity. It is relevant to note that Kids4Peace brands itself as an interfaith organization, focusing on the three major religions in Jerusalem –

³⁵ Malik does not explicitly mention the occupation. However, I found through my experience in Jerusalem that some Palestinians, particularly citizens of Israel, are more delicate than others in using these terms in company of unknown political associations. An individual using the term ‘occupation’ can hold a variety of implications about the individual’s political position, but this term most often indicates a left-leaning, pro-peace, or “pro-Palestinian” position. Therefore, using this term as a Palestinian citizen of Israel or resident of Jerusalem in the company of those who oppose these views could potentially invite social or physical harm. Many members of the Israeli Palestinian collective **code switch** (alternate between two or more languages or terminology in conversation) in order to avoid this harm and succeed in their environment.

High-context cultures like that of Palestinians often use indirect or symbolic language in communication. This style is likely shaped by both cultural communication patterns and the experience of living under foreign occupation and suppression of national expression (vague language becomes practical in a highly tense political environment). Additionally, high-context communication is a trait Palestinians share with other Arab cultures, but for Palestinians high-context communication also serves as an adaptive mechanism through which Palestinians may express themselves while under political and social suppression. High-context communication involves buried, blurred, or suggested meanings, as meaning is often found in the context rather than the overt content of the message. Symbolic language often takes the place of the direct speech associated with low-context cultures. Palestinians under occupation, for instance, used the symbol of a watermelon to represent their flag when the overt symbol of the flag itself was banned (Zaharna, Hammad, & Masri, 2009).

Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. Although the programming does discuss the Palestinian collective identity, much of the program is also focused on religious identity.³⁶

Malik also references the erasure of Palestinian identity as a concern. Malik points to **terminology** in the struggle between maintaining Palestinian identity and adopting Israeli culture for Palestinians living within the Green Line. He emphasizes that this challenge may be exacerbated by the context of Jerusalem, where divides are both stark but blurred in certain circumstances (i.e. the workplace, entertainment centers, etc.). Malik asserts:

I can't pretend that I'm Israeli or... a lot of people would use the term Arab-Israeli. I don't like that term, because I feel it strips me of the Palestinian-ness that I definitely feel I identify with. Especially being here in Jerusalem. Maybe it's not always common with people in the north - people in Nazareth or Haifa or Acre - maybe it's not as apparent. But for me, that's something that's a key central part of my identity.

This theme of **erasure of the Palestinian identity** appears in the Palestinian experience in Kids4Peace, particularly because the organization focuses primarily on grouping individuals based on religion rather than national group. This could be one way the organization de-politicizes its work.

As mentioned in Chapter II, Israel's state-designed curriculum aims at propagating the Israeli master narrative and minimizing mention of a national Palestinian character. When learning about history and culture in Israel, students are taught that Israel is a diverse country that hosts Muslims, Christians, and Druze as well as Jews, but often does not describe this group as Palestinians. Palestinian national holidays and important historical events are ignored.³⁷ Although many Palestinians citizens of Israel attend all Arab schools that use the *Tawjihi*³⁸ curriculum, the Israeli state is currently fighting to instate its own curriculum in Arab schools.

Chris and Malik do not credit Kids4Peace as an aid in easing the inner struggle around their personal relationships with collective identity. Each describe Kids4Peace as an organization aimed more toward mending the conflict between peoples, but not so much the struggle within

³⁶ The focus on faith is interesting to note, because although many participants do identify as religious, there is a significant portion who do not. The common denominator of all participants is a connection to a national identity group (either Israeli, Palestinian, or both). It would be logical to aim for a roughly even division between Israeli and Palestinian-identifying participants. The choice by early leadership of the organization to divide members evenly by faith (one-third Jewish, one-third Christian, one-third Muslim) creates a dynamic in which Jewish participants are largely outnumbered. This begs the question, why the emphasis on faith over nationality?

³⁷ Presenting Palestinian culture and key historical events would negate pieces of the Israeli master narrative described in Chapter II.

³⁸ Tawjihi is the curriculum taught in Arab Palestinian schools.

oneself. Other participants did cite Kids4Peace as an aid in solidifying their sense of selves and confidence in their identities.

A Resident without a Country: Jerusalem Residents with the Blue ID

As mentioned in Chapter II, many Jerusalemite Palestinians do not hold Israeli or Palestinian citizenship. Rather, these Palestinians hold a blue ID which grants them Jerusalem residency. Without prior knowledge, I was unable to decipher which Palestinian youths in the Kids4Peace program were Israeli citizens and which were residents holding a Blue ID. After I collected my data, I discovered that only one of my subjects holds a Blue ID. The remaining participants are Palestinians in Israel or Israeli Arab or Israeli Jews.

It seems meaningful that out of all the students who were recommended for an interview, only one is a Jerusalem resident. This could be explained both by social inequalities and cultural necessity. From my experience in Jerusalem and the expertise of my advisor, I gather that Jerusalemite residents in many ways tend to be more linked to Palestinian society outside of the Israeli state. Palestinian Jerusalemite residents with the blue ID travel more easily between the West Bank and Jerusalem. Many have family members living on the other side of the separation barrier in the West Bank and travel frequently to spend time with them. In this way, these residents with the Blue ID may experience certain sociocultural obligations to the Palestinian community in a way that is unique from Palestinian citizens of Israel, who are inherently embedded in Israeli society by the nature of their citizenship.

Palestinian citizens of Israel (or Israeli-Arabs) have already submitted to some forms of Israeli society by default. These individuals use Israeli services and often enjoy Israeli entertainment. Most Israeli-Arabs speak Hebrew, whereas not all Palestinian residents have access to the Hebrew language learning. This disparity leaves Palestinian residents with less economic and social opportunities than those with Israeli citizenship.

Those Israeli-Arabs with whom I spoke seemed to hold Western, pluralistic, and liberal ideals in many ways. For this reason, these youths seem to be the kind of candidates Kids4Peace staff would recommend for the study. These youths also seemed to be relatively open about their experiences in Kids4Peace, and they freely offered criticisms of the organization as well as various cultural issues in Jerusalem and the West Bank.

The sole Palestinian resident I interviewed was the one most concerned with whether his information would be identifiable in the publication of my research. I asked him to explain in his own words what this interview meant for him in relation to his Palestinian community. He

explained that he did not want his community to know about his involvement in Kids4Peace. From observations during my time in Jerusalem, the segment of the Palestinian population with the blue ID (indicating Jerusalem residency) seems to be even more deeply connected and socially influenced by Palestinian culture in the West Bank than those with Israeli citizenship, although both feel this connection to varying degrees.

When asked, “what is your nationality and how to do you represent yourself?” Ahmed definitively answers, “I’m Palestinian,” with no additional comment. His answer was so definitive, that as an interviewer, something stopped me from digging deeper into the issue.

Occupier or Ally, Left-wing or Right-Wing? The Predicament of Israeli Jewish Identity

Although the number of Jewish Israelis enrolled in the Kids4Peace programs is relatively low compared to Muslims and Christian Palestinians, this population is and has historically been surprisingly diverse. Many Jewish Israeli participants do come from Left-wing backgrounds, but some also come from more Right-wing communities. Jewish Israelis in the program range from secular to religious.³⁹ This diversity in ideology and religiosity leads to different experiences even within this group.

Yael discusses the salience of her religiosity among the other Jewish Israeli participants. The fact that she was one of the only religious Jews in her group led her to feel an additional layer of difference and the need to represent her sub-sect of the Jewish community. Yael explains:

So, like when we did go on Kids4peace to Camp Michael when I was twelve, the big issue was being Jewish and religious. Like some of the activities we did on Saturday, I was like, “Oh, I actually can’t do this”. And no one realized that, because no one realized that’s not something you wouldn’t be able to do on Shabbat. Like they said, “okay, we’re going to do the tie-dying on Saturday.” And I’m like, “Oh, I can’t do that.” And they say, “Oh, we have pool time,” but there’s not *ehovs*, so I can’t take my towel. Or like there’s grass outside, so I can’t like go onto the grass while I’m dripping wet, because that’s not allowed. And so a lot of things that you feel like, “oh, suddenly I’m a representative.” I feel like when we later joined the different delegations that we had to each area. Like we had -- we went to Georgia and there were some different chapters. So once we were all together, there were some more religious kids and there were more people identifying with me. So it stopped feeling like I had to represent and more like we

³⁹ Although I did not observe any Orthodox or Ultra-orthodox participants, one alumna cited having a friend from an Orthodox background.

were a group. They're not going to do anything to hurt me, because now there's a group, and like, they can't screw over an entire group.

The process of Jewish Israelis (particularly those from Right-wing and Religious Zionist backgrounds) to reconcile their Zionist identity and belief systems with more liberal coexistence belief systems is highlighted through their participation in Kids4Peace. To this point, Yael asserts:

Like one of my friends said, the biggest problem, and the reason that there's all this conflict in the Middle East is Zionism. And I had to think back and start saying, "Wow. What does Zionism stand for? What are its roots? Why would that conflict with Palestinian Identity? Why is this the cause of the conflict and why is this still a problem? And if so, how do I keep my Zionistic identity without hurting other people?" Which is a big issue that is hard to resolve and takes a lot of thinking. And even today I'm not really one-hundred percent able to explain my beliefs without feeling like I'm hurting one side of my identity as someone who participated in Kids4peace and cares about Arab people and people who aren't on the "winning side." And on the other hand, I mean, as a Jewish Zionist, how do I not hurt that part of my identity and don't lie to myself about what I do care about?

Yael acknowledges the way her friends perceive and have been hurt by Zionism. As she grapples with what it means to be a Zionist in the context of both Israeli and Palestinian narratives, she asks herself some difficult questions.

Yael appears committed to this journey of reconciling her relationship to Zionism with her relationship to Kids4Peace. However, Yael's future entails a further dive into Zionism in a context which likely promotes its ideology. This both shows the importance of the seeds planted by Kids4Peace and the potential limitations of these seeds when competing with the powerful, state-sponsored tools that promote a nationalist narrative.⁴⁰ Yael continues:

So my school is very big on talking about identity and really figuring that out. Next year, I hope to go into a pre-army program that one of its main focuses is Zionism and leadership and Zionist identity, which is something that I hope to sort of get into and really be able to understand. To learn a lot more about the conflict, what it means day to day and a lot of its roots, which are still difficult to understand when there are conflicting narratives. And every day we uncover parts of the history book that we didn't really want to uncover if they are uncomfortable or conflict with what we knew until now. I

⁴⁰ For Israeli Jews, these tools include pre-army programs like the one Yael describes, army enlistment, and other programs that promote a nationalist agenda.

think that's really something that will help me... I don't know the word in English... To really work on my identity and to give it a stronger face.

Yael hopes to uncover the uncomfortable truths that contradict the Israeli – and more specifically Zionist – master narrative that colored her view of the land on which she lives. It seems that she aims to gain a deeper understanding of her belief system by challenging it. She does not shy away from ugly truths or criticism of her Zionist identity. Instead, she grasps for understanding. When asked if Kids4Peace led Yael to question her ideas around her collective identity, she responded:

Not necessarily my identity but what more what I was told my identity has in it. I was told, “we're a Zionistic family.” My mom made Aliyah and came here in her twenties. My dad is from a kibbutz, and my grandparents came and built a lot of the ___ aspects of the country... participating in that wave of *Chamutzim*. And I mean, I always knew that, but I never knew what that entailed. Like, “Okay, I'm Zionistic. I live in Israel. I buy Israeli products. I go to the army. I think it's important to serve our country.” But on the other hand, I was also raised that you can't hurt other people like for ideological reasons. And so, how does that tie in? How do I say, “I'm a Zionist,” when the meaning of the word took a new turn. Like when a Palestinian friend of mine says it as if it's the worst epidemic to ever arise. How do I explain what to me being a Zionist means without giving up on any of the foundations I was raised on?

Although Yael brings up this point, she also describes her community as one that incubates the same values of Kids4Peace:

I mean, it's kind of funny, because the community I'm in has a lot of people who were either in Kids4Peace or believe in the cause. I mean, a really good family friend of mine is Omri, who was basically the face of Kids4peace for a while. Umm... so it's not like there's this conflict between what I believe in and the people who surround me.

Yael and Israeli Jews like her who come from a pro-peace background may have a more intuitive psychological integration phase of the Kids4Peace process – when youth bring the experiences, they have had through Kids4Peace back into their daily lives. These participants may have more support from community members and family or already have access to other integrated spaces such as the bilingual Hand in Hand school.

Adina represents the right-wing minority of Kids4Peace. Right-wing participants are uncommon given the culture and recruitment practices of the organization⁴¹. Adina expresses some frustration with the assumptions placed on her as a right-wing Israeli Jew:

Like me, specifically, and also my family are right-wing. And in all of Kids4Peace, I'm the only right-wing here. It's horrible. Because also, a lot of people say, "You're right-wing. What are you doing here?" And I feel like it depends how you define Kids4Peace. Because I define Kids4Peace as a place where I get-- like just because I'm right-wing, it doesn't mean I'm not going to talk to an Arab or be friends with an Arab. It's just when there are certain situations, my politics are more to the right. It's not like a stereotypical, "Oh, you're right. So let's kick out all the Arabs" -- Not like that.

Here Adina presents her perception of a nuanced right-wing identity and defends her moral position. It is significant to note Adina's suggestion that her own definition of Kids4Peace may differ from the definition others in the organization based on her group affiliation. Her perception of Kids4Peace adjusts around her goals and visions as a right-wing Jewish Israeli.

Noa offers her perspective as a secular Jew in the program who felt confused by the program's religious focus:

And the rest of it, maybe I got some-- how do you say it? Like religious knowledge. Because I wasn't religious at all. I'm not religious at all [laughter]. And Kids4Peace was the first time that I actually-- I mean I think that their agenda maybe-- that's how I remember it that their agenda is that this conflict is religious based kind of maybe. I mean not just but some of it... After 10 years in the program, I'm still trying to figure it out. Yeah. It's definitely complicated the way they present things. And I think maybe they believe that the peace or I don't know maybe that coexistence will come from learning other people's religion. I think that might be more a part of it than the conflict itself being religious. But yeah, I think they use that as a tool to help people understand each other. That was really weird for me because I never got to practice my own religion and now I have to practice some other people religion. And I had no idea. I mean they spoke about Judaism and they spoke about Islam and Christianity and I understood them both. All of them I understood the same level, because I had no idea. And all the information I got was from Kids4Peace because my family is not religious. And my school [Hand-in-Hand] really tries not to go into religious details because it's kind of complicated. We

⁴¹ Kids4Peace recruits through community outreach and awareness. Therefore, recruitment in the larger Israeli Jewish community has primarily remained within the realm of left-wing communities. Some Jewish participants have at least one international parent and go to more left-leaning schools. Some come from Hand-in-Hand, Jerusalem's interfaith school.

learn about the basics about all religions. And then we stop in my school because which religion would I go to? Do I go deeper into my religion or other people religion or--? So I think Kids4Peace wasn't afraid in practicing and learning about some other people-- I mean, about religion. So I think I got lots of information about this from Kids4Peace. And I think about most of the knowledge about the conflict that I have is not from Kids4Peace. It's from outside of Kids4Peace... I think it's not a religious conflict. And they thought maybe -- not that it's a religious conflict, but that religion has a part in it. And I think, yeah, they use it as a tool. But I didn't feel connected to that tool at all. So I felt like I don't get to speak about the things that really matter to me in this conflict, but I'm really interested. I'm really interested in that. So I think it's a small thing, but it's also a really big thing because I felt really frustrated to go to these meetings which were around religion. And I don't feel connected not to my religion, not to other people religions. Yeah. So I think mostly this.

Noa also expresses the difficulty she feels in remaining left-wing in Israeli society:

I think with time and everything that's happening outside -- everything that's happening in Israel right now and in Jerusalem in specific -- it's really hard to remain left-wing here. It's really hard to believe in one of them. I think it became harder and harder through the years to believe. I have to go to my school and to go to Kids4Peace. It became harder and harder.

Kids4Peace as a Platform for Understanding Relationship to Collective Identity

Most subjects of the study reported that their experience in Kids4Peace helped to shape, contest, accentuate, and/or solidify their understanding of and relationship to their collective identity.

Malik utilized the Kids4Peace programs as a venue through which to process his relationship to the collective identities he holds – both Palestinian and Israeli – and their master narratives. His coming to an even more solid understanding of this relationship and his individual self occurred through his experience in Kids4Peace, albeit in a round-about fashion. It seems that through a dissonance between the Kids4Peace coexistence narrative, which Malik felt he was obligated to propagate, and his own personal and collective narratives that he seems to arrive to a stronger sense of self and assuredness in his convictions.

One of Malik's most powerful anecdotes described an interview he gave for the American press in which he played the role of an Arab-Israeli representative of Kids4Peace. He

recalled feeling pressured to present a rose-colored, coexistence narrative. Afterwards, he regretted that he did not respond with a more authentic presentation of his own truth and the truth of his people. Malik recalls:

I think that's something that definitely harms the reputation of these programs in the Palestinian society. I think when we start adopting these falsities about the occupation, or when we start saying things more lightly, because it just sounds nicer to say them that way, or even because it's scary to do that. It takes a lot of courage to say that to an Israeli. I definitely understand the **fear** that's associated with it. But the impact that you'd be having on that Israeli student if you're not actually honest with the things that you go through is subliminal compared to the impact that you would have if you were actually honest. And yeah, I think I see that a lot in a lot of videos of Kids4Peace and other organizations where Palestinian students go up, and they speak about their experience and-- I don't know how to put this -- It's not a self-fulfilling prophecy, but it's like because Kids4Peace fosters that equality between students and giving both Palestinians and Israelis the equal -- and calling it a conflict and not an occupation. And having this idea of respect, yeah, emphasizing the idea of respect so much. Although it's good to have respect, but they emphasize it so much that I think it makes Palestinian students give the organization what they think it wants to hear rather than what they actually feel. And that's something that I've definitely experienced with other students. ... And it's something that I even fell onto in the past. In my first few years in Kids4Peace, I wasn't true to myself and my political opinions. In that 2014 Gaza thing, the war on Gaza, there was a lot of press coverage of the camp. And see, I was in Seattle at the time, so there was a lot of press coverage of that. And very often we'd be asked about what we think about the war on Gaza. And I think one time I answered that we, as in a collective of Israelis, Palestinians are suffering-- I think I said something along the lines of, "We suffer from the rockets from Gaza like we suffer from the rockets into Gaza," or something like that. And I don't think that was true. I think, even at the time, if you were taking me for a one-on-one conversation and asked me, "Is this really true to what you think?" I would have said no. But in my heart, I always thought that that's the reaction that Kids4Peace wanted to elicit from me. And so that's what I said. And at the end, actually, I got a lot of backlash for it. And I was a sixth-grade student. I was like twelve-years-old, cut me some slack. But even on the article that that quote was in, I think I got some hate in the comments from people that I didn't even know. Yeah, I

didn't even know about it, actually, until I came back and my parents told me, "Well, look. People said this, this, this, this about you."

... So, yeah, I think the best and most straightforward thing is to just encourage honesty. I think the impact would be so much greater if people just emphasized honesty. Emphasize that they shouldn't go into this organization with predetermined opinions about what they want. I think, also, the organization's kind of at fault for promoting that. Many times we've been asked by-- in certain activities, we've been asked to give a Palestinian narrative of a certain event, an Israeli narrative of a certain event, and then come together and bring a Kids4Peace narrative of a certain event. And it's very, very, very corrosive to any sort of positive, meaningful discussion that we'd be having. It's terrible. To adopt a Kids4Peace narrative that's a centrist narrative just for the sake of being centrist, I think it's terrible. It's really, really bad. And I think it hurts the impact that it has. I think in the minds of participants, it means that you should change your opinion. You should change your opinion this much. Or because there's a Kids4Peace narrative, just adopt that Kids4Peace narrative without actually considering facts and statistics and the stories of other participants.

Malik admonishes the idea of propagating a centrist narrative for participants to blindly adopt. He offers a powerful assessment of the authenticity of this centrist narrative. This quote from his interview lays the foundation for much of the criticism of coexistence work.⁴² This quotation also provides interpretation of the participants of Kids4Peace and their authenticity; in this way, it presents a meta view of the other interviews in the study. This lens led me to question whether this dynamic played out in my own interviews with participants. Malik's remarks brought me back to responses given by other participants. Muna, for example, when asked if anything in Kids4Peace could be done better, said:

No, I guess everything they do is quite amazing and lovely. I love everything about it. It was really really amazing and lovely. I loved it so much. And I really enjoyed the people who were with us. The company, the advisors, everything was great and amazing.

Many of Muna's responses were along the same lines – optimistic, appreciative and complimentary of the Kids4Peace program. Although she very possibly meant this glowing

⁴² These insights lend themselves to some of the larger criticisms of the coexistence organizations such as Kids4Peace, Seeds of Peace, and Hands of Peace. This is linked to the conversation about normalization in Chapter V.

review, I wondered why these responses aligned so perfectly with a coexistence narrative that supports the activities and proposed ideals of Kids4Peace.⁴³

In other interviews, some clues suggest that participants may potentially feel pressured to accept the centrist narrative outlined by Malik. There is a possibility that, as he says, participants internalize expectations implicitly laid out by the organization. Saed, for example, when asked what he has gained from his time in Kids4Peace, responds:

The other side's view – like, point of view. What they think. That this land belongs to them. We think that this land belongs to us. Like so on. We get to hear their opinion, and this can change our minds. You can be against an idea, but when you hear the other side's story. It can change up your mind.

Then, when asked in what way it may have changed his mind, Saed admits:
Until now, there is no major change, but I think that later -- by the years -- that it will change. I'm not sure if it will change or anything, but it can change other people.

This response highlights an expectation that participants will change their beliefs about the conflict. This expectation seems to be felt and articulated more so by Palestinian participants. Another interpretation of this response suggests that Saed originally meant that the minds of Jewish Israelis could be changed through contact with Palestinian participants like himself, not the other way around.

4.3 Emotional Themes: Shame, Fear, and Alienation

The emotion-based themes that emerged from the research are some of the most memorable and significant. A variety of emotional themes appeared in the interviews -- both positive and negative -- presenting the nuanced and paradoxical nature of the experience of youth in Kids4Peace. Some of these themes are: hope, disillusionment, fear, pride, shame, confusion, belonging, alienation, and strength. However, to better understand the complexities of participation related to collective identity, this section focuses on three emotional themes: shame, fear, and alienation. Shame and fear around one's group identity and its associations appear in interviews with both Palestinian Israeli citizens and Jewish Israelis, as does alienation from that collective identity group. Examples of these emotions arise in interviews with Malik and Chris on the Palestinian (Israeli-Arab) side, and with Alma and Johann on the Israeli Jewish side. The

⁴³ Another reason for this style of response could be the timing of our interview. The interview was held immediately before a Kids4Peace workshop while the other kids were socializing inside the event space. Muna may have been less present and rushed through answers in order to return to her friends.

theme of alienation from collective identity group arises as an important theme in discussing the place of Kids4Peace in society and how participation may impact an individual's relationship to their identity group.

The following section provides a snapshot of the complex nature of the psyche placed in the unique position of these youth in Jerusalem. Although delineated by single emotional themes, these themes are interactional and multidimensional by nature. These sections contain overlap as these emotions interact reciprocally and compound one another.

Opposition to participation of Kids4Peace is deeply connected to collective identity content and loyalties. This opposition affects participants to varying degrees depending on the strength and quality of their connection to the collective group and their position in the community. Some participants minimize the impact of this opposition in their interviews, suggesting that these attitudes do not sway them.

Although some of these participants experience bullying, many seem to minimize its harm as a possible coping mechanism. Some may also find the pay-off of Kids4Peace to be worth standing out in their community. Some, like Muna, even cite the opposition they experience as a source of strength and motivation to continue doing the work. They may not be as strongly identified with their collective group and value their own independence and individual identity to a greater degree. In other cases, these youth were raised in communities that valued coexistence and were exposed at a young age to this peace narrative. This peacenik subculture can lead to the placement of harmonious and coexistence values over group affiliation in some cases, even in a collectivist culture in an ethnonational conflict. The relative privilege of the youth entering the program may play a role in their ability to maintain some level of detachment when it comes to criticism from their communities.

In contrast to Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza or to Israeli Jews living in majority Jewish areas in Israel (or in settlements), living in Jerusalem puts many Israeli-Arab youth and adults in a position of coexistence of convenience and survival. All the same, these youth report experiencing light to heavy levels of opposition from friends, family members, teachers, and even from complete strangers, exacerbating feelings of shame in the youth. The content of this opposition often implies that participants in the organization are less legitimate members of their group or that they are traitors in some way. Other teasing involves painting participants of Kids4Peace as idealistic and naïve. Opposers exhibit a lack of understanding of the rationale for joining Kids4Peace and express disapproval of its activities.

Shame

Shame is a painful emotion that responds to a sense of failure to attain some ideal state. Youth in Jerusalem feel shame in the context of their identity due to the expectations and meaning placed on their collective identities. These expectations are impossible to meet for youth in the nexus of two competing collective identity groups (Israeli and Palestinian). Youth internalize the lack of coherency between their sense of selves and the expectations and meaning associated with their collective identities as shame. Malik and Chris discuss shame around the Palestinian piece of their Israeli-Arab identity in the context of the racism they face in their daily lives and in response to institutional racism that exists in the use of language and mainstream assumptions about what it means to be Israeli. Malik explains how shame is intertwined with the contradictions within his identity:

So I guess there's kind of a contradiction with how I identify myself and how ...like how I identify myself, many would see as a contradiction - the idea of being both, identifying both as a Palestinian and as a citizen of Israel. But I don't think both of those things are mutually exclusive, and I think many people would identify similar to me. And I think that's a contradiction that was created by a political climate that shames and shuns people for identifying as Palestinians. I think it's also ... I think it's also just that the war and conflict that prevents people from identifying as part of both.

For participants and alumni of the program, the data brings up themes of shame and fear around being an Arab in an Israeli setting. Chris reports observing a reluctance from his fellow classmates to reveal their Arab identity to non-Arabs at the Hebrew University. Although Chris pushes through his own discomfort, he confronts issues of collective identity-based shame through his Arab acquaintances. He reports experiencing discomfort in observing this phenomenon:

It's very hard for me. This is one of the biggest issues I'm seeing at the university, you know. I see one of my classmates who is also a Christian. He doesn't like to tell all our classmates that he's an Arab. I notice it. I notice that he avoids it, and I know because I get a weird feeling when I have to say it. But I always force myself to not feel ashamed, because I feel like I'm stupid if I'm ashamed of who I am. You know? But I've seen not only him, but a lot of people, who don't like saying they're Arabs because of the looks that they might get, or the fact that they might get isolated. And they end up finding very funny, clever ways of avoiding that question and answering [ambiguously]. And it's not

fun, you know? It's not fun to also feel like you should feel ashamed of who you are, you know?

As Arab Palestinian citizens living in Jerusalem, Malik and Chris also report their experience of **racism** in after-school activities. These experiences of racism may or may not have impacted their experience in Kids4Peace. Each went into the program having been ostracized as an Arab Palestinian surrounded by Israeli Jews:

Chris describes his experience as a child facing racism while playing tennis in his neighborhood:

One of the things I remember also was I used to play tennis and -- because tennis was next to my house, which is just tennis center wherever -- and I was kind of facing some racism there by Jewish people when I was a kid. It was not very fun at all. I started feeling that there's legit racism. I was spat at, cursed [at]. They didn't want to be my friends a lot of times. It was not very fun, especially when you're like eight or nine or whatever.

Malik explains his participation in extracurriculars primarily attended by Israeli Jews:

It didn't lead to a lot of meaningful interaction between me and the Israeli students. At best I would say it didn't have much impact, at worst it was quite confrontational. It was harrassing. There were a lot of racist... when I look at it now, I can see racist things being said much more clearly. I remember this a while back actually... I was surprised that back then I didn't stand up for it, and the teacher didn't stand up for it...(4:40) I was sitting in class. I used to be -- believe it or not -- I used to be a very quiet kid in these extra curriculars. I didn't speak to many people. And I would be sitting quietly and minding my own business. And I think *for* sitting quietly, one of the Israeli students had said I'm a "good Arab" for doing that. And I didn't give it much attention back then. In fact, I think I thought it was a compliment. But now in hindsight, it's so surprising to me how the teacher -- at the time the substitute teacher -- just responded to that with a smirk. It was even like he showed any --possibly he showed agreement, or he enabled that to happen.

... But there are a lot of occurrences like that. Unfortunately, it's not something to ___ I've had a lot of friends in the same situation where they're a minority in an Israeli educational framework. I've had friends who have had their hair burned. It's quite tough to be the minority in these things. Most definitely most definitely you can't have a political discussion without people ganging up on you. You have to learn that some subjects are just taboo to speak about.

Due to the racism Malik faced, Kids4Peace presented a new opportunity through which he was able to discuss politics with Israeli Jews in a safe setting. A safe space for expression is particularly valuable space for students who have the desire to have these conversations, but have been made to feel afraid, uncomfortable, and disempowered in mixed group environments.

Malik expresses ambivalence around the **terminology of “Arab-Israeli”**. There seems to be a dissonance in identifying as an Israeli, but not as a Palestinian. Replacing “Palestinian-ness” with “Arabnes” strips the Palestinian part of his identity of its legitimacy and importance in the public sphere and symbolically strips the Palestinians of the right to a nation. Malik says: I can’t pretend that I’m Israeli or... a lot of people would use the term Arab-Israeli. I don’t like that term, because I feel it strips me of the Palestinian-ness that I definitely feel I identify with - especially being here in Jerusalem. Maybe it’s not always common with people in the north - people in Nazareth or Haifa or Acre - maybe it’s not as apparent. But for me, that’s something that’s a key central part of my identity.

Noa and Johann express an active detachment from the collective **Jewish Israeli identity** due to shame catalyzed by the racist structures of the Israeli state in which they hold privilege. The implication is that these feelings are related to guilt they may feel in their association with an oppressive regime.

A theme that arose from interviews with leftist-raised Jewish-Israeli students is **detachment from the master Israeli narrative** and collective identity. These participants arrived to Kids4Peace already with a larger political and social consciousness than those who strictly adopt the Israeli master narrative. At some point it appears that a few of these individuals chose to separate themselves from either the Israeli collective identity or Jewish identity. This process of detachment seems to be associated with feelings of responsibility and guilt around Jewish privilege in Israel, policies of the Israeli state, and actions of the Israeli Defense Forces.

Noa serves as an example of a young Jewish Israeli woman who attended the mixed school Hand-in-Hand and was raised with Left-wing, pro-peace values. She was exposed to the coexistence narrative through her time at Hand in Hand, maybe even beforehand through her family. Therefore, the ideals of Kids4Peace are already ingrained in part of her identity. However, because of her group’s position in the conflict, at some points in her journey, Noa seemed to struggle with feelings of shame and coming to terms with her privilege in the Jewish state and the associations her identity holds. Noa recalls:

It was [difficult]. I mean in Kids4Peace, it was really hard for me to say in Kids4Peace that I am Jewish Israeli. Because it meant something for people there that it didn't mean for me. And I understood that throughout the years in Kids4Peace that saying I'm Israeli

and I'm Jewish. Jewish Israeli is not as objective... Yeah. It's not as objective as I thought it was. So there for sure, I thought about it a lot. And I didn't feel comfortable saying that I'm Jewish Israeli all the time. And I didn't use the word Jewish in lots of places. And it was the same like Israeli or something. Or Hebrew-speaking or something. I think I wasn't comfortable with my Jewish identity for a long time. Around middle school and high school, I didn't feel comfortable with it. Because just about how we spoke about the privilege we have. And the fact that I can come here and be a citizen and get my citizenship. I didn't feel comfortable about it. I think Raufman, which was an all-Jews program that I did, that kind of made it a little more comfortable. A lot more comfortable. Now I don't feel afraid to say that I'm Jewish, that I deserve to be here just like every other person. Not instead of other people. And I'm also really proud of the fact that I'm Jewish. I think that proud, and I know it comes with lots of *achrayut* -- responsibility... Actually, I think it's Kids4peace had a really big part of [why I felt uncomfortable saying I'm Jewish]. I don't know why I can't-- I don't remember specifically that conversation that I wasn't feeling comfortable with my Jewish identity. But I know that the Palestinian side was really vocal and was heard a lot. Maybe more than the Israeli side. And yeah, that was part of why I didn't feel so comfortable about my Jewish identity. I can't remember why. Maybe it was just me. Maybe it was the first time that I heard about all those terrible, terrible things that are happening just next to me. And I was so in shock that I got into defense and thinking, "No, that can't be the whole story." But now I know that it kind of is the whole story. And at least that's what matters to me that people are unsafe here. And feeling threatened and going through checkpoints everyday -- that's the main thing for me. Maybe this time was the first time I've heard about those things and I said to myself, "that can't be it." But it is. So yeah, Kids4peace had a big part of it.

Some of the Left-leaning participants simply did not feel a deep connection to their national citizenship for various reasons. Johann too is a Left-leaning Jewish Israeli with a complex background (like many Jewish immigrants), which mixes both Middle Eastern and European roots. His desire to detach from his Israeli identity seems to signal a disapproval of the Israeli project and governmental policy. On the other hand, this distancing from group identity appears to be a privilege of a generation of youth who are coming of age in contemporary Israeli society. Johann says:

So technically I have an Israeli citizenship. I'm Jewish. I'm a reform Jew. My mother is Yemenite. My father is Austrian. But if you were to ask me, I don't necessarily define

myself as Israeli. [There are] a lot of reasons why, but generally it's that I don't have a particular affinity or connection to an extent that I would actually identify with being Israeli. Although I do acknowledge the fact that I was born here, I live here, I participated in all of the cultural societal systems that constitute being an Israeli, but I still would rather not identify as such. I would say I'm from Jerusalem. And generally Jewish and other stuff. But when it comes to nationality, I wouldn't say I'm Israeli. If they would ask me, "are you Israeli" specifically, I would say yes. But it wouldn't be the first thing I would say about myself when someone would ask me, "who are you?"

It is not only Palestinian citizens of Israel who avoid claiming Israeli as their nationality. However, as a Jew, Johann likely chooses Jerusalem over Israel as a descriptor for his residence for different reasons.

Fear

Fear is a common theme experienced by both Palestinian and Israeli youth in Jerusalem. Participants report being bullied for their participation in Kids4Peace and confronted by outsiders. At times the coexistence work these youth participate in attracts confrontations that could potentially become dangerous to their physical and psychological well-being, emphasizing the real risk of this kind of peace work in a conflict environment. In his interview, Hamza recalls a time in which a group of boys were confronted by a group of Jewish Israelis while on a seminar:

But one time, we did [face opposition to coexistence work], as a group. And this was at a seminar three or four years ago... We weren't kids anymore. So what happened is-- we were Israelis and Palestinians in the same group. And it was then like we'd finished our activities. We're just in a room. Obviously, guys and girls [separated]. So the way the hostel was built was in layers. And each room had its own balcony, but you could look directly onto the lower floor's balcony. And so a few of us were outside on our balcony, and we noticed that on the level above -- there were like two or three rooms next to each other. And the guys were outside. They were drinking, smoking, listening to music, and hanging out. Very different. They were, I remember this, they were Mizrahi Jews from Rishpon... So a little bit of a rougher and kind of more divided background -- like lower, working-class sort of. Tall, big guys... So they noticed that we were—that there were Arabs and Jews. They noticed the Israelis, but also that there were non-Israelis. So they had a lot of questions. And then in the beginning, it was I think a lot of talk about like,

"Oh, what are you doing here?". But then they noticed that there were Israelis and Palestinians. And so then they didn't like it. I remember they called to one of the Israeli boys, "*boged*" -- "traitor". I remember that once, someone was trying to climb onto our balcony. They knocked on our door... So yeah. That's something I remember. Like just as Israelis and Palestinians being together-- like -- yeah. We met Israelis who didn't like that. But that was just a very-- it was something we had to deal with as a group the next day with our advisors, but it wasn't like every day.

Chris laments the fact that, although he has made good Jewish friends at Kids4Peace, he knows that many of them will join the army and may participate in violent or discriminatory treatment of his people. Chris describes his thoughts and feelings around the issue:

It's not easy. It's not easy. I mean I don't take anything personally, because I know a lot... they're forced to go into the army. I know if I was in their case, I would go into the army. And maybe even -- I would try to go for the best unit in the army too. Because I'm just an ambitious person. And that's what they put in front of me, that's what I'm going to do. So I understand that point. But it's not easy, because in the end of the day, the reality of the situation is after what I've seen in my life, I feel like in the end of the day the army is -- you can call it defense army -- but it's defending against someone. And that person is us -- Arab people. We're even Arab citizens, which is very unfortunate... I mean, if you want to say that a lot of people make the case that, "okay, Arabs from outside are coming in, Gaza and West Bank these outside are coming in behind." But even as an Arab citizen that technically has every right like any other citizen. We get treated like shit by the army, by the police. Things like that... So it's not easy for me, because I know that they go there, they go into the army, and they're probably fucking around with, messing, I'm sorry for using sorry for using, messing around with some Arab on the checkpoint or they're probably going to some Arab's house and breaking things in there. Yeah, so it's not easy. But I understand also that a lot of them don't want to be in the army. And rather do their own thing for three years. And some of them actually can't wait to go to the army. I mean one time we were actually on our way to Kids4Peace, me and another guy who's also in Kids for Peace. And no joke, we started talking to an American Jew, and he did not know the Arabs. And I don't know how we mentioned the military, and just goes like this, like the whispering. He's like, "But I wouldn't mind to join the army and shoot some Arabs." Quietly like that -- whispering.

In addition to some presence of fear and ambivalence, these anecdotes exhibit how through this fear and ambivalence, trust issues between Arab/Palestinian and Jewish Israeli

participants could continue to lay latent or even grow during participation in the Kids4Peace program.

Chris does not blame the individuals, however. He demonstrates empathy for Jewish Israelis and acknowledges the difficulty in reconciling the juxtaposition of the harmonious world of Kids4Peace with the harsh, violent reality outside in which his people face poor treatment from soldiers and police officers. Chris also cites a racist incident perpetrated by an American Jewish male on the bus on Chris's way to Kids4Peace. Subtle notes of fear appear in his response to my question. Kids4Peace, which attempts to reduce feelings of fear in interaction with the other, cannot erase the certainty of the future of some of the Jewish youths with whom he interacts.

Alienation

In this section, I investigate how external opposition to individuals' participation in Kids4Peace creates a sense of alienation from collective identity group, which in Jerusalem, means one's family and community. The alienation from one's collective identity and questioning of allegiances relates to deeper issues of identity for these youth surviving in a conflict setting. Presence and severity of alienation as a theme varies based on collective identity. Presence and severity of alienation as a theme varies based on collective identity.

Shame is a major part of the experience of alienation. I distinguish this motif of shame within the theme of alienation in that this shame is derived from a separation from the collective group and an isolation from the sense of belonging this group provides. In cases of alienation, members of the collective group shame an individual, leading them to feel as if they do not meet the requirements of what it means to be an Arab or a Palestinian – a Muslim or Christian – a Jew or an Israeli. Although ultimately some of this teasing may be light-hearted and does not lead to complete ex-communication from the group, the implications of identity-related teasing could potentially leave a lasting impact on the way these participants view themselves and their relationship to their collective identity.⁴⁵

The only Palestinian resident I interviewed exhibited the most concern over anonymity. I interpreted this to mean that the closer to the Palestinian community outside of Jerusalem, the

⁴⁵ The potential negative impact of this teasing being exacerbated feelings of an ill-fit identity, feelings of isolation, and distancing from one's community. However, there is also potential for positive repercussions of these interactions. Kids4Peace participants may push back against teasing to start a dialogue with their friends. The teasing and opposition to Kids4Peace, if not extremely serious, could act as a place for participants to make changes in their community, as conflict can be a mechanism for the transformation of society.

more an individual may wish to hide participation. This closeness to Palestinians outside of the Green Line may vary depending on family and neighborhood. Many participants reported hiding their participation when visiting friends or family in the West Bank. This youth's concern with exposing his participation in Kids4Peace illustrates how strong the anticipated opposition might be.

When Palestinian participants face opposition to their participation, the questioning strikes deeper than simple, superficial teasing. Many in the Palestinian and international activist communities alike view organizations like Kids4Peace as “normalizing” the occupation (*tatbi'a*).⁴⁶ Those who oppose normalization oppose this process before an end to the occupation and subjugation of the Palestinian people. Chris explains:

I guess from my close circle, I never felt that there was that strong of resistance. But that's also partly because the school I went to was a private school, so the people there are not as extreme. But they were still more extreme than others, but they're not that extreme that they would start fighting me because of my opinions. But they would disagree with me and a lot of times maybe they'd crack a joke-- You know, I've been called “Jew”, a Jew in my school when we were kids. But you know, it's not the biggest deal. I think they made a song. It was a bad rhyme, but they said, "Look at Chris, he's like a Jewish." or something like that.

The findings of the interviews show that youth like Chris, Malik, Noa, and others who attended either the mixed Israeli-Palestinian school or private schools are less likely to be in an environment that presents extreme opposition to this work. Without having exact numbers, it appears that a large proportion of participants of Kids4Peace do come from these schools that harbor pluralistic ideals and coexistence values. Additionally, the fact that the students chosen for my study -- some of the most active in the program – came from these schools may signal that youth are more motivated to continue with the program if they will not face extreme opposition or alienation from the outside world. Malik says:

The resistance is largely from my friends in Jerusalem [and] a lot of my friends in the West Bank and Ramallah who really look down upon these programs. They think they're normalizing programs. They legitimize the injustices that they face as a result of the

⁴⁶ Normalization defined by the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) has defined normalization specifically in a Palestinian and Arab context “as the participation in any project, initiative or activity, in Palestine or internationally, that aims (implicitly or explicitly) to bring together Palestinians (and/or Arabs) and Israelis (people or institutions) without placing as its goal resistance to and exposure of the Israeli occupation and all forms of discrimination and oppression against the Palestinian people” (Ziv & Chacar, 2011). This topic is discussed in depth in Chapter V.

Israeli occupation. That they normalize them in a way that they take them off the table and they pretend like everything is fine. They think it's like collaborative, and they don't necessarily like that. So yeah, I definitely received a lot of backlash from them. I definitely received a lot [of backlash]. Especially from Jerusalem and Ramallah - those two places I'd say I received the most backlash from. To say in Ramallah, in my friend groups there, to say that you are a part of such a program, it would be social suicide. And people there -- the community of people there I associate with -- they don't represent the majority of Palestinian society. They're pretty affluent people. They're people who have -- their English is excellent. I met them through model UN conferences and stuff, so that's the sort of society I'm dealing with. They live in a bubble in Palestinian society. I don't think they're exposed to many things outside of it. I don't think they have been exposed to those things growing up. So to them, me being a citizen of Israel, that's already a betrayal. That's like a question mark on top of their heads.

Here Malik emphasizes the strain of maintaining friendships in Ramallah and Jerusalem – presumably his community outside of Kids4Peace – while participating in Kids4Peace. He hides the Kids4Peace aspect of his life in order to retain his social position in the Palestinian community. Malik's comment additionally illustrates the delicate relationship between West Bank and Jerusalemite Palestinians, especially for those with Israeli citizenship. Palestinians living in Jerusalem are exposed to a different set of cultural dynamics that include interacting with Israeli Jews and mainstream Israeli Jewish culture. This may already be difficult for many in the West Bank Palestinian community to accept, given Malik's comment about his Israeli citizenship being taken as a betrayal. To elevate involvement with Israeli Jews to another next level through participation in Kids4Peace – to dialogue, to play, to eat and attend camp together – this may be cause for additional strain between these two disconnected populations.

Mariam also cites normalization as a reason for backlash she received for her participation in Kids4Peace:

The people outside tend to have a very confined opinion about these kinds of -- There's a word in Arabic. I don't know how to translate it into English, but it basically says it's a planned movement by the Israelis - like it's a way to go more into -- to take over more. [Normalization (*tatb'a*)]. I used to get attacked for it in high school. Like by my teachers. They used to be like, "oh, you're in Kids4peace," like in front of the whole class. I do see where they're coming from, but at the same time I don't think it's the most negative thing. I think it's necessary for people to come to listen. And to speak out to the other person. And Kids4peace provides that. It provides a safe area in which both

sides can talk about it. Like it's a safe place to do that. And I think it's necessary to do that. And as a result -- It could result in people from both sides in becoming friends and becoming more accepting. That's the positive way of seeing normalization. It depends on how you perceive it. But I do see... People are filled with anger. I do understand why they would be against it straight up right off the bat. It's not an easy process. I understand people are angry. I understand why people would be against it. But people are participating in it, and it could result in many good things. I think both sides are valid in my opinion.

When asked how she felt when her teacher made this comment in class, Mariam responds:

Yeah, I felt attacked that day. My teacher goes through check points every day to get to school. And I did not argue with him, because I was like I don't have much valid argument to tell him. I could tell him I am there making friends and trying to achieve peace... but to him that doesn't mean anything really... *ya-anee*⁴⁷, it doesn't change the fact that he has to go through checkpoints every morning, and that it takes him two hours more than if there hadn't been checkpoints. So there's always -- there's people who -- and I'm privileged as well. Compared to many people who live in the West Bank who are very confined. I can't go and tell them, "oh look at me, I'm friends with -- look at my israeli friends -- we're all happy together." And they are there they just can't travel freely, they have all of these issues. It doesn't feel right, you know? So I didn't really respond to him or defend myself. I kind of understand where he was coming from but at the same time, I did believe in what I was doing. But I did not believe it was appropriate to confront him about it.

Saed and Ismail also report that members of their collective Palestinian community express opposition to their participation in Kids4Peace. Visibly upset at the memory of these accusations, Saed recounts:

It's mostly based on friends. Like friends sometimes make fun of us. Not a lot. It's rare. It's when we were younger. Like, you're in Kids4peace, you're against our country, like just saying stereotypes that are not true... things that are not true.

Maroun also cites push-back from friends when it comes to his participation in Kids4Peace. It seems that Maroun speaks hypothetically here to these acquaintances, presuming the type of arguments he may encounter and his projected response. Because they are close friends they understand. I expect that other friends might not like the idea. Because I'm dealing

⁴⁷ "I mean" in Arabic.

with the ‘other side,’ how they say it. And they’re like, “you’re betraying your country. You’re working with Jews. They stole our country” and stuff. “Yeah, that might be true. But still, I’m learning, I’m understanding, I’m doing the right thing. Unlike you.” So that’s my reaction to the reactions as well.

Youth belonging to the Palestinian collective identity are not the only ones who face alienation from certain sectors of their community. As a continuation of his story in 4.3, in which he recounts a confrontation with Jewish Israelis during a seminar, Hamza makes an important point in his description of the debrief after the encounter:

We just discussed it kind of. The Israelis, I kind of liked having them there because I remember asking like, "Why would they be against you? You're Israeli." But to them, it was like, [bad] because it's-- we're with Arabs. It doesn't really matter that we're Israeli to them. If there was a scenario where a Jew was that severely opposed to us.” Then they said like, "it wouldn't matter that we're Jewish.

So kind of hearing that was a big thing for me like, “oh, wow.” There is kind of a divide there. I think Jews might feel differently about other Jews because of their political views. We did have to deal with our advisors on how would we approach it next time and what were the mistakes, and also just acknowledging, “oh, this is something that happens”. People aren't always going to like what you do.

Hamza’s commentary highlights an important element of Israeli Jewish society – the heterogeneity in thought and attitudes towards conflict⁴⁸. Although many Israeli Jewish youth from the organization are fortunate enough not to experience complete alienation from their community for their participation (and oftentimes this work is even applauded within left-wing communities), this anecdote is a reminder of the external challenges Jews face when participating in Kids4Peace. The opposition’s impact on collective Israeli identity may be even more salient if the Israeli Jew in question does not participate in the army, creating further distance from mainstream Israeli expectations.

Although some Jewish Israelis do receive criticism when it comes to their participation in Kids4Peace, fewer Jewish youth reported experiencing this, and those who did, did not seem to

⁴⁸ Refer to Chapter II, Hamza references the divide in Jewish Israeli culture based on ethnicity (Mizrahi versus Ashkenazi) and socio-economic divide (he describes the group of men as “rougher” and “lower-class.”) As a Palestinian citizen of Israel living in the intersection of both Israeli and Palestinian cultures, Chris holds insight into the social dynamics of both cultures and into the way they overlap via his own identity group.

suggest that this criticism completely alienated them from the Jewish community.⁴⁹ Johann and Noa represent the Left-wing Jewish identity that is already deeply immersed in a pro-peace framework. These students attended the mixed Israeli-Palestinian Hand-in-Hand School. When asked if he faced challenges to his participation from his community, Johann reports: So not really. I mean the fact that I already lived in a community in high school that was integrated -- so that kind of was a... they didn't really care. So it was kind of like "woo, you're doing it". If I did have any problems, I mean it was my family. For example, I don't think anyone had a particular problem -- not in my immediate family, but maybe with like cousins or stuff. If they did have a problem, that already would have presented itself when I started going to the Hand in Hand School. So it was just kind of bundled in with that.

It seems that these students faced the initial blocks that challenge the coexistence ideology before entering Kids4Peace, since attending Hand-in-Hand school means that these students live a coexistence lifestyle every weekday of the school year. Noa's personal narrative falls under the same category. She explains:

Meeting once a week or once every two weeks is less extreme than going every day to a school which is mixed. Sometimes people were just like, "Maybe go to an all Jews school, and then go for Kids4Peace, and that will do." So I think that was one of the things. None of the people I've known I know questioned my decision to go Kids4Peace. [There are ideas that--?] that's the things I do to go to mixed groups, and meet Arabs, and speak Arabic. But, yeah, going to the school was different and I was becoming who I am because of what my school was difficult in this situation. I have one specific friend which every time I meet and every time I see, we would speak a little bit about ourselves, and then she always comes with those really annoying kind of questions about my school and my decision to go to the army and she's really-- I mean, I don't think she sees me as who I am but just sees me as who she wants me to be and what she wants to be, and I'm not. So, yeah, it's different but I also get lots of support. My family supports me, of course. And I know my grandpa is really, really proud of me in whatever I do. So I get my support in my-- how do they say 'not supportive'?

For Jewish Israeli citizens who go to Hand in Hand, it seems that the questioning of their participation in Kids4Peace and the Hand in Hand school do not necessarily outweigh the support they receive from their families and communities. Noa continues to describe the support she receives from her grandparents:

⁴⁹ However, Noa does divulge that it has become increasingly more difficult to be left-wing in Israel from her perspective.

My grandpa and grandma were really proud of the fact that I chose not to go to the army, and every time my school puts up something on Facebook, they immediately share it. And I think that maybe-- yeah, I think the fact that I-- I mean, I could also go to this school and to Kids for Peace and I cannot take any-- it wasn't such a big part of me, but because it is, I know they have to accept it, and they became closer to the idea because of that. They also accepted it and themselves and [inaudible] and it changed them as well.

This anecdote illustrates that in some ways, Noa has more of an impact on her family than she first realizes. From my observations, I gather that the opposition from the Jewish community is less present and severe than that from the Palestinian community. This may be due to the power asymmetry and the charge of normalization. Israeli Jews may experience less risk when it comes to participation in coexistence organizations. For individuals on the group, this kind of work may appease their consciences. The riskiest aspect of this kind of work for Israeli Jews is psychological. They may begin to question the national narrative that holds their society together. More Israeli Jewish youth may start to refuse military service and oppose the occupation. These are the reasons for opposition within the community. However, the Jewish population continues to hold power securely over the country.

To reiterate her point, Noa mentions her work in the national service (*Sherut Leumi*) and her refusal to join the army.⁵⁰ When asked if she believes her voice has an impact on those around her – her friends, her roommates, those she works with in the national service-- Noa answers:

I wish I had more [of an impact on them]. I think that somehow my opinions and the way I see the world became not legit. At least, not legit as other ways to see the world and other opinions. In that, sometimes the moment I opened my mouth and start speaking to people about those things they shove me out. I mean, they tell me to shut up because I'm *kitzonit*. I'm extreme, and I'm leftwing. And whatever I have to say it's-- it's not the truth. And I think it's mostly because I'm not-- I want to translate this word in the Google translate -- “forceful” -- I think that people don't see my opinions as forceful. I mean, I also don't see my opinions as forceful. But it doesn't mean it's naive. It just means it's peaceful. And somehow it became less and less *mikubal* -- less and less accepted to listen to these kind of opinions. So maybe I have some kind of-- and I know the moment that we start speaking about something in a deep kind of way, and start to speak in a

⁵⁰ *Sherut Leumi* is an alternative for those who do not wish to or cannot serve in the Israeli Defense Forces. Through this program, Israelis citizens do community volunteer work and may receive the same benefits of those who join the army. Arab citizens are exempt from conscription in both the military and national service, but legally may participate in *Sherut Leumi*.

meaningful conversation, I know that some time people will listen. But most of the time it's just really artificial and it's not deep enough to speak about those things. I also think people are afraid of listening to me and hearing what I have to say because it threatens what their acceptable narrative is. And people don't want to change most of the time... I think [the leftwing narrative is getting less and less acceptable] with time and everything that's happening outside -- everything that's happening in Israel right now and in Jerusalem in specific. Yeah, it's really hard to remain left-wing here. It's really hard to believe in one of them. I think it became harder and harder through the years to believe. I have to go to my school and to go to Kids4Peace. It became harder and harder.

It is clear through Noa's answer that the smaller the left-wing becomes with the strengthening of right-wing politics and with current events that cause more division between Israelis and Palestinians, the more challenging she finds holding her position.

Rather than feel discouraged by those opposing the work of Kids4Peace, Muna, a Christian Palestinian citizen of Israel, uses the backlash to fuel the work she does in Kids4Peace. She says:

People are so convinced about the idea that Israelis are bad and they're the enemy and whatever so it's hard to be going against the flow. [But] it gives me more power to help me know that I should be doing this work more and more.

4.4 Self-Expression and Self-Reflection: Release, Relief, Communication, and Growth

The section examines the interactional level of the Kids4Peace experience. It describes and analyze experiences of youth from opposing sides of the conflict directly in dialogue. This discussion identifies output of contact through for youth variant based on collective identity group.

The responses to the questions above vary greatly depending on the age of the youth subject. Alumni of the program report different experiences with dialogue based on the staff who were with Kids4Peace at the time. Since a major overturn in Kids4Peace staff in 2017-2018, interviews suggested that the dialogue held during the programs failed to retain the deep, transformative quality of those of years past. The difference may be due to the loss of seasoned facilitators, the group of youth involved, the events that occurred during the time of the program, and the environment in which the program took place.

Having acknowledged these variables, it is valuable to explore what the participants took away from the dialogue and how they experienced the dialogue space. Many students reported a

feeling of relief in being able to express themselves to ‘the other’. I found this only in the Palestinian (Israeli-Arab) subjects. Jewish Israeli students reported higher levels of frustration and discomfort. Some Israeli Jews also reported personal growth and gaining perspective through this process. Arab/Palestinian students claimed a new-found empathy for the experience of the Israeli Jews as well as increased skills in communication and listening.

Relief and Release

A powerful motif that emerged from the interviews with Palestinian participants is the transformative power of being heard. Both Christian and Muslim Palestinians alike report a cathartic effect to dialogue. Hamza, a Muslim Palestinian alumni expresses his hope that the ‘other side’ would take his perspective into consideration, but the experience of being heard seemed to serve as a release and held value in itself. Hamza says:

Just the experience of having them hear you is a big thing. Really, I would just hope that they would actually listen and take things on board. My wish would just be that this is acknowledged, and kind of -- I definitely don't expect -- I can definitely kind of feel or understand why they might have a connection to this space as well.

It appears that Hamza feels more open to understanding the perspective of the other when given the opportunity to be heard. He expresses his wish for transforming the others in dialogue, but not an expectation.

Malik’s interview that deals with his ability to release the tension he experienced from years of repressing racism, discrimination, and microaggressions in Kids4Peace. After discussing the racism he faced in Israeli extracurriculars, Malik asserts:

I mean [Kids4Peace] was the first time I could speak about politics or about my treatment as a Palestinian in Jerusalem as part of a normal you know non-offending discussion ... it’s like an even-handed discussion where it’s like one on one or two on two. It showed me a side of Israeli society that I never saw before. I knew people had those discussions. I knew people had those political opinions. Hell, my parents had those political opinions. And they deal with a lot of that stuff on a daily basis. But I didn’t necessarily experience that... I think it was definitely a relief to be able to do something like that. I don’t think many people get the chance to. I also don’t think many people were put in my predicament before. I think most Palestinians largely keep to themselves and oftentimes confrontations with Israeli security forces or police, the army and such turn violent. So yeah, I think their experience would be slightly different. But it was definitely something

that was constructive. It definitely made me learn a lot. It wasn't something that was easy all the time. But I definitely think it had a net positive. It wasn't as if something was revolutionized in terms of my understanding of the conflict. But it was a lot more open and comfortable to speak about these kinds of things. It was a safe space where I felt like the things that I believe in weren't necessarily taboo. Like there were other people who believed in them, and I could communicate it to the quote unquote "other side" without being shamed for it.

Malik felt a relief in finding a space in which he could express his beliefs without being shamed or judged. He asserts that more than knowledge about the conflict, this was a greater output he received from time with the organization. It seems that Kids4Peace provided Malik a unique opportunity to share in a way he could not anywhere else.

Chris explains the value he gained from sharing his voice and ideas and developing leadership skills through the program:

The biggest thing I feel like Kids4Peace gave me is maybe a platform to share my ideas and my thoughts and bring it all out. I remember the most times that I felt like Kids4Peace was very beneficial and what I liked was when we went to leadership and we'd have actual conversations that were not even-- not really often. It's like it was legit conversations, which I believe are very, very important. A lot of times with the younger kids, they try to hold back. At least when I was a counselor, they were trying to hold back. They weren't trying to get very deep into the conflict. But when we were older, we got pretty deep. And it was very good, and I think also for me to be able to share my opinions and to have an outlet or a place where I could share, a safe place. Because it's not very safe to share your opinion, whoever you are. As an Arab, I've seen that. As an Arab in the Arab society, it can be sometimes problematic. And as a Jewish if you are left-wing, you get called a self-hating Jew and a lot of things, so it's very hard to find a safe place where someone can share their opinion here without getting aggressive feedback. So I feel like that's something that Kids4Peace helped me a lot with.

It appears that the space Chris found to share his truth and discuss important issues was beneficial to him. Chris expresses a need for a safe space for self-expression that was met through his participation in Kids4Peace. In the Kids4Peace program he was able to avoid the ostracization and shaming from Arab society. He acknowledges that this safe space could be beneficial for left-wing Jews who also face opposition to their liberal beliefs around the conflict. This response illustrates the importance of a space in which people with similar pro-peace values can come together and speak in a way that may be repressed outside of the program walls.

Ahmed, a Palestinian resident of Jerusalem addresses the opportunity he gains through Kids4Peace to share his perspective and have dreams and ideas taken seriously. In other spaces, these ideas may be seen as unrealistic or idealistic. Ahmed explains:

If Kids for Peace-- we Kids for Peace just keep talking about what's happening but if you talked about the same thing that you're talking with Kids for Peace everyone will judge you. And he will start saying, "Oh, you can't do anything. You're not going anywhere with that." But at Kids for Peace if you said anything-- but sometimes it happened and sometimes no. Because like last year we-- do you know the cinematic? We talked to them about putting Arabic subtitles in their movies and they agreed with that. So they gave us a date. But I can't really remember that date that they are going to start putting Arabic subtitles.

Although Ahmed does not have a confirmed date for the implementation of the Arabic subtitle project, he impresses that having his ideas heard and considered by adults was an empowering experience in itself.

Communication

Two Jewish Israeli participants expressed developing better “debate skills” through Kids4Peace. Tamar emphasized this in her interview:

My debate skills got better. Because, I mean, I was on a debate team. And I used to just write down points and then write down the people that are against me's points and then use it against them. But now I learned that debate is more about having not a discussion but really understanding what the other is saying and not just writing down your points and then using it against them. Because sometimes you use a point against the other person but you don't understand it, so you just make a fool out of yourself. You're contradicting yourself by saying it. And I didn't understand what it meant until I came here, and I really learned it.

A few Palestinian participants highlighted empathy, active listening, and non-violent communication over learning how to get their point across more powerfully. Chris asserts:

I [use the skills I gained from Kids4Peace] actually, more by listening and being able to listen to others, and how to respond. When I was in my leadership, again that's where we used to talk. Part of the issues was: 1) I always wanted to talk, and I had a hard time listening to others, 2) I was very aggressive in the way I talk. And I get emotional. And that I think [Kids4Peace] helped. I'm much less emotional. I'm not as emotional or

easily triggered. I have the ability to listen more and convey my message in a calmer way. That's some of the things I remember really helping. In general, it's always useful to have these tools where you know how to communicate with others effectively. Which is what they taught us about a lot in my camp. That it's very important to know how to communicate and how to say things in a way that is acceptable or right or how to say it. And also in general arguing, my approach to dialogue was an arguing approach where it's either I'm right or you're right. And it's a whole ego thing that goes a lot of times into argument, where-- and that's not very ineffective. Because a lot of times what happens is for example if we're arguing and somehow gets to our egos, even if you agree with me, you won't admit it. And that's not effective at all. So it's really about knowing how to give the person in front of you [inaudible] how to talk in a way where they can feel okay with agreeing with you or have-- what I remember the word, dignity to agree with you. Whatever, if that makes sense. I give them the ability to agree with you, and to come and see your point. The idea of kind of dialogue and argument is that the other person sees your point and understands you, not for you to embarrass them or to make them feel bad. Which is an approach that a lot of people take, and I used a little bit. I used to do it when I was younger, of course... of course I still do it sometimes. But taking the person part out is very important. I've seen people make things personal and it never goes in the right direction.

Hamza describes his experience developing empathy for the 'other side':

I can definitely kind of feel or maybe understand why they might have a connection to this space as well. Otherwise, it would have been like, "Oh, because they were here 2,000 years ago, and there's a wall that they think is holy." But now, it's like I can understand. It's more than just that you were born here and you grew up here and so have your parents. To a Palestinian, it's like, "So, I can count 20 generations." But I can understand like, "Okay, but even you as a person, regardless of your identity, you're also from here in a way." So I can kind of-- so I guess it is empathy, less than maybe in a debating sense, but just as at an individual level.

The small group of Israeli Jews who focused on developing debate skills juxtaposed with the Palestinians/Arabs who noted that their development of active listening and non-violent communication skills could present meaningful data, albeit loose. This difference in response could be attributed to two possible factors: 1) the relative power dynamic outside of the room and 2) a difference in cultural communication styles.

The youth I interviewed almost unilaterally agreed that through their experience with Kids4Peace, they underwent a process of finding their personal voices through a combination of solidifying the self and being given the opportunities to express this self through opinions and personal narrative. The results were positive for both Israeli Jews and Muslim and Christian Palestinians.

Fatima, a Muslim Palestinian citizen of Israel, is one of the participants who believes Kids4Peace accentuated her sense of self. As a participant who moved on to become a Counselor in Training (CIT) to an advisor to the position of a director, Kids4Peace provided Fatima with self-confidence, leadership skills, and the opportunity to use her own voice. Fatima asserts: Kids4Peace helped me know who I am more. Like highlighted who I am. [In] the way that I speak today and identify myself. It helped me know my roots more and also to understand the others even if they hurt you in the past. It helped me shape the way I see people in Jerusalem and see the occupation- conflict [with] more open eyes.

Sarah, a Jewish Israeli, also cited finding her voice as a partial result of her experience in Kids4Peace:

I have more of a voice [after Kids4peace]. I speak out more in debates. State my opinions... Kids4peace was one of the reasons.

Both Jewish Israeli and Palestinian Israeli youth like Fatima and Sarah felt empowered with the opportunity to speak openly and freely about their opinions and feelings in dialogue.

Self-Reflection and Growth

Israeli Jewish emphasized different themes from their experience of dialogue in Kids4Peace than Palestinian citizens and residents. Johann discusses his development of a political awareness through his time in Kids4Peace:

As Jews, you don't really hear about Palestinians' experience here, especially in Jerusalem. And for some of [the Israeli Jews] kind of -- well, their place in it kind of doesn't exist. They hear that, and they don't particularly think about how they are a part of -- let's just say the systems of occupation and oppression that [Palestinians] face. And I definitely think here having Palestinians who had and have preconceived notions of Jews and Israelis and Israeli systems and the way they experience things definitely helped me kind of look further into myself and ask, "what is my place in all of it?" When they talk about their experiences living under occupation or having experiences that a Palestinian would go through during their daily lives in Jerusalem, which is something I

only got from school later as all of us kind of developed a political awareness. But in Kids4Peace it was definitely kind of having people who are politically aware – actually from both sides – because Jews are encouraged to have very political views from a very young age – but from both sides to have varying political opinions and for me to understand that my political opinions were kind of like, “tralala let’s all live together,” when I was in 6th grade, which was kind of what was expected of me. But you know, [Kids4Peace] was kind of the first time and place that challenged me to think -- I went to a place where I saw two sides – not particularly um – I didn’t identify with any of them. From the Jewish side, it was that I didn’t identify with the views that they had. And from the Palestinian side, it was that I didn’t identify with basic core identities that they had - you know, they’re Palestinians. So definitely kind of the first place that got me to think, not sure if intentionally that was the - I’m sure actually that wasn’t necessarily the point, but that was the first place where I had to stop and think, “wow. That person is going through that experience. What do I have to do with that?”

Johann expresses a similar sentiment to the one Malik presents in section 4.3, which is that he took on an idealistic coexistence belief system due to expectations from others. However, interestingly enough, Johann found Kids4Peace to be the place that allowed him to question the “tralala” attitude he had about the coexistence and the conflict. This may be due to his identity as an Israeli Jew, as he was put in a position to learn about the harsh realities Palestinians in Jerusalem face and to question his own part in those realities. Malik, on the other hand, came from knowing more intimately the harsh realities his people face, but was encouraged to adopt a new centrist narrative through Kids4Peace – the one Malik was raised with. In a way, the Kids4Peace program played the role of devil’s advocate for the two individuals, encouraging them each to take on information and narrative that were farther away from their original understanding of the conflict. Johann continues:

I think that’s the idea later. Maybe it is the idea now but back then it was more just bringing Jews and Arabs together, which is a super important thing in itself. That’s another thing. But it wasn’t really about -- at least at the beginning -- maybe towards the end of like 9th and 10th grade. But it wasn’t really, “let’s see how your lives interact in ways you didn’t think they did. And what does it mean to be a Jew when it comes to Palestinians, and what does it mean to be a Palestinian when it comes to Jews?” That kind of wasn’t intentionally explored. But it was definitely something that sparked up.

Noa discusses the internal change that happened the first time she discovered there was something she did not understand:

It was a really, really interesting camp. And I just had the best time there, and so that's what I remember mostly. I was also really small. I was in the 7th grade and there were people there who were in 10th and 11th grade because I was in this school that was mixed. And I think that was the first time actually that in the 7th grade that I understood-- not understood but I mean, I understood there's something that I don't understand. It's not just like being friends with Arabs and speaking Arabic and everything is just so cool and normal and fun and nice. I understood. I mean, there's this friend of mine, Mariam... We were just really good friends and we had the best time with each other but she lived in [East Jerusalem,] and I live outside of Jerusalem and I'm Jewish, so it doesn't really matter or anything to me. And for her, it took her like an hour to go to the meetings throughout the year because she had to pass through a checkpoint. And for me, I mean, it took me like forty minutes and it wasn't that big of a deal. But at this camp, it was the first time that she explained to me what a checkpoint is for Arabs, and then I understood it. Every morning for the past seven years, I passed through two checkpoints. But I'm Jewish, and it doesn't really matter or anything to me. And I never noticed it the way she did. So I think that was the first time in Kids4Peace and in my life really that I connected the dots between my Arab friends and the life they had and the life I have -- and this conflict how it affects us and how it affects our friendships... Actually, I think Kids4peace had a really big part of it. I don't know why I can't-- I don't remember specifically that conversation that I wasn't feeling comfortable with my Jewish identity. But I know that the Palestinian side was really vocal and was heard a lot -- maybe more than the Israeli side. And yeah, maybe that's part of why I didn't feel so comfortable about my Jewish identity. I can't remember why. Maybe it was just me. Maybe it was the first time that I heard about all those terrible, terrible things that are happening just next to me. And I was so in shock that I got into defense and I saw them-- and thinking, "No. That can't be the whole story." But now I know that it kind of is the whole story. And at least that's what matters to me that people are unsafe here. And feeling threatened and going through checkpoints everyday -- that's the main thing for me. Maybe this time was the first time I've heard about those things and I said to myself, "That can't be it." But it is. So yeah, kids4peace had a big part of it.

Aiden acknowledges that Kids4Peace helped open his eyes to racism that he had unwittingly been a part of growing up:

Well, before I joined, I remember a very specific situation where -- there's a whole lot of racism going around in Israel, you're probably aware of that. And so I remember when I

was in fifth grade, and I was chanting a very racist song, which is related to a soccer team. And I just didn't realize what I was singing. I didn't even pay any attention or put any meaning to it, because it just didn't matter to me. It was there. That was the language I spoke. And slowly I started to realize these horrible things these words mean. And as I grew older, I realized that those words eventually translate into actions. And then I was very, very grateful to be in Kids4Peace. I was lucky enough to get that mindset of having a healthy view about other people that are different from me.

Aiden expresses gratitude for this opportunity for growth and to incorporate the Kids4Peace mindset. He continues:

I'm taking the knowledge information and mostly the personal interaction from Kids for Peace as just evidence, I could say, that you can't make conclusions to people because I've been exposed to many times that people are just assuming or are being judgmental towards an entire crowd just because they're either Arab or if they come from certain countries than people immediately put a label on them and just say, "Okay, they're--That something in their nature is just different from us." And I just experienced on my flesh that it's not. So I'm trying to-- I've been seeing myself as sort of this ambassador trying to let people know or make them see that you can't look-- That you can't just look at someone and that is a little different than you and just decide that he is what you hear in the media because the media takes all the extreme situations and they just spread it around because that's the thing that catches our eye most. It's the easiest thing to get ratings, I guess. And that shape the public mind. So what I am trying to do, not alone might I say, I'm joined by many, many people who also share my view. But I have the privilege of taking real life-- check the word, examples, yeah, and just sharing parts of my personal experience with that demographic I could say and try to make people see that they can be prejudiced because prejudice is the most dangerous part of all this. It's what's blocking us from communicating.

4.5 Visions of Kids4Peace: Goals, Motivations, and Visions of the Future

Personal and Group Goals

During my Monitoring and Evaluation internship at Kids4Peace, it became clear that there were a variety of goals of and motivations for youth participants and staff of the organization. As discussed in Chapter II, the relative power of the group may shape the goals of

the group members as they enter into contact with one another. Palestinians living in Israel strive for equal rights, justice, an end to the occupation, and a social and political future that involves autonomy in some sense for their people. This is evident in many of the Palestinian youths interviewed for the study. In a discussion about his identity, Malik states:

I want to strive for equal rights in Israel among all citizens, but at the same time, I feel that's part and parcel of my Palestinian identity. I think that's something that can't be taken away from [my identity].

It is evident through this comment that an important aspect of Malik's personal goals inside and outside of Kids4Peace is to strive for equal rights for Palestinians and that this goal is intertwined with his collective Palestinian identity. The struggle for rights for his people and his collective identity cannot be separated. Later in the interview, I asked Malik what he believes to be the goal of Kids4Peace. Malik provides his interpretation of the true goals and output of the organization:

I think if you asked me a few years ago I would say "to get big enough to like stop the conflict or to solve the conflict," but I don't think that's the case now. I think Kids4peace, it's really nice because it's a community. Yeah, it's like a little community of Jerusalemite people. I don't see it creating immense change that ripples through Jerusalem, but I think the idea of it being family -- of it being a safe space for kids, parents, brothers, sisters -- the idea of having fun experiences -- I think that's meant to be a drop in an ocean of peace work.

Although Malik's personal goals do not perfectly match up with the purpose and goals of Kids4Peace, they do overlap. Malik reframes the purpose of Kids4Peace for himself, allowing him to find a different type of value in his experience in the program. Relating back to Malik's comments in section 4.3, Kids4peace provides community beyond national or religious collective identity in a way that some of these youths crave. In Malik's case, this community is the safe space in which meaningful dialogue can be had, voices can be heard, and friendships challenge individuals to expand and solidify their selves. This experience in itself is valuable for Malik, who later tells me that he continues his peace work through other venues. He continues:

I think that in itself those positive experiences definitely contribute to solving the conflict. I don't think Kids4Peace is the be all and end all... I don't think the reason it exists is to solve the conflict. I think it provides a lot of people with a sense of optimism. I think it provides them with community. I think it gives a lot of Palestinians just a thing to do after school, because extracurriculars are not that common in East Jerusalem. I

don't think the purpose is to end the conflict, but I definitely think there is merit and virtue to having it there, even if that's not the end goal.

Although Malik has tapered his expectations of the organization's impact in ending the conflict, he values the small part it may play in enriching the lives of Jerusalemite youth and inspiring optimism. He also makes the point that Palestinian youth have less access to extracurriculars, so Kids4Peace provides them with an after-school activity.

Most Jewish Israeli respondents in the study discuss finding a way to live together peacefully. Palestinians and Leftist Jewish Israelis (social justice also embedded in this identity) focused on social justice and equality.

A few of the study subjects reported that their goals are to act as seeds of peace, hoping that their sentiments will reverberate into the larger environment. This sentiment is similar to the aims of similar organizations like Seeds of Peace (from where the imagery of "Seeds of Peace" arises) and presumably Kids4Peace itself. The hope is that the seeds planted into society by individual participants in the organization will grow and lead to change in a larger sense.

Christian expresses this idea:

To share hope. To expand our family. The community is getting bigger and bigger each year. I can see that. I can recognize it. I've been working with different groups. Each group is getting bigger, which is good. My goal in kids4peace is to share hope for younger generations. Because that's how it's supposed to start. With the younger generations. In order to teach them when they're young. When they're growing up, they learn a lot. And they understand. Not in like an older age when they already know from their own community about the other side.

Yael, an Israeli Jew says:

I think at different points of the program it's got different goals. In the first few years, the emphasis that we felt was very much on friendship and trust. And getting to know each other and getting to know each other's cultures and faith and sort of having an opening point at which we can both talk about issues where we know where the other is coming from. And really being able to later on bring up harder issues while having the foundation of trust and friendship to lean back on. So, I'd say it's sort of building up the knowledge and the trust so you came out of it having a good experience with each other that you could later build upon.

When asked what peace means to her, Yael again brought up the goals of the organization in the context of political agenda. She states:

That was also a question we had in Kids4peace. At the global institute, we said, “Look, in our song/cheer -- I don’t know what to call it -- we say, ‘we can do it better, we can live together’. But we’re not sure what that means. Does that mean one state for two nations? Because we’re getting funding by a country that says two states for two nations. So what are we supportive of? When someone asks me, “what’s Kids4peace? What’s their end goal? What do they want to see happen?” I say, “honestly, we don’t really have an end goal. But when there’s an end goal happening, we want to make sure that it happens peacefully.” And that there are people saying, “look, even if I kind of disagree with it, I think there should be one country, or I think there should be two.” I think there should be people saying, “It’ll be okay. We can live together. We can live apart as peaceful countries next to each other.” But it’s important that there are people supporting it and not creating more conflict as it happens.

Yael reflects the apolitical nature of the organization’s goals. She describes the goal to others as a creating a foundation of people who sustain peace no matter what the political solution. Aiden, also a Jewish Israeli, describes his perception of the purpose of Kids4Peace:

I see the purpose of Kids4Peace as the meeting point, because in Israel you can say that we live kind of parallel lives because we're on the same, in my case, city and some people are like me and my friends or my circle going to certain places and the other people both in the other side colleague goes to different schools. And it's not only that, but they also get different treatment. When you go to the Eastern City of Jerusalem which was conquered in the Six-Day War in 1967, you can really see the difference on the buildings, in the infrastructure because you can see that the Arabic neighborhoods are getting-- I don't want to say bad or is, but they're getting a different treatment from the Jewish neighborhoods in the Western City. So Kids4Peace is really a great opportunity to take people and make them see the other side from firsthand experience. And that's not something that comes by quite easily – allowing an environment where you can really evaluate a person by his intentions or his emotions -- his personality -- not by his race or nation. It is a very big issue in Israel. People are being judged for their race all the time. And so what I'm getting at is that Kids4 Peace makes the connection, the proper connection between the different people in Israel.

Some participants like Ismail and Saed, who interviewed together by request, expressed their desire for Kids4Peace to spread a wider net and to start discussions around politics earlier in the program. One motif brought up by these two youths was an impatience for change and frustration with those in the program who do not seem to share the same goals. Ismail says:

I don't always agree with that goal [to plant seeds of peace]. I feel like we should be broader to reach more people. I feel like in Kids4Peace they don't want us to get into the politics at a young age... Look, I see that [planting seeds is] the purpose, from my perspective. I don't know from their perspective. But I see that as the purpose from my perspective. As to whether it is working or not, I think Saed took up an issue earlier that not a lot of people are taking it seriously. So, I think that's the issue. If more people take it seriously, it will be far more reachable... They think that its goal is that it's all fun and stuff. They don't know that there's a political side to Kids4peace. They would never imagine that there's a political side.

Ismail and Saed are two current members of Kids4Peace. They vent their frustrations that some of their fellow Kids4Peace members do not share their goals to make social change. They appear eager for change. At a different point in the interview, Ismail reference leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr. and Nelson Mandela. Ismail and Saed partially fault the organization for not allowing for political discussion earlier on in the program.⁵¹ At the same time, Ismail embodies the goal of the program as it is perceived by these two youth – to plant seeds and to spread hope and optimism:

Look, as an individual, I believe. Yes, I believe. And you see here the word 'believe'. I believe. It's all about having hope. High hopes in God or anything. Having high hopes. And you know, yes, I believe. But as an individual, yes of course I believe that I could make a change hopefully one day. That's my belief and hopefully, hopefully... Who knows what happens, but if you see something that influences people, like if they see someone speaking on their behalf. Like someone who is empowering them... like speaking, of course non-violently, speaking what they think, then people would follow him and he would become a leader, like as we saw in Martin Luther King.

Laila's perspective aligned with Ismail's in the sense that she yearns for her work in Kids4Peace to have a wider influence:

The general purpose is to create peace... maybe... I can't really say, because I feel like with all the work that is being done here, for me personally, the only thing that I gained from Kids4peace is the social... Maybe also knowledge -- knowledge and social gains. But other than that, I feel there is something missing. Maybe a wider influence, or...

⁵¹ Kids4Peace programs are designed to build trust through lighter encounters in the first couple years of the program. As the program progressing, political discussion is added, starting with education on conflicts abroad and eventually discussing the local conflict.

yeah, to not just stay in this bubble -- this closed kind of safe zone -- to actually do something out of these walls.

Although all participants reported some kind of gain from the program, many like Laila and Ismail expressed their yearning for wider influence. Many joined Kids4Peace optimistic and driven to enact change in Jerusalem and the wider conflict. There are undertones of frustration, disappointment, and eagerness for change in these answers. Laila's emphasis on the "bubble" phenomenon – that Kids4Peace creates an idealistic, harmonious world not necessarily touching reality – is a common theme expressed by other participants as well. These youths are driven to know how to expand their influence.⁵²

Participants Ismail and Saed take their participation in Kids4peace very seriously and express frustration that others may not share their same goals. Ismail explains:

And that's hugely connected to the point I said earlier about fun. People just come to fun. Not people who are actually coming to be leaders and want peace. Yeah, I think that. For example, let's say... I don't know, as I said other programs -- some programs they focus on like other let's say, intellectual programs, the educational programs -- they focus on taking very specific people. I think that's what Kids4peace should do. They should take very specific people who just want peace. That's my point... Yeah, what's the part of bringing new people and bringing new people just like taking donations and just you know having a lot of people. That's pointless actually. Because as I said, some people are coming just for the fun and for the sake of it. And not everyone has this goal.

Ismail continues:

A lot of people are talking [during programs], a lot of people are just you know in their own world. There's a lot of people, the few people who actually want change, who actually want to be leaders and they actually want to influence others don't have the chance to do that. Why? Because there is people, other people that who just want to you know have fun. And I think that's not the point to just get in people you know take donations. What's the point if you're not achieving any goal?

Noa speaks about her desire to learn and understand. She looks to Kids4Peace, and her bilingual school, to unveil the truth around her. She tells me:

I think the tools I really got just from-- I don't know if it was from Kids4Peace or from my school and just being an aware-- a person with awareness to the situation here, and I am now. I mean, I don't want to stay blind to anything. I want to see everything and

⁵² Kids4Peace programs do attempt to address these goals through the Youth Action Program (YAP). However, it seems that some of the youth do not find this to be influential enough.

everything there is to know and see, I want to know and see it. I think Kids4Peace would have been a big part of it. Not making things disappear because it's not comfortable for me.

What is "Peace"?

In the interviews for this study, I asked the youth participants, "what does 'peace' mean to you?" and "what are the prerequisites necessary to obtain it?" I received a variety of answers to this question, ranging from the political to the social to the personal. Some discussed one-state/two-state solutions. Others referred to the interpersonal: people from different groups learning to coexist and become accepting of differences. One respondent considered an internal peace as her first priority.

Jewish Israeli, Yael explains her thought process around the meaning of "peace" in a political context and that of Kids4Peace:

At school and stuff, I do get into a lot of discussions about what Israel's policies should be and what that rests upon. And I mean it's difficult. You need to know what's going on with Israel. What it would mean, for instance, to give land back. I know a lot of people who say, "Look, I would be happy to give all the land they want back if it could promise me peace - unconditional peace." But then again, what does that peace look like? What does it look like to you? Does it mean that ... there are no Arabs? Does it mean that ... there are two states? ... I say, "honestly, we don't really have an end goal. But when there's an end goal happening, we want to make sure that it happens peacefully." ... Which is a hard thing to say, because then people say, "Well then what do you want? Do you want one nation do you want two countries?" And I say, "Look, honestly, I was raised to believe that we can live together. That we should be one country". But it's hard to say that. Especially in the Jewish state. Like Israel has a hard time with reform Jews. How is it going to deal with non-Jews? As a majority or as a bigger group rather than just a few like Israeli Arabs that happen to be there before '48... so you know, it's okay. It's not so many of them, so they're not really hurt by the Jewish identity of the state. But it's not so easy. So wait, do I believe in two countries? If so, like what does that mean? That I don't want people who are my Arab friends to live near me? So that's a really difficult point. Like what is the end goal? What do I want to see happen in ten, twenty years?

Yael raises important questions about the future and takes a practical approach to envisioning a peaceful solution. She does attempt to envision futures both with Jews and Palestinian Arabs living together in one country and with them living separately each with their own country. She grapples with the implications of both and with what it means about her own values to choose one solution over the other.

Noa, a young left-wing Jewish alumna of K4P, also acknowledges that her thoughts on a political solution have changed. She says:

I think what's necessary is harmony and maybe equality as well. I know I'm not-- maybe right now we won't get to equality anytime soon or even anytime in general, but I think we need to. I think we need to want to go there. I think I want just all to see each other as equals. I mean, I know we're not equals in this space. I know walking around Jerusalem, me and my Arab friends are not equal. I want to see everyone to see my Arab friends as equals to them. So I think that's a necessary for me. And see life, just people in life as equal. I mean, if one people was losing his life and the other one is losing his life and one's an Arab and one is Jew, it's supposed to mean the same thing for us. And practically, actually, I have no idea. I'm kind of losing faith actually. It's really hard to be here and see it and be faithful. Once I believed in two states for two nationalities, but I don't know if I believe in that anymore, and I don't know if it's possible anymore. I don't know. I just really don't want my kids to grow up in this kind of environment. Practically, I have no idea. I wish it wasn't that way. I wish it's not going to stay the same as it is.

Noa's definition of peace relies heavily on the idea of equality between herself and those who are Arab living in the county. With a heartbreaking tone, she expresses a loss in faith in the situation and in a political solution she once saw as viable. However, her dream for equality appears to be her priority. Aiden, an Israeli Jew currently in the army, shares his real politik vision of peace:

Unfortunately, it looks like a contract. I had this vision -- I'm not sure if I imagined it or if I dreamt about it or what was it -- I remember that I was thinking about me going into my home, into my building, and seeing an Arab family go to their apartment in that building, and me going to mine. And that was like normal to me. So what I thought of peace, that's what I thought about. But as I became more aware of the situation, I understood that we're not there yet, and we have to make some agreements in order to make peace. There is a very nice quote relating to that. It was by our Menachem Begin, the prime minister who signed the peace agreement with Egypt. He said, "The hardships

of peace are better than the sufferings of war." So that's what I see peace as. It's a business. It's something you've got to maintain, but it's-- you'd be much better off. You do make sacrifices. But they're very worthwhile.

Aiden's response was the least idealistic out of those I received. He acknowledges the interconnectedness of the two peoples, which makes peace a necessity and matter of practicality. His mindset may be a derivative of a mix of the security mentality taught in the army and the Kids4Peace coexistence narrative.

Palestinian Responses

Palestinian young people in the study report a variety of visions of peace, much like the Jewish respondents. Maroun, a Christian Palestinian citizen of Israel echoes the responses of many other Palestinian Arabs living in Jerusalem.

First of all, in order to have peace you have to learn. You have to listen you have to understand. You have to live and accept others, the other side. Peace — it's like, okay we understand that there are different groups. We still have to live with each other in order to live peacefully. Life without conflict, without arguments, without wars. Peace is something that needs to be found in every single place in the world. Because it's God's creation we have to respect this place. In order to do so, we have to live in it. Live peacefully, not to throw bombs at each other to ruin peoples' homes or futures. You have to respect the other side. You have to love them also. Work with them, live with them, everything. So peace is a big demand. But if we work together, it's worth it, and we will achieve it easily. But we need to change the mindset of the people. Jerusalem is one of the most beautiful cities I've ever been in. Like some people never notice that.

Like Jersualem, walking into the city and seeing these ancient walls that I'm looking at right now. It's like something magical. Something magical. The people inside it are making it a worse place. That's what I think. I'm serious, it's like the most beautiful place I've ever been in. I can't wait 'til I see everyone walking around together, making friends talking the same language. I don't know what language it would be. Just staying there together.

Maroun seems to present a people-centered view of the conflict. In many ways, Maroun reflects the coexistence narrative and cosmopolitan worldview. He stresses that the mindsets of the people inside the city make it a difficult place to live. Maroun looks towards a cosmopolitan

future in which the people of Jerusalem live side by side, melding together through one language and sense of belonging.

Mariam, a Christian Palestinian who currently lives in the West Bank and attends medical school, gives an answer that focuses on an internal sense of peace:

Peace is — right now? At this point in my life or just in general? It's like calmness. It's comfort. Like coexistence would be the obvious answer. Like peace would just be settled down. Having inner peace, like being calm, accepting yourself, others, where you are, what you're doing, your approaches. I guess that's my answer for this stage in my life.

This response stands out given its disconnection from the political and social conflict. Previously Mariam speaks of her difficulty in being a Christian in a religious Muslim town. At this point in her life, she faces this divide more strongly than the Israeli-Palestinian divide. She feels more alienated from the Muslim community and traditional culture which surrounds her in her current location. When asked what brought her to this understanding of peace, she says: It was very hard moving to Nablus. It was like a cultural shock. You wouldn't think so, but it's very different. I had to learn to accept where I was, like this is the place I'm going to be. I'm still struggling with that. I'm still trying to find peace with that, but working on it. It's challenging. It's very... it's very different. And it's taking me a lot of effort and time to be at peace with myself being there.

Hamza, a Muslim Palestinian, presents a vision of peace which involves equal life for Palestinians and Israelis and increased infrastructure. He presents this thought on how the needs of the Palestinian people can be met. Much of his pragmatic prescription for peace points to increased involvement of Palestinians in government and running infrastructure. He also hopes for a normalization of Israeli and Palestinian interactions. Hamza asserts:

So, to me, peace would look a lot like – definitely a lot more organized, Palestinian presence, a stronger ability for defense... I'd love to see less borders. I'd love to see a Palestinian health care and education being invested in a lot more. I'm not really opposed to like a border, but [I'd like] just more like right of return, freedom of movement. Yeah. Just, kind of, less fighting, less, kind of less armed conflict. I'd like to see a lot more equal life... and both sides having [their] basic needs met. So, definitely the whole Gaza thing has to stop for Israel, but that's something I think should be dealt with by both Israelis and Palestinians. Israel's reasons and Palestinian's reasons for doing whatever that should be dealt with. I'd also like to see a little bit less of [fighting], so, for example, it annoys me when I hear people say—"oh the Palestinian stand", or like, "oh, a

Palestinian committed an attack”, or like, “oh, Palestinians use women and children as human shields.” As long as there’s no unified Palestinian state, whatever a Palestinian does, those are the actions of that person or of that party. So, kind of having less like, “oh, the Palestinian attacked us.” The Israeli attacked us. People are also used to seeing “Palestinians” and “Israelis.” Haifa has a large population of Arabs and Israelis, so it’s not a big deal. Versus where I live, French Hill now is a very, kind of—there’s a lot of Palestinians and Israelis. But when I lived it was where—when I lived there, it was very different. And so once, when I was at a park, a group of Orthodox Jewish girls kicked out an Arab family and were yelling at my mom. And I don’t see that happening if Palestinians and Israelis being in the same place is normalized... So I’m aware that it would be very difficult to force millions of people to speak together and live side-by-side, but definitely having a more organized Palestinian presence, more equal development. ... Whatever it is, I’d like to see issues like that kind of being discussed—a lot more confrontation, but healthy confrontation. Like, “Why did you do that?” Making sure aid can come in. Construction supplies can’t come into Gaza anymore despite that, you know—so, I’d love to see like Palestinians being in administrative positions, checkpoints, settlements. Like even in the West Bank, I think Palestinians only control like 22 percent or something crazy. [I’d like] kind of a lot more equitable investment, representation, right of return.

After Kids4Peace

Joining the army is a right-of-passage in Israeli society.⁵³ A majority of young Israeli adults join the army immediately after high school, feeling bound by a sense of duty to their country and to their people. Israelis may also choose the alternative – national service work – however, this choice does not hold the same kind of prestige offered by military service. With the Jewish Israeli students planning to join the Israeli army, I inquired into what that meant for them in the context of their participation in Kids4Peace. Yael says:

We talked about it once very briefly. And in my mind, the question is sort of, “who would you rather be in the army?” Because the Israeli army does exist, and it will exist for the next foreseeable future. Even if it’s a common saying to say to your kids, “When you’ll be older, there will be no army because there will be peace. You won’t have to be

⁵³ See Chapter II.

in the army.” And yet still, in the foreseeable future we will have an army. So my question is, who would you rather have be the soldier in front of you? Someone who knows nothing about you, sees you as the enemy and as a suspect of a crime or someone who understands your culture – is there because he believes in keeping both sides safe?... They have a problem with things he does on a daily basis because of ethical issues, but he raises those ethical issues and says, “I’m not going to take this lying down”. Would you rather be would you rather have the good soldier or not see your friend whose been in Kids4peace ever contribute to something you find unethical? And it’s a hard question. Would you rather see your friend on the battlefield? Would you rather see them or not? Because not seeing them means someone who is not your friend is in front of you. Seeing them means that they’ve joined the cause that you’re against.

Yael justifies participation in the army thinking that it is better to have Israeli Jews who have participated in Kids4Peace in the army than ones who have not formed connections with Palestinians. She explains that those who have participated in Kids4Peace can resist ethically questionable actions in the military. When asked if she sees herself being one of those who raise ethical issues in the army, Yael responds:

Umm... it’s not very easy. I mean in the army there’s not really room to say, “I think we should change this policy”. That’s really something that would be done through the Kinnestet, but it could be the little things. An officer at a checkpoint smiling and saying, “I’m sorry for the inconvenience” or saying, “I’m sorry this is taking a little longer because we need to do some other checks” can make the experience a little less traumatizing. I mean, it’s still traumatizing in the sense that people need to be searched every day in order to get to work. But on the other hand, it’s making it a little less worse. And I think even if it’s something small, I mean that already makes room for it to be questioned. I personally am not going to be at a checkpoint, since I hope to go into the intelligence unit. I’ll probably be in an office behind a computer. And that’s a good question. Some of my friends said they don’t want to be in something top secret technological that would probably mean doing things that have an ethical question mark on them. And I think that I’d rather – I’d be the one questioning the ethical things rather than saying I’m not going to – I’m going to turn a blind eye to it and pretend it doesn’t exist. And I’d rather be aware of what exists and deal with the ethical questions myself than say, “I’m just going to trust that if I can’t see it it’s not happening.”

Yael discussed the potential to face ethical issues in the army. She seems unclear on whether she will have the power to influence policy or behavioral changes within the army but

claims that as a participant of Kids4Peace with knowledge of ‘the other’, she would rather be the one in the position to raise questions.

Aiden, an Israeli Jewish alumni, also plans to join the army after he completes the pre-army program in which he is currently enrolled. When asked if he will bring the lessons he learned from Kids4Peace into the army, he tells me:

It raises a lot of questions. It made me realize that me of all people have to go to serve in combat. I have to be in a combat position because I need to spread the word at the line of fire I could say. You can’t expect to talk all ideology and talk how your words and to expect everyone to listen when you’re doing nothing practical. So what made me realize that is that I have to go to the front lines and be there for that cause. Not to just do my part, but also spread the word and let people know out there what the consequences are to this whole situation.

Palestinian participants of Kids4Peace also grapple with this dilemma as their Jewish friends graduate high school and make decisions whether to join the army or not – a choice that either supports or negates the wellbeing of their people. Chris explains his perception of his Israeli Jewish friends joining the army:

I have a close friend – one of my closest friends – finished in the Army recently. He was in a very violent unit. They call this one Mista’arvim.⁵⁴ I don’t know if you know it. It’s basically a unit of special forces where they also – a lot of times – they act like Arabs, they dress like Arabs, and they do like field work and they do a lot of messed up stuff. There’s a show also about them, [Fauda], about the unit. It’s very famous now. So Fauda is about that unit. My friend served there. And yeah, I mean we talk about it sometimes. He told me. Serving in that unit was very important for him, but he told me that he got to see that he felt like what they were doing was wrong a lot of times. I’d also heard that a few of my old classmates from Hand in Hand, for example, now they work with intelligence.

... One of my old classmates told me that there. And she said that she was very disappointed that they went into Hand in Hand school to learn about peace in Arabic, just so they can be recruited to use that against us at some point. I don’t think I know someone that right now is in the army actively serving. Maybe my best friend when we were kids -- he might be serving now. Last time I saw him, he was doing community service instead of army. But I think he joined the army in the end. We’re not very close

⁵⁴ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/12/musta-israel-agents-pose-palestinians-171218061118857.html>

anymore, so I wouldn't know, to be honest...It's not easy. It's not easy. I mean I don't take anything personally, because I know a lot... they're forced to go into the army. I know if I was in their case, I would go into the army. And maybe even -- I would try to go for the best unit in the army too. Because I'm just an ambitious person. And that's what they put in front of me, that's what I'm going to do. So I understand that point. But it's not easy, because in the end of the day, the reality of the situation is after what I've seen in my life, I feel like in the end of the day the army is -- you can call it defense army -- but it's defending against someone. And that person is us -- Arab people. We're even Arab citizens, which is very unfortunate. I mean, if you want to say that a lot of people make the case that, "okay, Arabs from outside are coming in, Gaza and West Bank these outside are coming in behind." But even as an Arab citizen that technically has every right like any other citizen, we get treated like shit by the army [and] by the police. Things like that.

Chris, like a few of the other Palestinian respondents, expresses frustration that he and one of his peers experience due to Jewish friends joining the army, when his collective group is treated inhumanely by Israeli soldiers and police. He mentions that his status as a citizen does not protect him from violence and discrimination.

There are often major repercussions for young adults refusing to join the army – social, political, occupational, and economic. Young Israeli Jews who refuse to join as a political statement against the occupation may be jailed.⁵⁵ Those who simply claim pacifism as a reason not to join may be excused, but they face social stigma and alienation from a major part of Israeli society.

Noa serves as an example of an Israeli Jew who did decide not to join the army and finds pride in this decision. Noa explains that she brings the responsibility her privilege dictates – a responsibility she internalized from her upbringing and solidified through Kids4Peace -- forward into her decision not to join the army. She states:

If I am Jewish here in Jerusalem, in Israel, it comes with lots of responsibility. One of the responsibilities I have is not going to the Army in my opinion. And saying no to the—to resist the violence that is all around us. And not feeling comfortable holding a gun at the age of eighteen. And I have to say -- I mean that's one of my responsibilities. And I'm really proud to be Jewish. And I think that -- I mean because I'm Jewish I have to invest my life for this cause, for solving the conflict, and living in harmony and peace with my

⁵⁵ Ultra-orthodox Jews are currently exempt from military service, a fact that outrages many secular members of Israeli society.

neighbors. I think I have more power than my Palestinian friend. I think I have more time and strength to invest in it. Because I mean I can afford energy and time to solve this conflict. I know some of my friends, some of my Palestinian friends, have to afford their time and energy to survive and to stay where they are and to -- I don't know, they have so many different things to invest their money and power in energy about. And I mean, I don't have. So now I feel comfortable with my Jewish identity, and I know it comes with tons of responsibility.

In this statement, Noa takes on her collective identity in a new light than before she entered Kids4Peace. Noa views her Jewish identity with pride knowing her responsibility to resist violence and militarism. She expresses her commitment to dedicating her time and energy to work towards peace, in whatever form that takes. This recognition of privilege and responsibility is a powerful trope for Israeli Jews who participate in the Kids4Peace program. Although none of the other participants expressed it in this way. Noa says:

Right now, I mean power is limited. Because I know I didn't go to university, and I don't have a job in the field. And I'm not in college or something, which is something I really want to do. But I mean, I know I have some power. Talking to people. Just talking to the girls that I'm doing national service with. And the girls in my hostel maybe. But I think I mostly wait till the time where I'll be-- maybe after university and find a job in the field. Because then I know I will have the power I want to. But I'm really looking forward for this. Something to help me with the-- I mean, something that will help me in the politics field. I don't know if it's going to be law maybe or I don't know. I have a dream to study abroad, study in the States, study at NYU maybe.

In addition to refusing to join the army, Noa demonstrates a desire to get involved in politics in the future. She considers which steps she may need to take to get there. Noa serves as an example of one way in which Kids4Peace can build strong allies in the Israeli Jewish community.

In reflecting upon the interviews with Kids4Peace participants, it remains unclear whether participants dramatically change their trajectories based on participation in Kids4Peace. It appears that sub-cultural background (political leanings and associations), socioeconomic status, and family influence likely play a major role in the youths' choices for their futures.

Maroun describes the friendships that have followed him outside of Kids4Peace:

We built a lot of relationships. Although there may have been kids who left the camp because of what happened, but still some of us who like felt this idea of dialoguing a lot was good... that helped us connect more. I made a lot of friendships with that here with

friends they're now serving in the army right now. I don't see them a lot for two years, but still we're friends on social media, which is cool. If I see them in a checkpoint or working, I say hello, of course. I would love to see them. And for the kids, I met a lot of kids from all over. They're awesome. They all love each other. They're like a family -- a big family... like the tenth-grade group. Just awesome. And from working with advisors... we still hang out sometimes. Jews, Muslims, Christians, we hang out all.

Maroun's comments reflect Yael's point that she believes her Palestinian friends would rather see a friendly face at the checkpoints than an unfriendly one. Others like Chris and his friends feel differently.

I asked Noa if she had difficulty reintegrating from the 'bubble' of inter-group harmony created by the Kids4Peace programming. In response, she discusses the difficulty of maintaining her friendships from Kids4Peace:

Somehow me and Mariam kept in touch for a few years after the camps and after the leadership camp. Yeah, it was hard. It was hard, and it's also the fact that I don't have lots of friends from Kids4Peace. I mean, me and Mariam speak sometimes, but we're not friends just like we used to be. Just like it is hard to keep in touch with my Arab friends from class. They're in a really different part of their life right now, and they chose to go to the university, and they're studying. Some of them study their second year of university now, and I didn't even start thinking about what I want to study and where I want to study and how to do it. I mean, it's we have really different cultures, and I think that's the main part of it. And I don't know if-- I mean, Kids4Peace or my school goal was to make is friends, probably not. I don't know if that was the goal. I want to believe that [it's] not because I gained so much from both of these programs that staying friends is not a big part of it. I have such an amazing and special experiences in Kids4Peace in the States and in the camps that the fact that I don't have friends is not a disappointment in those terms... I know that everything I gained in Kids4Peace in the program, I still carry it with me today. So maybe the philosophical part of it is still with me, so maybe that wasn't so hard to integrate, but the friendships were. Yeah, I didn't realize how different-- I mean, I just realized. I was talking to Mariam, and she's in med-school—and other people are in the army.

... Or even if I don't have any friends from Kids4Peace, I do have friends from my school, but even if I didn't have any, I don't think that my school or Kids4Peace were there to make this one culture that is fine for everyone and everyone can take part of it in equal amount and everyone can do the same things. And at the end of the day, if I want

to meet outside of school, we do different things. We are come from different cultures and not everything is fine with me and fine with my classmates and my Arabs classmates. And I wanted to go to hang out in the city center, and they don't want to do it because of all kind of different kinds of cultural things. And I'm happy that we didn't make one culture that fits everyone, because it's wrong and there isn't such a thing. So, of course we have shared experiences, and we've been through amazing stuff together. But we didn't stay friends, because we all come from different cultures. It's fine. I'm fine with it.

Noa suggests that she has brought the philosophies of Kids4Peace into her post-Kids4Peace experience, but not the friendships. However, she believes that the purpose of Kids4Peace was not to make lasting friendships or for the collective identities of the participants to blend into one common culture. She emphasizes group differences, potentially referring to differences in belief systems, customs, and culturally defined interests. Noa also mentions the problem of geographical segregation in Jerusalem. The language here is vague, but her reference to her Arab friends refusing to visit the city center (which resides in West Jerusalem, the Israeli Jewish side of the city) “because of all kind of different kinds of cultural things” could mean that her Arab colleagues either have different preferences due to their culture,⁵⁶ do not want to participate in Israeli culture and would prefer to support businesses on the Palestinian side, or a combination of these factors. This comment may also refer to the stigma around Palestinians/Arabs associating with Israeli Jews. Sarah echoes Noa’s conclusion about relationships from the K4P program:

Yes [I had some strong, impactful relationships], but now that I’ve left those have faded away sadly. Which is a shame. But while I was there, yes I had some good friends.

Mariam, a Christian Palestinian reflects Noa’s comments about the friendships made during their time in Kids4Peace together:

During the time that I was involved with Kids4Peace, I did have very many meaningful relationships, so I am very thankful for them. But I guess this happens if you went to a school and you switched schools and you drift away from your friends from the first school. We did stay in touch for a couple -- I think for two years or a year in a half after we left Kids4peace, me and my friend Noa -- but then we kind of just drifted away. Because Kids4Peace was a common place for us to be, but then after that unfortunately we both got -- she went to -- she did not go to the army but she went to training something. We both went to very different paths. I went to university. There was just

⁵⁶ For instance, religious Muslims may prefer not to meet at bars in West Jerusalem.

not any more common things between us, so we kind of drifted away. But during Kids4peace, I did have many meaningful friendships throughout, and I still cherish them. Mariam cites that Noa did not go into the army, “but she went into training something.” This suggests the extent of separation between Israeli Jewish and Palestinian societies in the same city, despite the efforts of Kids4Peace to bring these two sides together. The trajectories of youth with different group identities take them in separate directions, which makes maintaining friendships difficult. These youth are afforded different opportunities based on their identity. Israeli-Arab youth do not have the option to join the army or to do national service. This is likely why Mariam does not seem to know exactly what program in which Noa is enrolled. Instead of these national programs and institutions, Israeli-Arabs more often go straight to university. These separate trajectories reform a gap between the youth, although many do seem to continue incorporating the values and lessons of Kids4Peace into their worldview.

As mentioned in the previous section, Mariam is now focused on maintaining her own sense of peace in a different context that alienates her from the Palestinian community. She therefore is not currently focused on her mission through Kids4Peace, but hopes to return to the cause someday. Mariam explains:

Okay so in [this city], in my situation, I find it very hard to [be accepted] as a Christian to begin with. I’m Arab just like them, but [me] being Christian is a shock to them. It’s a minority in [this city]. At this point after being there for a year in a half now, they don’t have to accept me. It’s fine. Well my name gives it away. You can see how they start treating you differently. They have these questions. Some are very nice and genuinely want to know more about you, but some of them they attack you with them and some are rude. At this point, I just want to be at peace. I already have a lot of school work, and I’m not really focused on the aspect of trying to change their mentality about me as a Christian. And if I were to be any other than like them, you can feel like you can just feel how they perceive you as different than them, and it makes life even more challenging there than it should be. So at this point I’m like, “just let me be. I’ll let you be and move on with our lives.” So if that’s a challenge for me, let alone on a bigger scale. It’s quite a headache. Like for me right now, I’m really focused on school, it’s a lot of work. So unfortunately, I’m not really looking to that aspect [of the work of Kids4Peace]. But whenever I can, through how I act, what I say, the things I post on social media, I try to convey that through that. But I don’t go out of my way specifically to try to make a change right now, but I do look -- I see myself going back to Kids4peace, because I feel like it’s home for me there. I’d be coming back home. And helping them make a

change, and they can help me achieve that as well. I see myself coming back in the future, but right now it's not really my focus.

As a Christian Palestinian, Mariam faces challenges to her identity on multiple fronts. There is a sense of frustration and exhaustion in her response, as well as a resignation to the social reality in which she lives. It appears that which of her identities feel the most salient and challenged is context dependent. In the city in the West Bank in which she lives now, her Christian identity makes her 'the other'. Additionally, she faces an academically rigorous program, which takes up her focus at this time. She takes the approach of facing one battle at a time and

For some like Malik, the Kids4Peace experience served as a gateway to other peace organizations and coexistence communities, which heightened his sense of agency and gave him the tools to make social and political change.

4.6 Power and Privilege: Youth Perceptions

The data presented various youth interpretations of the meaning and impact of power and privilege within the context of Kids4Peace. When asked whether privilege and power were discussed in the Kids4Peace programming, a few Jewish Israeli students presented an interpretation of this question divergent from the one I had in mind. These responses also differed from those of the Palestinian youth. Several Israeli Jews brought up their perception of bias towards the Palestinian youth in the organization, rather than address the larger issues of power and privilege that exist within the context and the country at large. Several Israeli Jews also divulged awareness of their privilege and responsibility as Jews living in Israel/Palestine.

Egalitarian Environment

According to Contact Theory, one of the requirements for a successful contact environment is a sense of equality between groups in contact. In response to questions about whether Kids4Peace provides an egalitarian atmosphere, a couple Jewish Israeli subjects expressed feeling out-numbered. These youth suggested they perceived unequally distributed empathy from Kids4Peace staff members, due to their identity group's relative privilege. Sarah serves as an example of a Jewish youth who lived almost completely separately from the 'other side' before Kids4Peace as opposed to the participants who attended Hand in Hand School or had experience with Palestinians prior. Sarah reports:

That was also an issue in Kids4peace where sometimes we would feel that they were siding too much with the Palestinians and less -- because we already had a better life -- they were putting more focus on them. So we also thought that --We also thought that -- we're all⁵⁷ --- it's the same amount of Muslims, Christians, and Jews, but they're all Arabs after all. They all spoke Arabic. So sometimes they were talking, and we wouldn't be able to understand. On the other hand, we talk and they understand us perfectly. They understand us. And so sometimes we would feel like they were a little too on their side and less on the Jewish side. Because again, they have it harder.

Here Sarah brings up the way in which she perceives the organization to deal with the power disparity between Jewish and Arab/Palestinian youth in Jerusalem. She appears discouraged that the Arab youth seemed to receive more attention than the Jewish participants; Additionally, she is frustrated that the Arab participants could understand when the Jewish students spoke Hebrew, but that the Jewish students could not understand when the Arab students spoke Arabic. This difference in knowledge of 'the other' comes from the power disparity itself⁵⁸. Arab youth are often required to learn Hebrew in schools and in order to gain employment in many places in Jerusalem. Israeli Jews, on the other hand, have not historically been taught Arabic for fluency as it is not seen as necessary for their livelihood or survival.

In the previous excerpt, Sarah's usage and accentuation of "we" and "them" categories heavily emphasizes collective identity belonging. She does not answer the original question directly ("How did being in K4p make you feel about your identity?"), but it is interesting that she brought this up in response to this question about her feelings around her identity. It could be an indirect answer (that this perceived attitude made her feel worse about being an Israeli Jew) or it could be a frustration that she wished to vent. Directly in response to "Do you feel this program creates an egalitarian atmosphere?" Sarah says:

Most of the time, yes. But I know sometimes the Jewish kids would feel they would give a little more attention to the Arab kids and the Jewish kids would be left on the side.

⁵⁷ In this moment, Sarah's speech breaks. It appears that she is uncomfortable using the word "Palestinians" in the public café where the interview takes place. She pauses mid-word. I realized that this reluctance to speak about Palestinians in the context of Kids4Peace may have been due to the public nature of our meeting. In retrospect, I wish that we were able to have a more private conversation. However, this location was more convenient for Sarah than the Kids4Peace office in East Jerusalem.

⁵⁸ Cite an article that describes: In most cases of power asymmetry, the group with less power has more information and knowledge of the group with more power out of necessity to survive in a world built to benefit the high-powered group.

Noa weighs in on whether she felt there was equal opportunity for participants from all collective identities within the organization:

I want to say yes, but then, I want to think about it a little bit more. Maybe say no. I was really young. I was young in the fact that I didn't-- I mean, I didn't really understand what is going around me. I was the youngest every time I've been there. So I didn't feel comfortable speaking because I was just really young. Not because I was Jewish, for sure. But I think that the part that most of the people who manage this program are Arabs and Muslims, also Christians. I mean, the time I was there, [two Jewish women] were the heads of Kids4Peace. And it changed. Yeah. Most of the staff were-- I don't know if it's right -- That's what it seems to me -- that most of the staff is Arab Muslim and Arab Christian.

When asked the question, Noa and one other Jewish participant cites the proportion of Israeli to Palestinian/Arab staff as a factor in whether the organization provides an egalitarian atmosphere. It is clear that the collective identities of staff members plays a role in participants' perceptions of fairness and proportionality.

I found contrast between the nature of Jewish Israeli responses versus Palestinian (Israeli-Arab) responses. When asked this question, Israeli Jews responded with, "mostly yes," explaining that they believed Palestinian participants received more attention from the staff. Palestinian participants responded "yes" unilaterally, affirming that the organization provided an egalitarian atmosphere that offered the same attention to Israeli and Palestinian participants. Noa answers:

That's a good question. I want to say yes, but then, I want to think about it a little bit more. Maybe say no. I was really young. I was young in the fact that I didn't-- I mean, I didn't really understand what is going around me. And the dialogues wasn't-- I mean, I was the youngest every time I've been there. So, I didn't feel comfortable speaking because I was just really young. Not because I was Jewish, for sure. But I think that the part that most of the people who manage this program are Arabs and Muslims, also Christians. Most of the staff were-- I don't know if it's right. That's what it seems to me, that most of the staff is Arab Muslim and Arab Christian. I don't know. I don't know because it's changed so often.

When asked whether the Kids4Peace staff discussed these issues of power and privilege directly in the programming, Sarah recounts, "I think they were just trying to balance them. They didn't really talk about [these issues]." As a participant she perceived a type of bias towards the

Palestinian youth, potentially brought on by the guilt of leaders of the organization or by the biases of the Palestinian staff, but no explanation of why these powers needed to be balanced.

On the contrary, Aiden does recall Kids4Peace programs involving explicit discussions about power disparities and inequalities between the two groups:

Later when we were a little older, I remember in ninth grade, we were getting into it. We were asked to read certain chapters [in a book], and then we were discussing the implications and causes for each thing. And I can't recall if we ever talked about what can we do about it. Maybe in a meeting that I wasn't attending, we did, but we were talking about the-- we got over-- and we did tackle real-world problems... I remember when I was in eighth grade, there was-- it's not-- like an operation between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza. I just remember hearing from my Palestinian friends about what they see happening in Gaza. And I just remember I was in shock by what's happening there, because I've been seeing only one side. I've been receiving rockets and hearing all those alarms and stuff, and I didn't realize that the other side is also suffering a great deal. I think the best example of it is that I remember was that someone said that whenever the Israelis hear an airplane, they feel safe. And whenever the Palestinians hear an airplane, they're getting alert. So it's two different lives. So that was a real deal-breaker for me.

Language and Power

Malik touches on the way language is used differently between identity groups through the politics of the language⁵⁹. Political implications of the conflict seep into the way the struggle is defined. Most academics and laypeople alike use the term 'conflict' as in "Israeli-Palestinian conflict", or sometimes expanding the term to reference a wider "Arab-Israeli conflict". Others repudiate the use of the word conflict, as they define what is happening not as a conflict between two equal powers, but as an occupation of land and people through a powerful neocolonial project known as Zionism.

⁵⁹ The terms used to describe the land itself often differ depending on one's political position. Some still refer to all of the land in that region as Palestine. Even some left-wing Jewish Israelis continue use this terminology to indicate their political view that the state of Israel is an occupying colonial force and their belief in decolonizing the land, returning it to its indigenous people. During my stay, I largely avoided this predicament by telling those I communicated with that I stayed in "Jerusalem". I will use this in this paper as well when possible. I will also focus on Jerusalem as a locale in order to localize and not generalize my study, as the experience of Palestinians and Israelis in other parts of the country and externally varies immensely.

Yeah, using the word "conflict" is a term that's a lot more neutral to everybody. And so it's a term used in-- I've used the word "conflict" in this conversation. And yeah, for some Palestinians, it might be something that's more interchangeable. Others, they might insist that this is an occupation and never use the word conflict. But I think some of the left-wing Israelis definitely called it an occupation. Or they may have called it a conflict, but when you ask them, "Do you think it's an occupation?" they definitely would have agreed. I think the face of Kids4Peace is changing slightly. It's changing slightly. I think the Israelis in Kids4Peace are slowly becoming more right-wing. I think that's something that's great actually. But I also think it's-- I think less and less Israelis would agree that this is an occupation and not a conflict. Or that at least there is an occupation and a conflict. Yeah, definitely. Those power dynamics, they're really, really important. In this context Malik exposes yet another contradiction in the work being done at Kids4Peace and other coexistence organizations. On one hand, Malik expresses approval that the organization is incorporating more right-wing members. This means that the message and impact of the organization will reach those who have the potential to undergo the greatest transformation from the experience. On the other hand, the incorporation of Zionist leadership and right-wing participants may change the content and style of the organization. As Malik mentions, language may be used more carefully and neutrally in order to avoid making right-wing participants uncomfortable. This trend may turn deeper into the focus of the organization, impacting content of workshops, activities, and dialogues.⁶⁰

Contrary to Malik, Johann seems to disapprove of the involvement of individuals who do not hold principles that Johann sees as being essential to the work of Kids4Peace:

Definitely there were challenges along the way, but they were mainly come internal and with the organization itself and the program and everything. Not particularly anything from my [community]. I mean... let's see what... it was a long time ago. I think I mean for the first time I met people who had -- I mean that were in an integrated framework program -- that might have let's say reservations or uhh... were hesitant to be fully in it. I generally think it came more from the Jewish side. I mean there were a few Jews who were not in full agreement with everything I thought you needed to be in agreement with in a program like that.

⁶⁰ For example, activities may retain a lighter focus on personal and religious identity versus conversations that touch upon issues of the power dynamics that exist between youth in Jerusalem. According to one advisor I spoke to, programs have decreased focus on issues of power and privilege over the years she has been involved.

Johann observed that some of the Jewish participants were not completely sold on the premise of the organization. This brings up an interesting issue. Should an organization like Kids4Peace reach out to those who do not believe in peace in an effort to bring them into the fold, or should recruiters avoid this to avoid the risk of harming the other participants and the authenticity of the program.

Socioeconomic and Geographical Privilege

Mariam interprets my question about power and privilege on multiple levels. When asked whether these topics were addressed in the Kids4Peace program, she says:

I think it would have been good if they brought up privilege more often, because mostly people who were more vocal about their opinion never addressed their privilege. And I remember, in like something I did for Kids4peace maybe last winter, the people from the U.S. came and they asked us about our life in Jerusalem. But they wanted to hear about our struggles in Jerusalem, and I couldn't help but think, "why are you asking me about my struggles? You should be asking the people in the West Bank, the people in Gaza, not me." I'm very privileged. And I don't remember that coming up in Kids4Peace. I feel like in Kids4peace, we were all privileged. We don't have much to complain about. And obviously, things on a very social level, okay maybe, but on the big scale like real struggles I don't think we -- like if we were to talk, we would be talking to the people who are actually going through that and not for ourselves personally. So I think that aspect should have been brought up more during our dialogues. Just to put things into perspective for each other.

Mariam is self-reflective in pointing out the relative privilege she holds in relation to Palestinians living in Gaza and the West Bank. She seems to believe that the privileges youth in Kids4Peace generally hold should be an important piece of the conversations they have around the conflict.

Jewish Privilege

Two left-wing Jewish citizens of Israel – Noa and Johann -- bring up their ambivalent feelings about their position of privilege. Noa outlines her thoughts on the privileges she holds as a Jewish Israeli as well as the privileges that non-Israeli Jews hold in Israel:

I think it's a privilege we as Jews have. And it doesn't say that we have to use it. I mean, we also can walk around in Hebron, and feel free, and we have those streets that are made only for us then-- I mean, it's not cool. It's just not cool to use this privilege because we can. The same about getting your citizenship because you're Jewish. It's important, and it's important that people will do this kind of work. So it's important that people will do this kind of work, and I know it's also really important for, I mean, how the world sees us. The world would see that there's a different narrative as well. That Jews actually care about Palestinians' lives and the conflict in this kind of sense. But getting their citizenship is a difficult-- I mean, it's a process that is only for Jews. It sounds bad -- not just sounds bad. It's bad. It's a bad privilege we have. It's a bad privilege that is only for us. I would feel more comfortable with it the moment where also Arabs and Muslims and Palestinians could get their citizenship here to work about those things... Also, I get money from the government now, which is the money me and my parents pay, and only certain people get it. Only I'm like, "Oh, my gosh. They want a certain type of Jew from a certain type of place," and, yeah, it's -- And no-one asked me if I want to give my money to people who are [making *Aliyah*].

Noa refers to the fact that Jews around the world can legally become citizens through a process called making *Aliyah* (meaning "to ascend" in Hebrew).⁶¹ She articulates her opposition to this law and to Jews taking advantage of their privilege while Arabs/Palestinians do not share that privilege. Noa also references racism here when she says that the Israeli government "wants a certain type of Jew from a certain type of place." Here she refers to the targeting of American and European Jews to make *Aliyah*. She expresses her rejection of these privileges and connects her participation in Kids4Peace as part of her way of showing the world that there is a different narrative and a Jewish Israeli mindset that involves awareness of privilege and compassion for Palestinians living on the land.

American Influence

In the description of one of the camps she attended in the United States, Noa brings up the American perspective that was passed down to the campers. She says:

I think I also remember a session about how-- Stuart, the one who hosted us on his farm, he explained the American perspective on conflict resolution in Israel and Palestine.

⁶¹ This procedure is open to Jews only because official based on the Law of Return, passed in 1950, which granted every Jew in the world the right to settle in Israel (Nefesh B'Nefesh, 2017).

Now when I think about it, it was really, really-- he had a really specific agenda. He was really pro-American intervention, and that's what he explained. But at least I got the knowledge. And now I know how to criticize this point of view that I don't agree with. But at least I got to hear it and understand it. So I think that's a camp that I really gained a lot from.

Noa felt that the hosts of the camp she attended held a specific view of the conflict and how it should be dealt with. She seems to have appreciated hearing the host's point of view despite disagreeing with his opinions. Rather than experiencing the American bias negatively, Noa reports gaining knowledge from the experience and the ability to criticize the perspective of those who propose American intervention. In this way, she gained a deeper understanding of alternative points of view, but also of her own thoughts on intervention.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

This chapter outlines the ways in which collective identity of young people intersects with the meaning they make of their experience in Kids4Peace. The literature presented in Chapter II lays a foundation for this mean-making process. The conversation around Kids4Peace and the intersections this paper investigates take place within larger conversations about identity, narrative, coexistence, and normalization. Throughout my time interning for and researching Kids4Peace, and during my time spent in decolonizing activist circles interested in promoting Palestinian human rights, I encountered critiques of coexistence work done in Palestine/Israel. This chapter delves into these criticisms and how they relate to the real experience and thoughts of the youth interviewed. Additionally, this discussion touches on an alternative perspective on the narratives developed by ‘ethos of conflict’ and on the real output Jerusalemite youth receive from being involved in Kids4Peace aside.

5.1 Kids4Peace in Conversations about Contact and Coexistence

This section discusses some criticisms of the coexistence model presented by scholars, activists, and other parties involved in this conflict. A critical underlying theme of this research is power asymmetry between collective identity groups in conflict and the ways in which asymmetry is or is not reflected in the youths’ experiences and motivations.

Allport’s contact theory asserts that intergroup contact reaps the desired positive effects only if four conditions of contact are met: equal group status within the contact environment, shared goals between the groups, intergroup cooperation, and support of authorities, law, or custom (Pettigrew, 1998). Contact theory intersects with the topics in this section to aid in the discussion about the effectiveness of Kids4Peace as a conflict intervention. Even if Kids4Peace Jerusalem, to the best of its ability, ensures equal treatment of all youth involved in the program, power asymmetry outside of the organization’s walls impacts the youth in the program and will inevitably seep into the contact environment. This inequality shows up in the differing motivations and goals of those in contact, in the way youth participate in and experience dialogue, and in what youth get out of the experience as a whole.⁶²

⁶² Power differentiation may be reflected in the way group members express themselves in dialogue.

Identity, Power, and Goals for Contact

This sub-section investigates the goals of Kid4Peace (K4P), the goals of K4P youth participants, and the youths' perceptions of the organization's goals. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to arrive at conclusions about the correlation between collective identity, power and participant goals. However, this chapter contributes to the discussion about how the relative position of power of the collective identity group in this conflict may influence the goals of young people belonging to those identities groups and participating in Kids4Peace. I use the research of Saguy, Dovidio, and Pratto, also mentioned in Chapter II, as a backdrop for this discussion.

The mission statement on the Kids4Peace website reads, "We empower youth to create more peaceful communities. In the face of violence, hatred and injustice, we connect youth from across religious and social divides and give them tools to be agents of change. Our vision is to create a global movement of peace leaders and activists who transform divided societies into communities of lasting peace" (*About Us*, 2019). I deduced additional goals of the organization by investigating the metrics used to evaluate its programs. These goals include personal transformation, involving changes in attitudes towards 'the other',⁶³ an increased sense of agency, and shifted perceptions of the conflict.⁶⁴

Reported goals of current youth participants and alumni of Kids4Peace, outlined in Chapter IV, range from the internal (an increased understanding of the other, general knowledge, and personal transformation) to the interpersonal (friendships and community-building) to the external (to influence social and political change). I examine youth perceptions of their own goals and the purpose of the organization through a lens of collective identity and power dynamics with the research of Saguy, Dovidio, & Pratto as a framework for understanding the role of group power in goals for contact.⁶⁵ The findings show that individual goals do, at times, align with the goals of their collective identity group as projected by Saguy, Dovidio, & Pratto. In other instances, individual goals stray from the predicted findings due to an ideological divergence from the collective's master narrative.

⁶³ Many of the youth interviewed do not report excessive negative attitudes about 'the other' before entering the program, particularly those who attended the bilingual Hand in Hand School. However, some with less contact prior to Kids4Peace do cite fear and a lack of understanding.

⁶⁴ It is notable that metrics used to evaluate the K4P programs are designed for a report sent to USAID (United States Agency for International Development), the project's primary funder. This project was funded by USAID until 2018 when U.S. President Trump withdrew money from organizations supporting Palestinians (Zanotti, 2018).

⁶⁵ This research is introduced in Chapter II.

The data shows that after graduation, alumni seem to have a different perspective on Kids4Peace than while they were participants. Alumni seem to synthesize the benefits of the organization as well as problems and challenges in their summation of the program's goals and their own. Generally speaking, current participants express more dissatisfaction due to dissonance between their own goals and the organization's goals, and between their own goals and those of the other youth in the program.

Social Identity theory (SIT) as outlined in Chapter II, relies on the idea that humans are motivated to maintain a positive self-concept. This motivation may play a role in the formation of group goals for contact. The underlying motivation for positive self-image of the group and self is also contained within the *ethos of conflict*. The subconscious selection of goals for contact may also be supported by this ethos and the beliefs it describes.

By accepting goals that are oriented towards social change, the more powerful group, Israeli youth, may feel that their place in the system is delegitimate. A few Israeli youth acknowledged this belief and were more motivated to work for social change than their Jewish counterparts who seemed to more strongly hold views that bolstered the idea of a Jewish state. On the other side, working for social change also supports the Palestinian system of beliefs and a positive self-image as they strive for rights and dignity.

One of the strongest ways in which collective identity interacts with experience in an asymmetrical conflict such as that in Israel/Palestine is through power dynamics of the collective identity groups as they are experienced by individuals in the Kids4Peace program. The relative power of a collective group may have an immense impact on the goals of the members of the groups as they enter into contact with one another (Saguy, Dovidio, & Pratto, 2008). Saguy, Dovidio & Pratto's analysis of power and goals states that those in the disadvantaged group in conflict will be more motivated than the advantaged group to work for social change when it comes to goals for contact with 'the other'. In alignment with this finding, Palestinians living in Israel strive for equal rights, justice, and an end to the occupation, in addition to a social and political future that involves some form of autonomy for their people (2008). Malik represents this notion in his assertion, "I want to strive for equal rights in Israel among all citizens, but at the same time, I feel that's part and parcel of my Palestinian identity. I think that's something that can't be taken away from that [Palestinian identity]."

Many Palestinian subjects in this study perceived the purpose as direct social change, reflecting their personal goals going into the organization. A few of the youth, specifically Palestinian participants like Ismail and Saed, expressed frustration at the lack of a larger immediate impact. Their goals in joining Kids4Peace were to inspire and create social and

political change. Those most impatient with the lack of direct action are Palestinian current participants.

On its website, Kids4Peace describes itself as “apolitical.” Reflecting on the goals of the organization, it is pertinent to question whether it is possible to be apolitical in a conflict that impacts the core of daily life in Jerusalem and is rooted in the collective identities of members of the organization. Apoliticalism signals a position of privilege, as it is a privilege to remove oneself from politics. It is often said that to not take a political stance supports the status quo by default.

Saguy, Dovidio & Pratto suggest that Jewish Israelis, as the more powerful group, may have goals that fit within the existing power structures and status quo (2008). The data from the interviews does reflect points made by these scholars to an extent. Many Jewish participants of Kids4Peace state a desire to understand the inequalities in their country. These subjects reported their perception of the purpose of Kids4Peace to be mutual understanding on an interpersonal level.

Jewish Israelis who plan to enter the army spoke of bringing social awareness and empathy to soldiers on the frontlines (Aiden) and potentially to military policy (Yael). Aiden declares the purpose of Kids4Peace as a meeting place where the two sides can make a “proper connection” and an opportunity to get firsthand knowledge of ‘the other’. Aiden specifically mentions Israeli Jews having the opportunity to see the inequalities between the Palestinian and Jewish sides of the city (East and West Jerusalem, respectively). Yael’s representation of her own goals presents a contradiction. She claims that she aims to bring the mindset of Kids4Peace into and raise ethical questions in the highest levels of the military. However, she admits that it is difficult to make change in this way. She suggests that change in these policies and procedures can only be made through the Knesset. This demonstrates how perceived goals and the reality may not match up.

It is not only Palestinian young people who cite the struggle for social justice as a key part of their collective identity. Through a self-reflective process, Noa, a left-wing Jewish alumna, finds the responsibility to fight for social change intrinsic to her Jewish identity. Noa does not represent the findings mentioned above. Her response suggests that far left-wing Jews may report having goals to disrupt the status quo just like their Palestinian counterparts. Far left-wing Jews in particular may have goals more similar to Palestinian participants in terms of commitment to social justice.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Given the small sample size in this study, further research should investigate specific personal goals more extensively.

Several participants – Palestinians and Israeli Jews alike -- were of the mindset that the new awareness brought upon by Kids4Peace would be a catalyst for change through individual participants bringing this awareness to their communities. These participants took on the Seeds of Peace approach, in which they saw themselves as “seeds” that will spread and grow into peaceful social change. According to a few of the subjects in this study, Kids4Peace served as a steppingstone as youth gained knowledge, a greater understanding of ‘the other’, and important life skills, but did not perceive the organization to have action-oriented goals.⁶⁷ Although Palestinian participants reported an eagerness for social change and a more active role, most jointly acknowledge that Kids4Peace can primarily provide the “seed” approach to change. However, participant faith in the effectiveness of this approach and their own agency to spread awareness varied. In many cases (for both Jews and Palestinians), a sense of “realism” appears to mediate personal goals and perceptions of the organization’s goals.

Youth in this study also presented different perspectives on who should be the targeted members of Kids4Peace. Some youth, such as Malik and Adina, believe that it is beneficial to have participants from all ends of the political spectrum. It seems that Palestinian youth with this mindset believe that incorporating right wing Jewish Israelis might allow for the greatest societal change. Others, both Palestinian and left-wing Israeli Jews, agree with Johann who asserts his belief that there are certain values and facts that should be agreed upon in order to join Kids4Peace. Those of this opinion aim to achieve a safer environment for the most vulnerable youth and a greater capacity to make an impact. This difference in opinion reflects differing goals of the youth.

It is important to note that the goals of the organization have and may continue to evolve further with shifting times and leadership. As a team, Kids4Peace leadership decides what kind of community the organization strives for, who they reach out to, and what the screening process looks like for admission into the program. It is unclear whether the true goals of leadership are to challenge the overarching power structures in a meaningful way. Whether this is the case or not, stating so on the Kids4Peace website may deter youth from joining the organization and may even put those involved in danger. The stated goals of Kids4Peace may in fact be authentic in their commitment to “apoliticism.” Alternatively, this more neutral stance may be a reflection of the predicament many peacebuilding organizations in Palestine/Israel face. They may often

⁶⁷ The exception to this statement is the optional action-based “Advocacy Track” accessible to the high-school YAP (Youth Action Program) participants. One project cited by Malik and other Kids4Peace representatives lobbied local movie theaters to incorporate Arabic subtitles in their movie screenings.

balance the desire to involve those who would benefit most from the contact with the need for members to have enough shared values to create a safe, productive space. The issue is even more delicate given young people are involved and could be at risk.

Identity Transcendence and Identity Accentuation

Identity transcendence and identity accentuation relate to an individual's adherence to their collective identity group's master narrative (a concept described in Chapter II). These terms describe the extent to which one's individual identity is intertwined with their collective identity and their personal narrative with their group's master narrative. **Identity transcendence** involves a reduction of the salience of an in-group identity to take on a new common identity that is inclusive of the out-group. In contrast, **identity accentuation** refers to a process of increased salience of social identity and emphasis on "us" and "them" categories. The process of identity accentuation is characterized by polarization and sometimes accompanies a continued delegitimization of the out-group identity and narrative (Hammack, 2011). These concepts appear in Hammack's research of Seeds of Peace and Hands of Peace, which serves as an example through which I ground ideas that arise in my own research.

Hammack's findings show that identity transcendence is a goal of the two peacebuilding organizations he studied (2011). An orientation towards identity transcendence in peacebuilding assumes that Israelis and Palestinians can peacefully coexist only if individuals in each group transcend the ideologically rigid master narratives that divide them. The aim is for participants to "develop a consciousness for coexistence" (Hammack, 2011). Hammack describes the way in which Seeds of Peace promotes the adoption of a super-ordinate identity that incorporates individuals of both 'sides' of the conflict into one community and culture of peace (2011). Kids4Peace does not promote the super-ordinate identity as systematically as Seeds of Peace. However, the interviews I conducted do suggest that being a "kid for peace" may come with the responsibility of adopting and transmitting a consciousness for coexistence to the larger Jerusalemite (Israeli and Palestinian) communities.

Seeds of Peace, more so than Kids4Peace, espouses identity transcendence as an ideal. However, to a certain extent, the participants of Kids4Peace interviewed in this study suggest feeling an expectation to accept a Kids4Peace narrative over their collective identity group's master narrative or their own personal adaptation of that collective narrative. This sentiment was expressed more directly in Malik's interview, but many of the other interviews supported the point. Hammack's study of Seeds of Peace discovers a pressure on youth to adopt a third, centrist

narrative. A similar centrist narrative is described by Malik in the findings (Chapter IV). The third narrative Seeds of Peace promotes relies on a story of liberal pluralism, cosmopolitanism and individual-driven social change (Hammack, 2011).⁶⁸

The interviews for this study generally did not get into details about individuals' beliefs about the region's history and the conflict. However, I was able to deduce general outlooks on 'the other,' perspectives on the conflict, and points on which individuals diverged from their group's master narratives. I witnessed a degree of identity transcendence in those who attended Jerusalem's Hand in Hand school – primarily in Israeli-Arab youth, like Malik and Chris who both attended this school and participated in other Jewish Israeli extracurriculars. I also classify Johann's (who was raised reform Jewish and a citizen of Israel) attitude as a form of identity transcendence, as he does not identify as Israeli but rather as a person from Jerusalem. He does not directly attribute this transcendence to his participation in Kids4Peace, although it may have played a role.

On the other hand, Kids4Peace may have played a role in Malik's identity accentuation. Malik warns against the coerced adoption of the centrist narrative. He asserts, "to adopt a Kids4Peace narrative that's a centrist narrative just for the sake of being centrist, I think it's terrible. It's really, really bad. And I think it hurts the impact that it has. I think in the minds of participants, it means that you should change your opinion." The experience of feeling pressure to present this narrative seems to solidify Malik's beliefs in some of the elements of his own collective master narrative.

Rather than experiencing identity transcendence, some participants of Kids4Peace felt a strengthening of their relationship to their collective identity, or identity accentuation (Hammack, 2011). Fatima and Adina relayed an increased salience of, understanding of, and confidence in their collective identity. This result at times appeared to be in conjunction with participation in other programs alongside Kids4Peace. Noa, for example, describes a process of learning about her Jewish identity. She transitions from feelings of shame – feeling uncomfortable identifying herself as Jewish to non-Jews – to a sense of pride in her Jewish identity as well as a sense of obligation to use her privilege to fight for equality. She credits the Raufman program for gaining pride and confidence and her experience in Kids4Peace for her process of self-reflection and her gained sociopolitical awareness. In this way, Noa begins a faux process of identity transcendence, one that brings about shame and discomfort. However, it seems that she eventually arrives at an accentuated and nuanced understanding of her Jewish identity rather than

⁶⁸ This model is familiar in Western culture, but individual-driven social change may be more difficult to enact in cultures so strongly based on the approval of the larger community.

identity transcendence. Noa's reflections, along with Malik's commentary on pressure to adopt a Kids4Peace narrative, could suggest that the idea of identity transcendence may not be innocuous, ideal, or realistic as a goal for contact.

"The Bubble"

One criticism of the coexistence model, and a motif brought up by Noa, involves the idea that organizations like Kids4Peace create a "bubble" that political issues, power asymmetry, and cultural limitations from the real world supposedly do not touch. Peace organizations may present a kind of bubble in which the youth appear equal and everyone may be friends regardless of their collective identity. However, when faced with the real world, this bubble may pop, leaving participants stunned and disillusioned. In this bubble, youth should be able to discuss politics and social issues in an egalitarian and safe space. However, the criticism of this bubble is that the youth who participate in coexistence camps form hope about a non-existent reality and are then forced to go back to a world in which the dynamic built at camp does not exist. The interviews show that this is, in part, the case.

Noa mentions the fact that the Kids4Peace camps do create a bubble and that returning home was difficult. She, as well as other participants like Mariam, also addressed the fact that her friendships did not last after graduation. In the "generating affective ties" phase of Allport's Contact Theory, positive emotions, brought upon by intergroup friendships should inspire empathy between members of the different groups, ideally forming lasting bonds between in-group and out-group members. These lasting bonds, solidified by the experience of working together for shared group goals, should lead to out-group reappraisal by in-group members. For this reason, the establishment and growth of friendships is key to the contact intervention. However, many alumni reported losing touch with the friends they made during Kids4Peace who were from the 'other side,' and some current participants reported not having made friends with members of the out-group. Noa and Mariam, once close friends in the program, both reported having lost touch over the years due to differing life directions. Noa claims that she does not believe sustaining these friendships is the goal of the program. Instead, she reports keeping the lessons from these friendships with her into her future life choices. In this way, the friendships made through Kids4Peace may be temporal yet meaningful.

On the other hand, Kids4Peace Jerusalem does not act as a bubble. Youth report facing discrimination and attacks during the programming. The inevitable imperfections of the program

and the fact that meetings take place locally year-round makes the bubble phenomenon less prominent.

The ‘bubble’ does not perfectly isolate the Kids4Peace culture, because youth continue to experience reality on the outside throughout their years in the program. This is the result of a long-term, year-round program that includes parents and community members. As the youth live through multiple Israeli-Gazan wars, continued occupation and oppression of the Palestinian people, and violent attacks from both sides, they may internalize increased feelings of helplessness and disillusionment. Participation in Kids4Peace mediates this sense of helplessness for some by providing a source of optimism and community for those who believe in peace. In this sense ‘the bubble’ may act as a vision of what society could be like post-conflict, fueling hope and optimism in the youth. However, this bubble is not fully insulated from the outside world.

The overlap of Kids4Peace and the world outside Kids4Peace is evident through some of the youths’ stories, which mention negative interactions with outsiders while together as a group. Through Kids4Peace, youth grapple with complex realities made even more stark by directly facing ‘the other’. Jewish Israeli youth must reconcile their bonds with and understanding of Palestinians when deciding whether or not to join the army. If they do decide to join the army, they must think about how their experience in Kids4Peace will influence the unit they choose to join and the way they carry themselves during their service. To Palestinians and left-wing Israeli Jews in the program, this service symbolizes the unjust distribution of power and inhumane treatment of Palestinians. Palestinian youth must come to terms with the fact that many of their Israeli Jewish friends from Kids4Peace will be on the other side of a checkpoint, in a unit that gathers intelligence, or potentially even committing direct acts of violence against their people. These realities are difficult for the youth to ignore while forming and maintaining friendships.

Kids4Peace designs their program to avoid creating a bubble separate from the realities of Jerusalem. The program is held year-round in order to incorporate the ideas of Kids4Peace into the everyday lives of the youth and their families. Kids4Peace attempts to target this issue through parent groups and community events. The organization hosts a parent program which aims to help parents support their children through an integration process – that through which participants bring the Kids4Peace experience into their daily realities – and through any difficult emotions that may arise during the process. Many students did cite their parents as a source of support and encouragement throughout their time with Kids4Peace.

Rather than describing Kids4Peace as a ‘bubble,’ some youth name it as the tool that popped ‘the bubble’ they knew while living in a segregated community surrounded by only

members of their national identity group or while attending the bilingual school Hand in Hand (which some described as a ‘bubble’ itself). Chris explains, "When you're in Hand in Hand school they construct a wall around [the conflict and suffering]. They say, ‘there's a conflict, but it's all good. We're all friends, and it's all good.’ But you don't realize actual people are suffering. But when I went to East Jerusalem and started studying at Beit Hanina (it's next to Shu’afat), I started learning the mentality of how people think and how people see the other side. You know, I came from Hand in Hand. My best friend was Jewish. And there they don't like Jews as much. I wouldn't call them extreme, but I was always different for being more open to Jews and being friends with Jews. It was weird. And that I spoke Hebrew and stuff." In this way, Chris received a better understanding of the Palestinian narrative through Kids4Peace and by moving to a Palestinian neighborhood than an understanding of ‘the other.’

Not only do youth report opposition they have faced as a group, but youth participants from all identity groups described negative reactions to their participation in the Kids4Peace from members of their own communities. In carrying the external response to their peace work with them, the line between the world of Kids4Peace and communities outside of Kids4Peace may become blurred for these youth. Additionally, many youth mention ways in which Kids4Peace values and skills are taken into their communities outside of the program.

Confronting the Issue of Normalization (Tatbi'a)

Within the discussion of opposition to Kids4Peace participation, a handful of Palestinian participants mentioned *tatbi'a*, or the English word, “normalization.”⁶⁹ *Tatbi'a* (normalization) is a term used to describe the “process of building open and reciprocal relations with Israel in all fields, including the political economic, social, cultural, educational, legal, and security fields” (Salem, 2005). Palestinian youth alumni and current participants assert that members of their community oppose their participation due to anti-normalization beliefs – these community members believe that normalized relations with Israelis is harmful to their community and to the Palestinian cause.

⁶⁹ This concept is referenced in Chapter IV in the context of sources of the opposition youth face to their participation in Kids4Peace.

However, anti-normalization positions lie on a spectrum, and not all Palestinians and allied activists share the same stance on this issue.⁷⁰ Some stand vehemently against any form of normalization, asserting that all peacebuilding activities involving both Israelis and Palestinians are problematic in that they dismiss the colonial power structure as the main source of the conflict, presuming that it should be up to the people on the ground to learn to live with one another within an unjust status quo. Other perspectives are more nuanced; they classify certain activities as normalization but others as ambiguous and passable. Others claim that normal relations with Israel is not possible, and therefore the word normalization should not be used to describe any current activities (Salem, 2005).

Different standards are set for internationals than for Palestinians living in the West Bank. Palestinian citizens of Israel carry a different set of anti-normalization rules as well according to PACBI (Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel)(2011).⁷¹ Some activities considered normalization under its broadest definition include

⁷⁰ “Anti-normalization positions in the Arab world fall into four main categories: Islam, Arab Marxism, Arab nationalism, and a mix of different ideological groups who all agree on the importance of resisting ‘cultural normalization.’ The root of the **Islamic anti-normalization** position comes from the belief that Palestine is an Islamic waqf (endowment), and that Jews have no rights at all in it. Consequently, Israel's existence is not legitimate, and therefore it is not possible to recognize it. The stance of **Palestinian Islamists** is more moderate than this. Since the beginning of 1994, the position of Hamas has been to accept coexistence with Israel without recognition, and without normalizing relations. The **Marxist** position on normalization is inherited from their anti-imperialist stance; therefore, they speak against normalizing with Israel as a part of their anti-normalization towards imperialism. This Marxist anti-normalization propaganda was strong in the Arab world during the 1970s and 1980s, and they put it into practice through anti-normalization committees such as the Committee for the Defense of the Arab National Culture in Egypt. With the collapse of most of the Arab Marxist groups, the Marxist anti-normalization trend has continued among groups of intellectuals who refuse normalization within the broader framework of the rejection of both social and cultural consumerism. The third anti-normalization position is that of the **Arab nationalists**, whose position towards Israel has passed through two stages. In the first stage, which lasted until the 1970s, the Arab nationalists considered Israel (which they called "the Zionist entity") to be a threat to Arab national unity, because geographically it has separated the Arab east from the Arab west, and has also taken part of Arab land. In the 1970s the Arab nationalists split into two different groups with respect to their stance regarding normalization. The official Arab position was expressed in a readiness to participate in negotiations with Israel through an international peace conference in Geneva as early as 1973. A second position, held by Arab nationalist intellectuals, rejected negotiations with Israel - even if they did not lead to the recognition of and the establishment of a normal relationship with Israel. It should be noted here that even those Arab nationalists who have taken part in official negotiations with Israel, such as the Syrian regime, make a distinction between negotiating with Israel and normalizing with Israel. The last category consists of a **mixture of groups** all of which call for the rejection of cultural normalization. Those working against cultural normalization include various religious, national, and Marxist orientations, some of whom believe that fighting against political and economic normalization is not likely to succeed. Therefore, they consider it is better to concentrate on preserving the last and most important ‘garrison’: Arabic culture” (Salem, 2005).

⁷¹ Palestinians who remain citizens of Israel and live within the Green Line may be confronted with two forms of normalization (PACBI, 2011).

joint Israeli-Palestinian academic journals, the buying of Israeli products (primarily those made on illegal settlements, which normalizes the existence and legitimacy of these settlements), events hosting mainstream Israeli artists, and peace-building organizations such as Kids4Peace. PACBI's (Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel) website explicitly lays out the organization's thoughts on dialogue, which is often offered as an alternative to boycott. PACBI argues that any dialogue or reconciliation process that does not endeavor to end oppression "serves to privilege oppressive co-existence at the cost of co-resistance, for they presume the possibility of coexistence before the realization of justice" (PACBI, 2011).⁷²

The issue of normalization may be a more structural way of looking at the situation on the ground, but the embodiment of this concept and questions around it are personal for young people participating in Kids4Peace. Palestinian participants build friendships with young Israeli Jews knowing that these friends will likely join the army after graduating high school. Chris mentions the disappointment felt by his peers who attended Hand in Hand school (a bilingual, Israeli-Palestinian school in Jerusalem) with Jewish classmates who gained knowledge of Arabic language and Palestinian culture to then use the information against Palestinians once they join the army after graduation. The same sentiment is reflected in those who oppose the work of coexistence organizations such as Kids4Peace. Through a systemic lens, it may appear harmful to provide the Israeli state and those who serve in the military a deeper understanding of the Palestinians whom they oppress and occupy. For this reason, many oppose normalization of relations until drastic changes in institutions and state structure are made. Whether or not the information learned at Kids4Peace ends up being used in a harmful way, there is widespread fear and opposition among Palestinians in response to this kind of coexistence work that brings together Israelis and Palestinians. Those I spoke outside of the organization to who opposed this kind of work suggested a superficial quality to peace work while larger systemic oppression

⁷² The PACBI website reads, "While many, if not most, normalization projects are sponsored and funded by international organizations and governments, many of these projects are operated by Palestinian and Israeli partners, often with generous international funding. The political, often Israel-centered, framing of the 'partnership' is one of the most problematic aspects of these joint projects and institutions. PACBI's analysis of OneVoice, a joint Palestinian-Israeli youth-oriented organization with chapters in North America and extensions in Europe, exposed OneVoice as one more project that brings Palestinians and Israelis together, not to jointly struggle against Israel's colonial and apartheid policies, but rather to provide a limited program of action under the slogan of an end to the occupation and the establishment of a Palestinian state, while cementing Israeli apartheid and ignoring the rights of Palestinian refugees, who compose the majority of the Palestinian people. PACBI concluded that, in essence, OneVoice and similar programs serve to normalize oppression and injustice. The fact that OneVoice treats the 'nationalisms' and 'patriotisms' of the two 'sides' as if on par with one another and equally valid is a telling indicator" (2011).

remains outside of the Kids4Peace walls and continue to influence social dynamics within the program itself.

Additionally, research shows that individual members of disadvantaged groups may lose motivation to act for structural change to benefit their collective identity group when that identity is less salient to them. The chance that members of the advantaged group, who are more likely to advocate for social change if they perceive their privileged position as illegitimate, decreases as the group distinction become less delineated with a focus on commonality (Saguy, Dovidio & Pratto, 2008). Although I did not specifically measure this phenomenon in the data I collected, a few interviews point to this potentially occurring in Kids4Peace participants. The Palestinian participants, most of whom attended Hand in Hand School, focused primarily on hope and some on commonalities between the groups and less so on political action.

Israeli Jewish youth in the study do seem to recognize a stark difference between their own position and that of their Palestinian counterparts. They report differences in culture and highlighted the disparity in suffering between the two, a reality they saw more explicitly during their time in Kids4peace. Almost all Israeli Jewish alumni and currently participants, aside from one right-wing identified youth, report some willingness to work for social change. Commitment for social change does fall into the coexistence narrative discussed earlier in this chapter. However, the level of commitment of Jewish Israeli alumni to this cause varies. Those who refused to join the army, for example, may represent a commitment to supporting the Palestinian rights, equality, and an end to the occupation. Others choose to follow the common Israeli Jewish practice of joining the army, maybe even the intelligence, but state that they will use their knowledge from Kids4Peace to impact those inside the military.

Some of the Palestinian participants who mentioned normalization understand and respect the anti-normalization perspective but also find value in the benefits they reap from Kids4Peace. Mariam mentions that her professor declares his opposition to normalizing activities due to his difficult reality crossing check points each day and facing difficult Israeli soldiers. She explains that she understands that people are angry and sees where they are coming from. She admits that going through a program like Kids4Peace is “not an easy process,” but that it could result in good things. She acknowledges that she believes both sides of the argument are valid.

Professionals in peacebuilding, like activist and academic Sami Adwan, reframe the issue of normalization. Adwan describes his peace work with Israeli academics as an act of resistance. He states, “Peacebuilding is part of resistance in our situation. What we do in PRIME [Peace Research Institute in the Middle East] is also resistance because we are resisting the dominant narrative of the occupation and its ideology. It is also resisting the traditional perspective of

seeing the conflict. So, by creating a generation of children who look at the situation from a critical perspective—that is resistance, because you resist the taken-for-granted, the legitimized, monolithic approach to history or narrative. I would say resistance takes the military and non-military, the peaceful and the not peaceful” (Adwan 2007; Richter-Devroe, 2008). Activists like Adwan project the possibilities for youth in Kids4Peace. His statement encapsulates the attitudes of many Palestinian youth participants and their reasons for continuing coexistence work despite arguments against normalization.

As both a practitioner in the field and an activist, I find myself grappling with the issue of normalization and to what extent the work of Kids4Peace may be flawed through the lens of anti-normalization rationale. I understand the perspectives of those who criticize the type of work done by Kids4Peace and similar organizations.⁷³ I have had conversations in which I broke down in tears speaking to anti-normalization activists who consider any coexistence work as supportive of the occupation. One activist in particular reasoned that if she saw real numbers of a reduction in Israeli Jews joining the army, she may see this work as legitimate. This complicated and charged topic is and will continue to be an important part of the dialogue Palestinians have around participation in coexistence organizations like Kids4Peace.

5.2 Social Power: The Positive Power of Narrative and Group Identification in Conflict

Several of the grassroots approaches to conflict resolution in cases of intractable, ethnic conflict are grounded in a reconciliation or negotiation of conflicting group narratives. These often involve intergroup contact and dialogue. Without taking structural sources of the conflict into consideration, many believe that ‘identity transcendence’ through this contact may act as a source of conflict transformation. Identity transcendence may be an easy answer for Western-minded folks sitting in relative comfort and existential security far removed from the conflict. However, it is an act of privilege to transcend one’s collective identity. This approach overlooks the power a strong collective narrative provides those whose livelihoods and identities are at risk.

A compelling story is a powerful force in itself. To have a moral backbone to one’s story assigns meaning to one’s life, one’s identity, and one’s very existence. The force of this story in the context of collective narratives is compounded by the numbers and power of the group. In a collectivist culture, this group narrative and corresponding shared group meaning is particularly powerful.

⁷³ Other organizations like Kids4Peace includes Seeds of Peace, Hands of Peace, and even the school attended by many of the youth interviewed in this study, Hand in Hand.

Not only does narrative protect the psyche in the ways mentioned in the section on *ethos of conflict*, but collective narrative contains elements of important truths that give the group and individuals within the group moral, social, and often political power within the conflict setting and on the international stage. These forms of power compensate for a lack of military, economic, and immediate political power. This power comes with having moral authority and being ‘in the right.’ In the same vein, the position of ‘the victim’ also holds a certain kind of power. The victimized group can use their narrative in strategic ways to strengthen their position (Agbaria & Cohen, n.d.). Strategies may involve awareness campaigns that highlight human rights abuses perpetrated by the more powerful group onto the less powerful group. This is the case with the Boycott Divest Sanction (BDS) movement and other Palestinian rights groups that have brought awareness of expanding illegal settlements and human rights violations to the international community.

Saguy, Dovidio, and Pratto assert that one of the ways in which a disempowered group can support social change and improve their position in society is by rewriting the public discourse (2008). That is to bring into public consciousness the injustice their group experiences and the illegitimacy of the existing power disparity. These authors use the examples of nonviolent resistance during the civil rights movement in the United States, South African apartheid, and the struggle for Indian independence. Activists of these movements brought awareness to the oppressive nature of the status quo and questioned the legitimacy of these hierarchical systems (Saguy, Dovidio & Pratto, 2008).

The political history and narratives deeply and irreversibly interlink these two peoples in a negative interdependence (Hammack, 2008; Kelman, 1999). This investigation of the experience of young people in Kids4Peace extracts the question whether it is possible to reframe narrative around this interconnectedness in a way through which these groups may maintain the power of their collective narratives as well as form bonds with ‘the other’, work together for social change, and heal from the trauma each group has experienced.

5.3 What do Young People Get Out of Kids4Peace?

Participants reported a myriad of impacts from the Kids4Peace programs. Among these outputs are an increased confidence, a stronger sense of self and personal voice, a greater understanding of the self and other, exposure to different perspectives, communication and

leadership skills,⁷⁴ a therapeutic release through dialogue, and greater socio-political awareness. Most participants described a sense of self-growth through the program. Additionally, youth report gaining a sense of belonging, support, and a safe space for expression in the Kids4Peace community.

Youth in this study cite finding their voice and sense of self through the Kids4Peace program. This process may have been facilitated directly by the tools that Kids4Peace provided (i.e. nonviolent communication workshops and exercises around identity), through the process of self-expression and self-reflection that comes with contact with ‘the other’, or through the community which gave youth a space to explore their thoughts around coexistence and peace. I found that the youth who were given opportunities to speak to international groups, either domestically or through outreach tours to the United States, were most likely to report a strengthening of voice and personal identity as well as an increased sense of confidence.

The work young people do in Kids4Peace inspires some to be leaders for their generation. Ismail, for example, tells me, “Look, as an individual, I believe. Yes, I believe. You see here the word ‘believe.’ It’s all about having hope. High hopes in God or anything. Having high hopes. But as an individual, yes of course I believe that I could make a change hopefully one day. That’s my belief, and hopefully, hopefully... Who knows what happens, but if you see something that influences people -- like if they see someone speaking on their behalf, someone who is empowering them, [someone who is] speaking (of course non-violently) -- speaking what they think, then people would follow him. And he would become a leader, like as we saw in Martin Luther King.” The fervor behind Ismail’s words not only demonstrated the inspirational speaking skills he has gained over the years,⁷⁵ but also the strong sense of optimism Kids4Peace allows him to nurture.

When asked if he feels he has the power to create social change, Ahmed says, “I’m a counselor with Kids4peace ...When you’re teaching the younger kids everything that Kids4Peace taught you before, you feel like you’re doing more than just staying.” This statement reflects a deep need to do something “more than just sitting” in the conflict. It appears that passing on the knowledge Ahmed has gained through Kids4Peace serves as a coping mechanism. The Counselor in Training (CIT) program also seems to provide youth a sense of agency when

⁷⁴ For the sake of narrowing the scope of this thesis, the findings section does not address youth responses around leadership skills. However, a majority of respondents who participated in the CIT (Counselor in Training) program or moved into higher positions in the organization reported leadership skills as a major benefit of the program.

⁷⁵ Ismail reported that he developed his speaking skills both in Kids4Peace and from watching YouTube videos.

otherwise many of them feel momentarily helpless to do anything about the conflict. Gaining these leadership skills through the Counselor in Training (CIT) program seems to provide youth with a sense of responsibility and agency through their role in shaping the younger youth.

Palestinian youth in K4P express a sense of relief in being heard and expressing themselves through dialogue. In a study that examines the interaction between group status and contact condition (coexistence model versus confrontational model), Hammack, Pilecki, and Merrilees found that confrontational contact seems to be more effective in empowering the low-status group (i.e. Palestinians) than contact intended to foster coexistence/recategorization and interpersonal friendship (2013). This may account for why Palestinians expressed greater feelings of empowerment through direct political dialogue than in gaining understanding of the other (and presenting a centrist narrative for reporters and visitors).

Several Palestinian young people also reported being empowered by speaking in front of groups -- locally or through speaking tours -- due to the opportunity this provides them to share their personal narratives. As mentioned above, in addition to advocating for the Kids4Peace narrative, these public speaking opportunities allow facilitate participants presenting their personal and group stories. Therefore, the Kids4Peace experience presents a contradiction. On one hand, Palestinian youth in particular may have felt pressured to cater their story to an audience, as Malik suggest. On the other hand, youth gained confidence and the feelings of self-knowledge through these opportunities to express themselves through dialogue and public speaking.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

As primary researcher, I experienced many obstacles throughout this study. These limitations included language, gender, culture, timing, selection bias, interview process, and my own positionality in the conflict.

Language

With minimal Hebrew and Arabic language skills, I felt most comfortable conducting interviews in English. Although almost all young people in Kids4Peace do speak English -- as much of the programming is conducted in English -- some youth have more developed English skills than others. Holding the interviews in English may have created a disparity in the information I received from participants. Those who are less proficient in English were able to

express less of their experience than those with high proficiency in the English language. With more resources and time, I may have hired a translator to conduct interviews with youth in their native language.

Gender and Culture

Like language, gender and culture stood as a partial barrier to my research. It is important to recognize the cultural norms around communication and gender when conducting fieldwork in a culture that is not one's own. Despite my preparations and intentions to be culturally aware and sensitive, there may have been subtle cues that I did not pick up on. There is a flow and comfort that comes along with speaking to those from one's own culture. My interviews may have lacked this flow at times. As an American, I sometimes felt awkward asking questions, not knowing the culturally appropriate way to approach certain topics. Additionally, after studying the norms around gender and mixed gender interactions in Arab culture, I felt that young Palestinian males from more traditional Muslim communities would have been more comfortable opening up to a male interviewer. With more resources, I would have included male interviewers in the interview process.

Selection Bias

As mentioned in Chapter III, the young people who participated in this study were selected by the Kids4Peace director and staff members. The staff provided me with a list of youth they remained in contact with or who they felt would be most willing to participate in the interview process. These participants were those most involved in Kids4Peace. Some of these youth graduated to be counselors and even paid advisors for the program. Therefore, these participants are likely some of the most engaged and supportive of the program. Although these individuals had criticisms, the data does not include the full spectrum of experiences youth had in Kids4Peace. It would be interesting and informative to interview youth who dropped out of the program for various reason or those who were less involved, possibly due to dissonance with program goals and design.

PI's Positionality, Shortcomings, and Bias

There is an awkwardness and naivete which I assume accompanies any researcher's first time in the field. I felt the growing pains of this process intensely and viscerally. I felt them while transcribing of interviews. I cringed at the way I approached certain questions and stumbled on my words. I came up with so many ways in which I could have conducted the interviews better. I know that in some cases, these youth could have provided me with fuller, more in-depth answers if I had the know-how and confidence to coax them out. Additionally, my position as an American with a Jewish background may have influenced the way the youth presented information.

It is critical to acknowledge the bias I hold as an individual with a past connection to Judaism and a leftist activist culture. Have participated in anti-occupation activism, I hold a bias. Although I have found myself in a more neutral space than before, my background inevitably impacts the way I examine the topics in this study.

5.4 Conclusions

Recommendations for Future Research

Further research should follow a larger number of alumni of the Kids4Peace program in their future endeavors. Ideally, this study should include a wider range of modes of participation. Whereas my study involved some of the most active members of Kids4Peace, many of whom moved on to become counselors and a few even staff members.

I suggest a study which enumerates activist, peacebuilding, and social justice-oriented activities performed by alumni of Kids4Peace, as well as the number of Jewish participants who refused the army versus those who joined the army. This research should collect qualitative data on motivations for the aforementioned activities and for refusing to join the army. This data will serve to answer the question: did participation in Kids4Peace impact the life choices of participants after graduation? Does Kids4peace motivate Israeli Jews to refuse participation in the Israeli military?

Research around power dynamics in dialogue could be expanded and applied specifically to Kids4Peace. How can K4P dialogue address power and privilege more directly and effectively, leading to greater awareness of structural realities and how they impact the relationship between youth in the program? Additionally, I would expand my investigation of

narrative with a critical look at the American narrative about coexistence work and whether Americans working in Kids4Peace culturally influences the programs.

Final Words

The trajectory of Kids4Peace tells a story of an organization in flux, evolving with the preferences and needs of the time and with shifting leadership. Like other types of grassroots non-profits, Kids4Peace attempts to fill the needs of people on the ground. In order to fill these needs, it is imperative to understand what they are through the voices of the youth involved.

The discussion in this study aims not to criticize the organization or its staff, but to offer insights into the program's impact and to raise the voices of those participants asking for true change, representation, clear intentions, and in the case of the conflict's most vulnerable youth, a commitment to social justice. As with all social movements, the pro-peace movement in Jerusalem and Palestine/Israel at large comes with immense complications and contradictions. In order to form alliances, people on the ground must meet, humanize, and bond with one another. However, by meeting and communicating with no vision for structural change, it seems that this work may act as part of the problem rather than the solution.

Youth participate in Kids4Peace out of interest, curiosity, a willingness to grow, and for the material opportunities the organization provides. Given the right facilitators, this work could be transformational in that it could bring greater awareness to what must be done and motivate youth to work stridently for real social and political change. The organization could be a platform for youth social organization. Although the organization currently moves in the direction of a youth-led model, steps can be taken to create more intentional programming around youth goals with a deeper focus on social change and awareness.

The criticism of Kids4Peace and other coexistence organizations is rooted in the lack of attention to problematic structures and power asymmetry. This dynamic can create a cycle of continuing power disparities and maintenance of the status quo. Despite the merit of these arguments, it is apparent in this research that, when coming face-to-face with 'the other' in a deep and continuous way, issues of power asymmetry and collective blind spots become more difficult to ignore for some. Kids4Peace provides spaces in which facades may begin to be questioned and crumbled. Although the power dynamic and issues of privilege are often not explicitly discussed, and some participants interpret these issues differently, some participants do reflect, grow, and find themselves in the reflection of 'the other.'

APPENDIX: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Introductory Questions:

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
 - What grade are you in? Which neighborhood do you live in?
2. What is your nationality on paper and how do you represent yourself?
3. What got you involved and has kept you involved in Kids4Peace?
 - How long have you been in Kids4Peace?
 - How do your friends and family react to you being in Kids4peace?
4. What do you see as the purpose of Kids4Peace?
5. What does “Peace” mean to you? What does that look like in your mind? What is necessary for true peace?

Programming Questions:

6. What are you looking to get out of Kids4Peace?
7. What could Kids4peace do to help you get this?
8. Do you have any feedback about last week’s seminar in Jaffa?
 - What did you think of the tour?
 - What did you think of the dialogue?
 - How did you feel during and after the dialogue?

Personal Transformation:

9. How do you navigate your life differently with the skills and knowledge you have gained from Kids4Peace?
10. What did you understand about the ‘other’ growing up? What were your initial feelings towards ‘the other’? Where did this initial feeling come from?
11. In what way, if any, do you feel Kids4Peace has impacted your feelings about [Palestinians/Israelis]?
12. In what way has Kids4Peace impacted your level of trust with “the other”? What kind of relationships, if any, have evolved from this program? How do these relationships translate into your interactions with members of ‘the other’ in general?
 - Can you give a specific example? Can you tell me about one or more relationships you have formed due to Kids4Peace?

Negative Externalities:

13. Do you find challenges to your participation in Kids4Peace in your community (with family, friends, neighbors, acquaintances, etc)?
14. How do you integrate the knowledge and skills you have learned at Kids4peace into your daily life, if at all?

Positive Supports:

15. What factors have helped support you in your journey with Kids4Peace and in any positive personal transformation you may have experienced?
 - Do you have any role models or peers who have supported you?

Hope and perceptions:

16. In what ways do you feel you can have an impact on your social and political circumstances?
- In what way is this feeling different from before you started kids4peace, if at all?
 - Do you feel that Kids4Peace helps you to this end?

Actions, Social Change, & Ripple Effect:

17. What kind of impact do you feel you have on your environment now?
- Do you have an example of when you took an action and saw an impact on the people or places around you?
18. In what way do you see yourself influencing your environment and social/political situation in the future?

Knowledge and Perceptions:

19. To what extent do you feel Kids4Peace has provided you with knowledge that has improved your understanding of the sociopolitical situation?
20. How does this knowledge impact your life?

Agency:

21. Do you feel that you have the power to influence others around you? How or how not?

Other Programmatic Questions:

22. To what degree do you feel that Kids4peace creates an egalitarian atmosphere? Do you feel that all youth have the opportunity to express themselves and their identity equally?
- Do you feel that the programming is equally geared towards all religions and nationalities?
23. What part of the program have you found most impactful?
24. Is there anything you would like to see done differently in the future?

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