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Pledge of honesty

“On my honour as a student of the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, I submit this work in good faith and pledge that I have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance on it.”

Marisa Wicki

Abstract

This research explores the role of peace education in the context of an intractable conflict. Particularly, it involves the peace educational approach of personal story telling and its role in influencing and transforming attitudes and perceptions of individuals towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Despite the conflict's international relevance, the international dimension nor the target group of internationals haven't been in the focus of peace educational research so far. First, this issue is addressed with a theoretical approach of a four-fold sequential theoretical model comprised of conflict narratives, sociopsychological theory on attitudes and perceptions, conflict transformation theory and peace education. This research then examines a personal story telling project of the Israeli-Palestinian NGO "Combatants for Peace", in cooperation with which a mixed methodological approach of a large-n survey and small-n focus group discussions was applied. A 3-steps research model was established aimed at exploring the issue in three stages: As a first step, it was analyzed whether participants are affected by the personal story telling approach, which was aimed at exploring a potential function of raising awareness and sensitization and measured on expressed emotional components. As a second step, the transformation of participants' attitudes was researched and operationalized on expressed changes of emotions, changed evaluative judgments or content-related changes of attitudes towards the conflict. As a third step, the potential of personal story telling of evoking a learning effect, a repercussion effect as well as motivation to take action was explored. The results showed that personal story telling not only affects participants' attitudes on an emotional level, it also increases awareness among them regarding the existence of two conflicting narratives. A transformation of attitudes took place as participants stated to feel more confident in voicing their opinion as well as more motivated to take an active stand towards the conflict. Further, they evaluated the conflict as more intractable after having participated in the project. Lastly, a strong learning and a repercussion effect were found among the majority of participants. The method of personal story telling triggered overreaching motivation among participants to take action and educate themselves better on the conflict. Participants seemed determined to share their experience of the project with their social environment, which reveals the potential of personal story telling of not only reaching a broad spectrum of people, but also of serving as a tool to educate people about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with its complexity of two conflicting narratives. Whatsoever, no content-related changes of attitudes towards the conflict could be detected among participants.

Abstract

Das Ziel dieser Forschung war es, den friedenspädagogischen Ansatz des persönlichen Geschichtenerzählens und seine Rolle bei der Beeinflussung und Veränderung der Einstellungen und Wahrnehmungen von Einzelpersonen gegenüber dem israelisch-palästinensischen Konflikt zu erforschen. Trotz der internationalen Relevanz des Konflikts standen die internationale Dimension und die Zielgruppe der internationalen Einzelpersonen bisher nicht im Fokus der friedenspädagogischen Forschung. Ein vierfaches sequentielles Modell, das sich aus Konfliktnarrativen, sozialpsychologischer Theorie zu Einstellungen und Wahrnehmungen, Konflikttransformationstheorie und Friedenspädagogik zusammensetzt, dient als theoretische Grundlage für die Analyse. In Zusammenarbeit mit der israelisch-palästinensischen NGO "Combatants for Peace" wurde dann ein persönliches Geschichtenerzählungsprojekt mit einem gemischten methodischer Ansatz aus einer Umfrage und Fokusgruppendifkussionen untersucht. Das Projekt wurde in drei Stufen untersucht: In einem ersten Schritt wurde analysiert, ob die Teilnahme an dem Projekt einen Einfluss auf die Teilnehmenden hat. In einem zweiten Schritt wurde die Veränderung der Einstellungen der Teilnehmenden untersucht. In einem dritten Schritt wurde das Potential des persönlichen Geschichtenerzählens untersucht, einen Lerneffekt, einen Rückwirkungseffekt sowie die Motivation zum Handeln hervorzurufen. Die Ergebnisse zeigten, dass das persönliche Geschichtenerzählen nicht nur die Einstellungen der Teilnehmenden auf emotionaler Ebene beeinflusst, sondern auch das Bewusstsein der Teilnehmenden bezüglich der Existenz zweier sich widersprechender Konflikt-Narrative erhöht. Eine Veränderung der Einstellungen konnte festgestellt werden, da die Teilnehmenden angaben, dass sie sich sicherer fühlten, eine Meinung gegenüber dem Konflikt zu äußern sowie sich motivierter fühlten, eine aktive Haltung einzunehmen. Darüber hinaus schätzten sie den Konflikt nach ihrer Teilnahme am Projekt als hartnäckiger ein als zuvor. Schliesslich wurde bei der Mehrheit der Teilnehmenden ein starker Lern- und Rückwirkungseffekt festgestellt. Die Methode des persönlichen Geschichtenerzählens löste bei den Teilnehmenden die Motivation aus, aktiv zu werden und sich besser über den Konflikt zu informieren. Die Teilnehmer schienen entschlossen zu sein, ihre Erfahrungen mit dem Projekt mit ihrem sozialen Umfeld zu teilen, was das Potenzial des persönlichen Geschichtenerzählens offenbart, nicht nur ein breites Spektrum von Menschen zu erreichen, sondern auch als Instrument zu dienen, um die Menschen über den israelisch-palästinensischen Konflikt mit seiner Komplexität zweier gegensätzlicher Konflikt-Narrativen aufzuklären. Bei den Teilnehmern konnten keinerlei inhaltliche Veränderungen der Einstellungen zum Konflikt festgestellt werden.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	6
2. Theoretical Framework.....	9
2.1 Collective narratives	10
2.2 Attitudes and perceptions	13
2.3 Conflict transformation.....	16
2.4 Peace Education.....	18
2.5 International dimension of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.....	23
3. Methodology	25
3.1 Cooperation with NGO “Combatants for Peace”: Encounters project.....	25
3.2 Research Focus Model.....	26
3.3 Quantitative method: large-n survey	28
3.3.1 Participants and Sampling methods	28
3.3.2 Instruments and Data collection.....	28
3.4 Qualitative method: small-n focus groups.....	31
3.4.1 Participants and Sampling methods	31
3.4.2 Instruments and Data collection.....	32
4. Results.....	35
4.1 Survey.....	35
4.2 Focus Groups	39
4.2.1 Function of raising awareness and Sensitization	39
4.2.2 Transformative aspect.....	41
4.2.3 Potential of Learning and Repercussion effect	43
4.2.4 Other findings	45
4.2.5 Discrepancies	47
5. Discussion	48
6. Conclusion	52
7. Limitations	54
8. Prospects	55
9. Bibliography	56
Appendix	61
A Transcripts Focus Group Discussions	61
B Original survey from “Combatants for Peace”	70
C Original Focus Group Discussion Questions from “Combatants for Peace”	72

Table of Figures

Figure 1: Four-fold sequential Theoretical Model	9
Figure 2: 3-steps Research Focus Model	27
Figure 3: Survey Questionnaire.....	31
Figure 4: Focus Group Discussions Questions	34
Figure 5: Question 1. «Have you participated in similar meetings in the past?.....	35
Figure 6: Question 3. “Do you believe it is possible to solve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the nearby future?”	36
Figure 7: Question 4. ”I feel _____ about finding a solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict”	36
Figure 8: Question 5. “Do you believe that ordinary people like you and me can help in an active way to solve/end the conflict?”	37
Figure 9: Question 2. ”Do you feel that you learnt something new during this meeting?”	37
Figure 10: Question 6. “Would you be open to participate at binational non-violent activities to promote peace between Palestinians and Israelis?”	38
Figure 11: Question 7. “What are your reasons to participate?”	38
Figure 12: Question 8. “What are your reasons NOT to participate?”.....	39

1. Introduction

Dealing with “two contradictory, often mutually exclusive, deeply rooted collective narratives”, as they can be identified in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, challenges the success of peace educational programs (Salomon 2004: 358). Since collective narratives including historical memories are “the backbone of a group’s sense of identity and the source of the stereotypes and prejudices it holds of others”, it’s difficult to move away from these sets of beliefs that each side of the conflict holds (Salomon 2003: 4). Another challenge peace education faces is when it is applied in the context of an intractable conflict, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. An intractable conflict is defined as “protracted, irreconcilable, violent, of zero sum nature, total, and central” (Bar Tal and Salomon 2006: 3). What adds to the intractability of a conflict is an “evolved culture of conflict that is dominated by societal beliefs of collective memory and ethos of conflict and by emotions of collective emotional orientations”, which builds a serious obstacle to peace (Bar-Tal and Rosen 2009: 557). Conflict narratives are said to be necessary for members of the involved parties in an intractable conflict, as they serve as a coping mechanism for the on-going stressful times.

A broad range of research has been carried out on perceptions, attitudes, values and core beliefs. Attitudes are described to be “a complex combination of things we tend to call personality, beliefs, values, behaviors, and motivations” (Pickens 2005: 44). Not only can they be conceptualized as a feeling towards a subject (Kind et al. 2007), but also as an evaluative judgement (Barmby, Kind & Jones 2008). On the one hand, attitudes not only have “poor and predictive power of behavior”, they can also be superficial and easily changed. On the other hand, attitudes towards a subject which is considered central and important are “more extreme than less important ones, less susceptible to outside influences, more stable over time, and more strongly associated with behavior” (Salomon 2005: 10). Attitudes can be changed through learning and “direct experiences with people and situations” (Pickens 2005: 47), by “addressing of the cognitive and emotional components” (Pickens 2005: 50), by assuring “open communication” (Pickens 2005: 52) or by “providing new information” (Pickens 2005: 50).

“Attitudes or beliefs that are considered more important are like pillars of a complex system”, which are strongly related to each other and show strong links to other attitudes and perceptions, too (Salomon 2004: 11). Being so closely linked, a “change in any component of the belief system will lead to changes in related components”. According to Ball-Rokeach, Rokeach and Grube (1984), “the more central the component that undergoes change, the wider the repercussions on related beliefs and attitudes, as well as on related mental activities and

behaviors” (Salomon 2004: 11). Younger generations might still be more prone to transformations of attitudes and perceptions, which were assimilated due to conflict socialization factors, as “by adulthood, the majority of members share the same beliefs, attitudes, values and emotions” and tend to have “similar perceptions of reality” (Bar-Tal and Rosen 2009: 558). Therefore, it seems that if an attitude or perception of an individual can be transformed, there is the possibility that this leads to a repercussion effect which results in touching other perceptions and attitudes. This assumption can be underlined by Salomon’s (2004: 11) statement, that “moving or changing any one of these central pillars threatens the whole belief structure of the true believer”.

Peace Education aims at changing attitudes, increase tolerance, reduce prejudices, weaken stereotypes and change conceptions of the own group and towards the “other” (Salomon 2004: 258). Whereas some scholars emphasize the goal of attaining the “legitimization of the other side’s perspective”, others highlight the aim of achieving “good enough conflict management” (Salomon 2004: 258). It is important to indicate not to primarily expect peace education to lead to conflict resolution, since the latter “greatly depends on political and economic forces not affected by educational interventions” (Salomon 2004: 258). Peace educational programs rather “try to attain increased mutual understanding, tolerance and a slight reduction of violence” (Bar-On 2000). Bar-On and Kassem (2004) argue, that intergroup encounters serve as an effective form of educational peacebuilding which helps groups in intractable conflicts to “work through their unresolved pain and anger related to the past”, resulting in “some degree of reconciliation”. The scholars created a study of personal storytelling that involved the “sharing of memories and pain, inner conflicts and insights” of the conflict-outgroup towards the ingroup and allowed the participants “to go beyond victimhood”, changes which “underlie the legitimization of the other side’s perspective” (Bar-On and Kassem 2004, Salomon 2004: 269).

On the one hand, peace education is not a new phenomenon and is frequently practiced in educational and community settings, on the other hand, it is “not often systematically studied” (Salomon 2004: 261). Further, the few peace education projects, which have been implemented in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, have only targeted the individuals involved in the conflict themselves. The importance of the international dimension of the conflict, which can clearly be demonstrated by the intervention of various international actors throughout the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, hasn’t been considered in previous peace education research. Hence, there is a lack of research on international individuals’ attitudes and perceptions towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This leads to a research gap, which shall be diminished through this research.

Keeping in mind the complexity of overcoming conflict narratives, the context of an intractable conflict, the higher probability of affecting and transforming individuals' attitudes when targeting younger generations, the little research having been conducted so far in the field of peace education and the lack of research in targeting international individuals' attitudes towards an intractable conflict, this research aims to analyze whether personal story telling as a peace educational approach has an impact on affecting and transforming international individuals' attitudes and perceptions towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as an intractable conflict. This leads to the following research question:

What role does personal story telling as a peace educational approach play in affecting and transforming attitudes and perceptions of individuals towards an intractable conflict?

This issue shall firstly be addressed on a theoretical level with a four-fold sequential model consisting of conflict narratives, sociopsychological theory on attitudes and perceptions, conflict transformation theory and peace education. As a first step, the importance of conflict narratives will be discussed, as they play a crucial role in the origin as well as in the on-going continuation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As attitudes and perceptions form an integral part of conflict narratives, sociopsychological literature will be analyzed as second step in order to detect their origin, specificities and potential of transformation. Further, conflict transformation theory will build the bridge in order to provide the context which allows such a transformation of an intractable conflict dealing with conflict narratives comprising various attitudes and perceptions. As a last step, peace education shall serve as the tool with which the barriers of the conflict, the conflicting narratives, could be overcome. Additionally, the international dimension of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will briefly be touched upon in order to demonstrate its relevance within the international system as well as the need to target international individuals. On a more practical level, a personal story telling project conducted by the Israeli-Palestinian NGO "Combatants for Peace" will be examined as a peace educational approach targeting international students. By applying a mixed methodological approach of a large-n survey and small-n focus group discussions, it shall be analyzed, whether personal story telling affects and transforms the attitudes and perceptions of international individuals towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

2. Theoretical Framework

The research will be conducted within the theoretical framework of a four-fold sequential model consisting of conflict narratives, attitudes and perceptions, conflict transformation and peace education theory (*Figure 1*). These 4 components combined address the issue with a collectively exhausted approach, as they cover the subject in its entirety. Further, each of these components is to be seen mutually exclusive, as there is no direct implication between them.

As a first step, the issue of conflict narratives will be given an overview, as they form the essential conflict-driving element in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict not only by playing a crucial role in its origin, but also in the on-going continuation. As a next step, sociopsychological theories of attitudes and perceptions are analyzed, as there is a need to understand the root and origin of attitudes and perceptions forming components of conflict narratives. After having identified and discussed the issue of conflict narratives comprising attitudes and perceptions, the method of how to address that issue will follow. With the next sequential step the context which allows for conflict transformation will be discussed within the framework of conflict transformation theory. Thus, conflict transformation theory builds the bridge from the issue of conflict narratives comprising attitudes and perceptions to identifying the context that must be given in order to allow such a transformation. The last step of the four-fold theoretical model suggests peace education as the method used to transform a conflict applied in this research. Through personal story telling as a peace educational approach, individuals' minds shall be opened by providing new insights, aiming at loosening up attitudes and perceptions building components of rigid conflict narratives. In addition to this, as the target group of this research comprises international individuals, the importance of the international dimension of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will be highlight.

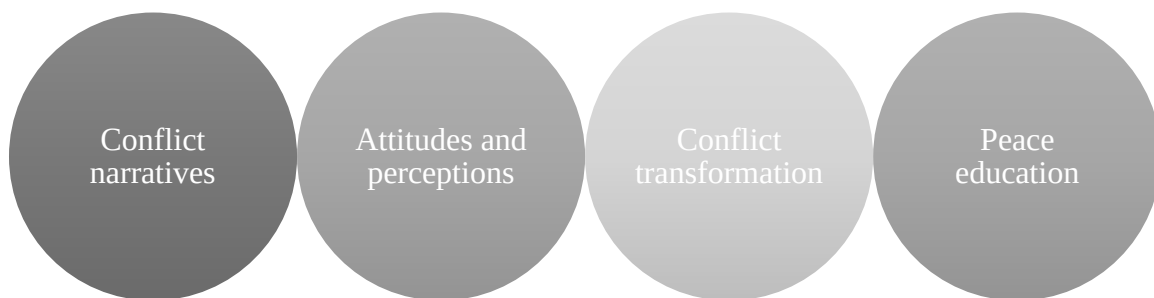


Figure 1: Four-fold sequential Theoretical Model

2.1 Collective narratives

Collective narratives form an essential part of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as they are not only seen as the reason for the origin of the conflict, but also serve as a driving factor for its decade-long continuation.

Collective narratives are brought to society members by social institutions, by politicians as well as the media, resulting in serving as a lens, through which society members view their world and process information. When a society member collects such information, it will be selectively attained within the framework of the collective narrative, leading to an acquisition of information which is “in line with the narrative” or absorption of contradictory information of the narrative (Bar Tal and Salomon 2006: 18). With narratives contradicting information doesn’t necessarily lead to full ignorance or absorption, it is “encoded and cognitively processed to be in accordance with the held beliefs of the narratives through bias, addition and distortion, resulting in a bias leading to a “focus on the schema-consistent parts of the absorbed information” and an “interpretation of ambiguous information in line with the held repertoire” (Bar Tal and Salomon 2006: 18).

National narratives “influence the translation of incoming information in particular ways” and evaluate it (Bar Tal and Salomon 2006: 19). Not only do they “influence the translation of incoming information coming from the environment”, they make society members actively search for confirmatory information on the one hand, and rejecting contradictory information on the other hand (Bar Tal and Salomon 2006: 19). National collective narratives add to maintain and even prolong a conflict, as they “close minds and facilitate a tunnel vision”, resulting in building “outstanding barriers to any reconciliation” (Bar Tal and Salomon 2006: 19).

According to Bar Tal and Salomon (2006: 3), the collective narrative of a society “provides a basis for a common understanding, good communication, interdependence and the coordination of social activities”, all of which build essential aspects necessary for a functioning social system. Not only do “beliefs comprising the collective narrative often feature on the public agenda”, they are relevant elements entailed in a state’s decision-making, influencing discussion of society members and the media as well as are so strong as to “influence the choices regarding courses of action” (Bar Tal and Salomon 2006: 3).

Collective narratives gain importance on a whole new level when it comes to societies in conflict. Conflict narratives can act as a driving factor of conflict and add to its intractability

comprising two conflicting collective narratives of the parties involved. According to various scholars, “typical beliefs are that “we” are right but “they” are wrong; “we” are the victims, whereas “they” are the aggressors; “we” only respond, thus even when “we” do harm, “they” are to blame; “we” are moderate, whereas “they” are radical; or “they” understand only the language of force” (Rouhana and Bar-Tal 1998; L. Ross and Ward 1995).

Conflict narratives are acquired through a socialization process starting at an early age. The younger generation is exposed to the culture of national narratives “through family, through the societal channels of communication, including the mass media, and through other cultural agencies and products” (Bar-Tal and Rosen 2009: 558). Further, the educational system takes over an “especially formative role”, as socialization for conflict takes place through “school textbooks, instructional materials, teachers’ instructions, school ceremonies, and so on” (Bar-Tal and Rosen 2009: 558). As “by adulthood, the majority of members share the same beliefs, attitudes, values and emotions”, older generations tend to have “similar perceptions of reality” and therefore endorse “similar courses of action” (Bar-Tal and Rosen 2009: 558). The latter might pose a serious challenge to peace education, “as it inhibits and suppresses ideas that promote peaceful resolutions” (Bar-Tal and Rosen 2009: 558). Thus, the younger generations can still be more prone to transformations of core beliefs and perceptions being components of conflict narratives, which are assimilated due to conflict socialization factors.

Asymmetry can play a decisive role in a conflict, as it can have an impact on the conflicting collective narratives of societies involved in a conflict. Conflicts are rarely symmetric, they rather consist of a stronger and a weaker party, leading to the two sides pursuing “two different, often opposing agendas” (Salomon 2004: 259). The effect of asymmetry in a conflict often results in the strong side evading the past and trying to look into the bright future, whereas the weaker side “usually returns to deal with the past to achieve recognition of the harm done to it” (Bar Tal and Salomon 2006: 21). This “absence of acknowledgement by the strong group of past harm done by it to the weak group”, might hinder a peace process between the two sides (Roe and Cairns 2003). The asymmetry of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has an impact on each side’s narratives and plays an important role in the involved parties’ respective analysis. Since 1948, Israel can be seen as the victor of the conflict, as it has been winning all the wars and gained more and more territory. Consequently, it developed its narrative at the expense of the Palestinian narrative. This can be underlined with the “physically destroying, repopulating, and renaming many Palestinian towns or outlawing Palestinian commemorative practices” (Khoury 2016: 468). The Palestinians on the other hand have lacked more decades “proper institutions (state, museums, and archives) to promote their narrative” (Khoury 2016: 468).

Collective narratives play a crucial role in the Israeli Palestinian conflict, since they add to the intractability with both sides of the conflict having their own narratives of the history of the land of Palestine. The importance of the role history plays in reconciliation processes of conflicts was highlighted by various scholars (Devine-Wright 1999, Maoz 2000, Roe and Cairns 2003, Bar Tal and Salomon 2006: 21). While some argue that “highlighting historical memories is unhelpful as it can easily lead to entrenchment” (Devine-Wright 1999), others emphasize that despite the fact of history being unavoidable, it will surface nevertheless (Maoz 2000).

When analyzing the collective narratives of the parties involved in the Israeli Palestinian conflict, the Zionist narrative builds on ethnic and religious continuity, whereas the Palestinian narrative comprises continuous presence on the land. The Zionist narrative creates a link between ancient Israelites and modern Israelis, claiming that this link was “disrupted when the Jewish people were sent into exile” (Scham et al. 2013). Consequently, “the fate of the Jewish people was in other nations’ hands”, far from their religious homeland (Khoury 2008: 468). While this period was marked by discrimination which lasted for the following centuries, the Jew’s suffering didn’t have an end, but rather increased through events such as the “pogroms in Eastern Europe in the nineteenth century, the Dreyfus affair at the beginning of the twentieth, and finally, the Holocaust” (Khoury 2008: 468). In order to end these dreadful events and relieve the Jews from their suffering, there is only one conclusion according to the Zionist narrative: the Jews shall return to their “ancestral land”. “The Zionist movement will put an end to the woes of the Jewish diaspora (Galut) and redeem its people (Geula) by securing it a land and a state” (Gur Ze’ev 1998: 163). The Zionist narrative can be found in textbooks in which the focus lies on describing the Jewish waves of immigration “as an expression of national aspiration to build a state for Jewish people in their ancient homeland”, being exposed to “Arab violence aimed at Jews”, portraying it as “vicious riots and massacres” (Bar Tal and Salomon 2006: 8). Whereas the Arab rejection of the 1947 UN partition plan with the violence of seven neighboring Arab states against Israel is clearly highlighted, the mass-deportation of Palestinians out of the state of Israel in 1948 or “initial attempts by Arabs to sense Israel’s willingness to negotiate a peaceful settlement” is not mentioned at all (Bar Tal and Salomon 2006: 8).

The Palestinian narrative on the other hand focuses on a continuous presence on the land, as Palestinians “have always been the inhabitants of historical Palestine” (Khoury 2008). Highlighting mostly the “period starting with the Arab conquest”, the Palestinian narrative also emphasizes historical periods such as the Canaanites, the Philistines and “even the Israelites”

(Scham et al. 2013). What disrupted the historical continuity of Arab inhabitants in the region, was firstly the British imperialism including the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and secondly, the Zionist movement, leading finally to the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. This event is known as the “Nakba” (“the catastrophe” in Arabic), as 750’000 Palestinians were expelled from their homeland. The Nakba “operates as a founding moment in the Palestinian national story”, although “Palestinian national consciousness predates 1948” (Khoury 2016: 468). What builds another major event in the Palestinian narrative following the Nakba, is the “Naksa” (“setback” in Arabic), during which the Six-days-war in 1967 “caused more displacement and the loss of all historical Palestine” (Khoury 2016: 468).

2.2 Attitudes and perceptions

Attitudes, perceptions and core beliefs form essential components of conflict narratives, as individuals involved in a conflict hold attitudes and perceptions, which result from their conflict socialization acquired throughout their life. When conducting research on people’s attitudes, it is often their behavior which is focused on. Conceptualizing attitudes remains a challenge, as they are described to be “a complex combination of things we tend to call personality, beliefs, values, behaviors, and motivations” (Pickens 2005: 44). Perceptions are “closely related to attitudes”, being the “process by which organisms interpret and organize sensation to produce a meaningful experience of the world”, based on prior experiences (Pickens 2005: 52, Lindsay and Norman 1977).

Allport (1935) describes attitudes as “a mental or neutral state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence on the individual’s response to all objects and situations to which it is related” (Pickens 2005: 44). Kind et al. (2007) define an attitude as the “feelings that a person has about an object, based on his or her knowledge and belief about that object” (Barmby, Kind and Jones 2008: 2). It is important to note that there is a distinction between attitudes and general affects such as moods and emotions. Although “these factors interact with attitudes, attitudes themselves are best thought of as evaluative judgment formed by the person” (Barmby, Kind and Jones 2008: 2). Attitudes have also been defined as “positive and/or negative evaluations of people, objects, and issues, deriving from the understanding of human emotion and the affect system” (Alhabash and Wise 2012: 361). More easily, an attitude can be understood as a “mind-set or a tendency to act in a particular way due to both individuals’ experience and temperament” (Pickens 2005: 44).

The comprehensive research on attitudes also provides various theoretical models aiming at facilitating a definition. For instance, the tri-component model of attitudes includes the assumption that people's attitudes towards a subject can include their point of view about the subject (e.g. thoughts), how they feel about the topic (e.g. emotions) and how they act regarding the subjects as a result of their attitudes (e.g. behavior). Thus, an attitude encompasses three components: "an affect (a feeling), cognition (a thought or belief), and behavior (an action)" (Pickens 2005: 44). While the components of feeling and belief are internal, there is nevertheless the possibility to view attitudes from the outside due to the component of behavior. Thus, a person "has knowledge and beliefs about objects which give rise to feelings about them, and these two components together may lead the person to take certain action" (Barmby, Kind and Jones 2008: 2).

Closely linked to the tri-component model of attitudes is the cognitive dissonance theory of Kassarian and Cohen (1965), which refers to conflicting attitudes, beliefs or behaviors of individuals. Initially analyzing how smokers rationalize their behavior despite the fact of knowing how bad smoking is for their health, the cognitive dissonance theory can also be applied on other subjects and helps explaining attitudes. The results showed that people are motivated to act in order to bring their attitudes and behavior into balance. People's reactions of being confronted with explaining their behavior were categorized into 3 categories. Firstly, people tend to eliminate their responsibility for their behavior. Secondly, they deny, distort, misperceive or minimize the degree of negative externalities or damage their behavior leads to. Thirdly, "selectively drawing out information that reduces the inconsistency" of the people's behavior served as the last category (Pickens 2005: 47).

Attitudes can be formed through "learning, modeling others, and our direct experiences with people and situations" (Pickens 2005: 47). While influencing our decisions, guiding our behavior, impacting what we selectively remember, attitudes can not only be measured, they can also be changed. Although "attitude transformation takes time, effort, and determination", it is the addressing of the cognitive and emotional components that make such a change possible (Pickens 2005: 50). Methods such as challenging people's behavior "by providing new information" can be applied in order to change attitudes over time (Pickens 2005: 50). As attitudes "are formed over a lifetime through an individual's socialization process", one should not expect them to change rapidly (Pickens 2005: 50). Socialization processes include the "formation of values and beliefs during childhood years, influenced not only by family, religion, and culture but also by socioeconomic factors" (Pickens 2005: 50). However, attitudes towards a topic which is of less importance to an individual and therefore rather superficial, can more

easily be changed. In a study researching a method on how to change attitudes in the workplace, the results showed that “open communication creates environments where workers feel safe to dissent, and in which their opinions are respected” (Pickens 2005: 52). Thus, a setting which provides open communication for the individuals involved increase the possibility of transforming attitudes.

Nevertheless, the analysis of implicit attitude changes forms a challenge, as implicit attitude change models comprise the distinction between what people express and what they truly think about a certain topic. The “discrepancy between what is verbalized and what is thought” remains a challenge in the operationalization of attitude change, as there is always the probability of such discrepancies occurring without being detected (Alhabash and Wise 2012). Another challenge within the field of attitude research was explored by Meuleman, Davidov and Billiet (2009: 2), as they argue that there is only little research on the evolution of attitudes towards an outgroup, since the “scientific study of longitudinal developments brings along additional methodological difficulties”. The scholars analyzed changing attitudes towards immigration in Europe and could identify factors, which were connected to outgroup attitudes of individuals of the respective ingroup. Attitudes towards an outgroup were found to be linked with people’s educational level (Coenders and Scheepers 2003), economic interests (Citrin et al. 1997), religiosity (Billiet 1995), human values (Davidov et al. 2008), perceived threat (Scheepers et al. 2002) as well as right-wing voting behavior (Semyonov et al. 2006). The interaction of these elements were found to influence an individual’s outgroup perception, adding to the challenge of operationalizing attitudes in a comprehensive way.

Locander and Spivey (1978: 576) emphasize that “attitude change is seen as resulting from the interplay between one’s ability to resist persuasive arguments and one’s desire to use such arguments to satisfy one’s needs”. The scholars make a distinction between theoretical and functional approaches to attitude change measurement. Whereas the theoretical approaches explore the “person’s belief structure as a means of creating attitude change”, the functional theorists argue that attitude change depends on the “motivational pattern supporting cognitive representations” (Locander and Spivey 1978: 576). Thus, the functional approach of measuring the transformation of attitudes focuses on the varied motivational patterns underlying a person’s attitude. Katz (1960) categorizes attitudes into having knowledge, utilitarian, ego-defensive and value-expressive functions. While attitudes serving the utilitarian function “are positive toward the means of reaching a desired goal” and are rather stable as they are acquired through experience over time, attitudes with an ego-defensive function are held as they “aim to protect oneself from internal anxieties or dangers from the external environment” (Locander and

Spivey 1978: 577). The value-expressive function of attitudes “helps the individual to give positive expression to his central values and self-concept”, aiming to confirm an individual’s self-identity (Locander and Spivey 1978: 577). The knowledge function comprises the need to increase an individual’s knowledge about the attitude object in order to “give general meaning” to the person’s social world (Locander and Spivey 1978: 577). The discussion of the functions underlying attitudes can provide a better understanding when it comes to the analysis of attitudes, as the probability of a transformation might depend on the function underlying it.

Salomon (2004: 11) argues, that “attitudes or beliefs that are considered more important are like pillars of a complex system”, which are strongly related to each other and show strong links to other attitudes and perceptions. While being closely connected, a “change in any component of the belief system will lead to changes in related components”. Rokeach and Grube (1984) mention a repercussion effect in the structure of attitudes and beliefs, as they state that “the more central the component that undergoes change, the wider the repercussions on related beliefs and attitudes, as well as on related mental activities and behaviors” (Salomon 2004: 11). Thus, if any of these central pillars can be moved or changed, the whole belief structure of “the true believer” is threatened (Salomon 2004: 11). Therefore, it is assumed that transforming attitudes and perceptions might lead to a repercussion effect having the potential to result in affecting rigid conflict narratives.

2.3 Conflict transformation

Conflict transformation is a comprehensive approach, which “aims to develop capacity and to support structural change, rather than to facilitate outcomes or deliver settlements” (Miall 2001: 17). The context out of which a conflict is arising is of great importance and contains a chain of context related elements linked to each other. Miall (2001: 8) argues, that conflict theories tend to focus on the involved parties and their goals, which might lead to the “exclusion of the context within which the conflict is situated as well as of the factors which characterize the self-fueling of conflicts”, such as markets and cultures of violence. Within the context of a conflict, the involved parties have certain attitudes towards each other. These attitudes are “shaped by previous relationships”, which makes their behavior “not purely reactive”, but rather “based on their memory of what has happened in the past, and expectations of what may happen in the future” (Miall 2001: 8). When looking at the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it becomes clear that a conflict transformation can’t take place without considering and addressing

the conflict narratives comprising the attitudes and perceptions, which the conflicted parties hold against each other.

Not only the context of a conflict, but also the relationship between individuals involved in the conflict play a crucial role when analyzing conditions for conflict transformation. Relationships not only “involve the whole fabric of interaction within the society in which the conflict takes place as well as beyond to other societies”, they also play a crucial role as “poor relationships between groups are all too often a trigger for conflict” and challenge peacebuilding efforts to hinder it (Miall 2001: 8). Memories of individuals in the conflicted party build part of their “socially constructed understanding of the situation, shaped by culture and learning, and discourse and belief” (Miall 2001: 8). Addressing them in peacebuilding attempts is significant, as “the way groups remember and construct their past is often central to the mobilization for conflict” (Miall 2001: 8). Hence, these memories form again an integral component of conflict narratives, as they include attitudes and perceptions. When analyzing the relationships between the groups involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, they are rather poor and marked by violence, considering that Israelis and Palestinians grow up in segregation and their first encounters often happen in form of the Israeli military occupation in the Palestinian territories.

The importance of a structural transformation referring to changes in the “set of actors, their issues, incompatible goals and relationships, or to the society, economy or state within which the conflict is embedded” is highlighted within the framework conflict transformation theory (Miall 2001: 8). Whereas only with such a structural transformation asymmetric conflicts can be changed, it is equally emphasized that “the unbalanced and contested relationships that lie at their roots” must be changed, too (Miall 2001: 8). Personal transformations, or rather “personal changes of heart or mind within individual leader or small groups with decision-making power at critical moments may be crucial” (Miall 2001: 10). Whereas structural transformations usually take place at the state or society level, personal transformations ask for “competencies on the individual level”, whereby such transformation “particularly affects attitudes and memory, behavior and relationships”, which are interrelated (Miall 2001: 11). Thus, a transformation of attitudes and perceptions of individuals with decision-making power involved in a conflict on a personal level could lead to a structural change of the conflict on the state level.

In fact, the individuals involved in conflicts are of high importance, since the “challenges, difficulties, hardships, setbacks and tenacity inherent in all conflict transformation mean that we must also ‘transform the transformers’” and “include this group as we focus on activities

designed to enhance peace education, to improve training programmes and to create opportunities for self-reflection and spirituality” (Miall 2001: 16). Consequently, addressing a transformation of perceptions and attitudes on the personal level through personal story telling as a peace educational approach might serve as an opportunity for conflict transformation.

2.4 Peace Education

After having discussed the setting which might allow conflict transformation, various scholars have identified conditions to be given in order for peace education to have a sustainable impact. Bar-Tal and Rosen (2009) identified four conditions that should be given in order for peace education to be effective. These conditions are of political-societal nature and comprise a progress towards peace, support for a peace process, the ripeness for reconciliation and political as well as government support. “Well-publicized, palpable movement toward conflict resolution that includes negotiation with the rival”, “substantial support among society members for conducting a peace process with the past rival”, the society’s readiness “to hear the message of peace education” and policy support of peace education build a basis for the road of success of peace educational approaches (Bar-Tal and Rosen 2009: 561). Further, in order for peace education to be successful and have an impact, the support of politicians, the media, the education system, parents and the public in general are needed. Within the context of intractable conflicts, this support is barely given, resulting in “peace education to be viewed by many as some kind of subversive activity” (Salomon 2004: 261). This might lead to the conclusion that peace education programs aren’t effective in the context of intractable conflicts. In fact, Kupermintz and Salomon (2005: 293) warn about peace education in the context of intractable conflicts, as they drew a number of lessons learnt from recent research on peace education aiming to provide the academia with efficient and long-lasting future research in that field. Having examined different studies with Israeli and Palestinian students and teachers, they come to the conclusion that the aim of “attaining durable and worthwhile effects through educational activities” is being faced with various challenges: “short-term benefits may erode over time, ongoing violence and hostility may block attempts to understand the opponent’s perspective, and power and status asymmetries may dictate incompatible agendas or prohibit a mutual common ground for constructive interaction” (Kupermintz and Salomon 2005: 293). Nevertheless, the research studies proved that carefully designed peace education programs could offer findings such as fostering “participants’ ability to acknowledge the adversary’s collective narrative, engage in constructive negotiations over issues of national identity, and

express a less monolithic outlook of the conflict” (Kupermintz and Salomon 2005: 293). Further, despite having established their set of conditions needed for peace educational programmes to be effective, Bar-Tal and Rosen (2009: 569) argue that “there is no one way to conduct peace education”, adding to their argument that “peace education can flourish under any condition – including violence – because its themes fundamentally support humanism and democracy”, which are core values “shared by many societies”. Only few will object “to positively valued themes such as tolerance, reflective thinking, peace, rejection of violence, and human rights”, which leads to a more optimistic point of view regarding the success of peace education (Bar-Tal and Rosen 2009: 569).

As the research on the effectiveness of peace education programs is limited, there are still many open questions yet to ask. Although being much practiced in educational and community settings, peace education is not often systematically studied. “Despite the large number of peace education programs and projects taking place all over the world, from Sri Lanka (e.g., Perera 1996) to Rwanda (e.g., Mukarubuga 2002), from Kosovo (e.g., Piggot 1995) to Northern Ireland (Smith 1999), there is very little research and program evaluation to accompany such activities” (Salomon 2004: 261). While there is more information available about peace education programs and their implementation, there is less on long-term effects and effectiveness of different methods of evaluation and research (Salomon 2004).

Looking at already existing research in the field, in particular previous personal story telling experiences, scholars agree that the story-telling approach was initially developed by the members of TRT (To Reflect and Trust) (Albeck, Adwan and Bar-On 2002). In this project, nine German descendants of Nazi perpetrators and nine Jewish descendants of Holocaust survivors met four to six days at a time every year between 1992 and 1998. In 1998, the original group took the next step when they reached out to practitioners involved in peace-building efforts from Northern Ireland, Palestine and Israel as well as South Africa in order to “test the possibility that the TRT storytelling method could be helpful in working through their current conflicts in small-group settings” (Albeck, Adwan and Bar-On 2002: 302). The aim was to produce guidelines for small group work involved in such intractable conflicts, while acknowledging the “unique historical contexts and the power relationship between the parties” as well as avoiding “the tendency to reinforce existing collective identities” (Albeck, Adwan and Bar-On 2002: 303). As Albeck, Adwan and Bar-On (2002: 301) discuss “how telling the story of one’s personal experiences in a small group comprised of members from opposing sides of intractable conflicts can help work through some of the ongoing intergenerational effects of violence”, the authors came to the conclusion that “telling one’s own life story in such

a historical circle encounter seems to facilitate the evolution of a new, shared narrative”, while “telling the personal story to those from the other side also seems to help improve participants’ subsequent ability to listen to the others stories more deeply” (Albeck, Adwan and Bar-On 2002: 318). The latter statement can be exemplified with one Israeli TRT member stating that these encounters with the other side felt like “getting the wax out of our ears” (Albeck, Adwan and Bar-On 2002: 318). It became evident that “honest and detailed personal storytelling that involved the sharing of memories and pain, inner conflicts and insights, combined with the emotional support of the group, allows one to go ‘beyond victimhood’” (Salomon 2004: 269).

Bar-On and Kassem (2004) carried out a study in which they oriented their research on the TRT approach and applied the storytelling method on participants of a one year-long Jewish-Palestinian student workshop held in 2000-2001. 13 Jewish and 12 Palestinian students took part in uninational meetings, binational meetings as well as lectures in which the storytelling method was applied. The uninational meetings served on the one hand as a platform for students of both sides to share their fears and concerns, while on the other hand they were of use to instruct the participants to conduct interviews with their parents or grandparents in order to transcript the life stories of the older generations. The binational meetings were meant for both sides to share these stories of their parents or grandparents with all the participants. It was found that the workshop “enabled students to learn about their own family’s history and about the origins of their own identity construction” (Bar-On and Kassem 2004: 300). The Jewish students emphasized the impact of the group process on their gained knowledge about the Palestinian history, as “through this group process, the Jewish students began clarifying for themselves some of the aspects of their construction of identity that had previously been ambiguous” (Bar-On and Kassem 2004: 300). When looking at the Palestinian side, some of the Palestinian students described that the newly acquired knowledge about their own family stories “strengthened their ties and identification with their collective” (Bar-On and Kassem 2004: 300). Further, a few Palestinian students also expressed that they felt for the first time that not everyone from the Jewish side incorporates an enemy. In conclusion, Bar-On and Kassem (2004) resumed, that the storytelling approach has the potential to lead to a formation of relationships between the two groups of the conflict.

Bar-Natan (2004) conducted a study with 170 Israeli-Jewish and Israeli-Palestinian students aiming to examine, whether “interpersonal friendships that emerge during encounter groups between Israelis and Palestinians” increase the “acceptance of members of the other group (not just those individuals participating in the meetings)” as well as the “legitimization of the other group’s collective narrative” (Salomon 2004: 269). The results comprised positive correlations

“among Jewish participants between the number and perceived depth of intergroup personal friendships developed during the workshop and pretest to posttest changes in their willingness for closer contacts with other members of the Palestinian group” (Salomon 2004: 269). Looking at the Palestinian group, a correlation between “friendships that develop during the peace education workshop” and the “willingness for more contact with Jews at the end of the workshop” was found (Salomon 2004: 269). However, the legitimization of the Jewish narrative didn’t show any correlation to newly established friendships. Thus, Bar-Natan (2004) concluded that friendships developed during an encounter group can lead to an increased acceptance of members of the other group as a whole as well as a greater legitimization of the other group’s narrative. Whatsoever, this proved to be more difficult for the Palestinian side. Finally, although “friendships with individual Jews increase their motivation for greater closeness with members of that group, they do not affect acceptance of the collective Jewish narrative, which they perceive as being the source of their discrimination” (Salomon 2004: 270).

Another study which was carried out by Lustig (2002) consisted of studying a foreign conflict in order to detect, whether participants draw analogies to the conflict they are involved in themselves. 68 Israeli 11th grade students were taught about the collective narratives of the two sides of the conflict in Northern Ireland during a time period of four months, without any analogies to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict being drawn. While one half of the students participated in the program, the other half served as a comparable control group. The method comprised a “pretest and posttest questionnaire assessing attitudes toward the Palestinians, a posttest questionnaire measuring understanding of the Northern Ireland conflict, particularly its two-sidedness, and a posttest measure consisting of two essays the students were asked to write describing the conflict- one from the Jewish-Zionist point of view, the other from the Palestinian perspective” (Salomon 2004: 264). Whereas the questionnaires didn’t provide for any significant results, the analysis of the essays offered interesting findings. While 94% of the program participants “wrote full-size essays from the Palestinian perspective, only 25% of the nonparticipants were capable, or willing, to describe the conflict from their adversary’s point of view” (Salomon 2004: 264). Thus, Lustig (2002) assumed, that the exposure to the conflict of Northern Ireland with its collective narratives “enables outsiders to detect similar qualities in the conflict that they are involved, thus enabling them to dare and write about the conflict from their adversary’s perspective” (Salomon 2004: 264). Further, the analysis of the essays written by the program participants showed that significantly more positive terms “such as conflict resolution, compromise and negotiation” were used in comparison to the essays of the

non-participants, in which more negatively connotated words like “war, death and deportation” were found (Salomon 2004: 264). Hence, the findings revealed that studying a remote conflict could serve as an analogy to the conflict in which participants were involved themselves, helping them to see the conflict in a new light as well as “circumvent defenses such as entrenchment and reactance that would arise if direct persuasion were attempted” (Salomon 2004: 264).

Finally, Biton and Salomon (2006: 167) conducted a study with 565 Jewish Israeli and Palestinian adolescents in order to research the “extent to which the collective narrative of a group in a conflict and participation in a peace education program affects youngsters’ perceptions of peace”. Half of the participants of the study took part in a school-based one year long program, while the other half served as a control group. The perceptions of peace were distinguished between positive and negative aspects of peace. With a method of pre- and post-program questionnaires, several results have shown that the participation of the students in the program had a positive impact on their perception of peace. Whereas initially Israeli students highlighted the negative aspects of peace (absence of violence) and Palestinians emphasized structural aspects (independence, equality), “both Israeli and Palestinian program participants came to stress more the positive aspects of peace (cooperation, harmony) following participation in the program” (Biton and Salomon 2006: 167). As during the time of the conduction of the program the first Intifada was still on-going, it could be analyzed that the control group “came to increasingly suggest war as a means to attain peace”, while no such change could be detected amongst the participants of the program (Biton and Salomon 2006: 167). Further, the Palestinian control group was found to express more hatred towards Jews in the light of the events, whereas the same couldn’t be observed amongst Palestinian program participants. Thus, Biton and Salomon (2006: 167) came to the result, that “peace education can serve as a barrier against the deterioration of perceptions and feelings”. Additionally, individuals’ perceptions of peace were found to be “differently colored by their group’s collective narratives and more immediate experiences of current events but are significantly altered by participation in a peace education program” (Biton and Salomon 2006: 167).

Having discussed previous peace education experiences, it can be stated that a few studies within the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have already been conducted, targeting Israeli and Palestinian individuals themselves. Acknowledging that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with its intractability has been in the focus of previous peace education research and studies aiming to examine the effect on programme participants who are involved in the conflict

themselves, this research focuses on a target group that hasn't been in the focus of peace education research so far: international individuals.

2.5 International dimension of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict's regional dimension and involved individuals' attitudes and perceptions have been analyzed while discussing the conflict narratives as well as previous peace educational projects within the region. However, although the Israeli-Palestinian conflict reached a wide spectrum of international attention and led to several international interventions throughout its long history, there is a lack of research on international individuals' attitudes and perceptions towards that conflict.

Considering the complex history of the conflict including its security implications leading to the intervention of not only surrounding Middle Eastern states but also states outside of the region as well as non-state actors such as international organizations, it would be beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the wide range of the conflict's international dimension in its entirety. Thus, the focus lies on the role of the European Union representing the majority of the European continent, the UN as an international organization counting 193 member states and the U.S. as being a powerful state within the international system and a dominant actor in the region's various peace processes.

When analyzing the international dimension of the conflict, it can be argued that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict resulted in various international players intervening in the region aimed at establishing peace between the conflicted parties. It is argued that security concerns became "primordial to all internationally-sponsored diplomatic initiatives and peace plans" (Bouris and Reigeluth 2012: 176). Looking at the different international actors, it can be stated that whereas the UN played a crucial role in the partition of Palestine in 1947, the European Union as well as the United States embody further central actors of the international community who not only played an essential role in the history of Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but continue to do so today.

The United states have participated in all major peace process attempts such as Camp David I (1978), which led to the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt, the Madrid peace process (1991), the Oslo process (1993), the Wye River Conference in Maryland (1998), the "road map to peace" by former U.S. president Bush (2003) as well as the recently published peace process by current U.S. president Donald Trump (2020) (Dieckhoff 2005).

The European Union not only developed guidelines “for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East” (“land for peace”: “the Palestinians’ right to self-determination, and Israel’s right to security”), but also provided financial assistance while supporting diplomatic initiatives (Dieckhoff 2005: 53). Having provided “half the funding needed for the setting up of the PA’s institutions following the 1993 Oslo Accords”, the EU was also involved in the “complex structure” established in order to coordinate aid in Palestine (Bouris and George 2017: 763). In 1997, the EU and the PLO signed the Interim Association Agreement, out of which the Action Plan resulted in 2005. The Action Plan included “judicial and electoral reform, effective enforcement of legislation, open, fair and free elections, transparency of public finances and the restructuring of civil service and security” (Bouris and George 2017: 764).

While the UN firstly played a crucial role in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict when drawing the partition of Palestine in 1947 in the framework of UN resolution 181, the international organization further established UNWRA, the UN Relief and Works Agency, which provides support to around five million Palestinian refugees as well as their descendants. In 1988, the former president of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) Yasser Arafat proclaimed the State of Palestine based on UN Resolution 181. Additionally, the UN changed Palestine’s status from a “non-member observer entity” to a “non-member observer state” in 2012 (Bouris and George 2017).

After having briefly discussed the international dimension the Israeli-Palestinian conflict reaches, the relevance that the conflict carries within the international sphere, which has led to the intervention and peace-keeping efforts of various international actors throughout its history, becomes evident. Thus, keeping in mind the international outreach of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the lack of research on international individuals’ attitudes and perceptions towards it, the latter forms an innovative target group to discover.

3. Methodology

In order to answer the research question, a mixed methodological approach of a large-n survey and small-n focus groups is being applied.

The aim of this research is to analyze the role of peace education in affecting and transforming attitudes and perceptions of individuals towards an intractable conflict. International students serve as the target group of analysis of this research, taking into consideration that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict provokes a wide international dimension, which has already led to various international actors having intervened and conducted peace processes. Additionally, as there is a lack of research on peace educational projects involving international individuals, but also research analyzing international individuals' attitudes towards a conflict, this research aims at filling that gap.

3.1 Cooperation with NGO “Combatants for Peace”: Encounters project

“Combatants for Peace” is a bi-national NGO of Israeli and Palestinian activists aiming to achieve a peaceful ending of the occupation so that “both Israelis and Palestinians (can) live in freedom, security, democracy and dignity in their homeland” (Combatants for Peace). One of “Combatants for Peace” activities is the “Encounters program”, a personal story telling event in which always an Israeli and Palestinian member of the NGO share their personal story, emphasize their past involvement in the cycle of violence and share the process of transformation they have made. There are three target groups for which these encounter-meetings are organized: Israeli high school students, Palestinian high school students and international students. In rare cases there might also be mixed target groups. Each session is “always followed by a galvanizing session of Q&A and open discussion to maximize personal transformation” (Combatants for Peace).

According to “Combatants for Peace”, “the Encounter program provides opportunities for Israelis and Palestinians to break from their narrow, militaristic narratives that feed into the cycle of fear, hatred and violence”. The aim of the personal story telling meetings is to “allow Israeli and Palestinians to encounter the ‘other’, learn about the other’s narrative, hear the personal transformation of someone from their ‘side’, so that participants can begin to change their own understanding of the conflict and their role in it” (Combatants for Peace). International students can increase their knowledge about the conflict while being introduced

to both sides, so that awareness about this intractable conflict is raised within the international community, too. Ideally, the “Encounters program” inspires hope and “encourages the participants to engage in demanding a peace process” (Combatants for Peace). Israelis and Palestinians shall be brought “out of their own stories as they see them, meet the other outside of their role as active participants in the cycle of violence and provide nonviolent alternative action” (Combatants for Peace).

Whereas in 2016, the first year of the encounters program reached over 2’800 Israelis and 260 Palestinians, this number went up to 3’000 Israelis and 350 Palestinians in 2017. In 2018, approximately 2000 Israelis and 60 Palestinians took part, in 2019 the numbers increased again up to 2400 Israelis and 100 Palestinians. Looking at these numbers, the asymmetry stands out, which is in line with “Combatants for Peace’s” activism. “Recognizing the asymmetry of the conflict and the privilege Israelis have, the encounters program is primarily geared towards an Israeli audience” (Combatants for Peace). There is a focus on targeting Israeli youth “in high school and pre-army preparatory schools before they are indoctrinated by the military” and thus at the mercy of militarized national narratives (Combatants for Peace).

3.2 Research Focus Model

The aim of this research is to analyze the role of personal story telling as a peace educational approach in affecting and transforming attitudes and perceptions of individuals towards an intractable conflict. In cooperation with the NGO “Combatants for Peace”, a large-n survey was conducted in order to see, whether their participation in a personal story telling event has an effect on individuals’ attitudes and perceptions towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Since “the use of attitude questionnaires has its limitations”, small-n focus group discussions were held in order to further analyze the effect of personal story telling as a peace educational approach (Salomon 2004: 262).

Whereas a survey shall help identifying patterns and basic attitudes of participants and measure the effect of personal story telling on a broad spectrum, focus group discussions serve to examine a small number of cases in depth in order to dig deeper into measuring the effect of personal story telling on attitudes and perceptions of the participants towards the conflict.

While the focus of this research lies in the transformative aspect of personal story telling as a peace educational aspect, a model has been developed in order to describe the process of the research focus in three stages (*Figure 2*). It shall be emphasized that this research explores data

as a post-event analysis, as there was no measurement of attitudes before participants took part in the personal story telling project. Thus, the focus lies on the operationalization of participants' expressed statements.

As a first step, it shall be analyzed whether personal story telling as a peace educational approach affects participants. The aim is to find out whether personal story telling events can raise awareness as well as sensitize participants towards the conflict and thus have an impact on participants. As discussed within the sociopsychological part of the theoretical framework, attitudes can be affected by addressing emotional components, this research aims at exploring expressed emotional attitudes of participants towards the project and the conflict as a whole as a first step (Pickens 2005). As a second step, it shall be analyzed whether any transformative aspect in attitudes or perceptions can be detected after participants took part in the personal story telling project. If a transformation of attitudes is shown, the aim is to explore what such a transformation entails. Based on the discussed sociopsychological theories of attitude transformation, attitudes can be changed through direct experiences with people, by providing new information and by addressing emotional or cognitive components (Pickens 2005, Salomon 2004). Further, the theory suggests that attitudes can either be defined as a feeling towards a subject or an evaluative judgment (Kind et al. 2007, Barnby, Kind and Jones 2008). Thus, this research aims at detecting an expressed transformation of feelings, a changed evaluative judgment or a content-related change of attitudes towards the conflict. This approach is in line with the tri-component model of attitudes, which consists of attitudes being either an

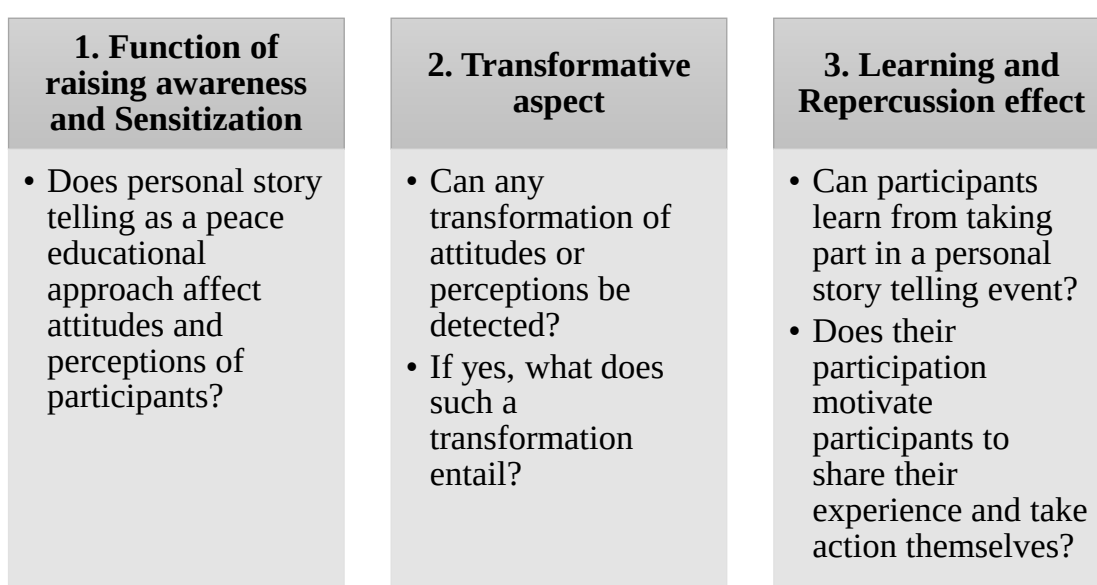


Figure 2: 3-steps Research Focus Model

individual's point of view towards a subject (e.g. thoughts), feelings towards a subject (e.g. emotions) or acting as a result of an attitude (e.g. behavior). As a third step, this research first aims at exploring the potential of personal story telling as a form of learning. Then, the potential of a repercussion effect in the light of participants sharing their experience with their social environment shall be examined, which would result in a wider public being reached, at best leading to a transformation of attitudes and perceptions or at least sensitization of a broader range of people than just the participants of the project. Firstly, it shall be analyzed whether participants can take a learning experience from their participation in the personal story telling event. Further, it shall be explored whether participants seem motivated to share their learning experience with their social environment or even make a change themselves and take action in their home countries.

3.3 Quantitative method: large-n survey

3.3.1 Participants and Sampling methods

The participants who filled out the survey are international students who took part in an encounters project. After having listened to the stories of a personal story telling event and being given the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the topic in a Q&A session, participants fill in the survey.

Looking at the sample characteristics, a diversity of gender and ethnicity is given, whereby the age of the participants ranges from 20 to 25.

3.3.2 Instruments and Data collection

Data of the large-n survey is available from different encounter projects which took place between October 2019 and January 2020. A total number of 56 questionnaires have been filled in. The set of questions of the survey can be taken from *Figure 3*.

It is emphasized that as questionnaires have a limited use when it comes to analyzing attitudes, the function of the questionnaire in this research is reduced to exploring the effect of personal story telling as a peace educational approach on a broad spectrum aiming to provide a first overview (Salomon 2004). This limitation is firstly revealed when aiming to address the first

step of the 3-steps research model of analyzing the function of personal story telling as a peace educational approach to raise awareness and sensitize. As it poses a challenge to measure participants' awareness and sensitization through a questionnaire in order to detect whether they have been emotionally affected by the event, this step will be looked at in more detail on a later stage when analyzing the focus group discussions. Secondly, the questionnaire doesn't provide the possibility of measuring the change of attitudes either, as there is no pre-event analysis, which would provide for operationalizing participants' attitudes before the event and therefore allow a comparison. Thus, this research aims at providing a first broad overview over the attitudes of participants after having taken part in the personal story telling event, without aiming at exploring a transformation. While *Question 3* and *Question 5* address the measurement of attitudes based on the sociopsychological theory of attitudes forming an evaluative judgement (Kind et al. 2007), *Question 4* comprises the operationalizing of participants' attitudes as being a feeling towards a subject (Barmby, Kind and Jones 2008). The third step of the 3-steps research model can most suitably be analyzed with the questionnaire, as not only *Question 2*, but also *Questions 6 – 8* address the potential of learning, the eventuality of a repercussion effect and the motivation to take action. Finally, *Question 1* provides an overview whether participants are new to the peace education project or whether they are already familiar with this topic.

Survey Questionnaire

Introductory question

Experience with personal story telling as a peace educational approach (1)

1. Have you participated in similar meetings in the past?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

If yes, what kind of activity was it? _____

Question addressing learning effect

Questions regarding learning effect of meeting (2)

2. Do you feel that you have learnt something new during this meeting?

- ☐ 1. Absolutely yes
- ☐ 2. Maybe yes
- ☐ 3. Not sure
- ☐ 4. Maybe not
- ☐ 5. Absolutely not
- ☐ 6. Prefer not to answer

If you did not learn, what would you change? _____

Questions addressing attitudes

Questions regarding attitudes towards the conflict (3, 4 & 5)

3. Do you believe it is possible to solve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the nearby future?

- ☐ 1 strongly agree
- ☐ 2 agree
- ☐ 3 neutral
- ☐ 4 disagree
- ☐ 5 strongly disagree
- ☐ 6 Prefer not to answer

4. I feel _____ about finding a solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict

- ☐ Hopeful
- ☐ Frustrated
- ☐ Tired
- ☐ Angry
- ☐ Energized
- ☐ Motivated
- ☐ Committed
- ☐ Disappointed
- ☐ Other _____

5. Do you believe that ordinary people like you and me can help in an active way to solve / end the conflict?

- ☐ 1 strongly agree
- ☐ 2 agree
- ☐ 3 neutral
- ☐ 4 disagree
- ☐ 5 strongly disagree
- ☐ 6 Prefer not to answer

Questions addressing motivation for activism Questions addressing the motivation for non-violent activism (6), motives for participation in non-violent activism (7), motives for not participating in non-violent activism (8)	6. Would you be open to participate at binational non-violent activities to promote peace between Palestinians and Israelis? ☐ 1. Absolutely yes ☐ 4. Maybe not ☐ 2. Maybe yes ☐ 5. Absolutely not ☐ 3. Not sure ☐ 6. Prefer not to answer 7. What are your reasons to participate? ☐ It is the right thing to do ☐ Because I care ☐ I am curious ☐ Other _____ ☐ I am interested to meet Palestinians / Israelis 8. What are your reasons NOT to participate? ☐ I am afraid of the police ☐ I am afraid of being injured ☐ Because of social pressure ☐ I don't care ☐ I am afraid of repercussions ☐ Other _____
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Figure 3: Survey Questionnaire

3.4 Qualitative method: small-n focus groups

3.4.1 Participants and Sampling methods

The participants of the focus group discussions were international students. Looking at the sample characteristics, a diversity of gender and ethnicity is given. About 70% of the participants were female and the nationalities of the students of which the majority studies in Norway include Great Britain, Germany, France, the Netherlands and Norway. The age of the participants shows a range from 20 to 23 years.

The two focus group discussions were conducted in June 2019. After having listened to the stories of a personal story telling event and being given the opportunity to ask questions and

discuss the topic in a Q&A session, the group of mixed international students was split into two groups consisting of 6 people each and then held discussions of about 25 minutes.

3.4.2 Instruments and Data collection

The advantages of adding a focus group discussion to the research methods is the opportunity of having a closer look at participants' attitudes, perceptions and beliefs and their response to the personal story telling event. Within the small groups, a discussion during which every participant had enough time to contribute freely and openly their statements without being limited due to a high amount of other participants was facilitated. The setting of such a focus group discussion asks for elements such as a shared experience of the participants as well as a non-threatening environment so that all members feel free to discuss unhindered. Both groups held their discussions in the same building in separate rooms after having participated in the same personal story telling event. The moderators assured that the participants of the two groups couldn't see nor hear each other in order to ensure a comfortable discussion setting in which everybody could feel free to speak openly.

The moderators of these discussions were the speakers of the personal story telling event who earlier shared their stories with the participants. While the Israeli member of the NGO "Combatants for Peace" was leading one focus group discussion, the Palestinian member was managing the other one. Both moderators were following a set of questions in order to guide the participants, asking them about aspects such as to reflect on their participation in the personal story telling project, their motivation to take part in other non-violent peace activities, their views on the probability of peace for the conflict or whether they would take an active role in solving the conflict (*Figure 4*).

The questions fully serve the purpose of the 3-steps research focus model (*Figure 2*). As a first step, the potential function of personal story telling as a peace educational approach to raise awareness and sensitize was mainly addressed by the "*questions addressing emotions*". As a second step, the transformative aspect of personal story telling as a peace educational approach was linked not only to the "*introductory questions directed towards experience with personal story telling as a peace educational approach and experience with people involved in the conflict*", but also to "*questions addressing emotions*" and "*questions addressing attitudes*". In order to explore a transformative aspect of the perceptions and attitudes of the participants, questions addressing different areas were asked in order to provide a broad spectrum of answers

in which a transformative aspect is looked for. While through the introductory questions a possible reflection of participants on earlier attitudes might be detected, the “*questions addressing emotions*” and “*questions addressing attitudes*” can further add to the spectrum of answers aiming to detect a transformation in the form of either an expressed change of emotions, a changed evaluative judgement or a content-related change of attitude towards the conflict, based on the sociopsychological theories regarding the definition and transformation of attitudes (Pickens 2005, Salomon 2004). As a third step, with the “*questions addressing motivation for non-violent activism*” the potential of learning, the eventuality of a repercussion effect and the motivation to take action is researched.

Both moderators were jointly conducting the focus group discussions, making field notes and audiotaping the sessions. The transcribed versions of the focus group discussions can be found in the Appendix A (*Transcripts Focus Groups*). It shall be emphasized that the categorization of the questions as shown in *Figure 4* shouldn’t be considered as mutually exclusive, as there might be overlaps between them in the analysis of participants’ statements. Thus, the steps of the 3-steps research model are rather interwoven in the set of questions for the focus group discussions.

Focus Groups Questions

Introductory questions directed towards experience with personal story telling as a peace educational approach and experience with people involved in the conflict	Focus group 1 ● Was it the first time for you to hear such stories? ● Have you met Palestinians or Israelis before? ○ If yes, how was this experience? ○ If not, do you think it is important to sit with them and hear them?
Questions addressing emotions	● How was it for you to hear the stories of the speakers? ● What were your feelings when you decided/heard that you were attending?
Questions addressing attitudes	● Why did you decide to participate in the house meeting? ● Do you believe it is possible to solve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the nearby future?
Questions addressing motivation for non-violent activism	● Would you be interested to hear more about this kind of stories? ● Do you see yourself talking an active role in solving the conflict? ● Would you be open to participate at binational non-violent activities to promote peace between Palestinians and Israelis? ○ If yes, why? ○ If not, why not?
Introductory question directed towards experience with personal story telling as a peace educational approach	Focus group 2 ● Was it the first time for you to hear such stories?
Questions addressing emotions	● How was it for you to hear the stories of the speakers? ● What were your feelings when you decided/heard that you were attending?
Questions addressing motivation for non-violent activism	● Do you see yourself talking an active role in solving the conflict? Does the meeting from today give you some inspiration to do so? ○ If yes, how? ○ If no, why?

Figure 4: Focus Group Discussions Questions

4. Results

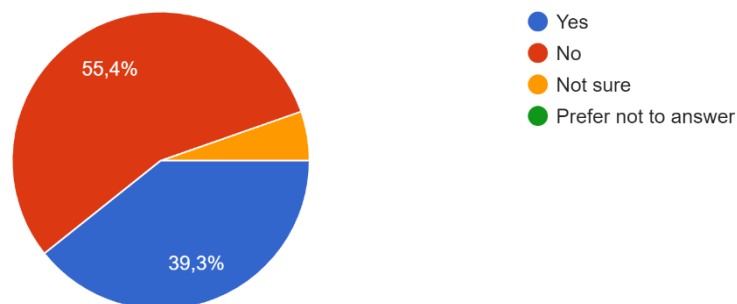
The aspects of interest as discussed in the 3-steps research focus model will serve as the guideline for analysis. As a first step, the survey results will be given an overview. As a second step, the focus group discussions will be explored. The statements of the focus group discussions were categorized into four categories: whereas the first three categories form equivalents to the three categories of the 3-steps Research Focus Model, the fourth one comprises other interesting results and findings. Finally, discrepancies will be discussed.

4.1 Survey

The survey results serve to give a first overview of the impact of personal story telling as a peace educational approach on participants.

The answers to the introductory question reveal that the majority of participants is new to this approach, as 55.4% of the participants haven't participated in similar meetings in the past (*Figure 5*).

Figure 5: Question 1. «Have you participated in similar meetings in the past?»



When analyzing participants' attitudes towards the conflict, the answers to the *question 3* (*Figure 7*), *question 4* (*Figure 8*) and *question 5* (*Figure 9*) shall serve as reference points. Whereas *question 3* directly asks for an opinion towards the possibility of solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the future, *question 4* rather addresses emotions related to the same matter. Both figures reveal the mixed feelings of participants: While the majority of 30.4% of participants disagrees that it is possible to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the nearby future, 28.6% of participants are neutral towards this question and 21.4% agree. Looking at the adjectives participants could either mention themselves or choose from an offered selection in

the questionnaire, most participants feel *hopeful* (42.9%), whereas 37.5% mention to be *frustrated* when it comes to describing their feelings towards finding a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Further, 19.6% of the participants feel *motivated*, while 12.5% express to be *tired* and 10.7% *committed*. Participants could choose more than one answer for this question.

Figure 6: Question 3. "Do you believe it is possible to solve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the nearby future?"

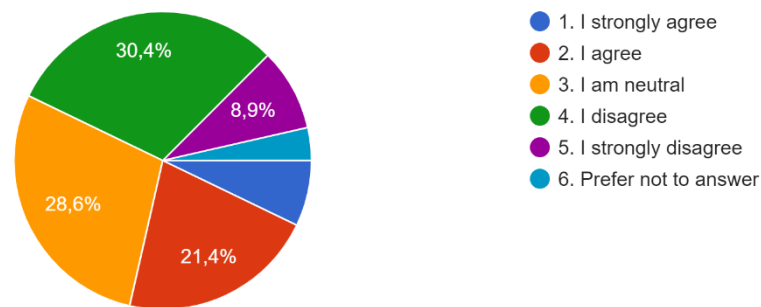
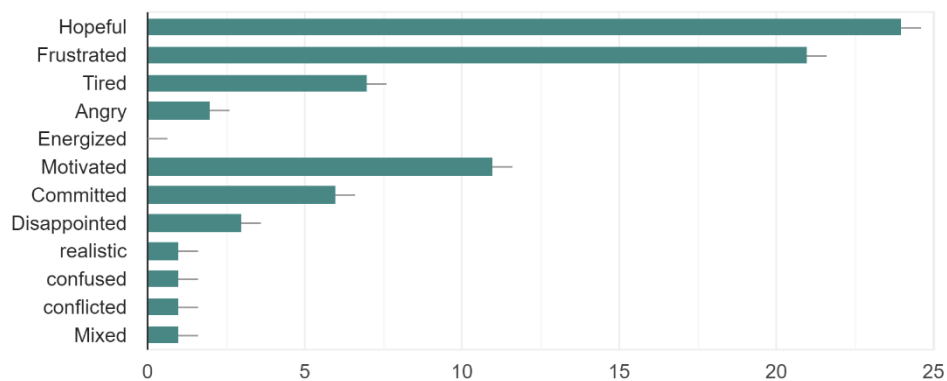
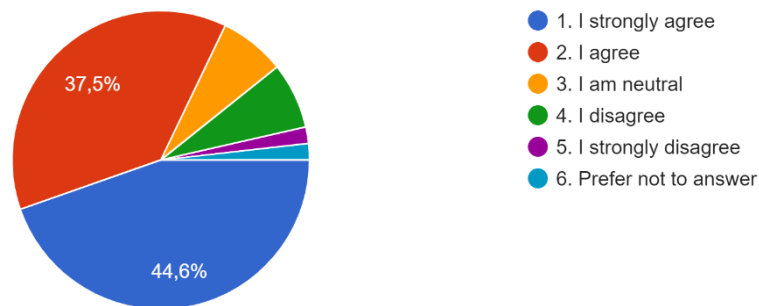


Figure 7: Question 4. "I feel _____ about finding a solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict"



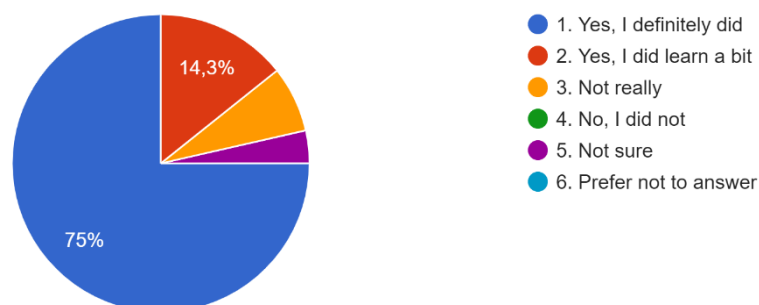
The results of *question 5* (Figure 9), which addresses the attitude of participants whether they believe that they can help in an active way to solve or even end the conflict, demonstrate a strong optimism amongst the majority of the participants, as 44.6% strongly agree and 27.5% agree on this matter. Only a few participants opinionate that they disagree with being able to help solving or ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict themselves.

Figure 8: Question 5. "Do you believe that ordinary people like you and me can help in an active way to solve/end the conflict?"



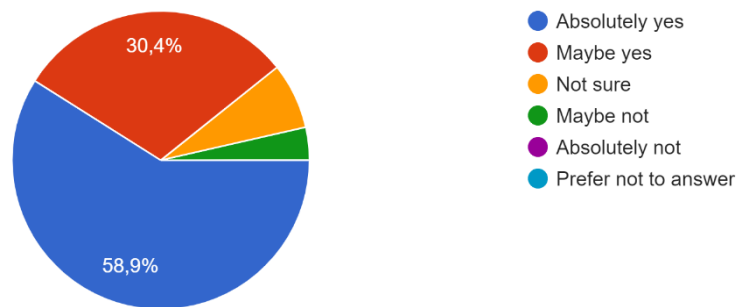
When analyzing the results for the third step of the 3-steps research model, the answers to the question addressing the learning effect of the personal story telling meeting reveal (*Question 2*), that a clear majority of 75% of the participants state that they definitely learned something during the personal story telling meeting while 14.3% learned a bit (*Figure 6*).

Figure 9: Question 2. "Do you feel that you learnt something new during this meeting?"



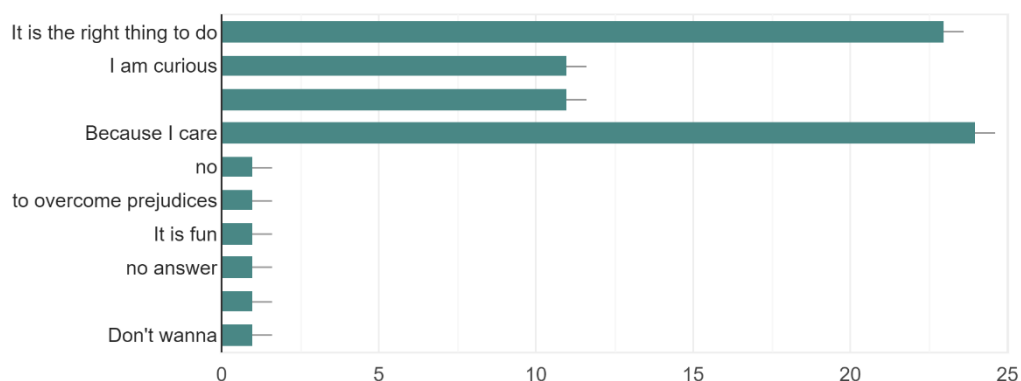
The analysis of the results of the questions addressing participants' motivation for activism have shown a clear positive attitude towards the participation in binational non-violent activities to promote peace between Palestinians and Israelis (*Figure 10*). 58.9% of the participants stated *absolutely yes* when answering the question whether they would be open to participate. 30.4% indicated *maybe yes* (*Question 6*).

Figure 10: Question 6. “Would you be open to participate at binational non-violent activities to promote peace between Palestinians and Israelis?”



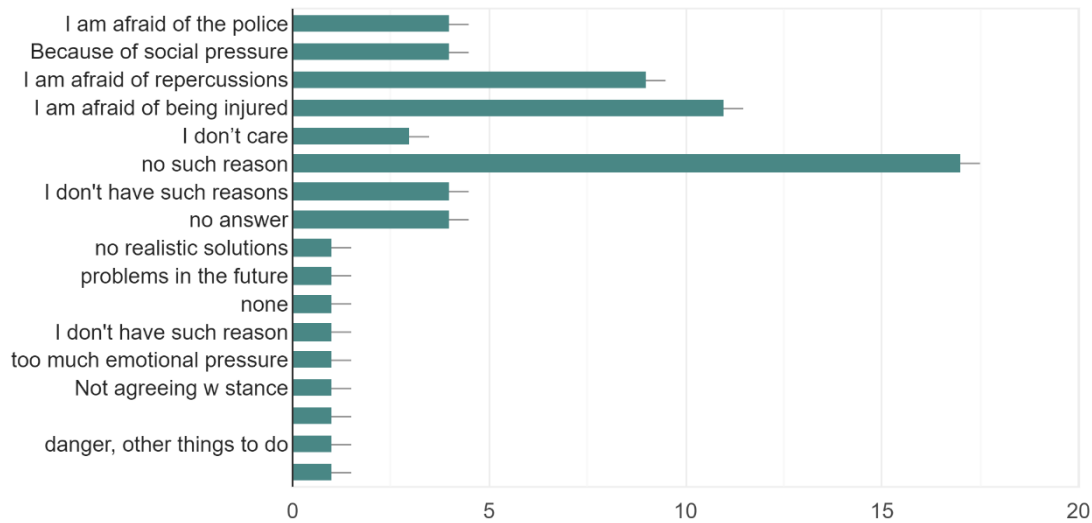
When being asked about their motives to participate in such activities (Question 7), participants’ answers reached from *Because I care* (42.9%), *It is the right thing to do* (41.1%) *I am curious* (19.6%) to *I am interested in meeting Israelis/Palestinians* (19.6%) (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Question 7. “What are your reasons to participate?”



Identified as reasons not to participate were participants’ answers such as *I am afraid of being injured* (19.6%), *I am afraid of repercussions* (16.1%), *I am afraid of the police* (7.1%) or *I am afraid of social pressure* (7.1%) (Question 8). However, the majority of participants claimed to have *no such reason* (30.4%) (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Question 8. "What are your reasons NOT to participate?"



4.2 Focus Groups

In the following chapters the focus groups will be named focus group 1 and focus group 2 for clarification. The focus group discussions took place simultaneously.

When conducting a between-group comparison it can be said that the moderator in focus group 1 provided more guidance and asked more questions than the moderator in focus group 2. Whereas in focus group 1, as a consequence of the moderator's amount and frequency of questions, a broader range of information amongst participants' answers was found, the more open discussion of focus group 2 led to the participants being more pro-active and more freely discussing with each other, which provided for interesting results, too.

4.2.1 Function of raising awareness and Sensitization

When analyzing the statements made by the participants in both focus group discussions, the questions whether personal story telling as a peace educational approach affects attitudes and perceptions of the participants can be answered positively. Having focused on expressed emotional components in the analysis of the first step of the 3-steps research model aiming at exploring a possible function of raising awareness and sensitization, the results have provided for a big variety of expressed feelings, which proves that their participation had an impact on

participants. The question how it felt for the participants to hear such stories, the answers reached from *moving*, *exciting*, *motivating*, *interesting*, *valuable*, *informative* to *intense*, *frustrating* and *overwhelming*.

The personal story telling event was described intense, as one participant states: *“I think I have heard of stories before or read about it in the media and seen it in the media, but never directly from someone and I thought that it was a bit more (...) intense than I had realized before.”* Many participants mentioned that after having listened to these stories they also feel frustrated: *“I also felt maybe a bit frustrated, that we didn’t know lot from before, because of all the things we learn in school we expect that we learn the right things, (...), but we don’t really know, so I felt like, why haven’t we known this before.”* Other comments might also lead to the assumption of participants feeling frustrated: *“I feel like this conflict is so huge and the history is so long and there are of course two sides to every story and all that but like the size of it makes it so..., a lot of people, I think, just don’t have the energy to learn about it. And I know some now, but I still don’t know half of everything.”*

Comparing the frequency of how the above mentioned adjectives were used to describe their feelings, participants used *moving* just as many times as *frustrating*, followed by *motivating* as the second most often used term. It seems like most participants were sensitized by the event, as many mentioned they realized that on the one hand, there are two different narratives within the conflict and on the other hand, participants claimed they didn’t know much of the conflict before and the personal story telling event revealed their lack of knowledge. More statements to these assumptions will follow in chapters 4.2.2 *Transformative aspect* as well as 4.2.3 *Potential of Learning and Repercussion effect*. In conclusion, there seems to be an overreaching majority of the participants who were emotionally affected by the personal story telling event and awareness about the complex history and the conflict narratives seemed to be increased. Participants realized that there are two sides to the story of the conflict and that there is much more to learn. This realization was found in the statements of the majority of participants and has resulted in constructing an outstanding scheme in both focus group discussions.

Finally, it seems important to mention that the above discussed results didn’t apply to one participant of Focus group 2, who didn’t seem to be affected by the personal story telling event at all and represented a rather critical view of the peace educational approach. *“My kind of issue is that like I think this is a really good initiative and I think this is (...) something that is really important to do, I just kind of struggle to see how to use it to make a difference. Because I think like what you have going is really good, really important, but then you have to find a way to*

actually apply that to the conflict to actually make a difference with it.” While mentioning that there are more important forces which dominate the conflict, in particular economic forces such as money, the participant also emphasized the importance of change coming from Israel’s initiative, being the stronger party of the conflict. “I think the key to the solution is kind of the Israel aspect to it because obviously they are the ones with all the power, they are the ones with the support, and most importantly they are the ones with all the money, and (...), in essence, (...) conflicts they are all about money, and this is the key to most things really...”. To conclude, the participant seemed to like the idea of personal story telling as a peace educational approach, but didn’t see any efficacy, nor any use in it. “...That’s my kind of issue, how to use this. Because I think it is really good what you put together but the key is to kind of find a way to actually make a difference there. We can’t all go to Israel and Palestine to experience this ourselves. Like there must be a solution to it and then I don’t really see how you could make everyone experience it in the same way. I don’t know if the solution is have everyone come to a meeting like this and listen to the story. I don’t know if that’s the solution or if this is even feasible...”

4.2.2 Transformative aspect

When analyzing the transformative aspect of personal story telling, this research looked as a second step into whether any transformation of attitudes or perceptions can be detected amongst participants. Further, it was researched what such a transformation entails.

Based on the sociopsychological part of the theoretical framework discussing the transformation of attitudes, a change can take place through direct experiences with people and situations by addressing cognitive and emotional components, providing new information and open communication or through learning and modeling others (Pickens 2005, Salomon 2004). By taking part in a personal story telling event, a direct experience with people involved in the conflict is given, followed by the focus group discussion providing a setting for open communication. As attitudes are defined as either feelings or an evaluative judgement towards a subject, this research explored whether a transformation of feelings or judgements of the participants towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could be detected.

While in chapter 4.2.1 *Function of raising awareness and sensitization* it was already discussed that participants were affected emotionally, a change of attitudes in the light of changed

emotions could be detected, as participants stated to feel more confident and motivated towards taking an active stand regarding the conflict after having taken part in the project.

«We learned a lot about the conflict at school or at least we heard something before and it is (...) of course a very internationally known conflict but before I haven't really felt like I knew enough to really (...), I just felt uneducated and I didn't really know enough, but now I am really motivated to get to know locals and to hear their stories and to hear your stories was very, (...), I [felt] really like motivated to hear about it.»

“I think personally I have always wanted to, or we have always heard of the conflict but I have never really been educated about it maybe so I have been maybe scared to (...) cause I really believe that's solving problems it's about awareness, that the general community knows what's going on. We work together as big groups of people to create a change and I want to voice, or use my voice to spread awareness but maybe I have been scared to because I don't know all of the different details about the conflict but I think this conversation we've had with you and this project in general helps us to understand and then we can use our voice to promote and share with people the experiences we have heard from you and the experiences we have had ourselves as well so that's where I want to take maybe a more active stand.”

These statements also reveal a learning and a repercussion effect as well as increased motivation to learn more about the conflict and take action, all of which will be further discussed in chapter 4.2.3 *Potential of Learning and Repercussion effect*. A transformative aspect of an expressed attitude of increased awareness among the participants was found. Participants stated, that they underwent a transformation of attitudes when it comes to realizing the intractability and complex history of the conflict. Before taking part in the personal story telling project, participants weren't aware of the conflicting narratives nor of the conflict's intractability, but after having heard the stories, they changed their attitude towards that matter and now evaluate the conflict in a different way. Hence, this aspect is not only closely linked to the first step of the 3-steps research model, which aimed at exploring the potential of personal story telling of raising awareness and sensitize people, but also to the third step in the light of a learning effect and increased motivation to take action.

Whatsoever, it seems uncertain whether one can go so far as to state that the participants experienced an actual change of content-related perceptions or attitudes towards the conflict, as none of the participants expressed a content-related attitude in the first place. It is argued that participants changed their perceptions in so far as to evaluate the conflict as more intractable as they did before, which goes hand in hand with their realization that there are two conflict

narratives playing an essential role and that there is much more to learn about the conflict than they knew until that point. Whether participants had a certain content-related attitude towards the conflict before the personal story telling event, which changed afterwards due to their participation in the event, cannot be indicated. None of the statements made by the participants could lead to such an assumption.

4.2.3 Potential of Learning and Repercussion effect

The learning effect already briefly touched upon in chapter 4.2.2 *Transformative aspect* forms an integral part of the analysis of the third step of the 3-steps research model of the potential of a learning and repercussion effect. Whereas the first question whether participants take away a learning experience through their participation in the personal story telling project could already be confirmed, it shall now be discussed what the learning experience of the participants entailed. The analysis of the focus group statements has shown, that the majority of the participants welcomed personal story telling as a different form of learning.

While one participant made a comparison with reading books, (*“It’s really interesting to hear you talking, it’s not the same thing to be reading books in school, but to meet you and listen to your stories that’s very interesting”*), others liked the personal touch (*“It got a personal touch. It hit more than reading it in the news or watch a documentary”, “I also think it’s really important to sit down and meet with people directly because that’s when you see their facial expressions, and their feelings and their emotions and how the people are affected and I think that’s really important”, “... they need to see it, and feel it in order to change”*). In addition, one participant claimed that this way of learning facilitates participants’ understanding of the conflict and supports the learning process: *“I think it’s very... interesting to hear such personal stories because it makes it so much easier to understand and I think it’s really important that you tell it that way. It makes it easier for people to try to take down and understand what it’s like (...)”*.

The discussed statements of the focus group discussions show, how participants describe their learning effect, whereby it seems important to note that the pre-knowledge about the conflict varied among the participants. However, despite this difference in pre-knowledge, the majority of the participants seemed to carry a learning effect from the personal story telling event, which only adds to the strength of the argument, as even participants with already existing pre-

knowledge could gain new insights through their participation in the personal story telling event.

Further, a repercussion effect could be detected in the statements of most participants. Answering the question whether they would like to hear more such stories, one participant answered *“Yes, and I also feel like really motivated to tell people back home, my friends, [other participants approving] my family and call them tonight and tell them hey we had this meeting today and that was so very ... and tell the people about it (...) like spread the word.”* This statement reveals the potential of a repercussion effect: participants hear the stories in the personal story telling event and are affected enough in order to feel a need to share these stories with their social environment. Thus, through this way the personal story telling approach can reach a wider spectrum of people without them taking part in such an event themselves. Other participants of the focus group discussions mentioned they would also *“Spread the word to friends and family”* or *“...make other students recognize like what’s going on here. Well this meeting has motivated me to like (...) make the project growing in Norway.”*

Regarding the effect of personal story telling as a peace educational approach on the will and motivation of the participants to take action, an overreaching agreement to act was found in both focus groups. After having been asked whether they would be open to participate in non-violent activities, participants approved with statements such as *“Definitely yes. Or (...) activities (...) for us, that would be in our country, and I would absolutely do that when I come back home”* and *“I know I can’t do that much now but it is definitely a goal to come back and maybe help”* Participants came up with different ideas on how to take action once they are back in their home countries. While one participant thought of voting as an option (*“I was thinking about voting. That is also activism in a way and I hope that we all will vote and when we vote, while informed about this issue, then we will probably vote for a party or a person that is pro a solution, then that might make international pressure on Israel to end this conflict”*), others agreed on a combination of raising awareness and putting pressure on their governments to be an effective way for non-violent activism (*“(…) I think if people knew about it and how it affects the people here they would put pressure on the government. But people don’t know”, “ I do think our best hope is to raise awareness and put pressure on the government (...)”, “I think there’s two different ways you can approach it. In the international community with raising awareness and putting pressure on the government and for example (...) supporting countries that accept Palestine as a state and raise (...) awareness like this what we are doing helps that and watching documentaries and putting it out there I think that will put more pressure on the international community. But then there is the second approach which maybe you guys are*

more directly into doing with the Israelis and having conversations with the youth and asking the questions (...) You have to approach it both from the outside and inside if that makes sense’’).

In conclusion, the third step of the 3-steps research model has brought overreaching significant findings. Not only can a learning effect be confirmed, but also the potential of personal story telling triggering a repercussion effect which might lead to this approach reaching more people than just the participants. Further, strong motivation amongst the majority of the participants towards taking action could be detected.

4.2.4 Other findings

Besides the initially planned three categories that were aimed to be researched, some other interesting findings shall be highlighted.

Firstly, the introductory questions asking the participants whether they had heard similar stories before proved to confirm that all the participants of both focus groups were new to personal story telling as a peace educational approach.

Secondly, it was interesting to see that several participants seemed surprised to be given both sides of the conflict. Statements such as *“But I was really positively surprised that we got to hear both sides of the story”*, *“I thought that it was a bit more (...) intense than I had realized before, but also very very informative and interesting to hear and to hear both sides of the stories as well. That was really good”* or *“(…) and I really like that we got both sides and that you didn’t agree on everything [the speakers]. That was also interesting”* led to the assumption that participants had different expectations or maybe unconsciously haven’t experienced the conflict in a symmetrical way before.

Thirdly, the lack of knowledge about the conflict proved to be an overreaching element in both focus groups. While some participants directly mention they haven’t been educated enough about the conflict (*“I think personally I have always wanted to, or we have always heard of the conflict but I have never really been educated about it (...)”*) or the fact that binational non-governmental organizations aiming at achieving peace between the two parties such as “Combatants for Peace” exist (*“I was quite amazed that such an organization exists, I didn’t know that. And I was quite interested (...) in hearing more about it. I didn’t know how it came to be to what you were doing”*), others differentiate between people being educated about the history, but not being aware about the personal stories of the people involved (*“I think a lot of*

people know this happened and this happened, but I think they don't understand like how it's affecting people and why people are doing what they're doing. It was very interesting for me to hear you say like why, how the local Israeli people think about the situation. And I will definitely try to raise awareness about that. Because I think that is something most people don't know. Like, really know how it's affecting people. On both sides."). What seems important to mention is, that some participants built an interesting bridge between education and activism, emphasizing that only after hearing such stories and being educated about the conflict, the participants would dare to have an opinion on it and use it to spread awareness (*"I feel like it is sometimes that you're scared you're not educated enough, but also sometimes it maybe sounds wrong to say that but you're scared to voice an opinion on something that's not yours, it's not my conflict you know, so maybe I shouldn't have an opinion about it because people who actually are here and experience it have a stronger opinion that's opposite or opposite of mine, so I think that's maybe what has been hindering us to voice our opinions earlier. But now that we're here, we can at least share our side of it to the rest of the people (...). I think that now that we (...) are more educated and have these experiences, we can do more of it", "I want to voice, or use my voice to spread awareness but maybe I have been scared to because I don't know all of the different details about the conflict"*).

Lastly, another overreaching element found in both focus groups was the uncertainty about how to help or take action in the home countries of the participants. While all participants expressed to be willing to participate in non-violent activism and some suggested concrete ideas how to do so, there was also some uncertainty amongst participants. Answering to the question whether they would see themselves taking an active role in solving the conflict, participants' answers reached from *"Yes I guess, but I am not sure how, being in Norway. So (...) I think this motivated me to find out more and to try to take some more initiative"* to the one outstanding participant who was being very critical to the whole personal story telling approach, as already discussed in chapter 4.2.1 *Function of raising awareness and sensitization*, because he doesn't know how to use it nor does he think it's a feasible way to solve the conflict.

4.2.5 Discrepancies

The between-group analysis has led to a few discrepancies which shall be highlighted in this chapter.

Firstly, the domination of female speakers was outstanding, particularly in focus group 1. Thus, the percentage of female participants of around 70% might have had an influence on the high female and relatively low male participation in focus group 1.

Secondly, not all the participants participated equally, regardless of their gender. Therefore, there was no complete documentation of all the participants' voices, as one participant in focus group 1 barely contributed to the discussion. This might be traced back to the participant not wanting to "reveal having a different opinion, attitude, experience, level of knowledge, or the like" being "too shy to speak about this issue", "relatively less articulate" or having a "tendency to acquiesce to the majority viewpoint" (Wilkinson 1998).

Thirdly, it seems to be impossible to avoid a bias between the two focus groups regarding statements eventually being made arguing in favor of either side of the conflict. As the moderators have been in focus group 1 the Palestinian speaker of the personal story telling event and in focus group 2 the Israeli speaker, one statement of a participant led to the assumption that participants might have argued in favor of the side of the conflict their moderator originated from: *"I think that usually people always talk about the Palestinian side. Brainwashing is happening"* [Participant's statement made in Focus Group with Israeli moderator]. However, this was only one statement of two focus group discussions, but nevertheless it still shows the difficulty of this intractable conflict with its strong narratives, where third-parties might easily tend to align with one side in order to facilitate their understanding.

Lastly, the problem of implicit attitude changes seems to be unavoidable in a research analyzing attitudes. Thus, there might have been a discrepancy between what was verbalized and what was being thought by the participants, of which we don't know (Alhabash and Wise 2012).

5. Discussion

While analyzing the results in the light of the 3-steps research focus model it became evident, that the three categories established in the model merged and couldn't be considered mutually exclusive. Nevertheless, significant findings could be explored in all categories. When looking at the results of the first step of the function of raising awareness and sensitization, the focus group discussion analysis revealed, that participants were indeed emotionally affected by the personal story telling event. In particular, mixed feelings towards the conflict were stated. Participants described their feelings after hearing the stories of the individuals involved in the conflict as *moving* just as many times as *frustrating*, *motivating* following right after, while others mentioned adjectives such as *exciting*, *overwhelming*, *valuable*, *informative*. Thus, a picture of mixed feelings among the majority of participants is given. Further, the participants of the focus group discussions also proved to be sensitized and more aware: on the one hand, they realized that there are two different conflict narratives building an essential part of this conflict after having been presented both sides equally. On the other hand, the participants seemed to be more aware of the size and complex history of the conflict, as most participants recognized that there is much more to learn. Whatsoever, one participant proved to be unaffected, as he was rather negative about the efficiency of the personal story telling approach and the feasibility of using it. The increased awareness and sensitization is directly linked to the second step of the research focus model.

As a second step, the transformative aspect of peace education was researched. When looking at the results of the large-n survey, a third of all participants disagreed when being asked about their attitude whether they think it is possible to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the near future, while another third stated to be neutral towards that matter and another similar percentage expressed to be optimistic. As participants were further asked to choose adjectives to describe their feelings towards that question of solving the conflict in the near future, *hopeful* was chosen the most often, closely followed by *frustrated*, whereas *motivated* counted many votes as well, accompanied by *tired* and *committed*. Thus, a picture of mixed feelings amongst the participants towards finding a solution for the conflict can further be confirmed. When looking at the results of the focus group discussions, a transformation of participants' attitudes could be detected. On the one hand, participants stated to have changed feelings towards the conflict, as they felt more confident in expressing their opinion about it and more motivated to take an active stand. On the other hand, participants evaluated the conflict as more intractable after having taken part in the event.

They expressed to be more aware about the significance of the two conflict narratives as well as the complexity of the conflict's history. Further, most participants were more aware that they had a lack of knowledge before taking part in the event. Therefore, it seems that the sociopsychological theories claiming that attitudes can be changed by providing new information and through direct experiences with people and situations can be confirmed in this case (Pickens 2005). However, a content-related transformation of attitudes towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict couldn't be detected. It could be assumed that as many participants stated they didn't have much knowledge about the conflict, they also didn't have a solid attitude towards the conflict before participating in the meeting.

When looking at the results of the third step of the 3-steps research model, not only a learning effect of personal story telling could further be confirmed and a repercussion effect detected, but also an overreaching strong motivation among participants to take action. The results of the survey revealed that while a clear majority of 75% of the participants stated that they definitely learned something during the personal story telling meeting and 14.3% learned a bit, over 80% of the participants believe they can help in an active way to solve or end the conflict themselves. 58.9% of the participants stated they would be open to participate, followed by 30.4% indicating they might join, too. The analysis of the focus group discussions further adds to the significance of these results, as the majority of the participants stated they would like to take action in their home countries after having heard the stories in the personal story telling event. Regarding the learning effect, the results of the focus group discussions can not only be underlined by the increased awareness and sensitization discussed within the first and the second step of the 3-steps research model, but also by participants' positive attitudes towards personal story telling as a welcomed, facilitating form of learning. Further, a repercussion effect was found, as many participants deeply expressed their will to *spread the word* in order to raise awareness when returning to their home countries as well as their need to share the stories with their social environment. However, while discussing about ideas on how to take action in their home countries, uncertainty amongst a few participants was detected. This could construct a problem, as although the participants expressed that they learnt a lot during the meeting and that they are determined to spread the word and take action in their home countries, they seemed overwhelmed with how to do so and how to use the newly acquired knowledge. Thus, the repercussion effect might not be equally significant among all participants.

Other findings which were discovered during the focus group discussions included a surprised attitude among participants towards being presented both sides of the conflict, an overreaching lack of pre-knowledge about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as well as the already discussed

uncertainty amongst participants about how to use their newly acquired knowledge in order to take action in their home countries. The surprised attitudes among participants about hearing both sides of the conflict leads to the assumption that participants had so far heard about the conflict in an asymmetrical way. This might be explained through an asymmetrical and framed media coverage or education in the various home countries of the participants. Media can play an essential role in affecting the public's perception and opinion of foreign conflicts. According to Evans (2010), "the type of framing employed determines whether the public will empathize with one of the sides involved or feel detached from events taking place far from them". When analyzing the education about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict within the international community, it could be assumed that on the one hand this conflict might not form an integral part of the educational systems of the various European countries the participants originate from (The Guardian 2017). On the other hand, the conflict might not be taught in a symmetrical way, which would include teaching the different ideological perspectives and narratives, as Walls (2010) has found in his study examining the framing of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Swedish history school textbooks. Finally, the uncertainty of some participants regarding how to take action in their home countries might be traced back on the one hand to the lack of pre-knowledge about the conflict. On the other hand, participants might have simply been overwhelmed with the amount of new information and the difficulty of understanding the complex history and the conflicting narratives of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Education builds an important basis for participants to build confidence and form an opinion about the conflict in order to take further action and organize non-violent activities in their home countries. Nevertheless, increased awareness and sensitization was found among the majority of participants, which already forms a significant pre-condition for further steps of education or activism.

Some of the findings of this research, which showed an overreaching significance among both methods of research and therefore among a broad spectrum of participants shall be pointed out. Firstly, the mixed feelings amongst participants after having taken part in the personal story telling were found not only in the results of the questionnaire, but also in the focus group discussions. Whereas 42.9% of the participants stated to be *hopeful* towards finding a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, 37.5% mention to be *frustrated*. This can be underlined by the participants of the focus groups mentioning to feel both *motivated* and *frustrated* at the same time. These mixed feelings might result out of a feeling of being overwhelmed after having been confronted with the personal stories of people directly involved in the conflict, in particular, the two conflicting collective narratives. Thus, these emotional components amongst

the participants might be linked to the intractability of the conflict, as they might be overwhelmed with coping with the newly acquired knowledge.

Another element which proved to be equally significant in the findings of both methods was the overreaching learning effect, which participants could take from the personal story telling event. Whereas over 90% of participants answered in the survey questions that they learnt something during the meeting, the answers of the focus group discussions provided for a more detailed feedback. Personal story telling was claimed to be a welcomed different form of learning, comprising a personal touch and facilitating the understanding of such a complicated intractable conflict. Thus, this peace educational approach might present a form of learning with a big potential in the domain of education, as it might form a popular tool to educate people about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with its complexity of two conflicting collective narratives.

Lastly, the motivation to take non-violent action was found to be an overreaching result of both the large-n survey and the focus group discussions as well. Over 80% of the participants of the survey answered to be open to participate at binational non-violent activities to promote peace, while most participants claimed to do so because *they care* and *it is the right thing to do*, having *no such reason* not to participate. The focus group discussions provided for more detailed findings when it comes to motivation for non-violent activities. Thus, considering this high amount of international students willing to spread awareness and take an active stand towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in their home countries, much more people within the international community could be sensitized towards the conflict with its two narratives than just the participants of the personal story telling event. At best, with an increased knowledge about the conflict and the awareness about the two different conflict narratives, the binational peace movement could include international actors pushing a peace process aiming at considering both sides' needs equally.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this research was to analyze the role of personal story telling as a peace educational approach in affecting and transforming attitudes and perceptions of individuals towards an intractable conflict. International students served as the target group, whereby it was researched, whether their participation in a personal story telling event affected and transformed their attitudes and perceptions towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Despite the conflict's wide international outreach, there is a research gap when it comes to international individuals' attitudes and perceptions towards it, which this research aimed to fill. The research was conducted within the theoretical framework of a four-fold sequential model consisting of conflict narratives, sociopsychological theory of attitudes and perceptions, conflict transformation theory and peace education. These 4 components combined addressed the issue with a collectively exhausted approach, as they covered the subject in its entirety. Further, each of these components was to be seen mutually exclusive, as there is no direct implication between them. In cooperation with the Israeli-Palestinian NGO "Combatants for Peace", a mixed methodological approach of a large-n survey and small-n focus group discussions was applied in order to guarantee a broad range of data. Whereas the survey helped identifying patterns and basic attitudes of participants and measured the effect of personal story telling on a broad spectrum, the focus group discussions served to examine a small number of cases in depth in order to dig deeper into measuring the effect of personal story telling on attitudes and perceptions of the participants towards the conflict. The 3-steps research model provided the focus of analysis of this research: As a first step, it was analyzed whether participants are affected by the personal story telling approach, which was aimed at exploring a potential function of raising awareness and sensitization and measured by expressed emotional components. As a second step, a transformation of attitudes was researched, operationalized by an expressed change of emotions, a changed evaluative judgment or a content-related change of attitude towards the conflict. As a third step, the potential of personal story telling of a learning effect, eventuality of a repercussion effect as well as motivation to take action was explored.

The findings of the mixed methodological approach of analyzing the role of personal story telling as a peace educational approach provided for significant results. Firstly, it can be argued that within the framework of this research, personal story telling as a peace educational approach indeed had an impact on participants. While many participants expressed to be moved by the stories they heard during the event, particularly mixed feelings were found amongst the

majority of the participants. The fact that participants not only felt motivated after hearing the stories of the speakers, but also at the same time frustrated, reveals the intractability of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with its complicated history and complexity of two conflicting narratives. Personal story telling as a peace educational approach further proved to transform participants' attitudes, as participants expressed to feel more confident in voicing an opinion about the conflict and more motivated to take an active stand. Further, they evaluated the conflict as more intractable as before having taken part in the personal story telling event. Not only could a learning effect be found, but also a meaningful repercussion effect. Participants welcomed personal story telling as a different form of learning including a personal touch, which led to a better understanding of the complicated intractable conflict amongst the majority of the international participants. Further, participants were motivated to raise awareness back in their home countries, share the stories heard during the event with friends and family and take further action. This results in the potential of personal story telling of reaching a broad spectrum of people besides the participants taking part in the project. Whatsoever, a content-related change of attitudes couldn't be detected amongst the participants.

To conclude, personal story telling as a peace educational approach was not only found to be a suitable concept in order to raise awareness amongst the international participants regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its intractability, but also to serve as a facilitating tool to educate participants about the conflict with its complexity of two conflicting narratives. While affecting people on an emotional level, personal story telling has the potential to not only have an impact on the participants, but to motivate them to share the newly acquired knowledge with their social environment and thus reaching a broad spectrum of people. Hence, when considering the target group of international students, awareness amongst the international community towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could be increased and the probability of a peace process including international actors being sensitized of the two different narratives and aiming at considering both parties' interests equally advanced.

7. Limitations

The operationalization of attitudes proved to pose a challenge, as this research only measured data as a post-event analysis. Thus, the probability of exploring a transformation of attitudes was challenged, as the focus lied on participants' statements regarding an expressed change of attitudes after having participated in the personal story telling project. For future research purposes, it is recommended to aim at applying a pre- and post-event operationalization in order to provide for a higher possibility to explore attitude changes.

Further, the use of the questionnaire when it comes to analyzing attitudes proved to cause limitations. The questionnaire used for this research was not suitable to measure the first two steps of the established 3-steps research model. Not only could it not serve to explore whether participants were affected by the personal story telling event on an emotional level, it also didn't allow to detect any transformative aspect of participants' attitudes. Thus, the questionnaire rather provided for a broad overview of the impact of personal story telling as a peace educational approach on participants' attitudes.

Finally, the questionnaire contained a margin of error of 13.3% with a sample size of 56 international students having participated, which is recommended to be decreased for future research purposes.¹

¹ $\frac{1}{\sqrt{56}} = 0.13363062 = 13.3 \%$

8. Prospects

Through this research a more human centered approach of the peace movement of the non-governmental binational organization “Combatants for Peace” for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was analyzed. Having conducted this research with the target group of international students, significant results regarding the role of personal story telling as a peace educational approach have been found. Implementing the same project and conducting the same research for the target group of Israeli students could present a big opportunity in order to examine the effect of personal story telling on individuals who are involved in this intractable conflict themselves.

A similar mixed methods approach of a large-n survey and a small-n focus group as applied in this research with the target group of international students could be conducted with either the Israeli or Palestinian youth. When focusing on the asymmetry in the conflict and if the timing could be chosen to be before the Israeli youth’s indoctrination into the army, since the latter can have an immense impact on their narratives, current core beliefs and perceptions amongst Israeli participants could be analyzed, while at best leading to the detection of current conflict narratives. Such core beliefs and perceptions not only form components of attitudes, but also play an important role in conflict narratives, which build an essential part of intractable conflicts, since they often conflict with any step towards reconciliation between the parties. Growing up in segregation and isolation, the first encounters between Israelis and Palestinians are mainly limited to military action and confrontation. Personal story telling as a peace educational approach could facilitate such encounters as they allow the Israeli soldiers a broader understanding of narratives of the other part they are supposed to fight against. Such an approach might open minds, broaden horizons and set personal transformations in motion, from isolating and delegitimizing the “other” to humanizing it. Increasing the understanding of the reality they live in, the personal story telling events might lead to a recognition of the sources of suffering within the Israeli youth before they are at the mercy of militarized national narratives. Thus, a continuation of this research with the target group of the Israeli youth could form a valuable contribution not only to the research in the field of peace education, but also to create bonds and a sense of solidarity between Israelis and Palestinians in order to establish a basis for a binational peace movement.

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Appendix

A Transcripts Focus Group Discussions

Transcript Focus Group 1 (Palestinian Moderator)

Moderator: “We would like to ask you some of the following questions. I picked some questions I would love to ask here. Was it the first time for you to hear such stories?”

Participant: “I have never met Israeli people before but I spent a month in Lebanon last year where I lived in a Palestinian refugee camp and they, I mean, my experience was that a lot of people want to tell their stories and where they come from, Palestine, and how things happened the way they did, but I never like you told us, how you met the other side, and change your opinion like that.”

Moderator: “Because in Lebanon they didn’t meet the other side?”

Participant: “No, exactly.”

Participant: “For me it was the first time, too. I loved to hear, I really, it’s so interesting to hear your stories and how you really believe that the people can change, that was very interesting.”

Participant: “It’s the first time I have heard the story from both sides at the same time as you’re sitting there and explain from the Israeli and Palestine point of view.”

Moderator: “How was it for you to hear these stories?”

Participant: “For me it was moving, cause, like I have some experience with the whole situation and the conflict from before and I feel that the hope is so strong and it’s even stronger with you and you can relate to the other side and you can get along, want the same thing, and so I thought it was really moving and motivating to hear.”

Participant: “I think motivating is kind of the key word, because I really felt this very, because we learned a lot about the conflict at school or at least we heard something before and it is a very of course a very internationally known conflict but before I haven’t really felt like I knew enough to really, mm, I just felt uneducated and I didn’t really know enough, but now I am really motivated to get to know locals and to hear their stories and to hear your stories was very, um, yeah, I could really like motivated to hear about it.”

Participant: “It’s really interesting to hear you talking, it’s not the same thing to be reading books in school, but to meet you and listen to your stories that’s very interesting.”

Participant: “I also felt maybe a bit frustrated, that we didn’t know lot from before, because of all the things we learn in school we expect that we learn the right things, maybe, and it that, but we don’t really know, so I felt like, why haven’t we known this before.”

Participant: “I feel like this conflict is so huge and the history is so long and there are of course two sides to every story and all that but like the size of it makes it so, a lot of people, I think, just don’t have the energy to learn about it. And I know some now, but I still don’t know half of everything.”

Moderator: “Would you be interested to hear more about these kind of stories?”

Participant: “Yes”

Participant: "Yes, absolutely"

[Other participants approving]

Participant: "Yes, and I also feel like really motivated to tell people back home, my friends, [Other participants approving] my family and call them tonight and tell them hey we had this meeting today and that was so very... and tell the people about it.. like spread the word."

Moderator: "I don't know if it's right to ask it this way. But why did you decide to participate in this house meeting? We call it house meeting".

Participant: "Like I said I feel like the goal for a lot of us here is to come here and learn as much as we can about the conflict so we can, I guess make up our minds and help in whatever way we can, or that's what we want to at least. So yeah, we are just trying to learn everything we can."

Participant: [Approving] "Yes, educate ourselves, before we, we are supposed to be in Palestine for some time and I think we all wanted to know something about both Israel and Palestine and the conflict before we enter the West Bank. And that's very healthy for us to see, we obviously haven't seen both sides enough, but to have seen some and heard some of the stories is very very good".

Moderator: "Anyone wants to add anything?"

Participant: "I feel maybe like, the selfish part of me also wants to feel like, that I like take an active part in educating myself sort of and to not passively, even though I don't actually, like sitting here and listen is not like a.. I feel like I want to use it to maybe do something or yes, educate others but also to feel like pushing on to learn."

Moderator: "What were your feelings when you decided/heard that you were attending?"

Participant: "I honestly, I, well, I didn't really have that many expectations for this meeting, this is our first, well, our first day in Jerusalem, we arrived yesterday, but it was a lot more than I expected really, and as you mentioned, and you mentioned this to listen to the conflict from both sides is so valuable, because, I don't know, it's so valuable.. I could spend many more hours here. No problem."

Participant: "I didn't really know what to expect. I knew of course that we would be talking to two sides of the conflict but we didn't know what it would be like. Like this is a house meeting right, we are talking in a circle and everybody has something to say but it could have been like a lecture or more of a you tell us what is true and what not, you participating in a discussion with us and I like that we could ask questions and I feel like if maybe we asked a stupid question it would be okay and we could get a good answer and also I liked, sorry, I don't know if this was the intention, but you could correct each other, if one of you said something that was absolutely outrageous and very partisan, the other could say, no, just a second, this is, maybe, you are a bit subjective right now. And that, I really liked it and appreciated that."

Participant: "I do agree and I really liked the dynamics between you guys, because, that you could, you first, you let [name of the other speaker of the event] speak, and he is telling his story, and when he's done, like you could correct each other afterwards, but in the beginning you told your story and you were able to speak, and when he was done, you could, you took over. And that you also, you were like, open-minded, but you were also concrete about your story and your feelings about the situation. I liked that a lot."

Participant: "I felt, when I first heard we come here I felt very privileged, first and foremost that you use your time and tell your story to us, and that you welcome us into your stories that are quite

personal, the traumas you faced, and it's really nice that you wanted to share it. So that's the first thing I felt." *[Others approving]*

Moderator: "You can tell us if you didn't like something, then you don't have to give us compliments."

[laughter]

Participant: "No no, that's the truth!" *[Others approving]*

Participant: "And I felt maybe after seeing the documentary I felt like the organization seemed really interesting and important, so I just wanted to hear more."

Moderator: "Would you be open to participate in non-violent activist or remote peace between Israelis and Palestinians. If yes, why? If no, why not?"

Participant: "Definitely yes. Or, I, as you, well, activities well for us, that would be in our country, and I would absolutely do that when I come back home."

Moderator: "Also what you are doing now in Nablus is kind of an activity?"

Participant: "Of course. So, yes." *[Others approving]*

Participant: "Spread the word to friends and family".

Moderator: "So, find another question and ask it to yourself. Which one will you pick?"

Participant: "I think we don't know enough for number 3. *[Do you believe it is possible to solve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the nearby future?]*. It is do you believe it is possible to solve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the nearby future? Do any of you feel competent enough to answer that question?"

Participant: "I feel like there is a difference between believing and hoping." *[Others approving]*

Moderator: "Actually, we prepared the questions mostly for Israelis and Palestinians. So that's why I want you to pick the one you can feel like it's talking to you."

Participant: "Well it's not really a question but what I think is hard, is that it's motivating and exciting to be here and learn but I still don't know, maybe we are going to figure out during these weeks, what we can do afterwards and how we can still find our way to do something for the peace in this region, and I, in the form I answered about my feelings, about the peace, I don't really remember the exact words what I felt about the conflict, and I answered both Frustrated and Motivated. So I think that's like a picture of how many of internationals see the conflict. That many want to do something and you mention that, you're frustrated because the international society really doesn't pay attention and I think that's right and I think that's a shame, but I also think that a lot of people really want to do something but we don't really know how."

Moderator: "Have you met Palestinians or Israelis before? If yes, how was this experience? If not, do you think it's important to sit with them and hear them?"

Participant: "I have met Israelis and became good friends with a few Israelis when I travelled abroad a few years ago, and, because in South America, many people like after the military, they travel. And the experience was, I became friends with them like not thinking about the conflict, just them as people, but I also felt a sort of a vacuum, I knew there was another side of the conflict that I didn't get to see. And they didn't, they talked friendly and good about the Palestinians, but I also understood that

they didn't really know many Palestinians themselves. I thought if they didn't know any and they live so close by, they live together, I didn't understand and I didn't know why they knew so little. I thought maybe because they didn't want to know and, yes, so that was also what motivated me when I saw this project and I knew that I would get to know Palestinians."

Participants: "Yes as I said I met Palestinians before, not Israelis. In Lebanon. And my experience was, that, I came there with some kind of prejudice I guess, I expected them to be in a certain way, and I was like amazed, that how first how hopeful everybody is, that they are going to return home, and make it, maybe not this generation, but the next one, and they are going to keep believing and fighting and hoping for the justice, and also how friendly, and like everybody is like very inviting and want to tell their story and want us to know, without like judging the other side. No one ever put like words in my mouth that made me, do you know what I mean? So that's my experience."

Participant: "No, I just, I, the only ones I have met, are the people of Nazareth. I tried to ask them about the conflict, but I don't know if they understood what I tried to ask them about. But they said that they were Israelis, they were citizens of Israel, and I tried to ask them, well aren't you first and foremost Palestinian and they said no, I am Israeli, but that might have been like the one person I met who also was, so young, that I think, she never experienced Palestine as Palestine and grew up as an Israeli citizen and didn't feel the connection to the Palestinian heritage maybe. So there was no conflict in her mind as far as I could understand. But of course I met a lot of Israeli people while being here, but none of them ever, ever, oh you know what? I went to a doctor actually and he asked me where I was going, and I said I was going to the West Bank and he said why? Why would you go there? Like you couldn't imagine why anyone wanted to go there. But that is my extent. But I think maybe he was like oh, this young girl from a different country, just a tourist, why would you ever go there. Yes, that is what I have and my experiences so far."

Participant: "Well, I don't really know that many Palestinians and Israelis. But I told the other ones, my mother in law, she is Christian and worked in a Kibbutz at our age, so back in the 80ies, and she was like a bit skeptical when I told her about the project. Well, she wasn't mad or anything but she didn't really support the idea, so I, was a bit surprised. The idea of me travelling to the West Bank, so she was like okay I would let you to, yes she was very lovely and everything, and she told me okay first you can experience Israel and Palestine yourself and then but it was very important to her to tell, that she can tell her story afterwards, she was like I need to tell you something afterwards and I was like okay. So, yes that was, it surprised me a lot."

Participant: "Well, so I arrived here yesterday, so this is kind of my first meeting with any Palestinian or Israeli, I think, I can't remember having met anyone before."

Moderator: "So thank you for sharing. I will ask another question. Do you see yourself taking part in any kind of activism, peaceful activism in the future to help ending this conflict?"

Participant: "Yes."

[Others approving]

Participant: "Well, as you said as well taking part in this project. This project we're doing by staying in Nablus, I would say is kind of activism, not really activism, but we are publishing and expressing our point of view."

Moderator: "I mean in the future when you go back home, taking part in telling the story, or making a movement, a youth movement or something like this? Do you see yourself there or do you want more experience in order to decide?"

Participant: “I feel like I have started on this path already and I feel very motivated, like the last couple of years really made me motivated to do more. I know I can’t do that much now but it is definitely a goal to come back and maybe help.”

Participant: “I was thinking about voting. That is also activism in a way and I hope that we all will vote and when we vote, while informed about this issue, then we will probably vote for a party or a person that is pro a solution, then that might make international pressure on Israel to end this conflict.”

Moderator: “Thanks for sharing. Do you want to add anything?”

[Participants thank and the discussion ends]

Transcript Focus Group 2 (Israeli Moderator)

Moderator: “Was it the first time you hear such stories? How was it for you to hear those stories?”

Participant: “I think I have heard of stories before or read about it in the media and seen it in the media, but never directly from someone and I thought that it was a bit more maybe intense than I had realized before, but also very very informative and interesting to hear and to hear both sides of the stories as well. That was really good.”

Participant: “It got a personal touch. It hit more than reading it in the news or watch a documentary. And I really like that we got both sides and that you didn’t agree on everything (the speakers). That was also interesting.”

Participant: “I have heard similar stories before. I guess before I went down here I tried to read and watch as much as possible and I also watched the documentary about you where you also had similar interviews and I also think that, so that was maybe this was the first time I heard such personal stories but I also thought that when I watched that documentary it was maybe one of the best ones I saw *[Disturbing the Peace]*. And yes, I think it’s very... interesting to hear such personal stories because it makes it so much easier to understand and I think it’s really important that you tell it that way. It makes it easier for people to try to take down and understand what it’s like and it’s very good that you had both sides. That’s really interesting.”

Participant: “This is also the first time for me that I heard the stories directly from people in this conflict. I have only like heard the stories of people who have been to Israel and Palestine to work like from their perspective but never from the Israeli side directly or the Palestinian side directly and I also think it’s really important to sit down and meet with people directly because that’s when you see their facial expressions, and their feelings and their emotions and how the people are affected and I think that’s really important.”

Participant: “I also thought it was very moving to see that when you and Osama told your stories, even though we have heard it many times before and even though you have accepted each other’s stories it still hurts. It hurts to hear and it is still difficult to talk about it”.

Moderator: “This question maybe it’s not that relevant to you, so I am asking it in a more relevant manner for you. Why did you to decide to participate in the house meeting? Maybe I can ask you more that when you heard about it before, when you saw the schedule of the program, what were your feelings regarding that, what were your expectations before, were you excited, or nervous about it?”

Participant: "I didn't really know what to expect. I hadn't heard of the organization before. I saw it on the schedule and didn't really have time to do research before we came so I didn't have any expectations. But I was really positively surprised that we got to hear both sides of the story."

Participant: "When I heard about you guys in, I think we were told about it in a skype meeting a few months before. I was quite amazed that such an organization exists, I didn't know that. And I was quite interested and you know, in hearing more about it. I didn't know how it came to be to what you were doing. So I thought it was interesting."

Participant: "I was very, very excited, when I had seen the documentary and that was one of the documentaries I thought was the best. So I was very excited to come here in person."

Moderator: "Did you get some explanation of people who run the program about what you are going to experience before?"

Participant: "They gave us a short introduction I think. Just in a few sentences explained, but I also think they wanted us to come and meet with you and without any pre-expectations as well to make up our own minds, but I was very excited to come and speak to you, where here you speak to us and we hear your stories. That was very good."

Moderator: "The next question is maybe not 100% relevant for internationals, but I personally think it is relevant, so try to answer it from your own life and experience, even if it's not directed to here. Do you see yourself taking an active role in solving the conflict? If yes, how? If no, why? And I can say you can answer even if it's something more general. Does the meeting of today give you kind of inspiration to do so?"

Participant: "Yes I guess, but I am not sure how, being in Norway. So I would, I think this motivated me to find out more and to try to take some more initiative and I know we have a Palestinian committee in Norway, and in Bergen there's a shop where lots of people are very motivated."

Participant: "But also the program we are participating in I think that is really important as well and to keep that in our medical association and make other students recognize like what's going on here. Well this meeting has motivated me to like keep, make the project growing in Norway."

Participant: "I think personally I have always wanted to, or we have always heard of the conflict but I have never really been educated about it maybe so I have been maybe scared to, cause I really believe that's solving problems it's about awareness, that the general community knows what's going on. We work together as big groups of people to create a change and I want to voice, or use my voice to spread awareness but maybe I have been scared to because I don't know all of the different details about the conflict but I think this conversation we've had with you and this project in general helps us to understand and then we can use our voice to promote and share with people the experiences we have heard from you and the experiences we have had ourselves as well so that's where I want to take maybe a more active stand."

Participant: "I will definitely be supportive of people trying to find solutions and try to use my voice to raise awareness cause now I know...I think a lot of people know this happened and this happened, but I think they don't understand like how it's affecting people and why people are doing what they're doing. It was very interesting for me to hear you say like why, how the local Israeli people think about the situation. And I will definitely try to raise awareness about that. Because I think that is something most people don't know. Like, really know how it's affecting people. On both sides."

Participant: "I think that usually people always talk about the Palestinian side. Brainwashing is happening"

Participant: "Also I think sometimes I feel like it is sometimes that you're scared you're not educated enough, but also sometimes it maybe sounds wrong to say that but you're scared to voice an opinion on something that's not yours, it's not my conflict you know, so maybe I shouldn't have an opinion about it because people who actually are here and experience it have a stronger opinion that's opposite or opposite of mine, so I think that's maybe what has been hindering us to voice our opinions earlier. But now that we're here, we can at least share our side of it to the rest of the people. Because I have a lot of Israeli students that I study with and when I said I was going here, a lot of them were asking why, they had a lot of different opinions about it and I couldn't feel, I didn't feel that I could speak up against them or speak about it because it wasn't my right to do so. I think that now that we have, are more educated and have these experiences, we can do more of it."

Participant: "My kind of issue is that like I think this is a really good initiative and I think this is like something that is really important to do, I just kind of struggle to see how to use it to make a difference. Because I think like what you have going is really good, really important, but then you have to find a way to actually apply that to the conflict to actually make a difference with it. I think that is like the issue with it. I think maybe one way to do it is like I think your perspective is quite important there you have all these pro Palestine kind of conflict shops and all this support Palestine, but if you are able to tie that a bit and in a way kind of support Israel to find a solution as well and make the people realize that to solve the conflict you kind of need to actually support both sides.. I suppose like, I think the key to the solution is kind of the Israel aspect to it because obviously they are the ones with all the power, they are the ones with the support, and most importantly they are the ones with all the money, and like, in essence, like conflicts they are all about money, and this is the key to most things really, so this might be an important thing to do, cause like at the same time we have these Norwegian doctors they go there to Gaza and every time they come back they kind of report oh I saw all of this, and these rific kind of things and at the same time there are people who book a flight and go to Israel on holidays and like they see it but then it doesn't really have an impact on them? They are just like oh I saw it on television and booked a flight to Tel-Aviv the next night. Obviously I don't think the solution is to not go on holiday there, but still people like they see it and then forget about it straight after. So it's a tricky one.... That's my kind of issue, how to use this. Because I think it is really good what you put together but the key is to kind of find a way to actually make a difference there."

Participant: "But don't you think the difference starts with the people itself? So when they meet other people who have experienced this conflict, and when they're telling their stories, don't you think that the people will change?"

Participant: "That's the thing, like, it's let's make a comparison. It's like climate change. We all know that climate change is coming and we all know that we have to make changes, but no one is actually doing anything. We still fly as much as we used to, we still eat the same food we used to eat, although we shouldn't, there is a small part of the population that actually is making changes, but overall the entire population, if you are going to look at it, the overall population... "

Participant: "But why do you think they are not affected? Because they are not affected? But we don't feel the changes, that's why we don't do anything. Sorry that's my opinion."

Participant: "We don't feel the changes cause you are protected in the same way like people living in Israel are protected by the government."

Participant: "That's exactly what I am saying like they need to see it, and feel it in order to change. As for us I think we would be more like acceptable to change how we live if we were actually affected by the climate change."

Participant: "That's the thing, like you actually are, but you don't notice it, because your government will protect you and that's the thing like if..."

Participant: "Don't you think we all would have been more climate friendly if you felt it really?"

Participant: "I felt more motivated fighting for the climate when I for example went to dive and saw the coral reefs all over... that's motivating me, like seeing it, really experiencing it."

Participant: "So I am like trying to draw like parallels to the conflict."

Participant: "But that's the thing like we can all watch movies on climate change and documentaries on this conflict and not going to have like the same impact. We can't all go to Israel and Palestine to experience this ourselves. Like there must be a solution to it and then I don't really see how you could make everyone experience it in the same way, cause in a way, hearing these people talk it is in a way similar to watching a documentary, it is obviously more kind of emotional. I don't know if the solution is have everyone come to a meeting like this and listen to the story. I don't know if that's the solution or if this is even feasible like, the problem is what I have come across is really negative and I think if you do this it is important to come and have different perspectives. It's the same thing like I live in Dublin and you don't realize that there is a conflict in Belfast with war separating the city in two and people don't realize that. That's actually the case in Europe with a city divided in half by a 20m high wall and people don't cross at night cause they are afraid they'd start fighting and this is the same thing. People don't realize. And even though I realized, what can you do? It is so difficult to actually kind of engage with that kind of issue. So sorry I don't mean to be very negative like that..."

Participant: "I do think our best hope is to raise awareness and put pressure on the government and also to raise awareness in the Israeli. "

Participant: "I think there's two different ways you can approach it. In the international community with raising awareness and putting pressure on the government and for example, like, supporting countries that accept Palestine as a state and raise, and I think awareness like this what we are doing helps that and watching documentaries and putting it out there I think that will put more pressure on the international community. But then there is the second approach which maybe you guys are more directly into doing with the Israelis and having conversations with the youth and asking the questions cause like you said you have it in the back of your head, this conflict is there, and that their forefathers, and everything has happened before and they know it's happening but they're making excuses and think that it's okay. But I think what you guys are doing is really important to ask the tough questions and make them feel it and force it onto them not in super forceful way but raising awareness within them as well, so that they can also put pressure on their government again and help to change it. You have to approach it both from the outside and inside if that makes sense."

Participant: "I think everything helps. Norway has also been active in donating to organizations that helped with food and medical care for Palestinians and our new government they cut it out and I think if people knew about it and how it affects the people here they would put pressure on the government. But people don't know. I think everything helps."

Participant: "Can I ask you something? [to Moderator] Do you have like, if you see like in the Israeli population, do they want to win the conflict or do they want peace? Because I think that's like the key to finding a solution to this conflict. You won't have peace if they want to win because nothing will stop them, until they win. So like, what do Israelis want? Do they want peace? Or do they want to win? And the same for the Palestinian side. Do they want to win or do they want peace? And what is winning?"

Moderator: “Very good questions. I don’t think I can answer them. Especially for sure not a short answer. It’s a very difficult conversation but it’s a very smart way to frame the questions you just asked. Maybe something that also answers the question you debated about is awareness really has an impact on reality. People expose to some knowledge, or emotional experience, does it really make some change? Which is actually the core question all what we’re doing, non-violence activism, it’s about changing people’s minds, I say it’s not about let’s kill the people/opponents. In order to get it we have to believe that people could change their mindset from winning the conflict that peace is actually winning the conflict and it’s a process. I think it’s something very much and a very natural desire to just finish it, win it. I think the question we are interested in and what we also try to do here is to understand does activism like that help to reach this goal, especially with people from here but also with you, internationals in Israel. I mean you know, globalization and everything is everywhere. This new wave of nationalism, racism, it’s not only here. It’s in Europe, it’s in America, it’s everywhere. I think our generation, I think we are still part of the same generation, we have to deal with this kind of every massive wave of people who say us we have to win conflicts, we have to stop immigration and so on. Something very like strict. Also here. I think it’s part of what we try to do to bring together two narratives without judging. It’s not something where you can put a strict line, there is a complicated reality that should have a complicated solution. That’s a thing we are interested in doing and in that sense it doesn’t matter if you live in Norway, Ireland or Israel. I am sad about it but I think in the nearby future we will face it more and more. All the idea that we could have peaceful solutions and we could have complicated solution, not like a black and white or like good and evil, it’s something that is going to be more and more radical and if we by doing that could help people hold these beliefs it is something very important that we can do. I hope it’s somehow answering, maybe it’s also going around.”

Participant: “I really believe that what you’re doing by sitting down and talking and being personal is the most right way to change something within people”.

B Original survey from “Combatants for Peace”



Only by joining forces,
will we be able to end
the cycle of violence

Survey

1. Have you participated in similar meetings in the past?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

If yes, what kind of activity was it? _____

Do you feel that you have learnt something new during this meeting?

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ 1. Absolutely yes | ☐ 4. Maybe not |
| ☐ 2. Maybe yes | ☐ 5. Absolutely not |
| ☐ 3. Not sure | ☐ 6. Prefer not to answer |

If you did not learn, what would you change? _____

2. Do you believe it is possible to solve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the nearby future?

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ 1 strongly agree | ☐ 4 disagree |
| ☐ 2 agree | ☐ 5 strongly disagree |
| ☐ 3 neutral | ☐ 6 Prefer not to answer |

3. I feel _____ about finding a solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| ☐ Hopeful | ☐ Motivated |
| ☐ Frustrated | ☐ Committed |
| ☐ Tired | ☐ Disappointed |
| ☐ Angry | ☐ Other _____ |
| ☐ Energized | |

4. Do you believe that ordinary people like you and me can help in an active way to solve / end the conflict?

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ 1 strongly agree | ☐ 5 strongly disagree |
| ☐ 2 agree | ☐ 6 Prefer not to answer |
| ☐ 3 neutral | |
| ☐ 4 disagree | |

5. Would you be open to participate at binational non-violent activities to promote peace between Palestinians and Israelis?

مقاتلون من أجل السلام לוחמים לשלום Combatants For Peace 	Only by joining forces, will we be able to end the cycle of violence
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- ☐ 1. Absolutely yes
- ☐ 2. Maybe yes
- ☐ 3. Not sure

- ☐ 4. Maybe not
- ☐ 5. Absolutely not
- ☐ 6. Prefer not to answer

6. What are your reasons to participate?

- ☐ It is the right thing to do
- ☐ I am curious
- ☐ I am interested to meet Palestinians / Israelis

- ☐ Because I care
- ☐ Other _____

7. What are your reasons NOT to participate?

- ☐ I am afraid of the police
- ☐ Because of social pressure
- ☐ I am afraid of repercussions

- ☐ I am afraid of being injured
- ☐ I don't care
- ☐ Other _____

8. In which of these activities would you be open to participate?

- ☐ Dialogue meeting
- ☐ Film screening
- ☐ Community activity
- ☐ Demonstration

- ☐ Solidarity action
- ☐ Direct action (go out to the field)
- ☐ Civil disobedience
- ☐ Other _____

Thank you for your time and input! By filling in this survey, you support us to improve our programmes.

Focus Group / Interview Questions

Introduction

The aim of the focus groups we are conducting is to identify the reasons why Israelis, Palestinians and members of the international community engage or do not engage in binational, non-violent activities for peace (and in the Peace Movement in general). We want to get a deeper understanding of the attitudes that encourage or hinder the different target groups in participating and how we can address those factors.

The peace movement in our definition is the alliance of all non-formal and formal groups, NGOs, coalitions and networks that work to make the Israeli-Palestinian peace movement stronger, using only non-violent tools and open to bi-national cooperation.

We invite you to participate in this discussion for about 45 minutes. All answers are welcome. There is no right or wrong answer. Feel free to express yourself. And please make sure to give space to what you want to say and also leave space for others.

As you read it in the consent form, we will record the conversation, only for our own records. If anything is published from what has been said here, it will be done anonymously.

Questions:

1. Was it the first time for you to hear such stories? How was it for you to hear the stories of the speakers? Would you be interested to hear more about this kind of stories?
2. Why did you decide to participate in the house meeting / encounter? What were your feelings when you decided/heard that you were attending?
3. Do you believe it is possible to solve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the nearby future?

4. Do you see yourself taking an active role in solving the conflict?
 - a. If yes, how?
 - b. If no, why?
5. Would you be open to participate at binational non-violent activities to promote peace between Palestinians and Israelis?
 - a. If yes, why?
 - b. If not, why not?
6. What do you feel stops you from taking part in a shared activity?
7. What can best help you to trust and take part?
 - a. How can Combatants for Peace support you?

Flexible questions (not for beginners)

8. Have you met Palestinians or Israelis before? With some groups it is clear that they have met Palestinians / Israelis
 - a. If yes, how was this experience?
 - b. If not, do you think it is important to sit with them and hear them?
9. What is the best way to bring Palestinians and Israelis together?