Israel/Palestine Experience and Engagement: A Multidirectional Study of Collective Memory Through an Analysis of Trauma, Identity and Victim Beliefs

by

Jeffrey J. Wilkinson

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Department of Curriculum Teaching and Learning
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

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Abstract

The ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict has sparked a debate in Canada (and elsewhere) that is as intractable as the conflict itself. This study looks at two Diasporas, Palestinian and Jewish, in the Toronto area, as typical of the challenges within these communities worldwide when it comes to deeply understanding the Other. Collective memory, a representation of the past shared by a group, is viewed in this study as a prime factor in how conflicts become intractable, insulating the groups from deeply acknowledging the Other and the Other’s history. I look at three primary catalysts that concretize memory within groups: identity, trauma and victim beliefs. This study engages in the experiences and memories of these experiences in the eight participants who I have interviewed for this study. The participants engaged in two interviews, a narrative interview where they shared their stories with me and an interaction interview where they responded to the stories of the Other. This research is not a peace plan or even a path towards peace, but is a process of unraveling. As the researcher I unravel my own victimhood as a Jew from a family of the Shoah. I am also unraveling two seemingly disparate realities, the ways in which collective memory has become ensconced within the two groups and the reality that the two groups’ situations today are starkly different. While both groups have experienced very traumatic histories, the trauma of Occupation is ongoing for Palestinians. This research offers an alternative to typical “dialogue”,
acknowledging the importance of hearing the Other’s stories within a framework of social justice and human rights. While recognizing the importance of sharing in the experiences of the Other, the Jewish community has a greater responsibility to alter the situation on the ground for those living in the Occupied territories.
Acknowledgments

Doing a PhD, particularly writing a thesis, is never achieved in a vacuum. There are many people who contributed to me, in a variety of ways, during this process. I am very appreciative to Dr. Tara Goldstein, Dr. Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández, and Dr. Heather Sykes for advising and supporting me throughout the planning and writing process. An extra special thank you to Dr. Tara Goldstein for her tremendous generosity of time and spirit that had her give me so many hours of consultation, steering, editing and encouragement. Many others contributed to my work by sharing with me their own work and expertise, including: Dr. Kent den Heyer, Dr. Ana Laura Pauchulo, Rabbi Larry Englander, Dr. Frank Bialystok, Dr. Renan Levine, Dr. Debra Dusome, Dr. Abigail Bakan, Dr. Kathleen Gallagher, and Dr. Mario Di Paolantonio.

I am also very grateful to all of my “writing buddies”, many who were part of a thesis writing group, who have read parts of my work, offered suggestions, edited my writing and were just an overall great support, including: Dr. Sean Jackman, Dr. Julia Gray, Doug Hitchcock, Davis Mirza, j Wallace, Austen Koecher, Emilie Wilkinson and Sandra Goldenberg. Also, thank you to three special friends, Ray Young, Jennifer Bascom and Jessie Steinberg, who helped to keep me on my writing schedule and had just the right words to say to push me along when I needed it. A special thank you to Dr. John Guiney Yallop for encouraging (pushing) me towards graduate work; I so appreciate your example and guidance. Also, thank you to Megan McIntosh for formatting my thesis. An extra special thank you goes to my friend and writing buddy, Jenny Salisbury for all the many hours of supportive conversations, reading and editing, as well as her great ability to encourage and inspire me to just keep going.

This research was driven by the openness and generous sharing of the eight participants who took part in this study. Each of them provided a unique window into the work I undertook here. I also thank them from the bottom of my heart for their willingness to interact with stories that were often challenging and unsettling for them.

I am especially fortunate to have two wonderful daughters, Sara and Emilie, who supported me throughout my graduate school process and were always there with a “way to go Dad” just at the right time.

My greatest thank you goes to my partner in life, my wife, Ann Goldenberg. She has not only endured years of an often absentee spouse but has been my rock, believing fully in what I was doing and listening endlessly to my worries, checking my work and lifting me up when I was struggling. You made this possible. I love you and am so grateful to you.
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Preface: Framing Intractable Conflicts - Post-defense

This research, in part, deals with intractable conflicts, both the physical Israeli-Palestinian conflict itself and the conflict within the Israel/Palestine debate in Canada. In my oral defense, I spoke about the conflict in two significantly different ways. First, I used the analogy of a car accident, where two cars collide and the drivers form two distinct stories about this event that become memories that they retell over time. My journey began with the idea that using the term “intractable conflicts” (Bar-Tal, 2012) was a reasonable way to define the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Much like a car accident, there are two parties with often-conflicting, yet reasonable views about what has occurred.

As my research journey unfolded, I came to describe the conflict as “a person escaping a burning building, jumping out of the window and landing on someone else’s head” (Colliding Dreams, 2015). These two opposing metaphors, the first where I began and the second where I ended up, speak to the journey that I have taken as a researcher and to the tensions that this research embraces. While there will always be multiple points of view about what has happened, who is most to blame and what the path forward might look like, I have come to question the notion of intractability, as a notion of equanimity, as it applies both to the conflict itself and the debate about the conflict. Bar-Tal’s work on intractable conflicts can be useful, particularly for the Jewish Diaspora, as a means of understanding how historical trauma can shield individuals and groups from fully grasping how one’s having a land and sanctuary came at the expense of another.

I invite the reader to wrestle with this along with me to revision how we apply the word “conflict” here in Canada and other parts of the Jewish Diaspora that can lead us to understate how the realities for the Palestinian people living in the West Bank and Gaza came to be.
“All of the massacres that have taken place in recent years, like most of the bloody wars, have been linked to complex and long-standing ‘cases’ of identity ... for people directly involved in conflicts arising out of identity, for those who have suffered and been afraid, nothing else exists except ‘them’ and ‘us,’ the insult and the atonement.”

(Maalouf, 2001, p. 33)

Chapter 1

Collective Memory, Trauma, Identity and Victimhood: An Introduction

Maalouf’s statement names “cases” of identity as the root cause of intractable conflicts. This research looks to shed light on how identity, forged by traumatic histories, works within groups who are not personally engaged in the conflict at issue, but nonetheless have retreated into an “intractable conflict” of their own, solidified within a “memorial collective”1 (Wilkinson, 2016). This retreat shields them from encountering and interacting with the Other within a non-competitive, reparative paradigm.

1.1 Process of the study

In this study, through two sets of interviews with my participants (see Table 1. for a summary of the participants), I seek answers to the following two research questions:

1. How is collective memory constructed within groups that are engaged in the Israel/Palestine debate in general and in Toronto specifically?

2. How might applying conceptual frameworks that allow us to see memory non-
competitively, but rather multidirectionally and interbiographically, open up new pathways that lessen distance and resistance, particularly in regards to how the Jewish participants engage with the ongoing traumatic experiences of the Palestinian participants?

In the first set of interviews, the narrative interviews, the participants share with me their memories of their families and their own, often-traumatic, experiences. In the second set of interviews, the interaction interviews, the participants read excerpts of the narrative interviews of the Other and respond to them. As the researcher, I am committed to a deeply reflexive journey and therefore participate myself in the second interview. The interview process is explained in more detail in Chapter 3.

1.2 Unraveling my own stories

The forming and entrenching of one’s collective memory is an often invisible, unconscious and ongoing act of defining and re-defining one’s identity. This research study comes out of an intentional and ongoing choice to understand not only how I have come to belong, but to examine the consequences to those outside of that “belonging”. This study extends my self-examination to two specific memorial collectives, Jews and Palestinians engaged in the Israel/Palestine political debate in the Toronto area, whom I have interviewed for this research.

It is difficult to trace back where my journey of unraveling began. An important step was the writing of my Master’s thesis, an arts-based autoethnographic work entitled Chord Progression: An autoethnographic étude in words and music. In it, I traced my family’s experience in the Shoah (the Hebrew word meaning "catastrophe," denoting the catastrophic destruction of European Jewry during World War II). The term is used in Israel, and the Knesset (the Israeli Parliament) has designated an official day, called Yom ha-Shoah, as a day of commemorating the Shoah or Holocaust). I also traced my young adult life as a member of an abusive religious institution, and my role as an equity-minded music educator, displaying these experiences in prose, lyrics and music. It is important to note that this was an essential step in bringing me to this examination, but it was not a linear progression towards engagement with the Other or insulating myself from the Other; rather it was a circular move towards and away from having my traumatic memory, at times, ensconce my victimhood and, at other
times, unravel it. My Master’s study, while bringing to light what and how I remembered, also worked as a means of affirming my identity and my memorial sense of belonging within a particular collective that served to isolate that identity and memory from those with a different identity and memory.

When I began my doctorate, my position of privilege, formed through being white, male, heterosexual, English-speaking and financially secure was one that I felt I had well-articulated, consciously owned up to and sought to mitigate, in terms of its negative effect on others. So much so that I believed my Jewishness and family experiences, while important, took a back seat to my identity as a social justice activist.

During one of my doctoral classes, we were asked to attend an Anti-Israeli Apartheid rally that was being held nearby. When we arrived, one of our classmates began leading the rally with a megaphone. Another Jewish classmate, who wore identifiable religious clothing, and I, stood near each other and were singled out by some other participants at the rally. During the debrief that followed when we returned to class, I articulated to the group that I was uncomfortable and felt victimized.

This event propelled me to rethink how deeply I had examined my privilege and inquired of others of how I was perceived. I began to see myself as susceptible to neo-liberal assumptions that led me to the naïve and inaccurate assumption that my identity as a Jew and sympathy with Zionism as a project and the state of Israel in general was “just part of me” and not in contest or in contrast to my equity, human rights positions. In challenging these assumptions, I began to understand that my identity and attachments had social and political consequences and needed to be interrogated. I also began to investigate my long interest and commitment to Holocaust studies and the unvarnished truth that Jewish stories had a unique and privileged place in schooling in the West and that I had a role in continuing this inequity.

As I became less and less interested in my own single story, I began to explore how histories and memories are positioned and how my stories and experiences might exist alongside of the Other’s story and not be in contest. This thesis project is the continuation of this exploration. I analyze a series of interviews, through the themes of trauma, identity and victim beliefs. My interview participants have been wounded by their history and, to varying degrees, isolated
from the Other within the Israel/Palestine (Palestine/Israel) debate in Toronto and the Israeli-Palestinian\(^2\) conflict as a whole.

While I am the researcher of this study, as I unravel how identity, trauma and victim beliefs are concretized within my participants and their memorial collectives, I am also unraveling my own “becoming”, particularly how my traumatic history has worked to ensconce a victim mentality within me. When I challenge the participants in this study to step outside of their memorial collective and work towards the multidirectional (Rothberg, 2009)\(^3\), interbiographic (Wilkinson, 2016) approach this research envisions, I am also challenging myself.

### 1.3 Interbiography: Forming a “new” dialogue

This interview-based study is viewed within a reparative teaching and learning paradigm, through a process of “interbiography”. I offer the term interbiography, expanding on the concept of “duoethnography” (Norris, Sawyer, & Lund, 2012), where two people with varied experiences tell their stories while reflecting on each other’s stories. Interbiography is used here to describe a methodology of telling traumatic stories through and with the constructed Other, rather than in opposition to the Other. While acknowledging asymmetry of experiences created by the legacy of colonialism and the on-going disparity in power between Israel and Palestine, the project hopes to recognize and build upon the shared effects of loss, grief and trauma\(^4\).

While dialogic, interbiography is viewed as distinct from “dialogue” in the way it can be perceived within groups like the “Arab/Jewish Leadership Dialogue Group” and the “Canadian

\(^2\) The term “Israel/Palestine” will be used when referring to the land, as well as the debate around the conflict and potential resolutions. Some of the research used refers to the land as “Palestine/Israel”. While the power dynamic of always having “Israel” first in most of the literature is recognized here, I use both terms interchangeably and when I refer to “Israel/Palestine” I am using this alphabetically, not to denote a preference. When referring to a Palestinian participant, I will use the term “Palestine/Israel” as their birthplace. When referring to the conflict itself, I will use the term “Israeli-Palestinian Conflict”.

\(^3\) The concept of “multidirectional memory” is coined by Michael Rothberg to refer to a framework for remembering that is non-competitive (Rothberg, 2009). This concept will be more deeply discussed in Chapter 2.

\(^4\) This interbiographic approach is realized through two sets of interviews. First, a “narrative” interview that traces how each participant’s identity, trauma and victim beliefs led to their “belonging” to a specific memorial collective. Second, an “interaction” interview when each participant encounters the narrative of the Other. This methodology is detailed in Chapter 3.
Arab/Jewish Leadership Dialogue Group” who presently do dialogue work in the Toronto area. Many of the participants in this study have been engaged in one or both of these groups, which often assume equivocal power between groups and therefore seek equivocal responses. Rather, in an interbiography, narratives are elicited and presented side-by-side, but sameness and agreement are neither expected nor important; paths forward are seen as possibilities that may become visible as a result of “re-membering” and, the work of “re-membering” is not assumed to be equivocal.

1.4 Traumatic Histories: The Shoah, antisemitism, the Nakba, conflict and occupation in Israel/Palestine (Palestine/Israel)

The goal, in this section, is to outline some basic facts of the historical traumas as well as the conflict at issue for the participants in the research. As will become more and more evident in this examination, facts or truths are rarely uncontested in the arena of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, or, in the traumatic histories that lie underneath the present conflict, both in the conflict itself, and within those that are engaged in the debate surrounding the conflict.

1.4.1 The Shoah and the Nakba

The Shoah may be described as the “sum total of all anti-Jewish actions carried out by the Nazi regime between 1933 and 1945”. In this research, I use the word Shoah, unless the source material I am quoting or a research participant him/herself uses the word Holocaust, which finds its roots in the concept of a burnt offering. While both terms are generally accepted, I use the word Shoah to mark the acts committed specifically against Jews, recognizing that the

5 “Re-membering” (Wilkinson, 2015) is viewed in two ways, to remember again as well as gesturing towards fostering a new collective of remembers that is multidirectional and interbiographical; to “member” or join anew.

6 This particular quote is taken from the website of “Yad Vashem”, the Holocaust museum in Israel (http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/holocaust/resource_center/the_holocaust.asp). The Shoah is, without question the most studied, and discussed genocide in human history. This particular definition reflects the scope of the Shoah and clearly names its perpetrator.

7 Shoah is a Hebrew meaning “catastrophe” or “destruction” (the catastrophic destruction of the Jews) (https://fcit.usf.edu/holocaust/DEFN/shoah.htm).
Holocaust affected many other people. As this research focuses on the historical traumas of two specific groups, Jews and Palestinians, using the word Holocaust signifies a much broader trauma that is not relevant to this particular work. The Shoah affected all the participants, who identify as Jewish, in some manner, most through the stories and experiences of their immediate family.

The participants in this research who identify as Palestinian, all have family stories from the Nakba (meaning “catastrophe” in Arabic), which can be defined as: “the catastrophic expulsion that Palestinians experienced as part of the creation of the state of Israel” (Spangler, 2015, p. xv). The war itself is known as the “War of Independence” to Israelis and their supporters. Today, historians generally agree on the basic facts of what occurred, but not the implications of those facts. It is estimated that 50% of the Palestinian population were expelled from their homes and almost all Palestinian villages and cities were destroyed or partially destroyed, (Ibid, p. 9). As will be discussed in more detail, through the participants’ testimonies, many Palestinians were killed or injured during raids on Palestinian villages. Also, about 1% of the inhabitants of the new State of Israel died during the conflict, (Ibid, p. 9).

Interestingly, the terms Nakba and Shoah both mean “catastrophe”. While both participant groups may resist the “catastrophe” of the Other, at specific issue here is how the Jewish participants, at times, resist the “catastrophe” of the Palestinian Other.

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8 Shoah is also the name of the day of remembrance “Yom ha Sho’ah”. While the word “Holocaust” is the most common word used to describe the catastrophe experienced by Jews during World War II in the English-speaking world (Harran, et al., 2000, p. 57). Using the term Shoah is a way to distinguish “Jewish trauma” from the traumas inflicted on other groups during the Holocaust. It is estimated that six million Jews were murdered during the Holocaust, but another five million people, including Roma people, priests, Jehovah’s Witnesses, homosexuals, political dissidents and disabled people were also murdered (http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/NonJewishVictims.html).

9 While there is a long history as to what led up to the war, in brief, on November 29, 1947, the United Nations created a partition of the land of Palestine, creating a Jewish and Arab State, giving approximately 55% percent of the land to the Jews, though they made up a much smaller portion of the population, ostensibly because they were going to take in Jews from Europe after the Shoah. This event, along with other historical factors, led to a vicious guerilla-style war that had especially disastrous consequences for Palestinians (Smith, 1992 pp. 139-142). By the end of the war in 1949, Israel had control over approximately 78% of the land (Spangler, 2015, p. 8).
1.4.2 Antisemitism\textsuperscript{10}: Past and present

While antisemitism is an umbrella term used to define negative stereotyping, discriminatory language and actions against Jews, as individuals or as a group, its manifestations are as diverse as its origins. Its import in this study is that it has played, and continues to play, a defining role in how Jews, in general, and the participants in this study identify as Jewish. Antisemitism also plays a role in how they view themselves and shape their positions on the Israeli-Palestine conflict. At issue, here, is not just how antisemitism is operationalized in the world but how it is often conflated with social justice and human rights driven critiques of Israel and Israeli policy by segments of the Jewish community and its supporters. Of particular relevance to this study is how past wounds inflicted on Jews, based on faith, racial identification and fallacious stereotypes, operate within the stories and experiences of many Jews, particularly the Jewish participants in this study. These wounds not only play an important role in shaping their political views, but how they perceive Palestinians and/or Palestinian supporters.

1.4.3 Occupation: 1967 to today

“Arab-Israeli hostility, inter-Arab rivalries, and great power meddling [primarily by the United States] led to the Six Day War (June 5-10, 1967)” (Spangler, 2015, p. 15), the result of which created the platform of the current Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The question of Israel’s military policy today, and whether or not it hastened Israel into an aggressor that attacks its enemies unnecessarily to gain military and strategic advantage or is a result of Israel needing to defend itself against aggressive enemies, recurs often in the participant interviews. Also of importance is how this political question is answered as a means of justifying actions that protect and defend a particular one’s own collective traumatic memory, while resisting narratives of

\textsuperscript{10} The term “anti-Semitism” was first coined in 1879 by a German, Wilhelm Marr to refer to political campaigns against Jews, viewing them as both a race and a religion, (https://www.britannica.com/topic/anti-Semitism). The spelling of the word is contested. It is typically spelled “anti-Semitism”, but some scholars argue that this misses the original intent, describing feelings and actions against Jews, not all “Semitic”, which includes Arabs (https://holocustremembrance.sharepoint.com/.../download.aspx). It does appear that only Jewish scholars (though not all Jewish scholars) use the spelling “antisemitism”. I have chosen to use this spelling unless the alternative spelling comes from a quotation, though, while I understand the semantics behind the spelling “antisemitism”, I am personally ambivalent on this issue.
suffering of another memorial collective. While it may be debated whether Israel’s “preemptive strike” (Shavit, 2013, p. 201) was a necessary response to incursion by the Egyptian army into the Straits of Tiran\(^\text{11}\) or another move along Israel’s “path of military conquests” (Spangler, 2015, p. 15), the results of these actions are less debatable. Bar-Tal and Schnell, in a book that primarily examines the effects of the Occupation on Israeli society as a whole, state: “the Occupation has been a disaster for the Palestinian people, denying them of civic development and self-determination and subjecting them to an autocratic, often lawless, and systematically humiliating regime” (Bar-Tal & Schnell, 2013, p. viii).

As a result of the Six Day War, Israel now controls all of “historic Palestine”\(^\text{12}\) and the people who lived there. Eve Spangler’s detailed account of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict lays out the many consequences of the Six Day War for the Palestinian population, including:

1. There are approximately 1.9 million Palestinians living today as refugees in the Gaza Strip and West Bank\(^\text{13}\).

2. There are about 3 million Palestinians living as refugees in camps in the surrounding Arab countries (Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Syria). They are either people who fled during the Nakba or their descendants.

3. Within the West Bank, which is the most populous Palestinian area, the land has been divided (following provisions of the Oslo Accords signed in 1993 and 1995) into three areas, “A, B, & C”. The vast majority of the Palestinians who live in Gaza and the West Bank (about 96%) are now in Areas A and B which are overcrowded cities and

\(^\text{11}\) This “incursion” that occurred in May 1967 where the Egyptian army entered the Sinai dessert and blockaded the Straits of Tiran may have been seen as a direct threat to the State of Israel and, according to some (like Shavit) viewed by the Israeli military as a precursor of a Pan-Arab invasion (Shavit, 2013, p. 201).

\(^\text{12}\) What is important here is that the change in what was “Palestinian Land” before the UN partition plan in 1947 and what was now “Palestinian Land” after 1967 is now just a small fraction (see Figure 1.) Spangler also uses the terms “mandatory Palestine” or Israel/Palestine synonymously with “historic Palestine” meaning all of what comprises “Israel” today (Spangler, p. 20).

\(^\text{13}\) Spangler points out that they (Palestinian refugees) remain in refugee camps either because they cannot get permission (from Israel) to purchase land outside the camps or cannot afford to. She also suggests that they may fear that in leaving the camps, they would give up their right of return to land, (Spangler, 2015, p. 15). Gaza and the West Bank together make up the “Occupied Territories”.
villages. Spangler states: “In short, Palestinians in the West Bank live in areas that look more like Indian reservations or Bantustans\textsuperscript{14} than like the nucleus of an emerging state”, (Spangler, 2015, pp. 9-10).

Many, including some of the Jewish participants in this study, may either debate these realities, or, at the very least, deflect Israel’s responsibility for the conditions in which Palestinians live today within the Occupied Territories. There is no debate, based on multiple readings and testimonies, that Palestinians live in overcrowded places, with little freedom and suffer tremendous emotional, physical and economic hardships and that these conditions are a direct result of past and current Israeli government policies and actions. The Six Day War and the Occupation that followed have directly affected all the Palestinian participants in this study. Furthermore, while this research is primarily focused on how groups become ensconced within a collective that resists the Other, it is also grounded in a framework of human rights that cannot remain neutral in examining the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the ongoing debate within the Diaspora.

In Chapter 1, have outlined some of the history that backgrounds this research, particularly the Shoah, the Nakba, antisemitism and the wars that led to the Occupation and the circumstances that Palestinians live in today in the Occupied territories.

In Chapter 2, I examine the current research on collective memory, specifically how it is operationalized within intractable conflicts, looking at how identity, trauma and victim beliefs work to entrench collective memory within a specific group and how this entrenchment resists the Other. I also look at literature that presents new possibilities for “re-membering” non-competitively and multidirectionally.

\textsuperscript{14} Bantustans were areas set aside by the South Africa government during Apartheid where a majority of Blacks were relocated and formed their own governmental system. This was done in order to prevent them from living in urban areas and segregate Blacks form Whites. Separating Blacks from government control, removed all protections afforded White South African citizens, (http://www.sahistory.org.za/article/homelands). Spangler’s use of this term links Israeli Occupation to Apartheid, an analogy strenuously resisted by most supporters of Zionism, but this is a comparison, I posit, that can be justified. For a detailed argument, see Israel/Palestine, South Africa and the ’One-State Solution’: The Case for an Apartheid Analysis (Bakan and Abu-Laban, 2010).
Chapter 2

Viewing Memory

2.1 Collective memory: Identity, Trauma, and Victim Beliefs and the Israel/Palestine Debate

2.1.1 Memory, History and Conflicts: Tracing the threads

Parce qu’il était juif, mon père est mort à Auschwitz

(Kofman, 1987, p. 16)

French philosopher Sara Kofman’s definitive statement, “[b]ecause he was a Jew, my father died in Auschwitz” states an historical fact, but also she positions herself within a specific memorial collective, that of being Jewish and the child of the Shoah. In this section, I define essential terms that explain how memory and history operate differently and specifically how one collective memory is often viewed competitively, in opposition to other collectives’ memories. I will discuss research that relates to the three key factors I articulate as catalysts for forming and concretizing this competitive collective memory: identity (specifically, social identity), trauma and victim beliefs.

2.1.2 Defining the “intractable conflicts”

As briefly discussed in the introduction in Chapter 1, there are two “intractable conflicts” at issue in this research; the Israeli-Palestinian conflict itself and the conflict within the participants (and the groups that they affiliate with) that I interviewed for this project.

Daniel Bar-Tal’s work on intractable conflicts, particularly the social-psychological nature of these conflicts and the role collective memory plays in entrenching these conflicts will be referred to often in this research. Intractable conflicts are perceived (by the groups involved)
as “being of zero sum nature, without compromises and with adherence to all the original goals” (Bar-Tal, 2012, p. 43). In addition, “parties engaged in intractable conflict perceive any loss suffered by the other side as their own gain, and conversely, any gains of the other side as their own loss” (Bar-Tal, 2011, p. 8). While the Israeli-Palestinian conflict certainly fits within these descriptions, what is cogent for this particular research is how the “intractability” has been imbibed within many of the participants in this research, even though they live in Toronto and are not physically engaged in any way with the conflict itself. The concept of intractability may be used to equivocate the two collectives under examination here, suggesting that the entrenchment is equal. My intent is to make use of the literature on intractability as a way of discussing identity, trauma and victim beliefs, but within an understanding that the Zionist project, rooted in settler colonialism, creates specific and important differences in how intractability must be viewed in this research. In other words, intractability is not used or defined here in a manner that situates the differences between the two sides as equally moveable nor assumes that the sides are equally responsible for the conflict’s intractability.

The participants in this project shared stories from their individual memories. These individual memories are influenced by the groups (collectives) in which they most identify, and, while both individual and collective memories are shaped and influenced by identity, trauma and victim beliefs, it is collective memory that primarily works to ensconce these memories within the group.

2.1.3 Individual and collective memory

Memory theorist Pierre Nora explains that memory, though strictly speaking an individual phenomenon, is now used in a way that “encompasses a broad spectrum of meanings relating to different forms of presence, real or imaginary, of the past and present…almost replacing ‘history’” (Nora, 2011 p. ix). The first distinction that needs to be made is what do we mean by “individual” versus “collective” memory, and what relevance does this have to how memory is being applied in this study?
Drawing briefly from cognitive psychology, memory, within individuals, is stabilized through a process of consolidation where “labile” (short-term) memory becomes “stable” (long-term) memory. One conception of this is seeing memory as a liquid; metaphorically, it flows sequentially through two buckets, the first one representing labile and the second stable, which retains the liquid (memory) for much longer, (Anastasio, et al., 2012, pp. 20-21). It is essential to note that both selective and unintentional forgetting is also occurring during the transfer of memory from labile to stable and that consolidation does not assume that the stable memory is wholly reliable.

Frederic Bartlett’s well-known concept of “schema” was originally related to how individuals construct memory. According to Bartlett, a schema is “an active organization of past reactions… always supposed to be operating” (Bartlett, 1932, p. 201). However, he then connects this to group (collective) memory, offering, “the individual is nothing more than a special sort of group” (p. 309). Therefore a socially constructed group such as a family, community, social organization or nation must also consolidate their memories in forming their collective memory (Anastasio, et al., 2012, p. 120).

Bartlett’s (1932) Repeated Reproductions study suggests that when an individual is asked to repeat a story, certain aspects of the story change with each telling (Bartlett 1932, in Anastasio et al., p. 136). It is the contention here that members of a collective go through a similar process. This is particularly true when the story is deeply significant to one’s membership in a collective that has experienced trauma. The consolidation process allows certain details and emotions to become stable. This consolidation is a process of selection, both remembering and forgetting. While intent as to why certain things are remembered and others forgotten cannot be judged, what is remembered generally serves to advance the narrative of the collective.

Sociologist Emilie Durkheim, while not using the term “collective memory”, spoke of collective identity, pointing to how this can create solidarity within groups. He stated that society is “a complex of ideas and sentiments, of ways of seeing and feeling, a certain intellectual and moral framework distinctive of the entire group” (Durkheim, 1912, in Misztal, 2003, p. 124). Durkheim believed that “every society exhibits and requires a sense of continuity with the past” (Ibid, p. 124). The notion of how groups construct a “moral framework” is of particular interest to me in this study as this moral framework is not only
applied to the actions of the group, but is used, as evidenced in some of the participants’ responses to the Other, as a means of framing their collective as moral and the Other as immoral or less moral.

French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, a student of Durkheim, is primarily credited with the term “collective memory”. In his 1924 work, *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire (On Collective Memory)*, he concludes that memory is essentially social, and denies the existence of private memory (Sundholm, 2011 p. 123). Halbwachs positioned memory as active in that it both selects and reconstructs the past. Linking this to Bartlett’s work, during consolidation, the group’s collective memory goes through a similar process of selection, where details are remembered or forgotten. Halbwachs posited that individual memories are dependent on social groups for their existence, remembering from a social perspective or for a social purpose (Bernecker, 2009, pp. 182-183). While the concept of group memory being influenced by the memory of the individuals within the group seems straightforward, those they interact with also influence individual memory. As Freeman states, “what we remember about the personal past is suffused with other’s memories – which are themselves suffused with others’ memories” (Freeman, 2010, p. 263).

Many challenge Halbwachs’ notion of collective memory, as it seems to subsume memory into a particular collective’s view and bias. They suggest his position was “antihistorical” (Wertsch, 2009, p. 58). I agree with this critique, as what is at issue in this study is exactly this “antihistorical” view of memory and how it is operationalized within a group. Halbwachs pointed to the difference between “personal memory”, that is, a first-hand recollection and “historical memory” that encompasses a much longer period of time and consists primarily of stories from others that we ourselves have not witnessed (Halbwachs, 1924, p. 52). This provides a framework for understanding how memories of past events are used within a collective to create a political and social force that is unified and resistant to the constructed Other. While individual memory is not to be minimized, it is collective memory that is primarily used, within groups, to construct a group’s “historical memory” or “historiography” (Nora, 1989).

Many memory scholars recognize that memories of collective histories and political objectives are often compacted together and prove difficult to unravel (Radstone & Schwarz, 2010, p. 1).
The meanings of memory and history have shifted significantly over time, and it is not always clear what meaning is being applied, particularly when collective historical memories are formed within groups that were often not present at the events that are being remembered. Memory, as has been laid out here, is always active, “forging its past to serve present interests” (Ibid, p. 3). History, in regards to memory, is seen in this work as a framework for viewing memory, a “history of memory”.

Collective memory, within groups engaged in intractable conflicts, may be defined as “representations of the past remembered by society members as the history of the conflict” (Kansteiner, 2002, p. 187). Therefore, what is being remembered is not the history of the conflict but a selection of memories of that history. While conceptually it may be easy for most to grasp that we are selective in both what we remember and what we forget, this research project reminds us that this tacit knowledge is itself “forgotten” when our “memories” become our “facts”. “Collective memory is not history, though it may be made from similar material”, (Kansteiner, 2002, p. 180). Memory is not, I propose, antithetical to history, as Nora suggests, (Nora, 1989, p. 8), but rather a selected portion of history. The participants in this study are prone, as am I, to framing their views without the benefit of stories and experiences from outside their own collective. The history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is seen as irrefutable rather than as malleable. Distortable memories are shaped from a narrow selection of stories.

2.1.4 Shifting meanings of Memory and History

Nora distinguishes history from memory, seeing memory as connected to a “site” while history is connected to an “event” (Nora, 1989, p. 22). This modern view of memory shifts from first persons’ recollections of historically significant events to describing forms of “commemorative praxis” (means of consolidating and sharing memories, such as sharing stories, art, museums, monuments, etc.) that social collectives, who were not part of the event itself, use to construct their collective memory (Palmié, 2010, p. 367). This is the view of memory that Assmann (1995) referred to as “cultural memory”. It is the entrenchment of collective memory that often results from this construction or “commemorative praxis” that is being primarily challenged in this work. Many of the participants, especially the Jewish participants, did not experience the traumas they are remembering but are basing their “memories” on shared stories from their family, books, movies, museums or other sources.
Nora’s essay *Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire* (Nora, 1989), a synopsis of many of the key points from his exhaustive seven-volume study of memory under the same title, establishes distinctions between memory and history that are fundamental to the work being proposed here. The context of Nora’s writing is within a view of modern France and his disillusionment with what he considers the loss of memory through the acceleration of history (p. 8). While memory and history are seen antithetically, their definitions are also shifting. He is both lauding memory and cursing what he feels has happened to “real memory” saying that now all memory, once a “sacred remembrance”, is now archival, it is used and then discarded by history (pp. 9-13). However, Nora’s concern over history’s attack on memory is in itself, protecting particular historical remembrances. “Sacred remembrances” are valued by Nora as means of preserving the past, but a specific past, a past that he sees as valuable. Where I do see his criticism as particularly useful is his claim of a split between memory and history, pointing to the rise of historiographical consciousness, a “history of history” that defines a collective (Nora, 1989, p.15). While Nora sees historiography, or historical memory, as an interrogation of history that dilutes and subverts memory, my claim is simply that historical memory operates separately and differently from the memory of first person accounts that Nora sees as “real memory”. However, all memory is subject to selective remembering and forgetting. Nora’s claim of “real memory” also needs to be viewed with caution. Historical memory, as it refers to a “historical collective” is another term for collective memory, or, can be defined as “collective historical memory”.

Jan Assmann makes a distinction between two forms of collective memory: “communicative memory” and “cultural memory”. Communicative memory, he defines as everyday communication that has a rather short shelf life and is greatly influenced by contemporary events. “Cultural memory”, on the other hand, “comprises that body of reusable text, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose ‘cultivation’ serves to stabilize and convey that society’s self-image” (Assmann, 1995 in Kansteiner, 2002, p. 182). Cultural memory helps to preserve memory within a collective through memorialization, including art, museums, memorials, etc. In the memories at issue in this study, oral retelling of personal and family testimony are also viewed as forms of cultural memory as their repetition concretizes these memories within the collective, giving them authenticity and durability. This is particularly true in testimonies from the Shoah, as is explored later in this chapter.
What is important for the argument being made here in Nora’s work is his positioning of historical memory as separate and distinct from history itself. However, in contrast to Nora, I offer that all memory is, at least in part, a construction. Where I agree with him is that within groups, this construction occurs, not only as a natural consequence of remembering as a collective, but is often an intentional mechanism formed to build political and social capital. Nora sees, as do I, historical memory as “privileged memory”, forming groups who had created a “jealously protected enclave” supporting their group’s identity (p. 12), asserting “the passage from memory to history has required every social group to redefine its identity through the revitalization of its own history” (p. 15).

2.1.5 Privileged memory and social representation

The concept of “privileged memory” and “privilege” itself is important in this study in two specific ways. The first is in terms of who gets to tell their story. In my Master’s thesis, I was mostly oblivious to the privilege I had, as a Jew, to air my family’s story, without contest. I was never asked if I was being self-serving or if my motivations were political or activist in nature. It was taken for granted that stories of the Shoah were important to tell. These “memories” were, I have discovered over time, privileged memories. It doesn’t make them less important or necessarily biased, but I became part of the thousands of people who have talked about experiences from the Shoah, most (in my experience) forgetting and/or omitting other stories of genocide, trauma and oppression. My Master’s thesis, in short, was not multidirectional in nature and could be viewed as a form of promulgating competitive remembering as the story only talked about my (and my family’s) pain.

Second, the likelihood that my story and stories like it would be believed without question is also a privilege. In this study, multiple traumatic experiences are conveyed and responded to. However, some of the Jewish participants, I posit, due to a privilege position of believability and political support, freely expressed their doubts about the stories of the Other. The intent here is not to position the Jewish participants, or Jews in general, as intentionally misleading or prejudicial, but only to keep the focus on how collective memory, particularly collective memory that holds systemic and institutional privilege, can dominate the political discourse and limit the effectiveness of cross-cultural, cross-traumatic remembering.
While history and memory are not entirely separate, memory is a social representation of history. As was my story told in my Master’s thesis. This social representation, “constructed in language and imbued with meaning” becomes the “shared social reality of group members” (Bar-Tal, 2014, p. 52). In other words, memorial collectives consist of individuals that construct a group reality and constitute a “complete, meaningful and comprehensive story about the past” (Ibid, p. 52). Framed within the concept of privileged memory, not all these “social representations” are equally valued or scrutinized.

These group social representations, due to political and economic influence, also may become dominant narratives in education, and, in time, in society at large. In 2013, in a paper entitled *The Holocaust: Viewing the Study of Traumatic Memories Interbiographically*, I examined the “particularity” of the *Shoah* as an event distinct and different from other histories of mass violence), specifically in regards to the curricular power that studies of the *Shoah* have been able to wield in Canada and the United States (Wilkinson, 2013).

The notion of the *Shoah*’s particularity has specific ramifications in this study as many of my Jewish participants resisted any form of comparing genocide or other catastrophic events, especially the *Nakba*, to the *Shoah*. In 2009, a docent at Yad Vashem (Israel’s Holocaust Museum) was fired for making such a comparison. Itamar Shapira offered this learning to a group of visitors to the museum, “The Holocaust moved us to establish a Jewish state and the Palestinian nation’s trauma is moving it to seek self-determination, identity, land and dignity, just as Zionism sought these things” (Alexander & Dromi, 2011, p. 108). Shapira’s statement was in contravention of the museum’s position that the Holocaust cannot be compared to any other event. This research not only welcomes the intersectionality of traumatic events, fostering a multidirectional view of traumatic memory, but also seeks to break down artificial barriers to viewing the Other and the Other’s trauma.16

16 What makes Shapira’s point especially multidirectional in nature is that Yad Vashem is built above the site of the *Deir Yassin* massacre, a horrific event that took place as part of Israel’s War of Independence, what Palestinians refer to as the *Nakba*. There is an ongoing project in Israel called “Deir Yassin Remembered” that seeks to build a memorial at the base of Yad Vashem (http://www.deiryassin.org). This event is spoken of by one of the Palestinian participants in this research and is discussed in depth in Chapter 4 (4:2:6).
My argument, in the 2013 paper and in this research, is not whether the study of Shoah is important and valuable, but that the Jewish community’s political and economic influence creates opportunities for disseminating “our” stories to a broad audience that may not benefit, or benefit to the same degree, from this learning. Furthermore, “Holocaust Studies” have become a lighting rod in Canadian schools, particularly in more diverse schools, for some Arab and/or pro-Palestinian students and their families. The amount of Holocaust curricula available and taught in schools is seen as obfuscating the realities of the Israeli-Palestine conflict and the Occupation.

If a collective’s memory becomes “privileged” within the education system or in society at large, its influence on the public discourse becomes disproportionate to memories that are less privileged. This project suggests that, in many cases, this disproportionate influence on the public discourse also further isolates the collective within its own memorial silo, resisting intrusion from the Other and from the Other’s pain.

2.1.6 A summary of the characteristics of collective memory

Daniel Bar-Tal (2014, pp. 3-6) cites eight distinctive characteristics of collective memory that summarize the key points from my review. I briefly summarize these descriptions below:

1. Collective memory is not an objective history (if there truly is such a thing) of the past, but reflects a group’s “present existence and future aspirations”. This “history” is socially constructed and exists within a specific socio-political-cultural context that gives this “history” its meaning.

2. These representations are shared by group members and are often treated by them as factual accounts and therefore represent a “valid history of the group”. While

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17 For a history of Holocaust Education in Toronto schools, see, The Campaign for Holocaust Education in Toronto: An Oral History (Cappe, 2007). Also, see Israel-Palestine: The pedagogical challenge (Chang & Grayston, 2010), which examines a particular incident in a school in British Columbia where the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC, which is no longer active) petitioned (and won) to have a question that they deemed antisemitic in nature removed. The question asked students, on a ministry of education website, for their views on the Occupation. Also, See The Emergence of Holocaust Education in American Schools, (Fallace, 2008) for a detailed account of how this rise in Holocaust media occurred in the 1970’s and how this influenced the growth in Holocaust curricula in American schools. For a similar review of this phenomenon in Canadian schools, see Issues in Holocaust Education (Reed & Short, 2004).
there are individual differences in how these accounts are transmitted, members of
a collective tend to retell these constructed histories in order to advance the group’s
socio-political objectives.

3. Collective memory acts as a container for holding shared emotions. These
emotions “provide a particular meaning to the remembered events and facilitate
their memorizing”.

4. Collective memory provides a foundation for the forming of cultural symbols such
as literature, films, monuments, ceremonies, etc. (the description of how the
memory of the Shoah became prevalent in Canada and elsewhere is an example of
how cultural symbols are ensconced within a collective and the society in which
they reside).

5. Collective memory is a multilayered narrative as new experiences may be woven
with past histories. These “new” stories often serve as further evidence for how the
group sees and represents its history (these “multilayered narratives” are repeatedly
represented in the narratives of this study’s participants).

6. Collective memory is dynamic and changeable, depending on the political and
cultural context and needs of the group.

7. Collective memory serves as a rationale for making policies decisions and taking
actions as well as to justify those actions.

8. Collective memory characterizes the collective as unique, distinctive and exclusive,
forming and maintaining the group’s social identity.

In this study, I am not making an argument for the value of collective memory as a discipline
or for the methodology used in the growing field of collective memory studies. As Kansteiner
reminds, collective memory should be studied with three essential historical factors in mind:
intellectual and cultural traditions that create how we represent the past, how these “memory
markers” are susceptible to manipulation and how, we as “consumers of memory” transform
these “memory markers” for our own interests (Kansteiner, 2002, p. 180). The argument I am
making is two-fold. First, that collective memory needs to be questioned, like all memory and
understood as fallible and open to both interpretation and misuse. Second, while all memory is fallible, whether individual or subsumed within a collective, this reality of fallibility is often tacitly disregarded when making political arguments and justifications for one’s own positions and actions or those of the group in which one belongs.

2.2 Collective memory and identity

Identity may be viewed as simply as “Who am I?” In this study, the question of “Who am I not?” is perhaps the most important identity marker. While some traits are fixed at birth (e.g. skin colour, place of birth, parental ethnicity and religion) others (e.g. language, clothing, food choices), while often influenced by parents and communities, are selected by individuals as they mature (Kriesberg, 2003, p. 2). This “selection” and the roots of why one embraces certain identity markers and not others is central to this study as individuals coalesce into groups with those that have embraced similar identity markers. Returning to Bar-Tal, identity is first how the individual views him or herself and how this viewing allows one to see themselves as part of a group. In other words, individuals “self-categorize within a collective” and this self-categorization is “in contrast to some other classes of collectives” (Bar-Tal, 2014, p. 7). It is “social identity” that is at work in forming a collective, framing who we “belong” to, and, by necessity, who we do not.

It is important, here, to state that this research project frames identity in a very specific way. It is identity forged out of collective trauma. I did not ask the participants anything about their likes and dislikes, what music they listened to, their interests outside of the Israel/Palestine conversation or any other question that would show who they are and how they viewed the world outside of the very narrow subject matter of this study. As the study evolved, this view of identity narrowed even further. In fact, this research focuses primarily on Jewish identity within the framework of the Shoah, antisemitism, Zionism and Israel/Palestine. What I am theorizing here is how the Jewish participants’ Jewish identity worked to create membership within a specific memorial collective that, in some cases not only deepened their sense of belonging, but fostered resistance to the identity and trauma of the Palestinian Other. My own Jewish identity and my continued questioning of how I have come to “belong”, is also under examination.
Therefore, the “social identities” I examine in this research are limited to the social identities that have come to be from individual and collective trauma. The “long-standing ‘cases’ of identity that leads to the entrenched “us” and “them” paradigm: being Jewish, being Palestinian, being from a family of Shoah survivors, being one who is Occupied or being a victim of discrimination have served to frame a particular place of “belonging” for the participants in this study.

The two research questions I ask in this research can both be viewed through the lens of social identity:

1. How is collective memory constructed within groups that are engaged in the Israel/Palestine debate in general and in Toronto specifically?

2. How might applying conceptual frameworks that allow us to see memory non-competitively, but rather multidirectionally and interbiographically, open up new pathways that lessen distance and resistance, particularly in regards to how the Jewish participants engage with the ongoing traumatic experiences of the Palestinian participants?

The first question of construction is a question of social identity formation. In essence, how did the individual participants identity and historical collective memory lead them to identify with a particular memorial collective? There are several theories in how one comes to identify, first as an individual and then as part of a group. Brewer notes anthropologist William Sumner’s ethnocentric study (1906) showing that humans seem to naturally differentiate based on membership with a group (Brewer, 2011, p. 26). Sumner defined these memberships as “in-group” (the group one belongs to) and “out-group” (the group one does not belong to, or the Other), (Ibid, p. 26). Freud looked specifically at group leaders as the “object of identification” as he was concerned with the role of experiences and maturation in how one comes to identify with the leader of a group. Freud used the term “narcissism of minor differences” to refer to the seeming preoccupation with small distinctions between groups that seemed to maintain separation between the groups. Volkan extended this theory (1988) of identity formation to suggest that “individual identity is achieved through a universal process of defining ‘allies’ and ‘enemies’” (Volkan 1988, in Brewer, 2011, p.128). This is similar to Maalouf’s contention that “cases of identity” lead to the “us” and “them” paradigm (Maalouf, 2001, p. 33). This study
suggests that individual identity-driven narratives become “social representations of collective memory that provide the sense of continuity which is crucial for the construction of a meaningful social identity” (Bar-Tal, 2011, p. 7). These identities or, more accurately, “social representations” of identity are coalesced within the collective and foster a sense of belonging that often immunizes the group from the Other.

Identities can also form out of specific events. Ahmad Sa’di posits that “the Nakba has become a constitutive element of Palestinian identity… it is a Palestinian event and a site of Palestinian collective memory” (Sa’di, 2002, p. 175). As is born out in many of the narratives of the Palestinian participants in this research, the Nakba, as well as the Occupation, has become an essential part of their identification as Palestinians. Nora points to a similar phenomenon in relationship to collective memory and the Shoah, referring to this as a form of “incontestable memory”, which has now become embedded in Jewish identity. The effects on identity of traumatic events, like the Nakba, the Occupation and the Shoah, are more deeply explored in the next section of this chapter.

The second question of unravelling collective memory expands the meaning of “social identity” beyond one’s collective. Remembering non-competitively requires individuals who have become ensconced within a particular collective, not to deny or reject their collective, but to pull themselves and the collective towards a new form of social identification; one that includes multidirectional re-membering. My commitment throughout this research project is to resist simplistic or unjust solutions, but rather offer that it is possible to seek justice for one’s group and assist the Other in achieving a fair solution. Within the Israel/Palestine debate, I call on the Jewish collective, particularly the Jewish liberal-left, to move beyond listening and dialogue, to action.

In looking specifically at the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Herbert Kelman posits that such conflict “impedes the development of a transcendent identity by creating a state of negative interdependence between the two identities” (Kelman, 1999, p. 581). Identity, viewed through the lens of “zero-sum game”, conflates one group’s loss as the other’s gain, and, conversely a loss for “them” is a gain for “us”. Kelman proposes that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a conflict between two nationalist identities and that this negative interdependence between the two identities is largely responsible for the ongoing nature of the conflict (Ibid, p. 583).
The intractable conflict primarily at issue in this study is the conflict within the two Diasporas I am examining. Any move towards “tractability” must involve a multidirectional view of identity, one that supersedes solely nationalist, ethnic, religious and familial identities and begins to break down the “interdependence” of the two collective’s identities, forming a “transcendent identity” (Kelman, 1999, p. 581). This “transcendence” is complicated within this study as I have come to understand the ethical dilemma of requiring Palestinians to “transcend” their identity while under Occupation. Therefore, this research focuses on a call for me and my Jewish participants (as well as the Jewish Diaspora that may read this study) to “transcend” our traumatic past and become voices for justice that may create a new collective that embraces the Palestinian’s past and present experiences with our own.

2.3 Collective memory and trauma

Referring back to Assmann’s (1995) specification of collective memory as “cultural memory”, there is also “cultural trauma”, trauma rooted in events connected to a specific people (culture). Specific to this thesis are three specific traumatic events, the Shoah, the Nakba and the 1967 war and subsequent Occupation. However, sociologists and psychologists generally concur that trauma and traumatic events are separate (Sundholm, 2011). Trauma, from the Greek meaning “wound”, refers to a “self-altering experience of violence and injury and harm” (Gilmore, 2001, pg. 130). Alexander positions trauma as a social event noting that: “Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and forever changing a group’s identity” (Alexander, 2004, p. 10). Returning to Kofman’s statement, “Because he was a Jew, my father died in Auschwitz”, she identified the “indelible mark” left on her and the Jewish community. But her depiction is of a “wound”, a cultural trauma as Alexander describes it, whose social character separates it from history. Trauma is not a “dissection of the past, but an experience in the present” (Sundholm, p. 123), which Kofman experienced as she was making this statement.

Sundholm cautions, as do I, Alexander’s emphasis on the social nature of trauma that seems to suggest that how the collective defining the event must be a politically and/or socially motivated decision, not a reasoned, grief-driven response to horrific events. This is particularly important here as participants from both memorial collectives, at times, question the veracity or long-
term impacts of the Other’s traumatic past. However, the cultural trauma process, or as Sundholm refers to it, “the semiotics of trauma that takes place in-between the event and representation” (Ibid, p.124) reflects how trauma, within a collective, can become a signifier of the group, operating separately from the traumatic event itself.

My thesis project works to challenge the fatalistic notion that memories are intransigent and impenetrable. History and memory are both vehicles of remembering and retelling the past; what is essential is that we don’t assume that historical memory is solely historical. Therefore, as historical memory is a social phenomenon, it is moveable and capable of remembering non-competitively. It is possible to create pedagogy of “re-membering” that fosters interaction with another’s story and builds empathy and agency. The extent to which such a process was successful among the participants, as well as the challenges that exist with my seeking equivalent responses from non-equivalent realities will be discussed in Chapter 7.

While Nora recognizes that collectives need to remember, he cautions that the repetition of a memory makes it “incontestable” (p. 16). This “incontestability” of memory that I referenced earlier is at the root of how collective memory has been operationalized to cement a group’s identity, particularly in opposition to the Other. He refers specifically to how Jews have remembered the Shoah. Referring back to Nora’s statement that “memory attaches itself to sites [where as] history attaches itself to events” (p. 22), the history of the Shoah itself is specific to the “event” to what happened. However collective historical memory, developed through the “sites of testimony”, including: sharing stories, art, museums, monuments, etc. is what becomes “incontestable”. These traumas, remembered within a collective, can serve to coalesce memory within the group, shielding the collective from an expansive, reflexive view of memory.

2.3.1 Trauma: Shoah (Holocaust) memory in Canada

Frank Bialystok’s book (2000) Delayed Impact: The Holocaust and the Canadian Jewish Community details how historical memory was operationalized within Canadian Jewry after the Shoah. The author traces how the memory of the Holocaust (his word) underwent changes based on the shifting needs of the community. Bialystok is not suggesting that memories were fabricated, but that historical memory, as Nora argues, is separate from history and susceptible to manipulations and distortions. Bialystok argues that the impact of the Holocaust on
Canadian Jews was “delayed” for about twenty years after the war. The Shoah was clearly a catastrophic experience and many Jews wanted to leave it in the past. As the author shows, most Jews living in Canada were here long before the war, were well integrated into Canadian society and, contrary to today, “most Canadian Jews did not want to know what happened, and few survivors had the courage to tell them” (p. 7).

Then, from December 1959 to January 1960, a rash of antisemitic incidents happened in Canada, the United States and Europe, including swastikas being painted on hundreds of synagogue doors. This led to a statement from the World Jewish Congress that “we are faced with a social disease which must be suppressed and whose seeds must be removed” (p. 101). A riot at Allan Gardens in Toronto in April, 1965, where members of the newly formed Canadian Nazi Party clashed with protestors, was a shocking event for the Jewish community and seemed to signal a new strength within the community to resist antisemitism (pp. 131-134).

Bialystok also cites the Eichmann trial, which began in 1961 in Israel and received much publicity, particularly in Canada (p. 106) as a galvanizing event for the Jewish community in Canada, bringing Shoah (Holocaust) memory to the forefront of the Canadian Jewish conscience.\(^\text{18}\)

Over the next ten to fifteen years, the historical collective memory of Jews in Canada, and elsewhere, became more and more focused on Shoah (Holocaust) remembrance, leading to many books, movies and television series about the Shoah\(^\text{19}\) and, a few years later, to the production of several Holocaust curricula referenced earlier. Shoah remembrance has also fostered the building of many museums that hold stories from the Shoah (e.g. Neuberger Holocaust Education Centre in Toronto, Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.).

\(^{18}\) See Eichmann in Jerusalem: A report on the banality of evil (Arendt, 1963) for an account of the trial from one perspective of a Shoah survivor. Importantly, Arendt questions Israel’s actions in capturing Eichmann and illegally bringing him to Israel for trial. Her account is important, in part, because she resists simplistic notions of Nazi evil while questioning Israeli actions. This is keeping with Arendt’s later criticism of Zionism and using the Shoah as a means of justifying Israeli policy. For a rebuttal of Arendt’s account that supports all actions Israel took in capturing and putting Eichmann on trial, see The Eichmann Trial (Lipstadt, 2011).

\(^{19}\) Of particular influence were the book The War Against the Jews (Dawidowicz, 1975) and the television miniseries Holocaust (1978).
Bialystok’s book is significant for this study as it shows how historical collective memory, particularly the memory of the *Shoah*, is a malleable representation of a collective’s experience, rather than a static replication of history. The Jewish participants in this study all grew up during, or lived in this time of exploding *Shoah* memory. It is the reality they know and this is reflected in many of their testimonies.

### 2.3.2 Traumatic memory and mourning

Freud viewed trauma as a “double wound”, both a wound to the body and a wound to the soul, though it is the wound to the soul that he became most interested in (Caruth, 1996, p. 3). Freud believed that mourning is “a crucial mode of working through” (Freud, 1917/2006, p.311) loss and trauma. Mourning can serve to mitigate traumatic experience as “it mediates between past and future and participates in the social production of meaning” (Humphrey & Valverde, 2007, p. 180).

While I critique the nature of collective cultural trauma that can privilege one group’s traumatic experience over another’s, each individual and collective under examination here is or has experienced mourning and is still “living with loss” (Simon et. al., 2000) and one’s memorial collective may offer a place of shared grief and even solace.

### 2.3.3 Trauma: Witnessing and representation

In describing the limitations of words, Dori Laub (1995) offers, “there are never enough words or the right words… to be fully captured in thought, memory and speech” (p. 63). The interviews conducted for this research consists of words and are responded to in words. However, within the limitations of words, the participants and I are “witnessing” the Other’s trauma. To encounter the Other and the Other’s experience of loss, one must engage in “witnessing” the Other and their loss. Laub refers to three levels of witnessing: “the level of being witness to oneself within the experience, the level of being witness to the testimony of others, and the level of being witness to the process of witnessing itself” (p. 61).

As is described in detail in Chapter 3, the participants in this research and this researcher are engaged, in certain moments in the process, in all three levels of witnessing that Laub denotes. What is primarily at issue in this section is how what my participants and I are witnessing is
expressed as representation: who is being represented and who is doing the representing.

Deborah Britzman probes one example of arguments over representation in looking at Meyer Levin’s 30 thirty-year unsuccessful quest to prevent the staging of the *Diary of a Young Girl*, a play based on Anne Frank’s diary, and produce his own version he felt better represented, not only Anne’s suffering, but Jewish suffering (Britzman, 2000). Levin’s quest seemed driven by a need to stem what he considered a conspiracy to forget “Jewish loss” (p. 28). As with Sara Kofman, it is not “loss”, in its entirety that Levin is referring to, but “Jewish Loss”, a people whose loss he identifies with and with whom he is invested. Britzman relies heavily on Freudian analysis as a means of making sense of the vicissitudes of Levin’s grief process. *Nachträglichkeit* or “afterwordness” or “belatedness” is Freud’s term for the dynamic of a new meaning of grief that is created over time. In other words, it is not experience that undergoes a change but rather how one perceives the experience and its aftermath and how that re-experience re/shapes one’s actions (p. 30). The re-experience of the event is also traumatic, as it was for Levin. His desire to remember stretched to an insistence that we all identify, not only with Anne Frank, but also with all who were affected by the *Shoah*.

In tracing Levin’s efforts, Britzman posits that Levin was unsuccessful, in part, because fleeting identifications with the Other cannot allow for ethical thought or create an ethical relationship with the Other, neither “solidifying or re-inscribing” (p. 35). What Britzman points to, beyond the scope of what Levin, in his grief could imagine, is the possibility of an ethical encounter with the past, imagined not solely to address the suffering that occurred and to whom it occurred, but creating a space where the present may be reshaped (p. 45).

I highlight Britzman’s examination of Levin as a reminder of grief’s (born out of trauma) endurance and the potential for its re-experience that prolongs the affect of mourning. In reading the participants’ testimonies (Chapters 4, 5 & 6), their past is most often being

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20 It is important to note that Levin, while a Jewish author who focused on Jewish-related themes and the *Shoah* particularly, was not himself involved in the *Shoah* as his family had immigrated many years before. This, however, does not lessen his commitment to the historical memory with which he associated.

21 *Nachträglichkeit* refers to the idea of trauma as an “unassimilated experience” that shows itself at a time well after the traumatic event. In Freud’s work, this refers often to sexual trauma but can also apply to trauma that results from any loss or difficult experience (Weller, 2012, p. 23).
represented within a specific collective’s identity, trauma, and victimhood. Is there a place beyond this memorial silo, beyond where Kofman and Levin were able to go? While mourning, or Freud’s distinction of “melancholia” (a mourning that persists)\(^{22}\) often leads to a form of representation that can inscribe grief within a group, shielding Self from the Other, this research envisions a study of loss that leads us to a more “generous, righteous and just urge for an affective community” (Britzman, 2000, p. 51).

### 2.4 Collective memory and victim beliefs\(^{23}\)

Victim beliefs or victimhood is defined by Montville as:

> [A] state of individual and collective ethnic mind that occurs when the traditional structures that provides an individual sense of security and self-worth through membership in a group are shattered by aggressive, violent political outsiders. Victimhood can be characterized by either an extreme or persistent sense of mortal vulnerability (Montville, 1993, p. 112).

Victim beliefs are an important contributing factor to the creating and sustaining of intractable conflicts and have proven to be a significant barrier to tractability. Brewer refers to Sumner’s work on identity when she speaks of the role of victim beliefs in intractable conflicts, stating, the “in-group as the victim of unfair treatment or aggression from the out-group enemy is a complement to the perception of threat and other justifying cognitions that sustain intergroup conflict”. This viewing of self, as part of a group, as victim, places the “in-group on the moral high ground at the same time that it serves to justify inflicting harm on the out-group” (Brewer, 2011, p. 135). While this “harm” is easy to quantify in physical conflicts, in conflicts that

\(^{22}\) See “Mourning and Melancholia” in *On the History of Psycho-Analytic Movement: Papers on Metapsychology and Other Work* (Volume II, 1914 - 1916). In this paper, Freud distinguishes natural grief as a result of a loss or trauma (mourning) from prolonged grief that would today be akin to depression. Britzman is suggesting that Levin’s grief moved beyond mourning and into melancholia. This may also be true for some of the participants in this research, but it is not a distinction I can make nor is it important to this study. Jacques Lacan and Walter Benjamin have also related melancholia to *nachträglichkeit*, while distinct; both theories refer to an after effect of a traumatic experience (Weller, 2012, pp. 23-24).

\(^{23}\) I have chosen the term victim beliefs to describe victimhood, though most scholars I have consulted use the terms interchangeably. The value of the term “victim beliefs”, I suggest, is that it directly interrupts the notion that being a victim is a “truth”, but rather points to victimhood as a construction.
centre on ideas, it is more difficult to assess harm. As is particularly evident in some of the participants’ responses to the Other, the harm to the Other is inflicted by rejecting the veracity of their testimony and justifying this by insisting that their own traumatic experiences have been more damaging and that any harm their “group” has inflicted on the Other was to protect themselves.

Volkan proposes that societies remember especially major events that he calls “chosen traumas”. Volkan defines a chosen trauma as “the shared mental representation of an event in a large group’s history in which the group suffered a catastrophic loss, humiliation, and helplessness at the hands of its enemies” (Volkan, 2002, pp. 211-212). This chosen trauma embeds victimhood within the group. Volkan further posits when individuals within a group are unable to fully mourn their loss, they pass this ongoing grief, as well as the task of completing the psychological work of repair that they have been unable to achieve on to their children (Ibid, p. 212). In essence, the nachträglichkeit, or “afterwordness” of mourning reappears in the next generation.

Further, for one group to maintain its own legitimacy, it must delegitimize the other. Kelman describes the “psychological core” of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict as “the perception by both parties that it is a zero-sum conflict, not only with respect to territory, but, most importantly, with respect to national identity and national existence” (Kelman, 1999, p. 58). Cohrs, et al., denote eight themes that are central to what they refer to as the “ethos of conflict” including “victimization of one’s group” and “delegitimization and dehumanization of the adversary” (Cohrs, et al., 2015, p. 33). The building of one’s legitimacy, working simultaneously with a need to delegitimize the Other that Kelman speaks of seem to work in concert with a group’s victim beliefs that have their genesis in a chosen trauma. Entwined in the group’s feeling that they have suffered repeated victimization is a need to legitimize their own need to fight back, combating being victimized by delegitimizing those that may contest (or they believe that they contest) their right to exist. Victimhood fosters an existential fight that “requires” the group to delegitimize the Other due, at least in part, to a “persistent sense of mortal vulnerability”, noted in Montville’s definition of victimhood (Montville, 1993, p. 112).

While both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict maintain a victim narrative born out of this sense of “mortal vulnerability”, it is some of the Jewish participants in this research that
display a greater propensity, from a narrative of victimhood, for legitimizing their group by delegitimizing the Other. There may be many factors that contribute to this phenomenon, including that this research utilizes a very small sample of eight participants, five who identify as Jewish with a connection to Israel and three who identify as Palestinian. While the small sample size may mean that this trait is specific to this small group, this propensity within the Jewish community to delegitimize the Other is one that I have often observed outside of this study. Also, the privilege of the Jewish, pro-Israel narrative in the West likely facilitates ease within the Jewish participants to critique the Other. What is, in my view the most critical factor is how the Shoah narrative has been able to maintain its stance as a unique historic event that must be viewed separately from all other genocides or catastrophes. The Shoah is then the greatest manifestation of victimization, producing the most “valued” victims. Without my own continuing journey towards unraveling victimhood within me, this view of Jewish victimhood would not be possible for me to grasp or to offer as essential learning for all in my community of remembers.

In the play, Masada, an Israeli history professor, while speaking to a Jewish community organization, articulates Jewish victimhood, stating: “Every Jew feels as if we are members of a club, but the membership card has a stamp, ‘may be cancelled without notice’” (Milner, 2012, p. 15). It is this link to identity, belonging, trauma and victimhood, within the Jewish memorial collective that is traced throughout this project. Membership in the Jewish memorial collective, for the Jewish participants I interviewed for this research project, is viewed, often, as dangerous and, as part of identifying within this collective, being killed, or at least the threat of physical and/or emotional harm is never too far away.

It is also important to note that in working from my identification as a Jew and the privilege this affords me, and the great disparities of power, not only within the conflict itself, but within the Diasporas that I examine, I came to understand that it was unethical and illegitimate for me to make any assumptions about how victimhood may or may not create resistance to the stories of Jewish trauma, for the participants who identify as Palestinian.

24 Arthur Milner’s play Masada premiered in 1990, but this excerpt was taken from his book Two Plays about Israel/Palestine, which was published in 2012.
2.5 Competing narratives about competing narratives and human rights

A student asked Dennis Fox, a critic of most common conflict resolution theories in academia, this question: “Do you totally reject the idea about psychological perspectives on conflict resolution or do you just want to add the issue about justice?” (Fox, 2011, p. 383) The work of Bar-Tal, Brewer, Volkan, Laub and others that I have reviewed here looks at the psychology of conflict through identity, trauma and victim beliefs. In fact, my research questions are psychosocial in nature, how emotionally driven memorial constructs form into social representations and what we might do to loosen them. Before reading Fox’s answer, I decided to wrestle with this question myself. Is my research just an amalgamation of some erudite theories with no concrete action attached to them? Is seeking to understand the psychosocial roots of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and, more importantly, of the conflict within the Israel/Palestine debate here in Canada, in and of itself, an important step forward? For the answer, I returned to my commitment to unraveling my own victimhood and the evening in class where I was confronted with the conflict between my largely unexamined privilege as a Jew and my spoken commitment to human rights. This commitment propels me to recognize the limitations of any work, particularly the work of Arab/Jewish dialogue groups in the form they currently exist, that provides feel-good answers without making a difference for those who suffer daily as a result of the conflict. My answer to my question is the study of the psychological roots of intractability in conflicts can help us understand what is happening within groups that lead them to support “us” while disregarding “them”. It can help those who study intractable conflicts to understand the role collective memory plays in conflict and can be a useful addition to conflict studies. However, without a human rights framework that acknowledges privilege in its many forms and directly confronts inequities, the efficacy of the work is, at best, an academic exercise.

Not surprisingly, Fox comes to similar conclusions. He focuses on the principle of critical theorizing, contrasting the often neo-liberal “value-free” approach he sees in “mainstream academics” (Fox, 2011, p. 385). In regards to conflict resolution, he refers to “competing narratives about competing narratives”. In other words, having opposing sides listen to each
other for the purpose of dismantling conflicting national myths and really listening to the Other is valuable, however, focusing on the process of dialogue and “contradictory perceptions” without justice leaves the injustice in place, (p. 386). Additionally, I suggest that it serves to tacitly approve of the injustice by not addressing it. Fox instead suggests a “psychology of social justice” that pays attention to “the impact of injustice and oppression on human behavior” (p. 385). In this research, a focus of my analysis is on recognizing and vocalizing the consequences of injustice and oppression on the Palestinian participants (and Palestinians in general) for the Jewish participants. My analysis is relevant to all who participate in approaches to conflict resolution that tend to step over the long-lasting effects of the Nakba and the ongoing impact of the Occupation.

In my thesis proposal, I pointed to the work of Daniel Bar-on and others who have invested in altering the future of Israel/Palestine by engaging students, teachers and researchers in paradigmatic explorations of co-creating curricula (Wilkinson, 2015). Bar-on and his colleagues employed a cross-cultural dialogical methodology they called “TRT” (to reflect and trust). While the concept of a “two-state” solution is commonly discussed, Bar-on offers a “two-narrative” solution (Bar-on, 2006, p. 89).²⁵

Fox looks specifically at the work of Bar-on and colleagues in their PRIME (Peace Research Institute in the Middle East) project, questioning if this project made a difference to the lives of Palestinians living under Occupation. Through their work in PRIME, Bar-on, et al. employed the “two-narrative” solution and created a curriculum project that told the history of Israel/Palestine “side by side”, with a group consisting of both Palestinian and Israeli educators (Adwan, Bar-on and Naveh, 2012). The result was a book that tells often-conflicting stories, beginning with the Balfour declaration of 1917 through present-day conflicts, on opposing pages.

Before conducting my participant interviews, I looked to TRT and the concept of “side by side” as a model for this research. While I still believe that there is great value in work that

²⁵ The concept of a “two-narrative” solution and a “two-narrative” curriculum put forward by Bar-on and his colleagues should not be seen as an endorsement of a “two-state” solution, but rather a means of a collaborative approach to understanding differing histories.
uses a shared narrative approach, I understand, as Fox points out, there are legitimate reasons to question the work it does. First, Bar-on and his colleagues did not envision working toward a single narrative that both sides might someday come to accept, but rather accepted the inevitability of the narratives remaining “side by side” (Fox, p. 387). This acceptance does not require the Israeli educators, whose memories hold a great deal more societal privilege, to fully accept the memories and experiences of their Palestinian colleagues. Second, the work of PRIME seems preoccupied with helping Palestinians understand and appreciate Israelis and the Israeli narrative, something Palestinians seem much less concerned with (Ibid, p. 387). After years of dialoguing, “they [Palestinians] are frustrated by activities that ‘normalize’ relationships without resisting occupation; they object to endless political negotiations that bypass core disputes or that seem destined – even designed – to resolve those disputes in Israel’s favor” (Ibid, p. 387). Fox cites a study conducted with both Israelis and Palestinians. One Palestinian respondent stated: “Palestinians don’t have a problem living with Jews and Israelis, so that’s not the issue…the issue has got to be the occupation” (Kaufman-Lacusta, 2010, p. 155, in Fox 2011, p. 387).

The commitment in this research is to use narratives interbiographically as a tool to begin to develop a cross-identity, cross-traumatic space. However, as is manifested in the second interviews “interactions”, my commitment to justice and human rights demands that I challenge notions that appear to see competing narratives as two equally proportioned views that must both be accepted without question. This is not a work of “balance” as balance itself indicates a negotiation between equal narratives, but rather a work of acknowledging differences while not accepting unjust and unexamined conclusions.

### 2.6 Summary: Identity, trauma and victim beliefs and competitive remembering

Up to this point in Chapter 2, I have reviewed literature that outlines how collective memory becomes ensconced within groups, particularly groups engaged in intractable conflicts. This literature highlights the intersectionality of identity, trauma and victim beliefs. While each operates, at one level, independently, within individuals and groups, they also work with and off each other. Identity, as it is viewed here as identity forged out of trauma, becomes imbued within a collective as a “traumatic identity” that deepens one’s adherence to and sense of
membership in, the collective. Victimhood is itself a way of identifying. Being a victim is wholly dissimilar from racial identity, country of origin or genetic characteristics, but rather it is a chosen way of viewing one’s life and experiences. What is most crucial and evident in the analysis of the two sets of participant interviews is that the selectiveness of identity is in no way a mitigating factor in diminishing the power of identities, born out of trauma and a resulting view of victimhood, to immunize individuals and groups from the Other, even when the Other has had very similar experiences.

Having reviewed literature on how collective memory operates within groups to isolate them from the Other, solidifying a competitive, resistant form of memory, I will now turn to literature that points to a path away; a path towards re-membering. This process is an educative one; therefore I will turn to literature that offers pedagogy for re-membering non-competitively and a study of the past that imagines an entirely different future.

2.7 Re-viewing memory non-competitively: A new “curriculum”

*Memory is not simply a form of afterness, but rather an elusive encounter between the “after” of something that never was present and a futurity that has not yet been thought.*

(Richter, 2010, p. 158)

Richter (2010) claims memory is not an “afterwordness” as conceptualized by Freud’s concept of *nachträglichkeit*, an “afterness” that occurs subliminally without action or agency, but rather an afterness that may create a new way of being with the past. Creating a co-constructed pathway to learning about the past, including this potential for a new way of remembering it, is in its broadest sense, a “curriculum”. Curriculum, writ large, pertains to the teaching and learning paradigm, whether in a traditional academic setting or within the Self/Other engagement being proposed here. In both cases, I offer that it is necessary to position this research within curriculum theory, as there is an intentional educational process that is being undertaken.

Richter’s observations on memory are in relation to the writing of Jacques Derrida that mourned the loss of many of his friends. Derrida separates memory into two categories, from
the German *die Erinnerung* (emotional memory) and *die Gedächtnis* (thinking memory) (Richter, 2010, p. 157). “Thinking memory” is what Richter is referring to. It is a memory that cannot remain in the past because as we struggle, working our way through it, we are reinventing what the memory means and what we are going to do with it. Collective memory is a form of emotional memory, memory that is selected, often unconsciously, without the agency necessary in thinking memory.

Richter’s reflection on Derrida, when applied to curriculum theorizing, rests within a postreconceptualization moment in curriculum studies (i.e. Gaztambide-Fernández, 2010, Wright, 2011). Wright offers the term “presentist praxis” as a curriculum theory that works in this moment, both honouring and re-shaping such discourses as critical pedagogy, antiracism, anti-colonialism, and critical multiculturalism (Wright, 2011, p. 20). Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández refers to this “next” moment of curriculum work as “creative solidarity” (2010).

Bringing historical memory into the curriculum conversation looks at the past most specifically as it constructs the present and, how, as it is socially active, can alter the future course. As both Wright and Gaztambide-Fernández point to, postreconceptualization insists on a blurring of theory and practice that, as Wright states, brings in the “dirty outside world” to curriculum theorizing (p. 20).

I place Tarc’s offer of a “reparative curriculum” as a “postreconceptual” vision of curriculum studies. It is a vision that insists on pedagogy of reflection as a path towards repair, of applying thinking memory to our competing traumatic histories. In this section, I position Tarc’s reparative curriculum as an interbiographical method, while acknowledging and continuing to expand discourses that deconstruct the deleterious effects of ongoing power imbalances, I focus on reconstructing the future. Curriculum is envisioned here as any interaction that creates new learning, not necessarily in an academic classroom setting. The interaction between the participants and me is viewed here as a form of curriculum as it employs an interdependent methodology where all are learning from each other.

My primary objective in this section is to offer a rethinking of how traumatic histories are discussed, interpreted, and concretized, in a way that is imaginative, reflexive and guided by future possibilities rather than past failings. I offer three separate but entangled pedagogies that are focused on the study of history and historical memory that employ thinking memory. They
are: “multidirectional memory” (Rothberg, 2009), “transactive public memory” (Simon, 2005) and “historical agency” (den Heyer & Fidyk, 2010). Each of these, separately and together, can assist in reframing how creative works, driven by a desire to counter oppression and disable the deleterious effects of colonial histories, can also serve as vehicles for enlivening “futurity” and be driven by a “hermeneutics of hope” (den Heyer, 2009, p. 446).

Below, I examine both the limitations and possibilities for the application of non-competitive forms of “re-membering” in creating spaces for contested conversations within Israel/Palestine and the diaspora.

### 2.7.1 Memory, History and “Futurity”

“All biographies like all autobiographies like all narratives tell one story in place of another story”


The path forward begins with reimagining memory, particularly as it operates within collective traumatic histories. My purpose here is two-fold: first, to offer an alternative to a competitive view of collective memory, and, to illustrate some of the challenges that have been presented to operationalizing a non-competitive framework to the Israel/Palestine debate.

#### 2.7.1.1 Multidirectional memory

In *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* by Michael Rothberg (2009), lays out a framework for remembering differently.

Against the framework that understands collective memory as competitive memory—as a zero-sum struggle over scarce resources—I suggest that we consider memory as multidirectional: as subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative (p. 3).

He sees collective memory as “the relationship that a group establishes between its past and present circumstances”. Rothberg argues the memory itself is “the past made present”. This relationship has the past living in the present, making past traumas into present day
victimizations. When Sundholm states that trauma is not a “dissection of the past, but an experience in the present” (Sundholm, p. 123), he is referring to a constructed memory of past trauma that is politicized and open to manipulation in the present.

Rothberg uses the example of the building of the United States Holocaust Museum on the “Mall” in Washington, D.C., which raised questions among some African Americans as to why a monument about a story that happened to Jews in Europe was constructed in such a prominent place in America’s capital while there is no memorial to recognize the “Black Holocaust” caused by slavery (Michaels, 2006, in Rothberg pp. 1-2). Michael’s view, according to Rothberg, implies that collective memory “obeys a logic of scarcity: if a Holocaust Museum sits on the Mall in Washington, then Holocaust memory must literally be crowding out of the public space of American collective consciousness”. Furthermore, Rothberg posits that while there is a great need to engage critically with racism in America, collective memory is not like real-estate development where building in a certain location means greater value, and, that we can commemorate both without excluding either (Ibid, p. 1-2).

While this research shares Rothberg’s aim of a non-competitive, multidirectional view of memory, I don’t entirely agree with his response to Michaels. I do reject, as Rothberg does, that in acknowledging one history, by inference, we erase another. However, my study of Holocaust curricula does suggest that some memories become privileged within a society and this privilege operates, intentionally or not, to obfuscate the histories of those that hold less societal privilege.

Rothberg, throughout his book, gestures toward a multiple consciousness that encompasses more than one history. For example, he refers to W.E.B. Du Bois’ book (1949) *The Negro in the Warsaw Ghetto*, which he wrote after his visit to Warsaw. Rothberg posits that Du Bois’ reflection on Jews, race, and genocide can be viewed as a revised version of his 1903 idea of “double consciousness”, where African Americans had to simultaneously hold both their own view of themselves and the view thrust on them by white people. Rothberg views Du Bois’ writing here as a multidirectional gesture, where the Jewish experience and the Black experience maintain simultaneously commonality and difference (Rothberg, p. 112). This frames multidirectional memory as a process of viewing traumatic histories as different but
also interconnected (Ibid, p. 112). In applying this multidirectional framework to Israel/Palestine, Rothberg offers “histories are implicated in each other” and sees the “only way forward is through their entanglement” (p. 313).

This “entanglement” is messy and in seeking to incorporate disparate historical memories, I caution that this does not absolve us of our responsibility for a remembering that takes into account whose story we are telling and what resources we are using to tell it.

2.7.1.2 Transactive public memory

This entanglement requires the form of ethical remembering solicited by Roger Simon (2005). In viewing memory as an ethical undertaking, Simon brings multidirectional remembering directly into the teaching/learning paradigm. His offer of a transactive public memory “places one in relation to the past in its otherness and in its potential connection to oneself as coming after (perhaps, emerging out of or against) the past” (p. 89).

Like Rothberg, Simon envisions memory as interdependent but without being subordinate to another’s memory (p. 25). This involves a connection between self and what has already happened, a connection that may work against one’s ‘indentifactory investments’” (p. 89). These “indentifactory investments”, like privileged memories, shield us from interaction with the Other that would lead to the transactive public spaces that Simon hopes for. Simon’s distinction to not “forget the past, but to remember it otherwise” (p. 9), signals a need for the function of memory, specifically historical memory26, to be acknowledged explicitly when interacting with competing traumatic histories. As Kelman proposes the need for a “transcendent identity” that resists the negative interdependence of conflicting identities (Kelman, 1999, p. 581), Simon’s transactive public memory envisions a “transcendent space”

26 Historical memory is used by different scholars in somewhat different ways. Halbwachs separated historical memory from individual and collective memory, seeing it as memory studied by historians (Halbwachs, 1924). Nora is clearly calling out historians and how history and memory had become conflated. Bialystok seems to see the term as synonymous with collective memory, similarly to how I use the term in this study. Simon seems closer to Halbwachs and Nora’s view but suggests that the study of memory should also include “the potential for a fertile commingling between present consciousness and the tracing of evidentiary traces of past presence” (Simon, 2000, p. 10), not seeing memory as either the past consuming the present or the past being absent from the present. This is a view of historical memory that I embrace, but operationalizing this concept within opposing groups is a challenge as the past, within collectives, so wholly informs the present.
that can hold multiple traumatic memories at once.

Multidirectional memory and transactive public memory utilize the idea of memory as active; not allowing us to see our histories as past events, but demanding a quest for the “futurity” of memory. Memory, as part of our learning about the past, becomes a call, not just to “remember it otherwise” (Simon, 2005, p. 9), but to imagine, to begin on a path of a reconceptualized future.

2.7.1.3 Historical agency and co-creation

Historical agency, as I interpret den Heyer and Fidyk (2007), is a pathway for developing a present understanding that may reimagine the future, by engaging not in the facts of what happened but in the stories of those to whom it happened. [D]en Heyer and Fidyk, similar to what I am searching for here, are looking for approaches that separate interpretations of history from history itself. Also, they are focused on moral and ethical responsibility of re-telling history, particularly difficult histories (p. 141).

The authors cite R. G. Collingwood’s view of the study of past events not as “spectacles to be watched” but rather as “experiences to be lived through [the historian’s] own mind” (Ibid, p. 141). Historical agency is fostered by experiencing history and from imagination, not from simply reviewing the past.

While den Heyer and Fidyk are primarily arguing for the use of historical fiction within schools as a way of developing an “imaginative” space for fostering agency in students of history, what is being proposed here is the use of the co-creation model with those whose collective memories often run counter to the Other. Historical agency is viewed in this research as a way of encouraging non-competitive memory by focusing on the stories of the Other rather than re-telling traumatic events that tend to entrench the “us” and “them” paradigm.

Hannah Arendt (2001) suggested that a life that is “specifically human” shares a story with others (Arendt, in den Heyer and Fidyk, p. 149). She frames agency as something that is developed through listening and dissecting stories. Storytelling, through the lens of historical agency, views the teaching of history as both active and constructive, not simply viewing the past, but creating change within the viewers of particular histories, giving them agency in their
future. This concretizes the idea of historical agency as a cross-cultural and cross-religious practice, creating a Self/Other paradigm that relies on thematic telling of experiences, rather than compartmentalizing stories within a people, religion or region.

Multidirectional memory, transactive public memory, and historical agency are reparative frameworks for presenting historical memory non-competitively and interbiographically, pointing to future possibilities for remembering together. As my research deals specifically with historical collective memory as it pertains to the deeply polarized debate within and about Israel/Palestine, I turn to a review of some of the work that has been done in this area.

2.7.2 Creating a pedagogical framework for examining the Israel/Palestine debate

2.7.2.1 Co-memory as a move towards understanding

In her book *Co-memory and Melancholia* (2010), Ronit Lentin traces her own experience as a Jew growing up in Israel and her distrust of the stories of 1948. She both acknowledges the workings of co-memorial practices within the Israel/Palestine conflict and challenges the efficacy of the work of the Israeli resistance movement to alter the conversation and improve the lives of Palestinians, focusing particularly on “Zochorot’s” work in remembering the Nakba.

Lentin builds on Halbwach’s view of collective memory, offering that he was not speaking about memory, but of commemoration, or “co-memory” (p. 37). She argues that the need within the Israeli resistance movement, like “Zochorot” to co-memorate the Nakba stems from melancholia, “our grief” instead of “their loss” (p. 121). Similar to Britzman, Lentin bases her concept of melancholia on Freud, distinguishing mourning, from melancholia (p. 50). She sees that, as in Freud’s analysis of melancholia, the “telling and retelling of the grim details of the dispossession might lead to the assuaging of melancholia” (p. 63). While giving credence to the courage of Israelis who come to recognize and regret the loss suffered by Palestinians in

27 Beginning in the 1980’s, a group of Jewish scholars known as the “new historians” began to acknowledge the Palestinian experience of 1948. From this, the movement often referred to as the “Israeli resistance” evolved. “Zochorot”, meaning remembrance in Hebrew, formed in 2002 and actively works with and for Palestinians, promoting their right of return.
the Nakba, she questions whether the work is done out of a need for self-healing rather than seeking justice for Palestine.

In summary, Lentin argues for this commemoration to be led by, and initiated from, Palestinians and their experiences. Citing this as a more genuine act of political resistance since it originates from those who suffered, rather than from those whose detached melancholic experience shifts the loss from the object to the grieving subject.

Lentin’s work informs this research on several levels. Similar to the failures of Arab/Jewish dialogue in Canada, Lentin sees co-memorative attempts by Israeli Jews to understand the Palestinian experience as limited in their ability to make a real difference in the daily experiences of Palestinians living in the Occupied Territories. Also, I share her concern that this form of co-memory can be more about the privileged groups assuaging its guilt rather than creating change for the Other.

In contrast, two of the Jewish participants in this research have dedicated much of their energy towards multidirectional remembering and have taken actions to, at the very least, disseminate the Other’s stories while questioning those within their own memorial collective who refuse to expand their remembering outside of their own group (see the analysis of “Ahuva” and “Leah’s” narrative and interaction interview, Chapters 4, 5, & 6). While, from a perspective of privilege, I acknowledge and largely agree with Lentin’s critique, these two participants’ responses to the Other did not reflect the inwardness that Lentin is critiquing.

Jo Roberts’ book, *Contested Land, Contested Memory* (2013) offers a more hopeful interpretation that is demonstrated by Ahuva and Leah’s responses. She explains that the act of opening oneself to the story of another not only allows for the possibility that this may transform one’s own story but is also a necessary step in reconciliation (p. 25). Furthermore, Roberts values Zochorot’s efforts in challenging the status quo of Israeli collective memory stating “[its] work puts it on a collision course with the collective memory of Zionism” (p. 228.)

Zochorot’s name came from the Hebrew word, Zakhor, to remember, not as a suggestion but as an obligation (Simon, 2000, p. 10). Simon posits that remembering as an obligation requires an ethical view of remembering; remembering from a place of interrogation that challenges the
significance of one’s historical memory and recognizes the natural tendency to stabilize memorial practices rather than consistently challenge them.

Lentin points out the asymmetrical power relations that persist within Israel/Palestine. Also, she reminds us that before entering fully into co-memorial practices, we must first legitimize and empower the stories of the oppressed group. What is missing from her argument is that while power remains asymmetrical, the historical traumatic histories of both groups are not only largely symmetrical, both sides have created their own “monolithic identity” that has been constructed and embodied by and through their opposition to the Other (Adwan, Bar-on, and Naveh, 2012, p. vii). The tension that is embraced throughout this study is that these two seemingly disparate concepts can both be acknowledged without erasing the other.

While I have critiqued Bar-on and his colleagues work in presenting Israeli and Palestinian stories (PRIME), I do not dismiss its potential for re-membering. In order for such work to be a tool for change, two important advances need to be taken. One, that shared history work must always embrace a complex viewing of a shared narrative; one that will require the more societally privileged memorial collective to accept fully the memories and experiences of the Other. Second, linked to this, inordinate efforts to “teach” the Other about “us” need to be diverted to ending their suffering, in this case, ending the Occupation.

While Lentin’s use of the term “co-memory” does gesture towards opposing cultural memories working through each other, it stops short of acknowledging that even flawed attempts at hearing and acting on a new understanding of the constructed Other can, not only transform Self, but create a new interbiographical Self/Other paradigm.

While critiques like Lentin’s, that point to the often self-serving nature of neo-liberal “do good” projects are important, my own journey informs my belief that co-memorial remembering is possible and can be beneficial to the oppressed Other if one takes actions commensurate with their “new” understanding. The continuing process of unraveling my own victimhood has provided me with a new clarity regarding the oppressive circumstances that Palestinians endure in the Occupied Territories. Furthermore, when I contradict victim-based narratives from my own community that delegitimize the suffering of the Other, I speak authentically, from my own journey.
2.7.3 A summary of re-viewing memory

What I have been proposing here is a framework for “re-membering”. The challenge is to remain critical of taken-for-granted assumptions about the Other, to engage with the history of another, to allow the stranger to become our teacher, “who in telling their stories change our own” (Simon, 2005, P. 89). Multidirectional memory, transactive public memory and historical agency offer a socially just vision of challenging privilege and fighting oppression. The imagining of a different future is never to be done at the cost of erasing the inequities and abuses of the past. The work before us is not to deny them, but rather to confront them, and then structure a more hopeful future together.

This research project is an interbiographical search for the possibility/impossibility of consonance achieved by connecting with the shared trauma experienced within deeply divided and dissonant histories. It applies a multidirectional, transactive vision of memory, intentionally developing agency in the participants. It represents an active, concrete demonstration of Tarc’s call for a reparative curriculum, a postreconceptualist view of curriculum that demands movement and action. When den Heyer refers to Simon’s work as a “hermeneutics of hope” (den Heyer, 2009, p. 446), he encapsulates my vision that is laid out here, seeing this co-created process and result as “presentist praxis” that has the potential to forge a different future.

The most important shift, in me, since writing the literature review for my thesis proposal and writing this chapter is, that while I believe that multidirectional re-membering may benefit both “sides”, both in the conflict itself and within the debate communities about the conflict, my focus is on diffusing the destructive effects of collective memory within myself and my memorial collective. In fact, it is Jewish identity, trauma and victim beliefs that are under scrutiny in this research. These are the places where I can speak authentically from and will prevent me from making equal conclusions about unequal memorial collectives.
Chapter 3

Research Methodology

“It is your future you are remembering.”

(Michaels, 1996, p. 21)

3.1 Method Background: Experience and engagement

In this chapter, I will outline the methods I have used to conduct this study within the broad field of qualitative research and describe the interview process used to collect the data and the theoretical frameworks I employ to analyze this data.

This project examines experience and engagement within the Israel/Palestine debate. I see experience as what has happened and engagement in how we deal with what has happened. The interview methods I have chosen are tools that assist me in my goals to illumine disparate experiences while fostering a new form of engagement. In Chapter 1, I talked about this project as part of a circular journey where layers of new insights came to light over time. For me, this is an incomplete journey as my process of unraveling victimhood is ongoing. This process of slow revelation also exhibits itself in my methodological planning.

Fox’s idea of “competing narratives about competing narratives” (Fox, 2011) was a concept that I pushed away at the beginning of the interview process. In other words, to a large degree, I thought I was examining competing narratives where the truth must lie somewhere in the middle. Out of this lens, the focus of my methodology was primarily on using narrative interviews, the kinds that are employed in oral history. I thought this approach would allow me to maintain a more neutral stance where I was intent on collecting diverse stories rather than interrogating them. I had a theoretical understanding that a critical lens that seeks justice for a historically oppressed group should be part of my approach, but this was more of a cursory acknowledgement, as I had not yet deeply examined the disparities in power and privilege within the two participant groups I was interviewing. Through the interviews and my extensive reading about the conflict, I came to understand more deeply both the level of pain that my Palestinian participants and their families are suffering and the depth of resistance within many
of the Jewish participants. As a result, my attention shifted towards deliberately incorporating a critical lens in my data collection and analysis.

### 3.2 Critical Oral History

Oral history is defined as a narrative approach that gathers personal reflections of events, from individuals or groups and how these events affect the individual group being studied (Creswell, 2013, p. 74). Oral history work is generally considered to be based on first person accounts. Valerie Janesick defines oral history as “the collection of stories and reminiscences of a person or person who have firsthand knowledge of any number of experiences” (Janesick, 2010, p. 2). However, oral history has its roots in anthropology and is based on oral traditions or “passing down” (Leavy, 2011, p. 3). While oral traditions and oral histories are separate and distinct, this particular study recognizes that this distinction is blurred by collective memory where the past is revealed in the present and where “historical memory” is often disseminated as “historical fact”. What is cogent about oral history as a method is that personal reflections (individual memories) become operationalized within collectives, concretizing their validity.

I use narrative interviews from the field of oral history in the first set of interviews I conduct with my participants to answer the first research question: How is collective memory constructed within groups that are engaged in the Israel/Palestine debate in general and in Toronto specifically?

An ongoing tension in this study exists between the value of traumatic stories in the history of a group that deserves to be told and retold and the destructive effects on the Other and on the hope for justice when these traumatic memories insulate and inoculate a group from the Other’s traumatic experiences. While oral history is an important methodological approach that backgrounds this study, incorporating a critical lens is needed to challenge historical memory and maintain a commitment to human rights and social justice.

### 3.3 Co-creation, witnessing and interbiography

Co-creation speaks to methodologies that encourage multiple points of view and multiple experiences to work together, absent of hierarchal and hegemonic structures common in educational settings. Co-creation as a means of data collection and analysis is centered in the
work’s purpose; to create “polyvocality rather than ‘telling like it is’… position[ing] the story not as a place to arrive, but as a place to start” (Gallagher, 2014, p. 16). As Krummer-Nevo argues, research can stand against Othering, as Self and Other are “knottily entangled”, thereby protecting privilege and ensuring distance (Krummer-Nevo, 2012, p. 185). In this thesis, co-creation is a way to take that stand. Furthermore, inspired by Grotowski (1968), I seek to create a communal experience, not one where individuals abandon their rituals and faith practices in order to create homogeneity, but rather an experience that restores individual wholeness within a group (Salata, 2013 pp. 24-27). Lessening the distant between “us” and “them” is a step towards community and is an aspiration of this study.

Co-creation, in this thesis project, is realized in the second set of interviews I undertake with the participants to answer the second research question: How might applying conceptual frameworks that allow us to see memory non-competitively, but rather multidirectionally and interbiographically, open up new pathways that lessen distance and resistance, particularly in regards to how the Jewish participants engage with the ongoing traumatic experiences of the Palestinian participants? I call these interviews “interactions” and will describe them in the next section.

A co-creation approach requires me, as the researcher, to participate on all three levels of witnessing referred to by Laub: “the level of being witness to oneself within the experience, the level of being witness to the testimony of others, and the level of being witness to the process of witnessing itself” (p. 61). While I primarily centered on the first level of witnessing in my Master’s thesis, it is the second and third levels that are most important here and that are generated by the co-creation approach I employed. Returning to the concept of trauma as a wound, approaching the Other is then to witness the trauma of the Other and be “wounded by their wounds” (Simon, 2000, p.10).

Interbiography, a term I described in Chapter 1, is, in essence an approach of witnessing and co-creation. In each interaction interview, there are multiple stories under scrutiny, the participant I am interviewing, the participants whose narratives they are responding to and my own stories. Additionally, I am witnessing the narrative that is being responded to, the responses themselves and my own interpretation of these responses. This is an interrogative process, working similarly to a vacuum chamber that suspends multiple “objects”
simultaneously. What is different here is that in a vacuum chamber, the objects are simply suspended, not called into question or altered. However, interbiography, as it is operationalized in this study, is generative in nature and seeks to weave one’s narratives with the narratives of the Other, not just acknowledge their existence.

Interbiography is an approach that I have developed myself and it has undergone several revisions. In keeping with the general arc of this study, the emphasis on interrogation and transformation has taken on a greater and greater significance, as my position in the study is often as both interloper and intermediary, I have witnessed all of the interviews. My reflections on the participants’ narratives are interpretive and subject to bias. I do not assume any sense of neutrality or value-free analysis. My analysis is therefore also subject to analysis by others, a proposition I welcome.

3:4 Data Collection

3.4.1 Gathering participants

My original goal was to have eight participants from the Toronto area, two from each of the following groups:

1. Participants who identify as Jewish, may identify as Israeli (or Israeli/Canadian) with specific ties to Israel, have family who experienced the Shoah in some way and are currently active in groups that primarily seek to further the cause of Zionism and defend Israel’s position in disputes over Palestine, security, occupation, etc.

2. Participants who identify as Muslim (or Arab Christian), may identify as Palestinian (or Palestinian/Canadian) with specific ties to Palestine, have family who experienced the Nakba in some way and are currently active in groups that primarily stand against Israeli policies that have deleterious consequences for Palestinians, work to end the occupation and create a free Palestine.

3. Participants who identify as Jewish, may identify as Israeli (or Israeli/Canadian) with specific ties to Israel, have family who experienced the Shoah in some way and are currently active in groups that pursue dialogue and compromise with Palestinians.
4. Participants who identify as Muslim (or Arab Christian), may identify as Palestinian (or Palestinian/Canadian) with specific family ties to Palestine, have family who experienced the Nakba in some way and are currently active in groups that pursue dialogue and compromise with Israeli Jews.

I began the formal process of seeking interview participants in November 2015, speaking to people associated with activist groups in the Toronto area that I had made contact with or with whom I had had some relationship, including: “JSpace Canada”, “The Jewish/Arab Dialogue Group”, Queers Against Israeli Apartheid (QuAIA), Beit Zatoun, The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA), The Canadian Institute for Jewish Research (CIJR), The Canadian Students’ Coalition for Palestine (CSCP) and the Simon Wiesenthal Center. I also spoke with students who I have met during my doctoral programme, teachers with whom I have worked in my job as a music teacher and members of the synagogue I attend who are engaged in the Israel/Palestine debate in some manner. Additionally, I asked each potential interviewee if they knew someone who might be interested in participating, and asked each person who agreed to participate if they could recommend someone else who I might contact. This practice is known as “snowball sampling”\(^{28}\). The recruitment process continued well after I had conducted the majority of the interviews and concluded in March 2016.

During the six months I was engaged in the recruiting process, I had communication, either by phone and/or through email with approximately sixty people, about two-thirds of which identified as Palestinian or were closely connected with groups resisting the Occupation. On reflection, my expectation of finding participants whose political commitments were at the edges of the debate was extremely naïve. My assumption that people who identify as Palestinian or are strong supporters of a free Palestine would be willing to talk to a Jew who was offering an approach that asked them to encounter the Other when this Other was also their oppressor, was an assumption that came from a place of my own unexamined privilege. Similarly, the vast majority who were affiliated with intensely pro-Israel advocacy groups, were not interested in participating in work that included encountering the Palestinian

\(^{28}\) Snowball sampling is “a technique for gathering research subjects through the identification of an initial subject who is used to provide the names of other actors” (http://methods.sagepub.com/reference/the-sage-encyclopedia-of-social-science-research-methods/n931.xml).
experience. In retrospect, the concept of dialogue and compromise was, at the time I defined the four groups, not something that I had really grappled with yet. I would then posit, particularly for potential Palestinian participants, my research project might have been viewed with skepticism.

This process was, however, very valuable. It allowed me to confront my own privilege and it played an important role in how I conducted the interviews and in the analysis itself. As I became more cognizant of how the concept of “competing narratives” was a false precept, I constructed the questions for both sets of interviews to encourage the Jewish participants to examine how they have come to understand the Other’s experience. My deeper understanding of the inequities in the conflict was especially evident in my responses to the Jewish participants in the second set of interaction interviews. While it was disappointing to have so many people, particularly those who identified as Palestinian, decline to participate in this study, having to grapple with why this was happening was an important part of the evolution of this research project.

Once someone showed some interest, I sent them a recruitment letter (see Appendix A) and an informed consent form (see Appendix B). I sent these letters to twenty-one potential interview candidates, nine of who identified as Jewish and thirteen who identified as Palestinian.

Of the four original categories, one participant who agreed to take part in the study fell into the first category (Jewish and a strong defender of Zionism). Four participants fit best into the second category (Jewish and involved in dialogue groups and/or are critical of the Occupation), though two of these revealed, in the interviews, a strong loyalty to Zionism and the existence of a Jewish State in Israel). The three Palestinian participants align best with the fourth category (Arab Palestinians who are or have been active in dialogue groups). There were no participants from the second category (Arab Palestinians who actively participate in groups that resist the Occupation and stand against Israeli policies and have not participated in

29 Both the recruitment letter and the informed consent form outline the possibility of using artistic expressions (poetry, drawing, sculpture, music, etc.) as another layer or response to the Other. Though I offered this and some participants were initial interested, in the end, no one chose to respond through an artistic communication tool. This was offered as another form of “co-creation”.

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While defining these four categories in the way that I did may have been a way of creating pluralism within the interviewee cohort, the participants did not fall neatly into these four categories. This is especially true in how I defined the two potential Arab Palestinian groups as binaries; either they were in dialogue or they resisted Zionism and the oppression of their fellow Palestinians. This delineation, I propose, came out of my unexamined resistance to naming Zionism as a settler colonial project and fully grasping the stark differences in power and voice afforded the two participant groups in the Diasporas under examination in this research. This will be more fully explored in Chapter 7.

The eight participants who agreed to be a part of this study all live in the Toronto area. Five identify as Jewish with family ties to the *Shoah* (Holocaust) in some way. Three identify as Palestinian (two identify as Muslim and one as Arab Christian), have personal and/or family experiences with the 1948 war (the *Nakba*), the 1967 war and occupation. All eight participants are active, to varying degrees in the Israel/Palestine debate in Canada. Their political positions vary widely as do their historical memories.

3.4.2 The First set of narrative interviews

The first set of interviews, which I will refer to as the “narrative interviews” were conducted between January and early March 2016. The use of the term narrative is related to “narrative” as a research approach, but is primarily used to differentiate between the first interview, where each participant shared their stories with me, and the second interview where they responded to the narratives of the Other. The interviews lasted between ninety minutes and two and half hours. The interview was “semi-structured” (Creswell, 2013, p. 160) beginning with seven questions (see Appendix C) and adding follow-up questions as seemed appropriate. The interviews were all conducted in person. I recorded them and did not take notes except to remind myself to ask a specific follow-up question. I did not ask all questions to each participant, either because, based on what the participant had already shared with me, I didn’t feel that certain questions would add any value to this study or, the participant may have spent longer on certain questions and there was not sufficient time. The goal of the semi-structured approach was, that while focusing on the participants’ memories of stories and experiences that help form their current positions and beliefs, provide enough latitude to unearth subtexts that
may be generative when each participant’s narratives are presented to the Other in the second interview.

### 3.4.3 The Second set of interaction interviews

The second set of interaction interviews took place between late March and the end of May 2016. The interactions interviews were much more open-ended (Creswell, 2013, p. 160). I took excerpts from the first interviews and presented them on poster boards. The Palestinian participants read excerpts from the narratives of the Jewish participants and vice versa. These interviews were as short as one hour and as long as seventy-five minutes. I asked each participant to respond to the Other through four framing questions (see Appendix D. These framing questions are also stated in the analysis of the second interviews in Chapters 5 & 6. The framing questions were viewed as a jumping off point and the participants did not always respond to them in order or with equal depth, but they did seem to provide enough structure to sufficiently answer the second research question.

For the interaction interviews, the participants first took some time to read the excerpts from the narratives of the Other. I offered the participants the option of either having me record their responses, similar to the first interview, or to write them in a journal I provided for them. If they chose to write their responses, I typed them out and then sent the transcript to them by email, adding some of my reflections to their responses. They then responded back to me. For those that chose to have me record their responses, I recorded my reflections as well as their responses to my reflections. Two of the participants chose the journaling option and the others chose to have me record them. The interbiographical communication was then between the participants and the Other, between my story and theirs and between my reflections on their responses and their responses back to me.

### 3.4.4 Transcribing and member checks

After each interview, I began the process of transcribing. I transcribed both sets of interviews myself, with one exception where I hired someone to transcribe one particularly long interview. It became clear that as the transcriber was not present for the interview, some of the finer nuances were lost. Additionally, the transcription needed a great deal of editing, so I chose to do the rest myself. I found, in this process, I took on another layer of “re-witnessing”
that added depth to my analysis.

After I completed each transcription, I sent them, through email, to the participant and asked for feedback. This process is sometimes referred to as “member checks” (Goldstein, et. al., 2014, p. 676). Member checks are used as a means of deepening the dialogical relationship between the researcher and participants and ensure that the transcriptions are accurate both in content and intent.

3:5 Data Analysis

3.5.1 Analyzing the first set of narrative interviews: A method of listening

Narrative oral history interview data can be viewed as a form of storytelling. Storytelling is, by nature, a process of selection. As representation plays such a key role in this study, I was listening for how each participant represented their story. In creating the semi-structured first interview, my goal was to choose questions that illumined how the participant came to be who they are today, in relation to their social identity and traumatic history that led to their current position within in the Israel/Palestine debate.

At the time of the interviews, I had studied collective memory for two years and was keenly aware that the memories the participants shared with me were selected memories, chosen out of a vast array of life experiences. While my research had pointed me to three key factors in how collective memory is formed and entrenched within groups, (identity, trauma, and victim beliefs) I was open to any learning that might come from the narrative interviews.

My process, after transcribing, was to generally divide the narratives into the three themes. While, at times, it was an easy process, at other times, pieces of testimony seemed to encompass more than one theme or even all three. My goal was to understand how these three themes were at work in collective memory formation, rather than strictly adhere to labeling each piece of testimony as specific to one theme. The intersectionality of the three themes is evident throughout my analysis in Chapters 4, 5 & 6.
3.5.2 Analyzing the second set of interaction interviews: A method of probing

While there is likely to be some analysis happening during the data collection phase, analysis was very much part of the second set of interaction interviews. I have already framed my process as an act of witnessing. This frame has special import in the analysis of the second set of interviews where I was looking specifically for the effects of identity, trauma and victim beliefs on the responses to the Other each participant was making.

My reflections back to each participant, during and after the second interview, were intentionally interruptive as part of my attempt to incorporate a critical lens in which to view the Other. As I shared my learning with each participant, I became active in the research, conducting more probing than simply reflecting.

After transcribing the second interviews, including my own reflections and the responses from the participants to those reflections, I engaged in another layer of analysis. I began to seriously look at the “so what” question. Did this process make a difference for the participants? Did it offer any new learning to the academic and educational communities that I am engaged with? Did it offer anything to the conversation on intractable conflicts?

My process included looking at both barriers and bridges. The data, particularly gathered out of the interviews from some of the Jewish participants, revealed more barriers than bridges. Methodologically, I returned to the three themes (identity, trauma and victim beliefs) and traced how they operated, more to maintain barriers than just to build them.

Finally, returning to the larger question of experience and engagement, I viewed the two interviews as a single entity, looking for connecting tissue. The move towards and away from the Other did not begin in the second interview. The memories the participants shared with me are memories that fit with their ideological and political stances. Their positions were not arrived at by accident, but were the result of an often unconscious process of memorializing their collective’s history that have led to who they are today and what they are committed to. This analysis led to some generalized notions of how one constructs their memories and why some participants seemed to gravitate towards the Other and some away from the Other. This analysis is explored in Chapter 6.
3.6 Summary of the methodologies

In this chapter, I have laid out my methodological approaches, the reasons why I chose these particular approaches and how the data collection and analysis process was undertaken. Inherent in all of my decisions was the desire to address issues of representation. Experiences are represented here as events that have been filtered through the lens of one’s memorial collective. Engagement is a process of viewing these representations in order to challenge who benefits from them and who does not and to begin to shake loose entanglements to the past that do not generate a more united, just world. In this study, this “world” is the world of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the world of the debate about the conflict here in Canada.

In the next chapter, Chapter 4, I focus on the analysis of the first set of narrative interviews, seeking a beginning understanding of how collective memory operates within the individuals and groups under examination in this study.
Chapter 4

Constructing of Collective Memory: Belonging, Connection and Isolation (Narrative Interviews)

4.1 Analysis of the first set of narrative interviews

In this chapter, I will use excerpts form the first set of narrative interviews to examine how identities, in concert with trauma and victim beliefs, of the eight participants were formed and continue to be re-formed. At issue is how this identity formation has contributed to the commitments and positions of the participants, surrounding the Israel/Palestine debate and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict itself, and how these identities (in the manner I have defined “identity” in Chapter 2), traumas and victim beliefs may work to engage and/or resist the Other.

As described earlier, memory, particularly collective memory, plays an important role in how one’s identity is formed; defining the “us” we belong to, and the “them” who sit outside of that belonging, particularly in groups engaged in intractable conflicts. Traumatic memories and/or experiences often play a role in deepening this sense of belonging as well as, often, building distance between Self and Other. The third thread, victim beliefs, play an important role in how the participants identities were formed, and, as is explored in Chapters 5 & 6 as part of the analysis of the second set of interactions interviews, in resisting the Other.

As related in Chapter 3, the semi-structured first interview was based on seven basic questions (see Appendix C). While each interview varied, all questions were touched on in some form and follow-up questions were asked when it seemed necessary. As a means of introducing each participant, I will use excerpts from their answers to the first two interview questions about why they agreed to participate in the research and what they hoped might come from their participation. Subsequently, I will focus on their answers to questions that focus on their family background, childhood stories and other influences that may have shaped how they identify, both individually and within a particular collective.

The remaining questions in the narrative interview are designed to elicit the participants’ thoughts about how their experiences have shaped their political and activist stances within the
Israel/Palestine debate. These thoughts will also be more deeply explored in Chapter 6. This chapter (4) primarily seeks to answer my first research question centered on how individual and collective memory is constructed and, often, cemented. Specifically, I look at how my participants view their own memorial collective and the collective of the Other within the Israel/Palestine debate and the conflict itself.

### 4.1.1 Dror\(^{30}\) - Co-chair of a pro-Israel academic think-tank living in Toronto

Dror grew up in Scarborough (a suburb east of Toronto) to a Jewish father and a Christian mother. He works as an activist, supporting a Zionist vision for Israel. In answer to why he agreed to be part of the research and what opportunities he sees in this type of research and what he hoped might come from his participation, Dror says this:

Trick question to begin with. (I assured him, ‘no trick, I promise’).
‘Beseder’ (okay). Well it would be very simple for me to say that I have no interest in hearing the other side because I feel that it is bombarded at me in one way, shape or form; from any given number of opinion pieces, from mainstream media, or people who just don’t know better. [People] who think they are making a political statement when they are wearing Hamas colours, when really they are wearing Hamas colours. It would be too easy for me to take that opinion. The truth is, when I lived in Israel, I was involved in a project that tried to get storytelling Jews and Arabs to build ties with each other. I did my part as an individual to really reach out to different communities when I lived in Israel. It was very meaningful for me when I was in Israel; I have lived in Israel twice, once when I was in grad school at Ben Gurion University. It was very meaningful to me how warm people were to me just because I walked over to them and greeted them, didn’t matter their faith, they just enjoyed their piece of ‘Canadian Dror’.

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\(^{30}\) All names of participants used in this study are pseudonyms. Most participants chose their own name and shared how the name they chose related to them and their identity in some way, either as a nickname, a middle name, a relative’s name or their “Hebrew name” (Jewish young adults often take on a “Hebrew name” when they have their Bar or Bat Mitzvah, particularly when their English name doesn’t have a clear Jewish identification).
One thing I found, it could be me, it could be where I am at in life but I also think it is something that is quite meshed with Diaspora politics that I don’t think you have that same type of good faith of discussion here [in Canada], the debate seems quite polarized here and that is why I agreed to participate.

As can be seen in Dror’s response, in answering these first two questions, the participants often revealed key parts of themselves and their political stances. This created a context for the narratives that were told in response to interview questions about their family backgrounds.

I come from a mixed family, Christmas was as important as Hanukkah; I grew up in Scarborough with a sort of generic English-Canadian identity. Fridays were spent rushing home to watch “Royal Canadian Air Farce”, at one point it was the “Coca-Cola Countdown” on Much Music. There was certainly not any synagogues where I grew up, the biggest faith as far as from what I saw growing up in the Scarborough-Agincourt, the main faith community, as far as I can tell, is always going to be Christianity, there was always another church sprouting up. As far as my Jewish identity, though I was aware of it and had some attachment to my dad [who was Jewish but my mother was not], it was never particular clear to me. Except for the time in Grade 7 & 8 when I would have been Bar Mitzvah age and I could feel the offer that was on the table, with the kind of tightrope I was walking, I felt that I kind of had to walk away from that in order to not offend one side of the family or have anyone feel that I was leaning in one direction or the other.

Dror’s strong identification as a Jew was one, as he describes, that came over time and out of feeling that it was something different from what surrounded him. He describes a discomfort when attending Christian events that he was invited to saying “when they started talking about Jesus Christ being the Son of God something didn’t feel quite correct”. He describes how his interest in Judaism and his identity as a Jew came primarily out of his interest in history:

In grade 10, I realized that I had a love of history. The history of Germany and the history of Russia and, to some extent, Jewish history, Jewish
history and the enmeshment of all these three topics fascinated me. Schindler’s List [the movie] came out in grade 10; I don’t believe I even saw it initially. I had to wait for it to be adopted on the school level, but it began the discussion. Some of my grandparents, from that side of the family, the Jewish side, when I would go to visit them in North Bay would start talking about Schindler’s List, they were very moved by it. Part of the reason that they were moved by it is that they had known the “Schindler Juden”, the Schindler Jews who had been [saved by him]: they had played bridge with them. One woman told of how she asked Schindler ‘if you could add my husband to the list, it would mean the world to me’, and he did. Before seeing the movie, I had picked up the book Schindler’s List. In reading the book it really reinforced to what extent the Holocaust was such a ferocious, ferocious attack against us, not an attack, attack is too minor, they tried to wipe us out.

Dror continued, sharing how as he became more aware of the scope of the Shoah, it deepened his connection to Judaism and led to his pride and later commitment to the State of Israel:

I believe that year, [Grade 10] we went to the Holocaust museum for the first time, but the reinforcement of the Jew as the victim, those of us who had faced such horrors as the Holocaust, it angered me, the seeds were planted, it angered me and it led me to read beyond Schindler’s List and beyond hearing the survivors who would speak to us with heavy accents at the end of visits [to the Holocaust museum] that were very difficult for me to pay attention, just being honest. It led me to question ‘were we always the victims, were we always the punching bags, what did the world have against us’? I was asking as someone who didn’t really know yet what it meant to be Jewish. Where was the pride for me? As I read up on Jewish history, the pride for me was that fact that we survived. The Holocaust wasn’t just one incident, it was a cycle that continued, that ebbed and flowed. There were other ferocious attacks against us that we don’t need to list here. The fact that we survived was of some comfort, but the fact that, in spite of absolutely everything, we emerged from the ashes of the
Holocaust and created a state, created a state by our own effort, by our own survival. That struck a chord with me that resonated. It gave me a sense of pride, of patriotism, in the sense that we weren’t always the victims. That led me to Israel and seeing Israel as an extension, as the ultimate, I would argue, the ultimate extension of Jewish history as it culminates to the twentieth century and to the aftermath of the Shoah. I got into it and I liked the pride that I could have in it.

Dror then relays how specific incidents in his life added to this feeling that being Jewish made you a target for discrimination and the “presentness” of antisemitism today:

It perhaps took a while yet for me to make the connection between just reading and how I felt as an individual. It started to be there. By grade 12, in grade 12, I was with a group of friends watching something on TV, an animal was being bled out, I guess for the purposes of preparing Kosher food. One of the people who were there was studying to be a funeral director. So he says ‘This is what the Jews do to their animals in order to make them kosher’ and so on and he concluded with ‘got to love them Jews’. That struck such an ugly chord because, all of a sudden, just like that, on the most miniscule of levels, my primary identity being English-Canadian, there it was, that first opening salvo of antisemitism right there in my own life. The history books, Schindler’s List and everything else I had read clearly said ‘there is only one way this ends’ so I had to stamp on it hard. So I took issue with this, loudly and publicly with the guy.

Interestingly, this experience of perceived antisemitism only deepened Dror’s sense of his own Jewishness. He then relayed an incident that happen with friends a few years that involved a conversation about the former mayor of North York, Mel Lastman, which had a similar impact but also empowered his resistance to being stereotyped:

So, one of the women says ‘Lastman, that is all you have to say’. I say ‘Oh, yeah, because he is the guy from the Bad Boy commercials. No, [she says], ‘He is Jewish, that is all I needed to hear, all Jews are rich…that’s my stereotype, all Jews are rich, that is how it is and I am sticking to it’.
eyes went red, I saw red, I was angry, I felt that angry chord I had felt a couple of years earlier. I got pretty hostile but tried to be distinct about it and I looked at her straight in her eye and said, ‘I hope my family and I prove that your theory is bunk’.

He later relayed an incident with a Muslim girl that he was having coffee with. He described this incident as “Muslim” antisemitism and, later, directly linked this incident to his views on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict:

She says ‘the Jews control the media and Hollywood and all that, Dror, could you pull some strings for me? I am trying to organize this fall event’. I said ‘I wished that was true, do you know how much I would love to have my piece of the action, I wish it were true, but it isn’t’. Dror, she says ‘don’t be foolish, the Jews totally control the media just look at all the names’. I then realized that she was serious and I said, ‘No they don’t, there is no way that they control it’. She wouldn’t back down. It was the first time I realized I was coming up against something distinct, no waspy, Christian, secular-Christian, antisemitic attitudes, but I was actually bumping up against Muslims, the Muslim perspective.

Dror then told of his reaching out to Arab and Muslim groups during his university years on the Scarborough of the University of Toronto campus and receiving this response from one of the people in the group:

‘Dror, the Jews need to leave the Middle East, they broke their covenant with God and they deserve everything that has happened to them. They need to leave, they need to relocate to Europe, they have done it to other people, they deserve everything that has happened to them’. [At this point], the [Second] Intifada\(^{31}\) had begun, at this point, Camp David had collapsed.

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\(^{31}\) “Intifada”, from the Arabic for “to shake off”, refers specifically to “shaking off” Israeli occupation and gaining independence, ([http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/what-exactly-is-an-infitada-a6688091.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/what-exactly-is-an-infitada-a6688091.html)). A protracted grassroots campaign of protest and sometimes violent resistance against perceived oppression or military occupation, especially related to the two uprisings among Palestinian Arabs in the Gaza Strip and West Bank.
He said, ‘The Intifada must continue because it is the only way to drive the point home and reclaim the land’. I said, ‘You have a chance to have a peaceful state next to a willing neighbor and you are telling me that you want your own people to choose the option of suicide bombing, you can’t mean that’. He said, ‘I do mean that, of course I mean that, that is what needs to happen’. At that point, I realized that that was my wake-up call. It had taken awhile to reach me, but there it was, the beast, the beast that was antisemitism, the beast that is certainly the same mentality that led to the Holocaust, looking at me and being thinly disguised as a desire to having human rights based discussion, a legitimate discussion around having a Palestinian State. It was a canard.

Dror’s staunch defense of Israel seems to have arisen directly from his interactions with people that he considered being aggressively pro-Palestinian and anti-Jewish. This defense took the shape of blaming Palestinians for their fate and deflecting Israeli responsibility. After making several statements about Palestinian people, Dror clarified this stating: “[Can we] change what I have been saying about the Palestinians to refer to the Palestinian leadership rather than the Palestinian people?” While Dror indicated that this was an important distinction for him, seemingly to resist being seen as disparaging an entire group of people, in framing how identity not only forms Self but also articulates who the Other is, distinct from Self, the separation from his “tribe” and the Other is equally clear. In other words, whom we blame is less important, it is that the blame rests with the Other, however that Other is described. In answer to my question about how he negotiates conversation with or about the Other, he stated:

There isn’t a single time that the Palestinian leadership, or the Arab leadership as it related to the Palestinians, didn’t decide their misery and reinforce it. Whether it was the grand mufti of Jerusalem being chosen, the great uncle of Yasser Arafat, him choosing to side with Hitler, him

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Bank, the first beginning in 1987 and the second in 2000, in protest against Israeli occupation of these territories. ([http://www.thefreedictionary.com/intifada](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/intifada)).
preaching the complete hatred of the Jews and declaring war against the Nashashibi who I believe were the alternative leadership at that time who were at least willing to negotiate with us, he wanted nothing of it. That man and his decisions and his leadership, if you could call it that, set the course for Palestinian intellectual thinking and subsequent misery. From that point on the willingness to actually think ‘Hey, let’s just stop this fighting in the first place, let’s use passive resistance, let’s use negotiations, let’s discuss something and let’s not pick up these weapons’. That is on them, not on us.

Pierre Nora speaks of how certain memories become privileged within a society (1989, p. 9), but here, for Dror, Jewish experiences became “privileged” within himself, over other possible “indentifactory investments” (Simon 2005, p. 89), like his mother’s family’s Christian identity, or his “generic English-Canadian identity” that he had described earlier. While there was Jewish influence in his life, Dror, His Jewish identity, at least in large part, is something he “selected over time” (Kriesberg, 2003, p. 2). This reminds us that we have, at least, a degree of agency in selecting the experiences that become “privileged” over other experiences and become how we identify and lead to whom and what becomes our “us” and helps shape the “they” that lies outside of our circle of belonging. While Dror had agency in committing to his Jewish Identity, there is little doubt that his brushes with discriminatory attitudes that stereotype Jews, coupled with his learning about historical antisemitism, particularly the Shoah, were traumatic as they wounded him deeply, both concretizing his identity as a Jew, and as a defender of Israel. The “wounds” Dror reveals in his narrative interview may seem less significant than what many other participants in this study speak of, they, nonetheless serve as a strong fortress that resist the traumatic stories of the Other.

4.1.2 Sami – Heads a Non-profit organization in Canada, originally from Palestine/Israel

Sami was born in Beirut, Lebanon and now lives in Toronto. He has been a leader in championing human rights in Ontario and has participated in the Canadian Arab/Jewish Leadership Dialogue Group for many years. In his responses to the first two questions, Sami reminds me that this is not a new conversation for him:
Well its part of my family history, it is an ongoing history. I have been engaged in dialogue with the Jewish community for the same reasons. Trying to go beyond what it is the news, who is killing who. So in a generalization about who is right and who is wrong, they’re bad and we’re good. I do like to continue to explore better understanding. It is also a bit cathartic to talk about these things. Even though I was born in Lebanon, I was born to Palestinian parents who grew up with the memory of evacuation and everything that happened, the war that happened in 1948 and after 1967, the things that happened in my lifetime. You never know [the benefit of work like this project], it is easy to say that it is an endless conflict and it may be. Even if it helps some people in the conflict, then it is worth it.

Sami mostly learned about his Palestinian heritage from his father, whose own father was a Greek Orthodox priest and part of the Palestinian nationalist movement:

My dad is originally from Birzeit, also known as “Bir Zeit”, meaning oil well, they made olive oil. It was a village. He wasn’t born there, but that is where his family was from. He was born in Ramleh, my mother was born there as well, a town near Tel Aviv. His father and his grandfather were from Birzeit. In the early sixties, he decided to build a summerhouse for us in Birzeit, to connect us to our Palestinian roots and be close to family he still had there. He had a sister there. He finished it in 1964. We spent two summers there. Then ’67 happened. I was [just] a boy. I would have been six years old in ’65. When ’67 happened, we lost access to our house there in Birzeit. As a child, I didn’t fully comprehend it, but later I did. And of course, the stories my father would tell us, more than my Mother. My father would tell us about his life. He grew up in Jerusalem. His father [Sami’s grandfather] was a Greek Orthodox priest. He was part of a nationalist movement. He was part of delegation that would go to European capitals. He would tell the Palestinian narrative. He would make patriotic speeches. He once spoke at a mosque. To send the message that Christian Palestinians were standing with Muslim Palestinians and defending the homeland and
promoting the independence of Palestine. I have heard many of these stories from my father. His politics, he was [also] a nationalist who believed in the Arab cause.

While Sami was too young to remember a lot of details about the summers in Birzeit, the sense of loss comes through clearly. He relayed how his father worked with Muslims although he was Christian, but as a Palestinian he was always an outsider in the Arab world:

During the heydays of Arab nationalism, he signed up, not in any membership, but he believed in it, he supported the idea. It was a very suitable sense of belonging for Arab Christians because it was secular; it was about a national cause rather than any religious one. You would find that many of the leaders of the Arab national cause were Christians. So that played a big part in my own political consciousness and creating a sense of justice. Another side of this was my parents never felt at home or made to feel at home in Lebanon because they were foreigners, they were strangers. This was common. They would say disparaging things about Palestinians. They would say like ‘the Israelis are civilized human beings, unlike you guys [Palestinians]’. That sense of alienation did not help. The Palestinians came to Lebanon after 1948, there were the poor ones that ended up in refugee camps, and they are still there today.

This “outsider” experience is something that was shared by all three of the Palestinian participants and will be explored in greater depth in later chapters. What is key here is Sami’s father’s Christian identity, his grandfather’s position as a priest and overall status served him and his family in some ways, but never compensated for the loss of their land and the continued feeling of unwantedness that they experienced wherever they went.

Sami described how he learned to conceal his Palestinian roots as a way of surviving:

So I do remember when I became a teenager, I perfected my Lebanese accent, because there was a real difference between the accents. In fact when the Lebanese civil war started in 1975, the guards at the roadblocks would ask me to pronounce ‘tomatoes’ because the way a Lebanese would
pronounce it was very different from the way a Palestinian would. If you pronounced it the Palestinian way, you were finished, they would say ‘Step out sir, you’re finished’. I perfected my Lebanese accent so I didn’t stick out as a Palestinian.

Sami’s retelling of his mother and father’s experiences during the Nakba reveal the pain of their dislocation and the overall trauma of remembering the violence that Palestinians experienced, but is also tinged with an awareness than many suffered more than his family due to their Christian identity:

Again, my family was lucky; we were Christian, my grandfather was a priest. He had a parish in a suburb of Beirut in Lebanon. So they didn’t end up in a refugee camp. My dad and mom had to get married quickly, they had an engagement, I have pictures of the engagement but no pictures of the wedding. They didn’t have a [formal] wedding as the war had started (1947). There was a dress but no ceremony. Had a celebration and then left. They weren’t forced out, but they fled the war that it was like a couple of weeks [old]. They had very little with them. They didn’t know they were leaving their lives behind for good. They really thought that they would be back in a few weeks. My dad told me that that is what the Arab armies were telling them, that it would all get resolved and everybody will be going back home. There were exaggerated stories, massacres, people getting killed and so on.

I asked Sami if the word Nakba brings certain thoughts, feelings to the surface.

Absolutely, it is a powerfully sad word and it brings out all the feelings of defeat, misery dislocation and even [a] sort of disloyalty, treason. My dad talked a lot about treason by the Arab armies. On the one hand there was my dad and cohorts that the Arab armies were putting up [as] the image of resistance and fighting, the appearance [of fighting], rather than really making a fight for Palestine. There were also stories of incompetence, the Palestinians not having access to arms, not having arms from the British government. But when it came to the Jewish militias, that was different. All
these things are coming back. I don’t claim that any of these are completely accurate; these are just the stories I heard.

I asked Sami if his father blamed the Israelis for the difficulties of the Palestinian people:

Yes, of course he did. He also equally blamed the British government and he blamed the Arab leaderships. There was a lot of blame to spread around. He actually often talked about how Arabs and Jews coexisted very nicely. There were Jewish neighbours and there was never any friction and they lived side by side. He blamed Zionism and the deliberate efforts to bring large numbers of European Jews to Palestine and take over the land and cost the Palestinians their state. I think what bothered him more was the little chance given to Palestinians to defend themselves which allowed Jewish militias to become organized and take over. 1967 was huge.

He elaborated:

Everybody had bought into Nasser’s, the President of Egypt’s view that the Egyptian army was a big strong army; ready. The Arab alliances were all ready to resolve the issue once and for all. Then the exact opposite happened. What was left of Palestine was lost and the Arab armies were crushed within six days. And that was really bitter. I remember the first three days; we actually believed we were winning. The propaganda was that hundreds of Israeli planes were shot down and the Egyptian army was in this place and that place. Of course, they were all lies. All of a sudden we found out the truth and it was really crushing. I remember my father crying when Abdul Nasser had died. Before he died, he resigned and said that he had failed. My dad said, ‘That it is we’re done, we’re finished, there is no help left for Palestine’.

I asked Sami how the ’67 war and ongoing Israeli actions have effected him specifically and how these have shaped his views today:

It is not what Israel did in 1948; it is what they have been doing since. It started with the ’67 war. I lived through that. We had to darken lights at
night. My friends were mostly Palestinian themselves, we talked about this. It is part of our ongoing narrative. When we went to Jordan to visit my aunt in 1970, my aunt’s husband came running and told us to go ‘get out, get out’. Then when the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Lebanese army fought in 1974. The Lebanese partisans were flying over our building to bomb the camps. The attack on Beirut by the Israeli commandos, 1972, 1973, started hitting the leadership, and that included one of my distant [cousins], my dad’s cousins. They were non-military, all intellectual leaders. It was clear they wanted to crush the Palestinian thinkers and intellectuals who were representing the Palestinian viewpoint and fighting for Palestine. I remembered, in the 1982 invasion, I was in Greece; I left after graduated from the American University in Beirut. The invasion happened. I could picture the Israeli soldiers walking on the streets of Beirut, which is exactly what happened. It has been endless. The attacks on Gaza last year. The brutality of these attacks and what Israel can get away with continues to amaze me.

Sami’s narrative illumines the ongoingness of Palestinian trauma. Unlike Dror, he is describing trauma that is not in the past, but is being revisited on his people on a regular basis. Despite this, Sami recognizes that suffering has happened on both sides but refutes claims of equanimity:

Sure Israelis have suffered, sure terrorists have attacked. It all pales in comparison to [what the] Palestinians have suffered, and it continues. It is absolutely horrible. I know people from Gaza, I know the doctor who wrote *I Shall Not Hate* [Izzeldin Abuelaish]32, I’ve seen documentaries, and I’ve read books. Life is hell, and that is without the bombings. Large-scale bombings happen, it is just amazing. So I am not hopeful because Israel can get away with pretty much anything. I don’t see any smart, effective Palestinian movement that is up to the task of making it really difficult for

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32 *I Shall not Hate* tells the author’s story of being a doctor in Palestine and enduring the loss of his three daughters and a niece in an Israeli rocket attack in Gaza (Abuelaish, 2011).
Israel to continue as is without engaging in terrorist activities. So it’s not looking good, but you never know.

While Sami’s narrative is tinged with optimism and an awareness that others suffered more than his family had, as each of the Palestinian testimonies illuminate, there is a strong synchronicity between trauma and identity. His family’s Palestinian identity is worn with pride but also echoes the reality of the incessant wounding that is woven throughout his narrative. Freud’s melancholia, the pervasive existence of trauma, works to entrench his victimized experience. It does not diminish his pride in his identity, but it concretizes their memories within a traumatized collective; a trauma that is ongoing.

Leah – Yiddish folk singer - born in Czechoslovakia, immigrated to Canada

Leah lives in Toronto and has taken a keen interest in Israel, particularly as her children have became very active in supporting Palestinian rights. Leah’s response to the opening questions revealed her commitment to justice for Palestinians. She also told me how her neighbourhood and family life are a microcosm of the Israel/Palestine debate:

For me, if anything, it seemed more counterproductive than productive to reach out to the Other as I have found a few times, but I do believe that the universe is more important than me, so be it, whatever happens, happens. I am very much into social justice and equality and that is more important to me than a tribal belonging. In fact, I have been very upset and saddened by some of the things my tribe is doing. In light of that, I am quite happy to reach out on the other side. Here I am surrounded in this house by both extremes. My neighbour on one side is a “lefty”, he is Jewish and we are exactly on the same page with almost anything. We are the two holdouts. Then we have the other side, lovely people who are Hassidic and completely the opposite of that. You can never have a political conversation with those neighbours, but we are polite and share, etc. We coexist very nicely; we are all in the same tribe, but absolutely not on the same page. That is one reality. Another reality is my musical community where people
tend to be pretty progressive in this category, which includes supporting social justice and not aggression in the world. Then you have my family where I have it nice and mixed. My husband is from a traditional family with an Iraqi Jewish background they call “Mizrahi”. That is people that have fled Iraq, his parents fled in 1941. At that time, there was no Israel yet. In their community, in the Iraqi community in Israel, they tend to be very much anti-Palestinian in every possible way. They are just totally blind to their plight, one hundred percent blind. So, they won’t talk about it and if they talk about it they are perplexed that somebody might think differently than they are. That is where my husband is from, that community. So, when we met, he was not political, he was very traditional and very conservative. He didn’t know anything. He will tell you that himself. Then I have three kids. Three kids that are totally as left as you can get, I suppose thanks to me. I don’t know how else that could have happened. That is definitely going to make trouble on the horizon, oh yeah. It already has, in fact. When we were in Israel, my daughters spoke up against things they didn’t agree with and that jars the rest of the family, they don’t want to deal with it. So far no one has hit anyone. Therefore, when I am given an opportunity to think about this, to interact and try to do something about this, it is something I care about, so I try.

While Sami needed to conceal parts of his identity in order to protect himself and fit in to the established and acceptable “norm” in Lebanon. Leah has a very different story. She had no concept of her history until she was nine years old and therefore never considered if she didn’t fit in:

I was a singer so, roughly around that age [9], I was already in the theatre as a singer. I was really well known as a child star, as a singer, in that way I was sort of in touch with the Jewish community there [Prague, Czechoslovakia]. Since I was known as a name, they had this custom that every holiday, some that are very serious, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, but there are two that are more fun, Hanukkah and Purim, I guess because they celebrate stories that are victories. So, in the Jewish Community
Centre (JCC), they always have parties and concerts going on. So, for the Purim celebration, my mom was approached by the Jewish community leaders to see if I would be interested to sing at their Purim concert and mom said ‘Sure, no problem’, except I didn’t know anything, I didn’t know what Jewish was. For our first meeting at the JCC, we were going by streetcar, she was telling me that we are going to the JCC and you are Jewish. I said, ‘What’s that, what’s Jewish?’ Just that word “Jewish” to my mom was like a curse, she gasped. So she tells me in three words or less what Jewish is, ‘It was our people, I was in Terezin’, we will talk about it another time...we were always the underdogs and they were always trying to kill us and they almost succeeded and that is why we don’t have any family and don’t talk about it to anyone’. I am thinking, you know, what is this all about? I am a kid. I say, ‘that’s great, I love the underdog’. My first understanding of being Jewish was that it was super dangerous, that you could get killed for it, that everybody did get killed for it, that is why I have no family. It is the victim; it is the underdog, one hundred percent.

Far from wanting to conceal her identity, Leah embraced it, pursuing a career as a Yiddish singer (though she describes how she knew no Yiddish and often felt like a fraud). Somewhat similarly to Dror’s story, the victim, underdog role was an “identity” that she discovered and this discovery created a new sense of belonging. She continues her story, telling of how she sang Israeli and Yiddish folk songs in a restaurant in Denmark where the owner was Jewish:

I felt an affinity to the owner who was an Israeli, and happened to be an Iraqi as well. He was extremely successful which was rather shocking to the Danes. That was the first time I felt some sort of tribal affinity because I could see that they were not pleased that an immigrant, dark skin, coming from nowhere, in five to ten years, had three restaurants knew prime

33 Terezin also known as Theresienstadt was a "camp-ghetto" that existed for three and a half years, between November 24, 1941 and May 9, 1945 in German-occupied Czechoslovakia and was primarily used as a holding camp. Starting in 1942, its inhabitants were transferred to various death camps (www.ushmm.org).
ministers, had a beautiful big home and drove around in a Maserati. He was not well liked.

She then states: “I can’t see this as making a difference to my identity”, though her story seems to belie this assertion as she continually created opportunities to expand her relationship with Jewish culture, particularly Jewish music. After coming to Canada, she went on a trip to Israel.

I went there and I had that same experience which is described probably a hundred times; when you get out of the plane, the air breathes on you and you have this feeling that this is different from any other place on earth and somehow you connect with it. It was very real and I was in tears and I didn’t know why. I didn’t care about Israel until that moment. I also had no idea about Israel at all, I didn’t read up on it at all, and I just came. I went to Masada34 and there I felt like I was one of the Zealots, this is me, this my blood and I connected to this thing right now. Every one else was one of the Romans and if it was me, right now I would also rather die than be captured by them. It was totally, you could touch this thing, and it was so strong.

What might create the feeling “I was one of the Zealots” Leah describes? Do memorials, like Masada, intentionally foster both a sense of victimhood and compunction to resist whomever is now perceived as the Other? Have the Palestinians of today been slotted into the role the Romans occupied during the days of the story of Masada and are now the Other that must be resisted?

Identity forms over time and is subject to manipulation (like the memorial at Masada), which can lead to isolationism and blindness to the Other. This is an example of “commemorative praxis” described by Palmié, where social collectives, who were not part of the event itself, use the building of memorials as a means of constructing and concretizing their collective memory (Palmié, 2010, p. 367).

34 “Masada” was a Jewish settlement high on a hill during Roman rule in what is Israel/Palestine today. Tourists go there to this day and are told of the resistance of the Jewish people to the invading Romans, ending in them choosing to commit suicide rather than being captured.
However, these “identifactory investments” (Simon, 2005, p. 89), like Leah’s emotional connection with Israel and places like Masada can be transformed over time. This will be illuminated in Leah’s interaction interview in the next chapter where she details how this “wide-eyed” identification with Israel shifted as she learned more about the difficulties the Palestinians face in Israel, particularly in the Occupied territories.

Leah was clearly aware of the trauma her mother and her family endured during the Shoah, but she didn’t indicate that it greatly affected her, other than how it was responsible for her connection to being Jewish and being part of a collective that was victimized repeatedly. Growing up in Czechoslovakia during the Communist takeover was very traumatic for her, but she doesn’t discuss this until the second interview, as a means of relating to the suffering of the Palestinian participants.

4.1.3 Samira – Professional - From Palestine/Israel, living in Toronto

Samira was born in Ramallah, Palestine and now lives in Toronto. Samira responded succinctly yet powerfully, pointing to her nationalist identity as a Palestinian, in answer to the first questions:

To spread the history; we have very few opportunities to tell the story. As Palestinians, it is our duty to share some of our history or some of our narrative with those who have not been exposed [to it]. On a personal level, it is my patriotic duty, my contribution to the cause.

Samira’s story reveals her deep awareness of her Palestinian roots and identity and how the cost of that identity started very early in her life:

At four years old (1967) I remember the occupation. We lived in Ramallah. I remember the Israeli tanks going through our street. At my aunt’s house with my Mom. We went to our grandparent’s [house] as it was better shelter for us. We walked for a mile carrying a white kitchen cloth on a stick, a white flag of surrender. I was crying, I knew something was wrong. ‘Was I going to be shot’? We reached my grandfather’s house. In a couple
of hours, Israeli soldiers were at the door. There were four or five of them, asking questions. ‘Show I.D.’ They looked around. Gave me and my sister candy. I was so petrified. I put it in my mouth, but thought it was poison so I didn’t swallow it. When they left, I spit it out. There was ‘us’ and ‘them’ (quotations added). They spoke a different language and all had machine guns. My dad was a cardiologist and was still in Jerusalem when this all happened. I knew there was something terribly wrong. It was the beginning of the ‘fun’ for us.

Samira’s description of being Palestinian begins with traumatic memories and this continues throughout her testimony. Her memory is therefore intrinsically linked to the Other’s actions as her family’s oppressor:

My grandparents came from Haifa in a panic due to the atrocities they had heard about [in 1948]. The Israelis were very smart, they didn’t have to kill a lot of people for the word to spread. They were skilled in psychological warfare. They [her grandparents] left and locked their house, left all their belongings because they thought they could go back. My grandparents, on my father’s side, moved to Jerusalem. Three families now all in one room, something like twenty people. The Israelis took over their houses [in Haifa] for Jewish immigrants from Europe.

She continues to frame her own identity within the context of Israeli oppression:

My grandfather on my mother’s side was a well-know historian. He wrote seven books and was the mayor of Jerusalem. In 1972, his last wish was to visit the house where they had lived. He knocked on the door and told the lady that he wanted to see the house. The lady said ‘Even if you have an order from Golda Meir, I will not let you come in’ and kicked him out. He died shortly after. She was German, as she spoke in German.

I asked Samira if she thought this woman was a Shoah survivor, her response was: “That is irrelevant - the abused turned abuser”. She continued; “[People think] the Holocaust was just a Jewish thing. They are appalled when we draw a comparison between the Holocaust and the
Occupation”. I then asked how she saw the connection between the Holocaust and what the Israelis have done in Palestine. She responded this way: “[The Holocaust] was NOT (emphasis implied) just Jews. Israelis (Zionists) take our land and erase our identity and existence. Antisemitism is not in Israel, just in the Diaspora”.

These statements are ones that I will return to often, particularly in the analysis of the interaction interviews. Samira’s personal experiences of trauma and the ongoing difficulty faced by the Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank also frame her stance on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict:

[The Occupation] is every Jewish person’s responsibility. Not the Palestinian people. Only Israel is responsible. Maybe the Palestinian leadership are all monkeys, maybe the Arab countries didn’t create a homeland. It doesn’t matter. Living under Occupation is living in constant fear. You couldn’t wear the colours of Palestine. If you did, you were stopped on the street. Soldiers speak Arabic, ‘Where are you from’? You had to respond ‘I am Arabic, NOT (emphasis implied) I am Palestinian’. You could risk going to prison. There were closures of schools and universities, skirmishes and strikes.

Samira elaborated on the difficulties she and her family experienced after the Occupation began in 1967, relating two specific traumatic instances she remembers:

[First incident] I went to a private school due to protests at my public school. Walking home, I was caught in a demonstration. Hiding in the bush, peeing my pants from fear. All of sudden, military jeeps came and students were protesting. Then they dispersed when the soldiers started firing in the air and throwing in gas bombs. “I thought I was going to die”. I was about ten years old or so. Then [second incident], when my brother, five years old, he was called for an “interfering action”. Playing outside, some kids were throwing stones. My mom got a call. Told to bring him in as potential witness. My mom took him the second day, what is sad is that you have a fifty year old military commander sitting to interrogate a five year-old, “it
is a sick comedy’. My mom told my brother not to give names out but the commander gave him chocolate, so he gave the names.

The “ongoingness” of Israeli oppression of Palestinians in Israel\(^\text{35}\), particularly in Gaza and the West Bank, creates a stark contrast in how the Palestinian participants speak about their identity. Traumatic pasts, for Palestinians, are traumatic “presents”. The Jewish participants’ testimonies are also often shaped by trauma; primarily the *Shoah* and their perception of ongoing antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiments, but some of their stories of being Jewish and discovering their Jewishness, are not as solely focused on their traumatic histories. Samira clarified that her own identity as a Muslim and that of her families does not play a role in her feeling about Jews or Israel, but that it is an issue of land and fair treatment:

> Golda Meir said “A land for no people, for people with no land”. I knew it was wrong. I came to Canada for university in 1979. The situation [at home] went from bad to worse. My parents identify as Muslim, but are completely non-religious. This was NEVER (emphasis implied) a religious thing. My grandmothers (on both sides) talked of Jewish neighbours. I had a best friend ‘Sara’ in Jaffa, who was Jewish. Many Jews had died in gas chambers taken in trains and that caused the influx of Jews [from Europe]. [They] had several choices for a home, why did they choose us? [Holocaust] survivors need to make a connection to Hitler and the Nazis and what is happening now to Palestinians. I remember thinking it was unjust, that we were victimized, that one day there could be a solution.

Samira recognizes that Jews suffered greatly in the *Shoah*, and, as she too participated in an Arab/Jewish dialogue group, has heard many stories of Jewish trauma. But, her identity as a Palestinian, at least what she shared in her interview, came almost entirely from her oppressive experiences at the hand of Israeli soldiers and as a result of Israeli policy; this, quite understandably, seems to limit the degree in which she can empathize with the Jewish experience. The “wounding” of her people continue to this day and this is an important factor

\(^{35}\) See, for example, *The Impacts of Lasting Occupation*, Bar-Tal and Schnell, 2013 as referred to in Chapter 2.
in how I analyze how “multidirectional” her memories are, or, if I should even expect this of her, or of Palestinians in general.

4.1.4 Joshua - President of a human rights advocacy non-profit organization in Toronto

Joshua grew up in Ottawa (Ontario, Canada) with one brother that he knew of. He has led a large organization focused on Jewish issues in Canada and is a frequent contributor to newspapers and magazines on “Jewish” issues. In response to the opening questions, Joshua places the conversation directly in the shadow of the Shoah:

I kind of grew up in the shadow of the Holocaust. It has been part of my life forever. [I’m interested in] any light that can be shed on the impact that it had. We kind of know the impact it had on its survivors, but not enough about the impact it has had on the descendants. I am not just talking about the children, but about the grandchildren because, for the most part, much of who we are is almost predicated back on where we came from. So, this kind of work that you are doing, for me, is fascinating. If it shines light in dark tunnels, that’s a good thing.

In contrast to some of the other Jewish testimonies, Joshua’s narrative is very much informed by his father’s experiences in the Shoah and his own brushes with antisemitism. Joshua’s father, a Holocaust survivor, was not only the sole survivor from his own family, but of the entire shtetl (village):

So, my life is unique because my mother came from Europe and so did the much of her family, before the war, [in the] 1920’s, [and] 1930’s. Sure they lost some people but they weren’t as directly impacted by it [the Shoah]. My father was the sole Jewish survivor of his village. So, that means, seven brothers and sisters, friends, relatives, his first wife, and two children. They
were all murdered in Treblinka.\textsuperscript{36} As a child, my father was kind of careful about what he told us. We knew a lot about the town of Botchka, where he came from. We knew a lot about it as kids, prior to the war. I knew about the Rabbi, I knew about the Rabbi’s son, he was kind of a \textit{wildekid} (wild child). As we grew older, the stories became a little more teemed with sorrow and about the Holocaust. What he never told us until I was almost twenty-two was that he was married and that he had another family. We knew everything else; we knew he had lost brother, uncles and aunts. We knew about the Nazis and the death camps, we knew about those things. We didn’t know his whole story, until my mother, which would be his second wife was diagnosed with cancer and wanted us to know before she died. He had one picture of his children. They were seven or eight years old and if you were to take a look at a picture of me at that same age, they were very close. So there was a lot he had to cope with. There were no grief counsellors back then, you just had to deal with it and go on. My mother had this expression ‘it took me five years to teach your father how to smile again’. Which kind of said it all, because he really was a man with a great smile.

The following stories about Joshua’s childhood in Ottawa, which were an essential part of how he came to understand what it meant to be Jewish, are filtered through the stories from his father. As reflected in several of the testimonies in this research, past family histories of pain reverberate in the experiences within one’s own life and appear to have a reciprocal relationship with the traumas experienced by the participants themselves. Also, the collective memory, formed within groups whose families have shared traumatic experiences with them, specifically experiences of the \textit{Shoah} or the \textit{Nakba}, are intensified and concretized within collectives that have experienced traumas (occupation, discrimination, etc.) which seem to echo their families’ experiences and vice versa.

\textsuperscript{36} Treblinka was a Nazi extermination camp located in Poland in a forest region north of Warsaw. (http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/ar/treblinka.html)
In Ottawa, antisemitism was rife. Bullying was just part of what I grew up with. There were 3000 Jews all together in Ottawa; I was one of two Jews in my public school. There was lots of French-Canadian kids whose antisemitism was “churched-based” rather than the kind you experience here [in Toronto]. A day did not go by that I wasn’t called a ‘dirty Jew’, a ‘Christ killer’, which my Jewishness was not thrown in my face. You either became tough or you hung out with tough people. The worst antisemitism was from the French-Canadian kids, and it was just something they were infused with; it was ‘biblical’ quite literally. The Italian kids were far different. So we made alliances as kids. There was this kid, Mario, who I became quite close to for a long time, and he had a gang of kids, there was this area in Ottawa called “Anglesey Square”. On one corner was a Jewish school, one corner was a public school and on the other corner there was a French school. In the middle was this park, Anglesey Square, and that is where a lot of this crap was would happen. So I always made a point of crossing the park with the Italian kids because they were tough, they were really tough. Jewish kids took a lot of crap, and we learned to take it, but we were always outnumbered so that is why we learned to hang with the Italian boys. There was not much you can do. It is far different for [Jewish] kids growing here in Toronto because there is comfort in numbers.

Joshua also shared a telling story from that happen in Grade 10 while studying Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*:

I remember my teacher, Mr. H., nice guy but not the sharpest blade in the drawer, okay, now Joshua, since you are the Jewish boy, you’ll play Shylock. I thought ‘give me a fucking break’. One of the things my father used to do in the old country is, he was a bit of an amateur actor; he played King Lear, in Yiddish, so I went to him and I was really pissed. I said ‘I can’t believe they’re making me play Shylock and what do you think I should do and should I refuse to do it’ He said, ‘No, no, no you are going to do it and you are going to be the best Shylock they have ever seen’. So we practised, you know that great soliloquy “If you prick us do we not bleed, if
you poison us, do we not die...’ This was like academy award stuff and I did it. Mr. H. said ‘that was very good but next time could you do it with a bit of a Jewish accent like your father has?’

Joshua referred, at several junctions of our narrative interview, that he had done extensive research on his father’s story and on survivor testimony in general. He relayed this account of what happened to his father after the Nazi’s occupied the town of Botchka, which lay on an ever-shifting border between Poland and the Ukraine, after Hitler invaded Russia:

There were about 1700 Jews there and about the same number of non-Jews. Life became increasingly difficult. Food was scarce; kids were literally crying for food, hunger was just rampant. So they formed a ‘Judenrat’ (Jewish Council) in Botchka, he [my father] was one of the men on the council. They [the Judenrat] would pick two or three men to go out and get food. But if you got out and you got found, you got shot. That is just the way it was. One night, it was his turn to go out with two other men, he heard the sirens and the dogs; this was the night of the liquidation of the ghetto. So he said he had no idea, nobody knew what was going on, so instead of running away from it, he ran toward it to be with his family. He was scooped [up], picked up immediately. He was thrown on a cattle car. There were already people, not from his village, but from other villages who were already on the cattle car, he didn’t know anybody. So as the car began to move, he was able to pry a board loose from the floor of the train and drop down. You know he just jumped off the train and he went into the woods. A Gentile (non-Jew) friend, Julian, found him; he was a White Russian. He (Joshua’s father) was in his forties at the time. So he brought him back to his home and told him what was going on, that they were being moved and he didn’t know what happened to his family, but that he couldn’t go back, he had to save his own life. Julian hid him at his place for three months, in a grave. He put him in a box and dug a hole in the ground and gave him a straw to breathe through and at night he would uncover him and exercise. I mean, I can’t even conceive of how one lives like that for three months, but he did. He was in despair. A: He didn’t want to put Julian
and his family in danger, for if they were caught hiding a Jew, their whole family would have been killed. B: He didn’t have anything to live for anymore. But he was an Orthodox Jew and he wasn’t going to take his own life because it was forbidden by Jewish law. So one night, he just left. Julian wanted him to stay but he said, ‘I’m not going to stay’. He didn’t want to put Julian at risk and he told me the story. He wanted God to take his life. There was this terrible electric storm and he found a large tree and he sort of squeezed into the crevasse of this tree and prayed for God to strike the tree and kill him. Of course, it didn’t. He ended up finding a group of partisans. Not Polish partisans, because he was already told that if a Jew went to Polish partisans he would be killed. So he found a group of Soviet partisans in the same forest where the Bielsky brothers had a family camp. I don’t know if you know the Bielsky brothers, the Bielsky brothers were kind of these Jewish criminals who brought families into the woods and created a partisan group and saved three to four thousand Jews, there was a movie called Defiance ….he fought with the partisans until the end of the war and he came back and it turned out that he was the only one left alive. I don’t think, until the day he died, he gave up hope that somebody had survived. I remembered we went in 1983 to the first gathering of Holocaust survivors in Washington, D.C. and he walked around with a sign in Yiddish saying ‘any information about a family from Botchka’. It never occurred, obviously. He went a DP (Displaced Persons) camp, a very big one. He was scheduled to go to Palestine, actually on the Exodus, but he got sick and couldn’t go. So he went to Canada. My maternal grandfather sponsored him and that is how he ended up in Canada. So he ends up in Ottawa and meets my mother.

Joshua described how his father’s experiences and his own personal experiences have shaped his life:

All of this is to say that almost everything that my life became was as a result of my own experiences, either through being brought up in the shadow of a Holocaust survivor, and he cast a big shadow, and/or my own
personal experience, which in a microcosmic sort of way, reflected the kind of pain my father went through, not anywhere near the same way.

Joshua’s testimony reveals four significant ways that these traumas have impacted his life and his choices. First, a steadfast resistance to tolerating antisemitism:

I remember my father owned a small grocery school right next to the school and I would come to the store and I remember I would say to him ‘he called me this and he called me that’ and he would say ‘just toughen up, just going to have to be tough, that it was Jews’ experience’. Basically what he was saying is that that is our lot in life. I accepted it for a bit but as I got older I thought ‘fuck this, this doesn’t have to be our lot in life, who says this is our lot in life’. To a great degree this is what has driven me.

Second, his commitment to Holocaust research and education, which he attributes primarily to being the son of a survivor:

It gave me a passion to understand more. To figure out how he survived. Common to many children of survivors, I wondered if I could have done what he did. How does one do this? This is how I ended up doing my thesis on spiritual surviving in a death camp; interestingly he [my dad] was never in a camp. But, we grew up in Ottawa in what I would kind of call a survivor community. I was kind of lucky, on my maternal side, I had relatives, but on my paternal side, I had no relatives. The only relatives I had on my paternal side were this community of survivors; they all called themselves ‘cousins’. They were kind of like family.

Third, his commitment to Israel (he refers to himself as a progressive Zionist who is both pro-Israel and pro-Palestine):

Israel was a passion, understandably so, because if there had been an Israel when my father was growing up, none of this would have happened. My brother honestly firmly believes this, and I think he is right. Had there been a strong Jewish State, there would not have been a Holocaust, there just
would not have been\textsuperscript{37}. So this concept of having a strong Jewish state was just central in our lives. In Canada, we are mostly first-generation Canadians. My friends are mostly first-generation, some second-generation Canadians. That means that the Holocaust is within our experience, within our living memory, it happened at that time. So the existential threat to Israel is predicated and based on what happened during the \textit{Shoah}.

Finally, his commitment to social-justice:

As I became a teenager and started joining Jewish groups, that is where the safety in numbers came and that is where I became a little more sure of myself, a little less capable of just letting things slide and I knew there had to be another way. Now when I got to university that is when I started doing research and I thought ‘there has got to be a better way than this’. Which really led me into social work.

Joshua’s experiences that ensconced his Jewish identity, clearly created a sense of being the Other. This identity as the oppressed Other has worked to enhance his belief in a memorial collective that still holds out for a Jewish independent state, while also giving him a great ability to empathize with other oppressed groups, including Palestinians, as he shares in the second interview. Joshua’s narrative portrays an interesting dichotomy of how one’s identity and traumatic history can foster a competitive view of memory yet can still create a sense of empathy for the Other. In contrast, Dror has not experienced the kind of family trauma Joshua has experienced, but shows less empathy for the Other than does Joshua.

\textsuperscript{37} Joshua seems to be suggesting that if Israel existed as a Jewish State before Hitler came to power, the \textit{Shoah} would not have occurred, as the Jews would have had a safe place to go. He doesn’t offer any evidence to support this nor do I know of any, but the idea was clearly important to him and has helped shape his belief in the importance of a Jewish State as a shelter should the Jews be in danger again. A former Israeli military officer, Ephraim Sneh, relays a similar sentiment, defending Israel’s military might: “This is an Israeli F-15 flying above... Auschwitz...To me, this is it in a nutshell: If there’s an F-15, there’s no Auschwitz. If there’s no F-15, there could be an Auschwitz...My grandfather and grandmother were murdered by the Polish peasant with whom they were hiding. That taught me that we have no one to rely upon but ourselves...” (Spangler, 2015, p. 180).
4.1.5 Souneh - Professional, from Palestine/Israel, lives in Toronto

Similarly to Samira, Souneh’s motivation to participate in this study was largely driven by a duty to have the Palestinian story told:

I think that it never has been taken into the attention of how the Palestinians feel about the taking of their land. The West don’t usually look at it as people who has been discriminated or that their land was taken away from them or that there were refugees that had to suffer. Nobody really thought about how these people felt when they saw foreigners coming to their land, look different, dress different, behave different. Because the Arab Jews [the Jews that were already there], we considered them Arabs, were peaceful people, they were not aggressive. They were in their communities, among the Arabs. So we never thought that the Jews that were coming would be aggressive enough to really kick them out of their country. So they underestimated them. Based on the scale of the experience that they had with the Arab Jews that were living with them, they were not understanding the power of the Jews that were coming on the boats from the sea, what power they had and how they could really kick them out, they couldn’t think about it. That is how my mother always tell [told] us that they underestimated their power; that it cannot happen.

Souneh’s hope for this research was linked to her motivation to participate; that through having others hear and better understand the history and ongoing suffering experienced by the Palestinian people, change might occur:

My hope is that people have the chance to read and learn about how the Palestinian people suffered and how unfair what they had to go through. I feel that people need to learn and probably this would lead to some kind of peace. As long as you don’t understand what is the exact problem, what happened and why this people are still calling for their land, although they are two or three generations away, they still call themselves Palestinian and they still feel that one day, they are going to go back. I think people need to know.
Also akin to Samira, Souneh’s narrative of coming to understand her Palestinian identity was largely shaped by the actions of the Israeli army, but she begins her story with the events leading up to the Nakba:

My grandfather, who I never had the chance to meet, was a freedom fighter, but at that time he was against the British. Because, at that time, it was occupied by the British people. I know, all my life, stories from my mother, he was always jailed, they come home to pick him up from his family they prod, they take him to jail, they bring home back. This story of being in jail, in and out and in and out, during the British mandate, the British occupation and then the immigration, the Jewish immigration started coming. The people were very naïve, I remember my mother saying that her father kept trying to give the people awareness, that this is occupation, people are coming from different countries, I don’t think that people were very aware of the Second World War of the Holocaust, I don’t think they really knew what was going on, what’s happening, who is Hitler, what he has done to the Jews. It wasn’t really, it didn’t affect my life. They never emphasized this. The only thing that had me believe there was something called the Zionist organization, and Theodore Herzl, in 1870 and meeting in Switzerland and deciding to create a state of Israel in our land. People were so naïve in our land.

Souneh does recall her mother telling her about how beautiful Palestine was:

I remember, with my mom, that was our bedtime story; how beautiful Palestine is, how beautiful their home was, she is from Jaffa, her home was in Hashmanaim, their home was by the sea and they can hear the waves day and night and they would sit out on the balcony every evening.

Yet, she prefaces this by stating: “People were so naïve in our land”. She frames her mother’s sharing of the beauty of Palestine within a narrative of how her experience of beauty had been eroded by war and occupation:
I remember my mom was saying my grandfather refused to leave all the way until there was the “Deir Yassin Massacre\(^{38}\). The girls have been raped by the Haganah\(^{39}\), we call them Israeli terrorist group so they were really scared by this, that was really scary for them.

I asked her if she lived in Deir Yassin?

No, the rumours just spread really fast that girls were raped and women were tortured and people were killed. There were a few villages that were demolished completely. Remember, the Palestinians were not trained to fight, they were under the British occupation, they were not allowed to serve in the army, and they didn’t have an army. For that there were under the “augments” (Occupation). On the other hand, the Jewish immigrants that came from the West, they did fight in the armies; they did have training and a lot of financial support. So the war wasn’t fair. People really didn’t know what was happening. A few fighters tried. I remember they were saying that the rifles they had were not working properly; the bullets wouldn’t go out.

I later asked Souneh about her father:

My father was a civil engineer; he was in Jaffa too. They also were expelled, everybody was expelled. My mom too, but she hadn’t met my dad.

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\(^{38}\) On April 9, 1948, 130 commandos of the Irgun and the Stern Gang attacked the Arab village of Deir Yassin, *Remembering Deir Yassin: The future of Israel and Palestine*, (McGowan, 1998). Several sources, including McGowan, place the number of Palestinians killed at about 100. Other sources estimate the death toll as high as 250. The *New York Times* reported the final count at 254 on April 13, 1948 [http://www.deiryassin.org/mas.html]. Charles Smith’s book *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* also states that “the bodies of men women and children were mutilated and stuffed down wells”, (Smith, 1992). Counter narratives about the massacre, like *The Birth of a Palestinian Nation: The myth of the Deir Yassin*, (Milstein, 2012) has also been written, calling it “the massacre that didn’t happen”. However, many stories from Israeli soldiers who were there, including members of the group *Breaking the Silence* confirm many of the details referenced here.

\(^{39}\) *Haganah*, literally meaning “defense” in Hebrew was a Jewish paramilitary force first organized in 1920. In May 1948, shortly after the State of Israel was proclaimed, the *Haganah* was re-named the “Israeli Defense Forces” (IDF). The leaders of the *Haganah* distanced themselves from having participated in the *Deir Yassin* massacre and issued a statement denouncing the “dissidents” of the Irgun and the Stern Gang [http://www.deiryassin.org/mas.html].
yet. What I remember [hearing] all the time is that my uncle was injured in his chest and that he was on a stretcher, he had a fever and when they went to the sea to get a boat, in my imagination I see the high waves, they were cold and people looked at them, people would look at them down (down on them) because they were refugees. So my family was treated like, everyone was looking down on them and they were called Palestinian as if it were a bad thing. I can’t remember a particular story; they are always [going to] continue to suffer because they are Palestinian. They couldn’t go back. In 1948, they were not allowed, the West Bank was with Jordan, but there was no contact with Israel. People lost contact with their families who stayed, the Palestinian Arabs.

Souneh, similarly to Sami’s story, relays how her Palestinian family faced difficulties wherever they went:

My dad graduated from an elite university in Beirut. He worked in Syria for a few years. They put him in sensitive positions because they didn’t have a lot educated people like the Palestinian. Then he was lent to the Kuwaiti government for a few years, they sent them to help and then come back. He met my mom in Kuwait and they got married and lived in Kuwait for four years. They went back to Damascus to Syria for, supposedly, his job. Then he lost his job; they gave it to a Syrian person, because my dad was Palestinian. We were given Palestinian travel documents at that time, around 1960. I was born in Damascus along with my brothers and sisters. But we left; we didn’t grow up there. We went to Kuwait for a few years and then to Lebanon then my father found a job in Jordan. He was originally in Nabulus. So when we went to Jordon, Nabulus was part of Jordan at that time, so he got Jordanian citizenship. We stayed there for three years, and then we went to Syria and then Kuwait and then back to Jordan in 1968. There was the civil war in Jordan, so we went to Kuwait and stayed there until the first Gulf war (1991). I was married so I was already settled in the States. My parents were under the Iraqi occupation for two-three years then they liberated Kuwait. The Kuwaitis attacked the
Palestinians badly. Firstly, the Palestinians were very successful. Most of the money that the Palestinians made was in Kuwait. They were engineers and [had] other successful jobs. They went there in the 1950’s. They had lots of construction businesses. They were well educated. They were in the schools as teachers. We felt we were more influential than the Kuwaitis. So, jealousy was part of it. Second, the time of the First Gulf War. There were two groups in Kuwait, those that were for America and those that were against. At that time, my parents, after the liberation of Kuwait, the Kuwaiti army, because they had been trained to fight Iraqis, it was horrible, they [were] killing and torturing Palestinians and raping girls. I think that the world is against Palestinians. Saudi Arabia has always been the biggest ally with the Americans. I don’t believe that they do anything that the Americans don’t allow them to do. Whether they attack the Islamic fanatic or whatever, it is all planned. Palestinians were tortured wherever they went, that is why we feel we have to stick together. 1967 - 1973 we were very proud Palestinians, we were proud to say we were Palestinian. Until the civil war in Lebanon (1975) we were very proud Palestinians. Lebanon really broke our back.

I asked Souneh why the Syrians and Kuwaitis treated the Palestinians badly, she replied:

When you leave your country, you leave your home, you lose your identity, you are never respected. They regret that they left; they realized that no matter what it is always better on your own land. That is why, in 1967, they didn’t leave. They said “we will die on our land; we will not leave”.

Souneh’s traumatic memories seem to exist in three layers: the experiences in the 1948 war and her Uncle being wounded, her family’s stories of 1948 and expulsion and again after the 1967 war and mistreatment in the other Arab countries they went to and her more recent experiences, coupled with her knowledge of the ongoing suffering of the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza:

I feel that they are very cruel; the settlers are very cruel. I was there, I saw them in 1994 and I think they are the worst caliber of people in the world.
The first time I went to Palestine with my children, we went to Jerusalem and I saw them. They have weapons, they have guns and they make sure that you can see them. They walk around the city very arrogantly, they drive their cars very fast in the old city, they don’t care if they hit anybody. This is West Jerusalem, in the old city. I read about them and hear about them from people in the West Bank next to Arab villages, how they attack people who are outside, they kill their animals, they burn their trees, they pull up their trees.

She also tells of how Palestinians from Gaza have had the hardest time after they were displaced and had to settle in other countries, particularly in Kuwait after the 1991 war with Iraq and the American intervention:

The Kuwaitis were the most arrogant people in the world so people weren’t that upset that Saddam invaded because maybe they needed to learn a lesson; but they didn’t. People didn’t speculate how bad it was going to be. People were on their vacations, some left their kids behind with their parents, and they had no idea. We heard the news and we were shocked. My mom, because she was the head of social organization, they used to come to her and ask for help. Amnesty, human rights, she had lots of interviews with them asking for help. People would find young boys in the trash, eyes gone, hair pulled out, tortured. It was awful. Unfortunately, most of these Palestinians were from Gaza. Those from Jordan went to Jordan, those from Lebanon went to Lebanon, and everyone went to where their travel documents, their passports were from, but we call ourselves Palestinian no matter the passports we carry. But the people from Gaza, if they have travel documents from Gaza, issued by the Egyptian government, if they need to go back to Gaza they need a visa to go back, to back to their land. When this happened, they were trapped in Kuwait; they could not fly back to Gaza. They could not go to Egypt to go to Gaza. These were the people who were tortured the most. They couldn’t go anywhere; they had to stay where they are. My mom used to talk a lot about the hard life they had because they were Palestinian, it was a huge torture.
Souneh made some direct comparisons to what she learned about the Holocaust and what the Palestinians experienced and continue to experience:

I can’t understand when I hear about the Jews and the Holocaust and all their bad history: wear a star, murdered and expelled because people didn’t like their success, just like happened to the Palestinians. But now you come to Israel and you have the strength, the power to spread fairness from your experience, you are becoming worse than expected. Other than the genocide, not including the genocide, you are doing worse [than you experienced]. When I went to Prague and they showed us the Jewish quarter and told us about the yellow star and all this stuff, I said ‘Why are you doing the same, it is the same?’ To be honest with you, I said to the tourist guide that ‘the Jews were doing exactly the same thing in Palestine that was done to them’. She was saying such a strange thing, she was saying, ‘When they were sending the Jewish people to the gas chambers, the German people would sit and watch, it was entertainment’. This is so sick, When they were bombing Gaza, it was the same, they put out chairs, the Israelis, I saw it, putting chairs on the mountains of Israel and watching and joking and kidding how the bombs are landing and killing the people of Gaza. So, what is the difference? A human can be very bad when they are given power.

Souneh distinguished, in this testimony, the asymmetry in power between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs. Also, her denoting of the similarities between Jews and Palestinian in terms of their historical treatment is important as this research looks to find threads of commonality that may work to bridge differences. Souneh’s identity, similarly to Samira’s, was framed, in large part, by oppression she and family suffered at the hands of Israeli soldiers and caused by Israeli policy. Unlike Samira, her testimony does demonstrate an ability to understand and empathize with the Jewish experience. Her wounds clearly serve to isolate her within her memorial collective, but, this does not prevent her from empathizing with the Other. She draws an important line between empathizing and excusing the actions that have harmed, and continue to harm Palestinians in Palestine/Israel.
4.1.6 Ahuva – Israeli-born filmmaker living in Toronto

Ahuva grew up in Tel Aviv, Israel and has lived in Canada for many years. Ahuva made a link to her own interests in stating why she agreed to participate in this project while also revealing skepticism for the efficacy of such projects in regards to Israel/Palestine:

It is natural for me to support others. I am going to pursue graduate studies next year. I am also looking at narratives and counter-narratives in understanding the Other and I have done it all my life in my own projects. I am also interested in other forms of storytelling, like virtual reality, to walk in the shoes of the other, etc. So I do believe that storytelling is a great tool in creating the atmosphere for understanding. This is a general answer. If you are asking about Israel/Palestine, I don’t feel very hopeful.

Ahuva grew up in Israel and immediately related her upbringing to indoctrination and the seemingly built-in radar she possessed, from a young age that questioned what she was being taught:

I grew up in Israel, in Tel Aviv. The Holocaust is like part of the education system and a very strong part of it. I was part of absorbing the horror stories. The annual ‘Five Weeks’ I call it like the ‘bulldozer’, you know its like the whole education system in Israel is structured around it. It was structured by Ben-Gurion ⁴⁰, at the early stage of the country. The five weeks at Passover and then it continues with the Holocaust [remembrance] and then it continues with Memorial Day and then Independence Day and then in between, it starts with the narrative of Passover, that we were slaves, and we became free and then of course immediately there is the trauma and then the resolution and then being independent with the State of Israel. So I made it a project about it, it was one of my first films, as an adult, to research. We went and documented this period, it was a very

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⁴⁰ David Ben-Gurion was the first Prime Minister of Israel.
interesting, to relive it as an adult, it was very interesting. This was like 30 years ago.

I asked her if she had heard stories about the Shoah from her family:

Sure, like many. I am not saying that my father and his family before [didn’t have experiences from the Shoah], I knew some stories, it was sad. I had one aunt who I liked and she didn’t like to talk about it. I understood she was a prisoner in a labour camp. It was not something that shaped me, it was just something that was there as part of things like wars and stuff, nothing was traumatic.

Ahuva’s identity as an Israeli Jew is one she never seemed to question or even give particular importance to. In place of this appeared a dislike for attempts to solidify her identity within the status quo of being an Israeli Jew and to “use” Jewish traumatic history for political purposes:

I never liked this indoctrination, like unconsciously. It was like five year-old kids wearing this yellow star and hear are all these sad stories of survivors, like you see in horror films. I hated it, I didn’t want to participate. The lies were not about the Holocaust, the lies were about the way we were taught history. We never heard about another people that were there [in Palestine/Israel]. It was when I started to travel and see other people. It was once when I was eighteen years old. They showed me a map of the 400 villages. You know, it was a very closed society; there was no free-internet, there was [only] one channel [on television]. When you start to travel and meet other people, you start to hear counter narratives. I grew up in a very apolitical house. My father is an artist. It was like I was not living in the Middle East; it was like I had to make the puzzle myself. As I met people, I met another guy, I went to the West Bank, I started to question. I was in the army. I wasn’t very participatory. I did nothing significant. I was smart, I avoided places I didn’t want to be. I was posted in Tel Aviv. I was a little bit clueless. This map I came to know when I was about twenty years old [a map of the West Bank and the Occupied territories, how Israel was divided up, and a pre-1948 map with the 400
Palestinian villages. I finished my high school and went through the army and then I understood where I lived, where I grew up politically. I went to South America before university. I met this guy who was in political exile from South Africa and left Apartheid, and came to visit me after in Israel. He was a very political guy. I went with him to the West Bank and saw the refugee camps for the first time. It was in Paris where I saw the four-hundred villages map, just before his visit. What I realized is it was like so deliberate and so sophisticatedly structured. I thought of the reason I went to study history and after graduation, I went to study film and learned to do documentaries that were the voices of the counter narratives. It is not random; it was not accidentally, it happened because I was motivated to bring the Other’s [stories to film audiences].

Ahuva’s understanding of Israel is one where the re-telling Jewish historical trauma creates a collective memory based on fear. For her, her telling of trauma is not a story of her family or her experiences but rather her growing realization that the country of Israel, her homeland, is a place of ongoing wounding and that much of this, from her vantage point, is self-perpetuated.

It is very simple in my case, the feeling of being so unjust. The whole system is structured to make the young Israelis be good soldiers, to feel they are the righteous people and to feel that they are always the victims. Looking at it from today’s perspective, looking at it from, we’re talking thirty years ago, it’s obvious, I think you know what I mean. I think Israelis are more aware of it than Canadians, my generation for sure. Unfortunately, the younger generation not so much, there is such a culture of fear, it is getting worse, very bad. The kids of my friends, oh my God. Not just a fear of terrorism, but fear in general. It is a culture of fear.

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41 Ahuva clarified what maps she was referring to in a follow-up e-mail conversation. The 400 villages are the Palestinian villages (towns and cities) whose residents fled or were removed, as referred to in Chapter 1 in the description of the Nakba.
Ahuva’s critique of Israel is reminiscent of the teaching of history that is part of Leah’s story of going to Masada and feeling like a Zealot from the first century. What does this “culture of fear” produce? In the framework of this project, it works to not only entrench victim beliefs within a memorial collective, but also inoculates that collective from the stories and experiences of the Other. Though Dror grew up in Canada, his readings, experiences in Israel and brushes with antisemitic stereotyping, have worked to position himself as victim and the Other as the enemy. In other words, promoting the idea of victim within a group segregates and isolates the “in-group” victim from the “out-group” enemy (Brewer, 2009, p. 135).

4.1.7 Hannah – An Educational Psychologist and human rights leader living in Toronto

Hannah has grown up in Toronto where she still lives today. Like Sami, she has been very involved with the Canadian Arab-Jewish Dialogue group as well as having been involved in many governmental and non-governmental agencies supporting and defending human rights in Canada. Hannah shared a little of her history and interest in the subject matter of this work in response to why she agreed to participate:

Well I must say I was curious. I agreed because I know you, and I know that you’ve, for a long time been a part of the anti-racism, equity thinking and practice in Ontario. So there’s a certain level of trust. My family, although not my immediate family, not my parents, who were both born here, but the rest of the family was certainly very much impacted by the Holocaust, including survivors who came and actually lived with us. Also, because of the Holocaust in Hope Educators Study Tour I led for many years. That’s why I agreed.

Hannah continued by sharing her hopes for research like this:

Well I have a lot of hope for anything that will help people who have a history of conflict, or at least inherited a conflict; it may not be direct. I have hope for anything that attempts to have people see things from the Other’s point of view. If I didn't have that kind of hope and optimism, I couldn’t of be involved in the last forty years, or I couldn't of been involved
even as a teenager in things like the civil rights issues and the struggles over the years. I guess too, as a psychologist I have always felt that our work is about putting yourself in the Other’s shoes. They have this term ‘hot buttons’. When people’s hot buttons are pressed and when they are emotional about an issue, they often forget everything they learned in theory, and it becomes conflict once again. My whole professional life has been about [having] people put theory and policy into practice. It’s not so much when people confront each other, but rather when they accept and respect the other so they can actually hear what the other is saying and try to put themselves in the Other’s shoes, then there is some hope for that. But I find, typically, that’s not happening in this discussion.

Hannah’s narrative tells of her life growing up in Toronto and the important role her Jewish identity played in charting her life’s course:

The most significant influence in my Jewish identity I think was growing up where I did, on Markham St. in downtown, Toronto, immediately post-war. In fact I was born when my father was overseas with the Canadian liberating forces in Holland. So it was multi-cultural, but also a fair number of Jewish people in the community. And I went to King Edward School. The stories, the family narrative came through my grandfather. We lived in his house on the second floor, because it was post-war and my dad was away. And I was named after his mother. And so from the time I was a child, I would hear stories of [family members in] Poland. Some were in concentration camps. Anyone who was in the town of Byzanchine, they were sent to Treblinka. The people were rounded up [and sent to Treblinka], which was only a death camp. Whereas the people, some of our relatives married at the same time, so they were in Ostrowiec. Which had a munitions factory, and they had to work in the factory as slave labourers, and then were sent to Auschwitz later in the war when that Ghetto, and the factory, were closed down. And that’s why they survived, because they were sent later. Some of this family tried to go back, some first cousins, my mothers and some nieces and nephew. They called my Grandfather, “Feta”,

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meaning uncle. They saw the Kielce Pogrom in 1946. They later came and lived in our house, having been survivors of Auschwitz. I used to think that you were supposed to cry at Kiddish, on the holidays. Because when my grandpa would get up, for example on Passover wearing his white kittel (Jewish robe of mourning) he would start the Kiddish and he would tremble, he would cry. Because he was thinking of how his mother in very difficult economic times sent him out from the shtetl. Living in that house, learning Yiddish because that would be the language they would use when they wanted to tell secrets. So of course I learned a lot of Yiddish.

Hannah described how being Jewish and being an educator, she became interested in Israel as a homeland for Jews, particularly survivors:

The ’67 war took place, at that time, right when I was directing the camp [a Jewish day camp at the Jewish Community Centre in Toronto]. And you know, you’re riveted to the radio, the television. So there was this desire in me that this Jewish place, because Jews have been this oppressed people for centuries, and understanding the history of antisemitism, finally had some place to call their own.

Hannah’s work life has greatly informed how she positions herself within a particular memorial collective. This, coupled with her interest in human rights in general, and, specifically related to this research, her interest in calling out antisemitism has played an important role in the work she has taken on.

She relayed the following incident:

You know, here I am coming in as a training specialist, on contract, to the then Ontario Race Relations Directory, which became the Anti-racism Secretariat. And a woman of colour comes up to me, and as someone there

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42 An attack against Jews in post-war Poland where at least 45 Jews were murdered and many others injured. These pogroms were related to the historical idea of “blood libel”, where Jews were accused of using Christian children for ritual purposes (https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007941).
teaching about stereotypes she says, ‘Oh gee Hannah, I wish I could have a better understanding, why are all Jews so good at business? You know, when my preacher tells us to work hard, he says we should work like the Jews. My brother is having such a hard time’. Now you see I am someone who does put theory and policy into practice. Here’s a woman, who is supposed to know what stereotypes are and saying that. I actually had a manager there, when we were discussing policy, say, ‘[N]o, Jew’s aren’t our clients, we wouldn't put them down, they’re not victims of discrimination, they have wealth and power.’ [This happened] in the Anti-racism Secretariat.

Similar to many other participants, Hannah had extensive interactions with Arab Palestinians before participating in this research, so parts of her narrative interview frame how her collective memory may or may not block her from understanding and acting in support of Arab Palestinians. Her long-time work as an activist, including standing against antisemitism, I suggest, has created a sensitivity for marginalized groups and protecting their human rights, while simultaneously sharpening her focus on antisemitism and, in the frame of this research, heightening her defensiveness of her own memorial collective:

It was antisemitic, when on September 1st, at Durban (the first Durban conference on Racism in 2000). Did the Palestinians and others in our human rights march on whatever September 1st is called, “Liberation Day” or whatever, did they march around the Durban government conference? No, you know where they marched around the Durban Jewish Club. That’s antisemitism. You want to make a protest, you want to say that at this conference we should be honouring Palestinians, absolutely tell the stories of Palestinians, but don’t go around with a group that has a sign that also says ‘Hitler should have finished the job’. You see, so no, the organizers wouldn't condone a sign like that, but why do you march around the Durban Jewish Club? Or the Synagogue? That’s called antisemitism.

Hannah defines herself as a “lefty Jew” and, like Sami, has been deeply engaged in the Canadian Arab/Jewish Leadership Dialogue group. While she has defended many groups from
hate and discrimination, her narrative reveals a particular focus on antisemitism. Identity, as Maalouf points out, often has us retreat into a fallback of “us” and “them” (Maalouf, 2001, p. 33). When Hannah is confronted with stereotypical views of Jews she speaks not just as a human rights advocate, but also from her “identifactory investments” (Simon, 2005, p. 89). Furthermore, her experiences listening to stories of her relatives being “rounded up” and sent to Treblinka, as well as witnessing her grandfather’s mourning rituals, served to ensconce her within a collective of mourners that continues to inform her political commitment to Israel and to resisting antisemitism.

4.2 Common threads and differences in how identity, trauma and victim beliefs in the narrative interviews work within the participant groups

These eight excerpts from the narrative interviews highlight four key points relevant to how the participants’ identity formation, traumatic and victimhood experiences create and ensconce their individual and collective memories:

1. The three Palestinian stories all represent how an outside force may concretize traumatic identity; a force that labels you as the Other. This is not to say that they didn’t all experience a sense of Palestinian identity before the *Nakba* or the 1967 war, but their memorial testimonies (in response to my specific questions) speak to how ongoing oppression can define a portion of one’s identity in a very particular way, a way where survival supersedes more bucolic, ceremonial and familial traditions that often signify who we are and who we become. While their parents and grandparents often experienced a more immediate trauma, each of the Palestinian participants has personal memories of war and occupation. While Sami remembered the beauty of the home his parents built in *Birzeit*, this too was soon overshadowed by his parents’ experience of losing this land forever. Samira and Souneh’s identifying memories, the ones they shared with me based on the questions I asked them, were almost completely framed within the 1967 war and the subsequent Occupation.
These stories reflect the depth in which past and present trauma work in concert to create feelings of isolation, oppression and a sense of displacement. My interactions with the Palestinian stories are largely responsible for my overall shift in thinking and outlook. My engagement with their experience allowed me a pathway through and outside of my own collective’s experience. My listening to their narratives and entering into to their experiences is a prime example of the multidirectional re-memorizing this research envisions.

2. While stories from the Shoah and experiences of antisemitism clearly shaped some of how the Jewish participants came to identify as Jewish and the passions that emerged from this identification, the Shoah became known to them through family stories, books, movies, etc., not through personal experience. In Leah’s and Dror’s testimonies, their memories of how they came to understand and embrace their Jewish identity, more specifically, the inherent danger in being Jewish, deepened and intensified both their sense of Jewish identity and affinity for this identity. In Dror’s case, his interest in Israel/Palestine was shaped both by his learning about the Shoah and his personal experiences with antisemitism, though his experience of the Shoah was more distant than the experiences of the other Jewish participants. Hannah grew up in a very Jewish neighbourhood in Toronto, surrounded by Jewish culture and learning, which directly attributed to her passion for Judaism and, later, for Israel. Ahuva’s Jewish and Israeli identity was just a fact of life, without seeming to be significant in how she viewed herself. In fact, as she learned more about the cost her freedom had on the Other, she grew resistant to embracing the privileges she had been given through her Jewish/Israeli identity. Joshua stands as more of an outlier, his father’s stories of the Shoah, reinforced and entrenched by his own personal experience with antisemitism growing up, contributed greatly to both his Jewish identity and his activist career that will be explored in chapters five and six. Joshua’s intimacy with his father’s trauma may, in part, be explained in that he learned as a young adult that he had half-siblings that were taken from him as well as a potential mother (step-mother). An interesting paradigm can be drawn between Joshua and Dror’s narratives. While Joshua’s narrative reveals a very intimate experience with trauma, specifically the great loss his family endured
during the *Shoah* and his “daily experience of antisemitism” growing up, Dror’s narrative show the greatest distance from these wounds, yet it is Joshua that is most able to empathize and relate to the Other, as is illustrated even more clearly through the analysis of Joshua and Dror’s second interviews (Chapters 5 and 6).

My analysis of the Jewish narratives, along with the examination of my own story, has greatly enhanced my understanding of how identity, trauma and victim beliefs are at work with in my collective and how these often act as force fields, pushing away the Other and the Other’s experiences. Ahuva and Leah’s personal work and reflections on Israel in general and Zionism specifically shine a light on a path forward, toward the Other and repair.

3. The politicization of identity through collective memory, as described by Rothberg in Chapter 1, is born out, to varying degrees, in each of the eight narratives. Being Jewish or being Palestinian and the personal and collective traumas associated with these identities, (with the exception of Ahuva and Leah, which will be discussed more in Chapter 5), led to a political positionality and commitments that were essential in the process of forming their individual identities, particularly in relationship to trauma, and their eventual membership in a politically-driven memorial collective. This process of co-opting memory is articulated by Nora when he decries the conflation of memory and history into historiography, a “history of history” that defines a collective and is then used to promote this “history” over the “history” of the Other (Nora, 1989, pp. 9-13). Furthermore, Palmié’s assertion of “commemorative praxis”, where social collectives, who were not part of the event itself, use to construct their collective memory (Palmié, 2010, p. 367) is actualized in how many of the Jewish participants connect the traumatic memories of their ancestors to the present and claim them as personal identifiers. This is something I have done personally and have only begun to unravel as a result of doing this research. It is important to remember that while this research is critical of the politicization of memory, it does not suggest that the oppression that one is resisting is any less real or less worthy of resisting. What is essential to this work is the understanding of how this politicization forms an immunity to the Other that is
entirely counterproductive to creating a non-competitive memorial library of experiences and utilizing this re-membering as a generative vehicle towards repair.

4. This research, based on the interviews with the eight participants, recognizes Jewish trauma, particularly as a result of antisemitism, as present and ongoing, but makes a distinction between the traumatic memories of the Shoah that exist in stories but not in the first-hand experiences of the Jewish participants, as separate and distinct from the experiences of occupation and displacement that continues to shape the reality of the Palestinian participants. The ongoingness of trauma in the Palestinian narrative places trauma not as a wounding from the past, but a wounding that continues and that plays an important role in examining how the Palestinian collective memory is shaped and continues to be shaped. Victim beliefs, which often form out of first-hand or family narratives of being a victim and/or perceptions of being victimized that may be related to historical experiences of victimization, are in play within both the Palestinian and Jewish narratives, but, as I have outlined earlier, I do not equate these victimizations and it is the deleterious effects on the Palestinian Other, stemming from entrenched Jewish victimhood, that I am examining here and in the following chapters.

To summarize my findings in four general statements, as I have done here, may not do justice to the engagement that this work has undertaken. Before proceeding, I offer that the narrative interviews show, at once, how collective memory becomes ensconced within, and operates as, a shield from the suffering of the Other while also displaying the generative, positive ability of individuals to see outside of their own single story and embrace, and even act on behalf of, the constructed Other.

In this Chapter, I have analyzed the eight narrative interviews, introducing the reader to the stories of the eight participants. I have examined how identity, trauma and victim beliefs have worked to ensconce their memories within specific memorial collectives. In Chapter 5 (and 6), I will analyze how identity, trauma and victim beliefs work to resist and/or engage the Other, looking specifically at the second interviews, “interactions”.
Chapter 5

Challenging Collective Memories: Encountering the Other (Interactions, Part One)

5.1 The efficacy of interactions with the Other

Chapter 5 and 6 will focus on the second research question that asks if the interaction with the Other, using a multidirectional and interbiographical frame, has a reparative and/or generative effect?

It is essential to state before delving into this part of the research that all eight participants had previous interactions with the people from the opposite group. Some of these interactions were quite extensive. Hannah, Sami, Souneh and Samira had been a part of a Jewish/Arab dialogue group and had been engaged in many conversations with the Other. Joshua related that he had many discussions with Palestinians, including formal and informal discussions with the Canadian Arab Federation and was very open to deepening his previous learning. Ahuva has dedicated much of her life to making films about the Occupation and illuminating the realities of Palestinian life in Israel. Leah has also been deeply engaged in understanding the Palestinian experience during many trips to Israel and in a variety of interactions here in Canada. Dror spent time in Israel working with a project “that tried to get storytelling Jews and Arabs to build ties with each other”. Therefore, both the narrative interviews and the interaction interviews reveal how the experiences of listening to the Other have affected their beliefs about themselves, the Other, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a whole. Therefore I will occasionally refer to the narrative interviews to provide a context for how the interactions in this research replicate and/or differ from their previous experiences with encountering the Other.

Chapter 4 focused largely on how identifying as “us” is created by apportioning blame to “them”. Specifically, I examined how identity, forged through traumatic memories and

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43 “Opposite” here refers to Jews and Palestinians being involved in formal and informal “dialogue” with each other.
experiences, including victim experiences, designate blame to “them”, and deepen the divide between Self and Other. Returning to Alexander: “cultural trauma…[leaves] indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways” (Alexander, 2004, p. 1). A pivotal question, which is the primary focus of this chapter is do interactions with the traumatic experiences and memories of the Other create a multidirectional move towards co-memory or do these encounters and interactions, in fact, work to further entrench the “us” and “them” paradigm? A further question, specific to the participants in this study, all of whom have had first-hand and/or family experiences with the Shoah or the Nakba as well as ongoing encounters with discrimination in regards to their Jewish or Palestinian identity, is what responsibility do we each have for the Other and each other’s stories? I asked this question specifically in the first interview, but it lies, tacitly, in the background of the entire second interview. This question’s import lies in the call for multidirectional remembering that is at the heart of this project.

When I designed the research questions, the idea of responsibility for the Other was framed as a means of creating pathways to multidirectionality. As the research unfolded, as I have often noted, asking a Palestinian what responsibility they had for mitigating the Jewish experience was problematic on several levels. First, the Palestinian participants were in no way responsible or connected to the Shoah or to antisemitism. Second, as I have stated, the stark inequities in power and privilege between the Jewish and Palestinian groups makes it unjust for me to ask them to understand the Jewish participant’s who are drawn to Zionism, as it is the Zionist project that has created the Palestinian loss of land, political voice, economic freedom and led to and maintains the Occupation.

As is detailed in Chapter 1, this analysis is framed within the understanding of asymmetrical power between the two participant groups and within a human rights and justice lens. While this lens creates different responsibilities for the Other, it does not negate either group’s agency in the process of repair. As Simon reminds us, to bear witness to the trauma of the Other is to be “wounded by their wounds” (Simon, 2000, p.10).

Chapter 4 introduced the reader to the traumas of the participants through the narrative interviews and how these “wounds” became memorialized within a particular collective, often shielding the participants from fully comprehending or appreciating the trauma of the Other.
This chapter examines how these collective traumatic memories can either build bridges to viewing and understanding the Other or form walls of resistance to the Other’s traumatic experiences, or do both at once.

5.2 Outlining the second set of interactions interviews

In the second set of interaction interviews, I asked the participants to respond to excerpts from the narratives of the Other within the framework of four guiding questions:

1. What resonates for you in the narratives you are reading and what intersections with your own story, if any, do you see in the experiences you are reading about?

2. Where, if you do, find yourself resisting what you are reading or feel confronted by what you are reading?

3. What possibilities/impossibilities to you see for “re-membering” after undertaking this process of examining your historical memory, hearing my story as the researcher and the stories you have read from participants who have a different historical memory and experience than yours?

4. Do you see any new actions to take out of participating in this exercise?

The participants had been given key excerpts from the narrative interviews of the Other. While the excerpts were presented anonymously to the participants, to make it easier for the reader to follow, I have indicated in the text of participants’ responses whose narrative they were responding to. While understanding that by editing the testimonies for this sharing exercise, my own biases as to what was most important came into play, my goal was to capture the narratives as they are told in Chapter 4, without overwhelming the participants with facets of the testimonies that were not cogent to the four framing questions or too lengthy to ask them to

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44 Samira, for health reasons, chose not to participate in the second interview. She did agree to allow me to share her narrative interview with the Jewish participants, so the responses of the Jewish participants to Samira’s narrative are part of this study. Having only two Palestinian participants take part in the second interview is a recognized concern in that there was already an imbalance of five Jewish participants to three Palestinian participants in the first interview, but as I will discuss in the conclusion, as a reflexive researcher, it was my intent to focus more on the Jewish responses and “our” responsibility to re-membering, especially given the asymmetrical power relations I have previously referred to.
read within the time that they had agreed to. While in some cases, I included the vast majority of a participant’s narrative testimony in what I presented to the opposite group, in other cases, I edited out significant sections. My goal was to focus on testimony that directly related to identity, trauma and victim beliefs, as they related collective trauma, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the debate about the conflict.

After reading the excerpts, the participants chose to either write journal reflections or have me record their responses⁴⁵, as they had in the first interview. In both cases, I responded either in writing or verbally to them. In some cases, I did this to encourage them to respond to what it was the Other had said, rather than to what they inferred from what they said. In some cases, where I felt that my own history and experiences might encourage further reflection from the participant, I added this as part of my reflections.

This chapter will deal with the first two framing questions and Chapter 6 will focus on the last two (framing questions). The participant responses being examined in this chapter primarily deal with how they responded to the narratives of the Other. Chapter 6 will examine what possibilities/impossibilities have arisen from participating in this research as well as what actions the participants felt might be productive going forward.

5.3 Resonance and intersections: Where can you enter the identity and traumatic experience of the Other?

5.3.1 Joshua: Shared Pain

Joshua’s first response to this question was: “what resonates, of course is the pain, the pain is similar and I feel it viscerally… the only thing that stays the same is the pain. That you cannot argue with because a person’s pain is a person’s pain”. I have omitted, here, a lengthy statement between the “… shown above where Joshua describes his resistance to comparisons to the Shoah made by Samira and Souneh. I note this here, as this was a significant barrier for

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⁴⁵ As some of the responses were written, points of emphasis, like italics or “all caps” appear in the transcriptions without explanations. If the points of emphasis are implied, the [] are used to notate the emphasis is implied.
some of the Jewish participants in acknowledging the cross-traumatic intersections between the narratives. Joshua continued:

Of course there are intersections. There are intersections of pain, there are intersections of loss of property and land, there are intersections of loss, there are intersections of having family members lost, killed, displacement, issues around faith, issues around militarism; there are all kinds of intersections here. They were expelled from their homes like my father was expelled from his home. But, they are individualistic at the same time. They are not the same, although there are intersections.

I asked Joshua, “Could you speak about how the traumas; the hits, the scraps, the bruising; how they resonate similarly? The big question in my work is if we can view trauma multidirectionally, maybe the disputes will become less important because we are speaking as ‘co-citizens’ of the world’”:

It is a very good question, but the differences are so stark as well, but the issue of displacement, I completely get. These people were in homes, on land, that they considered their ancestral home. My father considered his village of Botchka as their ancestral home; they lived there for three hundred years. That is a long time. But there is no connection, for me, other than my father lived there. I don’t consider myself a Polish Jew. Many of these Palestinians see these as their ancestral lands and yearn to go back there. Much like we want to return to the land of Israel, they want to return to the land of Palestine. I get that. But I don’t have an attachment to Poland. I went back purely out of emotional curiosity. They thought I was going back to reclaim the home which was the furthest thing from my mind. This is a huge difference. Even the children of the Palestinians who survived the Nakba see this as returning to their ancestral homeland; there is a strong pull. I don’t have that. I don’t even have that same pull to return to Israel. Yes, I am a Zionist, I love Israel, and it should be and must be a safe homeland for the Jewish people. I have my own feelings about what is happening now; I have no desire to live there, none. That is what has me in
a different place. It is hard for me to relate to that yearning because it isn’t a felt experience. The only thing that is a felt experience is in the similarities in the pain told of stories. Again, it is different. There is one story here where [s]he (referring to Samira’s story about her and her sister) is talking about Israeli soldiers coming in and giving a boy candy in order to get information, but nobody got hurt, no one was dragged away to concentration camps or made to dig their own shallow grave. It was a terribly fearful situation, but what did s[he] say. [S]he said ‘I thought they gave me poison so I spit out the candy’. Of course it is traumatic and a terrible thing for a child to go through but imagine the Jewish children that were dragged out by the SS and watched their parents be shot and thrown into shallow graves. The differences are so immense but it can’t in any way deny the tragedy and the trauma that these children and these folks went thorough; it’s just different. The question is a good one, the intersection are, well, there is only one intersection and that is the pain.

It is important to note that Joshua saw how Palestinians long for their homeland where he does not (though, unlike the Palestinian participants, the land he is referring to, Poland, was not Joshua’s indigenous land). In Joshua’s interaction interview, he continually came back to his understanding of shared pain, yet within, what he feels, are drastically different circumstances. On the one hand, he shows deep understanding and even regret for what Israel has done to the Palestinians, but “rails against” comparisons to the Shoah and details how they are different both in scope and in the consequences suffered by the differing groups. These differences he delineated include: (these are direct quotes from Joshua’s interaction interview)

1. What was unique about the Holocaust was that it was the first time that a state used the full resources, the technological resources to create a wholesale mass murder market.

2. The Holocaust is different in that it wasn’t part of a war, it was part of a war experience, but it was a separate war, it was a war against the Jews. There wasn’t, I don’t believe or accept, an attempt by Israel to systematically destroy
Palestinians. There was an attempt to move them away, to clear land and in so doing, there were atrocities that happened.

3. Jews were lone wolves completely. They were not considered Europeans. They spoke their own language. Palestinians speak Arabic, they may speak differently, but that has always been their language. Jews have always spoken a different language and have a separate culture and religion. They were a completely separate and isolated group of people. The Palestinians, if you will, in a region that was predominately Muslim, they were discriminated against because of their ‘caste’, as opposed to Jews who were discriminated because they were completely different than everyone else around them.

He makes one further distinction that goes to the heart of the identity question, questioning what it is to be Palestinian:

The Middle East is a caldron. Prior to 1948, Israel was part of the Arab world. You’ll have to forgive me; I am still unclear on what a Palestinian is? I don’t know where they came from. Jordan was really the land of the Palestinians. It was an artificially created country. As was Syria, as was Lebanon, as were many of these countries.

Joshua’s response speaks to how a memorial collective identifies itself in contrast to a stated and clearly defined Other in order to declare its legitimacy as a collective and is prone to delegitimize the identity of the Other in order to further clarify its own legitimacy. While the facts Joshua offers may be historically accurate (or not), I was struck by his need to devalue the identity of Palestinians while, at the same time, seeming to understand that they had lost their homes “like my father had lost his home” and their family members had been displaced or killed. As in all evaluations I am making, the intention is to better understand how collective memory works, not to judge or evaluate a particular person or viewpoint.
5.3.2 Souneh: Being discriminated against doesn’t allow you to discriminate

Souneh’s response to Joshua’s testimony about his father’s loss and the way Jews in general were treated during the Holocaust reveals her ability to empathize with the Jewish experience as her family experienced similar alienation, but she argues that this doesn’t give the Jews the right to mistreat the Palestinians:

His feeling is fair. Of discrimination and justice and fairness or being blamed for being successful, I agree with that. But, that does not allow Jews to discriminate against others. Unfortunately, as you see in psychology, if the father hits his son, then the son comes to hit his son. The husband who hits the wife and there is lots of violence at home, the children end up doing the same. So, I feel like the Jews are doing the same thing. They have been discriminated against throughout their life, for things that we have nothing to do with as Palestinians. We have people, who came here from Europe, who were fair-skinned, who feel they have the right to discriminate against Jews. The Ashkenazy discriminates against the Sephardim. Those who have dark eyes and darker skin, they discriminate against them, they think they are better than they are. I feel that this is so unfair. I can feel for them that they have been discriminated against and I try to think of why they are discriminated against. I can feel why they were discriminated against. People don’t like people who look different, who look darker. But, they are doing the same thing.

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46 Ashkenazy Jews are of European heritage, which includes the vast majority of Jews who immigrated to Palestine after World War II. Sephardic Jews (plural is Sephardim) originate from Spain or Portugal and were dispersed during the Spanish Inquisition of 1492 (http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/Sephardim.html). Arab Jews, known today as “Mizrahi” are descendants of Sephardic Jews and tensions between the groups are common in Israel as Ashkenazy Jews often hold systemic power and privilege within Israeli society.
I asked Souneh if she saw comparisons to how Joshua was treated by his teacher stereotyping him as a Jew and the discrimination he felt growing up in Ottawa and her experiences as a Muslim/Palestinian in Canada:

Yes, he didn’t see him as a Canadian. [Due to] Islamophobia, I have the same feeling. When I tell people that I am a Muslim, although I look modern and I act modern, they see me as less great. They see it in my eyes. They say like ‘what is this and why that’. If we go back to Palestine, and we think about it, all these are feelings, those that I have read [here]. Many of them, they choose Palestine as a step to get out of Israel. They kicked us out and then they left. Why are you not there, why are you here? Go there, if that is what you want. Why do Israelis have dual citizenship? If you really love Israel, why don’t you go back? You already took my land. I am here because I am forced to be here. You are here, but you are not forced to be here. You already have a country, you believe in it, it is part of your Torah, and this is what you fight for. So, why are you here?

Interestingly, in Joshua’s statements above, he recognized how he himself had no interest in living in Israel and that he understood how Palestinians wanted to live freely in their homeland. In Souneh’s first interview, she, similarly to Joshua, challenged the identity of the Other:

So, for me, the Jews are Jews. In Syria, I go to a guy who cleaned the knives, they had certain artwork (implying valuable art). Some were very influential and successful. They were Jews. They put the sign up on the door that their day off was Saturday. It was never a concern for me. For me, it was completely different to be a Jew and to be a Zionist. You believe in this and that, it is a religion. Three-quarters of the Koran is about the Jews. So I didn’t see the Jews other than politically. I didn’t believe that the Jews are a race. I still don’t believe it. I think Jews is a religion.

Souneh makes a valuable distinction between Jewishness and Zionism, an idea that will be more thoroughly explored in Chapter 6 and is particularly relevant to the Israel/Palestine debate here in Canada.
5.3.3 Sami: Empathy

Sami answered simply to the questions of what he could relate to: “I can empathize with all of it”. I asked him if he could see similarities between what the Jews have suffered and the Palestinian experience: “I think that the feelings are similar but I don’t think that there is a point in comparing the experiences”. I asked him if he felt it made a difference to connect on an emotional level rather than a political one:

I think it does, it might even be the only way. Because the Jews see themselves as victims of history and the Palestinians see themselves as victims of Israel or the creation of Israel. The more each side stands together in their experiences, the more room there is for this emotional empathy. Of course, the Palestinians always say, ‘We had nothing to do with the Holocaust, why should we be punished?’ I mean, that is what happened. The Jews can ask the same question, ‘Why were we the scapegoats for Hitler and the Europeans?’ I remember asking a thinking Jew once: ‘Hitler diverted many funds and energy to eliminating as many Jews as possible and this had no military strategic value at all, why on earth did he do this?’ She said, ‘I have no idea’. The fact that it is still not known makes it scarier, which leads to ‘it can happen again’. You can always say ‘it is just hatred’, but that doesn’t do it.

Sami responded specifically to Leah’s narrative when she became aware of her Jewish identity and the danger inherent in being a Jew:

‘My first awareness was that you get killed for it and you did get killed for it’. This sentiment that they are out to get us. In my own community there is such a lack of empathy for this position because Israel is seen as such a powerful country that has beaten the crap out of Arab countries over and over again and ‘You’re the one who is afraid that we are coming to get you?’ So I was reading this and empathizing with it all the time until I remembered how it is heard and the incredulity to such a sentiment. Because of my dialogue work I have come to learn that it is real, the suspicion on the Arab/Palestinian side that it is fake and an excuse to
engender sympathy and strengthen Israel claims. Every time Israel is accused of doing something wrong, a story about the Holocaust comes out to balance it out (not Sami’s view, but one he has often heard). Remember Madeline Albright said that ‘She remembers that she was Jewish’. The sentiment in the Arab community was ‘Yeah right!’ Getting an experience of the other side has a chance of waking you up.

Sami’s response to this question, and in fact all questions in the second interview, speaks to his journey of self-reflection and interaction with the Other. His responses are educative, if we choose to view them with the circumspection in which they are given. He is teaching me, as a Jew committed to a non-competitive view of the Other, how our fallback response to criticism of Israel is often to remind the world of the Shoah, our history as victims and our need to protect ourselves. Furthermore, Sami is also teaching me how that response is viewed in the Arab world and in the Arab Diaspora.

5.3.4 Dror: Empathy and blame: A duality

Dror begins his reflection regarding what resonated for him in the narratives of the Other, by revealing his distrust of the narratives and the people who shared them:

For the record, and I will respond more to this in the second part of the questionnaire, I am going to comment only on those parts that feel honest to me. Much of the passages I have read are so desperately inaccurate that I don’t feel they were told in good faith, notwithstanding the personalization of history this exercise is intended to encourage. Again, more on that in question two.

He then noted places where he could enter the story of the Other, but not without delineating who he felt was ultimately responsible:

As far as the parts that speak to me, the one person who wrote about his/her experiences coming back from school and getting caught up in Israeli checkpoints comes to mind (Samira). To the child growing up in the period of the first Intifada, to experience terror from living through an uprising and
army responses, indifferent or unaware at the large forces at work (such as who was responsible for provoking Israel’s response) such a situation must be terrifying. I am as sorry for any child to have such an experience, as I am that Israel needed to take such measures to defend itself from an impossible situation. I find it fascinating to see the other passage of a child remembering the actual arrival of Israel in 1967 (also Samira). I believe the sincerity of the family’s terror at the unknown that was arriving in their streets. The part I find so very sad is the part of a Palestinian from Lebanon (Sami), living every day under the weight of stigma for being a Palestinian. How horrible to wake up every day knowing the entire state of Lebanon, i.e. the world around you, is so terribly opposed to your existence. How can anyone be expected to succeed in life with that against them? The definition of sadness.

In response, I offered Dror the following:

I also see a parallel to a Jewish child growing up in Poland in 1939. Questions like: Why do we have to move? Why are they treating us this way? What did we do to deserve this? I find that I am connecting with experiences of isolation, oppression and alienation. Proportional comparisons don’t enter into it for me, just individual and family experiences. Personally, when my grandparents were arrested in Holland in 1942, as awful as it was, they knew the day was coming. I don’t think that Palestinians living in villages around Israel in 1948 knew what was coming. I really connect with that.

Dror’s response, while empathizing with the trauma experienced by Palestinians in 1948, returned to a re-telling that justified the memorial collective that he feels most at home with:

History tells us a third stayed, a third left and a third we kicked out (the experience of Palestinians in 1948). Sure there is a comparison, someone being denied a fair chance in life is never okay. The Holocaust experience would inform me to say that these people need to be masters of their own house, but not a comparison between Israeli checkpoints for security; [that
[321x42]113

is] not the same as a Jewish child being stopped. I get the experience of the Palestinian, but we were just living our lives. The winds of change just brought the winds of antisemitism back in the worst way. But we never were a part of being a group that was attacking another group like happens in Israel today. Though the Palestinians themselves didn’t kill us, by the time of war in 1948, they were part of a theatre that was trying to kill us (for example, the Jordanians, and the Lebanese).

5.3.5 Hannah – Othering: A shared experience

Hannah found resonance with Palestinian stories in several places while also citing differences:

What resonated with me in the Palestinian narratives was how commonalities in the immigrant/refugee/displaced persons’ are so prevalent. For example: ‘When you leave your country, you lose your identity, and you are never respected’ - or the bedtime stories on how beautiful Palestine was (both are from Souneh’s narrative). I could relate to the experience of members of my own family who were categorized as ‘DP’s’ or ‘greenies’, and to the challenges people with accents face daily and how it affects their identity and self-esteem (referring to Sami’s narrative about hiding his Palestinian accent). The ‘othering’ of Jews in most countries and communities in the world is commonplace. I can recall my grandfather's bedtime stories to me to bolster my self-esteem - not so much telling me how beautiful Poland was (needless to say); but how strong his mother was - my namesake - in Poland and how I was named for her and could be smart and strong and brave like her. But the difference I see in these narratives is the anger, I feel, still comes through and the blame/responsibility attributed to all Jews (e.g. ‘The Occupation is every Jew’s responsibility’, and ‘the war wasn't fair’ (with the blame ascribed to Jews). This is a very different psychologically and emotional response, psychologically and emotionally, from members of my own family who survived the Holocaust, most of who blame ‘the Nazis’ not
all Germans, and the collaborators who were complicit. There is not a residual blaming, in my experience.

I offered the following:

I also was really moved by the similarities of the trauma caused by being displaced. I also saw a real parallel between how Palestinians have experienced being unwanted and oppressed wherever they have gone, in part out of jealousy of their success and in part from being the Other, similar to the historical Jewish experience. I wonder also if Palestinians really have much opportunity to separate ‘all Jews’ from those that committed atrocities in the wars or who occupy Gaza and West Bank. We, in the West, have a larger lens where it is pretty easy, I think, to see Germans as a whole, separate from Nazis. We also have had the benefit of time, whereas the Palestinians in Gaza continue to be occupied. Does this add anything for you?

Hannah related to my response but noted:

We’re talking about the impact of traumatic memory on identity and psyche and although intimately connected, the ‘memory’ of the ‘Nakba’ of 1948 is different from the impact of present experience.

In her response to my statements, Hannah related to how the Palestinian participants responded to the *Nakba*, but deflected my suggestion that the “ongoingness” of the Occupation may account for how the Palestinian participants may not separate “all Jews” from the Israeli Jews that occupy Gaza and build settlements in the West Bank. This research’s stand for non-competitive memory allows for distinction like “past” memory and “present” or “ongoing” memory” but doesn’t value one over the other. In other words, stories of the Occupation, though they are continuing stories as the Occupation is ongoing, they are no less “traumatic memories” and make it far less reasonable for Jews to expect Palestinians to view “our” traumatic experiences outside of and separate from what they are currently experiencing.
5.3.6 Leah - Shared pain and experiences: A multidirectional move

Leah’s response to the question of what resonated for her revealed parts of her history that she had not shared in the narrative interview:

The first thing I can relate to, I relate to an incredible amount of things. The first is the experiences I had during [the] Russian occupation [in Czechoslovakia] with the tanks in front of our street, in front of our house and that feeling of uncertainty if someone is going to shoot you if they see something wrong with you, something like that. When you are a child, the fear from that, so I very much remember that. One of the stories, the people coming back, I think it was to Ramallah, and the person, maybe she was Jewish and maybe not but not wanting them to come in (Samira). That reminds me of the story of my mom and my grandmother when they returned from Terezin and they went to their lovely house in the small town where they lived before the war and that apartment was now lived in by another family and they opened the door and said, with horror, ‘Why did you come back, What did you have to do to survive?’ My mom and grandmother see the dining room table filled with dishes and a sugar bowl, all their stuff. These people didn't seem the least bit inclined to give any of it back nor the apartment, so they turned around and went away. They didn't try to do anything about it. [This was] very similar.

The next one was the accent (Sami), how you come to a new country and your accent betrays you all the time and some places that is really a problem. For me, that place was Denmark as no one there had an accent, really very few people who lived there were from anywhere else. I looked fine [fit in], but the minute I started singing, that was my problem, I still had an accent in Danish and I realized that was going to be the one obstacle in my way to being a singer so I decided to go to Canada as when I visited here in Vancouver, I realized that everyone had an accent, so I felt right at home. So I can relate to how they felt. These people who came into Lebanon looked much the same, but the soon as they opened their mouth,
they were in trouble; that I could also relate to. I haven't had as dreadful a situation leaving my home but I have seen enough in films so that I can understand that incredible sense of loss that never goes away, like the whole in your stomach that never gets filled. I do have a Palestinian friend and the minute she talks about her house [they had to leave] her eyes fill with tears. You can be happy and successful, but it will still always be there like a permanent sense of loss that never really wanes. It is pretty awful.

This research neither seeks for or provides simplistic answers as to why Leah, who lost all of her relatives on her mother’s side in the Shoah and has a deep affinity for Judaism and her Jewish identity, was so able to interact with the Palestinian stories with no hint of the defensive, identity-guarding language of several of the other Jewish participants. Why was she able to renegotiate her stance on Israel after learning what Palestinians suffered, as she relayed in her first interview? Why did her traumatic memories serve as a bridge to the Other, acting non-competitively, rather than as a competitive, zero-sum gain approach? Though the full answers to these questions are for another study, the relevance of Leah’s responses for this study are that they provide a window into how a multidirectional, non-competitive view of memory can be applied to this and other intractable conflicts.

Similarly, Sami not only suffered personally from the occupation and from his experiences of alienation in Lebanon, but also has an intimate knowledge of the cost of Israeli actions and policies on Palestinians, yet balances these realities by reaching out and wanting to understand, as he did when pointing to the shared trauma of Jews and Palestinians and how they both have been victimized. This also is a gesture towards multidirectional remembering. Where Dror, Hannah and Joshua’s responses (to varying degrees) in their interaction interviews reveal a propensity to “deny the Other’s suffering as a way of diffusing their own responsibility for that suffering” (Alexander, 2004, p. 1), Leah’s responses reveal a resistance to this tendency. Instead, she looks for links between her wounds and the wounds of the Other. She is witnessing the Other’s trauma in the way that Simon is calling for as she is being “wounded by their wounds” (Simon, 2000, p.10).
In Chapter 6, I will offer some common threads that appear to be sewn in the fabric of the lives of the participants who were able to reach across to the Other more than some of the other participants were, but, again, these are commonalities, not conclusions.

5.3.7 Ahuva - An insider/outsider’s view

Similarly to her narrative interview, Ahuva related a very different experience than most of the Jewish participants, though there are similarities between her testimony and Leah’s.

I read it from a very different place. I didn’t suffer as a fragile citizen (or non-citizen) being part of a war as was described in the first section I read. I did have some memories as a kid sitting in a closed shelter during bombing. But this was during the six-day war so it was a very short, non-significant experience. My husband, for example, lived in a very sensitive area, near the Lebanese border that went through daily bombardment, so they suffered a lot, that was very different.

I asked Ahuva if she found a resonance with the Holocaust stories that her family or relatives shared with her and the Palestinian stories, particularly in relationship to trauma:

I see it as two different realities. The Jewish trauma of the Holocaust was very particular. It was in a certain place at a certain time. It was in Europe, it was in the 30’s and 40’s, primarily to Jews, but not only. So, what I hear is it was six years of traumatic stories that I heard as a student in school in Israel and some family, but not directly. I had one aunt who had stories but she never really told them. It is not something I grew up with personally (as she shared previously). That is a very particular time. Stories of Palestinians, going through certain things, in the past, in the present, I hear them all my life. Nothing is new as information, every story is new that I read, but I have heard all these kind of stories in the past. There is nothing here that I had hadn’t heard before.

Ahuva recognized the trauma of the Shoah and how it is different from the Palestinian experience in Israel/Palestine, but responded to it very differently. Rather than displaying a
need to stand within a more common Jewish memorial collective view, she emphasized that the Holocaust happened in a particular time, but the Palestinian experience is both a past and present trauma. Ahuva’s responses here reveals her deep grasp of the impact of the ongoingness of Palestinian wounding and that this distinguishes Palestinian trauma from the trauma experienced by Jews in the Shoah. Her familiarity with the subject matter is an important factor but, in my view, doesn’t fully explain why she has followed a path that so directly stands against the status quo she grew up around. Ahuva’s view is important to this study as it is another reminder of our own personal agency in “choosing” what and how we view the Other, outside of the silo of our most prominent and most convenient memorial collective. Ahuva, similar to Leah, is open to learning about the Other’s suffering. Furthermore, she not only opens herself up to the suffering of the Other, but embraces her own agency in reducing that suffering.

5.4 In summary - Resonance and Interaction

Joshua’s statement, “what resonates, of course is the pain, the pain is similar and I feel it viscerally… the only thing that stays the same is the pain” demonstrates a common thread in all the responses above, an ability to recognize the wounding of the Other; the pain. Alexander’s hope that by viewing the suffering of others as our own, “societies might expand the circle of we” (Alexander, 2004, pg. 1) is realized, at least at the level of shared pain, to varying degrees, in the responses of the participants.

5.5 Resistance: Collective memory as a barrier/bridge to non-competitive memory

This section focuses on the question of resistance. Resistance is viewed here through what Bar-Tal cites as a consequence of collective memory: “delegitimiz[ing] the opponent” (the Other). The memorial collective views the Other as “inhuman and immoral” by presenting them as “intransient, irrational, extreme, and irreconcilable” (Bar-Tal, 2011, p. 149). In an earlier work, he offers that the most productive move towards reconciliation is efforts that both personalize and legitimize the rival (the Other), (Bar-Tal, 2009, p. 20). This research envisions the latter reality of personalizing and legitimizing the Other, but recognizes the former reality that delegitimizes the Other. This recognition is an important starting point in the move
towards personalizing and legitimizing the Other. The second framing question is: Where, if you do, find yourself resisting what you are reading or feel confronted by what you are reading? The question is utilized here as a means of bringing resistance (if it exists) to a conscious and spoken place. I view this as a step towards lessening its impact and as a move towards the non-competitive re-membering this research envisions.

5.5.1 Hannah – Competing victimhood

Hannah responded to the question of what did she resist, similarly to Dror and Joshua, sharing her reaction to the comparisons to the *Shoah*:

I found myself resisting and feeling confronted by the comparisons of Hitler's Nazis to what the Jews are doing to the Palestinians. Organized, state sanctioned mass murder and genocide is not what the ‘Jews’ have done or are doing to the Arabs in Israel/Palestine. I believe that people who say (or feel) it's exactly the same either don't know the history and facts of the Holocaust or have no idea of the range of events and complicated picture in Israel/Palestine. Of course, a person or family's personal narrative is traumatic in time of war when there are deaths, injuries, loss of life, loss of property, etc. But, to generalize and over-generalize is not productive if we ever hope to find common ground. I also felt ‘confronted’ by the comment that ‘I think the whole world is against the Palestinians’ (Souneh) when so much of the world I live in is anti-Israel, and world sentiment is increasing against Israel continually. The Palestinians suffer terrible discrimination in Israel and in every Arab country where their accents, as was described [in all three Palestinian testimonies], give them away and they are treated as second-class citizens. To blame that only on the Jews and Israel is wrong-headed. It is important through these narratives for people to put themselves in the other's shoes - for Jews to understand what

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47 Though Souneh made comparisons to what happened to the Jews in the *Shoah* and how the Israelis treated the Palestinians, Hannah’s comment seem to be responding to Samira’s statement “Holocaust survivors need to make a connection to Hitler and the Nazis and what is happening now to Palestinians”.
happened to many Palestinians (regardless of who started the war(s)) AND for Palestinians to understand what happened to the Jews of Europe, Jews in Arab lands, Jews all over the world who continue to be victims of discrimination (a.k.a. antisemitism!) [and] the way Palestinians are treated in Lebanon or Jordan or Syria or Egypt or elsewhere. The Palestinians have no empathy (by and large) for Jews, whether their whole families were murdered in the Holocaust and they were survivors of concentration camps - with no homes or property. They need to have empathy for each other - understand (and accept) each other's narratives - but NOT each other's propaganda fed to them by those who want to foment anger, hate, hostility and violence - in many forms.

I offered this response to Hannah:

I interact with these statements from a place of receiving the emotional impact, not a proportional or literal comparison. Do you think we may be able to learn something, as Jews, by entering into the Palestinian stories through letting in the emotional impact rather than defend the right of the Shoah to stand alone in its tragedy and scope? I also wonder what might open up if we (as Jews) were to hear, what seems like blame ascribed to all Jews and a lack of empathy for the Jewish experience to having the Jewish “victim” story consistently used as a rationalization for Palestinians being oppressed. Might this shift the conversation?

Hannah’s responded:

I have always acknowledged that (to give the benefit of the doubt) well-meaning people may make the comparisons to the Holocaust to try to convey the level of their pain and emotional impact. But what is to be gained by agreeing to accept inappropriate analogies?

I see, in Hannah’s responses, my own resistance that I discuss in the introduction. When I went to the Israeli anti-Apartheid rally, I was a Jewish victim of antisemitism, who, as an advocate for human rights felt that my sympathy for the Other was enough; that I didn’t need to examine
how my position as a victim prevented me from fully understanding the oppression that was being resisted at the rally. Instead, I was immersed in my own victimhood. The move away from victimhood and towards understanding, that is still ongoing, has transformed my self-absorption into a more malleable place where I can witness the wounding of the Other, rather than focus solely on my own wounds.

5.5.2 Dror - Bad faith

Dror returned to his assertion from the first question that some testimony was given in “bad faith” and particularly focused on comparisons to the Shoah:

I find myself resisting many sections of narrative where the testimony has been given in bad faith. Israeli soldiers did not rape women at Deir Yassin (Souneh). In fact, look at any village or community that Arab armies occupied in 1948 and you’ll find rape and outright murder. That people can only point to Deir Yassin is proof of how few times our soldiers made such types of ugly deaths. The boy in 1967 may remember Israel arriving in his streets (Samira), but if this passage was wholly accurate, then the boy’s family had to probably spend almost nineteen years living in terror under Jordanian or Egyptian occupation. I am disgusted beyond words at the blatantly false comparison by the Palestinian narrators here to the Holocaust. If Israel had systematically wiped out the Palestinians in the way the Nazis had done to us, then there wouldn’t be any Palestinians. If this one guy claims Israelis watched Gaza be bombed from chairs (Souneh), then what does it mean when Hamas and Fatah praise suicide bombers who murder innocents in nightclubs and pizzerias. What does it mean when Palestinian society is brainwashed to celebrate suicide bombers?

I asked Dror, similarly to Hannah, to interact with these statements from a place of receiving the emotional impact, not a proportional or literal comparison that he viewed through his own “historical truth” and if he thought we may be able to learn something, as Jews, by entering into the Palestinian stories through letting in the emotional impact rather than defend the right of the Holocaust to stand alone in its tragedy and scope:
I would say, my emotional reaction, I don’t bring the Holocaust experience into the discussion, it is just about security and survival. I have a duty to appreciate people without a home and empathize with them being displaced and without a home for seventy years. But, if they want to draw comparisons to the Holocaust and want me to sympathize, I would say we are not responsible for what happens on the ground in Gaza and in Lebanon which is more similar to the Holocaust. People who speak your language and are treating you way worse than us. The anger is disingenuous but I don’t expect the Palestinian in the street will get that and I don’t feel comparisons to the Holocaust. I do see their sense of hope and despair but at some point they have to became aware that they are not doing themselves any service by not understanding the Palestinian reality in the region. We are not responsible for Gaza, which is on Hamas.

Dror responded to a story Sami shared about the challenges he encountered working with representatives from “CIJA”48 and his feeling that “he couldn’t work with groups and organizations that continue to be for Israel, no matter what”:

It is this false narrative of being ‘moderate’ as a Palestinian advocate while only seeking non-Zionist Jewish dialogue that keeps Palestinians stuck in the intellectual black hole of not actually wanting to do the hard non-violent work of building a Palestinian nation-state, but just wanting to destroy Israel. This offends me because I would love to work with Palestinians and actually see their living conditions improve and have them join the world community as researchers of science, technology, innovation and entrepreneurialism. So long as their narrative is more about hating Israel than building a future, this misery continues.

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48 “CIJA”, the Centre for Jewish and Israeli Affairs is a pro-Israel advocacy group in Canada that superseded the “CJC”, the Canadian Jewish Congress and was considered to be somewhat more balanced in its approach to Israel. This part of Sami’s narrative was not included in Chapter 4.
Dror’s statements were difficult to absorb and I questioned myself before responding as to how I may have presented to him as someone who would be sympathetic to such rhetoric.

After considering, I reminded Dror that there was no mention in these statements of Zionists and that this person (Sami) had worked with people who identify as Zionists, he was referring only to people who he felt were close-minded in terms of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He responded:

I trust my instincts on what I read. On the one hand I interpret it like J Street\(^49\) who are apologists for Israel and go back to pre-1967 borders and believe in the right of return. Would that person have a welcome reception with those who identify with Israel and are Zionists?

This research cannot conclude what the roots of Dror’s (or anyone’s) positions are, but it is clear that he deflects opportunities to encounter the Other by blaming them for their circumstances and to justify his own stance. In Alexander’s words referring to the consequences of cultural trauma, “[B]y denying reality of others' suffering, people not only diffuse their own responsibility for the suffering but often project the responsibility for their own suffering on these others” (Alexander, 2004, p. 1).

5.5.3 Sami – Ongoing versus historical trauma

Sami responded to Hannah’s statement about the right of return: “Don’t claim international law either and then have the right of return advocated for only one people”:

It is the classic story of two wrongs don’t make a right. Yes, certainly Jews were expelled and some did go back. But, if you look at the Palestinian experience, not only did it happen in 1948, people are not able to go back, to this very day, residents of the West Bank are losing their right to live there, if they are away for a certain period of time, or they lose their ID

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\(^49\) “J Street” is an American organization that supports two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, sees Israel as the national homeland of the Jewish people living in peace and security alongside the state of Palestine as the national homeland of the Palestinian people and ending the occupation (http://jstreet.org/about). “J Space” is a similar group that has a subsidiary in Canada and promotes very similar values (http://jspacecanada.ca/about-jspace). J Street and J Space both consider themselves to be Zionists, though Dror dismisses this as incompatible.
card. It is preposterous yet it is ongoing. The whole demolitions, the
dissuading people from establishing themselves. The ongoingness of it
makes a big difference. On the other side, the fact that my dad was alive, he
was the one to talk more about his memories than my mom. I remember
him talking about wanting to go and, not even to the ’48 part, but the ’67
part, he had to get a permit to go visit. Then you have the fact that any Jew
in the world having the right to go to Palestine, to historic Palestine and
having immediate full rights as a citizen. It is such a dichotomy of rights
here.

I then asked Sami how he responds to Hannah, Dror and Joshua’s claims of Israel being
singled out for differential treatment and this pointing to antisemitism:

In reading this, they haven’t thought through this sufficiently. There seems
to be this reflexive return to defending Israel. Defending Israel is then
linked to fighting antisemitism. I see this as a knee-jerk reaction to equating
the history of antisemitism with a need to defend Israel. They say, ‘how can
we have that [a one-state solution], then there will be no more Israel’. It is a
common view and that is what complicates things, the entire lens of
equating questioning Israel with antisemitism.

Sami’s responses to the question of what he resisted again reveals his commitment to focus in
on the issues that divide and prevent the Other from hearing legitimate concerns from those
with an opposing view. He also reveals a sticking point that arises over and over, not just in
this research, but also in dialogue groups when Jewish participants equate criticism of Israel
with antisemitism as a justification for the Occupation. It is important to remember the
complexities at play in this research. All five Jewish participants stated at least a degree of
empathy for Palestinians and the need to create a just society for all. All, but Dror, also
supported the end of occupation and bringing a halt to the settlements to the West Bank, but
Joshua and Hannah stopped short of seriously considering the right of return, a one-state or
binational solution or any action that would threaten the existence of a Jewish State in
Israel/Palestine. While Joshua and Hannah defended Zionism as a necessary project, they both
referred to themselves as “progressive Zionists”. Dror, who some may position as quite right wing, aligned himself with the “Labour Zionist” movement. Many felt the Palestinians themselves (or their leadership) bore some responsibility for the ongoingness of the situation and were, not surprisingly, greatly divided on the ultimate solutions.

5.5.4 Leah – A minor resistance

Leah also reacted to the comparing of the Holocaust, but only briefly and this was her only response to the question of what she resisted:

There were some things, I don't think it is fair to compare the Holocaust to this because there was certainly no intent to exterminate the Palestinians; there was intent to take everything they had, but not to kill them all; I do think that there is a difference.

While Leah showed a great willingness to examine the failings of Zionism and the devastating effects the Zionist project has had on Palestinians, she retreated, in this instance to an particularist response to the comparisons with the Shoah, rather than seeing the underlying point of the comparison; to question how a group that has suffered so much could be a part of inflicting suffering on another group. I very much relate to Leah’s response here as my own circular journey towards and away from particularist views of the Shoah continues.

5.5.5 Ahuva- Two different realities

Ahuva’s response to this question shows her understanding for why comparisons to the Shoah might offend some Jews, but she returns to the issues, or, as she states, “realities”:

50 “J Street” and “J Space” mentioned earlier are examples of progressive Zionists group. In general, they adhere to three basic principles: an end to occupation and a halt to the settlements in the West Bank, the right for a
democratic Jewish homeland in Israel and the furthering of a justice society for all Israelis
(http://www.ameinu.net/about-ameinu/progressive-zionism).

51 “Labour Zionism” is a somewhat complex political concept. It is sometimes known as “Social Zionism”, combining Zionism with socialist ideals, particular economic justice for all. The movement is largely situated in the Diaspora. It encourages Jews to move to Israel (making Aliyah) and strongly emphasizes educating youth about Zionism (http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejed_0002_0021_0_21098.html). Also, the Labour party in Israel tends to more open to reconciliation with Palestinians.
I don’t feel confronted or have any resistance. I have heard these stories many times. When I heard it the first time, it was like ‘wow’. It was many years ago. I was 19 or 20. So first when I heard these stories from people not even in Israel and then I heard them from Palestinians. [To the question of comparisons], Yes, that is why I ask you [if I solicited these comments]. (I clarified that I had not solicited the comments). It is very banal and unrelated for me. Powerless. It is true that these are the Israelis and these are the Palestinians and they lived in the houses of those that were expelled but they were very different realities. They went where they were survivors, unfortunately or fortunately. Some of them became very frustrated people; some of them became very nice people. It became a very big Israel symbol for many things; I won’t get into it right now. It forced situations where kids are sent to the camps [concentration camps] and they are supposed to relive it. I think it is very bad. It recreates the experience, the memory. I think you have to very careful with any parallels, as such. I hope you are doing it, it is your job, and it’s not mine. I think it is very cheap, if you ask me, to put one at the same level as the other. I don’t do it in general. I don’t compare atrocities in South Africa today to other places.

Ahuva chooses not to draw comparisons to Israel and South African Apartheid. I began this project with a similar reticence, but I now see value in the comparison to Apartheid, as naming it directly confronts a common myth held in much of the Jewish Diaspora, a myth that views the Occupation as a series of necessary security measures, rather than as deliberate actions taken against an entire people (Palestinians).

Ahuva, as she did in both interviews, returns to her concern that Israel intentionally fosters a victim mentality in its citizens. Brewer’s concept of “in-group” as the victim of unfair treatment or aggression from the out-group enemy” seems particular relevant in Ahuva’s analysis of the Israel political and education system. While Dror received much of his “education” about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict here in Canada, this “in-group, out-group” delineation is also very evident in several parts of his responses. Specifically, “seeing the self as the victim places the in-group on the moral high ground at the same time that it serves to justify inflicting harm on the out-group” (Brewer, 2009, p. 135).
5.5.6 Souneh – It is all Palestine

Souneh responded to the comments about talking to a Palestinian who promoted suicide bombing after the first Intifada (Dror).

He lived in misery. He lived, dreaming that his life was on the other side. He lived in misery, not even having toilets; they had to go to a public bathroom. They have no water. It is a misery. They have no life. His mother tells him that we live happily ever after, on the other side [after death] and when we go there, we get our life back. How would you feel? The solutions of the camps (refugee camps, many of which have been in place since 1967) were never corrected. These people have pain, they want to be free, and they have no hope in life. They can’t leave the West Bank. They can’t go to school. They are ambitious and they are smart. So, for him, we need to come up with a solution. Now, you come to us Palestinians and say, ‘Would you share your country?’ Because, in their heads, it is all Palestine.

Souneh’s reflection is valuable to me as a researcher and as someone interested in a multidirectional remembering of the Israeli-Palestinian history of conflict, but it may be most valuable to those, like Dror, who have not taken into account the perspective of the Other in sensitive and challenging issues like suicide bombing.

5.5.7 Joshua - It’s not the same and of course there were crimes against humanity

Joshua’s answer to the first question, as referenced earlier, recognized the shared pain, but reacted strongly to the comparisons to the Holocaust:

But I have to take exception to what I am seeing here and I have seen these kinds of comparisons before, comparisons to the Holocaust. Let me be frank, here, about my understanding of genocide, vis-à-vis the Holocaust. I don’t believe that the murder of six million Jews during World War II was in itself unique as a genocide. What was unique about the Holocaust was that it was the first time that a state used the full resources, the
technological resources to create a wholesale mass murder market, for lack of a better term.

He continued along a similar vein in response to what he resisted:

My biggest piece of anger was the comparing to the Holocaust. Never bought it. I don’t care if it is Palestinians or if it is anybody else. Every genocide was different; the only comparative was the pain. The experience that friends who were Rwandan went through, that was probably the most brutal. Look, they were massacred by machetes; 800,000 people. It can’t make this kind of comparison. I have never met a Rwandan survivor who said “my experience was like yours or worse than yours”, nor vice versa. They only talked about their shared pain. They never talked about whose experience was worse. This is what I see happening in some of these things [Israel/Palestine] and I really think some of it is based on antisemitism. I wish they had expressed themselves differently because it mutes their real pain by making this unorthodox comparison.

I offered the following to Joshua:

Here is what I am wrestling with, perhaps in part because I sat with them, I saw their body language, and I looked in their eyes. What I heard them say, like when we talk about this woman ‘even if you had a letter from Golda Meir’ and I asked the participant ‘Was she a Holocaust survivor?’ and her answer was ‘that is irrelevant, the abused turned abuser’ (Samira). From a psychological place of shared trauma, what I got from all the Palestinian experiences, particularly the Nakba, is that ‘How come you suffered and then came and made us suffer?’ For me, I didn’t hear anything else. I don’t know why, I just heard, ‘how could you suffer like that and then do it somebody else’?

His response revealed his reflexivity when it comes to complex questions. Like Ahuva, he also complicates “painting everyone with the same brush” approaches:
[What] I struggle with this to this day, on and off, is this issue of ‘the abused turned abuser’. I am not quite sure what to do with it. I was in Israel during the second Intifada. Buses were being blown up; we heard an explosion two blocks away. Two Christian leaders, who looked Arab and they were the only ones questioned. I intervened and they listened. I saw something I really didn’t like. He explained ‘We are in the middle of the war’. So, do they become the abusers? Yes, there are Israeli soldiers who have become brutes; they have done terrible things. Then, there are others who have done great things. I think they are in a state of war all the time and they are kids.

I also asked him to reflect on Souneh’s references to *Deir Yassin*:

Are you kidding, there were crimes against humanity; I don’t have a problem with calling it that. Yes, Arab armies did it too. This is war. Did the Israeli fighters do these terrible things? Yes they did and anyone who denies it is a fool. They think Jews don’t do such things. We are no different than anyone else. They become powerful and angry and war becomes part of their blood, they do horrible things. This is not the way anyone should operate. I’d like to believe that the IDF (Israeli Defense Force) functions on a system of morality and ethics that is far better than most, but, from time to time, these things happen and maybe more than we like to admit. *The Gatekeepers*\(^5^2\) changed my life. I hear of this shit, but now I knew it was true. Israel has done horrible things just like others have. What gets me is when people shine the light on Israel like no one else has done horrendous things. I see it as an indicator of antisemitism. I thought Irwin Cotler put in best when he said ‘when Israel is put above all the nations of the world for all the bad things that it has done then you have to

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\(^5^2\) A movie featuring six former heads of the Shin Bet, Israel’s secret service agency, reflecting on their actions and decisions during the Occupation in the aftermath of the Six Day War. While this movie is not about *Deir Yassin* or the *Nakba*, the revelations in the movie clearly opened up a new understanding, for Joshua, of how the Palestinians were treated (http://www.thegatekeepersfilm.com).
 ask yourself why, where does this vitriol come from?’ We have a 2000-year history of Jew hatred in the world so that is the well where this comes from.

Joshua’s responses reveal the complexity of the issues at work within the Israel/Palestine debate. He openly admits that atrocities were committed by Israeli soldiers in 1948, stating: “there were crimes against humanity; I don’t have a problem with calling it that”, but he counters that by saying that the Arab armies committed atrocities as well. He recognizes that “Jews do terrible things” but still views Israel as the victim of antisemitism. My analysis of Joshua’s (and other participants’) responses has undergone some shifting over time. I admire his ability to empathize with the Other, an ability I see in myself. However, as is repeated over and over by Joshua, as well as Dror and Hannah, there is a strong tendency to fall back into a default position of “Jew as victim”, which I too am also susceptible. Joshua’s reference to a “2000 year history of Jew hatred” replicates the victimhood that Ahuva talks about when referring to the indoctrination that occurs within the Israeli education system. I recognize how easy it is to slip back into this historical view of Jew as victim, but it does not hold up to scrutiny in today’s world where Jews, like myself, have a great deal of societal privilege. Also, while Israel is subject to criticism, its position in the world, established by its powerful allies and geopolitical might, belies Joshua’s claim of Israeli and Jewish victimhood.

Empathy and victimhood appear to be at work simultaneously in many of Joshua, Dror and Hannah’s statements about the Other, but victimhood, or, more specifically, victim beliefs born out of their traumatic identities, seem to override their empathy for the Other. As part of my own unraveling of victimhood, as I have been able to disconnect my present from past traumas that are embedded within my membership within a Jewish collective, empathy becomes easier and has now moved from empathetic feelings to direct speech and actions that support human rights and justice for Palestinians.

5.6 A summary of participant responses to question two

Joshua’s responses above, in many ways, summarize the key findings from the responses to question two. Four of the five Jewish participants took issue with comparisons to the Holocaust (though Leah’s objection was mild). Ahuva recognized that the comparison wasn’t helpful, but didn’t appear to respond from a place of defending her memorial collective but rather
recognition that it wasn’t a fruitful argument. Is this resistance a stance forged from identity, cultural trauma or victim beliefs? Is it all three? While this question will be more finely examined in Chapter 6, the prime learning, for me, being engaged with both the interviews that the participant was responding to and the response itself, was that my reframing, in most cases, did little to dissuade the participant from their original position. They always were reflexive, ultimately though, the resistance to comparison, a reaction steeped in collective memory that is designed to act competitively to the memory of the Other, won out over the opportunity to relate multidirectionally and non-competitively.

5.7 Common threads and differences in how identity, trauma and victim beliefs work within the participant groups
(Interaction Interviews)

There are three points that appear most cogent in the analysis of the first two framing questions of the interactions interview:

1. Two points from Brewer are important to this part of the examination. First, her use of Freud’s idea of “narcissism of minor differences” (1912/1957) to refer to “the apparent preoccupation of group members with small or trivial distinctions that maintain differentiation between groups” (Brewer, 2011, p. 126). Second, her citing of how Volkan (1988) used this as a basis for a theory of identity formation; “individual identity is achieved through a universal process of defining ‘allies’ and ‘enemies’” (Ibid, p. 126). While Brewer’s examination refers to combatants in intractable conflicts, the participants in this study, as I have previously pointed to, are engaged in their own “intractable conflict” as those that are ensconced within a particular memorial collective and have formed their own “allies” and “enemies”. This is especially apparent in some of the language in Dror, Hannah, and Joshua’s responses that, on the one hand, acknowledge the Other’s realities, but then list reasons why they are different from Jewish realities. This is particularly true in the comparisons the Palestinian participants made with their experiences of oppression and the Shoah. While I am not suggesting that this is a “minor difference”, I am suggesting that these comparisons can be viewed as a response to how it is possible for Jews, with such a long history of
oppression and prejudicial treatment become the oppressor of another. This is a challenging suggestion, but one that merits examination.

2. While these “resistances” were also present in Souneh and Sami’s responses as they too are not immune from memorial siloes, yet, I offer, there are two important distinctions. First, the asymmetry in power relationships between the two historical groups examined here and, second, the ongoingness of Palestinian suffering. In other words, I heard, in the Palestinian responses, a plea to not be positioned as another victimizer in a long history of Jewish oppression, but to be given the rights and freedoms now available to Jews, particularly Israeli Jews. In contrast, Dror, Hannah and Joshua, to varying degrees, often returned to positions of “yes, that was wrong, but…” that repel the full import of the suffering of the Other.

3. These “resistances” must not obfuscate the many places where each of the Jewish participants was able to wrestle with what they resisted and recognize that there was value in much of the testimonies they were reading. Leah and Ahuva’s responses are obvious examples of finding bridges to the Other. Yet, Dror, Hannah and Joshua, in their responses to the first question of what resonated for them, all related and empathized with the traumatic experiences they read and they found bridges to the Other in their reflections. Joshua also recognized the atrocities committed both during the 1948 war and in the current occupation. As will be seen in Chapter 6, while resistance was palpable in Dror, Hannah and Joshua’s responses, they each make gestures, however subtle those gestures are at times, toward the Other that may lead to a deeper recognition of the Other and their suffering.

Chapter 6 will look at what the participants have learned from participating in this research. Also, I will explore what hope (or lack of hope) the participants have for the future and what they see to do. I will review the participants’ responses through the lenses of identity, trauma and victim beliefs, examining common threads and differences in how these are operationalized within participants, based on their responses to the Other.
Chapter 6
Examining The Learning and Moving Forward: Interactions - Part Two

6.1 What possibilities/impossibilities do you see for “re-membering”?

The first two framing questions begin to examine the larger question at work here: What difference, if any, do interbiographical and multidirectional approaches have on loosening the connective tissue of collective memory, particularly in cases where cultural trauma and intractable conflict are at work? The third framing question of possibilities/impossibilities and the fourth question, do you see any new actions to take out of participating in this exercise, gets to the heart of it. While some of the answers, at least at first glance, do not foster much optimism, I argue that even the most entrenched views do loosen here and reveal a move towards non-competitive re-membering between groups.

While the third and fourth framing questions were directed specifically at what opened up for the participants in being engaged in this research, many of the participants used this opportunity to discuss possible solutions to the conflict or to enhancing communication between the opposing groups that did not necessarily come solely from participating in this process. As previously stated, all the participants had some previous experience in hearing the perspective of the Other and in the larger debate surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Finally, I return to the last question I asked most of the participants in the first narrative interview: What responsibility (if any) do you think you have for representing and/or giving voice to the Other (those who have a different background, experience, commitment, etc.)? The goal here is to further examine the “bridge/barrier” paradigm at question. Specifically, asking the question concerning one’s responsibility for the Other, I posit, is, in itself a multidirectional and interbiographical move as it asks the participants to push beyond the walls of their memorial collective to include the needs, rights and memories of the Other.
6.1.1 Hannah – Moving back and forth

While Hannah felt that most of the stories were not new to her, she clearly was confronted by parts of the Other’s testimony:

I was aware of all these narratives and have not shifted my thinking for I have always felt that sharing each other’s stories with respect and acceptance in dialogue is the route to go. One of the Palestinians even admitted that had s/he not had the dialogue experience, s/he would have reacted differently to some current events and incidents (Souneh). I did find the description of how ‘the civil war in Lebanon broke our back’ (also Souneh) to be a revelation - the loss of power/pace/energy/momentum with the cruel blows of the civil war and it really saddened me to read of Israelis (Jews) sitting on lawn chairs, laughing at the bombing in Gaza - as if they were watching a video game (Souneh). This is a travesty and not in keeping with Jewish values. But I couldn't help thinking of the pictures of Palestinians dancing on rooftops as SCUD missiles landed on Israel at the height of the Gulf War(s) when Israel was not even a party to the hostilities. What have we all come to? Is there really a desire for peace? Or, do the various narratives sometimes mean that people won't be happy unless the clock is turned back and the Palestinians can return to their homes and villages with compensation for property, etc., something completely unprecedented after any other war? We need more exchange of the narrative of the Other - but NOT debate, or argument. We need empathetic listening - to achieve understanding (as long as there is some clarification as to what are actual lived experiences versus rhetoric, propaganda, mediated experiences, hearsay and generalizations).

I shared with Hannah how my understanding of the asymmetrical power relationship between Jewish Israelis (and Diasporic Jews) and Palestinians has greatly softened my view of “rhetoric and propaganda” she referred to, particularly as I have become more aware of the geopolitical might that the Israeli propaganda machine is able to wield. Hannah responded:
Regretfully, it has been my experience that the Palestinian ‘propaganda machine’ has had a much greater impact on world opinion than the Israeli [propaganda machine], which in my experience has wielded very little ‘geopolitical might’, although that is NOT the party line of the far left or so-called anti-oppression activists or current thinking on intersectionality.

Similarly to Joshua’s statements, Hannah’s reference to the “Palestinian propaganda machine” and to Israel having “very little geopolitical might”, again seems to retreat into a victim stance that doesn’t align with today’s realities. Also, Hannah says that the stories (from the Palestinian participants) are not new to her and that she has not shifted. I offer that her response to the fourth question of what she saw to do shows that she has been moved by her participation in this research and in hearing (or re-hearing) the Other’s stories:

It might be interesting to have a gathering of your subjects where each reads aloud a narrative of the ‘Other’ - and then discussed it - tries to get the facts, the actual history - stripped of political overlay - and sharing of understanding would be the goal - walking in the shoes of the other. If my grandfather died never being able to see his birthplace and claim his farm and property for his children and grandchildren, and if yours experienced the same facts (in a different country as a result of a different war that had nothing to do with you or with them), then what? How do we learn from their experiences? How do we learn from those who were/are resilient and went on to bury the anger, to live productive (albeit scared) lives? Perhaps these are issues that can be discussed re: how we help ourselves and others not to be immobilized by traumatic memory, but to resolve the impact, to face the future in a positive way and NOT be manipulated by those who would prefer to polarize the trauma and use an embellished or altered narrative to gain power and abuse others?

In response to the question of responsibility for the Other, Hannah replied:

Well I believe that. That’s why the listening is very important. Less “us” and “them” (quotations added) and more us as a shared experience. What drew me to this research is that Palestinians and Jews share traumatic
history. That they have spent their life saying whose traumatic history is worse and assigning blame [to] whom was the cause of it. Rather than actually looking that we have a shared experience to build on to create a better tomorrow. That’s what Arab-Jewish dialogue was trying to achieve.

These two responses from Hannah reveal her deep interest in a new way forward, particularly the thought of “less ‘us’ and ‘them’ and more shared experienced”. Hannah’s long-standing commitment to dialogue, listening deeply to the story of the Other is most evident in this statement. An ongoing inquiry of this research questions why dialogue has not been as effective as Hannah and others have hoped? The primary answers I have offered are the asymmetry of power relations and the ongoingness of Palestinian oppression. In other words, “talk” hasn’t changed the situation for those still living it. I explore this more fully and offer some concrete alternatives to the kinds of dialogue which Hannah and other participants in this study have been engaged, in Chapter 7.

6.1.2 Dror - Shared “outsider” status

In Dror’s response to the question of possibilities/impossibilities, he returns to laying the responsibility at the feet of the Palestinian leadership, resisting examining Israel’s responsibility for the ongoing conflict:

I am grateful for the chance to read about eyewitnesses from the early days of 1948 or 1967. I am particularly grateful to read about Palestinian experience beyond West Bank/Gaza/Israel. The real misery and oppression lies in Lebanon, Syria and many other countries Palestinians reside in the Middle East. In a perfect world, where all Palestinian experience has been weighted equally, I would be happy to discuss the negative impact Israel has had on its Palestinians, with this and that decision. However, to isolate the debate to only Israel is to create a false dialogue of claiming to improve relations between Zionists and Palestinians.

Dror seems to be conflating “Zionists” with Jews in Israel and is again deflecting Israel’s responsibility for the Occupation, by suggesting that the Palestinians are themselves oppressed
by their leadership. I offered Dror the perspective of the historic similarities in “outsider” status of Jews and Palestinians. I also suggested:

In having read many stories from the *Shoah*, I stand in the conviction that people’s stories are their own and should not be judged or questioned. As I am not a Palestinian living in Gaza or West Bank, I don’t know their experience and therefore don’t judge their accuracy.

Dror’s response again deflected the blame back to the Palestinian leadership:

We don’t know their experience because there is no free speech coming out of Gaza. We don’t have troops on the ground, we don’t have control. There is an enforced institutional difficulty in Gaza. If they could speak their minds they would say that Hamas is the real problem. I wish I could hear their perspective.

Dror offered the following to the question of what might move the conversation:

The possibility to host a ‘Genuine Palestinian Human Rights’ symposium that examines the role of Hamas, Fatah, Iran, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, and Israel in creating and sustaining the current misery and statelessness of Palestinians. I wish also that if it were possible to provide live Internet and anonymous reporting to Palestinians living in every nearby country to Israel and including Gaza and West Bank. I would be willing to bet they wouldn’t really be railing against Israel for their hardships.

I reflected back to Dror:

I am struck by the word ‘genuine’. How might the description of ‘genuine’ be different from the Palestinians whose stories you read? You are pointing to complexities that are important and I value. My overall research question that I am asking here is how do we view the Other as a container of trauma and pain similar to ourselves, rather than as a political Other who we must debate with and defeat? Do you think this is even possible?
Dror returned to his position of laying the responsibility at the feet of the Palestinian leadership, but he still recognized his own agency in being empathetic and understanding:

I wish it were possible. But as there is no genuine dialogue because of state-sponsored statements. The flip side of being supportive of security measures, we must really listen to the effect of these on the Palestinians in Gaza. If we take the approach that we can stop this, we are making things even worse. The securities measures are the symptoms, not the cause. As a Jew, I feel I need to overcome the sense that I can change the Palestinians. I can force myself to appreciate their hardships and keep that in mind going forward.

He responded similarly to the question of his responsibility for giving voice to the Other:

For the first part, what responsibility do I have to see that the Palestinian voice is shared freely? I would say that if there were freedom of speech in any Palestinian population in the Middle East, then probably there wouldn’t be the problems we have today. If they were allowed to do their own research, if they were allowed to have access to their own education, to challenge and have the same intellectual arguments base within the same framework that we have our own discussions in; ‘I disagree with you, I maybe don’t even respectfully disagree with you’, but there is no violence to be had here, it is not cricket. That is not on us, that is on their own bad leadership. Do I have any responsibility for their lot in life? I don’t control what happens on their side. The Palestinian people don’t control what happens on their side. Unelected thugs who do not have the best interest of those people. Yes, as a human being I would like to see prosperity on both sides of that wall. I would know that the person who can’t live in Jewish Hebron could still live with the same level of opportunity in the Arab component and I know they can’t. My heart goes out to that, I am not sure how to solve that. The best I can do is to try and maybe make some difference with co-existence of Palestinians living within Israel proper and try to be sympathetic that way.
Dror’s responses are, I offer, instructive in three key ways:

1. He sees that he has a duty to understand the other and be sympathetic and, in places, empathetic. This is an essential starting point in a multidirectional move.

2. This “move” is usually thwarted by his insistence of an Other, separate and distinct from the Palestinian people themselves; the Palestinian leadership. He creates a buffer between “us” and “them” by creating an Other that he feels justified blaming (the Palestinian leadership), thus absolving himself of his responsibility to work with and for the Other (the Palestinian people).

3. He separates “us” and “them” through a moral coding system of whose position is more justified. Returning to Bar-Tal, he delegitimizes the opponent by labeling them as “intransigent, irrational, extreme, and irreconcilable” (Bar-Tal, 2011, p. 149) thereby justifying the position and actions of his memorial collective. While not absolving Dror, or anyone with similar beliefs, of his/her responsibility, this analysis recognizes Dror’s response to the Other as a possible outcome of resting one’s cultural trauma within a siloed memorial collective that fosters a competitive view of traumatic histories.

6.1.3 Joshua – The “new Jews” and opening the tent wider

In my question to Joshua, I reflected to him that I had not heard “victimhood” in his statements and asked him what he might offer other Jews who seemed to infer the presence of antisemitism. I also asked him about the Israeli education system that seems to entrenched victimhood in Jewish/Israel’s psyche. He responded:

The Jews I know see themselves as ‘the new Jews’. They are not victims, not in the European sense. But it is a new victimology; a Middle East victimology. I am an eternal optimistic. My view is that I have to believe in the potential for a two-state solution, there is nothing else. I hold on to the
dream Rabin\textsuperscript{53} had. We were this close to not having this discussion at all, having a Palestinian state. It is a very delicate complex matter. The sad thing for me is that I don’t see an end but I have to view it as the glass half-full as a progressive Zionist: Palestinian people have rights, they ought to have a land that is completely their own, they ought to be compensated for the lands that were taken from them, the same way that Jews who were thrown out of Arab land should also be compensated. The only difference is that they had a place to go. The only place Palestinians had to go was these refugee camps. Nothing is going to happen unless there is a meeting of the minds. The Palestinians are once again a forgotten people. I tell them, ‘I get you’. There is lots of pain on both sides.

Joshua added that while he was “troubled” by the comparisons to the \textit{Shoah}, “this one, for example (Souneh’s narrative), there was a recognition of the pain of the Holocaust”.

In answer to what else he saw to do, he offered this idea:

I have been pushing our community to open the tent a little wider. I don’t like BDS\textsuperscript{54}, I don’t think it works at all and I think it is a terrible choice. But, I don’t believe that all people who believe in BDS are antisemites; many are, but not all. I think there has to be room for people who want to question BDS and right now there is no room for this dialogue. What can people like us do? You have to open a mouth. People say that they don’t like things but don’t do anything. Money talks. Stop giving donations to Jewish groups that are not open. This can work and has. That is what you do.

\textsuperscript{53} The reference here is to Yitzhak Rabin and the book \textit{Killing of a King} by Dan Ephron that details the assassination of Rabin as a pivotal movement in deterring the peace process, (Ephron, 2015).

\textsuperscript{54} “BDS” – Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions is a “global movement for a campaign against Israel until it complies with international law and Palestinian rights was initiated by Palestinian civil society in 2005” (https://bdsmovement.net/bdsintro). This type of economic and academic protest was referred to by several of the Jewish participants in this research as a divisive and/or ineffective strategy.
Joshua’s position reveals flexibility toward the Other. His suggestion offers a middle ground between disagreement and support where shifts in views and actions may occur.

6.1.4 Leah - Optimism

Leah revealed some reasons for optimism:

We owe it to each other to be better informed. Clearly, Palestinians are not informed enough, not taught in school what needs to be taught and Jews are not taught at all about how things actually were in 1947 and 48, none of it, none of it. I mean I know, because my kids went through the system, they are taught the victorious armies, how heroic everyone was and defeating the enemy. It is so awfully, totally one-sided. I think a major move towards educating about the Other, on both sides, needs to be done and I think it will go a long, long way. I have to say that there are some things, on the Jewish side, that are going in that direction. My kids were in Camp Shomria, which of course is frowned upon by the right-wingers, but they do talk about it there and that is where my daughter heard, for the first time, anything about Palestinians, some of these stories and some of the facts. So having spent the entire summer, two months, learning these things, pretty accurate information being given to them and then they go back to the Jewish school here [in Canada] which they learn none of that. My oldest daughter would always question the teachers about the Palestinians, which her teacher wasn't too happy about it. They also have that wonderful, difficult program "Heart to Heart". They were talking about, two summers ago when the Gaza war was going on and how difficult it was as they all were waiting for news about their families. Even then, the program handled it incredibly, after some difficult days, if anyone had any bad news,

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55 Camp Shomria is a camp run by Hashomer Hatzair, the oldest Zionist youth organization. It promotes progressive Jewish values (http://www.hashomerhatzair.ca).

56 “Heart to Heart”, run by Hashomer Hatzair and held at Camp Shomria, is a programme run in Canada each summer that brings together 20 Israeli teenagers, half of whom identify as Palestinian Israeli and half as Jewish Israeli to participate in activities together and learn about each other (http://www.heart-to-heart.ca/about.html).
they comforted each other. That is what you would hope would happen. That really stretches the idea of how you can get along, even though you are enemies. They would say, ‘I can see you are suffering because your brother is a soldier and he is in Gaza getting shot at’. That is really crazy for a Palestinian to say ‘I can see that your brother maybe doesn't want to be there and he is getting hurt’. ‘I understand because my brother is also suffering’.

When I asked what we could do, her answer was straightforward: “listening and learning about the Other's story”. Leah captured here Bar-Tal’s call to “personalize and legitimize” the Other (Bar-Tal, 2009, p. 20). I reflected to Leah that she seemed to have many more points of intersection than resistance. She replied: “No, [its] not resistance, it is from ignorance on the other side and so they say things that aren't quite right because they don't know”. I then asked for her to comment on Souneh’s question: “If you people understand suffering, yet you don't seem to care about our suffering?” Her answer: “100%, they are absolutely right… that is totally it, I say the same thing”.

At the conclusion of the first interview she answered the question of our responsibility with the Other simply, but then recognized that this is not simple for everyone:

Totally! So, my husband, who absorbs it and understands it, but if you asked him the same question, he would say, ‘no, this is my family, my extended family and that is where it stops’.

Leah makes an important distinction in sharing about her husband between recognizing the pain of the Other and stepping outside of your memorial collective to take action to diminish the pain of the Other. While Joshua focused on the theme of shared pain in his reflections of Jewish and Palestinian past experiences, Leah points here to the possibilities of also seeing the present from a perspective of shared pain. I offer that this can forge an “identity”, where people’s shared traumatic experiences form a new multidirectional and interbiographic memorial collective.
6.1.5 Ahuva – Disquieting the memorial collective

Ahuva’s testimony also demonstrated that as she learned about the Other, she became disquieted about her memorial collective and sought to expand it to include the Other. I asked how and when this shift occurred and if she felt she had to be careful about speaking out:

I tell you, when I learned of the four hundred villages, when I was twenty years old, that was my first time [I was aware]. I knew that there were Arabs, I knew there were places that went back to Israel after the war. No, I didn’t have to be careful, there was more the enemies around us not those inside. I did learn of the Arab uprisings, 1929, 1936, etc., but it was only the Israeli/Zionist side of that experience.

I later asked her:

Being Jewish becomes a political identity when it comes to Israel, some expect a natural loyalty, and how do you separate this? She responded: “I don’t have any problem with this, I am a very free agent, I don’t represent anybody; I am very outspoken”.

This type of movable, shapeable identity is another example of the non-competitive, multidirectional memory and storytelling that this research envisions, though I cannot assume that participating in this project contributed to Ahuva’s commitment to the Other, rather it is more likely that this commitment is why she agreed to participate in this study.

I think it is important to know what the others are experiencing. I think it is important for Jews who have grown up with all these terrible stories of suffering, of being expelled and murdered, etc. that it is good for them to know that others have also suffered and that in some cases, unfortunately, suffered by Israelis, some of whom just came back from Europe when they

57 The “four hundred villages” refers to the Palestinian villages that were depopulated during the 1948 war. The events at Deir Yassin, which I have referenced earlier, were considered the beginning of this depopulation. In all, approximately 700,000 Palestinians were removed from their homes during the war (the Nakba), (see Deir Yassin Remembered: The future of Israel and Palestine, Ellis &McGowan, 1998).
[the Haganah and later, the Israeli Army with the Arab combatants] were conducting the ’48 [war] and later the ’67 [war]. Not knowing that or resisting or ignoring or suppressing reality, I am not talking about morality, is just not efficient. Let’s be realistic. It is not pragmatic. These people grew up with these memories. These memories are real for them. You must understand that it is real for you as it is real for them. You better start to look and understand that because of this land that is being fought over, you better start to understand the Other and since you share a lot, you better learn about the Other.

I asked Ahuva if she knew much of the Palestinian experience when she grew up in Israel or if she learned about it here in Canada?

Yes I have heard about it because I have Palestinian friends. I learned this when I came here to Canada, you don’t mix a lot in Israel. The way we are being raised has nothing to do with our own experience. It is all about what we would like to tell our kids and ourselves. I am like a different bird for you.

In her first interview, Ahuva made this, in my view, profound observation on how Jewish identity has shifted into a Zionist identity:

I think the whole Jewish nationalism, Zionism has taken over in North America, especially the way it has replaced the identity of being religious and an observant Jew. So I am Jewish and I am Zionist and I support Israel and I go to Israel and that is who I am, that is my identity. So I might get married with non-Jews, not eat Kosher, etc., we know it is happening; it is how I see it (Ahuva is speaking of a typical Canadian Jew, not herself). I talk to many people about it; it explains things. Whenever I talk or speak on a panel here or there, this is what I am seeing [a need to de-couple Judaism from Zionism]. If we can do something here, it would help. I was very active in all kind of groups, and I am preaching about it: ‘Why are you coupling’?
I offer that what Ahuva described here can be seen as an extension of Canadian Jewish historical memory, as laid out by Bialystok, in *Delayed Impact* (2000). In essence, the memories of the traumatic events of the *Shoah*, first re-memorialized in the 1960’s and 1970’s as a response to what was then current antisemitism, has now become the rationale for Zionism. Canadian Jews, then, now bring this “past” in today’s political arena. Collective memory, has served to imbue the past trauma into the emotional consciousness of today’s Canadian Jewish collective and inform its views and actions.

As in any research, I am looking for connective tissue; what explains how a participant’s experience is linked to their upbringing, the kinds of trauma they were exposed to and other formative experiences? Leah spoke of the visceral experience of going to Israel for the first time and feeling such a sense of being home, a feeling that I too recently experienced. For Ahuva, it was her home, but she seemed to question what was happening there almost instinctively. Yes she was a “different bird” for me, but such an important reminder that we all have agency, separate from our birth, family tradition and national loyalties and even, our collective’s memories.

### 6.1.6 Souneh – We are not the beasts of Hitler

Souneh focused on what she sees as next steps and the obstacles to a just outcome for Palestinians. First, she spoke directly about a two-state solution:

> It doesn’t work, (speaking of a two-state solution mentioned by Joshua, Hannah and Leah); it is all Palestine. It is his country. I am giving you my home, stay in my little room and I should be happy? If these Israeli guys get out of their shoes and live in his shoes. Of course, he has a miserable life, so I hear this talking (referring again to Dror’s conversation with a Palestinian who said he would be a suicide bomber). I feel that I don’t have the right to judge him. I am very lucky, I have running water, I have a passport, I can travel, I am treated like a human being. But they have a horrible life; less than the animals in the West. I can understand why the Israeli person can’t understand.

She then comes back to how the Holocaust is used unfairly as a justification for Israeli policy:
But we are not the beasts of Hitler. Every time there is a feeling of violence against the Jews, they go back to Hitler’s time; they visualize it, to antisemitism. I didn’t hear this word until I came here. If we study history, we consider ourselves Semites. If I tell my friend, they tell me I am not Semitic because I am not a Jew. Who knows, maybe I was a Jew? That is the broken wall, the glass wall. I talk out of my perspective and listen to somebody, in a different scenario, judging the same situation, like Marie Antoinette, like the revolution, when people said that they don’t have bread, she said, “Eat biscuits”. For her, biscuits are available for her, but for the people who don’t have bread, they have no food. So that is ironic.

Souneh then brings things back to ask us to focus on Occupation being the cause of Palestinian resentment, not antisemitism:

To be honest with you, he doesn’t mean a Jew as a religion (referring to the comments about a suicide bomber being an antisemite). If he were Christian or Buddhist, he would feel the same. It is not against a religion or race; it is against an Occupier. We [have] never been discriminated against in Palestine. So when we left Palestine, we knew we were educated, we were smart, we can find jobs. I grew up in Kuwait as a proud Palestinian, very honest, sincere and respected. I grew up knowing we have to go to school, we have to have good jobs; this is our pride. We don’t have victim way of looking at ourselves. The Jews, like in your case, they are below zero, just trying to surface where we are trying to become high, to become successful because no one is going to help us, we have to help each other. I don’t think we have the same experience as Jew[s]. Maybe, as Jews feel the world will discriminate, that they are antisemites, they are going to kill us if we don’t stick together, the gentiles will kill us. They have to stick together or they are gone. In our case, I feel we have to stick together to succeed.

Souneh tackles victim beliefs in a powerful way. She is distinguishing a “raison d’être” of surviving from one of succeeding. I then asked Souneh about the comments around right of
return and that if the Palestinians should have it then “the Jews should be able to return to their shtetl in Poland” (Hannah):

I agree, if someone has been kicked out of his or her place, forced to leave, then yes. Actually, I believe that though the Jews did not go back, but they were compensated financially. I think that helps, it shows some kind of approval, shows that they discriminated against you, but it isn’t the same as going back home. In my opinion, everyone should have the right to go back to [his/her] country. I don’t think Jews would go; they have bad memories there. I would like to see them be able to go back, maybe not to the same house but to the same area. I believe if this happens, Palestine will be solved. I don’t believe in a country based on religion. How can we make peace in that world? Palestine should be one country lead by a democratic body where the leader is, doesn’t matter, Jewish, Muslim, Orthodox, doesn’t matter. People vote for the good person, I don’t care. How I see it, if you provide good education, if you provide a good living, nobody cares about your religion. Everyone wants to live [his/her] lives; they want democracy, they want fairness.

To the question of responsibility for the Other, Souneh answered:

I feel I will say something that is not correct. If they are still my enemy, I avoid them. Like my daughter dated a Jewish guy. I said, ‘Learn from your experience, it is not going to take you anywhere’. He also carries lots of baggage. It didn’t really last, but she learned a lot.

Souneh’s response is quite understandable, yet it rests along side of her earlier statements of learning about the Shoah and having great empathy for what the Jews have suffered. I posit that her eventual dissatisfaction with her dialogue experience, while stating that “she learned a lot, it didn’t change anything” contributed to her feeling stated here. She also told me that while she attended many synagogues and other “Jewish” events, her “Jewish sisters” (they referred to each other as sisters) from the dialogue group did not attend any events that she and the other Palestinians invited them to.
6.1.7 Sami – “Next year in Jerusalem”: a new opening

Sami reflected on his learning through the process of interacting with the Other:

The response of the singer (Leah) is interesting because she was trying to discover what her identity meant and Israel being part of it. Being an outsider looking in, she was able to look at it as an outsider, without the indoctrination that gets feed to us as children; fears and so on. She was able to see things for what they were, including her surprise of there being Arabs there. It is a complete disconnect from history. This part about Israel’s right to exist is interesting: ‘First I would have said yes, but now I am not so sure, the Jews need a place, but could it have been elsewhere’. It is reminding me of my surprise when one Seder that I was invited to, it says [the story told at a Seder] ‘next year in Jerusalem’. I had not known the extent to which it was part of Jewish life for thousands of years, the idea of going back to Jerusalem. It drove the point home to me, that sense of connection. So, I was thinking, so two thousand years ago you were here, it doesn’t mean you can come back and kick everyone out. But still, it wasn’t just two-thousand years ago you were here, it was that you were wanting to come back for two-thousand years, it made me empathize with the connection to the land that I didn’t have before.

As to what he saw to do:

I don’t know. I can speculate. The political narrative in Israel really has not changed. With left wing governments, it is more nuanced, more on the surface. With Bebe [Netanyahu], it is rougher. Like saying the other day that the Golan Heights is going to be Israeli land forever. Settlement expansion went on under all governments. It is such a fundamental component of the political system and of the consciousness of the society that the settlements are going to continue so I don’t think that any serious political contender would put out that kind of narrative. They have, but not mainstream. A human rights researcher was covering the region, not Arab and not Jewish. I asked him, ‘Do you think that a two-state solution is still
possible?’ He said, ‘No, because you can’t stop the settlements and the more they continue to grow, the more impossible a two-state solution becomes’. That sort of answers your question.

I asked Sami to respond to the suggestions (Hannah, Dror and Joshua) on how Israel is singled out for its actions and how this may point to antisemitism.

Certainly, with the United Nations (UN), you can make the case, but to zero effect. It is not like it is making a difference. The UN has become the only place where Arab states can show some muscle. They can go back to their people and say, ‘We are hammering the Israelis at the UN’. Of course, these are not democratic states. They have always used the Israeli/Palestinian conflict to strengthen their own position, to keep their populous busy thinking that they are doing the right thing, so there is no shortage of that. But, the UN created Israel, the UN Security Council certainly, which is always protected by the United States (US) veto. It is a red herring as far as I am concerned. It is something that people, like a friend of mine, who acts as if this is doing damage, which it isn’t. Then [he] equate[s] that to antisemitism, without any evidence. I remember another friends saying, ‘When you single someone out, that is discrimination”. I said, ‘Yeah, but it is not like this is an underdog state’. We go back again to the knee-jerk response.

In response to the question of responsibility for the Other, Sami answered:

Absolutely. I think on the international level, in North America, it is really the Jewish narrative that everyone believes. With Harper, it was nauseating; it was more pro-Israel than Netanyahu. To me, as a Canadian citizen, I am thinking, ‘What am I, chopped liver?’ In the States (US), it is even worse. The narrative is very well established. I don’t think Palestinians have any way to change that narrative on their own.

He added: “It is incumbent on North American Jews [to change the narrative]”.
6.2 In Summary: Possibilities/Impossibilities, what’s next and what responsibilities do we share for the Other

Chapters 5 & 6 focus on answering the second of two research questions at issue in this study concerning the efficacy of encountering and interacting with the Other. At the outset of this project, I imagined that there would be clear threads that would weave together to create a comprehensible quilt, offering new explanations for why some of us seem less impacted or concretized by our family histories, faith groups, political ideologies and, perhaps most importantly, traumatic experiences, than others. This was not the case. As reviewed in Chapter 2, the literature on collective memory focuses primarily on three key factors: identity, trauma and victim beliefs (or victimhood). I will examine each individually, however, a consistent offering of this project is that identity, trauma and victim beliefs, while often traceable individually, work in concert and support each other.

6.2.1 Identity

Maalouf’s quote that I opened this research with, links “cases of identity” to the “us” and “them” paradigm within traumatized cultural groups at the heart of intractable conflicts (Maalouf, 2001, p.33). Through the process of the two interviews, the participants in this project referred to identity, in a variety of ways. In the summary of Chapter 4, I laid out a case for how the intimacy and ongoingness of trauma framed the identity of the three Palestinian participants. In other words, their oppression cemented who they were as oppressed people, limiting the opportunities of deepening their own cultural and national affiliations that the Jewish participants noted. I do not assume that this is a ubiquitous experience for Palestinians or even a complete picture of the three participants in this study, but reflects their responses to the questions that I asked them.

It may also be reasonable to suggest that the more the stories, experiences and memories are thrust on someone, the closer they identify within a particular memorial collective. Joshua and Hannah fit, at least loosely, into this description. They grew up around Jewish culture, were part of a thriving faith community and had a great deal of exposure to the stories of the Shoah. In Joshua’s case, he also grew up with antisemitism, which, somewhat similarly to the Palestinian participants, was a constant reminder, from an oppressive group, of his identity.
Hannah experienced this more as an adult. Leah and Dror seem to have “chosen” their Jewish identity in many ways. In neither case, was it expected of them to follow Jewish traditions, but they both found a home within their Jewish collective. Ahuva grew up with being Israeli and Jewish in a way that could have easily siloed her within a political and religious collective that resisted all other forms of identity, but this didn’t happen.

Also significant is Ahuva’s observation that “Jew”, as an identifier, has undergone a shift in North America; becoming less a religious notion and more of a nationalistic, Zionist ideal. This malleability of identity and how this shifting promotes and entrenches the “us” over the “them” is a significant contribution to how we view identity.

6.2.2 Trauma

Trauma (wounding) is viewed in this research in two distinct ways. First, individual wounds, like the many that are relayed in the narrative interviews. All the participants, with the exception of Ahuva, conveyed experiences that wounded them. These individual wounds came both from incidents the participants themselves experienced and/or from the experiences they heard about from their families, or from other sources. While this research recognizes the difference between a personal experience and an experience that you hear about, there is no hierarchal value given to one over the other as there does not seem to be any correlation between whether or not one experienced the event themselves or that they were told about the event, and the depth in which this “experience” coalesces them within their memorial collective. In my own story, I never experienced antisemitism growing up and only had a very limited understanding of my Jewishness or of my family’s experience in the Shoah until I was an adult, yet the impact these stories had on my life was profound. Similarly to Leah, I was drawn to the idea of belonging to a group that had been persecuted and survived, even though I myself never experienced any threat or difficulty from being Jewish.

The second iteration of trauma that is key to this project is collective cultural trauma that cements traumatic memories within a group. Returning to Nora, while individual memory is not to be minimized, it is collective memory that is primarily used, within groups, to construct a group’s historical memory or historiography (Nora, 1989). While what led each person to “join” a collective was unique, their belonging was manifested through their identity, trauma
and victim beliefs. I use the word “join” to signify that one “chooses” their collective, consciously or unconsciously.

Looking exclusively at the Jewish participants, the coalescing within a collectivity manifests itself in disparate ways. Dror’s wounds led him from an intellectual understanding of the horrors of the Shoah to taking on the cause of “never again”, which, for him, is manifested in his commitment to supporting Israel and defending its right to be a Jewish state. His experiences with antisemitism are wounds that seem to have entrenched his view of Jews as victims. Joshua’s membership in a memorial collective that sees the Jewish state as essential to the survival of Judaism appears less as an intellectual project and more of one that is born out of pain. This pain is the result of personal, familial and cultural (Jews as a whole) wounding. Hannah may be seen as a bit of a hybrid of Dror and Joshua in the way she came to her memorial collective. Her wounds came from hearing her grandfather’s stories and other survivors’ stories, as well as through an intellectual understanding of discrimination. Leah, rather remarkably, ingested the news of her Jewish identity, coupled with the great loss of one side of her family, as an entry point into a collective that made her feel she belonged. Her traumatic experiences of soldiers and violence during the Communist takeover in Prague no doubt deepened these feelings of being an outsider who had to survive against the odds. Ahuva, as previously stated, choose to reject the silo that would have been most obvious for her to reside.

For the Palestinian participants, while there are individual differences in their stories, they seem to have followed a similar path to their memorial collective: first-hand and residual trauma. They each heard many stories from their families but also each experienced soldiers, violence, removal and denigration of their identities. This wounding from the Occupation continues, not only reinforcing their membership within a grieving memorial collective, but also never allowing time and space for repair.

6.2.3 Victim beliefs

As Brewer reminds us, “the perception of the in-group as the victim of unfair treatment or aggression from the out-group enemy” is aligned with the perception of threat that sustains conflicts within groups (Brewer, 2009, p. 135). The belief of being a victim drives a defensive and competitive view of the Other. It seems, based on the learning in this research, that the
extent of victimization is irrelevant when measuring the degree of entrenchment within a specific memorial collective.

This is particularly evident in looking at Dror, in contrast to Joshua and Leah. First, it would be fair to say that Dror had the loosest connections to his Jewish roots of the five Jewish participants and told only one specific story of the Shoah from family or those close to him (his grandparents had “known the “Schindler Juden”, the Schindler Jews who had been [saved by him] they had played bridge with them”. Also evident in many of the participants’ responses, to the Other, including Dror’s, was the concept of a “chosen trauma”; the memorializing of an event in which the group suffered a catastrophic loss through a shared representation, that serves to embed victimhood within the group (Volkan, 2009, pp. 211-212). Again, his familial and personal distance to the “chosen trauma” did not seem to mitigate its impact on him or on his need to delegitimize the Other.

Furthermore, his brushes with prejudicial treatment could be viewed as rather minor and occurred in situations where it would have been fairly easy for him to remove himself. However, it would be detrimental to the understanding of the power of trauma, particularly when it is viewed within a collective that has suffered a long history of wounding, to underestimate the impact of Dror’s victim beliefs. In the second interview, Dror repeatedly retreated into a place governed by victim beliefs, positioning himself as a victim of unfair treatment at the hands of the “out-group enemy”. Ahuva’s observation that Zionism has replaced Judaism as a “religion” in Canada may, in part, explain Dror’s strong views.

Joshua, while fitting into the construct of victim-driven protectionism in his strong belief in the necessity of a Jewish state in Israel, revealed in his statement “I am convinced if there was a Jewish state in 1938 instead of 1948, there would be no Holocaust”, he frequently speaks as a survivor of trauma who draws on his experiences to empathize and relate to the injustice the Other has suffered.

Leah takes this even further. While strongly identifying with Jewish collective trauma, she questions Israeli policy and responds to Souneh’s question, “If you people understand suffering, yet you don't seem to care about our suffering”, by stating, “100%, they are absolutely right… that is totally it, I say the same thing”. In other words, she rejects the notion that her wounds and the wounds of her memorial collective should inherently being seen as
more real or important that the wounds of the Other. This represents a clear multidirectional move, away from her victim identity that she embraced, beginning at nine years old and continuing for many years, and toward the wider community of traumatic collectives. This embodies Simon’s idea that to witness the trauma of the Other is to be “wounded by their wounds” (Simon, 2000, p.10).

Each of the Palestinian participants, to varying degrees, experienced “unfair treatment or aggression from the ‘out-group enemy’” (Brewer, 2009, p. 135), that drives a defensive and competitive view of the Other. However, its examination in this research is only probative within the frame of understanding how prolonged trauma often creates a resistance to understanding and empathizing with the Other. In other words, as I, as the researcher, have not experienced any of what my Palestinian participants have, I can acknowledge the impact prolonged trauma has had on their ability or interest in fully relating to the Jewish participants’ narratives, but I cannot judge the appropriateness of this stance. What is primarily different here is that for the Palestinian participants, the Other is a part of the group, or can be viewed as part of the group, that is directly or indirectly responsible for their ongoing oppression and victimization. This was not the experience of the Jewish participants.

Throughout this examination, I have distinguished the Palestinian experience of trauma and victim beliefs from the Jewish experience of trauma and victim beliefs, marking two dramatic differences. First, while antisemitism is a reality today, as are the aftershocks of the Shoah, the Shoah itself is a past event, in contrast to Palestinian trauma that is ongoing and ever present. Second, while some point to how Israel in singled out as a human rights abuser in a way that no other nation is (this sentiment was spoken here by Hannah, Dror and Joshua), the reality that the Zionist project itself is rooted in a settler colonial enterprise and the ongoing injustices that the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank experience is not understood or accepted by many in the Jewish Diaspora, particularly here in Canada. I explore the specific link between Zionism and settler colonialism in Chapter 7.
6.3 Loosening the memorial siloes created through identity, trauma and victim beliefs

Chapter 4 examined the narrative interviews of the eight participants as a means of tracking how siloed memory forms within collectives, tracing three key elements: identity, trauma and victim beliefs. In Chapter 5 and 6, how these three key solidifying agents of competitive, siloed memory resist the wounds of the Other were assessed through the interaction interviews. The question that I have hinted at but not really dealt with is why some participants’ responses fall neatly within competitive, resistant views of the Other and some do not. Why were some able to see across barriers created through collective traumatic memory and others were not? Leah herself asks why she has come to such a different place?

I wonder how I turned out so crazy compared to so many others Jews. Maybe it is, like when you mentioned the walls, I am obsessed with being free. I hate the idea of any walls. I grew up feeling like I was in a cage, I needed to break out and that was the most important thing; everything else came second. It is like we were watching these films, poor guys, I think it was in Ramallah, these guys are not allowed to go anywhere, even two kilometers from their town so they are so in a cage. The Palestinian-Israelis are not free to move around and I so empathize with them. It is the most horrible thing; it is like you have chains on your feet and you just want to break out. I am sure that if I were there I would be like the number one freedom fighter. I can really relate to that.

Looking a little more closely, Leah’s reference to “walls” and wanting to be free suggest that through her experience of learning about her identity, the death of much of her family in Terezin and the frightening experiences surrounding communist occupation in Prague led her to a narrative of freedom, not just for her, but for all. She was, very much, a victim, and could easily, today be siloed inside the memorial collective of her Jewish, pro-Israel neighbors and that of her husband’s family. But, instead of “us” and “them” she seeks the “we”, as Alexander, posited was a hopeful outcome of experiencing cultural trauma (Alexander, 2004, p. 1).
Joshua’s story contains some similar themes. He not only grew up hearing of his father’s horrific experiences in the Shoah and rather miraculous survival, he also lived with antisemitic comments, looks and even violent actions on, as he described, “a daily basis”. These experiences have likely shaped his resistance to fully examining certain parts of the Palestinian narrative, particularly when Palestinian participants made comparisons between their experiences and the Shoah (what his family suffered), which seem to propel him back into his siloed collective memory. In contrast, his family’s traumas have also informed the empathetic, social justice-seeking person that he has become.

Ahuva is, in many respects, an outlier in this research. While the shadows of the Shoah were all around her, they did not play a significant role in shaping her identity. Perhaps this is why she never saw herself as a victim and resisted the nationalist push to remind her of her victimhood.

Dror’s narrative reveals a susceptibility to victimhood. In other words, in all of us, there are many other things at work outside of our religious, ethnic and national identities that lead us to respond to the world in the ways that we do. What is instructive in Dror’s story and his responses to the Other are that his victim beliefs, no matter how they came to be, are barriers and resistors to those he sees as a threat or as in contest with his identity and world view.

As previously noted, the aim here is not to create seamless connective tissue that would lead to the “answer” of breaking down the tough sinew of collective consciousness and experience the Other in a manner that alters how we move forward. However, there are three general findings from this analysis of collective traumatic memory that may be instructive.

1. For some of the Jewish Participants, victim beliefs, born out of traumatic experiences, even if those traumas are not directly related to the memorial collective or, in the minds of some, are not significant traumas, nonetheless are influential factors in developing resistance to views and experiences outside of one’s own memories and those of the collective in which they most identify.

2. Opportunities to encounter the Other, combined with a willingness to widen one’s circle of remembering, serve to “legitimize and personalize” the Other (Bar-Tal, 2009, p. 20) and reduce the distance between one’s own historical memories and the historical
memories of the Other, and thereby, at the very least, making a move toward truly generative “dialogue”.

3. The politicization of memory plays a pivotal and destructive role, preventing intercultural, cross-memorial relationships. Both “sides” in intractable conflicts, whether these conflicts are physical wars or wars of words, politicalize memory to diminish the Other and promote their own uniqueness, superiority and preferred status in world opinion. In a few specific cases, this research shows that multidirectional, non-competitive re-membering, through interbiographical communication, can be a reparative approach to entrenched, politicized memory. For example, Leah entered into the story of the Other through making a connection to her own story, allowing her to view the Other in a non-competitive way that breaks down the walls between “us” and “them”. When Leah articulates how her wounds and the wounds of the Palestinian participants are “shared traumas”, she brings the Other into the circle of the “we”. However, unless this understanding of “we” translates into political action that leads to a new reality for Palestinians, then the “repair” is theoretical rather than practical. Also, Ahuva’s ongoing commitment to work outside of her most natural collective is another example of the potential for re-membering multidirectionally. Multidirectional, non-competitive re-membering demonstrates a shift in how we think about traumatic memory, but, in and of itself, is not reparative, without a shift in action. In the intractable conflicts at issue in this work; the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Israel/Palestine debate here in Toronto and throughout the Diasporas, this shift acknowledges and even embraces the differing realities, power dynamics and present experiences of the groups. However, this is not seen as an obstacle, but rather as a truth that all must come to terms with.

In Chapter 7, I will look specifically at settler colonialism and how my learning about the history of the Zionist project has influenced my theorizing and analysis coming out of this research. I will also examine the significance and potential contribution this study may have in formal and/or informal education and for the Jewish Diaspora. Lastly, I will offer an alternative to traditional “dialogue” that has failed to make a difference in the lives of Palestinians living in Palestine/Israel.
Chapter 7
Learning, Movement and Next Steps

7.1 My Awakening: Settler Colonialism and Zionism

In Chapter 1, I spoke of my journey as an “unraveling”. The process I described was one of a circular move towards and away from having my traumatic memory, at times, ensconce my victimhood and, at other times, unravel it. This process is one that is ongoing. What became more and more apparent, as I worked through the relevant literature, as well as my own analysis of the participant interviews, was that I was continuously resisting portions of what I was learning. First and foremost, I was grappling with naming Zionism as a settler colonial project. As I researched the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, I seemed to be able to grasp, over time, the traumas related to the *Nakba* and the ongoing effects of the Occupation, but I did not examine the root causes and had to face my resistance to doing so.

I defended this resistance to those that brought it to my attention as a need to be loyal to the Jewish participants, I felt that when they read this research, some of them would be offended by my naming Zionism as a settler colonial project. In fact, it was more my own resistance to seeing my clan as colonizers. I had accepted that the horrors of the *Shoah* and the need for a safe place for Jews was just not an adequate explanation for present Israeli government policies that are so oppressive to Palestinians in the Occupied territories. However, I wanted to maintain a certain altruistic, mythical view of a Jewish homeland in Israel/Palestine.

The following description of Zionism unsettled this ill-informed view: “an ideology and a political movement that subjects Palestine and Palestinians to structural and violent forms of dispossession, land appropriation, and erasure in the pursuit of a new Jewish state and society” (Salamanca, et al. 2012, p. 1). A further point, that I had not fully digested, is that Zionism, like other settler colonial movements, includes “the control of land, a zero-sum contest fought against the indigenous population. The drive to control the maximum amount of land is at its centre” (Ibid, p. 1). While I became increasingly aware of the asymmetry in power of the two collectives under examination here, I had underplayed and turned away from the stark realities of Zionism and the consequences of its realization to those who lived in what I knew as “*Eretz*
Settler colonialism is a “distinct type of colonialism that functions through the replacement of indigenous populations with an invasive settler society that, over time, develops a distinctive identity and sovereignty” (Barker & Lowman, 2015, https://globalsocialtheory.org/concepts/settler-colonialism).

The importance of my coming to understand Zionism as a settler colonial enterprise was that I was able to move past a simplistic awareness that British interference in Palestine was a colonial project whose repercussions continue to be felt by Palestinians, to an understanding that the Zionist project itself is a project of cultural and ethnic erasure. It did not require me to push past the boundaries of my collective belonging to understand Brittan’s role in setting up an impossible situation in Palestine/Israel, but facing Zionism as a project engaged in replacing an “indigenous populations with an invasive settler society” (Ibid), expanded my learning and brought me closer to the Other’s experience.

While I had become present to the effects of Zionism, I had not examined deeply its roots. In other words, I grasped, at least partially, the abhorrent actions of Israeli soldiers during the Nakba, the 1967 war, subsequent conflicts and the disastrous effects on Palestinians due to the ongoing Occupation and building of settlements in the West Bank. But I had not examined the genesis of these realities; settler colonialism is at the root of the Zionist project. This has led me to examine my position as a Western academic and as a Jewish learner and researcher and how these positions must be taken into account in my analysis.

7:1:1 Questioning my position(s)

Anaheed Al-Harden asks:

What kind of research can researchers who are structurally positioned within the academies of the former/current imperialist powers and their allies engage in when carrying out research in communities that are on the other end of the imperialist and colonial equation? (2014, p. 61)

In order for me to engage with Al-Harden’s question, I first needed to accept that Zionism is a settler colonial project. Second, I had to grapple with, not only my own identification as a
white Jewish male researcher, but also the way in which the “[Western] academy operates as part and parcel of the historical and contemporary colonizing power/knowledge nexus” (Ibid, p. 62). I am fortunate to study within an institution that is committed to challenging colonial knowledge production, but nonetheless, this “challenging” is not ubiquitous and does not erase hundreds of years of Western appropriation of knowledge of and from the Other.

Al-Harden examines her own research of stories from the Nakba of Palestinians in refugee camps in Damascus, Syria. As a researcher in a Western academic institution, she engages in an examination of power relations within colonialism by looking at the “before”, “during” and “after” of her research (Ibid, p. 62). She works from a de-colonizing stance that seeks to challenge that Western knowledge production about the Other (specifically Indigenous people) does not take into account the ongoing effects of imperialist and colonialist histories and racial and ethnocentric assumptions on Indigenous people. Not doing so exploits Indigenous people and their knowledge, rather than disrupting the colonialist structures from which such research emanates (Smith, 2012).

Naming Zionism as a settler colonial project was an important step for me to begin to challenge what right I had to conduct research interviews with Palestinians and draw conclusions from that research. Al-Harden questions her position as an outsider as she formulated her project, during the project and after the project. In large part, I did not begin to look deeply at my positionality and the ethics of examining the Other until well into this research project.

Smith asks, along with other questions: “Whose research is it? Who owns it? Whose interests does it serve? Who will benefit from it?” (Smith, 2012, p. 10). I did not begin to ask these questions until late in the research and it is primarily in this conclusion, after the research, that these questions have really surfaced for me. These questions have led me to conclude, simply, that the three Palestinian participants have become my teachers and I their student. To make any claims outside of this is to own research that is not mine, and would not serve or benefit the interests of the Palestinian participants.

I have drawn some conclusions in the analysis chapters (Chapters 4, 5 & 6) as to the effects of trauma on them (the Palestinian participants), but even these conclusions are things I now question. These conclusions may be instructive for me and the Jewish participants in this
research as a means of coming to terms with what “our” collective, through the taking and occupying of a land that was not ours, has done and continues to do to the people who were there before us. Yet, even these conclusions come from an outsider place. The answer to Al-Harden and Smith’s questions is that I have a duty, to myself and the Jewish memorial collective in the Diaspora, to challenge collective, competitive memory within our own collective.

7:1:2 Being Jewish and critiquing Zionism

In her book *Parting Ways*, Judith Butler posits that the critique of Zionism, particularly the critique of taking and occupying of Palestinian land, is in keeping with Jewish teaching and practice. She offers, “…there is a significant Jewish tradition affirming modes of justice and equality that would, of necessity, lead to a criticism of the Israeli state, I establish a Jewish perspective that is non-Zionist” (2012, p. 2). Butler is keenly aware of the tendency to aggrandize Jewishness and Jewish values; she acknowledges that even in this statement she may be promoting the “exceptional ethical resources of Jewishness” (Ibid. p. 2).

Reading how Butler came to her decision to “part ways” with the common Jewish ideal of Zionism gave me “permission” to do the same. Joshua, Hannah and Dror, in distinctly different ways and to differing degrees, hold on to Zionism as a necessity for Jews; a necessity for them to be safe and to resist extinction, posthumously, for their relatives and for all victims of the *Shoah*. I too have had difficulty with letting go of the dream of a “safe” place for Jews. Butler describes *galut* as a means of being Jewish. *Galut*, a Hebrew word meaning “exile”, being a dispersed people subject to another’s rule that involves “departing from oneself” and being “cast into the world of a non-Jew” (p. 16). Butler explains that *galut* comes with a commitment to cohabit with the non-Jew. This is a concept that runs counter to Zionism that seeks to control the land and the people of the land (p. 16). She then offers Edward Said’s view of two displaced people in Israel/Palestine: Jews and Palestinians. She concludes that embracing this duality can forge a new way of thinking about “cohabitation, binationalism and a critique of state violence” (p. 16). Butler’s linking *galut* with Said’s notion of two displaced people has given me a new means of resisting the Zionist project and to embracing possible new paths away from it.
Butler also challenges that to question Zionism means that you are denying Israel’s right to exist (p. 19). As can be seen in this research, this is a common refrain in the Jewish Diaspora. Butler’s critique of Zionism fits well with Ahuva’s statement: “I think that Zionism has taken over in North America, especially the way it has replaced the identity of being religious and an observant Jew”. There is a consistent tension in this research to maintain multiple realities, not “either or”, but “this and that”. I have learned that Jewishness and Jewish identity is not Zionism and I, at once, can maintain my Jewish identity and reject Zionism as a project. In fact, as Butler points to, to be faithful to the fundamentals of Judaism requires “our” collective to embrace the principles of galut and coexist; within an ethical and human rights framework, in the land we have come to after “dispersion”. Zionism, as a settler colonial project and the resulting Occupation stand in direct contravention of these ideals.

7:2 The problem with dialogue

This study has offered the reader an overview of how collective memory is formed within groups through three primary constructions: identity, trauma and victim beliefs. It has attempted to reframe the act of remembering, not as a “practice of retention” but as a bridge between “present consciousness and the staging of evidentiary traces of the past” (Simon, 2000, p.10).

All of the participants in this study had previously, or are currently engaged in dialogue between Jews and Arab, Muslim and/or Palestinian groups or individuals. Some participated in a formal setting where dialogue is the stated goal, while others, through more extemporaneous interactions. In either case, the participants have all put themselves in a position to listen to the Other’s experiences.

Elizabeth Ellsworth’s critique of dialogue as critical pedagogy can be applied here. She describes a course she taught called ”Media and Anti-Racist Pedagogies”. In spite of her attempts to frame dialogue in an inclusive manner that resisted norms of creating unity in the class, “we remained in the grip of other repressive fictions of classroom dialogue for most of the semester” (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 315). Ellsworth contends that “[d]ialogue in its conventional sense is impossible in the culture at large because at this historical moment, power relations between raced, classed, and gendered students and teachers are unjust” (Ibid, p. 316).
Similarly, dialogue, within the groups that the participants and I have been involved with, has been mostly unsuccessful and maintained the kind of power relations to which Ellsworth refers. To make this claim, I need to be clear about how I am viewing “success”. Sami, Samira and Souneh all related that learning about Jewish experiences, particularly stories from the Shoah, was useful as it helped them to understand Jewish traumatic history and why Jews might view Zionism as a means of guarding against the repeating of such an event. However, they also all articulated that, while this dialogue was a useful exercise, it fell short of creating any real change. Due to this, Samira and Souneh are no longer involved with a dialogue group while Sami continues his participation. Souneh noted specifically that the Palestinian participants in the dialogue group routinely attended synagogues and participated in other “Jewish” events, however, the Jewish members of the group did not reciprocate.

The problem with dialogue is that the there is a presumption of equality that belies reality. I have attended many events focused on Jewish/Arab or Jewish/Palestinian dialogue and I have found that they were attended mostly by Jews, that most of the talking was done by the Jewish participants and that when Palestinians spoke, they seemed to be perceived as “angry”. A further challenge is that the Jewish leaders of these groups seem to see these “angry” critiques as not only anti-Zionist, but as antisemitic. This conflating of anti-Zionism with antisemitism is evident in the responses from Hannah, Dror and Joshua, as I have articulated in Chapters 5 & 6. Successful dialogue, in my view, must be evaluated in three key ways.

1. Did the dialogue experience assist the Jewish community in confronting their privilege and in their learning of how they can make a difference?

2. Did the experience shift how Palestinians view the Jewish community? Specifically, did the experience allow them to see Jews as allies rather than as just another group that they have to explain themselves to?

3. Perhaps most importantly, as is reflected in this study, did it become possible to hold, simultaneously, the past traumatic experiences, specifically the Shoah and the Nakba, of the two collectives that are engaged in dialogue and the ongoing oppression of Palestinians that exists today in the Occupied territories?
For both groups to feel fulfilled and grow from the dialogue experience and to make a difference in the lives of Palestinians, the often-conflicting notions of shared traumatic histories and the ongoing oppression experienced by Palestinians living in the Occupied territories must be held together. The resulting tension must be embraced.

7:2:1 Creating a new way forward

The learning generated from this study may be used as a source to frame a new way forward within the Israel/Palestine conversation. While this may be seen simply as a new kind of dialogue, what I am presenting is something all together different. I offer that the three questions above can create a starting point for shifting the way we engage in dialogue. These three questions can lead us to three concrete commitments:

1. Those who identify as Jewish and participate in Palestinian/Jewish interactions for the purpose of building alliances need to be willing to examine the positional privilege Jews enjoy in society today and within the debate itself.

2. There is agreement to build relationships as allies as well as an agreement to a stated goal to lessen the systemic effects of societal power and privilege. This would necessitate the Jewish participants agreeing to support the needs of the Palestinian participants of the group as framed by them. This agreement recognizes that the purpose of the group is to create a new way forward, not to have another conversation that ends with an agreement about shared trauma and does nothing to address the injustice of the Occupation.

3. There is agreement to use a non-competitive framework, similar to what I employed in this study, which holds the tension of shared trauma and unequal privilege, neither denying the traumatic experiences of either group nor using these experiences as a means of justifying unjust actions that maintain the oppression. In the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, this means resisting the knee-jerk response of justifying the Occupation with security concerns or “you attacked us first” logic.

The transformation that has occurred within me as a researcher, from the beginning of my doctoral journey, through the proposal process, culminating in the study that appears here, I
suggest, offers a possible template for achieving the new kind of interaction I have just proposed. My commitment, stated in my thesis proposal, was to “create a possible template for navigating traumatic histories together, entangled, messy and disruptive of static replications of the past” (Wilkinson, 2015). This “navigation” was envisioned as mediation between two relatively equal communities who have suffered immeasurably. I imagined a journey of coming together. Each side would learn about the Other’s traumatic past and relinquish long-held opinions about the Other and become partners in peaceful dialogue. On some level, I knew this was unrealistic; I was nevertheless caught up in this possibility. I had become aware, slowly, that the intercultural events I had attended were problematic, but my commitment to the notion that listening was the “magic pill” had me suppress my doubts.

In fact, it was listening that made the difference. My listening. My listening differently. As I encountered the Other, the connective tissue that formed and concretized my identity as a Jew began to tear. While this “tearing” did create an unpleasant tension, it ultimately led me to recalculate.

To begin a conversation about imagining Jewish/Palestinian interaction differently, I offer my own journey to the Jewish “liberal left”, a political force that wants to do good, and knows that the situation in the Occupied territories is not only deeply inhuman for Palestinians, but ensures that Israel will never be a peaceful homeland for Jews. I offer, through this journey, the possibility one can question the fairness and justice of a Jewish state in Israel and maintain a belief in Jewish tradition and remember “our” traumatic histories, particularly the Shoah. What we must no longer do is to use this history as justification for oppressing another. As Butler offers, this is not only possible, but also a fundamental way to honour Jewish tradition and embrace a faithful Jewish identity. I also offer the memory of historical Jewish trauma, including the Shoah can be maintained along with a critique of Zionism and the Occupation.

7.2.2 Possible applications for education

Earlier, I framed this study within the broad field of curriculum studies. As a step towards a reparative curriculum and a pedagogy framed by interaction and negotiation, this study may provide educators with insights on creating a space for students to consider “the possibility of new possibilities” (den Heyer, 2009, p. 441), and a beginning template for working with students from traditionally opposing histories and memories, encouraging new collaborations.
Historical agency, as proposed by den Heyer and Fidyk, may be particularly useful as, at its heart, it is a view of history as a study of people and memories rather than facts and events (den Heyer and Fidyk, 2007). This was true for my journey. Investing in the experiences of my participants fostered agency within me; a desire to do something. Perhaps of most import, I offer a rethinking of Shoah (Holocaust) study in schools that reflects the multidirectional nature of this study and challenges the freedom that some groups get to disseminate their historical traumatic experiences, often at the expense of other groups.

While this work examined the traumatic histories and memories of two distinct groups, I offer the following three ideas may be applicable to any engagement, within formal and/or informal education, dealing with conflicting histories and memories, providing that, as I endeavor in this research, unjust equivalences between groups are resisted:

1. The study of events is more likely to lead to a repetition or ongoingness of these events than a study of the people and their stories that come out of these events.
2. Viewing multiple stories and experiences is likely to lead to a fuller “representation” of the events in question.
3. When one seeks to give voice to stories and memories of those stories, they are, in fact, now a part of these stories and must commit to an ethical framework that acknowledges their own bias and the likely possibility that the stories they are telling are unequal and that this inequality has, very possibly not been spoken.

### 7.3 Conclusion

I entered into this project intent on challenging the fatalistic notion that memories are intransigent and impenetrable, and to create pedagogy of “re-membering” that fosters interaction with another’s story and builds empathy and agency. My participants’ responses to what they learned and now see as possible from engaging in this research with me do not suggest that this project fully achieved this intention. The participants’ views about the conflict or the Other, in general, did not seem to shift significantly as a result of their participation in this study, though they did begin important conversations. The shifts in my own thinking may be instructive for others. We need to grapple with how truly difficult it is to loosen the connective tissue that entangles historical traumatic memories within a collective. Also, we
need to continue to examine the role privilege plays in allowing one group to maintain their position at the expense of the Other.

I began this work committed to identifying a pathway to untangling collective memory and creating spaces where the participants I interviewed could view the Other differently. What I discovered was that this untangling is a personal journey. For me, this was a journey of unraveling victimhood. Once I understood the power victimhood has played in my life, I was able to relook at my history and “remember it otherwise” (Simon, 2005, p. 9). This did not change my past, but it fostered a new view of it that focused on how I might use my remembering as a vehicle for justice, to live with the understanding that when we speak of our past, it is our “future that we are remembering” (Michaels, 1996, p. 21).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Name</th>
<th>Birthplace</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>General Stance</th>
<th>New Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ahuva</td>
<td>Tel Aviv, Israel</td>
<td>Documentary filmmaker</td>
<td>Advocate for the end of Occupation, dedicated to telling a broader story than most Israelis are exposed to</td>
<td>Learning from Palestinian participants was not new. Especially aware of the conflation of Zionism and Judaism in the West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dror</td>
<td>Toronto Area</td>
<td>Co-chair of a pro-Israel academic think-tank</td>
<td>Pro-Israel/Zionist, Identifies as a “Labour Zionist”. Blames most of the challenges on the Palestinian leadership</td>
<td>Greater empathy for the childhood experiences of Occupation and displacement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannah</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>Educational Psychologist and human rights advocate</td>
<td>Strong believer in dialogue. Believes in a need to end the Occupation and the building of settlements and is also committed to a Jewish State in Israel</td>
<td>Saw many commonalities with her experience and that of the Palestinian participants. Wants to have all participants meet each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joshua</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>President of a human rights advocacy group</td>
<td>Believes in a Jewish State but also is against current Israeli policy and knows that the Occupation must end</td>
<td>Moved by the “shared pain”, advocates for Jews to stop supporting “right-wing” organizations, not prepared to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>Reflections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leah</td>
<td>Prague, Czechoslovakia</td>
<td>Yiddish Folksinger</td>
<td>Believes strongly in a free Palestinian State. Continually moving more toward a one-state solution and questions the ethics of a Jewish State</td>
<td>Saw many clear parallels between here childhood experiences and that of the Palestinian participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sami</td>
<td>Beirut, Lebanon</td>
<td>Heads a non-profit organization</td>
<td>Believes in a just and free Palestinian State. Advocates for dialogue and shared understanding</td>
<td>Mostly not new information for him, he continues to be struck by stories from the Shoah and the pain it still causes for Jews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samira</td>
<td>Ramallah, Palestine</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Strong supporter for justice for Palestine, favours a one-state solution</td>
<td>N/A (Did not participate in second interview)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Souneh</td>
<td>Damascus, Syria</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Strong supporter for justice for Palestine, favours a one-state solution, believes in the right of return for Jews and Palestinians</td>
<td>Made connection between Jewish and Palestinian histories of oppression and displacement, was mostly aware of the Jewish stories she read in this study</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1. - Israel before the UN partition in 1947 to 2005

https://palestineteachingtrunk.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/2b_disappearing_4_maps.jpg
References


*Heart-to-Heart/About* (n.d.). Retrieved May 23, 2016 from [http://www.heart-to-heart.ca](http://www.heart-to-heart.ca)


My name is Jeffrey Wilkinson and I am a doctoral candidate at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). I am writing to invite you to participate in my thesis project, which explores historical collective memory with individuals who currently are engaged in an activist group and/or project within the Israel/Palestine discussion in or around Toronto.

Purpose of the research

My thesis project is premised on three principal ideas:

1. “Memory” and “history” operate separately and differently.
2. Individuals within groups form a particular kind of memory referred to as “collective memory”.
3. That this can isolate groups from each other and make it much more difficult to listen, learn and work with groups that are seen as opposing, particularly within the Israel/Palestine discussion.

I am inviting participants who would be interested in exploring this with me. There will be two individual interviews. The interviews will include creative writing (poetry, storytelling, dramatic dialogue, etc.) as well as the possibility of creating art pieces. I, as the researcher will work with the participants in a process of “co-creation”. A
performance piece based on this research will be developed as a separate project after this thesis is completed.

If you are interested in finding out more about this and would consider the possibility of participating in this research project, please contact me at: dignitymusic@live.ca

Thank you for your consideration,

Jeffrey Wilkinson, PhD Candidate
Appendix B - Informed Consent

Invitation to Participate in

Research for Exploring and Understanding Historical Collective Memories:

Israel/Palestine Activists in Toronto

Informed Consent

Research for Exploring and Understanding Historical Collective Memories:

Israel/Palestine Activists in Toronto

Consent Form

Date:

Dear Potential Research Participant:

My name is Jeffrey Wilkinson and I am a doctoral candidate at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). I am writing to invite you to participate in my thesis project, which explores historical collective memory with individuals who currently are engaged in an activist group and/or project within the Israel/Palestine discussion in or around Toronto.

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**Participation**

Participation in the research is voluntary. If at any time people wish to withdraw from the project, for any reason, they may do so.

**Storage of Interview Information**

To ensure confidentiality, the recorded interviews and subsequent transcripts of these interviews will be stored in a computer file that is only accessible with the use of a protected password. As well, any written or artistic material created during the co-creation segment of the interviews and any hard copies of the transcribed interviews will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at my residence.

**Confidentiality**

Participation in this research project is confidential. No names or identifiable information will be used in this research project. The performance piece that will follow the thesis portion of this research project will be comprised of composites of the interviews in order to further shield the identity of the participants. Participants will also have the opportunity to review their transcribed interviews. If at that time, participants read section of the transcript that they do want to be used, I will withdraw this information from all parts of the project.

**Reporting the results**

The results will be reported in my doctoral thesis, a copy of which will be retained at the
OISE/UT library as well as in the University of Toronto’s Research Repository, “T-Space”, which can be accessed on web with the following address: https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca.

**Contact Information**

Jeffrey Wilkinson, PhD Candidate – E-mail: jeffrey.wilkinson@mail.utoronto.ca
Phone: (905) 867-5587

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at The University of Toronto
252 Bloor Street West
Toronto, ON M5S 1V6

Dr. Tara Goldstein, Faculty Supervisor – E-mail: tgoldstein@oise.utoronto.ca
Phone: (416) 978-0104
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at The University of Toronto
252 Bloor Street West
Toronto, ON M5S 1V6

The Office of Research Ethics – E-mail: ethics.review@utoronto.ca
Phone: (416) 946-3273
Research Ethics Board Manager--Social Sciences and Humanities
12 Queen's Park Crescent West, Toronto, ON
M5S 1S8

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Wilkinson, PhD Candidate – OISE/UT
Consent Form

I UNDERSTAND THE CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATING IN THE STUDY ABOUT COLLECTIVE MEMORY WITHIN ISRAEL/PALESTINE ACTIVISM IN TORONTO AND I CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT AND I AGREE TO THE FOLLOWING:

__ To participate in the study.
__ To allow my art productions from the interviews to be shared (anonymously) during interviews with other participants.
__ To allow the content of the interviews to be used, in composite form, without identifying me, in the libretto (lyrics for the music) of the subsequent performed ethnography

Name (Please print): _______________________________

Signature: ____________________________________
Appendix C- Beginning questions – First Interview (narrative)

1. Why did you agree to be a part of this project?

2. What hopes (if any) do you have for yourself and/or for the Israel/Palestine debate as a whole from your participation in this project?

3. Would you please reflect on how your family background and cultural and/or religious experiences (including experience with the Shoah or Nakba) have influenced (if you feel they have) your principal beliefs and commitments around the issue of Israel/Palestine?

4. What specific memories do you have about your parents or other influential people in your life about being Jewish/Israeli/Arab/Muslim/Palestinian?

5. Have you discussed the issues around Israel/Palestine with those who disagree with many of your beliefs or political stance? If so, how have you navigated these discussions?

6. What responsibility (if any) do you think you have for representing and/or giving voice to the Other (those who have a different background, experience, commitment, etc.)?

7. Is there anything that you would like to talk about that we have not discussed?
Appendix D - Framing questions – Second interview (interaction)

1. What resonates for you in the narratives you are reading and what intersections with your own story, if any, do you see in the experiences you are reading about?

2. Where, if you do, find yourself resisting what you are reading or feel confronted by what you are reading?

3. Do you experience anything new opening up for you or are you aware of a shift in your thinking from reading the narratives of the Other? What possibilities/impossibilities to you see for “re-membering” after undertaking this process of examining your historical memory, hearing my story as the researcher and the stories you have read from participants who have a different historical memory and experience than yours?

4. Do you see any new actions to take out of participating in this exercise?