

## CONSTRUCTING A COLLECTIVE IDENTITY ACROSS CONFLICT LINES: JOINT ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PEACE MOVEMENT ORGANIZATIONS\*

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*For collective action to occur and be sustainable, social movements must construct collective identities and develop a sense of themselves as collective actors. This is especially difficult for movements that work across deep political and cultural chasms, and in situations of protracted conflict. Yet, there has been almost no research on how movement organizations, which work across conflict lines in situations of protracted conflict, are able to establish this sense of cohesion. This project investigates how two joint Israeli-Palestinian peace movement organizations are able to construct shared collective identities in a political environment where each side is cast as the enemy of the other. The findings indicate that in protracted conflicts, trust building is a distinct and critical process inherent in constructing a collective identity. The findings similarly reveal that while storytelling goes a long way toward establishing trust initially, ultimately, collective identity construction depends on visible confirmatory actions.*

Collective action cannot occur in the absence of a “we” characterized by common traits and specific solidarity. Della Porta and Diani (2006: 94)

Activists are often faced with the task of building solidarity among a diverse membership, which can require very careful deliberate identity work. Einwohner, Reger, and Meyers (2008: 3)

For collective action to occur and be sustainable, social movement organizations must construct a collective identity (Gamson 1991; Melucci 1989; Snow and McAdam 2000). This endeavor means reaching a shared definition of who “we” are, including a mutual understanding of goals, strategies, and the environment in which they operate (Hunt and Benford 2004; Melucci 1995).

This is especially challenging for movement organizations that work across deep rifts and power asymmetries (Breines 1982, 2006; Bystydzienski and Schacht 2001b; Flesher-Fominaya 2010b; Gawerc 2012; Kurtz 2002). Movement organizations in the U.S. and elsewhere have long faced these challenges in terms of race, class, and gender (Breines 2006; Kurtz 2002; Meier and Rudwick 1975; Piatelli 2009) and these issues are becoming more relevant with groups increasingly organizing transnationally (Kay 2010; Nepstad 2001; Smith 2007). Constructing a collective identity in these organizations poses additional challenges, “since the participants do not define themselves in terms of their common social location in a class or ethnic group, [thus] the question of who ‘we’ are is intrinsically problematic” (Gamson 2011: 257). Moreover, the power asymmetry in different movements and movement organizations often leads to claims that the more privileged engage identity construction in ways that are paternalistic, condescending, and/or dominate leadership roles, thus producing tension and conflict (Munkres 2008: 191).

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Problematically, our understanding of collective identity formation among more diverse groups is largely based on groups in the US and Europe whom, at most, have some racial, ethnic, gender, and/or class diversity; not groups with fundamental differences in national identity (except see Nepstad 2001; Smith 2007).

There is almost no literature, exploring these issues, focused on movement organizations that work across conflict lines, in settings of protracted violent conflict (e.g., Israel-Palestine, Northern Ireland, South Africa). Arguably, when it comes to constructing a cohesive collective identity, movement organizations that work across conflict lines in situations of active protracted conflict have the greatest challenge. In these instances, one's conflict identity (e.g., whether one is Israeli or Palestinian in the Middle East, or Unionist or Nationalist in Northern Ireland) tends to have an especially strong impact on one's self-understanding (Smithey, Maney, and Satre 2013). Consequently, the crosscutting ties that can be beneficial in overcoming divisive conflict and factionalism (Goodwin and Jasper 2009), may pale in significance when compared to the dominant conflict-based division.

These joint movement organizations theoretically operate within at least two different—and *polarized*—environments that are engaged in violent conflict (Gawerc 2013). Because of the degree of polarization and the power asymmetry in these environments, it is especially difficult for social movement organizations to define themselves as collective actors with unified goals and strategies, to operate in ways deemed legitimate by activists from both communities, and to manage conflict and maintain commitment (Gawerc 2012, 2013). Indeed, in such environments, one would expect that the divisions between 'us' and 'them' would exist within joint movement organizations such that, in the words of Bystydzienski and Schacht (2001a: 5), "even seemingly progressive individuals . . . [would] still typically view those individuals having the 'other' identity with trepidation." Thus, one might expect that aspects of the collective identity formation process that ordinarily work among groups whose diversity is limited to race, class and gender within an uncontested nation would not necessarily work in groups in which there are fundamental differences in national identity, nor where the nations with whom the actors identify are engaged in violent conflict.

This study addresses the significant void in the literature by investigating how joint Israeli-Palestinian peace movement organizations have sought to create a sense of cohesion and construct a collective identity allowing them to engage in [joint] collective action in an acutely polarized, hostile, asymmetric, and violent conflict environment. In the process, it answers Einwohner, Reger, and Myer's (2008: 7) call for more research on groups that are engaged in especially challenging identity work, and sheds light on some of the problematic aspects of the collective-identity formation process.

Using data collected in the period leading up to the 2014 War in Gaza, this research addresses the following question: How is it possible that Israeli and Palestinian peace activists are able to develop and sustain a shared collective identity given the current political environment that casts each side as the enemy of the other? Specifically, how is it possible that the members of these two activist groups—each of whom has participated in and/or experienced violence at the hand of the other—are able to come together in a shared sense of "we-ness"?<sup>1</sup> The answer to this question contributes to our understanding of collective identity construction in social movements because it exposes what is often taken for granted, and at the same time, shows how collective identity can even be built in situations where the actors have never felt a sense of "we" before. Indeed, they have felt a strong sense of each other as "the enemy."

### COLLECTIVE IDENTITY FORMATION ACROSS CONFLICT LINES

Collective identity is a shared definition of "we" and a shared understanding of one's "collective agency" (Snow 2001; Hunt and Benford 2004). According to Melucci (1995: 44), "It involves cognitive definitions concerning the ends, means, and the field of action." These elements are then articulated through a common language and incorporated into rituals, prac-

tices, and symbols. Melucci (1995) emphasizes that this shared sense of “we” is constructed through ongoing interaction and negotiation, and [that it also] requires the emotional investment of the activists, thereby enabling them to feel like a collective entity.

The understandings that result from ongoing interaction are not necessarily unified, which speaks to Flesher-Fominaya’s (2010a) argument, building on Melucci (1995), that activists need not agree completely in order to come together and engender collective action. Indeed, as Rupp and Taylor (1999) show, a collective identity that unites across different interests, goals, and ideas can allow for a movement—and presumably, movement organizations—to move beyond these differences (see also White and Fraser 2000: 342).

Taylor and Whittier (1992: 111) highlight three processes involved in building a collective identity: the development of a group consciousness that “emerge[s] out of a challenging group’s struggle to define and realize its interests;” negotiation, which involves “the symbols and everyday actions subordinate groups use to resist and restructure existing systems of domination [and includes protests and other activities];” and the creation of boundaries that “establish differences between a challenging group and dominant groups.” While Rupp and Taylor (1999) rightly argue that this definition is problematic because it focuses on the unitary aspects of collective identity and overlooks what are often considerable differences of beliefs, interests, and goals, the importance of group consciousnesses, negotiation, and boundary work, when treated as on-going processes, have been well-recognized in the collective identity literature (Reger, Myers, and Einwohner 2008).

This approach, which includes consciousness as well as the strategic actions taken, includes the belief of many scholars that “collective identities are talked into existence . . . and [at the same time] are shaped by collective action” (Hunt and Benford 2004). Indeed, the literature is clear that the “visible” moments of movement activity, such as protests, can impact, foster, and strengthen a collective identity (Melucci 1995; Flesher-Fominaya 2010a). In fact, Dugan (2008: 22) refers to protests and other visible movement activities as “collective identity presentations,” indicating that these externally oriented events are one of the key ways that the group asserts its identity to the public. While as Gamson (1991) indicates, interactions with movement opponents at these events and elsewhere are a double-edged sword (as they force actors to reflect on whether group involvement is worth the associated risks), it should be noted that these interactions have been found at times to increase solidarity and the sense of “we” in the organization (Brockett 1993; Davenport, Johnston, and Mueller 2005; Flesher-Fominaya and Wood 2011).<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, Dowton and Wehr (1991) indicate that organizational style, shared leadership, rituals, and particular tactics, which likewise serve as “signifiers of collective identity” (Flesher-Fominaya 2010a: 396), can also help to strengthen the bonds of solidarity and the “feelings of belonging to a collectivity” (Hunt and Benford 2004: 439). As Flesher-Fominaya (2010a: 396) argues, this may be especially true for movements practicing prefigurative politics, as their movement practices, organizational forms, and tactics are often “conscious and explicit alternatives to dominant paradigms.”

Building on Melucci, several scholars have also highlighted the importance of emotional experience and reciprocal emotional ties for collective identity formation (Jasper 1998; Hunt and Benford 2004; Flesher-Fominaya 2010b). Indeed, Flesher-Fominaya (2010b) found that a positive movement experience can keep activists involved even in the face of failure, while a hostile movement environment can deter participation, even for activists with a strong commitment to the cause.

As the above suggests, collective identity theorists recognize that the political, social, and economic environment that movement organizations operate within—as well as external constituents in the environment—will inevitably impact the ongoing process of constructing a collective identity, and even the likelihood that it will be successful (Melucci 1995; Sarabia and Shriver 2004; Van Dyke and Cress 2006). Indeed, as Einwohner et al. (2008: 3-4) argue, when activists construct a collective identity, they need to do so “with an eye towards the potential reactions of external audiences.”

As Neuhouser (2008) indicates, however, a constructed identity that works with one audience can hurt a movement organization's chance of success with another. Thus activists need to utilize and balance different strategies in their interactions with external audiences. I argue that the challenge is even greater when groups within the movement organization identify with disparate audiences, including communities in conflict. Indeed, it highlights one of the challenges facing movement organizations working across deep chasms in protracted conflicts.

While the literature on collective identity formation across difference is limited, Wood (2005, 96) suggests that shared neutral space is critical. Moreover, Wood (2005) and Smith (2002) both highlight the importance of trust, which Wood (2005) argues is critical for overcoming the effects of inequality. Kay (2010) argues that there is a need for symmetrical relationships that go beyond helping the less-privileged group and individuals. And finally, Lichterman (1999) shows that activists must be able to freely discuss the identities they claim.

However, in a situation of asymmetrical conflict, where a state is unilaterally occupying territories that do not belong to it and the two parties (i.e., identity groups) are engaged in violent conflict, [the problem is that] there is no neutral space (except, of course, outside the boundaries of the state and occupied territory). Moreover, in such a situation, building trust where it is nonexistent is a long process, and establishing symmetrical relationships an impossibility, given the asymmetrical reality (i.e., where there is an occupier and an occupied). Furthermore, in a conflict environment such as this, the ability of activists to freely discuss their identities is an accomplishment in its own right. Thus one would assume that groups working across conflict lines, without a neutral space to gather, with no possibility for symmetry, and embodying initially both a strong distrust of the other and a fear to discuss one's identity, would be unable to foster a collective identity. Yet these two activist groups have managed to do so.

This study analyzes how cross-conflict movement organizations manage to construct and sustain a collective identity that encompasses members situated on both sides of an active conflict line. Building on the above-mentioned literature, I show that for these movement organizations, trust is fundamental and implicit in collective identity construction. Moreover, some semblance of trust needs to exist *prior* to (as well as alongside) the work involved in constructing a collective identity. In other words, collective identity work involves stages, even if many of the processes are ongoing, and trust building is a distinct stage and process that's required—at least for groups engaged in difficult identity work. The findings also indicate that storytelling goes a long way to establishing this trust initially, while also allowing the participants to recognize their shared interests, thereby beginning the process of developing a collective identity. But ultimately for groups engaged in difficult identity work, the data indicates that trust and collective identity depend on visible actions that confirm the constructed identity—ones that meet both the emotional and rational needs of the participants (cf. Flesher-Fominaya 2010a).

## POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict dates back to the 1880s (Caplan 2010). Primarily a struggle over land, the conflict has stood witness to numerous wars and armed battles, as well as two Palestinian intifadas (uprisings). Since 1967, Israel has been militarily occupying the Palestinian territories and has been constructing settlements for Israeli citizens. Given security concerns, Israel has increasingly built and/or deemed certain roads and areas in the occupied Palestinian territories to be off-limits for Palestinians, thus resulting in apartheid-like conditions in the West Bank. The same was true for the Gaza Strip, until Israel unilaterally disengaged in 2005 (B'Tselem 2004; Li 2006).

Since the 1990s, Israel has increasingly sought to separate the two peoples. Consequently, many Palestinians have never met an Israeli who was not a soldier or a settler. Similarly, most Israelis have never met a Palestinian except perhaps as a manual laborer or during their time in the army. The significance of this near complete separation cannot be

overemphasized. In the words of Hass (2007), this limited interaction plays a role in “the Palestinians’ conclusion that it is impossible to reach a just agreement and peace with Israel” and it “reinforces Israelis’ racist—or at best, patronizing—attitudes towards the Palestinians.”

In 1993, the Oslo Accords opened the prospect for a negotiated solution to the conflict. Unfortunately, little has come of it. And public opinion polls indicate that mistrust and despair are rampant, with few believing that the other can be trusted. Indeed, as a joint Israeli-Palestinian poll taken in December 2013 indicated, “The majority of Israelis (63 percent) and of Palestinians (53 percent) support the two-state solution. . . . [Nonetheless,] each side perceives the other side as constituting a threat to its very existence: 60 percent of Palestinians think that Israel’s goals in the long run are to extend its borders to cover all the area between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea and expel its Arab citizens, and twenty-four percent think the goals are to annex the West Bank while denying political rights to the Palestinians. Thirty-four percent of the Israelis think that the Palestinian aspirations in the long run are to conquer the State of Israel and destroy much of the Jewish population in Israel; and an additional twenty-one percent think the goals of the Palestinians are solely to conquer the State of Israel” (Truman and PCPS 2014).

Within this context of protracted violent conflict and occupation, mistrust, and increasingly, despair, Combatants for Peace and Parents Circle/Families Forum have both managed to develop into peace movement organizations that involve Palestinians and Israelis working *together*, in order to demand an end to the cycle of violence and the occupation. With clear organizational structures, leadership patterns, and membership requisites, both movement organizations have the indicators of a collective identity (Melucci 1995: 49). Yet given the political and social context, the question that emerges is how did they manage to construct a collective identity, thus allowing for collective action in support of peace?

## METHODOLOGY AND GROUPS STUDIED

The two joint peace movement organizations studied here are, in fact, the only two major *joint* peace movement organizations in Israel/Palestine: Parents Circle/Families Forum and Combatants for Peace. While there are a handful of other peace movement organizations in the region, these other organizations identify as either Israeli *or* Palestinian, even if they work together at times.<sup>3</sup> Thus, these two groups are unique in that they *define* themselves as binational movements (i.e., joint Israeli-Palestinian movements).

Both of these organizations have been studied before (e.g., Furman 2013; Gawerc 2012, 2013; Kaufman-Lacusta 2011; Nasie, Bar-Tal, and Shnaidman 2014; Perry 2011; Saunders 2011). However, no one has examined how these organizations have managed to construct and maintain a collective identity across the polarized Israeli/Palestinian divide, and how these organizations are able to take ongoing joint action focused on ending the cycle of violence.

Parents Circle/Families Forum (PCFF) consists of Palestinians and Israelis who have lost a first-degree relative in the conflict (e.g., a child, a parent). This group shows both publics that reconciliation is possible, and exerts pressure on the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority to engage in negotiations that will ensure “basic human rights, the establishment of two states for two peoples, and the signing of a peace treaty” (PCFF website). Parents Circle/Families Forum was founded in 1996 as an Israeli peace organization, but became a joint organization involving Palestinians as equal members in 2004. Since then, the group has implemented a semi-symmetrical organizational structure, which is headed by two co-general managers (an Israeli and a Palestinian).

Combatants for Peace (CFP) was jointly founded in 2006 by former soldiers in the Israeli army and Palestinians who were formerly engaged in the violent struggle for Palestinian liberation. Combatants for Peace, which engages in nonviolent protest activities, seeks to “educate towards reconciliation and nonviolent struggle in both the Israeli and Palestinian

societies; [and] to create political pressure on both governments to stop the cycle of violence, end the occupation and resume a constructive dialogue” (CFP website). Combatants for Peace similarly embodies a symmetrical organizational structure that includes two coordinators (an Israeli and a Palestinian) at the national level, as well as an Israeli and Palestinian coordinator for each of the five regional groups.

The activists involved in Parents Circle/Families Forum and Combatants for Peace have all experienced violence at the hands of “the other” and/or participated in the violence, and thus it is far from clear what factors enabled each of these groups to develop a collective identity across this fundamental conflict line, allowing their members to work together as a collective actor for peace.<sup>4</sup> Identifying and analyzing these factors and processes is the main contribution of this study.

I collected data on these two organizations from April to June 2014.<sup>5</sup> The data included forty-six interviews with Palestinian and Israeli peace activists in the two joint organizations, as well as observations of events, actions, and meetings. In terms of the interviewees, twenty-three were Palestinian and twenty-three were Israeli—with roughly equal distribution of interviewees from the two organizations. These activists were from different geographical locations in Israel and the West Bank and included thirty men and sixteen women between the ages of 30-85. The interviews were all conducted in private houses or local coffee shops. I used a semistructured interview guide and the majority of the interviews were conducted in either English or Hebrew. While many of the Palestinian activists were capable of doing the interview in English or Hebrew, I also offered Palestinian activists the choice of conducting the interview in Arabic with the help of a translator.

These interviews addressed both participants’ past experience and their present perspectives on the challenges facing their organization, the negotiations that occur within the group, the ways that the asymmetry is managed, the different ways that collective identity has been fostered and commonality expressed to strengthen solidarity, and the ways that the political and social environment have impacted the group’s ability to maintain a cohesive collective identity. In addition to the above, I gleaned additional data about the organizations through their websites and selected articles that highlight the individual stories and experiences of some of the activists. During the data collection, I was alert to the role of shared leadership, personal stories/narratives, emotions and affective ties, ideologies, protests and other “visible” moments of activity, the drawing of boundaries between those in the movement and those outside, matters of equality, and participatory meetings, given that the literature suggests these are all fundamental in constructing and maintaining a collective identity.

I coded and analyzed the data using Atlas.ti, and used individual themes and patterns as units of analysis. While the coding was largely inductive, I also coded, where relevant, theoretical constructs and concepts derived from the literature. The inductive generation of codes was important as it allowed me to highlight unforeseen patterns and themes in the data. For example, the salience of trust—and how challenging it is to build—surfaced through the inductive coding. The deductive generation of codes was similarly valuable. Given that some of these literature-derived categories were highlighted in my interview questions, I was able to do cross-interview comparisons of these particular categories. For instance, since I asked each interviewee about personal stories and visible moments of activity, I was able to analyze how each interviewee related to these two categories. Subsequent analysis indicated that most members saw them as the two key elements involved in building a collective identity across conflict lines.

### COLLECTIVE IDENTITY FORMATION IN CROSS-CONFLICT GROUPS

This section highlights the ways that these two joint peace movement organizations were able to develop a collective identity and an understanding of oneself as a collective actor, within their polarized conflict environment. It should be noted that, with the exception of quotes

taken from other sources and attributed to particular individuals, names of research participants and interviewees have been changed to provide anonymity.

*Combatants for Peace: Building Trust and Shared Commitment through Conflict Stories*

A group of former Israeli Defense Force (IDF) officers and former Palestinian fighters from Fatah, who had spent time in the Israeli jails, first met in early 2005. An international activist who had contact with both the Israeli *refuseniks* and Palestinian ex-prisoners initiated the meeting, which took place on the outskirts of Bethlehem. This first meeting lasted around three hours, and was characterized by tension and fear in individuals of both groups. As the quotations below highlight, the Palestinians wondered if Israeli intelligence organized this meeting in order to obtain information from them, with a goal of arresting them. The Israelis, on the other hand, wondered if the Palestinians were going to kidnap or kill them.

It was the most difficult meeting in my life. [Imagine,] you are going to meet your ‘real enemy’ . . . to shake hands, maybe to smile, and to try to talk to them. The same soldiers, the same people who tortured you, arrested you, or damaged your house. [The same people] who occupied you. We [Palestinians] think that they are maybe from the Israeli Intelligence or the Israeli Shabak coming to catch us. At the same time you can see the fear in their eyes. It is the first time they are coming to meet a Palestinian ‘terrorist’ or ‘dangerous criminal.’ [They are thinking] maybe we will kidnap them and kill them. This is the first time they are come without their [military] units, without their tanks, without their weapons. . . . I can understand their fears. Samir

We had to wait in an olive grove in the dark for cars to pick us up. We were afraid. I remember thinking we were doing something that was just incredibly stupid. We were not at all sure we would come back alive. I later learned the Palestinians were also afraid the meeting was a trap, and they would be arrested or killed. Elik (quoted in Hirschfield, 2007)

During this first meeting, there was no common language, and there was no sense that the individuals present constituted a “we.” There were also no discussions about whether this group had a future; rather, the time was spent, in the words of Samir, with “each side trying to say that he is more or less right. . . .” Elik similarly noted, “It was a very hard meeting . . . while talking politics, we were all inflexible, each side barricaded in their most defensive positions” (Elhanan 2011: xiii). It was also clear to the Palestinians in the meeting that the two sides were far from equal. In the words of Samir, “We were kids who found ourselves as fighters, and they were *real* soldiers.” Notwithstanding the tremendous gap and the lack of trust, they agreed to meet again in two weeks hence to continue to talk.

These early meetings focused largely on the sharing of stories. The Israelis tended to highlight their family’s story (i.e., how they came to Palestine and/or Israel), the beliefs they were socialized into and how they felt entering the army, the turning point for them (often an incident or incidents that provoked a “moral shock” and led them to question what they were doing in the army), and the reasons they decided to no longer serve in the occupied Palestinian territories. Many Israeli participants found it difficult. In the words of Zohar, “There was much mistrust to begin with and I was afraid to admit to what I’d done as a soldier” (CFP website). These difficulties were magnified by the fact that the Palestinian activists vigorously challenged the Israeli speakers if they suspected that they were not telling the whole truth and/or were leaving anything out of their story.

The Palestinians shared their stories as well, which typically highlighted the impact that the Nakba (i.e., the uprooting of Palestinians from their land in 1948) as well as the 1967 Israeli military occupation had on their family’s life, their involvement with Fatah and the resistance movement, the years they had spent in Israeli jails, and the reasons they now wanted to pursue a nonviolent resistance to the occupation. Given the lack of trust—and the

reality of military occupation—Palestinians felt the need to withhold particular aspects of their story. In the words of Ihab,

We were afraid to share what we were involved in, as we were not sure if the Israelis, or [at least] some of them, were tools of the occupation . . . or just wanted to get information from the Palestinians.” Over time, he stated, “these doubts became much less. . . . It took a long time though.

Reflecting on this early period, Samir noted,

It was very strange for me. I [remember] saying that either those people [the Israelis] are crazy or they are very courageous, since they are talking in front of Palestinians about [Israeli] criminal [acts] against our people. They said they reached the point [where they realized] that they are just occupiers and just criminals . . . and [they] are increasing and creating more enemies on the Palestinian side and [it’s not] serving Israeli security or the Israeli people. So they decided to not continue to be part of this situation. . . .

During this formative period, the sharing of their personal stories was the most critical tool they had for building trust and fostering dialogue. In the words of Elik, “When we started exchanging our personal stories, a wall came down” (Elhanan 2011: xiii). Similarly, Ihab noted, “The personal stories really did help a lot because through the personal stories you understand who the person is, where they come from, their background, and what led them to join this organization. So, it really did help in building trust.”

From a Palestinian perspective, as Samir’s quote suggests, the stories were critical in that they allowed the Palestinians to see that the Israeli activists recognized that their actions in the IDF were not in the best interest of Israel and they recognized the need to struggle against the Israeli occupation. As Samir noted, “[Realizing and] trusting that we have the same commitment [to end the occupation] . . . we slowly started to see each other as being on the same side.”

Largely through this process of sharing their stories, this group of former “combatants”—on both sides—was able to start to build trust across the conflict lines as well as a respect for each other. Moreover, the discussions of who they were collectively and what they were committed to, both of which emerged from the stories, ultimately allowed for the development of a group consciousness.

#### *Combatants for Peace: Cementing and Maintaining a Collective Identity through Joint Actions*

Once created, collective identities need to be nurtured and maintained. From early on, the activists in Combatants for Peace knew that they did not want to be a dialogue group; they wanted to work together with the goal of ending the occupation and the cycle of violence. For CFP, this eventually took the form of conducting joint demonstrations against the occupation, as well as presenting house and school lectures.

These multiple joint actions were, and continue to be, critical for collective identity maintenance. In the words of Meir,

The action is an indicator of the ‘we’ . . . . It’s [who we are and] what we do.” Similarly, Shai suggested that while the personal stories aided the group in forming an identity and were critical internally, it is through “the act of standing together” in the demonstrations, that the group is able to act collectively, thus employing and “cashing in [i.e., making use of] our identity.

Many of the interviewees also suggested that these visible moments were fundamental when it came to further enhancing the trust and the group’s identity. In the words of Yael, “When we work together, when we build something together, and protest together, it’s a great tool for strengthening the trust and our identity. It’s not only by sharing our personal stories, but by *doing* stuff together.” Similarly, Rashid argued, “The nonviolent demonstrations against



the occupation in Palestine build the trust. . . . The most important thing [for me] is to work on the ground [and these actions show our commitment to ending the occupation].”

Khalil, who has been active in other Palestinian-Israeli groups, similarly revealed,

I identify more with CFP than [any other], because it addresses the needs of the Palestinians. . . . I organized a solidarity event with the hunger strikers and announced it to Combatants for Peace and the Palestinians came, and the Israelis talked a lot about it and tried to raise awareness in Israel about administrative detention. . . . I haven't seen that kind of activity or event coming from [any other joint peace organization]. Look, what unites us in the end, the Palestinians and Israelis, is that we want to resolve this conflict and end the occupation. . . . It's not enough to just go and do lectures and say, 'we, Palestinians want peace.' In CFP, we do things that are more relevant to the situation.”

Similarly, Ihab noted,

Combatants for Peace was founded with the goal of ending the occupation. The whole purpose is to have direct action against the occupation, nonviolent direct action. It's not to have activities behind closed doors that they will need to write some report about. That's not what we are about.

In part, it is the interactions with movement opponents—particularly during demonstrations—that facilitates this strengthening of identity. As Keren argued, “It is really helpful when you stand together and oppose your army or settlers, or someone who is not us. That gets the sense of ‘we’ on a stronger level.” Similarly, Noam argues,

In a way, we are symbolizing and putting ourselves under the same risks when we are demonstrating. We are standing and embodying, the two bodies of the Israelis and the Palestinians, in front of the soldiers, in front of the checkpoint, in front of the tear gas, whatever it is. I think that the nature on this symbolic action, and the fact that we are insisting on it, is kind of a contract that allows us to keep on with what we are doing.

Ibrahim would likely agree. At a protest against the occupation in June 2014, one Israeli and two of the Palestinian protesters were taken in by the police for questioning. Ibrahim, one of the Palestinians, conveyed,

We are used to getting arrested and having the soldiers take away our identity cards and take us to interrogation. . . . We're used to all of that. It's something different when you have Noam who served in the army and got arrested because he is protesting the occupation. I really respect that and because of it, I feel close to Noam and want to continue on our journey together.

In addition to the above-mentioned demonstrations, the organization also conducts educational lectures in schools and community centers involving an Israeli and a Palestinian activist speaking together and sharing their personal stories. The stories are a key part of the presentation. In the words of Niv, “The stories are how we tell about our collective ‘we.’” These joint lectures were a strategic decision made early on, as both groups recognized the need to influence both publics and recruit more members. These joint presentations and the stories are seen as critically important, especially with the Israeli public, as it enables Israelis to meet a Palestinian, to hear their story, and to understand the impact the occupation has on Palestinians. As Samir explains,

In our constitution, as Fatah—this is what we learn in jail—it's our responsibility to start to make a large circle of friends from the Israeli side to support us. How do we do this? By sending suicide bombers? By killing them? That doesn't work. It means we need to talk to them, to explain to them. . . . Nelson Mandela says, 'I didn't liberate South Africa with a gun of the black South African. It's with the mind of white South Africans.' So I believe that the

Israelis must end their own occupation, because it's illegal and immoral. So the basic need is to convince the Israelis, but how? I think the key word is storytelling. . . . This is our M60.

While it is more challenging to conduct these educational events in Palestine (due to the Palestinian taboo against any normalizing of relations between Palestinians and Israelis until the occupation ends, and the unfortunate reality that these events are often characterized in Palestinian society as normalization), these lectures do, in fact, occur in Palestine, with the goal of recruiting more Palestinians to join the movement (Mi' Ari 1999; Gawerc 2012, 2013). In these meetings, the Palestinians in the organization seek to convey to their society their belief that this joint work is a critical component of the larger nonviolent struggle to end the military occupation, as it encourages Israelis to withdraw their support from the military occupation of the Palestinian territories. The challenges are nevertheless substantial. As Riad explains,

Meeting with the other side is not necessarily an acceptable Palestinian idea, and that causes some problems. The meeting with the other side, Israelis, is seen as a form of normalization in a lot of ways by certain Palestinians resisting the occupation. So they don't really look fondly upon these kinds of activities.

Notwithstanding the challenges, Samir underscores the impact these joint presentations can have when they do occur in Palestine. He notes,

When the people [i.e., Palestinians] who you invite come to an event to hear those [Israeli] criminals, they [often decide to] became active in Combatants for Peace. It's very simple, if you [Israelis] refuse to fight me and you come to support me, there is no need for me to fight you; and you become my partner." He also highlights the pride he feels in undertaking these joint presentations in Palestine. In his words, "For me, these Israelis who used to be criminals and are now talking about our rights. . . , for me, for the Palestinians [in the movement in general, they are my] achievement.

In the last so many years, as a result of broadening the membership requisite to include noncombatants (i.e., those who never held a combat role in the Israeli Defense Force), there has been some debate regarding which stories should be told to external audiences. Most notably, some of the Palestinians feel that the stories of some of the newer Israelis, who were not combatants, are not as strong as those of the Israeli founders who were, and as a result are not as effective. Thus there is an effort—especially by some of the Palestinians—to have the presentations done mostly by former combatants. However, this is often impossible due to time constraints, and the issue continues to be discussed.

As the above makes clear, the lectures and the demonstrations are not simply tactics but are collective identity presentations that convey to the audience who they are, both as individuals and as a group (cf. Dugan 2008).

#### *Parents Circle/Families Forum: Building Trust and Shared Commitment through Conflict Stories*

They shared part of their story and I shared part of my story. I sometimes say, people who were, are considered to be my enemies five minutes before, and there was a gap or something between us, this gap was gone one day after they listened to me and I listened to them. . . ." (Ran)

In this organization, we have the same pain and we share the same hope. This is our trust. Both of us know that the occupation is the reason that killed my brother and my family and this mom or this brother or this son. We must end the occupation, for all the people. (Jalaal)

Parent Circle/Families Forum was officially founded in 1995 as an Israeli organization of bereaved parents who advocated for peace and reconciliation. While Palestinians took part, the organization only became formally a *joint* effort in 2003, after the Palestinians gave the

Israelis an ultimatum: asking that the organization become joint and the Israelis start to work more equally, or they would leave the organization (Gawerc 2012). Throughout its lifetime, however, the organization has been engaged in lectures in schools and community centers, and members have occasionally been brought together for different projects and events, often involving storytelling.

Before joining the group, most of the prospective members attended a meeting where they met active members and were introduced to the mission of the organization. At this time, many members, especially Palestinians, admitted to fear, anger, and apprehension before attending their first event. In fact, Samir who is an activist in both Combatants for Peace and Parents Circle argued, “I believe it’s more difficult in the Parents Circle than Combatants for Peace. . . . You’re going to meet your killer. It’s not just your occupier . . . but someone who kills [your child or loved one]. It’s not easy to meet each other at all.” Regarding the fear, Nadia noted,

Before I went to the first meeting, about three years ago, I felt a lot of fear. On the way, I was wondering how I could now meet those killer people, the Israeli people. But when I saw them and listened to some of their stories and saw their pain, I saw that they are not the soldiers [that I see all the time]. They have a human side; and they can understand my pain.

Rania similarly noted,

As a Palestinian, I am asking for peace while living under the occupation. So it is not easy for me to be involved. I felt a lot of fear in the first meeting, since I was going to meet the Israeli women who for me *are* the occupation. I felt a lot of fear. But I also wanted to discover who are the Israeli people who believe in making peace and how do they think. I wanted to make sure that these people really agree with Palestinian rights, and are working for a peace that will give the Palestinian people their rights and will end the occupation.

Anger was also a common sentiment. Osama, in his first encounter with Israeli members of the organization, who happened to be in his village visiting his brother-in-law, shouted at them, calling them, “Jewish murderers,” and exclaimed, “You [Israelis] go around saying that all Palestinians are terrorists [but listen to] . . . all the people I know who had been killed by you—my grandfather, my in-laws, my best friend—and [listen to] . . . how I was tortured in interrogation.” Osama relayed,

They didn’t say a word until I was done. I thought they were keeping quiet because they were afraid of me. But as soon as I stopped talking, the man said to me, “I am here because I acknowledge your pain. . . . I too have experienced loss.” He told me he had lost his daughter, Smadar, in a terrorist attack . . . [and] when he was done, he said . . . “If the two of us, who lost the people closest to us and paid the steepest price possible, are sitting today and talking, then everyone can. . . .” He is right. After four hours [talking with him at my brother-in-law’s place], I signed up for membership in the bereaved families forum (Ahituv 2014: 4).

Curiosity was another motivating factor that drove some Palestinians to the first meeting. Khaled wanted to know, “Are PCFF members crazy people? Have they lost their minds? . . . They killed your brother, and [you’re] interested in meeting the other side, the perpetrator?” Echoing the experiences of many in the organization though, he noted, “In the story of every one of them, I found *my* story. . . . I started talking about Yusuf and Sayed for the first time [and started to feel like] . . . I belong to this group” (Furman 2013: 127; emphasis my own).

Many of the Israelis also expressed curiosity as well as a sense of apprehension when it came to attending their first meeting. Mati noted,

I didn’t want to be considered as a bereaved father. I didn’t want to be tagged and I didn’t want to be used. But Frankenthal [the founder] invited me over to watch a meeting of this group of crazy people, and I got a little bit curious, and I went to see. I was standing aside,

very detached, reluctant, and cynical. I didn't anticipate being part of it. . . . The decisive moment [for me], was the sight of the Palestinian bereaved families coming down from the busses, walking towards me, shaking my hand for peace, hugging me, crying with me. I don't remember ever in my life being in a state of shock like this. I was so deeply moved by the sight . . . it was the first time ever in my life, like every good Israeli, that I met Palestinians as human beings, not as workers in the streets, not as terrorists, [but] as humans, as people carrying the same burden that I carry, suffering exactly like I suffer. . . . That instant, I wanted to be part of it.

For some, the apprehension was focused on the fact that they would be meeting Palestinians. For example, Ran noted,

I went to a Parents Circle meeting following the first summer camp, which my kid participated in. I was a bit anxious and I was unfortunately biased, although I thought I knew Palestinians. I had some kind of stereotypes. . . . I thought I was going to see faladeen and people who work in the field, and instead, I saw a Palestinian governmental official and a neurologist. It was people like me; it was amazing." Not long after, Ran had the chance to share his story with the group, and he found it to be a "euphoric experience.

Notwithstanding the warm welcome often extended to new members, building trust and a sense of solidarity between the groups took a lot of time. In the words of Merav, "We went through stages. We started off checking each other out—checking the Palestinians or checking the Israelis. And slowly, slowly, we started to build trust." Many described how the sharing of stories also strengthened the sense of togetherness. Rania explained,

The personal story helps us to connect at the human level. It also helped us to see the reality on the two sides. . . . They had believed that the Palestinian people are killers, that we are violent, and that we don't believe in nonviolence. We, as Palestinians, believed that the only thing on the Israeli side is the occupation and they want to continue to occupy us. But after those meetings, after we listened to them and they listened to us, we (and they) saw the reality of the two sides. . . . This sharing of stories built trust as by listening to their story, and their history, I was able to understand their suffering. And when I shared my story, I could see that the other side understood my suffering and my pain; and when I saw that they felt very sorry about my suffering, it allowed me to build trust with them.

Baruch similarly noted, "I think the sharing of stories is very strong . . . we know each other's stories. It hurts a lot to hear of all the relatives who died for nothing. So although all the stories are very different, I think they create a very strong sense of togetherness."

While the interviewees clearly communicated that the personal stories were critical in fostering trust, they also indicated that the building of trust was dependent on the belief that the two sides shared the same goals, including ending the conflict and occupation. As Nadia noted, "[In addition to both being bereaved], what brings the two sides together, the Israelis and the Palestinians, is that they believe in the same goals and they have the same message." Similarly, Aharon noted, "The sharing of personal stories is very important; we are talking about people that have suffered. . . . But it is not only that—it is also the approach towards the future [and] the expectations for peace."

Palestinians were particularly explicit about the importance of a shared commitment to ending the occupation. As Nisreen stated, "The storytelling brings in the human element and makes the first connection between the two sides. But what makes it closer and stronger is the shared belief that the occupation must end." Similarly, Mahmoud noted,

We don't speak the same language, we have different viewpoints, we have different ideas, we come from different backgrounds, but there is one thing that brings us together and this is loss. The loss has led to a vision, and this is Parents Circle/Families Forum; and this is what brings us together. The sense of 'we' is centered around our vision, and our vision is to end the occupation, and to have two states. Once we have achieved these goals, then our identity ends, and

we shape a new identity, whether it's about how we become neighbors [in two states] or [live together in] one state. . . . It's this vision that brings us together.

*Parents Circle/Families Forum: Cementing and Maintaining a Collective Identity through Joint Actions*

If you do things together, you work together, you create something together, then after a while, you forget that he's the enemy or he's the other side and we are becoming the same side. (Nadav)

Similar to Combatants for Peace, Parents Circle/Families Forum's mission does not stop with internal dialogue between the members. As one of the more prominent Israeli peace movement organizations, its members jointly advocate for a negotiated solution to the conflict. One of the main means, as noted earlier, is presenting educational lectures in the schools and community centers.

For many of the interviewees, the act of standing together, in front of an audience, where they share their personal stories, also helps to strengthen the sense of "we." In the words of Nadav,

Because you hear the personal stories so often, you remember them. So sometimes, when a Palestinian is standing among other people and telling them my story, my bereavement story, and I'm telling his because I heard it so much and I remember, it impresses him, and it impresses the audience. And it impresses me that he remembers mine. . . . Yeah; it brings us closer.

Similarly, Baruch indicates,

We share the same fate. . . . So when we come together to the classroom, we put all the differences aside . . . [and focus on] our message: "We know the price of losing somebody for the country [and] they paid the same price. And . . . we came to talk to you, and to share with you, our pain and our cry for change. . . ." You don't need to agree on everything, just to agree on this [one] issue. This is our public face. . . . And this joint appearance in front of the audience really strengthens [our collective identity]. Whenever I'm leaving a session with my Palestinian partner, it can be my worst opponent [in the organization], and we always end up very close to each other. So it's a bonding experience to go together in front of an audience.

Several interviewees—mostly Palestinian—suggested that having an impact through these visible moments is what helps to keep the identity strong. Osama commented, It's affecting other people that makes me identify with the Parents Circle. I've met hundreds if not thousands of Israelis and I feel that I have had a very positive effect on a large section of the people I have met [through the lectures]." Mahmoud would likely agree as he suggested, "Whenever we succeed in our vision, our relationship with each other and the organization itself gets stronger."

The ability of these visible moments to strengthen the collective identity, however, is based to a large degree on meeting each other's expectations. And for many Palestinian interviewees, this included the Israelis being willing to engage in protests against the occupation, and not only to give lectures in the schools. For example, during the first Gaza War, there were many challenges inside the organization, but in the words of Suheir,

They [the Israelis] made a demonstration in the middle of Tel Aviv at that time and I still remember they [the Israeli police] took Ran to the jail. And they wrote in the newspaper, that he's part of Parents Circle/Families Forum. It meant a lot to me; and a lot to us [Palestinians]! If I see that my enemy is asking for my rights . . . it gives us a lot of power inside ourselves to continue. And it builds trust with the other side that is asking for our rights and believes in our rights.

Similarly, Mais argued, “The most important thing is for them [the Israeli side] to demonstrate against their government, and that’s it. That’s enough. If they can’t go against their government, then what’s the point? They should definitely be more active within their society.” And this sentiment was widely shared among the Palestinian interviewees.

While all the Palestinians believed in the educational lectures and the other visible moments, there was some frustration among them that the Israelis were not more active in protests and demonstrations inside Israeli society. Indeed, several Palestinian interviewees indicated that they were feeling less connected to the organization as a result; the sense of “we” was diminishing for them. As Zaid noted:

Even though most of the time we are doing everything together . . . it’s a very limited [sense of] “we” [right now]. At the end of the day, I have to go back to my [refugee] camp and the Israelis go back to Tel Aviv. I have to go back to face my life again, which is the occupation, which is the conflict; and he will go back to his life, which is easier. Everything going on politically affects this sense of “we;” [and] we are affected from the situation in the daily life. . . . [Now], how can we be a “we” if we are not doing something for the Palestinian prisoners [that are currently on a hunger strike?]. . . . The [lectures in the] Israeli high school and the activity there [in Israel], is really coming from our needs and our beliefs. But also, the action on the ground is a need; and it’s becoming more so. I want to see my partner, as an Israeli, as part of this “we;” tell the Palestinians in my [refugee] camp that *they* are against the occupation. . . . When I come back to my community alone, [I hear], “Where is your partner; where is the ‘we?’ You are talking about peace and reconciliation? No, no, no—[it’s normalization!]” We need action on the ground! It would [meet our needs, and also] reflect, build, [and strengthen] the “we.”

Many Israelis recognized the Palestinians’ desire to engage in more protests, and some were concerned that this disagreement on tactics could hurt the sense of “we” in the organization. Nonetheless, during this period, most Israelis felt that they could not engage in demonstrations, as they would then be seen as political, and would lose their ability to conduct the joint presentations in the Israeli schools.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

For social movement organizations working across conflict lines in hostile and polarized environments, it is clear from the above data that the first step in building a collective identity is developing trust. For many groups in conflict situations, this is not a given; indeed, mistrust is often the starting point, and it may not be resolved satisfactorily for the ultimate cohesiveness of the group. And yet as Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta (2004: 419) indicate, there has been very little discussion in the social movement literature focused on trust, and seemingly little awareness of how fundamental it is for groups trying to build a collective identity. When looking at salient factors for building a collective identity, it appears as if many scholars assume that trust is a given, a nonissue, and that identity work can begin the moment the actors come together. Still, in the above two organizations, because of the substantial amount of violence and distrust between the parties, a significant amount of work needed to be done before the groups could even consider constructing a collective identity. Indeed, this study suggests that in such situations there are relatively distinct stages of identity work, and that trust building is a distinct stage that needs to occur before (as well as alongside) the development of a group consciousness, negotiation over the content of the “we-ness,” and the employment of strategic actions. Thus these two cases, which reveal that some semblance of trust needs to exist before a collective identity can be constructed, are also important because they expose what is often taken for granted in the literature: the underlying assumption that trust is a nonissue. While establishing trust may not be problematic in many of the typical cases in which collective identity has been examined, it is a requisite, and, in some situations, creating that trust can be a prolonged process.

Meanwhile, as the experiences of these two joint peace movement organizations reveal, storytelling, which highlighted one's relationship to the occupation and the violence of the conflict (whether one participated in the violence or experienced violence at the hands of the "other"), went a long way towards building this trust, and fostering a shared consciousness. As the data illustrated, the personal stories helped to foster understanding and humanized the other. In line with what Hunt and Benford (2004: 445) found, the personal stories tended to embody the moments where actors become aware, active, and committed. Yet the stories shared in these crossconflict organizations started before the point of awareness. As noted above, the stories involved sharing the impact the occupation and/or conflict has had on oneself and one's family, and one's relationship to the violent conflict. Perhaps it is not surprising that the impact of the occupation and/or conflict and one's role in the above were key elements in the stories, as it allowed them to recognize shared and/or similar experiences (e.g. loss, participation in the violence), notwithstanding the asymmetrical context. Moreover, storytelling helped the participants to recognize their shared issues and interests, which Bystydziensky and Schacht (2001: 8-9) deem critical for different social groups to be able to coalesce. Indeed, once they were able to recognize the shared interests and feel comfortable with each other, they could begin to define the ends, means, and the field of action together (Melucci 1995).

As the social movement literature indicates, however, such accomplishments are not enough for building a collective identity. In fact, in this case, it was not even enough to secure trust. In order to truly build a collective identity—and be able to maintain it—visible confirmatory actions, focused on meeting their shared goals, were critical. Indeed, both groups were clear that their goals were both political and cultural change, not self-transformation, and that the internal work, which involved personal storytelling, was a means, not an end (Polleta 1998: 430). For these two groups, the act of standing together in front of an external audience allowed them to present who they were collectively and to show their commitment to ending the occupation and the cycle of violence. Importantly, though, they were not only showing their commitment to those outside the organization, but also to those on the other side of the conflict line. Witnessing the commitment of the other side to the shared cause was significant—especially for Palestinians, who needed to be assured that their Israeli colleagues were clear and resolute in their opposition to the occupation. As the data make clear, interactions with the Israeli authorities and movement opponents in Israeli society further helped to cement the trust and facilitate this sense of cohesion across the conflict lines. And this sense of cohesion was only reinforced when members felt they were able to have an impact, whether by breaking through to someone outside the organization or achieving something more substantial. Thus this study makes clear that while storytelling goes a long way towards establishing trust initially and therefore is critical, trust and ultimately collective identity construction depend on visible confirmatory actions, thereby supporting Melucci's (1989, 1995) argument that groups may tend toward disintegration without visible moments of action.

Just as essential, though—as the struggles of the Parents Circle/Families Forum (PCFF) indicate—the visible moments generated must “satisfy both [the] emotional and rational needs [of the participants] in order to generate a sense of cohesion, purpose, and collective identification with the group” (Flesher-Fominaya 2010b: 385). In these cases—and presumably the case of all movement organizations that work across conflict lines—it becomes especially critical to ensure that the needs and desires of activists from the different communities engaged are being met, and not simply the needs of the more dominant group. Indeed, as indicated above, it was difficult for some of the Palestinian members of PCFF to maintain their identification with PCFF since the group was not heavily involved in protesting the occupation, which many of the Palestinians saw as more important than lectures. The challenge for PCFF, however, as noted earlier, was that by engaging in political protest against the occupation, they could lose legitimacy in Israeli society and consequently, access to the Israeli school system. Many in the organization, on both sides, but particularly on the Israeli side, perceived this as critical to advancing their goals.<sup>6</sup> The implication of this is clear: not all

visible confirmatory actions will succeed in constructing or maintaining a crossconflict collective identity. While visible confirmatory actions may be able to take various forms, the actions employed must meet the rational and emotional needs of the participants in the disparate social groups that make up an organization if it is to maintain a strong sense of “we.”

In some ways, the tension experienced by Parents Circle/Families Forum epitomizes a significant challenge that movement groups, which work across conflict lines, face in situations of protracted conflict. Not only are there different audiences, but also the audiences—the communities—are engaged in violent conflict and are highly polarized. Moreover, the activists themselves identify with these disparate communities and their loyalties to some degree are tied up with these different communities. In addition, where each is socially situated in the conflict, helps to shape one’s views on the nature of the conflict, and what tactics are needed or desired (Gawerc 2015; Montier and Macapagal 2006). Furthermore, as Munkres (2008) has observed, the views of the dominant group often tend to dominate in movement organizations, and when this occurs in cross-conflict groups, it inevitably produces significant tension and conflict (Gawerc 2013). Somehow, within these polarized environments, these movement groups need to come up with and demonstrate visible moments of activity that meet the emotional and rational needs of the participants from both (or all) of the conflicting communities, if they are to construct and sustain a shared collective identity.

Notwithstanding the above, this study also makes clear that a collective identity does not require complete agreement and can effectively unite across conflict lines—even in situations where the actors had previously understood themselves (both cognitively and emotionally) to be enemies. What a collective identity does require in these contexts, however, is some sort of internal process such as storytelling that begins to foster trust, recognition of the shared issue, and ultimately a shared consciousness, alongside visible confirmatory actions that are mutually agreed upon—and meet the rational and emotional needs of the participants in the disparate social groups—to advance the shared goals. While these processes may not be enough to construct a collective identity across conflict lines that can withstand hostile and polarized conflict environments, they are fundamental in the effort to do so.

Finally, it should be noted, that while this study focused on peace movement organizations that work across conflict lines in settings of protracted conflict, there is relevance more broadly for all movement organizations, particularly those that work across difference and inequality. Initially, this study makes clear that even if it is not obviously problematic in many movement organizations, trust is a requisite for collective identity construction and should not be assumed to be a nonissue. Without trust, a successful and long lasting union is not easily achieved. Secondly, it is likely that for groups working across difference and power asymmetry—even if not in a situation of protracted conflict—there will need to be some sort of internal process, whether storytelling or something else, that helps to establish trust, foster recognition of shared issues—that common bond—and ultimately, facilitate the development of a shared consciousness. And thirdly, as we know from social movement research, this internal process, while critical, is not enough to construct or sustain a collective identity. Indeed, in some cases, where the asymmetries are substantial, it may not even be enough to secure trust. Confirmatory actions that meet the rational and emotional needs of the participants from the various social groups involved in the organization are fundamental for maintaining a collective identity across difference and power asymmetry.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> In another study (2016), I address how these two activists groups managed to sustain and maintain their collective identities during the 2014 Gaza War, which lasted over 50 days, and resulted in the deaths of more than 2,100 Palestinians and 70 Israelis (BBC 2014).

<sup>2</sup> While the conditions under which repression increases solidarity rather than decreases it are still not completely understood, there has been some work done on this (Davenport, Johnston and Mueller 2005; Fominaya and Wood 2011).



<sup>3</sup> Several of these organizations also identify as international (e.g., One Voice). With regards to the Israeli peace movement organizations (which also include several organizations working in solidarity with Palestinians), Palestinian citizens of Israel may also be involved via a joint partnership with Jewish Israelis (e.g., Taayush). Meanwhile, it should also be noted that several other joint initiatives exist in Israel/Palestine (e.g., Israel-Palestine Creative Regional Initiatives [IPCRI], Peace Research Institute for the Middle East [PRIME], and Windows: Channel for Communication), but the organizations and their participants do not actively identify as part of the peace movement even if they are sympathetic to it and are likely to be associated with it by the civil societies and authorities. Moreover, these organizations do not engage in extrainstitutional means (e.g., protests) to promote peace. These organizations identify primarily as peacebuilding organizations, and while they share some of the same challenges as these joint peace movement organizations, they consist largely of paid staff rather than volunteers, which aids their ability to maintain commitment.

<sup>4</sup> While CFP was initially founded by combatants—and had this as a membership requisite—beginning in 2008 the organization included anyone willing to withdraw their support from the occupation and/or the violent conflict.

<sup>5</sup> I conducted research on these two organizations in 2007 and 2010, but this article is based primarily on data collected in 2014, and involves reflections on the past and present, rather than a comparison of these different periods.

<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that during the 2014 Gaza War, which occurred weeks after I finished collecting data for this paper, the Israeli side of the Parents Circle/Families Forum helped to lead the Israeli protests against the war. In addition to participating in the large-scale antiwar protests inside Israel, which were sponsored by several peace organizations, the Israeli members of the Parents Circle/Families Forum also set up a “Peace Square” in the middle of Tel Aviv, and sat there every evening during the fifty-day-long war, with banners reading, “It won’t stop until we talk.” In the square, members would use a microphone and talk about what was occurring inside Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories, share their own personal story of loss and bereavement, and share their collective belief that military operations were not the answer. Remarkably, many of the Palestinian members—including those who were feeling disconnected from the organization before—expressed pride with what their Israeli counterparts were doing in Israeli society, and these actions, which they saw as important and meaningful, renewed and strengthened their identification with the organization tremendously.

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