

**INTERCULTURAL EMPATHY BETWEEN PALESTINIAN AND ISRAELI
INDIVIDUALS:**

A qualitative study utilizing Grounded Theory

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<p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>This study addresses intercultural empathy as a concept, and if or how it might be present among conflicting parties, specifically between Palestinian and Israeli individuals. Since there are many definitions of the word “empathy,” the researcher examines previous definitions of this term, how it relates to intercultural empathy, and then offers a singular definition for the purpose of this study. Previous research has examined empathy in relationship to other familiar words, including “sympathy” and “compassion,” though there has been little research done on the term, “intercultural empathy,” as a whole, nor has it often been studied between specific conflicting parties. Through interviews over Skype, as well as through open-ended survey questions, the researcher analyzes how Palestinian and Israeli individuals conceptualize “intercultural empathy” as a concept, and how said individuals perceive the “other” in relationship to the amount of contact they have had with the “other.” It is intercultural empathy that might enable us to better realize our shared humanity.</p>	
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1. INTRODUCTION

In an age where much of humankind is reaping the benefits of interconnectivity and convenience within the Internet, social media and a greater ability to travel and collaborate, many are taking advantage of these great steps in our collective evolution through inclusion and integration. Human typography has changed and we are no longer separated from each other, physically and emotionally (Calloway-Thomas, 2010). However, some antagonists are hoarding and/or destroying resources while fighting with the “other,” while many are either in struggle to survive and to maintain, or even obtain, their basic human rights altogether.

According to Calloway-Thomas’s (2010) analysis of empathy in the global age, she suggests that much is happening internationally in the arena of giving, while we are also at risk of “peril of the entire planet.” Calloway-Thomas (2010) asserts that we “must commit to global justice and the global public good,” because humankind could “go in the opposite direction” (Calloway-Thomas, 2010, p. 204-205). At a time when the stakes are so high where we could either find our interconnected achievements in the echelons of success, so too exists the polar opposite possible reality. Thus, the complete necessity to research intercultural empathy as a whole is born, while clarifying the meanings of similar words. As Calloway-Thomas (2010) explains, “Part of empathy’s work, then, is to knit together human and cultural elements of both the near and the distant, so that we will care about other people even if they are an ocean away” (Calloway-Thomas, 2010, p. 12). By examining our similarities and differences while remaining open-minded, we may gradually strengthen our ability to be interculturally empathetic.

There is a growing disparity between the privileged and the less privileged, meanwhile atrocities such as war and ethnic cleansing are occurring at our doorstep. Although many enjoy the overall comfort of their privilege and adequate safety, thousands of others around the world

are simply fighting to survive. In some cases, they may be seeking sustainable resources and better education for their children. In other cases, they may be in dire situations of war and ethnic cleansing, resulting in the loss of their homes and families, resulting in everlasting emotional, mental and physical scars. Indeed, there has never been a more fitting or applicable time to better understand the “other” through a lens of intercultural empathy. We can keep fighting over our differences and how things look while turning our backs to despairing and/or displaced “others,” or we can devote ourselves to the global ideal of collaboration and position taking, as suggested by Weaver (1990).

Research studies lack in a particular focus of “intercultural empathy” as a whole, as well as the application of intercultural empathy between specific conflicting individuals who share in historical reasons to remain in conflict. This study seeks to understand how individuals of conflicting parties conceptualize intercultural empathy, as well as to learn if intercultural empathy might exist between similar conflicting individuals who might share a historical reason to remain in conflict. This study also seeks to understand how intercultural empathy might be strengthened between such conflicting individuals, specifically between Palestinian and Israeli individuals. For the purpose of this research, Palestinian and Israeli individuals will be referred to as the “other” when being addressed from an ingroup/outgroup perspective.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Empathy Defined

Prior research shows ambiguity towards the definition of “empathy” alone, and it is often used interchangeably with different words such as “sympathy,” “compassion,” and “tenderness” (Cuff, Brown, Taylor, & Howat, 2014). Indeed, it can be said that the lack of clarity among this definition has had “a negative impact on both research and practice” (Cuff, Brown, Taylor, & Howat, 2014). In a previous examination of the term “empathy,” forty-three different definitions were found on the concept. Of those definitions, eight sub-themes emerged; many had similarities, though many were also very different (Cuff, Brown, Taylor, & Howat, 2014). Cuff (2014) suggests that there are as many definitions of empathy as there are authors (Cuff, Brown, Taylor, & Howat, 2014). Baron-Cohen (2011) identified empathy as “our ability to identify with what someone else is thinking or feeling and to respond to that person’s thoughts and feelings with an appropriate emotion” (Baron-Cohen, 2011).

There has been extensive research surrounding various terms such as empathy, sympathy, sensitivity, compassion and tenderness, which are often ambiguous in association to each other. Indeed, the lack of clarity between these very different terms has negatively impacted the research of intercultural empathy, and may have even negated the necessity of said research (Cuff, Brown, Taylor, & Howat, 2014). Furthermore, intercultural scholars and practitioners have often confused terms such as intercultural empathy, intercultural awareness and intercultural competence without giving them a clear distinction (Chen, 1997). We must first clarify these terms if we are to make progress in the research of intercultural empathy, which is becoming more critical to our present time.

In previous research surrounding terms such as “sympathy,” “compassion,” “tenderness” and “empathy,” there have been efforts to clarify said terms for the researcher’s purposes. Whether the study has been within an academic context, an analysis of empathetic responses in the health field or even about promoting global empathy and interest in learning through simulation games (Bachen, Hernandez-Ramos, & Raphael, 2012), it has remained important that the ambiguity between these terms be clarified and solidified for the research. Unfortunately, as Cuff (2014) suggests, there are as many definitions of empathy as there are authors (Cuff, Brown, Taylor, & Howat, 2014). This ambiguity can be expected, as each human experience of empathy differs, and thus, the understanding of the terms. However, it is important that we come to an overall understanding of the root of empathy in its simplicity and agree upon the new understanding for the sake of future research.

Empathy has been long recognized as a central element for intercultural sensitivity (Alder & Towne, 1987), however, research on empathy specifically is still lacking in recent studies, especially surrounding interculturalism. Among the torrent of ambiguity, the two terms that are most often confused for being synonymous are empathy and sympathy. However, for the clarification of this study, the researcher asserts Broome’s (1991) previous explanation on the matter, being that sympathy is based on projection and depends on similarity, making it inappropriate for the intercultural encounter (Broome, 1991). Indeed, whereas sympathy is based on projection rather than position taking, it has less power in an intercultural communicative sphere. In order for empathy to have intercultural validity, it must be seen as part of the communication process itself, and thus it “must be influenced by the variables in that process” (Broome, 1991, p. 238). Intercultural empathy is not merely a factor or byproduct, which may or may not be present, but rather, a crucial step within the intercultural communicative process.

In a study by Baron-Cohen (2011) where the researchers measured the functions of the human brain in response to being elicited to think about individuals who they either loved or disliked, it was found that empathy was either “present” or “absent” in the human brain. After analyzing which areas of the brain were activated in response to empathy, he noted how his findings can give us a direct way of explaining who might not have the ability to have empathy, or at least little empathy, being specifically individuals with autism, Asperger syndrome or other personality disorders (Baron-Cohen, 2011). Based on this research study, it can be said that empathy is a capability of every human being who is fully functioning mentally and cognitively. Furthermore, a lack of concern for the welfare or interests of others may embody the essence of immorality. Vetlesen (1994) argues, “The truly wicked person is *deliberately* uninterested in avoiding moral wrongdoing, he believes that what he does is wrong, he does it nonetheless, indeed does it willingly” (Vetlesen, 1994, p. 222). The purpose of this study is not to argue the moral or ethical codes, but rather, to point out the ability of most human beings to have at least some capacity for an empathetic response.

Whether or not we have felt or experienced it, there is always something mysterious about human empathy (Hochschild, 2005). Baron-Cohen (2011) also addressed one’s ability to empathize with the “other”, or an outgroup. He stated:

People are often motivated to increase others’ positive experiences and to alleviate others’ suffering. These tendencies to care about and help one another form the foundation of human society. Then the target is an outgroup member, however, people may have powerful motivations not to care about or help that ‘other’ (Baron-Cohen, 2011, p. 11).

Present gaps in existing research address very little concerning whether or not existing dislike or hate between conflicting individuals can be transformed into empathy through perspective taking and a conscious effort.

Perspective taking might offer a new understanding within intercultural empathy. Schutz (1967) describes perspective taking as the importance of an individual's stream of consciousness coinciding with another person's (Schutz, 1967). Rogers (1959) described empathy as "entering the private perceptual world of the other and becoming thoroughly at home in it" (Rogers, 1980, p. 142). In order to heighten our ability to empathize with the "other," we must have a clear understanding of our personal identity. "Identity is a critical reflection upon who we are and what we want" (Gilroy, 2000, p. 99), thus it becomes important for us to first understand our personal identity in relationship to who we are and where we came from.

As there are indeed as many definitions of empathy as there are people as previously mentioned, a few definitions will be introduced as per previous research. First, Mehrabian and Epstein (1972) define empathy as "a vicarious emotional response to the perceived emotional experiences of others" (Mehrabian, & Epstein, 1972, p. 525). Coke, Bateson and McDavis (1978) assert, "empathy allows a person to possess a higher degree of feeling of sympathy and concern towards others" (Coke, Bateson, & McDavis, 1978). Empathy refers to "our ability to identify with what someone else is thinking or feeling and to respond to that person's thoughts and feelings with an appropriate emotion" (Baron-Cohen, 2011, p. 17). There are many more definitions, however, the researcher found these definitions to be especially relevant and inclusive of other definitions. For this study, the researcher is defining empathy as "projecting oneself" into another individual's point of view so as to momentarily think similar thoughts and feel similar emotions as that person (Alder & Towne, 1987).

2.2 Intercultural Empathy as a Concept

2.2.1 Intercultural empathy defined. According to Berlo (1960), empathy has been recognized as an integral function of both general communication competence (Berlow, 1960), and as a central characteristic component and effective intercultural communication (Bochner & Kelly, 1974). Howell (1983) argues that it is unlikely that individuals from varying backgrounds can be constructively empathic with one another (Howell, 1983), while Sameover, Porter and Jain (1981) also believe that “the greater distance between ourselves and others, the harder it is to empathize” (Samovar, Porter, & Jain, 1981, p. 209). Furthermore, Howell (1982) makes a similar point when he expresses that empathy cannot go beyond the limits imposed by culture and knowledge. He continues saying, “[Empathy] has no magic power to overcome differences in personality and background” (Howell, 1982, p. 108). However, Lim and Desteno (2016) have found otherwise. Indeed, suffering and compassion may be the link to prosocial behavior and empathy.

As we examine the necessary components for empathy to take place between individuals, our ability to empathize with the “other” may lead us to nurture empathy between conflicting parties if it is indeed possible. Although previous research might have postulated that the ability to empathize is dependent upon affective proximity (Bucchioni, et al., 2015), it may be beneficial for future research to focus specifically on this point of proxemics. Vico (1968) expressed a visionary process that allows one “aspirationally, to leave one’s own world and enter into the world of the other” (Vico, 1968, p. 10). Because there is a connection between empathy and cognitive dissonance in relationship to the “other,” there may also be greater capacity for empathy through shared experience. Buccioni (2015) surmised that accomplishing tasks that demonstrate perspective-taking may more clearly define the role of familiarity in empathy for pain (Bucchioni,

et al., 2015). The human experience of pain is a unifying experience that all individuals can share to some capacity despite originating culture.

Intercultural awareness as a concept invites the individual to remember that, from hers or his own cultural background and perspective, they are indeed a cultural being. This understanding may be used as one's very foundation to further distinguish the distinct characteristics of other cultures, enabling one to effectively interpret others' behaviors in intercultural interactions (Triandis, 1977). Morgan and Weigel (1988) expressed how intercultural sensitivity is a prerequisite for intercultural effectiveness (Morgan, & Weigel, 1988). Calloway-Thomas (2010) explains the true essence of empathy, being that of imagining the feelings of others (Calloway-Thomas, 2010). Within the very simplicity of imagining the feelings of another, it then becomes unnecessary to be accurate; rather, "accuracy decreases the usefulness of empathy for intercultural communication" (Broome, 1991, p. 236). Thus, leaving some empathetic conclusions as the product of personal experience may be beneficial, even if slightly biased.

2.2.2 Attributes and keys of intercultural empathy. Intercultural empathy is often confused or associated with a few characteristics that limit the power of the word, and the ability to further develop empathy as a principle for future use. For example, Broome (1991) explains how previous definitions of empathy have not been very useful in intercultural communication contexts because of an overemphasis on accuracy, an inappropriate focus on affect and an improper portrayal of empathy as an ability or a skill (Broome, 1991). However, those who are opposed to viewing empathy as an ability "nevertheless continue to describe it as a personal skill that can be developed" (Broome, 1991, p. 239). In addition, he explains that the belief that empathy is only made possible when individuals have various characteristics in common might actually hinder or make an empathetic exchange impossible altogether. Broome (1991) also goes

on to propose that empathizing may be more essential in intercultural communication than in interacting with individuals who are similar; empathy is what makes it possible to bridge differences between cultures.

There are several various components of empathy, as well as intercultural empathy that are essential to the term as a whole. Katz (1963) characterizes the effective empathizer as one who respects the integrity of others, is self-accepting, is capable of spontaneity, tolerates anxiety, and has courage and patience to suspend judgment (Katz, 1963). Alder and Towne (1987) refers to three skills that are necessary for empathy to occur, including open-mindedness, imagination and commitment. Weaver (1990) also describes four steps to empathy, including *identification*, which is when we consider ourselves, and then absorb others views and their experiences, *incorporation*, which is when we take the experiences of another into ourselves, *reverberation*, which is when we share a common emotion with another that comes solely from inside ourselves, and *detachment*, which is when we “withdraw from our subjective involvement and use reason and scrutiny (Weaver, 1990, p. 137).

The characteristics described by Katz and Weaver are also related to Calloway-Thomas’s (2010) expression of “imaginative placement.” This requires us to “see” through the eyes of others, creating both a “subject and object-oriented focus” that can shift (Calloway-Thomas, 2010, p. 13). Although some might argue the validity of empathy as a concept as it is related to emotion and feeling, which cannot be quantified, the notion of feeling is already insinuated in the concept of empathy (Calloway-Thomas, 2010). Because of this, empathy as an experience cannot be made obsolete simply because feeling is a basic function therein.

Listening is an integral component of intercultural empathy. Rosenfeld and Berko (1990) suggest that empathic listening requires one to listen to another person’s plights by reflecting hers

or his problems or needs, exploring the situation by listening and offering feedback that invite the person to express themselves, resolving problems through personal insight and concluding by summarizing possible future resolutions (Rosenfeld & Berko, 1990). Empathic listening is closely related to dialogic listening, as surmised by Steward and Thomas (1986). Rather than seeking to control the conversation or lead it to a particular outcome, the listener must remain tentative and experimental, until they are “literally playing with the ideas” that they are discussing (Steward & Thomas, 1986, p. 198). Listeners should remain open-minded and creative in an empathetic process.

Broome (1991) presented keys that those who are seeking to learn how to build understandings rather than exclusively trying to determine “where a person is coming from,” and may offer the steps to “see behind” the verbal and nonverbal expressions, which is often thought of as impossible. He contends that, in order for students to learn, they must be willing to put forth the effort needed to make it through the difference, show a commitment to overcome “breaking points,” explore and negotiate alternative meanings, and be willing to collaborate in a mutually creative development of their “third culture” (Broome, 1991, p. 247). This approach allows for collaboration and unification, despite differences.

2.3 The Present-Day Conflict

2.3.1 Historical background. From the point of view of many Israeli people, the Palestinian Israeli conflict can be traced back in time even farther than just the 20th century, and certainly much farther back than World War II and the Ottoman Empire. For many Zionist Israelis, the conflict can be traced back through the first book of the Torah into Genesis, when the God of Abram, who was childless, suddenly came to him and promised him a son through a covenant. As the wife of Abram, Sarai, knew of the promises bestowed to her and offered her

servant, Hager, to Abram, knowing full well the physical impossibility, thought that Abram's promise might be fulfilled through her. As a result, Hagar conceived a child and thus began to "despise her mistress." After informing Abram of her ill feelings, he gave her permission to treat her servant as she wished. As a result, Sarai was then harsh with Hagar, who then fled. However, an "angel of the Lord" appeared to Hagar soon thereafter, and eventually, Hagar bore the son of Abram, named Ishmael.

According to Christian and Judaic tradition, the son of Sarah, Isaac, who is Jacob's father, would produce the "twelve tribes of Israel," and would eventually receive the land of promise. By tradition, the Arab people are actually descended from Ishmael, who was the son of Hagar as previously noted. Israelis hold firmly to their belief that the land of Israel is their land above all else, as per the Abrahamic promise. As of result of the Judaic interpretation of the Torah, Palestinians, who are not dominantly of the Judaic or Christian faith, became conflicted when their homeland of hundreds of years was suddenly given away on the grounds of religious text and the result of displacement.

In the late 19th century the creation of the Jewish state in the land of the historical Israel was underway as per Zionism, which is the aim to create such a new state by public law, when a wave of antisemitism hit Europe and especially Russia (Ovendale, 2013, Beinin & Hajjar, 2014). In the early 1900s, the land of Israel was still occupied by the Ottoman Empire and Palestine primarily consisted of Arabs with a population of about 683,000; the Jewish population consisted of about 60,000 after an influx of about 33,000 Jewish immigrants as a result of the formation of the Zionist movement. At that time, most orthodox Jews were not Zionist until WWII. They even opposed the idea at that time, as they believed that the formation of the Jewish state was to be the responsibility of God, not of politics (Beinin & Hajjar, 2014).

When the Ottoman Empire was allied with Germany against the British and French during WWI, the British High Commissioner of Egypt conspired a revolt with the Arab Ottoman governor of Mecca and promised that his family would rule over the Arab states. The revolt, which was led by Lawrence of Arabia and Faysal, the governor's son, was successful. Unfortunately, conflicting agreements which were made by Britain later in WWI resulted in the previous agreement to fall through. One such agreement which was made by the British Foreign Minister, Sir Arthur Belfour, promised to make a Jewish national home out of Palestine. Britain and France also agreed that the two countries would divide up the land and govern it.

The abovementioned agreements resulted in incredible difficulties following the war (Beinin & Hajjar, 2014). The League of Nations (precursor to the United Nations), divided some land between France and Britain and gave the land east of the Jordan river to Faysal's brother, Abdullah, and the land west of the Jordan river to Britain, the Palestine Mandate, which was the first time that Palestine had been a "unified political entity." The Arab people were angry that the promise that had been made to them had not been kept and Palestinians grew concerned that the creation of the Jewish national home would lead to a Jewish state.

Violent conflicts arose between Arabs and Jews over the Western Wall, which is sacred to both Jews and Muslims, when the land was purchased by the Jewish National Fund, forcing residing Arabs to evacuate their homes (Beinin & Hajjar, 2014). By 1936, Palestinian and Israeli tensions were high, which led to a Palestinian Arab revolt from 1936-1939. Fortunately, the conflict was later subdued by the British with the help of Zionists and neighboring Arab regimes, however, in order to pacify the Palestinian Arabs, Britain wrote the White Paper, limiting Jewish immigration and purchase of land. Jews viewed this as betrayal of the Belfour Declaration, while the British were under the impression that they had already fulfilled it. As a result, Jewish

immigration to Palestine had risen to 17.7 percent of the Palestinian population. It then became the national Jewish home as the Belfour Declaration had promised (Ovendale, 2013).

The British victory over the Arab revolt and the banishment of the Arab political leaders left the Palestinians militantly disorganized and weak as the decisive decade for their homeland approached. Palestinian's sentiment at British rule was illustrated with the slaughter of two British officers and the "booby trapping of their bodies" (Ovendale, 2013, p26).

On November 9, 1947, the UN decided to divide Palestine into two states, one Jewish and one Arab. The Jewish state was slightly larger than the Arab state, assuming that many Jews would immigrate to that area (Beinin & Hajjar, 2014). On May 19, 1948, British forces pulled out of Palestine and Zionists declared it a Jewish state. This declaration was alarming to nearby countries including Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Iraq, causing an attempt to reclaim the land allotted by the UN to the Jewish people. However, with the help of Czechoslovakia, Israel defeated this opposition (Beinin & Hajjar, 2014).

This development resulted in many Palestinians refugees as the number rose to over one million, meanwhile tensions remained between Palestinians and Zionists (Ovendale, 2013). In the spring of 1967, Syria was misinformed by the Soviet Union that Israel was planning to attack, leaving Syria to call on Egypt for help and the two blocked the port of Eilat in Aqaba, frightening the Israeli public. Then, on June 5, 1967, Israel attacked the grounded air forces of Syria and Egypt, destroying them within only a few hours. Israel then gained the West Bank from Jordan, who was too late in joining Egypt and Syria in the fight, and was thus defeated by Israel, the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt and the Golan Heights from Syria. This six day war established Israel as the prominent military power in the region and humiliated the surrounding Arab regimes (Beinin & Jajjar, 2014).

Due to the large number of Palestinians in these newly conquered areas, political measures were taken by Israel to prevent them from revolting; they were denied many basic rights. In response to this injustice, the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) was established, a political organization that also organized the intifada, which was a series of civil disobediences in which many people, even women and children, could partake.

There was then another war in 1973 between Egypt, Syria and Israel. Jimmy Carter, president of the United States at that time, called the countries to Maryland for peace negotiations, referring to it as Camp David. However, peace did not last long as neither party adhered to the agreements. Israel had encouraged development of Islamic organizations in order to divide the PLO up until that point. However, as Islam gained prominence, they became more of a threat to Israel than the PLO though radical Islamic participants in Hamas and jihad. Finally, in 1993, Israel and the PLO agreed to the secret Oslo Accords in Norway, in which Israel agreed to withdraw from parts of conquered land for five years. During this time, the PA (Palestine Authority) was formed, and Yasir Arafat came to power (Beinin & Hajjar, 2014).

Yasir Arafat is now no longer in power as he is deceased, though the conflict in the Middle East is very much alive. The purpose of this brief, incomplete overview has been to demonstrate how a Palestinian subculture developed within Israel. Palestinians in Israel are now seen by those within the West Bank as traitors for living in the Jewish state, while Israelis view them as second-class citizens because they are not Jewish (Beinin & Hajjar, 2014). Thus, the conflict between the two cultures, now side-by side, continues.

2.3.2 An equal right to exist. As we explore the history of the Palestinian Israeli conflict, we can see two valid sides who have an equal right to exist, including the Israelis, a people marginalized and disposed of by the dominant German force at that time, and the Palestinians, a

people similarly marginalized by the Israeli militant force. The history of the Jews comprises generations of refugeeism and the Palestinians have become refugees (Har-Gil & Sheffi, 2015, p. 179). Hence, the common victim-oppressor interpretation is reinforced by a mental lock in a historic framework, which is perpetually reproduced (Har-Gil & Sheffi, 2015, p. 159). Israel may serve as a test case with which to examine the discourse of recognition since it has played a pivotal role in the “growing global practice of apology as both victim and perpetrator” (Kampf, 2012, p. 431).

2.3.3 The present condition of Palestine. The Palestinian people were present in their land for thousands of years, being the indigenous people to the area. Bazian (2014) posed questions that are important to consider: Who are the Palestinians, what are their origins, what does archeology and history inform us about this human group, and why would it be important to approach these and other questions about the Palestinians (Bazian, 2014, p. 42)? It might be easier to downplay the suffering of the Palestinians as an indigenous population, considering other native groups around the world and their history of genocide, but it remains a unique case that should be heavily weighed, considering the history of strife that remains present today. The first act of true liberation and freedom is located in the mind, with the reclamation of the history and memory of the Palestinians and Palestine (Bazian, 2014).

Looking at the history of the indigenous Palestinians is not enough; we must also closely examine the problems that present-day Palestinians face so that we may begin to see some rectification. As Drainville & Saeed (2013) point out, “The pernicious daily oppression the Palestinians experience in all its forms is difficult to bear witness to... the seriousness of their stories [do] not lend itself to an over-dramatization of the situation” (Drainville & Saeed, 2013, p. 837). According to Arraf and Shapiro (2003), many Palestinians felt they were cheated by the

word “peace.” While the world was talking about peace, the Palestinian economy was going downhill, checkpoints were being instigated, homes demolished and settlements built. Thus, Palestinians believed that they were misled by this peace process, and that Israeli peace groups were only interested in how it would benefit them, without achieving justice, freedom and an end to the occupation (Arraf & Shapiro, 2003).

Much of the conflict occurring in the Arab-Israeli conflict generates little interest in the foreign media. The longer an event continues, the less audiences will be interested in it, except if a large and dramatic event occurs, like in a rise in the level of violence (Cohen, 2014, p. 139). It is prevalent in Western media where coverage of the Palestinians supports the image of extremist, terrorist, and stone-throwing youths. Furthermore, Westerners are also led to assume that the Palestinians as a body of people are predominantly male and exist only to oppose, in every possible way, the Israeli regime (Drainville & Saeed, 2013). In reality, Israel annexed large settlement blocks, retained control of water resources, bypassed roads, airspace and borders. Furthermore, Palestinians were divided into three major contained blocks (Hallward, 2011).

It is easy to assume that the Palestinian population as a whole are violent terrorists that simply want to fight the Israelis for the sake of fighting, though it is important to remember that the Palestinians are first and foremost people who share far more similarities with the Israelis than the Israelis might care to know. Underneath the Israeli occupation and outside of the organized resistance, a far more “normal” life of ordinary Palestinians exists” (Drainville & Saeed, 2013, p. 830). In truth, the Palestinian population is composed of families with men, women and children who have desires, aspirations and ambitions like any other people (Drainville & Saeed, 2013). They are normal people who are trying to pursue an elevated way of life, albeit being under the Israeli military control.

2.3.4 Possibilities for peace. Amidst a time of civil unrest on both side of the wall, it is important to note the ways in which the Israelis and Palestinians are working together and offering up messages of inclusion and hope. In some cases, initiatives like the Hand-in-Hand school, which teaches Arab and Jewish students together in both Hebrew and Arabic, or the intentional Arab-Jewish village Neve Shalom-What al Salaam, seek to build bridges rather than walls (Hallward, 2011). Organizations such as these work within their own societies as well as across national boundaries to humanize the “other”, share narratives and build a culture of nonviolence (Hallward, 2011).

While addressing the injustices that the Palestinian people face, it might be easy to generalize the Israeli people as being insensitive, unjust or dishonest. However, there are movements in place in Israel to spread a message of inclusivity for the Palestinian people among the Israelis. Hallward (2011) shared a hopeful message amidst the demoralizing times:

Although... the Israeli-Palestinian conflict seems increasingly intractable at the official level... there are Israelis and Palestinians who continue to put themselves on the line for a nonviolent resolution of the conflict and a just, secure, and lasting peace agreement... Both Israeli and Palestinian societies are highly diverse; a number of peace activists from each society have noted that they often have more in common with their fellow activists on the “other” side than they do with some in their own society. What these activists share is a dedication to nonviolence and equality, an acknowledgement of the pain suffered by the “other,” and a long-term commitment to struggle despite the many challenges.
(p. 196-197)

We can see, as outlined by Hallward (2011), that a peaceful resolution of the conflict requires honoring the narratives of both peoples and finding a way for justice, security, and recognition for all. Acknowledging misdeeds can lead to reconciliation at the international level, as we have previously seen in South Africa with the Apartheid. Nonviolent activism puts power in the hands of the weak.

While hope is instilled when viewing the efforts of the Palestinians and Israelis alike to work together to build peace on a grassroots level, it would still be of value to examine where the differences between the two parties occur. Differences of definitions has been previously discussed, but we can see that mythic differences might surpass even differences of definitions. Israelis and Palestinians are still engaged in civil war, and their mythic systems will need to change before a pragmatic peace can break out (Roland & Frank, 2011). Anthropologists assume that myths function to give life sacred meaning and identity, moving groups of people to action. However, when ethnic groups are threatened, the mythic systems they construct can become impervious to the suffering of others and resist toward historical change (Roland & Frank, 2011). Israelis have their myths concerning their history and entitlement for the ownership of Israel. Palestinians also have their myths concerning why the land is also entitled to them. We must look at both sides pragmatically from an anthropological perspective to better understand why both parties are willing to fight to have what they believe to be theirs.

Perhaps we must simply make peace with the fact that both parties have their own myths, all of which are valid as they bring the collective a shared purpose and meaning. It would also be of service to accept that conflicting parties will undoubtedly share different definitions of various words including “peace.” In knowing that these differences exist, one may more easily comprehend a common ground for communication and lasting peace building measures. As

suggested by Roland and Frank (2011), military actions that threaten identity are likely to be counterproductive (Roland & Frank, 2011). In order to begin peace building, it would be of benefit for Israel to withdraw the military presence in Palestine so that the Palestinians' identity will no longer feel threatened. There is an enormous need for confidence-building measures to create trust among Israelis and Palestinians to lay the groundwork for mythic change and a just end to the conflict (Roland & Frank, 2011).

2.4 Empathy and the “Other”

2.4.1 Ingroup/outgroup empathetic responses. The researcher is defining empathy as “projecting oneself” into another individual’s point of view so as to momentarily think similar thoughts and feel similar emotions as that person (Alder & Towne, 1987). Concerning outgroups or the “other,” Baron-Cohen (2011) said:

People are often motivated to increase others’ positive experiences and to alleviate others’ suffering. These tendencies to care about and help one another form the foundation of human society. Then the target is an outgroup member, however, people may have powerful motivations not to care about or helps that ‘other.’
(Baron-Cohen, 2011, p. 11)

Gaps in existing research do not address whether or not existing dislike or hate between conflicting individuals might be transformed into empathy through an ability and effort of perspective taking.

Since there is a relationship between empathy and a cognitive dissonance toward the “other,” it leads us to the question; if an individual has an opportunity to get to know an individual in a personal way who they previously saw as the “other,” might there be greater capacity for empathy and a shared experience? A study by Giulia Buccioni (2015) showed that

taking on perspective-taking tasks more clearly define the role of familiarity in empathy for pain (Bucchioni, et al., 2015). Through learning this, we may begin to integrate similar practices in the future for the sake of instilling more empathy in the hearts of conflicting parties.

2.4.2 Joined through shared adversity. Looking at the details of empathy and the inability to empathize with the “other” leads us to inquire how empathy might grow between conflicting parties and if it’s even possible. Whereas previous research confirmed the hypothesis that level of empathy depends on affective proximity (Bucchioni, et al., 2015), it stands to reason that future research on this point would be beneficial. It may be possible that empathy could be shared between conflicting parties, or between “in” and “outgroup” members if they had the ability to be within close proxemics of each other over long periods of time. The individuals we surround ourselves with in our lives will be easier to relate to as they are more familiar, but it is also possible that this familiarity, followed by empathy, might be nurtured over long periods of time. Factors such as altruism may also influence the level of empathy felt (Bucchioni, et al., 2015). Bucchioni also stated:

Empathy enables us to understand and share another person’s feelings. As such, empathy plays an essential role in social interactions between humans. Perception of another person is in a painful situation involves much of the neural network activated during first-person experience of pain. (Bucchioni, et al., 2015, p. 6)

It can therefore be surmised that having a shared adversity, or otherwise, being able to feel another individual’s pain or similar more familiar pain, might be the link between the growth of empathy between conflicting parties.

3. SUMMARY AND RESEARCH QUESTION

This study addresses essential research and aims to study how empathy is conceptualized by varying individuals, if and how Palestinian and Israeli individuals are able to have an empathetic exchange and how that might be possible. Furthermore, this study seeks to understand the various factors related to intercultural empathy and how one might empathize after having the opportunity to learn of a specific individual in the “outgroup.” For the sake of the study, the researcher will explore how historical references support or dismiss the present conflict between the Palestinians and Israelis overall. While examining empathy on a larger scale through the scope of the Palestinian Israeli conflict, it will help us understand how greater empathetic responses might be made possible and may eventually lead to more substantial peace building processes. People are often motivated to increase others’ positive experiences and to alleviate others’ suffering (Cikara, Bruneau, & Saxe, 2011). Two research questions will be addressed including first: How do Palestinian and Israeli individuals conceptualize intercultural empathy? And second: Is empathy present between Palestinian and Israeli individuals, and if so, to what degree?

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Case Study

Some research has already been conducted within the analysis of empathy occurring between individuals and their empathetic responses between loved and hated peers (Bucchioni, et al., 2015). Due to this previous research, it would be of benefit to analyze the potential presence, perception and sustainment of empathy between individuals who share historical and present reasons to dislike the “other” and remain in conflict.

By researching the potential presence of empathy utilizing Grounded Theory, we may better understand intercultural empathy, why attempts of intercultural empathy fail and how building lasting empathy between conflicting cultures may be possible. Because there has been little to no research done thus far surrounding intercultural empathy specifically, using Grounded Theory for the purpose of this research may provide a foundation for future theoretical developments. According to Lim & Desteno (2016), “Severity of adversity does not directly influence dispositional compassion when controlling for empathy” (Lim & Desteno, 2016, p. 178). Having some adversity, no matter how great or how it compares to others’ adversity, might be the first link to an increased empathic response.

4.2 Participants

As the researcher had personal connections with universities in the West Bank and Israel, the researcher was able to conduct personal interviews for convenience and snowball sampling. The pool of participants was drawn directly from controlled academic circles, which may have also had an influence on the end findings and may have characterized the higher academia culture as a whole. The researcher conducted interviews over Skype with students and professors; the

sessions were recorded with participants’ permission, which were then transcribed and coded utilizing Grounded Theory. Totals for participant demographics can be seen in Figure 1.

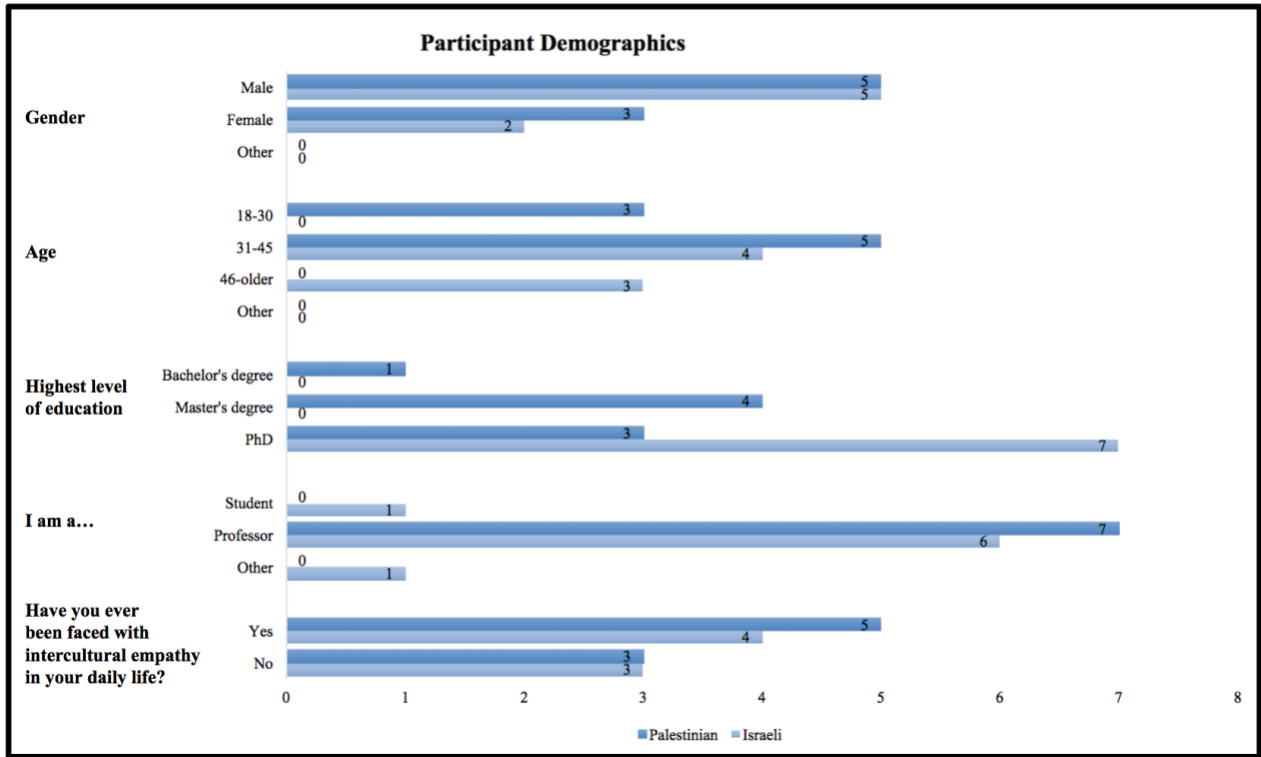


Figure 1. Participant Demographics

4.3 Surveys

Open-ended surveys were completed by each participant so as to gather their basic demographic information. Each survey that was given also had open ended questions that may have been answered in written form to assess each individuals’ perception and understanding of the term “intercultural empathy,” their familiarity with the history of the Palestinian Israeli conflict, the amount of contact they have add with the “other” and how they viewed the “other.” This may have yielded significant correspondence between the participants’ attitudes toward members of the “other” and their familiarity with the “other.”

Several strategies were implemented to recruit participants. An email was dispersed among professors present at Birzeit University in Ramallah, West Bank and at Netanya Academic

College in Netanya, Israel. However, after the attempt to solicit a response failed, the researcher then emailed one hundred Palestinian and one hundred Israeli individuals within higher academia after the researcher googled all present higher academic facilities for both parties and sent random emails to the faculty and staff obtained from each university website. Of those emails, eight Palestinian and seven Israeli participants responded on a volunteer basis and completed an open-ended qualitative survey (see Appendix A) via Survey Monkey, which also aided in a demographic assessment (see Figure 1).

4.4 Personal Interviews

The interviews were conducted similar in structure between the Palestinian individual and the Israeli individual, though both interviews were fluid according to each participant. Personal interviews lasted no longer than forty-five minutes each as deemed appropriate on a case-by-case basis. Preliminary questions included their age, location, education level, how much communication, if any, they have had with the “other” on either side, and if they would be open to communicating with the “other” in future situations. Questions also included how much they knew about the “other” on an individual level. Follow up questions were asked as deemed appropriate and there was an added focus on the emotional responses of the participants. This study was high risk as it may have elicited emotionally stressful topics to discuss, thus each participant was aware that the interviews were recorded, that their anonymity and safety was the first priority, and they knew that they had the freedom to cancel the interview at any time. The interviews were then transcribed and coded after they were conducted to find possible consistent themes according to the participants’ permission.

5. RESULTS

The first research question was answered following the surveys distributed to various Palestinian and Israeli individuals involved in higher education. After analysis of the surveys, as well as the personal interviews, a variety of themes emerged. Four main themes which were borrowed from Weaver (1990), were then modified and coded in both the surveys and personal interviews. The themes that emerged included Reverberation, Detachment, Incorporation, and Identification. Totals from the interviews and surveys can be seen in Figure 2. To further test the themes and eliminate or add to the list of emerging themes, interviews and surveys were done with a balanced amount of Palestinian and Israeli individuals.

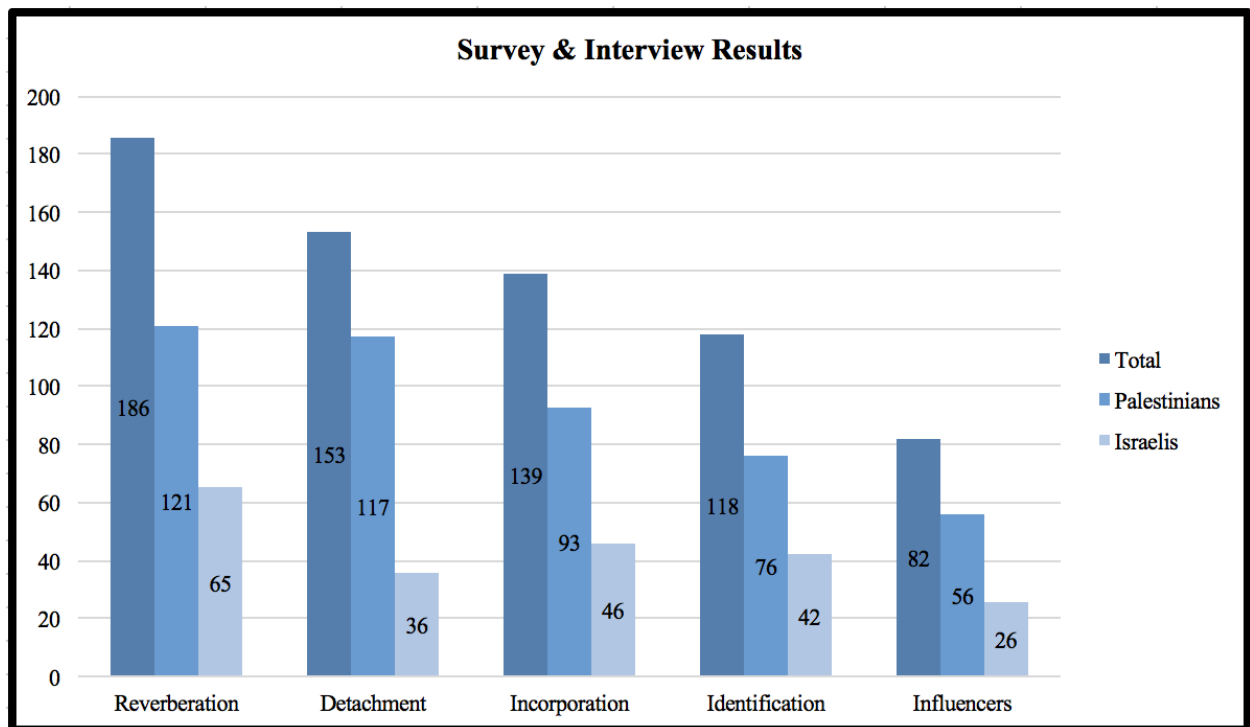


Figure 2. Survey and Interview Theme Totals

Personal interviews were coded according to the themes from the surveys and interviews, and were then adopted from Weaver's (1990) research; other possible themes were also considered. A fifth theme set was created, Influencers, with subthemes Outside Instigators,

Religious Context, and Need for Education. Influencers was specifically in regard to influencers of intercultural empathy as this study points out. Participants are noted with assigned numbers.

Reverberation (n = 186)

The first main theme for coding was Reverberation. Reverberation was defined by similar emotions that individuals might feel and the common experiences that might ignite such emotions. This definition was formed by the researcher after examining the interview transcriptions and noticing the commonalities between the emerging themes and Weaver's (1990) previous research. Instances of Reverberation was totaled for the Palestinian participants (n = 121), as well as for the Israeli participants (n = 65). Three subthemes emerged in this theme: shared experience, negative emotions, and positive emotions.

Positive emotions. (n = 74) As the first subtheme for Reverberation, positive emotions is defined as emotions associated with optimism, joy, trust etc., in relationship to the "other." In the context of reverberation, the researcher found that the individuals who experienced positive emotions was usually due to appreciation and respect for the "other," as well as a certain amount of optimism for future peace with the "other." One survey participant shared how she feels Palestinians and Israelis are quite similar in many ways and that she ultimately wishes for both parties to share in a sustainable peace. She said, "We are similar in our loss and tragedies and the longing to have immanent peace... Humans are alike if not categorized and labeled... [which should] enrich and broaden our sense of shared humanity." (Survey P15) This example showed how the participant recognizes the hardships, yet is still hopeful for a positive outcome. Instances of positive emotions was totaled for the Palestinian participants (n = 46), as well as for the Israeli participants (n = 28).

Negative emotions. (n = 65) The second subtheme of negative emotions was defined by any instances in the interviews or surveys where the participants expressed emotions of pain, fear, apprehension, sadness etc. In some cases, there were experiences of guilt for the present situation between Palestine and Israel, though not necessarily shame. This theme was considered with participants described how they felt in various situations in regard to the “other.” The following quote gives an example of negative emotions.

... on some level, Jewish culture is based on feelings of guilt. Right? We're feeling guilty about things... I think that the Palestinians have undergone a process of shame... And it's a really specific sort of sociological paradigm where I don't think that maybe Jewish Israelis really operate on that level of honor or pride versus shame. We have a sense of guilt, of what's happened, but we don't necessarily feel shame for it. (Interview P16)

The quote above shows that this individual experienced a sense of guilt for the present situation, though not necessarily shame. Instances of negative emotions was totaled for the Palestinian participants (n = 41), as well as for the Israeli participants (n = 24).

Shared experience. (n = 47) The third sub-theme was titled shared experience. As a result of thoughts shared by participants combined with the definition provided by Weaver (1990), shared experience was defined as experiencing a shared experience with the “other.” In context with reverberation, shared experience refers to individuals' first-hand experiences with the “other,” or their expression of interest in having future experiences with the “other.” This interview participant shared how having shared experiences with the “other” was important to her. She said, “This earth is for everyone, but we created the borders! We don't want borders! Let's live together and have people who can regulate things ... It will be just a piece of land where

people are living and trying to do good. Maybe. But it's good to have hope." (Interview P17) This quote shows the desire of the individual to share experiences with the "other." She acknowledges the suffering on either side, but understands the importance of having shared experiences. Instances of shared experience was totaled for the Palestinian participants (n = 34), as well as for the Israeli participants (n = 13).

Detachment (n = 153)

The second general theme that emerged was Detachment. Detachment was coded whenever there were instances of differences causing distance, acts of aggression, or negative experiences that the participants discussed, particularly in context of the "other" and experiences that lead to feelings of fear, hatred, etc., as a result. Instances of Detachment was totaled for the Palestinian participants (n = 117), as well as for the Israeli participants (n = 36).

Differences causing distance. (n = 69) Differences causing distance was defined as perceived differences between the self and the "other" that limited the desire or ability to get to know the "other" personally. In the context of detachment, differences causing distance refers to the lack of desire or ability to engage with the "other" personally, leading to cognitive dissonance or physical distance, thus inhibiting connection. A survey participant said the following:

I think that there is just such a level of hatred... that the idea of having one state where, you know people who are on the far right of Israel will, and people from Hamas will be able to sit in the same room as parliament and come up with some kind of idea of where this one state is heading, is kind of preposterous. There needs to be a kind of division of nationalities. (Interview P16)

This quote suggests that there are external factors which limits the ability to communicate with the “other,” while also supporting the participants belief that a form of division needs to exist even still. Instances of differences causing distance was totaled for the Palestinian participants (n = 45), as well as for the Israeli participants (n = 24).

Acts of aggression. (n = 46) The third subtheme for Detachment is acts of aggression. Acts of aggression was defined as explicit or perceived acts of violence against the “other,” either without cause or in response to. The following quote is an example of a coded thought for this subtheme: “...How can I put my hand in the hand of that person who killed my father? And how can I shake hands with someone who killed my brother? And how can I shake hands with someone who demolished my house when I said ‘no’ for Israel and when I said I’m going to fight this state?” (Interview P17) This comment implies the idea that there is little room for forgiveness amidst such violence, while also pointing out the participant’s part in the aggression as she expressed her desire to also fight the state of Israel. Instances of acts of aggression was totaled for the Palestinian participants (n = 39), as well as for the Israeli participants (n = 7).

Negative experience. (n = 38) The first subtheme that emerged for Detachment was negative experiences. Negative experience was defined as situations where an incident occurred directly, or in relationship with the “other,” resulting in fear, hatred, etc. A survey participant stated, “... They have the right to hold weapons to protect themselves from you, but you do not have the right to hold any weapons to defend yourself... the ruler must be a chosen by them and their allies, and must meet their standards not your own standards. Would you accept peace? (Survey P13) This participant and others expressed their frustration as a result of varying situations after being adversely affected by the “other.” Instances of negative experience was totaled for the Palestinian participants (n = 33), as well as for the Israeli participants (n = 5).

Incorporation (n = 139)

The third theme that emerged was Incorporation. This study defines Incorporation as taking the experiences of another into ourselves as adopted from Weaver (1990). Subthemes of this main theme included perspective taking, acknowledging the “other”, and distinguishing. Instances of Incorporation was totaled for the Palestinian participants (n = 93), as well as for the Israeli participants (n = 46).

Perspective taking. (n = 49) The second subtheme for Incorporation was perspective taking. Perspective taking was defined as leaving one’s own world and enter into the world of the “other” (Buccioni, 2015) by imagining the circumstances of the “other” and/or feeling with them. Perspective taking may also be known as “imaginative placement” as discussed by Calloway-Thomas (2010), which requires one to “see” through the eyes of others (Calloway-Thomas, 2010). It did not necessarily have to involve empathy on the participant’s part, though it did include an act of imagining the situation of the “other.” In this study, the theme that emerged where people who might have had negative experiences with the “other” were still capable of understanding the situations of the “other,” though it did not take away from their desire for autonomy and peace. One participant said, “On some level, we have the same kind of similar understanding and social engagement between Israelis and Palestinians even if we are divided by the conflict... Israel has a role to play in that Israeli leadership and in society as well.” (Interview P16) A second quote provided more clarification on this sum theme. “I felt sad and upset in the beginning, yet I tried to see things from his angle and said it is just ignorance and fear that makes people act in this way. Maybe he has never travelled abroad and never knew a Muslim, so he thought that all Muslims are bad. I no longer feel that bad when a racist action happens in front of

me.” (Survey P13) The quotes are examples of how individuals practice perspective taking in various situations. Instances of perspective taking was totaled for the Palestinian participants (n = 32), as well as for the Israeli participants (n = 17).

Acknowledging the “other”. (n = 46) The first subtheme under Incorporation was acknowledging the “other.” Acknowledging the “other” was defined as situations where individuals were able to honestly look at the “other” and their experiences, either positive or negative, without necessarily taking accountability for their experience or practicing imaginative placement. When one participant was asked if she had been faced with intercultural empathy in her daily life, she responded, “As far as my own experience - many cases of seeing and recognizing the hardships faced by people in other cultures.” (Survey P8) Other participants shared additional experiences that explained how they may acknowledge the “other.” Instances of acknowledging the “other” was totaled for the Palestinian participants (n = 38), as well as for the Israeli participants (n = 8).

Distinguishing. (n = 44) The third and final subtheme of Incorporation was distinguishing. For this study, the researcher defined distinguishing as the way in which individuals notice the similarities or positive differences of the “other.” In context with incorporation, distinguishing refers to the way that people within varying cultures perceive the other, but in addition, find characteristics that they appreciate which are different and/or recognize the similarities that they may share. One participant expressed a few things he found in common with the “other.” He stated, “Israelis and Palestinians have many similar traits, as Middle Eastern people; for example, warmth coupled with hot-headedness, welcoming to others, society run by an honor-based social code.” (Survey P1) This quote shows an example of how these similarities are noted while also pointing out the appreciate that this man had for characteristics of the “other.” Instances of

distinguishing was totaled for the Palestinian participants (n = 23), as well as for the Israeli participants (n = 21).

Identification (n = 118)

The fourth theme for coding was Identification. Identification was defined by the way in which we consider ourselves, and then absorb others' views and their experiences. This definition was formed by the researcher after examining the survey comments and interview transcriptions, which was also supplemented by Weaver's (1990) description of the term. Three subthemes emerged within this theme: self-identity, identifying the "other," and historical context. Instances of identification was totaled for the Palestinian participants (n = 76), as well as for the Israeli participants (n = 42).

Self-identity. (n = 58) The first subtheme was titled self-identity. As a result of thoughts shared by participants, self-identity was defined by the factors in which individuals identify themselves in terms of culture and their supporting personal experiences. In context with identification, self-identity looks primarily at the person behind the lens that they are looking through, as our identity often shapes how we view the world. This survey participant shared how her experiences growing up in Israel influenced how she reacted in a particular situation. She said, "During the second intifada I taught at an institution that included a separate college for training teachers for the Arabic speaking school system. All teachers shared the same coffee room, but didn't speak to another. I felt this was wrong, and tried to reach out." (Survey P3) This quote shows the personal experience of the individual and how that shaped how she handled that specific situation. Instances of self-identity was totaled for the Palestinian participants (n = 41), as well as for the Israeli participants (n = 17).

Identifying the “other”. (n = 39) The second subtheme identification of “other” was defined as the way in which we view others, either simply by our personal perception of them or in how we come to view them through personal experience. This theme considered when participants might also project their perception onto the “other,” although it may or may not have been correct. The following quote gives an example of identifying the “other.” “Israel is not content with the territory it is having now. Israel dreams to occupy all the land of Palestine and they believe that this land is their property while Palestinians are a bunch of Arabs who must go to Saudi Arabia.” (Survey P13) This quote shows the way in which this individual perceives the “other,” in this case being the Israelis, which is fundamentally a generalizing perception and not necessarily reality. Furthermore, the individual projected her beliefs about how she as a Palestinian is viewed by the “other,” however it again might not be factual of all Israelis. Instances of identifying the “other” was totaled for the Palestinian participants (n = 26), as well as for the Israeli participants (n = 13).

Historical context. (n = 21) As the third subtheme for Identification, historical context was defined as perspectives or experiences of historical counterparts or the “other.” In the context of identification, the researcher found that the participants often recalled history to justify or explain why they felt the way they felt toward the “other.” The following quote gives an example of historical context.

The main reason for this belief [that neither a one state or a two-state solution can work], is that the existence of the Zionist entity on this land is ILLEGAL since the very first day of their claimed independent state in 1948. This land is for its people who are still living and their descendants know their right of this land. The whole

world, as well, witnessed and assisted the brutal invasive operations to this land since 1948. (Survey P14)

The quote above shows that as this individual identifies the history of his native land; his perspective supports his belief that neither a one state or a two-state solution could work. Similar references to historical context supported several participants’ perspectives. Instances of historical context was totaled for the Palestinian participants (n = 9), as well as for the Israeli participants (n = 12).

Subtheme Totals

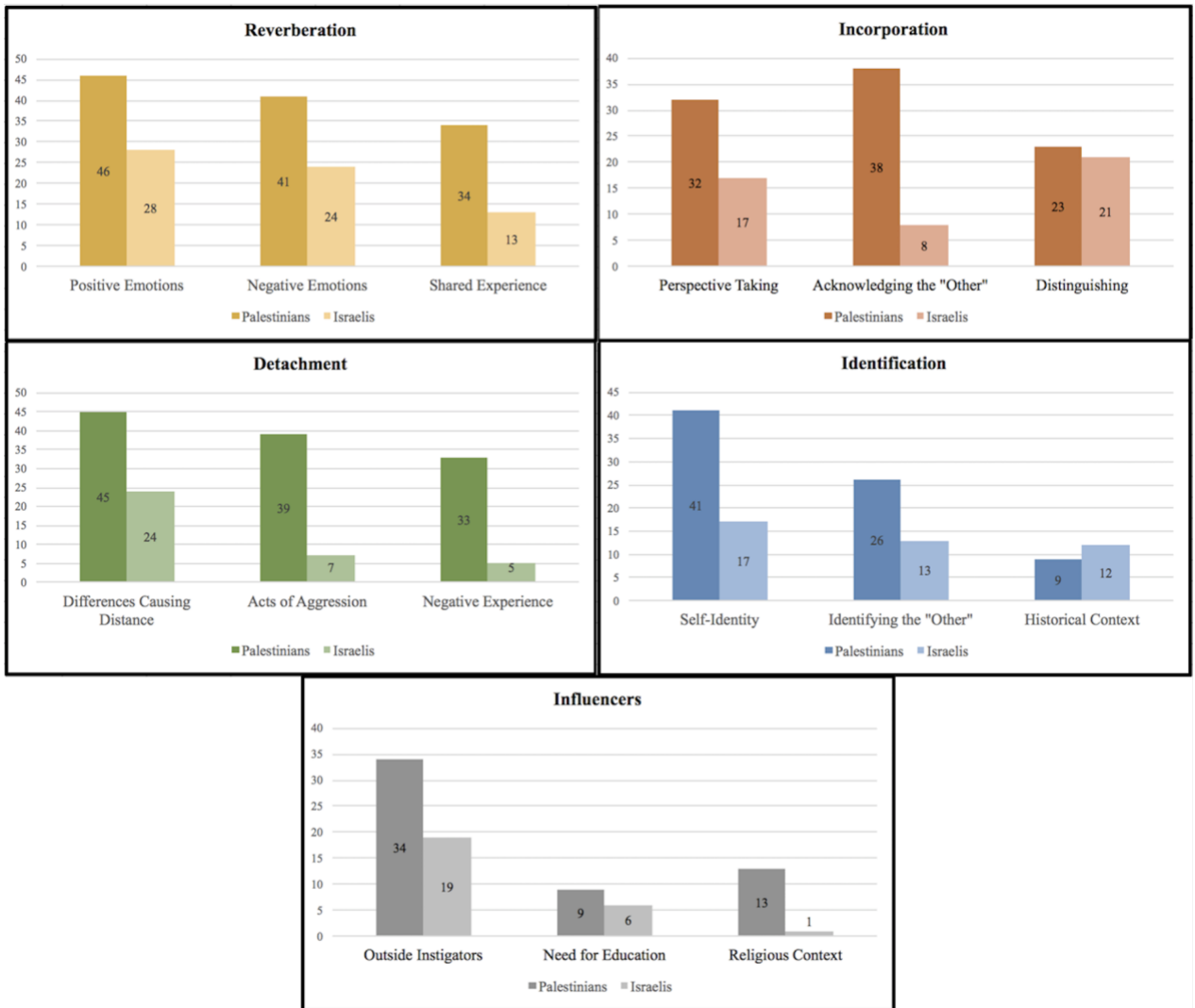


Figure 3. Survey and Interview Subtheme Totals

Influencers (n = 82)

After the surveys and interviews were conducted, a fifth specific theme also emerged apart from Weaver's (1990) themes. Influencers contained the subthemes of need for education, outside instigators, and religious context. This theme was needed after considering the reoccurring similarities that occurred repeatedly in the surveys and interviews, and aimed to address specific influencers that played a role in their experience of the "other" and life in general. Instances of influencers was totaled for the Palestinian participants (n = 56), as well as for the Israeli participants (n = 26).

Outside instigators. (n = 53) The primary subtheme for Influencers was outside instigators. Several participants discussed how they often felt powerless regarding situations that were out of their control, primarily within political situations. This study defined outside instigators as government or other similar external forces being the instigator for conflict or otherwise played a role in shaping perspectives. One participant said, "I think that a two-state solution is the only realistic solution, however, I don't think our leaders will make it happen any time soon. (Survey P1) Another participant expressed a similar notion, saying, "...they may not really comprehend that fifty years of occupying, of having a military occupation of another people does not really work well with maintaining a democracy." (Interview P16) These participants who expressed these sentiments were either Palestinian or Israeli, thus we can see that similar notions are evident on both sides. Instances of outside instigators was totaled for the Palestinian participants (n = 34), as well as for the Israeli participants (n = 19).

Need for education. (n = 15) The second subtheme under Influencers was need for education. Need for education was defined as an expressed need for improved education, or

ignorance as a result of a lack of education. One participant said, “One of the problems in Israel is that the current government plays on sort of their basic fear. And sometimes that kind of thing is more effective with people who don’t have as much education.” (Interview P16) This thought showed how essential this participant believed education to be for the purpose of dismantling ignorance. Instances of need for education was totaled for the Palestinian participants (n = 9), as well as for the Israeli participants (n = 6).

Religious context. (n = 14) The third and final subtheme that emerged for Influencers was religious context. Religious context was defined as references to religious ideologies or beliefs in either reference to the “other” or independently. In context with influencers, religious context refers to individuals’ explanation or justification toward their perceived reality. This interview participant shared how she believes the land of Israel is for everyone based on religious text. She said, “If God created this earth, he didn’t say, ‘I am going to divide it among you guys. You are people, go and live tougher and worship God, and don’t fight in the name of God.’ When he created this earth, he said... God has created you to be khalifa. The word ‘khalifa’ means somebody who is going to build. Somebody who is going to take care of.” (Interview P17) This quote shows the desire of the individual to live at peace with the “other” and not fight in the name of God. Instances of religious context was totaled for the Palestinian participants (n = 13), as well as for the Israeli participants (n = 1).

6. DISCUSSION

Results suggest that previous research addressing empathy was confirmed. The varying definitions of intercultural empathy from the participants in this study mirrored Cuff, Brown, Taylor and Howat's (2014) assertion that there are as many definitions of empathy as there are authors. Furthermore, the participants ranged in a basic knowledge or familiarity with "intercultural empathy" as a concept. Out of the seven Israeli participants, three showed little to no understanding of what intercultural empathy meant, nor had they reported experiences such instances. Out of the eight Palestinian participants, only one demonstrated little to no understanding of the concept. In such situations where the participants appeared to not understand the term, their lack of understanding was similarly mirrored in their lack of interculturally empathetic experiences except in two cases where the individuals, although reporting to not know what intercultural empathy was as a concept, still reported such interculturally empathic tendencies. This may display an understanding of the term on some level although it was not reported as such.

In such situations where participants demonstrated a greater understanding of the meaning of the term, "intercultural empathy," the similarly displayed many more instances of intercultural empathy for the "other." One example of a developed understanding of the term, "intercultural empathy," can be found in this study, where a Palestinian participant suggested that intercultural empathy is, "The ability to empathize with another person from a different culture regardless of the cultural differences... Focusing on humanity that we share with them." (Survey P15) This participant went on to further display their concrete understanding of the term by stating the following:

Humans are alike if not categorized and labeled. Difference in culture, religion, politics... etc. should encourage us to get to know each other more and learn from one another to enrich and broaden our sense of shared humanity. (Survey P15)

Other participants who demonstrated a similar fundamental understanding of the term “intercultural empathy” provided similar definitions in depth and scope.

Those who demonstrated no understanding of intercultural empathy reported little to no such instances, and in some cases, they even expressed a strong indifference toward the “other,” or even an open hostility.

In instances where participants regarded “intercultural empathy” to be an ability or a skill, the participants demonstrated much fewer instances of intercultural empathy, which confirmed Broome’s (1991) previous research on empathy in relationship to empathy being referred to as an ability or a skill (Broome, 1991). One such example of this presented itself in this study; an Israeli participant was asked to define “intercultural empathy,” and they responded, “Identifying with other people from a culture different to yours... Understanding what they go through and being supportive to their current circumstances.” (Survey P11) Surprising findings included that of participants who understood intercultural empathy to be an ability or a skill seemed to demonstrate less empathy than those who understood intercultural empathy to simply be that of imagining the feelings of others, as characterized by Calloway-Thomas (2010). This was found in this study where participants characterized “intercultural empathy” as an ability or a skill. In one such example, the participant suggested that intercultural empathy was “the ability to make balanced and realistic judgements about intercultural “other.” (Survey P10) Of the Palestinian participants, no one characterized it to be that of an ability or a skill, whereas four of the seven

Israeli participants suggested that it was an ability or a skill; in such situations, the participants demonstrated much less empathy as the other participants.

Previous research by Schutz (1967) was also confirmed in instances where the participants demonstrated perspective taking quite frequently, so too did their efforts to empathize with the “other” despite previous associated pain. One such participant stated, “Friends from Israeli Christian congregations would show support and understanding to the difficulties we go through as Palestinians.” (Survey P12) There also seems to be a correlation between identity and the ability to empathize with the “other.” This study confirmed Gilroy’s (2000) assertion that if individuals have a limited perception of their cultural identity, they might also have a limited ability to recognize the culture of the “other” in productive manner. Indeed, where the participants expressed a limited view of their personal identity, they similarly demonstrated little to no instances of intercultural empathy.

As discussed previously, Weaver (1990) found that there are four primary steps that are evident in the act of empathizing as a whole; all steps were clearly recognized and significant in the results of this study. Participants gave examples of empathetic tendencies toward the “other” within the current study when discussing the “other,” and more specifically, their perception of the “other” based on personal experience. It was not specifically found whether or not participants in the study who demonstrated many instances within the step characterized by Weaver (1990) as Detachment experienced less empathy toward the “other,” though they did display signs of intercultural awareness by understanding that they are indeed a cultural being, and could thus often recognize the culture of the “other,” as explained by Triandis (1977). This study confirmed Triandis’s (1977) findings where he suggested that those who recognize themselves as cultural beings have a greater capacity of intercultural awareness. As previously discussed, intercultural

awareness is not to be confused with intercultural empathy, but it is a functioning component therein.

As presented in the results, most participants who participated in his study identified as being either Palestinian or Israeli depending on where they spent the majority of their formative years, whereas one participant identified as being more of a “citizen of the world” due to his previous experience traveling and his exposure to various cultures. Indeed, his previous experience traveling and studying abroad widened his intercultural scope tremendously, which also translated into his perception of “the other.” He showed increased instances of recognizing his own identity as a cultural being, which included the factors about himself and his culture that he deemed perhaps unfortunate, but factual. For example, he stated, “Israelis and Palestinians have many similar traits as Middle Eastern people, for example, warmth coupled with hot-headedness, welcoming to others, society run by an honor-based social code.” The quote demonstrated how a more developed personal identity can aid in recognizing similarities and differences between himself and “the other.” (Interview P16)

Findings also showed that participants found education to be of significant importance for intercultural empathy to actually be possible. The participants explored their experiences within education and suggested that if not for their education, they might understand or empathize with the plights of the “other” much less. Indeed, in instances where participants expressed a greater importance for education, so too did they describe the realities of their uneducated counterparts. For example, one participant expressed the following:

We need education as Palestinians. We are not angels. We need education. Our people are barbaric. We need education. And the Israeli soldiers are barbaric too. I’m not talking about the people, there are people that are really good. And I really,

I highly respect them. But I'm talking about the soldiers and my people who are really barbaric sometimes. They need a lot of education. They, really.

Empowerment and education and all of these things. (Interview P17)

In the example outlined above, we can clearly see how having an education assisted in shaping this individual's perspective of the world, and also offered a platform for her to have a realistic understanding of her Palestinian counterparts. According to this participant, those who have not had the privilege of an education in their society are barbaric, similarly as the Israeli soldiers from her perspective. This is but one example of many where participants, Palestinian and Israeli alike, shared similar views of the incredible importance toward the availability of education to allow for any lasting peace processes to take place. This particular participant also had previous experience with traveling and studying abroad.

When analyzing the surveys and interviews, it was found that religious context played a much smaller role in the perception of the "other" than the researcher expected. Whereas a few participants made reference to religious text specifically to explain their own positionality on the conflict, most referenced an inability or lack of desire to forgive the "other" based previous pain that was caused, rather than religious text indicating so. In many instances where the religiosity of the participants was mentioned, it was often in support of claims for peace. The following quote from a Palestinian participant offers a great example of this:

This one purpose is getting to know their creator and the creator of everything around, including Palestine, then they should listen to their creator's teachings to live the best life on earth and in the hereafter. I believe that the devil, Satan, is the first enemy to both parts of any conflict because He wants to corrupt their lives on this world and in the hereafter. Therefore, I have feelings of sorrow towards the

ones who follow the devil teachings and leave the teachings of their Wise and Merciful creator. (Survey P14)

As this quote suggests, the abovementioned participant felt sadness toward those who he characterized as following Satan rather than anger, which is an empathetic response. Furthermore, as this individual takes personal value from the abovementioned religious reference, he would similarly want the “other” to similarly experience such value.

It was also noted that individuals expressed a certain sense of honor toward their similar counterparts. Although they may not harbor any resentment toward the “other” singularly, they would reference the pain of their people, suggesting that if they forgave the “other,” they would be seen as a traitor. For example, in an interview, one participant articulated her personal torment of being torn between wanting to forgive the Israeli people and understanding how she might be estranged by her similar counterparts if she did. She said, “If you say, ‘I want peace with Israel’, people will start accusing you that you are a traitor and you have betrayed all of those who have died, who have passed away for the sake of Palestine and who fought for it.” (Interview P17) Such occurrences were coded in the research as Identification, under the subtheme “historical context.” These occurrences were coded as such due to the reference of a previous historical situation or honor for a deceased counterpart.

Notable findings showed an interesting pessimism toward both a one state and a two-state solution from both the Palestinian and Israeli perspective, often due to expressions of distrust in either the government to create a peaceful solution that would benefit all, or due to a distrust in the people to lay down their arms and truly live at peace among one another. There was also a mutual sense of frustration from both Palestinian and Israeli individuals toward the political situation; both parties expressed frustration and helplessness on this regard. Even if they did want

peace, many participants felt it would be an impossibility due to factors entirely out of their control.

Of the Israeli participants, four expressed a desire for a two-state solution, though of those four, three of them explained how a two-state solution might be the best option, but it probably wouldn't guarantee peace. Four Israeli participants explained how neither solution would work due to the distrust their counterparts had in the "other" and because the government did not seem interested in such peaceful discourse. Of the Palestinian participants, one stated that they thought a two-state solution was not ideal, but most realistic, and six participants expressed a lack of interest in either option as a result of the tumultuous history between Palestine and Israel. In addition, the Palestinian participants suggested that no solution would be beneficial as no solution would guarantee peace. The remaining Palestinian participant expressed the hope for a one state solution where all individuals were a part of one government, all sharing in equal rights and the benefits of a developed country. She suggested that a one state solution to be ideal, allowing for Palestinians and Israelis to live as one nation and sharing in the same development and educational opportunities. She expressed that a border and separation is limiting what both parties could be gaining from the "other," furthermore, she went on to suggest that it would be of particular benefit for Palestine to make peace with Israel and accept them as an ally. In her words, "everyone needs a strong friend." (Interview P17) They also exclaimed that forgiveness toward Israel might be impossible due to feeling obliged to honor those who have suffered through the conflict. Indeed, the lack of reconciliation might be the root of the present and sustained conflict.

Additional notable findings showed that the Palestinian participants demonstrated a greater ability to empathize with the "other," which may be due to their increased suffering. They demonstrated more enthusiasm while participating in this study and were quite expressive in the

personal interview and surveys, whereas most Israeli participants gave much less feedback in comparison. These results also support the research done by Lim and Desteno (2016), where they asserted that suffering and compassion may be the link to prosocial behavior and empathy. Bucchioni (2015) also made a similar assertion when he explored the magnified ability of those who had suffered from adversity to empathize with individuals who experienced similar adversity. In this case, the Palestinian participants demonstrated more empathetic instances by almost twice as much than the Israeli participants as the results of this study suggest. This was perhaps due to their greater collective and present adversity, contrasting with the Israelis' perhaps more brief and past adversity, which still allows for them to live developed and comfortable lives. It may also be due to cultural differences in communication. Therefore, it would be an unfortunate assumption to think that Palestinians might not want to empathize with "the other" solely based on their negative past and present experience with the "other." Indeed, intercultural empathy may not be a choice as much as an inevitable byproduct of adversity.

7. CONCLUSION

Summary

Most participants in the study expressed at least some empathy for the “other” as per Weaver’s (1990) aforementioned steps of empathy, thus showing the researcher that a greater capacity for intercultural empathy between Palestinian and Israeli individuals is indeed possible. Although the Israeli individuals might have been less keen to participate in this study and therefore might have shown fewer instances of empathy, this study found that individuals were capable of more empathy toward the “other” as a result of their exposure to the “other” and various other cultures. Shame was found to be quite prevalent among the Israeli participants, whereas the Palestinian participants demonstrated more empathetic tendencies. The need for education was an overwhelming theme as both Israeli and Palestinian participants noted the importance of education to allow for a greater capacity for empathy. Furthermore, those who had experienced more aggression or pain caused by the “other,” either personally or remotely, showed more instances of displaying empathetic tendencies as outlined by Weaver (1990) than the participants who expressed an adverse reaction.

Limitations

This study addressed important points of the concept of intercultural empathy between Palestinian and Israeli individuals. Limitations for this study should be considered. This study did not look at gender differences in the surveys or interviews, in addition to how age might be an influencing factor. This study also failed to address the perceptions and experiences of those who have not been involved in higher academia, as educated individuals may be among the minority of both Palestine and Israel, thus the aforementioned findings may not be accurate for most individuals within Palestine and Israel who are uneducated. Future research should examine the

differences between these two groups. Another limitation is that of language and whether or not the interviews and surveys are addressed in the participants' mother tongue; not doing might produce less accurate and possibly obscure results. Lastly, surveys and interviews participants were selected from a convenience sample. Further research should consider participants from a random sample to better apply findings to the overall population being studied.

Future Research

Future research studies should also consider grouping individuals into gender, age and academic categories to better expel any potential variables and have a clearer understanding of the true influencers of perceived and practiced intercultural empathy. Additional study of this subject should be conducted among other conflicting parties in other geographic locations as well to better assess the concept of intercultural empathy across a variety of situations and contexts. More studies could be done within other religious or nonreligious groups to see similarities between level of religiosity in correlation to intercultural empathy. In addition, future research should address the presence of shame in various cultures more critically so as to gain a better understanding of the levels of shame within various cultures. Only then will we gain a clearer idea of how to address said shame and eventually transform it into empathy. Addressing these additional factors will help determine if intercultural empathy might be prevalent within other groups who might share in historical or present reasons to remain in conflict.

Final Thoughts

There is so much pain in this world that is affecting men, women and children. We can see evidence across the globe of a true lack of empathy and an ever-growing cognitive dissonance between the more privileged and the less privileged in our societies. As a result, men, women and children are starving, families are becoming disbanded as violence ensues, and thousands of

people are being displaced, raped and slaughtered. As this destruction and divisiveness continues, the overwhelming need for empathy only increases. Indeed, there has never been a better time for such groundbreaking research. Empathy in intercultural communication reduces the tendency to use ourselves as lightning rods and to judge others by our own feelings, choices and preferences (Stewart, 1976). As we remain open-minded when communicating interculturally, becoming more empathetic may be achieved incrementally. To do so requires effort and consciousness on the communicators' part. It is critical that future research seeks to continue clarifying previously ambiguous terms while further developing intercultural empathy as a whole, as well as to develop research dedicated to better understanding cultural shame.

Intercultural empathy may be the next step in our collective evolution as humankind. Everyone who is not suffering from some adverse condition which might limit their cognitive and affective ability to experience empathy is already hardwired for empathetic connection at birth. This need for empathetic connection is not a recent necessity, but has always been present as our joining together is how we have survived as a species from the beginning of time; it is our empathetic connection that allows us to collaborate, innovate and build. However, simply focusing on empathy alone is no longer enough as we continue to interact more and more with those around the world. Indeed, at this time we are finding that conflict is at an all-time high, but so too is international interconnectedness. There are individuals who are thriving socio-economically, while others remain without even the basic human rights to survive. This alarming imbalance between us and our counterparts must change, for as even one of our international counterparts falls behind and suffers, so too does it hold back the collective evolution of humanity. This is the time to better understand our counterparts and to develop our intercultural

empathy for one another and as we do so, we may eventually find ourselves in a more empathetic world.

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Appendix A
Participant Demographic Survey

Informed Consent:

Background:

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully.

The purpose of this study is:

This study addresses intercultural empathy as a concept, and if or how it can be present among conflicting parties, specifically between Palestinian and Israeli individuals. Since there are many definitions of the word “empathy,” the researcher examines previous definitions of this term, how it relates to intercultural empathy, and then offers a singular definition for the purpose of this study. Previous research has examined empathy in relationship to other familiar words, including “sympathy” and “compassion,” though there has been little research done on the term, “intercultural empathy,” as a whole, nor has it often been studied between specific conflicting parties.

Study Procedure:

Your expected time commitment for this study is: 5 - 10 minutes.

Participants will be asked to complete one survey per person. The surveys will comprise of 10 questions, with both quantitative and qualitative questions.

Risks:

The risks of this study are minimal. These risks are similar to those you experience when disclosing work-related information to others. The topics in the survey may upset some respondents. You may decline to answer any or all questions and you may terminate your involvement at any time if you choose.

Benefits:

There will be no direct benefit to you for your participation in this study. However, we hope that the information obtained from this study may offer an opportunity to better understand how intercultural empathy is understood and experienced by individuals who are heavily involved in their academic careers. The results acquired from this research may aid in future discussions and research.

Alternative Procedures:

If you do not want to be in the study, you may choose not to participate.

Confidentiality:

Please do NOT include any identifying information in your online survey. Your responses will be anonymous.

Participant data will be kept confidential except in cases where the researcher is legally obligated to report specific incidents. These incidents include, but may not be limited to, incidents of abuse and suicide risk.

Person to Contact:

Should you have any questions about the research or any related matters, please contact the researcher at _____.

Voluntary Participation:

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this study. If you do decide to take part in this study, you agree that you are freely consenting. If you decide to take part in this study, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving reason. You are free to not answer any question or questions if you choose. This will not affect the relationship you have with the researcher.

Unforeseeable Risks:

There may be risks that are not anticipated. However, every effort will be made to minimize any risks.

Costs to Subject:

There are no costs to you for your participation in this study.

Compensation:

There is no monetary compensation to you for your participation in this study.

Consent:

By continuing with this survey, I confirm that I have read and understood the information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without cost. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Survey: Intercultural Empathy

1. What is your gender?
 - a. Female
 - b. Male
 - c. Other

2. What is your age?

3. What is your highest level of completed education?
 - a. Bachelor's degree
 - b. Master's degree
 - c. PhD
 - d. Other

4. I am a:
 - a. Student
 - b. Professor
 - c. Other (please specify)

5. Where are you from?
 - a. Palestine
 - b. Israel
 - c. Other (please specify)

6. How would you define intercultural empathy?

7. Have you ever been faced with INTERCULTURAL empathy in your daily life?

8. Describe your feelings toward Palestinian/Israeli individuals? Are you similar? Different?
How so?

9. Do you think a one or two state solution is possible for peace? Why or why not?

10. If you have anything additional you would like to add, please do so below:

Appendix B
Interview Questions

1. Is it okay with you if I record this?
2. What is your age?
3. What is your highest level of education?
4. Where are you from?
5. How would you define intercultural empathy?
6. Have you ever been faced with intercultural empathy in your daily life?
7. What are some difficulties that you feel most Palestinians/Israelis face?
8. Do you personally experience or feel any fear or insecurity in regard to the conflict and what's going on there?
9. Do you feel like that influences your communication with Palestinians/Israelis and how you see them?
10. Do you have friends or acquaintances that are Palestinian/Israeli?
11. In what ways do you feel you are similar or different from Palestinians/Israelis?
12. Do you think your perspectives are different according to your education?
13. Do you feel that peace between Palestinians and Israelis is possible?
14. How would you define peace?
15. Do you think in order for peace to happen, a one state or a two-state solution would be best?
16. Do you generally feel openness or fear toward a Palestinian/Israeli person?
17. Do you think that there is a connection between the suffering the Palestinians/Israelis experience and the threats that they sometimes bring to the Palestinian/Israeli people?