THE IMPLICATIONS OF A POLITICS OF NATALITY FOR THE PRAXIS OF
PEACEBUILDING IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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# LIST OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Religion: a divisive state or a source of flourishing and reconciliation? 11
2. Human flourishing: constructing the moral imaginary of natality 64
3. Natals and natality: methodological reflections 111
4. Fragile rays of hope 146
5. The matrices of flourishing: some trajectories for the future 193

Conclusion 215

Appendices

1. 1 Interviews conducted in Israel and Palestine June 18-August 10, 2008 220
2. List of interview questions 224

Bibliography 226

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The Author

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis explores how a politics of natality can yield fruitful insights about peacebuilding approaches in conflict situations. The Israel/Palestine conflict provides a rich context for operationalizing the concerns of politics of natality as an analytical lens in order to uncover different perspectives that are being birthed through people’s engagement in a wide range of peacebuilding approaches.

The Israel/Palestine conflict and the myriads of efforts to resolve it both at the formal diplomatic level as well as the grassroots level is one of the most researched and most written about conflicts to date. It seems as if there would be nothing new to be gleaned by doing further research on it. However, I deliberately chose to focus this conflict because of its longevity and seeming intransigence, some of which has been rightly or wrongly been attributed to religion. On both sides adherents of various strains of Christianity, Islam and Judaism have made specific claims about the conflict and its resolution that have made it more difficult to resolve; e.g. the final status of Jerusalem, a holy site claimed by all three religions, is something that has been consistently deferred. I argue that by locating aspects of human flourishing it will be possible to locate different ways in which people, religious, secular and atheist, are utilising their moral imagination to bring about peaceful transformations.

This thesis contends that there are creative insights, being developed through active engagement in trying to promote social change, which are not being
heard or taken into account. The predominant moral imaginaries of the various peacebuilding approaches that I explore in this thesis are still steeped in some variation of a liberal Enlightenment approach to conflict resolution which precludes sufficient considerations of plurality and difference. They do not sufficiently account for the ways in which religious discourse and practice can work to shape, sustain, as well as transform the moral imaginaries.

The thesis begins by exploring the ways in which different peacebuilding approaches to address this conflict do not adequately account for the ways in which individuals are acting morally out of love rather than need, for how their identities are fluid and are constantly being transformed as a result of their encounters with Others, and for how they do not pay sufficient attention to the ways in which religion informs peoples’ morality and identities or what constitutes flourishing for them.

Using the work of Grace Jantzen, a feminist philosopher of religion and ethicist, I construct an alternative framework, the matrices of flourishing, which privileges the metaphysical concerns of natality, including those of religion, where human flourishing is both its ethic and goal. This framework privileges different aspects of human nature such as resilience, creativity, imagination, inner resources and the capacity to act morally and ethically from a place of love, rather than aspects of human nature more prevalent in peacebuilding literature I review in Chapter 1 such as fixed subjectivity and human need. This thesis contends that this framework is more effective for locating ways in which people, including religious ones, act morally and deploy moral imagination and for locating the ways
in which their identities are fluid. These fluid and dynamic moral arrangements and identities challenge existing narratives of the conflict in ways that open up new stories about how it is being transformed.

My hypothesis is that it is possible to locate ethical actions of religious actors and evaluate them in the public sphere in the same way as those of nonreligious actors. Therefore, I interviewed people from some of the most fundamentalist religious segments of Israeli and Palestinian populations in order to locate identity shifts and openings within these groups. A major premise of this thesis is that religion matters in politics, it is intelligible, and it exerts political influences that can be evaluated for whether or not they promote flourishing.

International Relations theorist, RB Walker predicted that “the most interesting accounts of democratic practices are those that have learnt to refuse the modernist choice between evolution and revolution, immanence and transcendence, the rendition of political struggle as the preservation or the transformation of all there is.”¹ As developed in this thesis, I contend that a politics of natality refuses these modernist choices. Natality which privileges birth, love, immanence and connection over death, transcendence and individual autonomy, seeks to transcend the binaries of modern politics by recognizing the tensions and paradoxes inherent to these binaries.

This thesis contends it is possible to locate accounts of transformational practices. By developing and deploying the research lens of the matrices of flourishing, I predict these accounts will become more visible. Also, if this

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framework were able to locate flourishing in the Israel/Palestine conflict, then, it is very likely it would be able to locate flourishing in other conflicts.

The results of the data from the field research have implications for peacebuilding approaches. Based on these, the final chapter outlines some trajectories for future research and strategic planning for peacebuilding in this conflict as well as others.
Chapter 1

Religion: a divisive state or a source of flourishing and reconciliation?

1.1. Introduction

This thesis begins by considering the role of religion within current conflict resolution literature and argues that an alternative approach, the politics of natality, offers a potentially more fertile ground for engendering reconciliation. I argue that these approaches are troublesome in that they do not account adequately for the importance of religion in the formation of identity including morality, and that this in turn places limits on the re-construction and fluidity of identities as well as the ability to uncover and critique the political actions of religious actors.

To do this, I introduce the work of feminist philosopher of religion, Grace Jantzen, and argue that a politics of natality which I develop from her work offers a unique framework for analysing future possibilities for peaceful transformations in the Israel/Palestine conflict. The following chapters will provide more detailed discussion as I develop this framework and offer some empirical evidence of flourishing suggesting ways in which this new frame allows for a different understanding of peacebuilding.

Section 1 provides initial definitions of the ways I have conceptualised peacebuilding, religion and moral imaginaries from the perspective of a politics of natality and develop these further in Chapter 2. In the next section, I explore the ways in which different secular and religious approaches of peacebuilding theorise religion in conflict and peacebuilding although few of these approaches explore gender in a significant way. Where gender is considered, it is considered
separately by women analysing feminist peacebuilding efforts in the
Israel/Palestine conflict. Although insufficient attention is paid attention to how
‘secular’ gendered discourses of the conflict marginalise the voices of religious
women.

This thesis argues that a politics of natality provides space for better
incorporating considerations of religion and gender into peacebuilding, by providing
a different metaphysical grounding for peacebuilding, one that considers
intersections of religion and gender in the formation of different subjectivities. It
does this by showing how metaphysical presuppositions underlying current
approaches perpetuate violence by not opening up the spaces for those
considered as ‘Other’ to be recognized and seen as human. It is my hypothesis
that the theoretical lens afforded by a politics of natality will uncover creative
insights at the grass roots level which have previously been ignored or hidden that
have the potential to engage existing moral framings of the conflict, that which is
morally conceivable and possible, in a transformative way.

1.2. Definitions

Below I outline my working definitions of three key terms: religion,
peacebuilding and moral imaginary. Chapter 2 defines the concepts of natality
and flourishing and from these I sketch out a theoretical framework for considering
the ethical concerns of politics of natality based on my reading of Jantzen’s work.
1.2.1. Religion

Scott Thomas, Talal Asad and William Connolly have explored how religion has been conceptualised in western liberal political theory “as a body of ideas,” or a collection of myths, symbols, rituals, and practices.\(^2\) This contrasts with the conceptualisation of religion which I argue for in this thesis; something that shapes and informs the moral imaginary in which political theory is constructed, as well as being something that informs individuals’ moral context as well as their identity as moral beings.

Asad, employing Foucauldian discourse analysis, traced the genealogies of how the disciplines and boundaries between religion and the secular have been constructed since the Peace of Westphalia.\(^3\) He contended that the separation of religion from politics and the public sphere was a modern western norm, the ‘product of post-Reformation history.’\(^4\) In this construct, the boundaries which separated religion, which was private, from the secular sphere, which was public, were rigid and strictly enforced. He argued that religion was not one essential transcendent category, or a “trans-historical and transcultural phenomenon” as assumed in this construct, but instead was contingent and fluid.\(^5\) This thesis explores the permeability of the boundaries between the secular and religious.


\(^3\) Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 35.

\(^4\) Ibid., 35.

\(^5\) Ibid.
Religion today is often perceived as a private matter of individual choice and as irrelevant in the public sphere. Thomas observed,

*The concept of religion was invented as part of the political mythology of liberalism and has now emerged as a universal concept applicable to other cultures and civilizations.*

He noted that this concept of religion, a transcendent universal category, was used to privilege secular reason as objective and neutral, and therefore, good. He observed how this definition of reason was used to keep religion, viewed as dangerous, illiberal, unreasonable and potentially violent, out of the public sphere.

When religion has been considered in the public sphere it has often been construed as a discrete aspect of modern life that can and should be judged by “objective” liberal values. Martha Nussbaum’s work represents some of the most wide-ranging efforts of a liberal feminist to evaluate religion in the public sphere. She asserted that ‘illiberal’ values of different religious beliefs and practices could be judged in the light of modern liberal ethics that she derived from Kant.

Connolly also considered how the formation of the secular was socially constructed. In particular, he addressed the ways in which prevalent constructions of the ‘secular versus sacred,’ binary emphasized and reified static identities over fluidity of identities, or as he put it, ‘being’ versus, ‘becoming.’ He argued that secularism, a religion in and of itself, was not able to sufficiently account for the becoming of many different kinds of subjects. He argued that neither

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8 Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist*.
9 Ibid.
religion nor religious and non-religious subjects were static categories and identities, but all were in the process of becoming.

He concluded therefore, that it was important:

To rewrite secularism to pursue an ethos of engagement in public life among a plurality of controversial metaphysical perspectives, including, for starters, Christian and other monotheistic perspectives, secular thought, and secular, nontheistic perspectives.\(^{10}\)

As I explore in Chapter 2, this idea of becoming, or change, is a key aspect of a politics of natality. It is my intent, by locating natality and flourishing, to create an ethos of engagement in public life where this plurality of controversial metaphysical perspectives might be able to converse on a level playing field.

Similar to these writers Grace Jantzen problematized this western liberal approach to religion.\(^{11}\) In this thesis I argue that her interventions into western constructions of religion is vital to developing a framework for a politics of natality for analysing peacebuilding which is able to bridge the rigid private/public and sacred/secular binaries in western political theory identified above.\(^{12}\) It provides a means for demythologizing the religious as being irrelevant, irrational, or incomprehensible in the political sphere.

Jantzen argued that religious discourse, specifically ‘christendom,’ is one of the many discourses that has shaped the norms and values of western modernity. Religion was far from being a private matter. Instead:

\(^{10}\) Ibid., 39.
\(^{12}\) Thomas, The Global Resurgence of Religion, 300.
The masculinist symbolic of the west is undergirded by a concept of God as Divine Father, a God who is also Word, and who in his eternal disembodiment, omnipotence, and omniscience is the epitome of value. Even in a relatively secular society, these attributes of divinity still stand for that which is most valued.\textsuperscript{13}

She argued that religious notions of the divine supported certain ontologies and epistemologies over others. In other words, in western modernity, the notion of a transcendent, male, Omni-powerful God reified the male rational individual subject, freed from any social context or interdependence with the community into which he was born, represented true humanity and was the authority that arbitrated what constituted knowledge and rationality. Jantzen argued that this conception of the divine subjugated other forms of subjectivities and knowing, including the subjugation of women and society’s others including the ‘others’ in the international system. The sacred (private) versus the secular (public) divide obscures the ways in which certain onto-theological assumptions have formed what seem to be objective norms, but which have actually worked to reify certain subjects and norms over others.\textsuperscript{14}.

This hidden role of religion as a discourse that informs what is considered moral, ethical, valuable, normative, and who is considered human needs to be exposed in order to better explore how religious discourses might be better understood both as a source of conflict as well as a source for peaceful social transformation. In this approach, religion and culture are seen to be co-constitutive rather than as separate unrelated aspects of being; religion is not a subset of culture but is a discourse in its own right that is an integral part of informing the moral imaginary of any given society.

\textsuperscript{13} Jantzen, \textit{Becoming Divine}, 10.  
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 62-70.
In the next chapter I discuss the ways in which a feminist philosophy of religion supports a politics of natality by creating the possibility for pluralities of being and knowing which are vital for peace and reconciliation.

1.2.2. Peacebuilding: a systems approach.

Peacebuilding is a term that has developed and evolved as part of conflict resolution theory, a relatively new theory within international relations that has experienced dramatic growth since the end of the Cold War.\textsuperscript{15}

Broadly the aim of conflict resolution has been to address and transform the deep-rooted sources of a conflict, including the institutions and discourses that reproduce violence as well as a transformation in the conflict parties and their relationships with one another.\textsuperscript{16} These aims correspond to the underlying tasks of structural and cultural peacebuilding.\textsuperscript{17}

In addition to the official diplomatic track where state actors work diplomatically to negotiate peace between two warring parties referred to as Track I (T1) diplomacy, a second track, Track II (T2), was identified by theorists in order to recognize the valuable contributions of non-state actors, initially nongovernment organisations (NGOs), who worked to bring peaceful resolution to violent

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 29-30
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
This track was recently expanded to include non-violent resistance (NVR). Since its inception there has been a move towards a more systemic approach to peacebuilding that include a wide range of activities by state and non-state actors. A systems approach to peacebuilding was first outlined in 1995 by Diamond and Black in 1995 which defined peacebuilding as multi-track diplomacy. They identified nine tracks including: NGOs and professional organisations; the business community; private citizens; research; training and education institutions; activists; religion; funding organizations; and media and communications. They argued that these tracks were all necessary components of peacebuilding and that their totality was greater than the sum of the parts. They noted that the system was fragmented and that the way to address this fragmentation was to generate more synergy between the various tracks was by deliberately creating greater self-awareness and knowledge of the system as whole and by increasing greater relationships and connections between people in different tracks. They observed that although every track its own culture, they had an overarching culture in common characterised by: a) participants’ commitment to service based on a sense of calling or vocation (their participation

21 Ibid.
22 Ibid., 13-14.
23 Ibid., 7.
was what gave their lives a sense of meaning and purpose); and b) values which motivated them, in other words, their personal ethics and morality.\textsuperscript{24}

Because of the emphasis on the values and culture of peacebuilding as a whole and recognition of a wide range of activities as contributing to peacebuilding, I have adopted this systems approach as a springboard for my discussion of different models for conflict transformation. As Chapter 2 elaborates, its recognition of ethics and values is compatible with a politics of natality. Its emphasis on the importance of the production and sharing of knowledge between tracks is compatible to the epistemology and methodology suggested by a politics of natality elaborated in Chapter 3. This model enables me to explore three broad approaches to peacebuilding which include contact, NVR (including demonstrations, boycotts, and human rights advocacy) and capacity building approaches (development activities and leadership development).

The main difficulty with this model is, that Diamond and Black acknowledge outline religion as a discrete track with its own goals and values in peacebuilding rather than as something that informs and shapes the entire system.\textsuperscript{25} Though they acknowledge that religion is the heart of the system providing its “spiritual impulse, idealism and ethical foundation’ they do not follow that with an analysis of how this ‘heart’ might infuse and inform the other parts of the system

Lederach’s work represented another significant shift in conflict resolution theory which informs the conceptualization of peacebuilding in this thesis.\textsuperscript{26} This

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 13-14.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 97-107.
shift was from a more static and linear approach where neat, progressive steps towards a final peace could be delineated, to one that viewed sustainable peace as more of a dynamic, iterative and contingent process where reconciliation was taking place at all phases of the peace process. As Chapter 2 elaborates, this approach to reconciliation is more compatible with the ways in which time and forgiveness are conceptualized in natality.

I have chosen to focus on a systems approach to peacebuilding because it most closely approximates a politics of natality with flourishing as its goal. It is a normative approach that is concerned with morality and ethics and envisions the possibility of positive social and cultural change; ‘positive peace,’ that involved a ‘reordering of global priorities in order to promote social justice, economic development and participatory political processes,” as opposed to negative peace, or the mere absence of war.

Because all peacebuilding takes place in a certain moral imaginary and are underpinned by the metaphysical assumptions of that moral imaginary, I define this term below. The politics of natality as developed in the next chapter will provide an alternative moral imaginary, or framework, from which to consider these models.

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27 Ibid., 73-74.
1.2.3. The moral imaginary.

The term moral imaginary, which I have adopted and adapted from Jantzen’s work, is central to this thesis.

According to Jantzen, the moral imaginary constitutes both the literal and figurative space where moral thinking occurs, including moral theorising, which frame what people in a given culture think is morally feasible and possible.\(^{29}\) The moral imaginary, internalised norms and assumptions, provides the framework for what it is possible for people to think of in relation to moral attitudes and behaviour.\(^{30}\) It did not refer to a moral theory or system of ethics, but informed different moral theories, different philosophies of religion and politics, within a given culture. This concept implies that while people are moral beings, morality is not abstract, but is socially constructed and informed by the cultural, religious, and gendered context into which people are born. A moral imaginary shaped by the assumptions and norms of natality will provide a different analytical framework than one that does not share these assumptions.

Jantzen reasoned that the becoming of women as subjects in their own right was only possible if suppressed elements in the western moral imaginary such as nature, the bodies of women, and contextual rather than abstract reason were valued and privileged over abstract reason and normative subjectivity which was male.

While Jantzen used this term to refer to the overarching western moral imaginary which she said was informed by ‘christendom,’ I use the term also to


\(^{30}\) Ibid., 220-23.
refer to the moral imaginaries of people from different religions, cultures, and genders. As Chapter 2 elaborates, moral imaginaries inform peoples’ moral contexts, an aspect of their identity from which their ethical actions flow.

The moral imaginary of natality, by providing a different conceptualisation of the human condition, one in which people act out of abundance and love, rather than out of lack and fear, expands the possibilities for extending human flourishing, well-being involving a sense of meaning and purpose in life, to different kinds of subjects. Chapter 2 outlines the contours of this moral imaginary and the politics it inspires.

For now, I will use these terms as defined to evaluate the approaches to religion in different peacebuilding models.

1.3. **Approaches to religion in peacebuilding**

Current T1 and T2+ (multi-track) approaches are problematic in three ways. Firstly religious, national and gendered identities in these approaches tend to be essentialized and static. In these approaches it is difficult to account for multiple changing and fluid identities that emerge as people experience the world in new and different ways. Secondly, these approaches tend to lock parties into one of two categories: Victim or Oppressor, where the Victim, inherently good, is viewed as helpless and the Oppressor, inherently bad, is viewed as powerful and abusive. Although all conflicts are asymmetrical and one party is more of an oppressor than the other, this binary obscures the ways in which the Victim also can act in oppressive, violent and immoral ways and the ways in which the Victim has the
imagination and resilience to act violently or non-violently. It also obscures the ways in which the Oppressor can act in humane and peaceful ways and obscures the different ways in which the Oppressor also suffers from the conflict. Thirdly, these approaches tend to have a fixed view of history where time moves in a linear fashion, progress is inevitable and a final solution or end to the conflict is possible making it difficult to locate and analyse the many different possible open and fluid futures that are emerging from peoples’ engagement in peacebuilding. Finally, because religion as defined above informs the contours of the moral imaginary in which these approaches are embedded, it is important to explore how they account for religion.

In the following chapters, I offer a reading of Jantzen’s framework, a different moral imaginary, which offers a different approach, one which seeks to address these problems. This framework begins from the standpoint of natality and flourishing which conceptualises human beings first and foremost as ethical and moral beings with the capacity to deploy their moral imagination to act in new and surprising ways.

1.3.1. Traditional T1 approach of realpolitik.

The aim of this section is to explore how the concerns of T1 diplomacy, or realpolitik based on national self-interest, side-line considerations of religion and ideology.

T1 diplomacy, the state-to-state approach, is grounded in a realist or ‘geo-strategic’ approach to conflict resolution in which states are the major actors and in
which realpolitik, calculations of national self-interest, not ideology or values, is the primary concern.\textsuperscript{31}

An example of this approach is Henry Kissinger’s shuttle diplomacy in the Middle East in the early 1970’s.\textsuperscript{32} He defined realpolitik as a “foreign policy based on power and the national interest”.\textsuperscript{33} In this context, he argued that it was in the United States’ national self-interest to become a third party negotiator in the conflict since Israel was a strategic ally in the Cold War. Kissinger argued that it was imperative for the United States to intervene on behalf of Israel in order to maintain geo-political equilibrium. In this approach the underlying assumptions included competition for power, anarchy of the international system, and the inviolable sovereignty of states as unitary actors in international politics.\textsuperscript{34}

Kissinger articulated his approach to religion as “cujus region, ejus religio—whoever rules determines the religion of his subjects”, the principle first articulated by the signatories of the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 which ended the ‘wars of religion’ in Europe.\textsuperscript{35} This statement corresponds to the rigid boundaries between the sacred and secular that Scott, Asad and Connelly argued formed the socially constructed western liberal boundaries between secularism and religion.

\textsuperscript{33} Kissinger, Diplomacy, 137.
\textsuperscript{34} Kissinger is a realist and a classical balance of power international relations theorist. Even post-Cold War, he argues for the US role in maintaining equilibrium in the international system as a primary foreign policy goal. Ibid.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 236.
From 1973-1975 Kissinger made eleven trips to the Middle East for four major rounds of negotiations.\(^{(36)}\) Difficult issues, all involving a religious aspect in the narratives of both sides, including the right of return of refugees and the status of Jerusalem, were consistently deferred. His mediation approach was characterised by incremental pragmatism.\(^{(37)}\) Policymakers paid little attention to religious Zionism as a possible contributing factor to the conflict. Similarly, Palestinian claims to statehood, if considered at all, were viewed as a reflection of secular nationalism.\(^{(38)}\) Kissinger largely ignored existential concerns of identity, religious or otherwise.

Even though the Oslo negotiations were considered to represent a breakthrough for more informal negotiations, they continued this approach of pragmatic instrumentalism which largely side-lined considerations of religion.\(^{(39)}\) Ironically Oslo was scuppered by the religious element of both sides—the murder of Palestinians worshiping at the Hebron mosque by Baruch Goldstein and the suicide bombing attacks by Hamas in 1996—in part because they were not brought into the peace process.\(^{(40)}\)

### 1.3.2. Secular T2+ approaches also do not sufficiently account for religion.

At first glance, T2+ diplomacy seems to offer a means to deal with the soft issues, those involving values, history and context, and to account for the actions of non-state actors in peacebuilding. In a systems approach T2 activists are

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\(^{(40)}\) Ibid., 141-43.
viewed as a necessary complement to T1 negotiations in order to build lasting
democratic constituencies for peace. Therefore, I anticipated that T2+
approaches would be more likely to locate accounts of religion and how religion
shapes the moral imaginaries and moral dispositions of the parties involved in the
conflict and in peacebuilding in these approaches. However, religion, although
mentioned, is largely missing in these accounts, particularly in terms of how it
shapes and influences fluid moral identities.

This section analyses three different kinds of secular T2+ approaches for
the ways in which they construct religion. The first one is contact approaches
which include problem solving workshops, dialogue workshops, and encounter
groups. Secondly, I explore NVR approaches. Thirdly, I explore narrative
approaches to conflict resolutions which involve attempts to view history as less
rigid and fixed in order to bring about peace in the present. I chose these
approaches in particular because they initially seemed compatible with the ethical
concerns of a politics of natality.

First, I address the problem solving workshops pioneered by Herbert
Kelman and Nadim Rouhana. I chose this focus because they were early
pioneers of the contact approach, because of the availability of primary literature
detailing and evaluating it, and because most contact approaches to peacebuilding
in the Israel/Palestine conflict have since modelled themselves on their work.

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41 Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, and Miall, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution.*
42 H. C. Kelman, "Some Determinants of the Oslo Breakthrough," *International Negotiation* 2(1997);
H. H. C. Kelman, "Building a Sustainable Peace: The Limits of Pragmatism in the Israeli-
One of the aims of these encounters was to bring people from opposing sides of the conflict together to work on a mutually identified problem presented by the conflict. The point of the workshops was to facilitate the mutual recognition of the Other as human and the creation of empathy and understanding for people on the opposing side. The aim was to help people overcome their existential fears of the Other since it was argued that it was these existential fears which fuelled and sustained the conflict. Another goal was to create a constituency for peace within both parties to the conflict since, according to Kelman, one of the main reasons the Oslo agreements failed was because the negotiations were conducted in secret at the elite level without involvement from the publics on each side.43

Similar to the concerns of natality developed in the next chapter, these approaches focus on the commonalities of both parties, their humanity, their common need for meaning, worth, value, dignity and for security (physical as well as existential) and their desire to pursue lives in a rewarding manner, in other words, to flourish.

However, there is little mention of religion in any of Kelman’s many publications. This silence is significant. Religion was either deemed not very significant, or, if considered, it was too incomprehensible or too inflammatory.44 Religion is relegated to the private sphere by the norms that regulate the sacred/secular. Problem solving groups were only meant to focus on the mutual

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problem at hand and any discussions of history or disputed and controversial
issues were deferred.45

The only mention of religion in the literature I was able to identify was in an
outcome document by the Working Group on Israeli-Palestinian Relations.46

Participants recommended that:

Common religious values could be explored in dialogues between moderate
religious leaders from the Muslim, Jewish, and Christian communities. Such
common elements do not by any means bring about peace in the face of conflicting
interests, but they can advance the dialogue and mutual acceptance required for
reconciliation.47

Although this statement recognized religion as a source of values, it is
problematic. First of all it tends to reinforce the sacred/secular divide by
suggesting that although leaders of religions should talk separately about their
common values, this would have little effect in contributing to overall peacebuilding
in the public sphere. For example, there is no mention of bringing together both
religious and nonreligious leaders to discuss common values that might advance
‘dialogue’ and ‘mutual acceptance.’ Secondly, the way in which the term is used
here, suggests that religion exists as a discrete component, or subset, of culture
and values, but not as something that also shaped those cultures and values and
also might have shaped the conflict. Thirdly, as deployed here, there is no
discussion of how religion shapes people’s identities or how people draw on
different religious values at different times in order to make sense of their
experiences and encounters with the Other. Fourthly there is no consideration of
the differences within each religious tradition. The term as it is used here implies

45 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
that religion is static and homogenous, rather than contested and fluid. Although
the group acknowledged that there are moderate leaders of these religions and
that they are the ones to be brought together, there are no written criteria in the
document for assessing what constituted moderate. Moderate, as it is used here,
also seems to imply reasonable and rational leaders, the more ‘agreeable’ ones, or
the ones who were the most secular. By overlooking the more ‘extreme’ religious
leaders (however they chose to define extreme) they miss possible necessary
constituents for peace. By focusing only on religious leaders they did not account
for the different ways in which people at the grassroots were constantly interpreting
their religion as a source of identity and as a source of morality throughout their
lives. Finally, religious leaders in this model were usually men leaving many
religious women leaders in their communities out of the conversation.

Religion was viewed primarily in utilitarian terms as to how it might advance dialogue and
mutual acceptance, not as something that informs fluid religious and moral
identities.

The following quote from Kelman, one of the five basic assumptions he
listed as integral to the problem solving approach, is troublesome for several
reasons which I explore below.

48 In my discussions with interfaith dialogue leaders from PASSIA, they indicated that majority of
high-level interfaith dialogue was male. See www.passia.org
Although war and peace are societal and intersocietal processes that cannot be reduced to the level of individual behaviour, there are many aspects of international conflict and conflict resolution for which the individual represents the most appropriate unit of analysis. In particular, conflict is driven by the needs of individuals, as articulated through their core identity groups. Unfulfilled and threatened human needs, especially for identity and security, and existential fears must be addressed if conflict is to be resolved.49

Kelman consciously based his approach to conflict resolution theory on Burton’s human needs theory which specifically identified human needs for security and identity as a root cause for conflict.50 Kelman explicitly acknowledged his intellectual debt to Burton in many of his articles including the one cited above. Like Burton, he based his theory and practice of conflict resolution on an understanding of human beings as lacking something which compelled them to act violently.51 There is little account in Kelman’s theory about why some individuals who suffer and have the same need for identity and security as their compatriots, chose to act non-violently and chose to engage in peacebuilding activities in spite of their own personal losses of family and property. Human needs theory has been criticized elsewhere for being deterministic and for its instrumental view of reason based on pragmatism and maximizing individual self-interest.52 The view of human nature in this approach, in contrast to that of natality, is one where individuals act in predictable ways (violently), and autonomously out of self-interest.

51 For a critique of Kelman’s view of reason which ignores considerations of culture as well, see T. Vayrynen, Culture and International Conflict Resolution: A Critical Analysis of the Work of John Burton (Manchester University Press, 2001).
52 Ibid., 64,72.
Secondly, the reference to core identity groups for each side implies that the identity of each side is homogenous and static. In Kelman’s work there was little analysis of the pluralistic nature of either Israeli or Palestinian society or how that might inform approaches to peacebuilding or to conflict. Contested identities and conflict within each society was not given significant attention. This provided little scope for exploring the ways in which peaceful constituencies were being built that challenged the core identity groups of each society which had begun to transgress national and cultural boundaries.

Thirdly, the individual as referred to here is reminiscent of the autonomous, rational unitary subject of western liberalism. In this quote and in Kelman’s other writings, little attention was given to the relationship between individuals and the social context into which they are born which informs how their subjectivities are formed and constantly becoming. Instead, identity is fixed and static.

Another difficulty with this approach is that it does not problematize the objectivity of the third party facilitator. Kelman argued that academics were good third party facilitators because they were allegedly neutral. He claimed:

> Our credentials as academics, with expertise in international relations, and in my case, in the Middle East, provide some assurance to potential participants that we approach the issues with a degree of even-handedness and scholarly objectivity, rather than a partisan political agenda.\(^{53}\)

The view of reason implicit in this statement is that it was abstract, universal, and existed apart from the social, economic, national and religious context into which people were born and resided. He did not explore how third parties’ religion, gender and class or social, political, national, and ethnic place in society might

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\(^{53}\) Ibid.
impact their neutrality. Kelman was an American Jew of a certain social class and educational status which had a bearing on the project he chose and the way in which he went about it. Presumably none of these third party participants were neutral because they were self-identified activists who sought to bring about social transformation.

In his model the third party formulates the ground rules, sets the agendas, and is able to provide theoretical formulations that might help clarify issues under discussion. These activities are not neutral and put the third party in a position of power in terms of being able to define what the normative context is without having the underlying source of their norms exposed or challenged. He did not explore how third parties might want different things from the process than the two parties in conflict or how they might envision different outcomes and goals depending on their standpoint. Scholar practitioners, although well-intentioned, had their own agendas. Although not inherently bad, when left unacknowledged, these agendas normalised certain processes over others.

Finally problem solving and other contact approaches reinforce existing asymmetries of power between the two parties. Kelman asserted it was waste of time to apportion blame in these workshops. Rather, was more important to concentrate on solving the problem. This focus on pragmatism and results obscured that genuine criteria existed for apportioning responsibility.

While contact approaches try to create an environment where all participants are equal they were not, given the situation on the ground. Palestinian...

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54 Kelman, ‘Scholar Activist,’ 276.
intellectual Edward Said was one of the first ones to point out the difficulties of problem solving workshops and dialogue.

There is still a military occupation, people are still being killed, imprisoned and denied their rights on a daily basis....In the meantime cooperation can all too easily shade into collaboration with Israeli policy.55

Rouhana and others also wrote about how workshops favour the more powerful party and often work to reinforce oppression rather than build peace in a situation of structural inequality.56

On the other hand, NVR approaches attempt to address this structural inequality and asymmetry. For example, Diane Francis observed that in contact approaches there were no incentives for the more powerful party in a conflict to stop its oppressive actions.57 She argued that it was possible for the more oppressed party to make life so uncomfortable for powerful party through NVR activities including boycotts, demonstrations, and work stoppage, that they would be forced to stop some of their oppressive and violent practices. She highlighted that justice had to be a central element of peacebuilding. She concluded:

From this perspective, conflict is seen largely in terms of justice or the lack of it, and active nonviolence as the way to achieve it without at the same time denying it to others, and negating the values on which the concept of justice is based.58

Francis, unlike like Kelman, acknowledged and focused on the capacity of the oppressed to creatively resist in ethical and moral ways. This approach,

57Francis, People, Peace and Power, 264.
58Ibid.
acknowledging moral agency as part of the human condition, is less deterministic than contact approaches. Additionally, in stressing the oppressed as a group, she emphasized the importance of collective rather than individual action.

Her view of rationality was less instrumental than Kelman’s. She was critical of the role of neutral third parties facilitators and argued the two parties involved in the conflict were the best ones to resolve the conflict.59

Secondly, she expounded a view of reason and knowledge that was contextual and communal; the knowledge of the oppressed developed from resistance. Her approach, like other NVR approaches, was founded on the concept elucidated by Palo Freire, the ‘conscientization of the oppressed’, whereby the self-respect of those that are oppressed by structural violence becomes awakened and through this new awareness are then able to evaluate oppressive structures and influences in their lives.60

Although this approach addresses some of the difficulties raised by contact approaches, its lack of attention to religion is problematic. While Francis acknowledged and addressed cultural causes of violence, there was little substantive analysis of religion or how it influenced and shaped fluid identities, religious and moral identities as well as fluid individual cultural identities.61

For example, her most detailed reference to religion was her acknowledgement that most nonviolent movements in history had spiritual roots in one of the major religious traditions; e.g. Buddhism in Viet Nam; Christianity in the American Civil Rights movement, Latin America and the base communities,

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59 Ibid., 81.
60 Ibid., 77.
61 Ibid.
Philippines and people power, and in the fall of Eastern Europe; and Hinduism and Jesus’ sayings which informed Gandhi’s spirituality and the pioneering of the field of NVR. However, in subsequent chapters she did not explore which resources in these religions inspired a spirituality of non-violence and how that spirituality might transcend the religious and be located in people who are self-acknowledged secularists, atheists or agnostics.

There was also little exploration as to how the religious has shaped and is shaping identities and morality. Although change was central to her theory, it was more focused on external change in the political arena. She did not reflect on how religion had shaped and was shaping the moral identities of the oppressed. The identity of the oppressed primarily defined by their oppression and then by their awakening, seemed to form a unitary category. There seems to be little analysis of the contested identities and plural identities within the group labeled oppressed. The identities of the oppressors also appeared to be a monolithic, unitary category in her writings and there is little analysis of how their identities changed when confronted by the nonviolent resistance of the oppressed.

The consequence of this is that the essentialized identities of the victim or the oppressed and the oppressor are largely left intact, which again reinforced the binary opposition between the victim and the oppressor. In her model, it is difficult to uncover ways in which oppressors also can act differently, humanely and morally and how their identities were changed by their encounters with the Other.

\[62\] Ibid., 41.
The final approach I chose to address because of its specific emphasis on opening up new possible futures is the psychosocial narrative approach as articulated by Daniel Bar Tal and Nadim Rouhana. They argued that the narratives which each side have about the past are what largely fuel and sustain the conflict; and they argue that although at first glance these narratives were incommensurate, irreconcilable and contributed to the intractability of the conflict, they are being challenged by individuals from both parties to the conflict that have been transformed by their encounters with the Other.

They elaborated the following as the key components of the narratives each party has constructed about the past:

1. My side is the sole victim in the conflict
2. The other side is the dehumanized Other, the Oppressor;
3. My side has sole historical claims to the land whereas the other party has no legitimate claims to it.

They argued that the source of conflict was cognitive; a clash of hegemonic narratives, therefore, the solution to the conflict was cognitive change. They recommended that the way to engender this change was through contact approaches like Kelman’s .where peoples’ beliefs about the Other were transformed as a result of their encounters with the Other as human...

Initially, this approach appears promising in that it acknowledges the different histories of each party and initially did not appear to normalize the more powerful side’s interpretation of the past as being the objective and true account of the conflict. However it is problematic for many reasons.

First of all there was a curious absence of religion in Bar Tal’s analysis even though he has elaborated different kinds of societal beliefs in detail.\(^{65}\) There was little discussion as to how religion might work to influence and shape both societal concepts of conflict and of peace and how it might be construed in ways that either contributed to an ethos of violence or an ethos of conflict in a given conflict.\(^{66}\) He mentioned religion once with reference to the Israel/Palestine conflict as something that had become politicized.

*These segments anchor their national and territorial claims in religious doctrine that considers the country a holy land and views Jerusalem as a sacred city.*\(^{67}\)

He did not follow this statement up with an analysis of how this has occurred, what the politicization of religion meant in practice, or how to adjudicate between the claims about ownership of the land and Jerusalem made by adherents of different religions who politicized religion. He did not explore how the religious shaped the narratives on either side, both the secular and religious. Instead he listed it as one unexamined source of societal beliefs that each side used to justify their cause.\(^{68}\) Finally, he did not explore the ways in which religion worked to shape individuals’ identities and morality.

Furthermore, Bar Tal, like Kelman, asserted that the intractability of the conflict was due in part to the intrinsic human need for identity, security and recognition outlined by Burton.\(^{69}\) Again, this privileging of human needs obscures the resiliency and morality of humans who participate in peacebuilding activities.

\(^{65}\) Bar-Tal, “Societal Beliefs.”
\(^{67}\) Bar-Tal and Rouhana, “Psychological Dynamics of Intractable Ethnonational Conflicts,” 768.
\(^{68}\) Bar-Tal, *Shared Beliefs in a Society*, 288.
\(^{69}\) Bar-Tal and Rouhana, “Psychological Dynamics of Intractable Ethnonational Conflicts,” 767.
By basing this model on human needs theory the psycho-social model is unable to escape determinism, the emphasis on individual autonomy devoid of social context and the instrumental rationality that form the metaphysical assumptions which undergird this theory. How and why individuals choose to participate in contact activities and how they were changed by these encounters is concealed.

There are other difficulties with this approach which are similar those of other contact approaches. First of all this approach tacitly assumed that the narratives of each side were equal and commensurate. This obscures the asymmetrical aspect of the conflict and reinforces the structural and cultural inequality between the two sides. Secondly, implicit in this approach is that the narratives for each side are hegemonic rather than contested within the societies that they are purported to reflect. There is no one Israeli narrative or one Palestinian narrative about the conflict. Instead there are many overlapping and conflicting narratives within each side rendering means to be a Palestinian or Israeli complex and contested. This makes it difficult to explore the positive cognitive changes amongst individuals within each side that occur as people encounter the Other. Bar Tal and Rouhana admitted that their model was unable to account for how individual change translated into broader societal change and admitted a different methodology was required for doing this. Natality, as I construe it in Chapter 2, informs such a methodology.\(^7\) Finally, because this approach leaves the boundaries of the sacred and secular intact, the ways in which religion works to shape moralities and identities within each side is hidden.

\(^7\) Ibid., 769.
These contact, NVR and narrative approaches are more promising than the T1 approach in that their aim is promote positive peace rather than the minimalist T1 *realpolitik* peace, a balance of power between warring states. By recognizing that there were more actors and interests besides those of states, they opened up the possibilities for more democratic peacebuilding. However, the norms underlying these approaches, most notably those that reinforce rigid boundaries of sacred and secular are, as in *realpolitik*, left unchallenged. This obscures the ways in which religious beliefs and practices inform the identities and moral motivations of individuals that are publically engaged in peacebuilding.

In Chapter 2, I outline a somewhat different approach based on my reading of Jantzen’s politics of natality, which seeks to uncover the political significance of the religious beliefs and practices of those engaged in peacebuilding. Then, I return to these three approaches from the epistemological perspective of natality in Chapter 3. I predict that a moral imaginary of natality, by locating flourishing, will be able to uncover valuable insights generated by those engaging in these activities.

The role of gender and gender construction is a further factor of concern which I address in the next section.

### 1.3.3. Gender in T2+ approaches to peacebuilding.

Current peacebuilding efforts tend to marginalise the moral actions, changing identities and insights of religious women. My hypothesis is that a politics of natality will also be able to uncover the perspectives of these women by
locating the ways in which they flourish. These perspectives are ones which tend
to be overlooked by current non-gendered, gendered and religious approaches to
peacebuilding.

Much has already been written about gender and the gendered construction
of war and peace and many have already explored the ways in which women have
been marginalised in peacebuilding in both the T1 and T2+ approaches. The
importance of women’s contributions to peacebuilding in situations of armed
conflict was eventually acknowledged by the United Nations in Security Council
Resolution 1325 which was adopted in 2000 but, even so, the contributions of
women to peacebuilding are still marginalised. I will briefly consider the literature
on gendered communications and contact approaches to peacebuilding and the
role of women’s organisations in peacebuilding in the Israel/Palestine conflict and
their approach towards religion.

The first women to consider gender in contact and communications
approaches in the Israel/Palestine conflict were Tamra d’Estree and Eileen Babbitt
who compared two all-women problem solving workshops with a mixed group
workshops. Their goal was to determine whether or not women, qua women,

71 Judith Butler, Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence (London: Verso, 2004);
Cynthia Cockburn, “Gender in Armed Conflict and Peace Processes,” Cyprus review 13, no. 1
(2001); Jean Elshtain, Women and War (Sussex: The Harvester Press, Ltd., 1987); Cynthia Enloe,
Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics. Updated ed.
(Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Cynthia Enloe, The Curious Feminist: Searching
for Women in a New Age of Empire (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Christine
Sylvester, Feminist International Relations: An Unfinished Journey; J Ann Tickner, Gender in
International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security (New York: Columbia
72 U N Security Council Resolution 1325: Recognizing Women’s Vital Roles in Achieving Peace and
Security, (General Books, 2012); Gender, Peace and Security Women’s Advocacy and Conflict
Resolution, (Commonwealth Secretarial, 2012); ibid.
73 Tamra d’Estree and Eileen Babbitt, “Women and the Art of Peacemaking: Data from Israeli-
Palestinian Interactive Problem-Solving Workshops,” Political Psychology 19, no. 1 (1998).
were more effective in all-female workshops and if they were, were there any political implications?

Based on the data, they concluded that women were more willing to confront difficult issues such as the final status of Jerusalem. However, changing the gender composition of the workshops did not address the difficulties inherent in the problem solving approach outlined in the previous section. This study did not reflect on the different motivations for Israeli and Palestinian women’s participation in these workshops, and therefore, left the underlying assumptions of human need theory intact. Furthermore it did not address how the identities of the women participating were changed by their encounters. From a feminist standpoint excluding considerations of how these women’s nationalities might influence their perspectives their approach did not challenge assumptions of a unitary autonomous subject. The emphasis was on finding a common ‘woman’s voice’ in order to determine if women, a universal category with a presumed universal standpoint, were more peaceful than men meaning no significant women’s voices emerged from this study.

Similar to other problem solving workshops, the results of the all women workshop did not address the asymmetries between the two sides. Finally, there was no mention or analysis in this study of religion as a contributor to conflict or peacebuilding in this study. It did not consider how women’s moral motivations and identities were influenced by the religious context into which they were born.

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74 Ibid., 205.
75 Ibid., 186.
Although they listed participants’ individual political party affiliations for each side, no mention was made of their religious affiliation. Finally, as in Kelman’s approach, the neutrality of the third party mediating the problem solving workshops was not challenged; the only concession was that the moderators for the all-female workshops were women.

Simona Sharoni analysed the history of the women’s peace movement in both Israel and Palestine. She concluded that the first intifada was both a catalyst for the development of the Israeli feminist movement and for the invigoration of the Palestinian feminist movement Cooperation and interaction between women across the Israel/Palestine divide took place in the form of dialogue groups, international conferences, solidarity visits, joint demonstrations, and collaborative work on specific projects.

Sharoni critiqued dialogue groups for assuming the environment in which they took place was neutral. Because Palestinian women’s ultimate goal was the national liberation, they viewed dialogue as a tool to mobilize Israeli public opinion against the Occupation, whereas Israeli Jewish women, who tended to privilege feminism over nationalism, were encouraged to participate in the name of universal sisterhood. Sharoni noted how the dialogue groups’ emphasis on universal sisterhood which failed to problematize the identities of women by race and class

78 Ibid., 196.
80 Sharoni, “Rethinking Women’s Struggles,” 135.
81 Sharoni, Gender and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 142.
both within Israel and Palestine as well as between the two groups of women, meant there was little space to explore identity and difference within and between groups.

She also discussed how these dialogue groups universalised motherhood and made it central in their attempts to address the conflict. This focus did not allow for the exploration of women’s identities outside of motherhood from which to express opposition to war and violence.

Finally, Sharoni critiqued these dialogue approaches for not addressing the structural asymmetries between the two sides.

The weaknesses of these communications approaches, even though they were self-consciously feminist and tried to take differently gendered identities into consideration, are similar to the ones elaborated in the previous section. The underlying assumption of these approaches of fixed rather than fluid identities meant that it was still difficult to account for different kinds of gendered subjects, particularly the ways in which Palestinian nationalism played a major role in the ways that Palestinian women were constructing their identities. In this instance the fixed identity was based on universal concept of sisterhood and motherhood that obscured the different political goals of Israeli and Palestinian women and obscured differences between different groups of women within Israel and Palestine based on their social context, i.e. their class, race or religion. Gender identities were essentialized.

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82 Ibid., 140.
83 Ibid., 141.
84 For a discussion of the ways in which the complexities of gender and nationalism affected both Israeli and Palestinian women see Nira Yuval-Davis, Gender and Nation (London: Sage, 1997).
Additionally, other than addressing religion in only one reference and then only as one aspect of identity, along with ethnicity, class and sexuality, Sharoni did not address the ways in which religion informed and shaped women’s moral, ethnic and national identities. Although she pointed out the need to address the complex ways in which nationalism informed and shaped identities, she failed to identify the ways in which religion further complicated these different and fluid identities. Religion, as in the other contact approaches, was missing.

Feminist literature on the conflict and its resolution by Palestinian women has focused more on addressing the challenges they face in negotiating the competing claims made on them by feminism and by nationalism. Penny Johnson and Eileen Kuttab addressed the differences in women’s public participation in resistance in the first and second intifada. While gender equality was advanced through women’s participation in the first intifada, they concluded that not only women, but Palestinian civil society, were excluded from public participation in Palestinian politics in the second intifada. To address the causes of this absence, they explored gendered constructions of masculinity, motherhood and paternity, but did not locate how religion informed how these identities were being constructed. Although they recommended developing an alternative politics which would not only be the main avenue for women’s participation and gender

85 Sharoni, Gender and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 140.
equality, but for a democratic Palestine, nowhere is the religious looked to for constructing this alternative politics.\textsuperscript{88}

In contrast, Maria Holt highlighted the difficulties that religion presented to these women\textsuperscript{89} She concluded that another violence Palestinian woman faced was the conflict between ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity.’\textsuperscript{90} She wrote:

\textit{They have been exposed to theories of women’s rights and feminism, and at the same time, to the ‘fundamentalist’ agenda of the Islamists. Tugged in several directions, they must maintain family stability, act as an example of appropriate female activism in a conservative Arab-Muslim society, and avoid threatening the precarious authority of their men.}\textsuperscript{91}

This characterisation of tradition versus modernity, as articulated in the quote above, assumes religion as ‘tradition’ (that is to say backward) and conflates religion with culture. This characterisation failed to locate the ways in which Muslim women could be devout and still advance the political participation of women in the public sphere.

A more promising gender approach to peacebuilding, one that recognized gender fluidity in the Palestinian case, was outlined by Sophie Richter-Devroe.\textsuperscript{92} She explored the potential of what she labelled Track III (T3) peacebuilding, that of humanitarian and development assistance, which may or may not have peacebuilding as its ultimate aim, for exploring the ways in which Palestinian women’s identities were changing as a result of their participation in development projects. She argued that the feminist peace project was analytically weak

\textsuperscript{88} Johnson and Kuttab, "Where Have All the Women (and Men) Gone?," 40.
\textsuperscript{89} Holt, "Palestinian Women, Violence and the Peace Process."
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., 234.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{92} Sophie Richter-Devroe, "Gender, Culture and Conflict Resolution in Palestine," \textit{Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies} Vol. 4, no. No. 2 (2008).
because, in conflating women with gender, it construed gender identities as “static, individualistic, and isolated from other identity-defining structures.”\textsuperscript{93} It is one of the few approaches in the available literature that problematize the victim/oppressor binary and explored the ways in which ‘victims’ did not act out of need or lack and did not need to be rescued. She quoted one of her interviewees:

\textit{Palestinian women tend to be portrayed as victims of the occupation….but, these women are not victims---they are survivors, they are powerful and continue every day to find different forms of resistance to survive.}\textsuperscript{94}

Her field research uncovered the ways in which Palestinian women’s participation in local women’s development organisations and daily activities to care for their families constituted a political act. However, by conflating religion and culture, the approach was weakened thus it did not explore the role of religion in constructing women’s identities as an ‘identity-defining structure’, or the ways in which it informed their moral motivations.

In this section, I have noted that communications and contact approaches, even when undertaken by women, leave assumptions about subjectivity that is gendered and religious intact making it difficult to locate different gendered subjects that are in the process of becoming. Because the becoming of different women’s subjectivity, including considerations of religion, is the central concern of Jantzen’s conceptualisation of natality, her work which I explore in Chapter 2, offers an approach that is more inclusive of differently gendered religious subjects. Natality offers an approach that is able to explore the intersections of religion and gender in the construction of fluid, gendered identities.

\textsuperscript{93}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid., 48.
However, first I will briefly explore the literature of those who have sought to reintroduce religion into peacebuilding as well as the ways in which they consider gender.

1.3.4. Religion in Religious approaches to T2+ peacebuilding.

Douglas Johnson and Cynthia Sampson were amongst the first to reintroduce the relevance of religion as a topic for study in international relations. They identified religious leaders as potential diplomats in armed conflicts that involved some aspect of religious violence. As a result, numerous religious conflict resolution specialists from the three monotheistic religious traditions represented in the Israel/Palestine conflict sought to explore how it was possible for adherents of each of these religions to engage in peacebuilding efforts by mobilising moral resources within their traditions that supported peace. These practitioner/theorists of religious approaches to peacebuilding in the Israel/Palestine conflict include Mohamed Abu-Nimer (Islam), Marc Gopin (Judaism) and Scott Appleby (Christian).

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The strengths of these approaches to reintroduce religion were two-fold. First they all portrayed the plurality and dynamism within their particular religious tradition; they noted how religions were not hegemonic, but plural, dynamic, contested and constantly changing and adapting throughout history to changing social and political conditions. According to each of these writers, it was this dynamism of religion, its capacity for change, and the inherent internal pluralism of each religious tradition which contained not only the resources for violence but also for peace.

For example Appleby defined religion as:

*A sustained argument conducted anew by each generation about the contemporary significance and meaning of the sources of sacred wisdom and revealed truth.*

This definition of religion opened up the possibility that religions were fluid and dynamic. Appleby argued that each generation reinterpreted the sacred texts in light of the cultural and historical context in which they found themselves. The texts did not exist outside of time and history. Their relevance depended on the ways in which people interpreted them given their social context. This meant religious texts and traditions could be explored for the ways in which they promoted peace in the present.

Abu-Nimer developed a theological apologetic for Islamic peacebuilding which challenged representations of Muslims as extremists intent on violent jihad. He argued that there was hermeneutical flexibility in this framework to interpret


97 Appleby, The Ambivalence of the Sacred, 33.

Islamic texts and traditions in ways that supported universal peacebuilding values, which if consistently applied, were capable of transcending and governing all types and levels of conflict.  

Gopin argued that the monotheistic ‘Abrahamic’ religions as well as all major world religions contained values which should be excavated in order to support peaceful resolution of conflict over violence. These values included empathy, non-violence and pacifism, the sanctity of life, the importance of interiority (spirituality), compassion, and promoting self-restraint.

Secondly, they emphasized the importance of the inner spiritual life of individual peacemakers, something that secular peacebuilding T1 and T2+ theory tends to overlook. In another example Abu-Nimer highlighted the importance of the inner cultivation of virtues, such as humility, respect, forgiveness, love, compassion, and self-discipline.

However, none of the writers adequately challenged the liberal western definition of religion that sees religion as a distinct and separate phenomenon from the secular. They did not problematize western liberal definitions of religion beyond stating that there was a need to redraw the boundary between religion and the secular that was more accommodating to religion. None of them propose how this boundary might be redrawn.

99 Abu Nimer, "Nonviolence and Peace Building in Islam."
100 Ibid., 6, Appleby, _Ambivalence of the Sacred_
101 Ibid., 26
103 Appleby, _The Ambivalence of the Sacred_; Gopin, "Religion, Violence, and Conflict Resolution."
For instance, Gopin viewed religion as a subset of culture, not as something that also influenced and shaped culture. He wrote

_I assume for the purposes of this book that religious text, myths, metaphors, laws and values are a subset of all cultural phenomena of a particular civilization._\(^{104}\)

In this view, religious myths, metaphors and values, are discrete resources to be employed in peacebuilding, the goals of which are set by secular authorities. They are not used to challenge the ways in which the secular authorities define identities, set the agenda, or to explore the ways in which the secular reify certain identities and power imbalances as being true, objective reality.

Appleby recommended that the religious and private/secular and public distinction needed to be “recast in the light of the new alliances between governments, NGO’s, and religious bodies.”\(^{105}\) Throughout his book he insisted how “the relationship between ‘the secular’ and ‘the religious’ is seen to be more intimate, overlapping, and mutually transformative than previously understood.”\(^{106}\) However, he did not explore how the religious and secular might be co-constitutive in the discourses it shapes around ontology and epistemology.

Appleby provided a useful taxonomy of religious fundamentalists and their attributes and discussed the ways in which religious fundamentalism was a reaction to secularism which threatened to erode their religious identity.\(^{107}\) However, he did not explore the phenomenon of fundamentalist strains of secularism which are also symptomatic of an underlying metaphysical difficulty

\(^{104}\) Gopin, _Holy War, Holy Peace_, 5.
\(^{105}\) Appleby, _The Ambivalence of the Sacred_, 301-302.
\(^{106}\) Ibid., 4.
\(^{107}\) Ibid., 101.
inherent in modernity. The clash between secular modernity and religious extremists is a clash of fundamentalist views about identity. He wrote:

_Ideologically, fundamentalists are both reactive against and interactive with secular modernity; and they tend to be absolutist, inerrantist, dualist, and apocalyptic in cognitive orientation._

The same could be said for fundamentalist secularists who in turn fear the invasion of religion into the public sphere, e.g. the strong reaction in France of secularists to Muslim women wearing veils in France which threatens secularism, a major aspect of French identity.

Another weakness of these approaches, similar to the weakness of other contact dialogue approaches, was that they did not address the structural injustices, cultural and economic, between the two sides.

Gopin illustrates this tendency. Although critical of secular problem solving approaches for being utilitarian and instrumental, he failed to sufficiently challenge the asymmetry these approaches left intact. This is evident in his critique of the work of the Christian NGO, Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT), in Hebron. Their work involved shielding Palestinians at Israeli checkpoints from violent attacks by Israeli Settlers. He criticised the NGO for its ‘aggressive partisanship’ which therefore compromised interfaith peacebuilding efforts. He commented:

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108 Ibid. 88
111 Gopin, *Between Eden and Armageddon*. 155
112 Ibid., 159-60.
The invitations to intervene come from one side of a conflict, and, therefore, the team is immediately entering as partisans. This makes perfect sense in pursuing justice but not in conflict resolution.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, 159-60.}

Implicit in his critique of CPT, are the same assumptions made by the secular peacebuilding approaches that he criticised for being instrumentalist, that 1) both sides in the conflict occupy equal and symmetrical positions; and 2) that it is possible for a third party to observe, analyse or participate in peacebuilding from a neutral standpoint. Furthermore by drawing a false distinction between ‘justice’ and ‘peacework’, he obscured the ways in which the structural and cultural inequalities on the ground operate and need to be addressed as an integral part of the peacebuilding process.

Abu-Nimer was the only one of the three who criticized the asymmetries of different peace processes.\footnote{Abu Nimer, “Religion, Dialogue, and Non-Violent Actions.”} Interestingly, the religious writings that focus the most on the role of justice in interfaith peacebuilding efforts come from the economically militarily weaker and arguably more oppressed Palestinian side. Palestinian Christian liberation theologians, like Naim Ateek, the founder of \textit{Sabeel}, a Palestinian organization which has developed a Christian theology of NVR against the Israeli occupation, was also concerned about justice.\footnote{Ateek, Ellis, and Ruether, \textit{Faith and the Intifada : Palestinian Christian Voices}; Ateek and Prior, \textit{Holy Land, Hollow Jubilee : God, Justice, and the Palestinians}; Ateek, \textit{Justice, and Only Justice : A Palestinian Theology of Liberation}.}

However, these writers also failed to challenge the liberal western imaginary in which these emancipatory projects are grounded. They do not problematize subjectivity or the underlying onto-theological presuppositions of liberalism that reify a dialectical emancipatory process at the expense of a plurality of identities.
and ideas about what peace would look like. Liberation theology has been criticized elsewhere for its rigid teleological view of history, its unitary subjectivity that does not explore difference in terms of gender or ethnicity as well as class, and its rigid binary oppositions in terms of the oppressor versus the oppressed.\footnote{Ellen Armour, \textit{Deconstruction, Feminist Theology and the Problem of Difference: Subvert the Race/Gender Divide} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Daniel Bell, \textit{Liberation Theology after the End of History} (London: Routledge, 2001).} For example, feminist liberation theologian Elizabeth Johnson noted that classic liberation theology focused on the poor at the expense of women. She sought to develop a liberation theology that promoted gender equality.\footnote{Elizabeth Johnson, \textit{She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse} (New York: The Crossroads Publishing Company, 1992).} Furthermore, the oppressed, or victims, are privileged, but little attention has been given into the ways in which they also act unjustly or immorally.

Gopin suggested that for conflict resolution to work on a global scale it needed to:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Become part of the ethical ethos of civilization, part of the means, both interpersonal and institutional, by which conflict resolution and peacemaking are pursued by individuals and institutions, not just an end.}\footnote{Gopin, \textit{Between Eden and Armageddon}, 150.}
\end{quote}

However, because neither he nor the other writers mentioned in this section constructed an ethical ethos, one that transcended, but also incorporated the religious, some of their insights, much needed, have not been heard or adopted by policy makers. They have also failed to sufficiently challenge the liberal western imaginary in which these emancipatory projects were grounded. They did not problematize subjectivity or the underlying onto-theological presuppositions of liberalism in which a unitary subjectivity was reified and which did not consider
ethnicity, class, or gender (which I will consider in the next section), and which, notably in the case of liberation theology, reify a dialectical emancipatory project at the expense of pluralism. Nowhere is this more evident than in their approach to gender. Because of my concern with gender and the intersections of religion and gender below I will look at the ways, in which these religious approaches have neglected gender,

1.3.5. Gender in religious peacebuilding.

Like the other approaches, the authors above also leave western liberal assumptions of a unitary, autonomous subject which exists outside of history intact by not sufficiently addressing the construction of gender identities. Therefore, as in other approaches, the voices and contributions of women peacebuilders, in this instance, religious women, have been marginalised. In this section, I will note how Gopin and Appleby’s attempts to address gender as a part of peacebuilding fall short. Then I will briefly note how attempts to explore the actions of religious Palestinian and Muslim women emphasise the importance of interventions that explore the intersections of religion and gender are for peacebuilding.

Gopin referred to gender briefly when drawing up a research agenda to study the relationship between religion and conflict resolution calling for a “feminist critique” of religious systems that treated the Other harshly.\textsuperscript{119} Although he argued that contestation over gender roles both contributed to and marked ethno-

\textsuperscript{119} Gopin, "Religion, Violence, and Conflict Resolution."
religious conflicts, he glossed over the need to analyse religious justifications of
gendered acts of war as necessary part of conflict resolution.  

Elsewhere he did not contest essentialized gender roles but reinforced them.

He contended:

*It is self-evident that, in much of human civilization, men are associated with the*
*aggressive roles of hunter/gatherer and warrior and identified with the cold calculus*
*of war and rational advantage. Women are commonly associated with peaceful*
*characteristics, including a constitutional abhorrence of violence, an embrace of*
*emotional empathy, and a strong tendency to interact with others in a deeper, more*
*intuitive fashion.*  

His primary concern with gender seems more due to his concern that
peacemakers were marginalised rather than out of a genuine concern for gender
equality and for involving more religious women in peacebuilding. He worried that
their work was associated with the “feminine” in the West, e.g. what he termed the
“passive quality of listening” instead of the masculine quality of “holding forth.”  

He argued that if men, the main instigators of war, were to take peacemaking
seriously then these attributes also needed to be viewed as masculine. But he
provided little analysis of how certain constructions of religion have supported
certain gender identities over others or how a feminist theological hermeneutic
could be used to challenge the reification of the gender roles within a religious
tradition.

Appleby mentioned gender briefly in the introduction and a lengthy footnote
in his book which he cited various Christian and Muslim feminist theologians’

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120 Gopin, *Holy War, Holy Peace*. 69
121 Gopin, *Between Eden and Armageddon*. 191
122 Ibid. 192
123 Ibid. 191

55
critiques of the ‘patriarchal’ natures of their religions.\textsuperscript{124} There were few examples in his extensive catalogue of religious efforts at peacebuilding of religious women engaged in peacebuilding, a role which has been documented elsewhere as being extensive.\textsuperscript{125} Appleby’s marginalisation of women reflected an institutional bias against women’s agency and leadership in the constructions of religion which can be found in all the world’s major religions which privileges men and male leadership. Feminist theologians in all major religions have written extensively about this privileging of men and male identity and leadership at the expense of women where this privileging of men became viewed as natural and normative.\textsuperscript{126}

As Mary Daly, one of the earliest feminist theologians wrote this institutional bias was first evidenced, but not limited to, referring to the Divine as He. She is often quoted, “If God is male; then male is God.”\textsuperscript{127}

Where Appleby specifically addressed gender it was in the context of religious fundamentalism. He observed that one of the characteristics of religious fundamentalist sects was that they formed around authoritarian and/or charismatic males.\textsuperscript{128} Marc Juergensmeyer also attributed the sources of religious violence as

\begin{footnotes}
\item[124] Appleby, \textit{The Ambivalence of the Sacred}. 2 and 310-311n
\item[125] See \url{http://www.ifor.org/WPP} the site for Women Peacemakers Program of the International Fellowship for Reconciliation and the website for UN Women in Peace work on Security Council Resolution 1325, \url{http://www.peacewomen.org/un/sc/1325.html}
\item[127] Mary Daly, \textit{Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women’s Liberation} (Boston,: Beacon Press, 1973).
\item[128] Appleby, \textit{The Ambivalence of the Sacred}.
\end{footnotes}
being male. He portrayed religious terrorists as young men who were ‘homophobic, sexually frustrated, and marginalized.’

These writers’ analysis of religious violence was based on an essentialization of gender roles and therefore it becomes difficult for them to account for the emergence of female suicide bombers. Also, in Gopin, Appleby, and Abu-Nimer, religious leaders, as noted by the lack examples of women religious leaders in their writing, were implicitly male; men are the ones who reinterpreted the texts and participated in interfaith dialogue projects.

Furthermore this gender blindness led them to discount the influence women have had in Hamas which led them to dismiss Hamas as a terrorist organisation existing on the margins of Palestinian society. Islah Jad, a feminist Palestinian academic contradicts both of these conclusions in her more nuanced article on Hamas.

I will now explore the writings of two feminist authors, one from each side of the conflict, who specifically addressed intersections of religion and gender. One is Ayala Emmett, a Jewish anthropologist from the United States and the other is a Palestinian academic, Islah Jad.

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130 Ibid., 201.
132 Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*. 199
Emmett produced an anthropological study of the women’s peace movement in Israel prior to the signing of the Oslo agreement.\textsuperscript{134} Her basic thesis was that the activities of women’s peace movements prior to Oslo created necessary preconditions for the Oslo agreement by fostering a political climate favourable to peace.\textsuperscript{135} By making women the focus of her investigation, she highlighted significant aspects of political life that had been marginalised.

She explored the divisions within the Israeli women’s peace movement between secular women and religious women and then explored how religious women for peace were also marginalized in their own communities both because of their political stance for peace and because of their gender.

The religious women for peace were religious Jewish fundamentalists from the same socio-economic background as Gush Emunim, the radical religious settler movement. However, these women interpreted the Jewish scriptures and traditions differently than people belonging Gush Emunim.\textsuperscript{136}

Whereas members of Gush Emunim viewed settling the West Bank as a mitzvah, or a good deed, the religious women peacebuilders privileged the passage Exodus 23:9-19 of their scriptures that gave priority to hospitality and to treating the stranger well. As a result, they were committed to building peace with the Palestinians rather than denying them access to their crops and land as those

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Ibid.}
\footnote{Ibid. 107}
\end{footnotes}
in Gush Emunim did. These women labelled these settlers’ actions as a desecration of the divine name rather than as a mitzvah.\footnote{Ibid. 111} She concluded that:  
*Defining the nature of God profoundly determines the actions of human beings.*\footnote{Ibid. 115}

Therefore determining which view of the divine people are mobilising to support their actions for peace or for conflict is a political consideration with political implications. I explore this more in Chapter 2. A politics of natality will pay attention to the ways in which people construct the divine both to support the becoming of their own identities as well as their political actions.

Furthermore, these religious women did not primarily identify themselves as belonging to a sisterhood of women peacebuilders. They were critical of secular women for peace for their lack of religiosity. Similarly, the secular women viewed religious women with suspicion and did not make accommodation for them to engage in joint peacebuilding activities.\footnote{Ibid.} In this instance, the religious women felt much more at home with their religious compatriots, who like them were actively engaged in resisting the secularization of Israeli society.

Jad explored the interaction between the secular feminist movement and religious Islamic women and how this interaction resulted in changing and fluid identities for these women.\footnote{Jad, “Between Religion and Secularism.” 172} She demonstrated how since 2003 Hamas was forced by the actions of religious women who had been influenced by secular feminism to broaden its platform and redefine its gender ideology in order to include the active participation of women.
She asserted:

_The rigid, formal division of labour, confining women to the domestic sphere as the reproducers of a ‘moral’ nation, gave way to more open-ended interpretations of the texts, enabling women to occupy a wider space in the public arena._

By strategically interpreting their religious texts in a way that expanded their gender roles, women were able to ‘Islamize’ the women’s rights discourse, i.e. contextualise it within their own social and religious milieu. Contrary to stereotypes of religious Muslim women as traditional, these women recruits were university-educated professional women.

In contrast to Juergensmeyer’s dismissal of Hamas as a marginalised fundamentalist terrorist organization comprised of male ‘misfits’ Jad, by noting the ways in which women participated in this organisation, was able to uncover significant evidence for the broad popular appeal that Hamas had in Palestinian society, evidence which was obscured by Juergensmeyer’s gender ideology.

What we learn from these women is that fundamentalist religious groups were not monolithic and religious and gender identities were not static. By exploring the intersections of religious, gendered and national identity, it becomes possible to explore the ways in which religious women mobilised different aspects of their religious traditions to support and inform their political activism. It also becomes possible to discern the specific ways in which these women’s identities have changed and are changing. Finally, it helps to locate the ways in which their changing identities challenge and transform the dominant gender constructions of their particular religious tradition. Similarly, we discover that the activism of

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141 Ibid. 174
142 Ibid. 174
religious women transgress representations of women in secular feminist peacebuilding approaches which often construe religious women as ‘backward’ and as victims of tradition with little or no agency. Therefore it is important for peacebuilding to explore these intersections of gender and religion. These examples indicate that religious women have many different voices and roles to play in civil society discourses about the future. What is needed is a more nuanced feminist theoretical lens that provides a more comprehensive perspective of the intersections of religion, gender and identity formation. I argue in the next chapter that natality provides such a lens.
1.4. Conclusion

A consideration of the ways in which religious discourses shape values, identity and morality is largely missing from current peacebuilding approaches. Religion was largely marginalised in these approaches as being irrelevant, unintelligible, and/or irrational. Where it was considered it reinforced, rather than challenged, the other difficulties that this chapter identified with these approaches. Because of this, it was difficult to explore the ways in which religion informs the moral imagination of different subjects, particularly the perspectives of religious women.

Firstly these approaches were unable to adequately account for or locate different subjectivities, particularly those from different religions, cultures and genders. In these approaches identity was given and fixed. Secondly, these models with their deterministic emphasis on human need were not able to satisfactorily explain or explore the ethical motivations of individuals who had become active in the peace process. Thirdly, by highlighting the possibility of a neutral and objective third party, some models assumed reason was abstract and that it was possible to apply universal principles to resolve the conflict independently of any historical or social context in which individuals were located. Conflict was viewed as ‘irrational’ and therefore it was up to ‘impartial’ third parties to intervene and rescue those engaged in conflict. Finally by not adequately addressing the structural inequalities between the two sides and by reinforcing the oppressor/victim binary, these approaches had difficulties uncovering and
exploring the complexities of the relationships between the two parties in the conflict.

In the next chapter, based on my reading of Jantzen’s work on flourishing and natality, I outline the contours of a moral imaginary grounded in natality which has the flourishing of natals as its ethic and goal. This framework, one more comfortable with the complexities of identity, will explore the ways in which religion informs the moral imaginary in terms of identity, morality and flourishing. Religion is intelligible. It is my hypothesis that such a framework, by focusing on intersections of religion, gender and culture, will open up voices and identities of people engaged in peacebuilding. It offers a broader range of futures, ones which engender and celebrate flourishing.
Chapter 2

Human Flourishing: Constructing the moral imaginary of natality

2.1 Introduction

This chapter considers Jantzen’s interventions of natality and flourishing for privileging ethics and morality as a central concern of politics and considers what framework they might offer for analysing current models of peacebuilding. For Jantzen, flourishing constituted both the goal and the ethics of politics of natality. In other places, she referred to it as a metaphor that best characterised the moral imaginary of natality. For Jantzen, flourishing, or what constituted peoples’ well-being, when considered through the lens of natality, was more than an individual maximising their own well-being at the expense of others. I explore and critique her development of aspects of flourishing in this chapter.

Jantzen insisted that natality was first and foremost:

…the condition of hope, and of the future. A moral imaginary of natality is one that takes up the tough fragility of life, its hopefulness and its possibilities, its interconnectedness and the dependence of its flourishing on the whole web of life around it, not excluding the earth.\(^\text{144}\)

My question is what happens when we take natality seriously as a starting point for ethics and politics? Throughout this thesis, I note the ways in which a politics of natality, is a politics of hope. If natality rather than mortality were the starting point, what spaces are opened up for subjectivity, knowledge and for the end goal of peacebuilding, human flourishing?

\(^{144}\) Jantzen, "Flourishing: Towards an Ethic of Natality," 229.
Section 2 sketches the philosophical backdrop for understanding Jantzen’s approach. She argued that the western moral imaginary was not best suited to explore and promote social transformation that allowed for the flourishing of all because it was metaphysically grounded in death with its emphasis on abstract moral reason and its conceptualisation of subjectivity as being fixed, autonomous and unitary. Natality, with its emphasis on birth, provided a different ground for considering subjectivity and reason within their social and historical contexts. Therefore Section 3 considers key aspects of natality that inform the politics of a moral imaginary of natality.

Section 4 analyses her conceptualisations of becoming divine, pantheism and process theology, for the ways in which they inform identity (religious and moral), reason, and considerations of what different futures might constitute flourishing. These religious interventions are central to a politics of natality because they help redraw the sacred/secular boundaries in ways that make these boundaries less impermeable, thereby uncovering the hidden voices and actions of religious actors in the public sphere.

Finally, Section 5 draws out the aspects of flourishing I have identified from my analysis of these interventions. Because Jantzen’s view of flourishing was problematic and limiting in some aspects and not fully developed in others, I explore other valid versions of flourishing that are not grounded in the emancipatory versions of flourishing located in the western moral imaginary. Also, I examine different conceptions of the past and time and how these inform
flourishing informed by aspects of Arendt’s writings on natality which not considered by Jantzen.

2.2. Jantzen’s intervention into the western moral imaginary.

Jantzen’s intervention of natality in moral philosophy was similar to that of other feminist moral philosophers in that she also sought to redraw the boundaries between morality and politics.\(^\text{145}\) She argued that the good life, or human flourishing, and how to realize it, should be a central aim of politics. According to Jantzen, natality was a feminist ethic based on a feminist critique of the moral imaginary because birth, a uniquely female capacity, had been suppressed in western philosophy.

Her approach was different to those of feminists who essentialized the attributes of motherhood as being peaceful and projected them as superior to ‘masculine’ attributes of war and violence.\(^\text{146}\) For Jantzen it was birth, not motherhood, which was significant because, although not all people were mothers, all people were born of mothers.\(^\text{147}\) Valuing birth meant valuing women, nature, the maternal, embodiedness as well as thought and reason. She developed her suggestions for transforming the western moral imaginary based on her reading of Hannah Arendt’s work on natality. As I explore below, it was in this way Jantzen


\(^{147}\) Jantzen, Becoming Divine.
sought to break down the barriers between politics and morality and to privilege ethics as ‘first philosophy’ prior to ethics and ontology.\textsuperscript{148}

One of the questions that undergird her work was,

\textit{What does it mean to do feminist moral philosophy with notions of utopia and transformation as points of reference? What characteristics are necessary for moral philosophy to address, criticize and ultimately redeem the present---a present whose constitutive ingredients include massive inequalities of gender, ‘race’ and economic cultural resources.}\textsuperscript{149}

She was concerned with transformation, with addressing situations of injustice and how to best promote flourishing. A ‘chastened’ emancipatory feminist, she was suspicious of universal and ‘final’ solutions while writing with the political goals of feminism in mind.\textsuperscript{149}

Jantzen’s interventions were meant to shift the moral imaginary to better equip moral philosophy to address issues of massive inequalities of every sort in the present.\textsuperscript{150} Although she was a feminist philosopher of religion who desired to reshape the western discourse of religion in order to open up the development of different subjectivities of women, what motivated her above all was a concern for flourishing. Her primary argument was that a certain discourse of ‘christendom’, which sustained the western moral imaginary, worked to support and sustain injustice. Therefore, in order to transform situations of injustice, how religion informed ethics and the moral imaginary also must be addressed.

\textsuperscript{148} Butler, \textit{Precarious Life}. Judith Butler is another feminist moral philosopher who sought to break down these barriers. However she grounded her feminist ethics in mourning and death. Butler’s emphasis on human vulnerability and mortality as the starting point for ethics contrasts with natality which emphasizes that the starting point for ethics is birth.

\textsuperscript{149} Jantzen, "Flourishing: Towards an Ethic of Natality,” 219.

\textsuperscript{150} Ibid.
Below, I briefly summarise the key points of Jantzen’s interventions into the western moral imaginary before constructing a moral imaginary of natality inferred from Jantzen’s writings.

2.2.1. The Western moral imaginary is grounded in death.

Chapter 1 defined the moral imaginary as a socially constructed place from which moral thinking is done. It was not synonymous with a particular moral philosophy. Rather, Jantzen contended that moral philosophers, politicians and policy makers share the same moral imaginary. Therefore, different moral philosophies and the ethical systems they generated were likely to be ‘sophisticated articulations’ of that moral imaginary.\textsuperscript{151} For example, Jantzen would argue that cosmopolitanism and realist approaches to international relations are variations of the same western moral imaginary and, as such, exhibit the same characteristics. As noted in the previous chapter, different peacebuilding models were shaped by the similar considerations of religion that T1 policy makers had which rendered the religious as something to be confined to the private sphere with little relevance in public political discourse. Similarly, these models shared similar conceptions of the human condition, identity, reason, and the future which made it difficult to account for agency, fluid identities including fluid religious and moral identities, difference, and possibilities for different futures.

\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., 223.
2.2.2. Grounding human authenticity in death had implications for subjectivity.

In her extensive genealogy of death, Jantzen highlighted how death had been a major preoccupation of western philosophy since Aristotle.\(^{152}\) This led her to conclude that necrophilia, the love of death, underpinned the moral imaginary of the West.

Jantzen argued that birth was suppressed on two levels. Firstly, she argued that western philosophers made death, not birth, the measure of human authenticity. Secondly, she argued that men appropriated birth as their own as birth into singular, autonomous, disembodied thought and reason, and into the life of the mind rather than into a life of material, embodied, human beings born into a web of relationships.\(^{153}\) Finally, she argued that salvation was a metaphor that best characterized the western moral imaginary.

Throughout her work Jantzen argued that death has been privileged in western philosophy as the source of human authenticity or being, freedom for action and responsibility to the other, or ethics.\(^{154}\) She argued that although continental philosophers such as Derrida and Heidegger sought to challenge what Lyotard defined as the ‘grand narratives’ of western modernity, they were unable to escape the preoccupation with death in the western moral imaginary.\(^{155}\)

For example, Jantzen observed how death was a central concept in Heidegger’s *Being and Time*. For Heidegger, it was death that conferred one’s

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\(^{155}\) Ibid. 101
authenticity as a human being and it was death in which human freedom was
grounded.\footnote{Jantzen, \textit{Becoming Divine}. 133} She observed that when Heidegger referred to birth, he used terms
like being ‘thrown’ into existence, and that this thrownness, was ‘thrownness to
death’.\footnote{Ibid.} This ‘thrownness’ connoted a lack of rootedness of human ontology,
being, in any material or bodily existence. She argued, therefore, that the ethical
implication of grounding one’s authenticity in death was putting the pursuit of one’s
own authenticity ahead of ethical responsibility to others.

She also highlighted how philosophers located moral responsibility to
oneself and others in death. In this context, she cited Derrida:

\begin{quote}
\textit{It is from the site of death as the place of my irreplaceability, that is, of my
\end{quote}

Jantzen argued that locating individual moral responsibility in death resulted
in a moral imaginary preoccupied with individual and private morality that little
public political relevance.

When western philosophers did mentioned birth, she claimed that they
referred to it in terms of birth into the life of the mind; in other words that human
subjects were disembodied thought that existed independently of their detached
from historically situated social, political and cultural realities. To illustrate this point
she cited Adrianna Cavarero’s reading of Diotima in Plato’s Symposium.\footnote{Jantzen, \textit{Becoming Divine}, 141-42.}

Jantzen argued that Diotima was not a real flesh and blood woman but a rhetorical
device that Plato employed to teach men what constituted true wisdom. Plato,
through Diotima, advocated that the better union was a spiritual one uniting rational mind with rational mind, rather than a sexual union with a woman that produced physical progeny. Jantzen concluded:

We have, therefore, the unedifying spectacle of male appropriation of birth, taking it away from mothers and bodies and gender and making it bloodless and lifeless.

The grounding of subjectivity in the life of the mind, denying the particular communities, culture, race, gender and religion into which human beings were born, was something Jantzen sought to address through her intervention of natality.

A final aspect of Jantzen’s arguments central to this thesis, is her contention that the doctrine of salvation was privileged in the western discourse of religion, over and above the religious doctrines pertaining to flourishing. She argued that, especially since the Reformation, the western moral imaginary had come to be characterized by the emphasis on individual salvation. Jantzen cited that an examples of the outworking of this religious metaphor in secular discourse included studies which linked the Protestant conception of individual salvation and the rise of capitalism and individualistic liberalism. She maintained that the metaphor of

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161 Jantzen, *Becoming Divine*. 141
162 Ibid. 159 For example Jantzen contended that Jesus was referring to flourishing in terms of the here and now of human existence rather than in terms of eternal life after death when he said “….I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly (John 10:10). It was only later that it became associated with life after death.
salvation supported and reinforced notions of an autonomous, fixed and unitary subject.\textsuperscript{164}

Furthermore Jantzen claimed that the privileging of the doctrine of Jesus’ divinity over and above the doctrine of his humanity meant that a ‘god’ from outside was needed to be the saviour and rescuer of humankind.\textsuperscript{165} She contended the need for a rescuer from outside implied people were helpless rather than resilient, and that they lacked the agency or resources to improve their own and others’ situations of oppression.\textsuperscript{166} She observed:

\begin{quote}
If we think in terms of salvation, then the human condition must be conceptualised as a problematic state, a state in which human beings need urgent rescue, otherwise calamity or death will befall.\textsuperscript{167}
\end{quote}

Not coincidently, there are echoes of this human anthropology of need, dependence, and determinism in Burton’s human need theory discussed in the previous chapter; i.e. individuals out of a need for identity and security are irrationally violent and need ‘rescued’ by ‘rational and objective’ third parties. Therefore, the question arises, what different would it make to peacebuilding if natality was the focus?
2.2.3. The intervention of natality and flourishing would transform the deathly western moral imaginary.

To shift the western moral imaginary in different directions, she argued for an intervention of natality which she developed form the writings of Hannah Arendt, a secular Jew and contemporary of Heidegger, who was forced to flee Nazi Germany. Arendt reasoned that birth, even more than death, was a fundamental human condition since birth both preceded and made death possible.\(^{168}\) Jantzen took up Arendt’s suggestion that birth should be considered a key category of philosophical thought.\(^{169}\) In the next section, I will take up vital aspects of Jantzen’s development of Arendt’s work on natality and their relevance to a framework for locating flourishing.

Jantzen insisted that a moral imaginary characterised by natality would be different from the western moral imaginary which was characterised by a preoccupation with death.

Natals require care and protection to flourish. They rely on interdependence; and unless they are welcomed into the world, they will not survive. A moral imaginary that proceeds in terms of atomistic individualism could simply not get off the ground if we were thinking in terms of natality.\(^{170}\)

Jantzen based her conception of human flourishing on the Latin word *florere* which used as a verb meant to flower or to blossom and to thrive and connoted luxurious and vigorous growth.\(^{171}\) She asserted that when applied to human beings, *florere*, signified “abundance, overflowing with vigour and energy and

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\(^{169}\) Ibid., 109.

\(^{170}\) Jantzen, "Flourishing: Towards an Ethic of Natality," 229.

productiveness, prosperity, success and good health.” She maintained that a moral imaginary which privileged the metaphor of flourishing rather than salvation provided a completely different perspective of what it meant to be human. She contended:

*We could then see human beings as having a natural inner capacity and dynamic, being able to draw on inner resources and interconnection with one another in the web of life, and having the potential to develop into great fruitfulness.*

In this characterisation, human beings were constantly growing and changing. They were resilient. This was in marked contrast to the metaphor of salvation which characterised life as problematic and humans as needy and in need of rescue. In short, a metaphor of flourishing would support the conception of human beings as natals and would be an appropriate intervention into the western moral imaginary.

The link between subjectivity and natality was crucial for Jantzen because she argued natality better supported the development of a plurality of subjectivities that were constantly becoming. She insisted that a moral imaginary that was shaped and informed by natality was one that was better able to facilitate flourishing for multiple and plural subjects who by virtue of being born into this world, were shaped by different genders, ethnicities, subjectivities, and dis/abilities.

Below I begin to construct a framework for locating and promoting human flourishing by first taking up Jantzen’s reading of key aspects of Arendt’s work on natality which I contend promote, inform and sustain a moral imaginary of natality.

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172 Ibid. 160
173 Ibid.
2.3. Constructing the moral imaginary of natality

In this section I develop the way in which natality conceives what it means to be human as well as the ways in which it conceptualises human agency, freedom and morality. These considerations form the basis for delineating the contours of a politics of natality which reflect its ethical concerns. As I elaborate, although natals have freedom and agency, these are constrained by finitude, interdependence, and a particular approach to ethics.

Jantzen argued that birth represented hope for the becoming of different human subjects as well as for the transformation of the future. Natals were capable of changing and they were capable of changing the world. Jantzen quoted Arendt:

*It is the nature of beginning that something new is started which cannot be expected from whatever might have happened before. This character of startling unexpectedness is inherent in all beginnings and in all origins…. The fact that man is capable of action means that the unexpected can be expected from him, that he is able to perform what is infinitely improbable. And this again is possible only because each man is unique, so that with each birth something uniquely new comes into the world.*

Janzen derived her human anthropology of natals from this quote. She claimed that natals, because of their potentiality and freedom to act, are creative, resourceful, resilient and imaginative. The possibility of action is grounded in birth as is each person’s authenticity and uniqueness. Natals do not need to strive to achieve authenticity as in a moral imaginary which privileged death; it is given. This contrasts with the human condition characterised by salvation described in the previous section, where life was viewed as inherently problematic and troublesome.

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and identities as being static and fixed. Although natals’ identities are shaped by
their material circumstances, something I explore below, they are free to act
otherwise; they are capable of doing new things and are able, therefore, to exceed
the circumstances into which they were born and which continue to inform their
becoming throughout their lives. Therefore, the possibility for change is at the core
of the ethics and politics of natality.

However this freedom has limits. The first limitation is based on Arendt’s
emphasis on the finiteness and embodied nature of the human condition which
Jantzen contrasted to the human condition in the western moral imaginary
characterised by Plato’s quest for the immortality of perfect thought.

Jantzen cited Arendt:

*Action is limited by those things which men cannot change at will. And it is only by
respecting its own borders, this realm, where we are free to act and to change, can
remain intact, preserving its integrity and keeping its promises.*\(^{176}\)

Jantzen also drew from this premise that the uniqueness of the individual
whose appearance, bounded by their appearance (birth) and disappearance
(death), into the world constitutes a story.\(^{177}\) Arendt asserted,

*The chief characteristic of this specifically human life, whose appearance and
disappearance constitute worldly events, is that it is itself full of events which can
be told as a story, established as a biography.*\(^{178}\)

Jantzen concluded that because of this, history becomes the “storybook of
mankind.”\(^{179}\) The stories are not isolated ones of atomistic individuals but are
formed by the world into which natals were born. At the same time, each

\(^{176}\) Ibid. 155(Arendt, 1977: 264)
\(^{177}\) Ibid, *The Human Condition*. 97
\(^{178}\) Ibid.
\(^{179}\) Jantzen, “Necrophilia and Natality.”113
individual’s story is important and unique; the lives of natals are narratives. These narrative implications of natality inform the research methodology developed in Chapter 3.

In a politics of natality, therefore, the boundaries of this life constitute the arena for human activity and for analysing the political implications of that activity.

The second constraint on freedom is represented by natals’ interdependence. This contrasts with the autonomous, unitary, subject that Jantzen argued characterised the western moral imaginary. A central insight from Arendt’s work that I adopt from Jantzen’s reading of natality is that natals are dependent on their communities for survival, but at the same time they represent many different kinds of individual subjects who were able to construct their identities within that community in dynamic and diverse ways. I unpack this below.

On the one hand natals are dependent. They are:

strangers’ welcomed into a “web of human relationships which is woven by the deeds and words of innumerable persons, by the living as well as by the dead.”180

Jantzen noted that unless natals were welcomed into the world and cared for and protected, they could not survive, let alone flourish.181 Their survival and their ability to act and become in the world is constrained by the membership their birth conferred on them in a particular community in a specific time in history. They are not the detached, atomistic, disembodied individuals portrayed by western philosophers like Heidegger and Plato. They are born into a particular community, gender, race, class, nationality as well as into a particular religious tradition.

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180 ibid., 113.
These aspects of their existence and how their specific community interpreted those attributes, positively or negatively, shape who they are, and what they knew. They also form the basis for their becoming and influence their moral imaginary. This also has implications, as I explore later, for the conceptualisation of reason in a politics of natality. In natality, reason is not abstract, but contingent and contextual. Natals are not ‘thrown’ into some existence where these ties make no difference in shaping who they become and were something to be shaken off in order to become ‘authentic.’

Natals are also unique. Therefore an ethics of natality will take up the following attribute of natals that Jantzen adopted from Arendt:

*Plurality is the condition of human action because we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live.*

Individual natals are irreplaceable. While being woven into a fabric of social relations, they also weave the pattern of their unique identity within the tapestry of these relationships. Therefore, freedom is rooted within the interconnectedness of natals’ relationships within the community.

Significantly, this conceptualisation of natality does not privilege community and embodiment at the expense of the individual, neither does it privilege the individual above the community in which they were located. Therefore a framework which locates flourishing must focus on the ways in which individuals interact with, are shaped by, and work to transform the communities in which they live.

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The final aspect of natals integral to constructing an ethics of natality and which works to both constrain and inform their agency and freedom as actors, is their inherent morality. This morality, in Jantzen’s reading of Arendt, constitutes a pre-ontological predisposition towards ethics, or the possibility of acting ethically towards others whilst respecting their ‘becoming’ in terms of unique multiple subjectivities. In other words, in natality ethics is prior to being or becoming and exceeds it.

Jantzen arrived at this position based on her reading of two vital aspects of Arendt’s development of natality; love for the world and love for the Other.

Arendt defined ‘amor mundi’ as:

\[ \text{…love better dedicated…to the world into which we were born, and this is possible because we shall not live forever.}^{183} \]

Arendt was concerned about ‘worldlessness’ or the view that the modern drive towards progress meant an increasing alienation of humanity from the natural world in order to dominate it and exploit it.\(^ {184} \) According to Jantzen, this love for the world was in direct contrast to \textit{contemptus mundi} of medieval Christianity which connoted contempt for the physical world based on a preference for the spiritual world and an emphasis on eternal life after death which she argued became a rationale in the western moral imaginary for exploiting and degrading the material world.\(^ {185} \) Jantzen concluded that \textit{amor mundi}, was essential for ethical and political action in a moral imaginary of natality.\(^ {186} \) It is also central to this project.

\(^{183}\) Jantzen, \textit{Becoming Divine}, 152.

\(^{184}\) Arendt, \textit{The Human Condition}. 248-257

\(^{185}\) Jantzen, \textit{Becoming Divine}.

\(^{186}\) Jantzen, “Necrophila and Natality.” 116
Jantzen also highlighted Arendt’s writings about love for other human beings, or as Arendt termed it, ‘Amo: Volut ut sis’ or “I love you; I will that you be.” Jantzen observed that ‘will’ in this instance was a verb and not a noun.\(^{187}\) She argued that what Arendt meant by love was not an emotion or sentimentality or a romanticizing of the natural world, but it constituted a deliberate choice to be committed to the well-being of people in this world in addition to the well-being of the material world itself.\(^{188}\)

Love is defined as an act of will to be responsible for the becoming of others prior to knowing who the Other was. The possibility for action, or love, is also informed by plurality as discussed above. Therefore respect for the inherent uniqueness of the Other, for plural and multiple subjects, will both inform and constrain natals’ freedom.

Furthermore, in Jantzen’s reading of Arendt, this love through action constitutes a pre-ontological disposition to will the being and becoming of others, before it is known who the Other is. Therefore, a moral imaginary that takes natality seriously will privilege ethics over ontology and will make ethics the priority in philosophy.\(^{189}\)

\(^{187}\) Jantzen, \textit{Becoming Divine}. 153
\(^{188}\) Ibid. 152
\(^{189}\) Ibid.157, 233
She quoted Arendt:

*Labor and work, as well as action, are also rooted in natality in so far as they have the task to provide and preserve the world for, to see and reckon with, the constant influx of newcomers who are born into the world as strangers.*\(^{190}\)

Labor, work and action, to provide for and reckon with the constant influx of newcomers born into the world of strangers, as the final section of this chapter elaborates, is part of what constitutes flourishing.

In a moral imaginary shaped by natality, it is love, rather than care,\(^{191}\) mourning,\(^{192}\) or suffering,\(^{193}\) which becomes the basis for ethical and political action.\(^{194}\) Love for natals both informs and constrains the freedom of individuals. Natals are not constrained from acting in the world, or from loving, by their individual circumstances no matter how difficult they might be. They are free to love; they are free to do new things. At the same time, political freedom and action is constrained by this love which respects the difference of the Other and recognises the responsibility to provide for and preserve the world for new generations of natals.

Finally, this action of natals out of love for the world and for the Other is an aspect of what it meant, as Jantzen construed it, to flourish. As such, it forms a central focus of the analytical framework developed in the final section for conceptualising human flourishing. In this thesis, I will locate the actions of flourishing natals that flow from a positive notion of desire, a passion for the well-being, or flourishing of the Other. While hopeful, it will also be action that is

\(^{190}\) Jantzen, "Necrophilia and Natality."; Arendt, *The Human Condition.* 9

\(^{191}\) Robinson, *Globalising Care: Ethics, Feminist Theory, and International Relations.*

\(^{192}\) Butler, *Precarious Life.*

\(^{193}\) Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist.*

\(^{194}\) Jantzen, "Necrophilia and Natality," 115.
grounded in material, embodied human history that recognises and heeds a multiplicity of insights and perspectives. This action will also be creative, imaginative and will flow out of the resilience, resourcefulness, imagination and creativity of natals.

Jantzen’s unique intervention into natality, acknowledging the ways in which religion informs the moral imaginary, subjectivity and ethics, better secures the space for the becoming of multiple and fluid identities. It is this conceptualisation of religion that I noted was missing in the peacebuilding models in the previous chapter. The next section analyses some of these religious interventions for their contribution to natality and flourishing.

2.4. Religious interventions for developing an ethics of natality.

Religion has been dismissed by many feminists in the past as irrelevant and/or ‘backward.’ However, with the rise and threat of religious fundamentalism as a global phenomenon in all major religions transnational feminist theorists have begun to bring religion back into the public sphere as an important variable for consideration in international politics.¹⁹⁵

In contrast, Jantzen argued that religious discourses shape and influence who the subject is considered to be and what constitutes knowledge in any society’s given moral imaginary, or that which is considered normative, ethical, rational and morally possible. She claimed that the discourse of religion was one

of the discourses (others being law, science and economics) that shape the imaginary of western civilization. If, as Jantzen asserted, religion is one of the ways in which we construct human reality, as “a grand myth or set of myths that we live by (where myth does not have ‘truth’ as its opposite),” then, how we restructure that myth in ways that foster human dignity is of ultimate value. Therefore, religious discourse plays a significant and substantial role in determining who is human and how one becomes a subject.

2.4.1. The divine horizon of becoming allows for the development of multiple subjectivities.

Specifically, Jantzen examined how the philosophy of religion was a discourse of Christendom that contributed to the development of a particular kind of subjectivity in the western moral imaginary. She insisted that this ‘universal’ subject was essentially that of the white western male in which other forms of subjectivity, particularly that of women, were violently suppressed both metaphorically and in actuality. For Jantzen religion was far more than a variable; it was:

_a mirror for humanity, into which ideal human characteristics are projected and which we then strive to reflect._

God, or the divine, then, becomes the “horizon for human becoming.”

To create spaces for women’s becoming, Jantzen elaborated on Luce Irigaray’s intervention into developing the subjectivities of women; that women must also become divine in their own right in order to become speaking subjects.

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196 Jantzen, _Becoming Divine_, 161
197 Ibid
198 Jantzen, _Becoming Divine_. 13
199 Ibid.
Irigaray’s main project was the development of an ethics of sexual difference in which women qua women achieved subjectivity rather than as speaking men. According to Irigaray, for women to become subjects they must ‘become divine’.²⁰⁰

Jantzen agreed with Irigaray that women needed a god of their own which represented their subjectivity, or a ‘sensible transcendental’ in order to facilitate their own becoming. For this to occur, Jantzen, recommended that women should be able to project what has been seen as ‘female’ qualities, onto what constitutes the divine, the ‘sensible transcendental’, and that these previously repressed and devalued attributes should be also be valued attributes of the divine and capable of representing the divine. Jantzen quoted Irigaray,

*This God, are we capable of imagining it as a woman? Can we see dimly see it as the perfection of our subjectivity?*²⁰¹

In other words, women as well as men should be able to represent the divine, or viewed as a horizon for human becoming.

She argued that becoming divine and a sensible transcendental for women was a critical and necessary disruption to shift the moral imaginary to one more in keeping with natality which promoted difference and pluralities of subjectivities.²⁰² What attributes constituted the divine in a society where the attributes that were viewed as valuable and ones worthy of emulation and consequently were indicative of what the established norms were for subjectivity.

Although Jantzen did not go on to develop it, she insisted that the ethics represented by natality could represent a multiplicity of differences, not only those

²⁰² Jantzen, "Flourishing: Towards an Ethic of Natality."
of gender, but of race, culture, religion, nationality and their various intersections.\textsuperscript{203} The sensible transcendental could be applied apply to all subjectivities; each different subject is capable of representing those attributes which are most valued in a given culture or society; or those attributes which are projected onto the divine in that culture.

This sensible transcendental of becoming is an integral aspect of the moral imaginary of natality that opens up the flourishing of different kinds of subjectivities.

Secondly, Jantzen’s critique of ‘God as Father’ cited in Chapter 1 had implications for what constituted knowledge, reason and rationality in the western moral imaginary. Though ostensibly secular, the western moral imaginary valued an abstract, omnipotent rationality that transcended bodies and materiality. Jantzen critiqued rationality in the western moral imaginary as being a ‘god’s-eyes view from nowhere,” or knowledge detached from human experience and existence.\textsuperscript{204} Therefore, shifting the religious discourse away from a transcendent, divine being separate from this world towards a religious discourse that evoked a divine that was grounded, created, fashioned from peoples’ own existence, experience and relationships taking their gender, and race into account, has implications for what constitutes reason and knowledge in a moral imaginary characterised by natality. I explore these implications in the next chapter.

\textbf{2.4.2. A religious discourse informed by pantheism facilitates the becoming of different subjectivities.}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{203} Jantzen, \textit{Becoming Divine}, 274.\\
\textsuperscript{204} Jantzen, "Pantheism," 268.
\end{flushright}
In order to facilitate the ‘becoming divine’ of natals, Jantzen suggested that the religious discourse could be transformed by ‘projecting’ pantheism. By so doing, she was careful to delineate between her approach, pantheism as a religious metaphor that could open up new possibilities for developing a moral imaginary consistent with natality, and pantheism as an actual theological doctrine with its own set of truth claims about the nature of God and human existence. Historically, pantheism has referred to nontheistic religions and thought systems where the divine was not considered to be a personal being, but where everything was considered to be God and God is considered to be everything.\footnote{205}

There were two crucial aspects of Jantzen’s interventions that I address for their significance for my project. The first intervention built on the inseparability of the divine from the material world in pantheism.\footnote{206} The second is her insight based on her reading of process theology that what constitutes God or the divine was also in the process of becoming.\footnote{207}

In part, Jantzen based her intervention of pantheism on her interpretation of the writings of Emmanuel Levinas, a Jewish theologian who was contemporary of Arendt and Heidegger. Jantzen contended that Levinas partially attributed the development of German totalitarianism that led to the Holocaust as a logical consequence of the privileging of a transcendent, God that existed independently of the world and its inhabitants.\footnote{208} To contest totalitarianism, Levinas argued that a

\footnote{205}Ibid. \footnote{206}Grace Jantzen, \textit{God’s World, God’s Body} (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1984). \footnote{207}Jantzen, \textit{Becoming Divine}, 255-60. \footnote{208}Ibid. 236
divine embodied and located in this world and in human relationships would promote more ethical relationships. Jantzen cited him:

*I do not want to define anything through God because it is the human that I know. It is God that I can define through human relations and not the inverse.*

According to her interpretation, the divine, defined through human relations, embodiment and immanence and this-worldliness rather than by transcendence and otherworldliness, becomes the site for ethical relationships where relationships between natals were privileged over ‘Being.’ These relationships were fluid and changing, with the potential to be transformed, but not absorbed by the Other.

Therefore, she insisted that a moral imaginary of natality should privilege the transcendence of the Other who is located in this world, rather than the divine. The Other is irreducible, always unique, acts in excess to expectations and therefore cannot be reduced to a stereo-type. Therefore in a moral imaginary characterised by natality what constitutes the divine will be located and/or created in relationships between different people.

This conception of the divine also forms an aspect of a framework of natality which promotes flourishing. Religious and nonreligious practices and beliefs can be judged as lacking where they privilege the possibility abstract universal morality at the expense of relationality. It becomes possible to locate instances where people mobilise their religious and moral beliefs and practices to support relationality; love, empathy and common ground, i.e. solidarity with the Other. Where religious and moral systems fail to privilege relationality over ‘being’ or ‘abstract’ morality, they hinder flourishing.

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209 Ibid.
Jantzen also reasoned that a moral imaginary characterised by a divine located in this world, made it possible to disrupt and transcend the dualism between thought and matter in the current western religious and secular moral imaginary where spirit and thought respectively were presumed superior to matter.\(^{211}\) Locating the divine in the world meant not only the splits became disrupted, but also the hierarchies of value based on these splits.\(^{212}\) In this thesis, I emphasize how a moral imaginary of natality disrupts the dualism of the religious/secular and the victim/oppressor binary.

She argued that pantheism, most significantly for the development for a moral imaginary characterised by natality, would disrupt the dualism of transcendence and immanence which regulated the formation of human subjectivity as being static rather than fluid in the deathly western moral imaginary.\(^{213}\) She proposed that immanence and transcendence were not oppositions, but that taken together they were the opposite of reductionism, or reducing people to static pre-determined identities without allowing for growth or becoming that exceeds any expectations or stereotypes of a particular subject position.\(^{214}\) She asserted:

*Immanence is a necessary condition of transcendence, since no one can achieve intelligence or creativity without the requisite physical complexity.*\(^{215}\)

Immanence, possessing a body that is already marked by sex and race which is born into a particular community in a specific point of history, as well as

\(^{211}\) Ibid., 267.
\(^{212}\) Ibid.
\(^{213}\) Ibid. 270
\(^{214}\) Ibid. 271
\(^{215}\) Ibid. 271
transcendence, the thought arising out of the materiality of human bodies and circumstances into which those bodies are born, together opposed reductionism. \(^{216}\) Therefore, both immanence and transcendence are both vital to becoming.

Jantzen’s intervention, the pantheistic conception of the divine as immanent and being located within the world and in human relationships, is better able to guarantee difference and plurality of natality than the current dualistic system which valorised mind over body. \(^{217}\)

This allows for the recognition of all kinds of alterities, including those of race, nationality, gender, age, and ability. \(^{218}\) Bodies born into certain contexts were marked by physical and social difference which in turn, depending on the meanings assigned to these physical and social differences, shaped and influenced how each individual became a subject.

Finally this conception of the divine as being inseparable from the material world meant that the divine, no longer aloof form the world and its pain, also suffered. Therefore, she concluded that the becoming of natals, i.e. becoming divine was:

…inseparable from solidarity with human suffering; a symbolic of the divine is a symbolic of outrage, imagination and desire, and compassionate action, not the detached and objective intellectual stance which traditional philosophers of religion assume and which they also take to be characteristic of God. \(^{219}\)

Becoming divine has ethical implications for what it means to be a human subject and to flourish. Becoming divine, becoming an authentic human being, therefore is not just about individual self-realization, but includes concerned for

\(^{216}\) Ibid.
\(^{217}\) Ibid. 274
\(^{218}\) Ibid., 274.
\(^{219}\) Ibid. 263
human suffering and then acting upon this concern. In this regard, religious values, behaviours, rituals, dogmas and beliefs that were not concerned about justice could be critiqued as deficient.\textsuperscript{220} I argue with Jantzen that part of what it meant for natals to flourish includes compassion and action on behalf of those who were suffering. Therefore a research lens of flourishing informed by a moral imaginary of natality will locate where people are moved by and are acting out of compassion and empathy for the suffering of the Other.

Also, incorporating this conception of the divine, the horizon of human becoming, as immanent and as suffering in solidarity with humans, means that religious subjects and religious beliefs and practices, irrespective of the religion, can be made transparent and evaluated in the public sphere, for whether or not they encourage the flourishing of the Other.

The second aspect of Jantzen’s intervention is that what constituted divinity itself was also in process—it is also becoming and like natals, is always growing and never static.\textsuperscript{221}

As such, she asserted that it was better to conceive of God or the divine, as a verb rather than a noun and that considering change and growth as characteristic of the divine enriched a moral imaginary shaped by natality and flourishing.\textsuperscript{222} She argued:

\textit{Divinity in the face of natals is a horizon of becoming, a process of divinity ever new, just as natality is the possibility of new beginnings.}\textsuperscript{223}

\textsuperscript{220} Ibd., 263-64.
\textsuperscript{221} Ibid. 255-256
\textsuperscript{222} Ibid., 258.
\textsuperscript{223} Ibid. 254
The divine, or that which represents what is most valued in society is therefore open and in process of change as well. This opens up possibilities for new horizons of human becoming and leaves the future of becoming open. There is no one absolute way of being or becoming, because there is no one Ultimate Being that is the final repository and guarantor of what it meant to be human. It is only in this sense that the divine, like natals, are transcendent.

Similar to pantheism this conception of the divine is not meant as a metaphysical truth claim. This characterization of a divine that was also becoming is a critical aspect of a moral imaginary of natality.\footnote{ibid., 258.}

In forming my framework from flourishing developed from Jantzen’s interventions on the divine from pantheism and process theology, I argue that the pre-ontological ethical disposition of natals, Amo: Vol ut sis and amor mundi, should be applied to the divine as well. Jantzen did not make this leap, but it is a logical extension of her work.

This has implications for both facilitating the becoming of subjects and for evaluating the claims of the adherents of various religions as to whether or not they promote peace and flourishing rather than violence. The ethical basis of religious practices can be evaluated to the extent to which they promote human diversity and flourishing: Jantzen wrote that “...the question to be asked of the world’s many religious and cultural moral imaginaries was:

\[\text{...to what extent it is a symbolic that celebrates natality, makes for flourishing, prompts action for love of the world as contrasted with a symbolic which shuts down on flourishing for some or all people or for the earth.}\footnote{Ibid. 212.} \]
In other words, the same criteria for judging whether certain practices are consistent with an ethics and politics of natality genuinely promote human flourishing can be applied to religious actors, religious practices and religious doctrines themselves. For instance, a moral imaginary shaped and informed by the conception of a divine that was relational, immanent and becoming would challenge the political agendas of religious fundamentalists of every religion where the power and domination of certain subjects were politicized, i.e. justified in the name of a divine that privileged some subjectivities and their power to define what was considered normative over that of other ‘marginal' subjectivities. As Jantzen asserted, one of the criteria for evaluating religious claims would be, “How are the resources of religion…used by those who inflict evil on others. How are they used by those who resist?”

Therefore, in a framework of flourishing and natality, one of the criteria for evaluating conceptions of the divine and acts in the name of the divine in the framework of flourishing and natality is whether or not they involve relationships; a concern for the Other and for the flourishing of the world and of humanity.

In a moral imaginary of natality, becoming divine, the immanence of the divine and a divine in process of becoming, guarantee the spaces in the matrices of flourishing for the flourishing of multiple identities. As such, these concepts are crucial aspects of the analytical framework to locate flourishing in a moral imaginary informed by natality and its ethical concerns.

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226 Ibid. 264
227 Nanci Hogan, "The Implications of a Politics of Natality for the Praxis of International Humanitarianism: Female Genital Cutting, a Case Study" (M.A., University of Manchester, 2004).
2.5. Constructing a framework for locating and analysing human flourishing in the moral imaginary of natality.

Flourishing, besides being a metaphor or an ethic, is also the end goal of a politics of natality.

In the section on natality, I noted how a metaphor of flourishing supported and was reinforced by the positive human condition of natals. Natals were resilient, imaginative, and capable of doing new things and had moral agency; they were not victims. Therefore any framework to locate flourishing will locate the actions of resilient, creative, imaginative natals who acted morally out of love rather than need.

Jantzen’s theorisation of flourishing was problematic. Because she spent more time deconstructing the western deathly moral imaginary, her theorisation of flourishing, limited to her own political concerns (the construction of a feminist philosophy of religion), she did not focus on the ways in which people were already flourishing. For example, in her most thorough exposition on flourishing, she observed that flourishing was rooted in bodily well-being.228 She insisted that:

*Sick people, starving people, people whose existence is miserable because they lack the necessities of physical and psychological well-being cannot be said to be flourishing….*229

This contradicts the conceptualisation of natals as being resilient, and as having the inner resources, the creativity, imagination and freedom to act differently. I argue that natality and the construction of flourishing that I delineate in this section from her work, imply that even poor, sick and starving people, or people in the midst of conflict such as the one involving Israel and Palestine, have

229 Ibid., 167.
some ability, no matter how circumscribed, to act morally and differently and therefore, although they are victimised, they are not inherently victims.

Therefore in this section, I suggest ways in which Jantzen’s work can be expanded and developed to better support the becoming and flourishing of multiple identities which are marked and influenced not only by gender, but also by race, religion, and culture, as well as by class, ability/disability and sexuality or sexual preference. Specifically, I will use the work of Gloria Anzaldúa and Saba Mahmood to explore how an ethic of flourishing can transcend religious and cultural boundaries.

Then, I will draw out three key aspects of flourishing suggested by Jantzen and supported by the work on natality, becoming divine, and pantheism outlined in the previous two sections, which begin to form a framework for locating flourishing. The first aspect of flourishing is the moral action of natals in the world. The second involves the constant becoming of multiple, plural and overlapping subjectivities. The third aspect is the open-ended nature of flourishing futures; there are countless possibilities for multiple futures where people can flourish.

2.5.1. The moral action of natals in the world is an aspect of flourishing

A social and cultural order reflecting a symbolic of flourishing would not be able to avoid confrontation with issues of domination, whether in terms of poverty, class, race, sex or any other form of injustice; since these are the things which prevent people and communities from flourishing. 

\(^{230}\) ibid. p. 169
In the previous section, I argued that an important aspect of natality is that natals are inherently moral. They have moral agency; they are both capable of and free to act out of love for the world and out of love for the Other rather than out of human need. Natals are not victims and as the evidence indicates in Chapter 4, their creative moral actions challenged the essentialization of people as being either a victim or an oppressor.\textsuperscript{231} And this love and action for the Other is not dependent on who the Other is, but recognizes that the Other, like oneself, is in the process of becoming and changing. Therefore, an important aspect of what it meant for natals to flourish is engagement with the world and the Other. In an ethics of natality, human flourishing will express itself as “outrage, imagination, desire and compassionate action.”\textsuperscript{232} Locating these expressions of flourishing, people acting ethically to address situations of injustice, was central to my field research.

Secondly, natals are born into webs of relationships and are marked by gender, race, culture, religion and other aspects of their culture and society, their morality is shaped and influenced by these factors. In natality, there can be no appeal to an abstract universal morality that exists outside of a person’s material world. Because in a moral imaginary of natality, morality is contingent and contextual, natals’ moral reasoning will also be contingent, fluid, and in process. I explore the epistemological implications of natality more in depth in Chapter 3.

\textsuperscript{231} Elsewhere I have written how not adequately problematizing the dualism of victim/oppressor binary, obscures the moral agency of women. See my discussion of female genital cutting and the activism of Afghan women in Nanci Hogan, "Implications of a Politics of Natality for Transnational Feminist Advocacy," in Grace Jantzen: Redeeming the Present, ed. Elaine Graham (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), 235-37.

\textsuperscript{232} Jantzen, Becoming Divine, 263.
Here it is important to note that because natals are moral actors, a framework that locates flourishing will be able to identify and critique the ways in which natals are acting morally or not by observing the ways in which they are acting out of compassion and empathy for the Other, who for whatever reason, is not flourishing.

In previous sections, religious discourse has been shown to be integral to the moral imagination of natals. Therefore, in natality, it becomes possible to identify and evaluate the ways in which natals are mobilising religious beliefs and practices to support or hinder the flourishing of the Other. A framework that locates flourishing will be one that is able to identify the actions, beliefs and practices of people from various religious traditions and assess whether or not they promote or hinder an individual’s own well-being as well as the well-being of those who are viewed as the enemy Other. Rather than asking whether or not ‘God’ exists the question for policy makers becomes ‘Who is God’ and asking ‘Whose God?’ What is most valued in society and why? Which subjects count, which ones do not and why? What conceptions of the divine support the becoming of some over others? Religious metaphors, beliefs, practices and doctrines, whatever the religion, can be critiqued for whether or not they address issues of human flourishing in the material, embodied, present.

Furthermore, this concern for acting morally and ethically is a characteristic of all natals whether they are religious, agnostic or atheist. Other writers have

\[\text{233} \text{ Hogan, "Fgc", 74.}\]
referred to this capacity for ethical action as ‘spiritual capital’. While the language of capitalism is objectionable--it reduces human beings once again to being human resources or to mere cogs in a machine rather than natals who exceed expectations and neat categorization--their acknowledgement of the value of human beings to act ethically is noteworthy.

Also since natals are inherently creative and imaginative, another facet of flourishing will involve identifying the ways in which natals exercise their moral imagination based on the spiritual capital/moral resources from their respective moral imaginaries. One author described it thus:

*Moral imagination rises with the capacity to imagine ourselves in relationship, the willingness to embrace complexity without reliance on dualistic polarity, the belief in the creative act, and acceptance of the inherent risk required to break violence and to venture on unknown paths…. [It is the ] capacity to imagine something rooted in the challenges of the real world yet capable of giving birth to that which does not yet exist.*

This definition is consistent with natality which emphasises relationships and creativity and it hints at the complexities arising from the flourishing of multiple subjects which is supported by the data in Chapter 4.

Finally, Jantzen observed that an aspect of flourishing was people’s inner spirituality. She briefly noted that her conceptualization of flourishing was not meant to emphasize only the public and political at the expense of peoples’ inner lives. Rather, she observed that a person, like a plant, “which flourishes does so

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234 In their book, Spiritual Capital, the authors refer to spiritual capital as not having to do with any religion or organized belief system. They define it as the “deeper, non-sectarian meanings, values, purposes, and motivations that might be sacred to any human being.” 4 Danah Zohar and Ian Marshall, Spiritual Capital: Wealth We Can Live By (London: Bloomsbury, 2004); Danah Zohar and Dr. Ian Marshall, Connecting with Our Spiritual Intelligence (London: Bloomsbury, 2000).
from its own inner life, ‘rooted and grounded’ in its source. If that inner life is gone, the plant withers up and dries up, no matter how good its external sources may be. Therefore a framework to locate flourishing should also be able to identify and evaluate the inner spiritual resources that natals draw on in order to fuel their resilience, moral imagination and capacity to act in the public world without becoming burnt-out.

The ability to act ethically out of love for the world and for the other transcends religious boundaries. Although the content of the religious or nonreligious ethical beliefs and practices may differ, in a framework that locates flourishing all natals can be appraised for the ways in which they act morally and deploy their moral imagination in new and different ways to promote the flourishing of all human beings. This focus on ethics or spirituality has the potential to enable people from various religious standpoints to work together for common purposes without losing the uniqueness of their own religious beliefs and practices or lack thereof.

2.5.2. Flourishing involves the constant becoming of multiple, plural and overlapping subjectivities.

An imaginary of natality, expressed in an idiom of flourishing, would lead in quite different directions, opening the way to a divine horizon which celebrates alterities and furthers the aim of the divine incarnation of every woman and every man. As developed earlier, Jantzen’s religious interventions, becoming divine, and the metaphysical intervention of the representation of the divine in any religion,
whether god actually exists or not, as immanent as well as in the process of
becoming, has significance for subjectivity and rationality and reason.

First of all, in natality the identities of natals are constantly in process and
are fluid. Therefore another aspect of what constitutes human flourishing involves
becoming. To be a natal means the capacity to grow and change. A framework
that locates flourishing prioritises identifying and evaluating the ways in which
individuals are changing for better or for worse.

Secondly, natality opened up the possibilities for multiple subjectivities to
develop, not just one. Because natals are plural by definition, difference, or
alterity, a multiplicity of different subjectivities, which are also fluid and shifting,
becomes possible and is celebrated. Although Jantzen’s focus was on the
becoming of different women subjects, she contended that it was possible to
extend these interventions to include the becoming of different subjects arising
from intersections of race, dis/ability, class, ethnicity and nationality.

The intervention of pantheism opens up the possibility of exploring non-
Christian and non-western deities and religious metaphors as valid sources for
human becoming. This puts other religions and the metaphors and practices they
inspired on an equal footing with Christianity. Criteria for evaluating these
metaphors and practices as bases for becoming include whether or not they hinder
the becoming of multiple flourishing and different subjects who acted morally out of
love for the world and love for the Other. I develop this extension because it
relates to the nature of this thesis; to evaluate the different ways individuals with
different moral imaginaries to the western one that Jantzen critiqued, were constructing their identities.

Feminist, Gloria Anzaldúa, writing about the multiple and mobile strands of her own subjectivity, exemplifies how this could be achieved. She sought to account for the various strands that made up her own identity as a Mexican American-Chicana-Tejana-Native American-Mestizo. She questioned:

*What am I? A third world lesbian feminist with Marxist and mystic leanings. They would chop me up into little fragments and tag each piece with a label.*

She noted that her own home of becoming was a thin space, the border, the edge of barbed wire fence separating Mexico from the United States. This border was:

*una herida abierta [An open wound] where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country—a border culture.*

This border culture was where the struggle for identity occurred. The *mestiza*, a hybrid identity developed in the space created by the thin edge of the borders of becoming. This has applications for ensuring that the spaces of becoming explicitly recognize the ways in which people with multiple ethnic backgrounds mobilise different strands of these identities in order to flourish.

Similar to Jantzen, Anzaldúa emphasized that the symbols, myths and traditions of a culture about the constitution of the divine, are resources for creating subjectivity and identity. In order to locate these symbols, myths and traditions

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that could support the development of various Chicano/subjectivities she uncovered the genealogy of the goddesses of her people from pre-Aztec times through to the present day.

Based on her excavation of Chicano/a history Anzaldúa concluded that:

*Today, la Virgen de Guadalupe is the single most potent, religious, political and cultural image of the Chicano/Mexicano. She, like my race, is a synthesis of the old world and the new, of the religion and culture of the two races in our psyche, the conquerors and the conquered. She is the symbol of the mestizo true to his or her Indian values.*

The Virgen became a symbol for the *mestiza* identity, the one who lived in the *borderlands*, constantly being created anew without assimilating difference. In uncovering various divinities in the history of her people, Anzaldúa created a divine horizon of becoming for women of Mexican and Aztec descent in the United States that could facilitate their becoming as visible speaking and acting subjects.

This example also illustrates how religious identities are fluid. A research lens that locates flourishing will also locate and analyse where and how this occurs in other cultural and religious contexts.

Mark Johnson, a critic of abstract moral reasoning, observed how exercising moral imagination in order to empathise with the Other and work on their behalf, transformed one’s own identity. This is in marked contrast with the utilitarian moral reasoning underpinning contact models of conflict transformation that presumed individual identity was unitary, fixed and autonomous. He contended that:

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241 Ibid. 30
Instead our evolving identity emerges in and through the ends we come to seek, the relationships we establish, and the way others come to regard us. In a sense we grope around for identity, which is never a fixed or finished thing.\textsuperscript{243}

Therefore a framework that locates human flourishing will identify and explore the ways in which different subjectivities interact and influence one another. It will locate and investigate the ways in which people are changed by their encounters with the Other and the new ways they come to see themselves as a result of new relationships that are emerging from these encounters. Finally, it will uncover and analyse the ways in which different conceptions of morality, religious identity, nationality, ethnicity as well as gender are mobilised as people engage one another in the public sphere and will provide a means for evaluating which conceptions better facilitate flourishing and which ones do not

2.5.3. Human flourishing is open-ended. There is no final solution or ‘end to human history.’

Moreover, that flourishing is not once-for-all, but is growth and process never static.

Although Jantzen strove for the practice of transformative moral philosophy, she opposed the idea that human history was ever finished. Neither a ‘god’ nor humans were going to rescue the world from all injustice and pain and suffering and usher in a final utopia. Rather the ethic that flows from this is a commitment to the world that recognizes that political morality is contextual, contingent, ever changing, never final, and committed to the flourishing of all human beings, not just of some. However, by not being more fully theorized, her vision of flourishing did not fully reflect the ethical concerns of a moral imaginary shaped by natality. She did not realize the full potential of her thinking because she failed to fully decouple her explorations of agency from liberal feminist visions of emancipation.

First of all Jantzen did not account for the ways in which people flourish outside of resistance to oppression. To further develop a framework that locates flourishing, I briefly explore the different visions and valid modalities of flourishing identified by Mahmood that are not circumscribed by the political agenda of western feminism. This agenda tends to obscure and often negate the agency and political implications of that agency being exercised by women who do not ascribe to the political goals of women’s sexual liberation.

245 Jantzen, Becoming Divine, 165.
Mahmood explored the potential for flourishing in different religions through her ethnographic field research of the women’s piety movement in Cairo, part of the wider Islamic religious revival movement in Egypt. Crucially, one of her research goals was:

*resolve the profound inability within the current feminist political thought to envision valuable forms of human flourishing outside the bounds of a liberal progressive imaginary.*

By locating desires other than those for freedom, and by locating other forms of agency other than resistance and subverting norms, Mahmood’s vision of flourishing is better able to encompass desire, agency, motivations, and subjectivities that go beyond resistance to oppression.

For example she discovered that in the piety movement, some women’s motivation for wearing the veil was based on their desire to become moral human beings and their participation in Koranic study groups reflected their aspirations to learn how to apply the Koran to daily moral dilemmas. In their social and religious context, pious morality constituted ‘flourishing.’

Mahmood found that these women’s activities were not best represented in terms of ‘subaltern feminists’ who subvert norms of ‘patriarchal’ Islam through acts of ‘resistance’ nor were they best represented, as they often were as the ‘Fundamentalist Others’ of feminism’s progressive agenda. Neither paradigm reflected the desire of these women for a different mode of flourishing in which submission to a certain set of norms was preferable to freedom as defined by

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247 Ibid., 154-55.
progressive feminists. These women viewed themselves as agents able to actively shape their own identities and pursue their ethical ideals.

Mahmood revealed that the ‘private’ ethical actions of these women had political consequences, albeit unpredictable and unintentional. That the piety movement threatened and transformed secular Egypt was evidenced by the State’s attempt to shut them down. However their influence was not a direct consequence of progressive liberal politics where individuals consciously exercised rights as citizens to make claims against the State.

To foreclose recognition to these women as active citizens whose actions had consequences in the public sphere because they were religious subjects whose values, identities and goals were different to those of western liberal progressive feminists, was to render them invisible and to discount their agency as natals. A politics of natality grounded in an ethic of flourishing seeks to make the lives and identities and ethical motivations of people like these women more transparent. As Mahmood demonstrated, there are other models of flourishing which did not view all of life in terms of subjection and resistance.

Becoming divine and pantheism more broadly applied and decoupled from the implicit goal of liberation, meant being open to learning from and being changed by the knowledges of other cultures about human agency and flourishing besides those gained from resistance. Consequently, to leave the project of moving from oppression to flourishing more open-ended, it is critical to recognize that the spaces in the margins where different perspectives and forms of

knowledge about oppression and about flourishing are birthed may not just be ones of resistance to oppression, but that they also reflect aspects of flourishing that could be explored for their political potential or for how they are already having an impact on the politics of the centre.

Therefore, to evaluate peacebuilding where different cultures and religions are operating, it is vital to be attentive to how different subjectivities and ways of becoming subjects shape multiple visions for flourishing and political goals. Doing so will help uncover creative means for achieving co-existence and flourishing.

Secondly, Jantzen did not explore a key aspect of Arendt’s theorising of natality, her conceptualisation of forgiveness which, by providing a means for addressing both individuals’ and nations’ histories, opens up the possibility to recognise fluid identities and different futures.

In her most systematic consideration of natality, Arendt noted the significance of forgiveness.\textsuperscript{249} Forgiveness was another unique capacity of natals. It was a faculty or ‘potentiality of action’ that was necessary if people were to be free to act in unique and surprising ways. Vengeance, she argued was the opposite of forgiveness because it involved re-enacting the original trespass. Forgiveness addressed the irreversibility of action where it was impossible even for a transcendent omnipotent Divine to reverse the actions of the past.\textsuperscript{250} She described forgiveness as:

\textsuperscript{249} Arendt, \textit{The Human Condition}.
\textsuperscript{250} Ibid., 236-37.
The possible redemption from the predicament of irreversibility—of being unable to undo what one has done though one did not, and could not have known what he was doing—is the faculty of forgiving…forgiving serves to undo the deeds of the past, whose “sins” hang like Damocles’ sword over every new generation…Without being forgiven, released from the consequences of what we have done, our capacity to act would, as it were, be confined to one single deed from which we could never recover; we would remain victims of its consequences forever…

By forgiveness, Arendt did not mean that past should or could be forgotten. Rather, it involved a recognition there was nothing that could be done to undo what happened in the past. Nothing could be done to restore life and property which had been destroyed. Because of what happened, the present and future would never be the same. Forgiveness, she implied, meant mourning and then coming to terms with irreversible loss. Only then, she claimed, did it become possible to look to a different kind of future, one where memories of lost ones were kept alive and cherished and where flourishing was still possible.

Therefore forgiveness, and opening up possibilities of hope for the future, means coming to terms with loss and means accepting that no amount of reparations could ever make up for what was done. Punishment of the perpetrators, whilst important and helpful, can never reverse the loss. And as she Arendt noted above, forgiveness releases people from fixed identities as eternal victims of the past. This emphasis on forgiveness, an important aspect of freeing up potentiality for the future, meant that the past, like the future was not fixed, but fluid.

Therefore, as I construct them, the spaces in the margins of flourishing are ones that Lederach, who drew on Arendt’s work on forgiveness for his work as a

\[251\] ibid., 237.
mediator, referred to as *spacetime*; a space where dynamic interpretations of the past, present and future existed simultaneously comprising the wellsprings of people’s moral imagination to act differently.\(^{252}\) He contended *spacetime* opened up the possibility for different flourishing futures as people began to:

*recognize and build an imaginative narrative that has the capacity to link the past and the future, rather than force a false choice between them.*\(^{253}\)

A moral imaginary shaped by natality with its emphasis on forgiveness also refuses the dualistic juxtaposition of the past against the future. *Spacetime*, which characterises the space in flourishing where the past or new interpretations of it are birthed and where memories are brought forth that have been suppressed in order to create a better for future, is an important characteristic of flourishing.

In chapters 4 and 5 I identify some of the ways in which people engaged in peacebuilding dealt with the past that opened up multiple possibilities for the future.

### 2.6. CONCLUSION

By developing Jantzen’s suggestion for making natality rather than mortality the central concern of philosophy, I have sketched out some contours for a moral imaginary of natality in which flourishing shapes both the ethics and goals of the politics born out of this moral imaginary. As a consequence, I have begun developing a framework to locate examples of flourishing amongst those engaged in peacebuilding in the Israel/Palestine conflict. The aspects of flourishing identified here which inform my research include the moral actions of natals to address injustice, the constant becoming of multiple, plural and overlapping

\(^{252}\) Lederach, *The Art and Soul of Building Peace*. 149

\(^{253}\) Ibid., 147.
subjectivities, and the open-ended possibilities of different visions for flourishing futures.

A key aspect of this lens to locate flourishing includes the conceptualisation of the human condition of natals. Natals are resilient, imaginative, creative, unique and irreplaceable. They have moral agency and therefore are able to act morally by imaginatively deploying the moral resources (spiritual capital) from the moral and social context into which they are born. This social context includes religion as well as the meanings assigned to race, gender, what it is to act morally in the world (their own individual moral imaginary), ethnicity, class and dis/ability. Natals are also plural and in the process of becoming. Their identities are fluid and they can and do change. They do not have to act out of need and they are not victims in need of being rescued. It is therefore, possible to locate and explore the ways in which individuals’ identities are changing as they engage morally out of love for the world and for others. An important aspect of framework is identifying and exploring the acts of flourishing natals who are acting morally in the public sphere and the ways in which they are changing as a result of these actions.

Another aspect that informs this lens is the concept of becoming divine, pantheism, and the borderlands which help to guarantee the spaces for the becoming of natals into multiple and different, fluid identities. This has implications for exploring how conceptions of the divine in a culture are being used to support the becoming of certain subjects over others. Conceptions of the divine can be critiqued for whether or not they promote relationships over ideology and whether or not they privilege acting out of love for the other and the world over and above
violence and self-aggrandizement. Also, by providing the means to determine how religious discourse, beliefs and practices are being mobilised to influence individuals’ morality and identities, it is possible to make the political influences of religions more transparent. Religion is comprehensible and it is possible to explore the ways in which it is being used to promote flourishing or violence. Also, this lens makes it possible to explore the ways in which the identities of those who are religious are also fluid and changing.

Finally, because an aspect of flourishing is *spacetime*, this framework will locate how forgiveness, or different interpretations of the past, is being enacted.

Until now, I have not fully examined the epistemological implications of a moral imaginary of natality for developing a research lens that will locate examples of human flourishing. The next chapter explores these implications as part of my development of a research methodology, indicated by considerations of natality and flourishing delineated here, that I then deployed for locating and analysing examples of flourishing amongst those engaged in peacebuilding in the Israel/Palestine conflict.
Chapter 3

Natals and natality: methodological reflections

Living a fulfilling life in accordance with some notion of human flourishing is one of the chief problems we are all trying to solve. We each want very badly for our particular life stories to be exciting, meaningful, and exemplary of the value we prize. Morality is thus a matter of how well or how poorly we construct (i.e., live out) a narrative that solves our problem of living a meaningful and significant life.  

3.1 Introduction.

The moral imaginaries in which the Israel/Palestine conflict is embedded are shaped by political and social considerations in which those in power determine whose voice counts and who is considered human. Similar to the methodology that Fiona Robinson developed for moral inquiry, a methodology birthed from a politics of natality would also commit to focus on the “everyday lives, the permanent background, of real embodied people.” In addition a politics of natality, with its unique emphasis on how the religious works to shape, sustain and transform moral imaginaries, focusses on the roles religious beliefs and practices play in promoting peace.

It is my hypothesis that the theoretical lens afforded by a politics of natality will uncover creative insights at the grass roots level, previously ignored or hidden, that have the potential to engage existing moral framings of the conflict in a transformative way. However, in order to get at these insights, it is necessary to decouple them from the moral imaginary in which they are birthed.

254 Johnson, Moral Imagination, 230.
The aim of this chapter is to outline the research methodology, consistent with the ethical considerations suggested by a moral imaginary of natality that I developed and deployed, in order to locate and analyse aspects of flourishing in the midst of the Israel/Palestine conflict.

Throughout Chapter 2, I alluded to the epistemological implications of natality and flourishing. In the next section I draw out these implications and the ways in which they informed my research methodology. Then, I sketch out the matrices of flourishing, the research lens that I used to locate the narratives of those engaged in peacebuilding. This framework informed the research subjects that I chose as well as the aspects of flourishing I chose to locate in my interviews.

From there I consider why a narrative approach is indicated by natality and then outline some current seemingly intractable narratives of this conflict that might be rendered less intractable by data uncovered by this lens. Then I list the questions I chose to elicit peoples’ moral narratives and the criteria I used to examine them for whether or not they evidenced flourishing. Finally, I discuss how I conducted the field research using this methodology. In Section 3, I outline my own partial perspective and standpoint as a researcher. There I also discuss some of the methodological difficulties I encountered and provide a few additional methodological reflections for the ways in which I translated the data I into some potential transformative insights.

3.2. Methodology
To test my hypothesis, I undertook field research using a narrative enquiry approach because it is the one that best reflects the particular ethical, epistemological and ontological concerns of a politics of natality. In the summer of 2008, I conducted 32 semi-structured open ended interviews with secular and religious individuals in Israel and Palestine. Interviewees included Israeli and Palestinian men and women who were actively engaged in some aspect of work, paid or volunteer, for a range of NGOs and other organizations that were engaged in peacebuilding activities. Through these interviews, I located examples of flourishing, which I will analyze in chapters 4 and 5. This section provides the rationale for the approach I took, the aspects of flourishing I undertook to locate, the criteria for identifying them, and the ways in which I actually deployed the matrices of flourishing, in my field research.

3.2.1. Epistemological concerns.

In natality knowledge is not as Jantzen argued, a ‘god’s-eye’ view from nowhere, the abstract reason characteristic of the moral imaginary of death. In this chapter I use the term epistemology to refer to who knows and what is known. I employ it as defined below:

*an understanding of knowledge—of how we can know—and therefore what constitutes a research question.*

Although Jantzen identified numerous epistemological implications of natality, there are five which inform my methodology.

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First, because the emphasis in natality is on the materiality and social situatedness of natals, experience is of primary importance for developing knowledge. It is not raw experience, but it is experience within the context of the discursive and material conditions in which people existed and how they interpreted those experiences within their context. Therefore, an important focus of this methodology is to locate and analyse peoples’ experiences within their social and political context.

Secondly, Jantzen argued for evaluating insights gained from experience as a resource for transforming the moral imaginary, not on the basis of whether or not the insight was empirically true. This distinction also informed the development of my methodology. I did not conduct the field research with the expectation that I would uncover the ‘truth.’ Rather, I set out to locate concrete experiences of natals who were flourishing and then analyse these experiences from the perspective of what insights might they provide for transforming the narratives that sustained the conflict at the material and discursive levels. For example, how were natals employing their moral imagination in new ways in order to account for new experiences such as encountering one’s enemy as human?

Jantzen’s criteria for evaluating insights gained from experience was whether or not they contributed to human flourishing and promoted “action for love of the world” as opposed to “shutting down the flourishing for some or all people of the earth?” Similarly one of my criteria for evaluating the evidence of flourishing

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258 Jantzen, Becoming Divine.
259 Ibid., 127.
260 Ibid., 102.
261 Ibid., 212.
that I located in the field research whether the insights people gleaned from a particular experience promote or hinder the flourishing of others?

Thirdly, I explored and developed Jantzen’s conceptualisation of partial perspectives based on her critique of feminist standpoint theory that explores knowledges formed in the margins through the experiences of those who resist the oppression of the centre. Jantzen claimed that because no one standpoint was capable of reflecting all marginalised subject positions, any one standpoint developed in the margins was only able to give one perspective for how the moral imaginary might be transformed. She asserted that:

\[ \text{Just as there is no one form of absolute power and domination, so there is no single form of oppression, no uniform standpoint which all oppressed people share.} \]

Instead there was a diversity of subject-positions, each of which yielded partial perspectives. She recommended considering insights gained from different standpoints not as rival truth claims, but as diverse ways of freeing the imagination to generate alternative myths, symbols, and world views that would disrupt the moral imaginary. Similarly, I looked for the partial perspectives of a wide variety of people, shaped by their material and discursive locations and experiences, which might disturb the dominant narratives or moral imaginaries in the Israel/Palestine conflict.

I also consider the insight of feminist methodologist Laura Weldon who expanded standpoint epistemology. She discovered that:

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262 Ibid., 207, 12-18.
263 Ibid., 127.
Viewing social relations from the position of the oppressed does not just add another set of experiences to existing accounts; it forces revision of the dominant accounts since it reveals them as partial and limited.\textsuperscript{264}

Recognizing the dominant accounts as also being partial and limited is much more in keeping with natality. Doing so challenges the implicit hierarchy of the centre versus the margin which re-inscribes the power of the centre, that Jantzen and other feminist standpoint theorists inadvertently left intact. By leveling the playing field, the perspective of the centre becomes merely one more partial perspective that informs and is informed by a range of other partial perspectives. Knowledges formed in the matrices of flourishing include the knowledges formed by all kinds of people interacting in a fluid continuum where the identities of victim and oppressor are problematized and in flux.

Significant for my methodological approach, Jantzen contended that although the criteria for evaluating these insights from partial positionings did not map onto 'empirical guarantees,' this did not mean embracing relativism.\textsuperscript{265} She argued for holding these perspectives accountable to further analysis against basic shared commitments of justice and morality and that although there were ambiguities about what some of these might be people knew enough to join the struggle.\textsuperscript{266} She contended that

\textit{Criteria, insight, are gained within engagement, not as neutral spectators from an objective vantage-point.}\textsuperscript{267}

\textsuperscript{265} Jantzen, \textit{Becoming Divine}, 216.
\textsuperscript{266} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{267} Ibid.
Similarly, I define the criteria in this way. In the next section, I develop these criteria for locating and analyzing aspects of flourishing. Also as a matter of accountability, in the final section, I acknowledge my own engagement as an activist researcher.

Fourthly Jantzen found there was no one central form of oppression against which resistance and knowledge was formed. Rather, there were matrices of oppression based on the intersections of variables like race, sex, class and gender. These formed a dynamic, interlocking system of oppression constituting a ‘matrix of domination’ in which different forms of inseparable oppressions, built upon, informed and reinforced others.²⁶⁸

This is an important methodological consideration as far as it goes. Race, class, gender, nationality, religion and ethnicity are interlocking variables and as such they shape and inform peoples’ identities. To view them as forming a dynamic system is useful as it is consistent with natality in which the identities of natals, contingent on one’s material conditions and one’s embodiment, were fluid and constantly changing.

However, based on my critique of Jantzen’s conception of flourishing in the previous chapter, it is not surprising that she failed to consider the possibility that these partial perspectives could also be developed from the experiences of people from a variety of standpoints who considered themselves to be flourishing apart from resistance to oppression and who were striving to achieve their vision of what it meant to flourish. Therefore, rather than matrices of oppression, my

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 124. She developed this concept based on her reading of the work of Patricia Hill Collins
methodology will consider matrices of flourishing which I develop further in the next section.

For now I note the implications for my methodology in terms of the ways in which it informed who I selected to interview. It meant interviewing people from different genders, ethnic backgrounds, religious affiliations, and experiences in peacebuilding in order to obtain a diversity of perspectives. I interviewed individuals who were not part of the social elites, but who were active at the grassroots level who represented both dominant and marginalised subject positions within these societies. This diversity of perspectives was important because it provided a rich source of creativity.\textsuperscript{269} It also reflects the plurality and fluidity inherent in the ontology of natality.

The fifth and final aspect of Jantzen’s epistemology of natality that I considered in developing my research methodology was her conceptualization of the ‘beloved community.’ For her this was the place where new insights and creativity was birthed.\textsuperscript{270} She maintained that

\begin{quote}
It is from the creative rage and grief and joy of such a ‘beloved’ community working together for justice that insight comes.…\textsuperscript{271}
\end{quote}

From this, I inferred that a critical aspect of these epistemological communities was that they were flourishing ones since one of the aspects of flourishing I identified in the previous chapter was active resistance to oppression and injustice out of a sense of moral responsibility to those who were suffering.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{269} Ibid., 124.
\item \textsuperscript{270} Ibid., 218.
\item \textsuperscript{271} Ibid., 218.
\end{itemize}
Therefore, I chose to interview individuals who were working in a broad spectrum of organizations actively engaged in peacebuilding. Although it is a stretch to call these organizations ‘beloved communities’ they constitute epistemological communities of natals who by virtue of their active engagement in the world, were flourishing. These epistemological communities form one strand of the matrices of flourishing which I sketch out below.

3.2.2. The matrices of flourishing are central to a research methodology for locating flourishing.

The strands and spaces which make up the matrices of flourishing form the research lens that I used in my field research to locate insights which challenged the intractable narratives of conflict.

Natals, representing a particular conceptualization of the human condition, comprise the first strand of these matrices. They are unique individuals whose anthropology I developed in the previous chapter includes resilience, creativity, and imagination, and who exercise moral imagination in the public sphere to act ethically on behalf of the Other. Therefore, I chose to interview people who were resilient and who were acting in creative imaginative ways out of their inner resources to bring peace.

The second strand is made up of the different aspects that form the social context and the webs of relationships into which natals are born. Natals, as the previous chapter indicated, are not detached minds, but are material and embodied beings. Therefore, I located and interviewed natals whose identities were constantly being shaped and informed by multiple and overlapping intersections of
gender, race, ethnicity, religion, age, class and nationality. That meant interviewing men and women, Israelis and Palestinians, from various ethnic backgrounds, from a multiplicity of religious and nonreligious standpoints. Although there were many different intersections that could be explored, I chose to concentrate on the different intersections of religious, ethnic and gendered positions of individuals.

Finally the third strand is formed by the different kinds of epistemological communities constituted by NGOs and the particular kind of conflict transformation strategies in which they are engaged. These ‘beloved communities’ produce knowledge about various oppressions as well as how to best address them. The knowledge produced by these organizations represents a wide range of perspectives and knowledge about different aspects of peacebuilding. Their insights, decoupled from the moral imaginary in which they were embedded and viewed from the lens of flourishing represent a few of the partial perspectives about what constitutes peacebuilding. As Chapter 1 contended, no one perspective was capable on its own of providing a complete picture of what was already occurring or what was needed in order to transform this conflict. Therefore I chose to interview individuals from organizations that represented three broad categories of conflict resolution approaches.

These broad categories, as I have grouped them, include the partial perspectives found in contact approaches (problem solving workshops, dialogue groups, interfaith dialogue and other kinds of encounter groups), the partial perspectives provided by NVR approaches, and the partial perspectives developed
in NGOs and other organizations that focus on development and capacity building. See Appendix 1 for comprehensive list of organisations from which I interviewed individuals.

Firstly, one of their strengths of contact approaches is that they have been a catalyst for changing some peoples’ beliefs about the ‘enemy’ Other. Another important consequence of these approaches is that they have fostered relationships between people who were enemies. These relationships provide a basis for building solidarities between the two sides that transcend national and ethnic boundaries and for building constituencies for peace. The encounters and insights yielded by these approaches are significant. Therefore, I chose to interview individuals from organizations like Interfaith Encounter Association (IEA).

The second type of partial perspectives are those afforded by the knowledges arising from those engaged in NVR which include activities such as boycotts, documenting human rights abuses, and nonviolent demonstrations. They are approaches that acknowledge and seek to redress the asymmetries of power between the two parties, something the contact approaches, as discussed in Chapter 1, do not emphasize. Their focus on justice as an aspect of peacebuilding is crucial. Their perspectives, born out of action for change and out of struggle, challenge the predominant discourses of the powerful. Therefore, I chose to interview individuals working for NGOs and other organizations which were involved in NVR. For example, I interviewed individuals from organizations such

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as *Holy Land Trust* (HLT) and *The Israeli Committee against Housing Demolitions* (ICAHD).

The final sort of partial perspectives is the one afforded by organizations and NGOs that focus on capacity building and development. The strength of this approach, as noted in Chapter 1, is that it located forms of agency that other approaches did not. Palestinian Muslim women studied by Richter-Devroe were more than victims of ‘patriarchal’ Islamic practices; they found ways to flourish within their religious context. These approaches seek to develop inner resources and build upon peoples’ inherent resilience, attributes indicative of natality and flourishing. They are approaches that, when taken out of the current moral imaginary in which they exist and viewed from natality, recognize visions of flourishing other than those born out of resistance to oppression. For example, I chose to interview individuals from the Palestinian leadership training organization, *Ta’awon* because of its emphasis on building and strengthening Palestinian civil society as part of its approach to peacebuilding.

These partial perspectives contribute to a fuller understanding of the peacebuilding efforts in the Israel/Palestine conflict and therefore address some of the fragmentation, noted in Chapter 1, which characterise a systems model of peacebuilding.

The spaces in the matrices of flourishing are the spaces where knowledge is being formed by the interactions of the three strands of these matrices. There are

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273 Richter-Devroe, “Gender, Culture and Conflict Resolution in Palestine.”
five aspects of the spaces that I develop below that are significant for operationalizing the matrices of flourishing as a research lens.

One of the indications of human flourishing was natals’ public moral actions on behalf of the other. Therefore, the spaces are first characterized by spiritual capital and moral imagination and the ways in which people are dynamically mobilizing the socially constructed sources of morality, their moral imaginary, in creative new ways. This means that one aspect of flourishing this lens locates is people’s moral context, religious or otherwise, and then it provides the means to analyse how people are mobilizing their identities as moral beings, in new and creative ways.

Secondly, the spaces are characterized and held open by the notions of the immanent divine that is created and resides in the spaces through human relationships and interactions rather than by those of an unchangeable transcendent divine that exists outside of human existence. The divine horizon of becoming, as conceptualized in the previous chapter, guarantees the openness and multiple possibilities of becoming. This has methodological implications.

Because the divine represents becoming and represents ethical relationships and actions towards the Other, it becomes possible to locate and evaluate the ways in which both the identities of religious and nonreligious people are changing through their encounters with the Other. I will locate both of these aspects of flourishing in Chapter 4.
Thirdly, the spaces are characterized by *borderlands* where a multiplicity of ethnic and religious identities are constantly becoming. Borderlands also hold open the becoming of multiple identities based on the intersections of various aspects of identities where interlocking variables of race, class, gender, nationality, religion and ethnicity operate to dynamically shape and inform peoples’ identities.

Fourthly, the spaces are characterised by different visions of flourishing which include resistance to oppression as well as those that exceed and are not confined or defined by resistance and oppression.

Finally, the spaces are characterized by *spacetime*, where the past, present and future exist simultaneously and therefore allow for multiple, open and fluid futures. Operationalized as part of my methodology, *spacetime* provides a means for examining the ways in which forgiveness as defined in the previous chapter was applied by the people I interviewed towards past suffering, including loss of lives and property, in ways that open up possibilities for new futures.

In sum, the matrices of flourishing constitute my methodological framework. The various strands of the matrices of flourishing directed my selection of interview subjects. The spaces of the matrices of flourishing informed which aspects of flourishing I located in my interviews. These include the following:

1. The moral context of natals, religious or otherwise
2. Peoples encounters with the Other and how those encounters changed their identities
3. The ways in which religious identities were not static, including gendered religious ones.
4. The ways in which all three aspects above complicate the representations of the victim/oppressor binary in their respective national narratives
5. The possibilities for open futures.

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Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*.  

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One final aspect of natality that informed my methodology is the idea that each human life, framed by birth and death, formed a narrative. In the next section I address how a narrative approach, along with the matrices of flourishing, informed the questions I asked and the criteria I applied for locating and analyzing data that evidenced flourishing.

3.2.3. The narrative approach is consistent with the ethical concerns of a moral imaginary of natality.

One of the aspects of natals discussed in the previous chapter was that individuals perform deeds and narrate stories. Through performing deeds (experience) and telling stories (making sense of the experiences), natals create new insights which inform and can transform the moral imaginary. Narratives are the means by which these insights emerge that contribute to new identities and futures. I sought to answer to the quote that I opened the chapter with: What were the moral stories that people told in order to sense of their lives and what it was for them to flourish? In what ways did people construct their life stories as ‘meaningful,’ ‘exciting,’ and that exemplified the ‘values they prized?’ A narrative approach also fits well with the epistemological concerns of a politics of natality that insists that a there is no one abstract eternal objective truth, but that truth is comprised of a multiplicity of perspectives. Furthermore, there are precedents for using a narrative methodology in feminist international relations field research.

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276 Jantzen, Becoming Divine, 148.
277 Ackerly, “Feminist Methodologies for International Relations.”
I chose to use a semi-structured interview approach in order to elicit the stories, of how Israelis and Palestinians made sense of their lives and how they were living up to their notions of flourishing. Their moral narratives, situated in the matrices of flourishing, comprise aspects of what can be known about the conflict and its resolution. They were engaged in a form of cultural and transcultural experimentation. Through their experiences and the meanings they ascribed to those experiences, they were challenging the predominant framings or stories of how individuals and the different groups involved in the conflict make sense of their lives, who they are, and how to treat others. In order to elicit these perspectives I asked four questions.

The first question was,

*How and why did you get involved with this particular organisation?*[^278]

By asking this question, I sought to prompt interviewees to reflect on their moral motivations for engaging in peacebuilding. I deliberately did not phrase the question in terms of ethics and morality because I did not want to prejudice their responses. In their replies, I was looking for language which indicated a sense of moral obligation as well as how their views of the enemy, the Other, were in flux. Invariably the conversation turned to why they came to reject violent solutions to the conflict as a matter of principle and conscience. It was these moral ‘oughts’ and ‘shoulds,’ whether they were based in religious beliefs or not, that were indications of flourishing which I was then able to analyse.

[^278]: I asked four questions in order to elicit peoples’ stories. They are listed in Appendix 2.
In order to further explore their moral context as well as to gain an understanding of the ways in which they constructed their identities, a second question was:

*How do you view yourself in the context of your own society as well as within the broader context of the conflict?*

This was a question about identity as it related to both the conflict as well as the Other. It was vital to ascertain how people defined their identities and which aspects of those identities were most important to them. I wanted to know what stories they constructed to make sense how they were changing as a result of their involvement in peacebuilding. Were these identities fluid, and if so, in what ways were they changing? For example, in what ways were peoples’ national identities shifting?

Because a central hypothesis of this thesis is about how religion is intelligible and relevant for the ways it informs identity (moral and otherwise) and peoples’ moral imagination, another question I asked was specifically about their relationship to religion.

*Does religion form a meaningful part of your life, if so, how? If not, what beliefs are important to you and how you view yourself and your life?*

It was not sufficient to ask what religion they were because that did not indicate whether or not meaningful that religious background was to them. One of the things I wanted to determine was to what extent religion formed the ways in which they defined flourishing, i.e., the ways in which it informed the narratives of how they made sense of their lives in terms of significance and purpose. It was important to determine whether or not, and if so, how religion informed their
morality and ethics. Were there data to support that peoples’ interpretations of their religions and their religious identity were changing as a result of their involvement in different peacebuilding activities? I wanted to ascertain whether or not people from the same religious tradition deployed their religious texts and beliefs differently in order to account their moral motivations, and if so, how? The main question I asked as I then analysed the data was how was religion being mobilised by people to promote rather than hinder the flourishing of the Other? Was religion being deployed in flourishing ways or was it only being deployed to sustain and fuel the conflict?

The final question I asked was to try to elicit peoples’ hope and vision for the future. To elicit their perspectives I asked:

*What is your vision for the future? What kind of a world do you envision for your children and your children’s children? If you don’t have children, what kind of future do you aspire to for future generations?*

The question was framed so as not to limit visions of the future to particular solutions to the conflict that were being proposed, although it was deliberately left open to that interpretation. I was interested in what constituted their over-arching vision for flourishing. In the responses to this question, I wanted to determine how, if at all, people were reframing the past. Were there examples of forgiveness of past losses that opened up new possibilities for the future? Were there examples of different and fluid futures being mooted? This question did not reference terms like justice, equality, reconciliation, redemption, co-existence or equality. In asking this question, I wanted to see if they emerged in the narratives and if so, how they were defined.
As part of the data analysis, I set the insights that I uncovered from my research results against the dominant moral stories, or narratives, set out by Bar Tal and Rouhana, whose narrative approach to peacebuilding I discussed in the first chapter. I did this in order to see if the partial perspectives that I located opened up new possibilities for imaginative new moral framings that were more conducive to human becoming and flourishing.

They maintained that the three incommensurable moral framings of the conflict have been shaped and sustained by the following beliefs which needed to be changed in order to move towards peace:

1. We are the moral ones; our goals are legitimate and just
2. The opponent is subhuman and is ‘evil’
3. We are the victims

Although the particular framing of the narratives each side developed about the three elements above were by no means hegemonic, these elements provide a useful lens through which to view new insights that were being produced in matrices of flourishing. In particular, the strong belief that one’s own side was the victim and the other side was the oppressor, was a narrative that was constantly being challenged by the data as demonstrated in the next chapter.

Additionally they noted that in the case of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict all of the above perspectives were often justified and reinforced through the politicization of religion. Therefore, I explore the ways in which peoples’ religious narratives were challenged by their encounters with the Other and how this influenced their shifting and changing identities. As I have argued throughout this thesis, religious

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279 Bar-Tal, "Societal Beliefs." 765
subjects and religious beliefs and practices, irrespective of the religion, can be made transparent and evaluated in the public sphere. Therefore, it is possible to evaluate the actions of the religious with the non-religious on a level playing field with non-religious actors.

3.2.4. The field research.

I went to Israel and Palestine for approximately seven weeks from June 20 through August 8, 2008, in order to conduct the field research. I conducted 32 formal interviews and numerous informal informational interviews with people from a wide variety of organizations, including NGOs, universities, the media, and religious organizations including churches, mosques and synagogues.

Although my goal had been to formally interview an equal number of Palestinians, Israelis, men, women, and religious and nonreligious people, in practice I unintentionally interviewed more Palestinians than Israelis and more religious than nonreligious people. Given that my goal was to uncover the voices of people who were not being heard, this reversed asymmetry in the kinds of people I interviewed was actually more in keeping with the purposes of my field research. I formally interviewed 13 Israelis, 2 Palestinian Israelis, 17 Palestinians, 14 women and 18 men. Only 5 people, all of them Israelis, self-identified as atheists. Whether or not they worked for a religious organization, everyone else acknowledged some degree of religious affiliation. The degree of religiosity ranged from very devout to almost agnostic.
The purpose of the informal interviews was to locate contacts. These informal interviews were also an invaluable resource for being able to set the stories I was collecting into the wider political and historical context of the conflict in which they were occurring. They were also crucial for gaining a broader picture of the peacebuilding efforts.

Because I had previously traveled extensively to Israel and Palestine, I already had numerous contacts and relationships from which to draw. This meant I was able to set up some informational and research interviews ahead of time. This prior experience and my preexisting network of relationships was an asset given the difficulties of traveling around Palestine after the second intifada. It also meant I had already established trust with many of my interviewees ahead of the interviews I conducted on this trip which meant people were usually forthcoming.

For the first two weeks I stayed at a former colleague’s house in Bethlehem and for the remainder of the time I was able to stay in a flat in the Palestinian part of Jerusalem which bordered Bethlehem, roughly a ten minute bus ride to the Bethlehem checkpoint. The people in the block of flats where I stayed were Palestinian Israelis and this provided a different perspective than I would have had if I had stayed in one of the Israeli Jewish sections of Jerusalem.

I took the snowball approach to locating interview subjects starting from the research subjects I had identified on prior research trips. The first two weeks I was there I concentrated on informational interviews set up prior to my arrival. These

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280 From 1998-2001, I spent two-three months each year for work in Israel and Palestine. I stayed mostly in al-Eizariya, a small town in Palestine, traveling daily into Jerusalem to conduct training courses for an NGO. I returned for two week exploratory research visits in 2006 and 2007 in order to lay the groundwork for the field research in 2008.
contacts gave me names and introductions to people working for organisations that they thought were relevant to my research. It was in this way, for example, I first heard from an Israeli contact about the work of Combatants for Peace (CP), an NGO comprised of former Israeli and Palestinian combatants.

This approach was effective resulting in more potential candidates than I was able to interview. It was particularly effective in locating Palestinians outside of Bethlehem meaning I was able to travel to most parts of Palestine including Ramallah, Hebron, and Qalqiya, as well as to numerous checkpoints in the northern part of Palestine. My greatest regret was not being able to follow up contacts I was given in Gaza due to significant security and safety concerns both for myself and my contacts. Similarly Israeli contacts in Jerusalem were able to put me in touch with many useful people in Tel Aviv, particularly the Israeli and Palestinian Israeli women who worked with the Women’s League for International Peace and Freedom (WILPF).

3.2.5. The interviews.

The interviews were semi-structured open ended. I chose this approach so that I could focus their stories on the aspects of flourishing that I identified in the previous chapter without being directive.

The interviews were conducted in English. Although I had access to translators, most of the people I interviewed spoke English fairly well although I did

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281 One of my Palestinian contacts invited me to go meet with some of his colleagues and offered to help me get a permit. He was keen for me to interview senior leaders of Hamas that he had been in exile with in Lebanon in 1992 and hear their stories. However, I was not sure my ethics submission to the University would have covered these interviews. Safety was also an issue. In the summer of 2008 n Hamas had kidnapped an Israeli soldier and was holding him hostage.
not consciously choose them for this reason. Only with Palestinians did language pose any difficulty, and then only in a couple of instances.

Generally, I conducted the interviews in neutral public places such as coffee houses or restaurants both for the interviewee’s safety and comfort as well as my own. I also interviewed people at their place of work during work hours. In many instances both Israelis and Palestinians invited me to their homes for the interviews. When setting up the interviews, I let people know ahead of time that the initial interview would be no more than an hour since many people I interviewed were busy NGO managers and workers. However, at least half of the interviews lasted longer, but always at the interviewee’s initiative not mine. For example, one interview took place over more than half a day in a car as I travelled with an Israeli woman from Machsom Watch (MW) to observe the work they did at numerous checkpoints in Palestine. In instances where an hour was not enough, I scheduled a second interview. However, this was rare. Generally, people were very open and eager to tell their stories. Out of the 32 interviews, there were less than five where it was difficult to elicit peoples’ stories.

It was critical to be flexible as things rarely worked out as planned. However that became an advantage as I was able to follow up on serendipitous encounters, and meetings, of which there were many.

Having gained the interviewee’s signed permission, I both recorded these interviews on a microcassette recorder and took notes. These notes provided a useful outline of key points to refer to when transcribing the interviews which

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282 As part of the ethics process I went through with the School of Social Sciences, I developed a permission form that I had the interviewees sign at the beginning that gave me permission to use their data in my research and that ensured their anonymity.
synopsized the data. I transcribed all the interviews and have referenced the data from them in the following chapters. Every evening after returning home from a day of interviews, I also wrote up field notes based on my impressions of the day including the interviews and the travel, which I referred to extensively for context when writing up my data results. I regularly emailed my interview recordings and notes to a colleague to make sure, for whatever reason, they were not lost. For safety reasons, I was in constant email contact with my supervisors and colleague with a clear plan should I fail to check in.

Although very few of my interviewees insisted on anonymity, the School of Social Sciences Ethics panel who reviewed my research proposal informed me that anonymity was automatic. Therefore, I have maintained the anonymity of those with whom I conducted formal interviews although most of the Palestinians I interviewed wanted their interviews to be ‘on the record.’ In rare cases, I opted to name people who I informally interviewed as informational sources because I wanted to formally acknowledge their contribution to this project.

In many respects, the logistics of conducting these research interviews were challenging. I planned to spend half of the time in Israel and half of the time in Palestine, but fortunately for the purposes of my research it did not work out that way. Because my interview schedule was shaped by peoples’ availability, I was constantly traveling back and forth across the checkpoints and borders that separated the two peoples. Sometimes, I would have an interview with an Israeli in ‘new’ Jerusalem in the morning and then travel to East Jerusalem and Ramallah in

283 Many people are searched by Israeli security on departure and have had things confiscated, especially if they have been traveling in Palestine.
the afternoon to interview some Palestinians and then return to where I was staying which was in a completely different part of Jerusalem.

This was challenging intellectually and emotionally. A four mile journey, if it involved crossing a checkpoint, could take up to two hours. My perceptions and understandings were constantly being challenged and assaulted by the vast differences between the Israel and Palestine. Even within Israel, the differences between Jerusalem where the conflict was much more immediate and tense, and Tel Aviv, where it was possible to be completely oblivious to the conflict, were stark.

Travel to and from interviews with one exception (in an Israeli’s personal car), was done on local public transportation including Israeli and Palestinian buses and share taxis. Traveling to Palestine and within Palestine was especially difficult due to the prevalence of Israeli checkpoints before entering into Palestine as well as numerous Israeli checkpoints in Palestinian territory. I was often delayed at checkpoints for up to three hours.

Due to the Separation Fence, travel within and to various points in Palestine was more circuitous because I was traveling on Palestinian buses which had to use Palestinian rather than Israeli roads. For example, a journey from Jerusalem to the Palestinian town of Abu Dis, a distance 5 kilometres, which prior to 2001 took 15 minutes by share taxi, took more than an hour because it had to go around the Israeli settlement of Ma’ale Adumim.
Furthermore, although I was exploring peacebuilding, violence was a constant background threat, something to be expected in a situation where a conflict was ongoing.

3.3. Methodological reflections.

Because the moral imaginary of natality insists that knowledge is not objective and neutral it is important for me to disclose my own standpoint.

Jantzen observed that it was not enough to analyse the situation as it is, but that natality involved locating insights that bring about its transformation.284 My hopes in this respect are modest, but it is one of my motivations for choosing this particular conflict as a case study. My interest in the conflict was ignited through repeated visits, starting in 1998, to Israel and Palestine as part of my work for an international NGO which had workers in Israel and in Palestine. The lives of Israelis and Palestinians I became friends with were affected in different ways by the conflict.

3.3.1. My religious, gendered, and cultural standpoint.

My experiences and social location as a Caucasian woman with dual American and British citizenship that has come from a Western religious background has influenced this project.

Another influence has been my work as someone who has worked in the field of international development and then human rights advocacy for more than

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20 years. During that time I lived and worked in Southeast Asia for five years and for ten years was involved in women’s human rights advocacy for an NGO, whilst being based in Britain. Therefore, addressing inequality and injustice has been a central motivation for most of my career.

My perspective has also been shaped by living and working cross-culturally for most of my life. I have not lived in the United States where I was born since 1992 and prior to that I spent significant periods of time studying and traveling abroad.

My perspective has been informed being an academic and activist in turns. In an effort to make sense of my experiences in development and human I returned to academia part-time in 2001 where I have been until now whilst also engaging in international women’s human rights advocacy for different NGOs. It has been difficult to bridge the interrelationships between these two identities and it is an uneasy location. I identify neither fully as an academic nor fully as an NGO worker and activist.

Finally, I have a religious partial perspective which is difficult to qualify in a specific moment of time because it is one of constant becoming. Grappling as a latecomer to feminism with some of the ‘patriarchal’ elements of the specific Christian tradition in which I was raised was another motivation for returning to academia; I wanted to identify forms of spirituality and religious expressions which promoted, rather than hindered, the development of multiple subjectivities for women. The most significant aspect of my religious standpoint for this research
project is that religion matters in public discourse and that it plays a role in politics in the ways I have suggested throughout this thesis.

3.3.2. Methodological reflections arising from the field research trip.

Before analysing the data, I shall reflect on some of the ways in which my standpoint as a researcher affected my ability obtain interviews and to establish rapport with interviewees. I shall outline further methodological considerations for the ways in which I analysed the data.

One of the challenges I faced when conducting the research was how much of my own personal history to divulge in order to obtain interviews and then to establish rapport with interviewees. Because I was asking people to share very personal aspects of their stories, I thought it important to reciprocate on some level but without foreclosing their responses.

For example, my affiliations with the Christian NGO that I had previously worked for opened doors for interviews in many instances, most notably for obtaining interviews with Christian church leaders and leaders of Christian NGOs. Because my former colleagues had relationships with Palestinian Christian leaders in Bethlehem, I was granted access to these people as a matter of course. I was a trusted and known person. Therefore people were gracious about granting me interviews despite their busy schedules. That I was fluent with various forms of Christianity, including various Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant traditions and their positions towards peacebuilding and towards the conflict, made it easy for me to
understand and ask questions about their perspective and about which parts of the Christian scripture and tradition they were mobilising to support their moral actions.

But this background was also a potential liability when it came to obtaining interviews from people who worked for secular organisations who knew of the organisation for whom I had previously worked. In those instances, I chose not to hide my previous work affiliation, but stressed my position as a postgraduate researcher from the University of Manchester. This usually provided me with sufficient credibility in obtaining interviews and in establishing rapport.

Surprisingly, my Christian background was not a barrier with the religious Muslims and Jews that I interviewed. I thought it might be because many Muslim Palestinians in particular associate American Christians with a form of Christian Zionism which they view, rightly or wrongly, as influencing the US foreign policy bias towards Israel. In fact one devoutly religious Muslim man I interviewed commented that it was easier for him to talk openly about how his recitation of the Koran sustained him when he was being tortured in an Israeli prison because he perceived that we shared a common bond as ‘people of faith.’ Also, because I had studied and taught on comparative religions as part of the training courses I conducted for my former organisation, I was already somewhat familiar with the different forms of Judaism and Islam some of the interviewees practiced, and where I was unfamiliar with them, it was fairly straightforward to intuit which questions to ask in order to elicit the ways in which their religious beliefs and practices informed their narratives.

It was difficult to know how much to reveal about my own political perspective about the conflict and how I thought it should be resolved. I never mentioned it in the interviews unless asked directly. I deflected the question by saying that although I had a perspective my main purpose was to learn about a diverse range of perspectives. I also assured them that my perspective was fluid and open to change depending on the data.

Finally being open to new perspectives on the conflict and its transformation meant allowing my own identity to be transformed by these encounters. This was severely tested by an encounter with a religious settler whom I interviewed. Although I never came to accept her point of view that building Israel’s settlements in Palestine was inherently right and just, I gained some appreciation for the ways in which she said she was marginalised. And although I found some of her statements distasteful, I empathised with the contradictions and tensions in her position as a settler who engaged in peacebuilding. As I discuss in the next chapter, her identity was fluid and changing and I learned some of the ways in which Israeli settlers were not a homogenous identity group.

There were some additional methodological considerations that influenced how I analysed and presented the data in the next two chapters. The ethical implications of natality for my own research meant recognizing that people were not just objects to be researched, but they were authors of their own stories and that these stories, as I told them, although fluid, reflected a particular moment in time.
I took a similar approach to the one taken by Tami Jacoby in her field research in Israel and Palestine between 1996 and 2000, that of self-presentation.\(^{287}\) She acknowledged the difficulty in translating experience into knowledge because of the “incommensurability” inherent in the researcher-researched relationship in field work. She maintained that the researcher, because of their own standpoint, would never be able to accurately represent others’ experiences.\(^ {288}\) Maria Stern also spoke of this incommensurability in her work. She concluded that “a narrative recalling a memory is the closest one can come to being privy to another’s experience.”\(^ {289}\) Similarly, in the next chapter, my representations of the interviews will be a narrative recalling a memory.

In the self-presentation mode of analysis, those who are the ‘subjects’ of the research are also agents who are actors in their own right. As Jacoby defined it self-presentation denoted “the ways in which agents form their own subjectivities…and actively present their lives to others.”\(^ {290}\) The researched have their own agenda in shaping how they want to be represented. This resonated with my research experience. I observed that everyone whom I interviewed presented their story in such a way as to convince me of the rightness and reasonableness of their actions and their cause.

The most interesting stories were those where interviewees were self-reflective and aware of the shortcomings of their efforts and the dissonances in


\(^{288}\) Ibid., 153.


\(^{290}\) Jacoby, “From the Trenches: Dilemmas of Feminist Ir Fieldwork,” 162.
their stories. They represented the greatest openness to new insights and to change. They were the ones who most empathetically put themselves in the shoes of another in such ways that caused them to revise their own identities and definitions of flourishing in order to incorporate aspects the Other’s view of the world and what it meant to flourish.

In a research project shaped and informed by the lens and ethics of natality, then, research becomes more of a conversation between equals rather than a hierarchical relationship with the researcher in the transcendent position of knower above the ‘object’ being studied.

3.4. Conclusion.

This chapter began by outlining the epistemological concerns of natality which indicate a particular research approach, the matrices of flourishing, in order to locate aspects of flourishing in the Israel/Palestine conflict. These concerns root knowledge about the conflict and its transformation in the experiences of differently located natals in terms of their social, religious and gendered context rather than in abstract knowledge located outside of human experience in this world. Therefore the research lens formed by the intersections of the spaces and strands of flourishing, were designed to locate the partial perspectives of natals that were being forged as they engaged in different aspects of peacebuilding.

The strands of the matrices of flourishing were comprised by natals, peacebuilding activities as well as the different social and moral contexts of natals, indicated which people I chose to interview. Because each of the peacebuilding
approaches generated knowledge about flourishing, I chose interviewees from three different broad approaches to peacebuilding including contact approaches, NVR, and capacity building. Finally, because a central hypothesis was that the moral actions and identities of the religious as well as nonreligious men and women could be evaluated on a level playing field, I selected religious people from all three different major religions implicated in the conflict, Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, as well as self-identified atheists, agnostics or secularists. Finally, I chose to interview both men and women. The purpose of my research was not to look at the identities and actions of outside third parties. This was predicated on my standpoint grounded in natality, that the best parties to resolve the conflict in the first instance are the ones involved in it and not third parties, which although are supposedly neutral, never are. Therefore, I did not interview international activists except in certain instances to gain more context of the conflict and what was being done to facilitate its resolution.291

The spaces where the strands of flourishing intersected and overlapped are dynamic ones where four different kinds of insights were being generated. These included spiritual capital/moral resources, borderlands/becoming divine, flourishing through resistance to oppression as well as flourishing not defined by resistance, and spacetime/forgiveness. Therefore these spaces pointed to the aspects of flourishing I sought to locate; the moral context of natals, religious or otherwise, people’s encounters with the Other and the ways in which these encounters transformed their identities, the ways in which peoples identities religious and

291 For example, I spoke to foreign nationals belonging to CPT in order to gain a better understanding of the situation between Palestinians and Israeli settlers in Hebron.
nonreligious were fluid and changing, and the ways in which three kinds of narratives about the conflict were being challenged by those identity transformations. These narratives included assuming that one’s own side had sole ownership of the moral high ground, the demonization of the Other as subhuman and evil, and the assumption that one’s own side had the sole claim to victimhood. I hypothesized that these narratives were being challenged in ways that open up different possible futures by the insights produced from an analysis of these aspects of flourishing.

To locate the evidence, I designed four questions in order to elicit stories which began first by asking interviewees how and why they became involved in peacebuilding. I also identified some criteria for locating and analyzing the evidence for flourishing. These include identifying the ways in which people were acting as natals: resilient, creative, acting out of inner resources and love towards the other rather than out of need, and the ways in which people were imaginatively deploying the moral resources or spiritual capital within their social context, religious or otherwise. Evidence consisted of locating and then analysing what people were doing to alleviate human suffering, the ways in which the resources of religion or other sources of morality where people were not religious, were being used to act on behalf of the Other, i.e. out of empathy and concern for the Other, and the ways in which people came to identify with and empathise with the Other.

Finally, it is important to note that the purpose of the field research was to demonstrate how the matrices of flourishing, a research lens grounded in the concerns of natality, could uncover new insights which would increase the creative
and imaginative options available for achieving peace in this particular conflict. The intent was not to provide a comprehensive empirical ethnographic study of the conflict. Instead, it was to cast as wide a net as possible to locate a few black swans of flourishing in a context of intractable conflict where flourishing seemed highly improbable by exploring knowledges being formed in multiple intersections of the matrices rather than honing in on just a few.²⁹²

In the next chapter I explore how the black swans that I located indicate some of the ways in which different identities, moral, national, religious and gendered, identities were fluid and shifting. New identities, coalescing around solidarities that shared a common goal for a peaceful future which intersected and transcended boundaries of gender, nationality and religion, represented fragile rays of hope. Then Chapter 5 examines aspects of flourishing that reflect the ways in which different views of the past were being mobilised to open up new futures, makes recommendations for how future research using this lens might be conducted and how the results of the research might address the fragmentation between the different tracks in current systems approaches to peacebuilding.

Chapter 4
Fragile Rays of Hope

Walls come down. They do not last forever.  

4.1. Introduction.

As Chapter 2 contended, a politics of natality is one of hope. My hypothesis was that the research lens afforded by matrices of flourishing would uncover indications of flourishing that open up different possibilities for the future. The quote that begins this chapter reflects the hope that sustained one Palestinian’s engagement in peacebuilding. This chapter examines many similar expressions of hope, words backed by the actions of flourishing natals despite the intensification of this conflict as I undertook my field research in July 2008 which culminated in Operation Cast Lead in December of that year. Since then the conflict has continued to wax and wane, yet I argue the hopeful actions of flourishing natals captured in this chapter and the next, are relevant for the glimpses they afford of different peaceful futures. This chapter explores how locating aspects of flourishing, the black swans not predicted by modernity, complicate the seemingly incommensurable and intractable narratives that both sides deploy to justify and sustain the conflict.

Firstly this chapter examines how data pertaining to the interviewees’ self-described moral context, religious or otherwise, problematizes ‘the moral high

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293 Muslim Palestinian female refugee A.R., personal interview, Ibdaa, Personal Interview, 26 June 2008.
294 Israeli troops invaded Gaza to on December 27, 2008 and conducted a 22 day offensive against Hamas. See Asa Kasher, "Operation Cast Lead and the Ethics of Just War," Azure 37(2009).
ground’ narratives that each side employs to justify conflict. Section 2 locates and analyses the context, religious or otherwise, in which people acted morally and how that morality was central to their identity.

Secondly, data analysis indicates some ways in which encounters with the Other were transforming people’s constructions of narratives that demonised the Other as evil and inhuman. Section 3 pinpoints and studies interviewees’ encounters with the Other as human and the ways in which those encounters were transforming their identities.

Section 4 explores the ways their religious, moral and religious-gendered identities were fluid in response to these transformative encounters. Men and women mobilised their religious and moral beliefs in ways that engendered flourishing.

Section 5 explores how the data problematizes the victim/oppressor binary which Chapter 1 argued was left intact by models that did not privilege natality and flourishing. The data indicates the different ways in which interviewees from both sides of conflict were able to act morally, in creative and imaginative ways despite their circumstances.

By contesting all three of these kinds of narratives which work to justify and explain the conflict, the data indicated some of the ways in which moral, religious (including gendered religious identities) and national identities were shifting. While this data is bases on a limited sample, the initial results were encouraging.
4.2 The moral context of flourishing natals, religious and otherwise, informed their moral predisposition to engage in peacebuilding.

An analysis of the data indicated that the moral standpoint of those engaged in peacebuilding was informed by the social and religious context into which they were born. The men and women whom I interviewed were not moral beings operating from ‘a god’s eye view from nowhere.’ Each individual I interviewed saw herself or himself as a moral actor operating from a moral framework that was informed by the communities into which they were born. This moral grounding influenced their approach of life and to the conflict. This was particularly apparent in the interviews as individuals told stories about their motivations for becoming involved in peacebuilding activities.

Throughout the interviews, individuals cited that one of their primary motivations for becoming actively engaged in conflict transformation activities was out of a sense of morality; it was a matter of conscience.

One elderly Israeli activist, H.S., who had been part of the Israeli war of independence in the 1940’s as a medic in her youth, recounted how she was compelled to be involved in peacebuilding by her sense of morality:

*It’s a matter of character. I was very much a part of it. I belong to the generation that fought the War of Independence….You know I believed in it. I was part of the underground…the Hageneh…and then I opened my eyes.*

Although she could have retired from public life a couple decades previously, she indicated that what gave her life meaning and value was acting ethically on behalf of the Palestinians through her engagement in peacebuilding.

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This motivation transcended religious and national boundaries. The woman above described herself as an atheist. However a conservative Jewish rabbi, A.R., who worked for Rabbis for Human Rights (RHR) voiced similar sentiments.

I believe it is what I have to do for the sake of my children, for a better future for them, and so I can look them in the eye when they grow older and ask Daddy what were you doing then?296

A.R. expressed his morality in terms of how he thought his children would view him when they grew up. He felt he had a historic opportunity to act morally and rightly as a religious Jew in accordance with his different interpretation of the Jewish religious texts, by recognizing Palestinian claims to the land and by protecting their houses and olive crops from destruction by religious Jewish settlers.

Another example is M.F., an Israeli and self-described atheist and child of Israeli left-wing activists, who culturally identified herself as an Ashkenazi Jew.297 She worked for Bat Shalom, an Israeli feminist peace organisation. M.F.'s paternal great grandparents died in a Nazi concentration camp. Her grandfather, a liberal rabbi, was the first to protest the Vietnam War and joined RHR when he immigrated to Israel. She expressed her motivation:

Morally, I want to be able to look at myself in the mirror and be happy about what I see and not be ashamed of being an Israeli. Love has nothing to do with it. It’s doing it because it because it’s right. It doesn’t mean they [Palestinians] are lovable or not….that is not the issue. They try to kill you, they hate you, but that’s not the point.298

297 Ashkenazi Jews were Jews of European descent, Jewish-Atheist Israeli female M.F., personal interview, Bat Shalom, Personal Interview, 21 July 2008.
298 Ibid.
M.R.’s moral standpoint is particularly indicative of flourishing as her moral actions were not predicated on her preconceptions of Palestinian identity. Instead, acting morally was unconditional despite the ways in which Palestinians constructed their identities in terms of their political goals.

N.F., an Armenian Palestinian Christian woman reflected that being a descendant of survivors of the Armenian genocide on her paternal side was one element that shaped her moral commitment to engage in NVR. Her Christian faith was another. She observed that:

…the knowledge of the Armenian genocide and what it has done to people largely because of their faith has really moulded who I am today and how I am working for justice.

By coming closer to this movement known as Sabeel which means ‘lead the way’ and ‘springs of living water’ this has been part of my journey of faith…as to why I’ve been serving the community so much…..It’s a costly responsibility.

A.M. a religious Palestinian Muslim refugee who resided in a Bethlehem refugee camp engaged in NVR projects as part of the secular organisation HLT, reflected:

My background is from a Muslim family. I was never taught that Islam says kill your neighbour. No, it says live in peace with your neighbour. Love your neighbour. I am a human being that is a just man. I believe in justice and human rights.

A.M.’s interpretation of the ethical imperatives of Islam from his personal family background predisposed him to engage in NVR, rather than violence. It was part of what it meant for him to act justly and with respect, not for his human rights, but also for those of Israelis

300 Ibid.
S.Q., a Christian Palestinian with HLT, discussed the moral context which informed his decision to engage in NVR instead of violence in response to the conflict. He first related the story of his uncle M. and how it influenced his moral choices. M. was one of the first Palestinians to use NVR tactics against Israel in the first Intifada and was eventually put on trial by an Israeli court in 1988. S.Q related how the fact that M. was ultimately declared to ‘a threat to the national security of Israel’ and deported made a strong impression on him as to the effectiveness of nonviolence. Therefore, as a teenager, he spent a lot of time working alongside his uncle. S.Q. discussed other ways in which his Christian background influenced him:

*I grew up in a Christian family that was faith based. There was a lot of talk about reconciliation in the family. I remember clearly having this conflict of what you do with this ethical and moral teaching of forgiveness and reconciliation but at the same time seeing injustice and also being treated unjustly by the Israeli army and Occupation.*

S.Q. related how he made the choice to follow these moral teachings of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Another way in which people expressed their morality and ethics was in terms of concern for future generations of children. As I demonstrate below this moral motivation was something that transcended barriers of religion, gender and nationality and was something that formed a basis for developing solidarities which transcended these boundaries. It was a significant component of people’s identity that contributed to their openness and willingness to change.

A Palestinian former combatant, a member of CP expressed his motivation:

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303 Ibid.
I am doing this because of the children and for my people and my country so our children will have a future and so they won’t grow up with violence and death and they will be able to build themselves and the nation.  

This concern for children and for future generations’ well-being is consistent with an ethic of natality that seeks to promote human flourishing.

A religious Muslim Palestinian man engaged in NVR and who spent a combined total of seven years in Israeli prisons where he had been routinely tortured, asserted,

I am doing it for the future generations of children on both sides so they don’t have to suffer like we did.

A Palestinian Muslim woman expressed her motivation for engaging in NVR:

For my kids, I want a safe place to live and a safe future to build for them.

The Jewish rabbi with RHR, A.R. also expressed that his motivation for becoming involved in conflict transformation, was based on the hope that future generations of Palestinian and Israeli children would have better lives.

N.F. reflected:

What people really want is to have a normal life to bring up children, not to be confined in a certain area… [but] to develop as much as possible.

The quotes from Palestinians and Israelis alike indicate that the shame from the failure to live up to what people considered to be a basic aspect of what it meant to be a human being, to act morally and ethically even towards one’s enemies, was a powerful motivation. This moral context was shaped, as seen in the quotes above, by family history, religion, and one’s community. This context

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304 Muslim Palestinian male R.I., CP, Personal Interview, 26 July 2008.
305 N.M.
306 Muslim Palestinian female S.M., Ta’awon Personal Interview, 2 July 2008.
307 A.R.
308 N.F.
was what informed the moral actions of men, including religious men, and women, including religious women, and compelled them to engage in the public sphere. Also, the moral concern for future generations of children, one’s own and one’s enemy, was something that a majority of the interviewees had in common that informed their moral imagination.

4.3. **Empathy, prompted by encounters with the Other, resulted in the renegotiation of identities and conflict narratives.**

Another indication of flourishing that I located was evidence for peoples’ ability to act with empathy, rather than out of fear and need, towards the Other. As a result of their encounters with the Other, people were able to draw on resources from their moral imagination to begin thinking and acting towards others differently. From the interviews it became apparent that this empathy, putting themselves in the shoes of others, was a two-fold process. First of all, interviewees related how they were touched by a personal encounter in which they were able to recognize the humanity of the Other rather than as the delegitimised, subhuman Other portrayed by their national narratives. Secondly, they recounted how these encounters transformed their own identities in unexpected ways. Through their engagement in peacebuilding, they began to see the humanity of the Other resulting in a measure of recognition and respect that was not previously possible.

There are two stories that illustrate this process. I chose them because they are from two extreme situations where Palestinians and Israelis normally have little opportunities to encounter one another due to almost insurmountable geographic and psychological barriers.
4.3.1. Some Israelis’ encounters with Palestinians contested Israeli conflict narratives that demonised Palestinians as sub-human and evil.

The first story is that of a Jewish economic settler, L.P. one of the founders of an interfaith encounter group and her Muslim Palestinian counterpart, A.M. whom I interviewed separately.309

Prior to her transformation, L.P. said she was content with the status quo and had little interest in the conflict or Palestinians. Her perception of Palestinian young men was consistent with a conflict narrative that demonised Palestinians. Prior to her involvement in IEA, she stereotyped Palestinian men as being inherently violent with a strong likelihood of becoming suicide bombers.310 Furthermore, she was a member of the right-wing Jewish sect founded by Meir Kahane, which did not recognize Palestinians’ claim to land or nation.311 The death of her daughter’s boyfriend in a suicide bombing attack was the catalyst for her to address both her increasing discomfort with her religious community’s approach to the Palestinians and her dissatisfaction with the Israeli left’s approach which she felt was too ‘political.’

This event prompted her to respond to an advertisement for an interfaith encounter group meeting of 25 Palestinian youth from Nablus and 25 Israelis.

309 Muslim Palestinian male A.M., IEA, Personal Interview, 3 July 2008; Jewish Israeli female L.P., personal interview, IEA, Personal Interview, 8 July 2008. There are Israelis who self-identify as economic settlers in order to distinguish themselves from religious or ideological settlers. They maintain that the primary reason they live in settlements in Palestine is economic; high housing costs in Israel mean many look for subsidized housing there.
310 Stereo-type as articulated by L.P.
311 Meir Kahane founded the Jewish Defence League and the Kach Party in Israel. He preached radical Jewish nationalism and was ultimately banned by the Knesset for being racist. He proposed evacuating all ‘Arabs’ from Israeli held territories.
Below is her description of how the encounter transformed her perspective of Palestinians.

*If I saw these young men on the street, I think they would probably kill me…I didn’t realise it, but they were just as frightened of Israelis. Their only experiences with Israelis were with the army so they thought all Jews were like that and all Israelis were like that.*

*I thought we Jews were the only victims, but came to the realization that we all suffer in this conflict.*

Through this encounter she realised that these young men were as frightened of her as she was of them which negated her stereotype of them as being killers. She moved from fear to a position of empathy and compassion that resulted in her recognition of Palestinians as human beings. She came to a realisation that Palestinians also suffered as a result of the conflict and caught a glimpse of how she herself was perceived as being less than human by the Palestinian youth she encountered which challenged her moral identity. As a result of this meeting, L.P. developed friendships with those she most feared.

Inspired, she cofounded an encounter group to bring people from her settlement of Ma ‘ale Adumim together to meet with villagers from Abu Dis to discuss the commonalities of their religious beliefs, Judaism and Islam. As a consequence bonds were formed between religious Jewish settlers and devout Muslim Palestinians. When one religious Jewish settler, a person who previously had viewed all Palestinians as violent terrorists and who was initially very resistant to the idea of talking to Palestinians, had brain surgery, the Palestinian members of the group prayed for him. When some of the Palestinian members of the group

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312 L.P.
were unable to get permits to attend the encounter group meetings, a formerly hostile Jewish woman settler petitioned the government to procure permits for them.

These bonds transcended the vast geographical and psychological barriers that separated the two groups. Although the village borders the settlement, Palestinians must travel for approximately two hours, via Jerusalem by bus to visit Ma’ale Adumim where the encounter groups were held. Prior to the Separation Fence, this journey would have taken 15 minutes or less.\textsuperscript{313} Also, as the Palestinian co-founder of the group, A.M. humorously reported,

\begin{quote}
It is easier [for a Palestinian] to get an interview with George Bush than it is to get a permit to get to Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{314}
\end{quote}

He spoke of waiting for days to get a permit and how, even if he got one, the border was often arbitrarily closed.

Furthermore, the settlers have appropriated many of the ancestral lands from the predominately Muslim Palestinians living in Abu Dis. A.M.’s grandfather’s property was confiscated by settlers for which he was never compensated. When questioned about it, A.M. articulated how his identity had been transformed despite his losses:

\begin{quote}
When you sit and speak with someone as a human being, you see a lot of things the same. So I changed my mind. So I began to challenge my friends to participate. It’s not easy.\textsuperscript{315}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{313} When previously visiting Abu Dis in 2000 before the Separation Fence was built, I stayed in Abu Dis and regularly commuted into Jerusalem by shared taxi.

\textsuperscript{314} A.M.

\textsuperscript{315} Ibid.
Similarly, the settlers who relied on and believed in the value of the Security Fence to keep them safe from Palestinian suicide bombers had to overcome their fear and mistrust of the Palestinians. L.P. recounted how initially many religious settlers in her apartment bloc initially resisted her efforts and refused to have her in their homes any longer asserting “We don’t want Arab lovers in our home.”

In both instances, forgiveness, a reframing of past loss in order to move towards a different future, an aspect of natality, was part of the transformation. L.P. forgave the loss of her daughter’s boyfriend as well as other losses she and other Israelis had suffered due to suicide bombings and violence which threatened her security. Similarly, in order to form relationships with Israeli settlers, A.M. forgave the suffering he’d endured at checkpoints at the hands of Israelis as well as the loss of his ancestral lands. For both, it also meant letting go of the stereotypes that each had of the Other which separated them. Other members of the encounter group, Israelis and Palestinians, also exercised forgiveness as they formed bonds that transcended national barriers.

4.3.2. Some Palestinians encounters with Israelis contested Palestinian conflict narratives that demonised Israelis as sub-human and evil.

The second story revolves around the Israeli and Palestinian participants of CP which comprised of former Israeli and Palestinian combatants. The testimonies of Israeli and Palestinian members indicate how potent empathy was for motivating ethical and loving actions on behalf of the Other. When confronted

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316 L.P.
317 CP is an NGO that works for the transformation of the conflict through joint Palestinian and Israeli NVR projects including peaceful demonstrations to protest construction of the Security Fence in villages like Bil‘in and Ni‘lin.
with their common humanity, both former Palestinian and Israeli combatants shifted from violent to nonviolent means to transform the conflict. Below are a few illustrations that exemplify this change.

A Palestinian former combatant, R.I. related how the death of his brother during the second intifada leaving his nieces and nephews fatherless, was the catalyst for him to reconsider his own position as a Palestinian fighter.  

He agreed to meet with former Israeli soldiers working to end the Occupation non-violently and was shocked by his encounter with them. It was the first time he had ever met Israeli soldiers who had renounced violence and who were opposed to Israeli’s occupation of Palestine. Eventually he joined the organization. This encounter challenged the national Palestinian narrative which demonised Israelis as subhuman which informed his identity. Eventually, he joined the organisation. His position and behaviour shifted from violence to non-violence and empathy for the Israelis. Despite his frustrations with the Occupation, he commented that what kept him going was his vision for a normal life for future generations of children. This empathy with an enemy combatant as someone who is also a loving parent who shares a common concern for the well-being and future of their children is something that was transformational.

This transformational concern for children on both sides of the conflict was also reflected by former Israeli soldiers. In another interview, a former Israeli soldier who had worked in Palestine noted that what precipitated his change from violence to nonviolence was an incident where he almost accidently shot and killed

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318 R.I. .  
319 Ibid.  

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a four year old Palestinian child as he was going from house to house in order to arrest Palestinians suspected of terrorism.\textsuperscript{320} The child reminded him of his own four year old daughter back home. He could not bring himself to continue violence against people who were also parents.

Former Israeli combatants interviewed came to view the Palestinians as being more than terrorists or suicide bombers or as being inherently violent. They came to see them as individual human beings who had families and similar aspirations as they did for a ‘normal’ life. Similarly former Palestinian combatants came to regard Israelis as being more than inhumane oppressors, but as human beings who have also suffered loss, who also had families and who desired to raise those families in peace.

Israeli and Palestinian participants in CP, as in the previous example, also forged bonds that transcended psychological and geographical barriers. Former Israeli combatants travelled widely through Palestine with Palestinian counterparts in order to apologise to villagers for their former acts of violence and to train them in NVR. Similarly, Palestinian former combatants met with Israeli groups in Jerusalem in order to apologise for their acts of violence and to train Israelis to participate with them in NVR. Forgiveness of the past, in terms of past losses as well as past stereotypes that demonised the Other as subhuman, like the previous story, was part of the identity transformation.

While these encounters, in and of themselves, were insufficient to significantly address asymmetries of power between the two sides, they provided

\textsuperscript{320} Jewish-Atheist Israeli male P.R., \textit{CP}, Personal Interview, 2008.
an important starting point for generating new narratives about the Other which are critical for building constituencies for peace amongst the two parties in the conflict. For example, the encounter group comprised of settlers and Palestinians from Abu Dis did not address the fact that the Jewish settlers had appropriated the family lands of the Palestinian villagers with whom they met with. L.P. could not understand some of the Palestinians’ anger toward her for living in the settlement. She justified being an economic settler because she said it was the only place she and her family could afford to live. However, people were able to begin to imagine the lives of the Other, to put themselves in their shoes and empathise with their plight; something not previously possible due to wide gulf that separated them.

The two processes, first an encounter, and secondly, an identity shift away conceptualising the Other as less than human were reflected in a significant number of other interviews as well. Although the illustrations above touched briefly on how people from the three major religions, Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, transcended religious barriers as well as ethnic barriers that separated them and formed solidarities because of their ethical commitment to the flourishing of the Other, the next section explores in more detail in how religious identities were shifting in ways that also made these new solidarities possible.

### 4.4. Religious identities, including those of religious women, were fluid and changing.

One of my hypotheses was that a politics of natality with human flourishing as its goal makes it possible to explore the changing motivations, identities and actions of religious actors on a level playing field with secular actors. The data
bore this out. In this section, I examine how individuals from different religious backgrounds with different moral frameworks interpreted and acted on their beliefs in a way that was characteristic of flourishing. I give examples from all three religions, of how both religious women and men interpreted their individual holy books in a way that acting on behalf of the flourishing of the Other was privileged above other religious values.

Being religious was not a guarantee of ethical action. People located within the three main religious traditions encompassed by this conflict, mobilized the ethical resources of their religion differently. Those, whose primary motivation was love for the other, mobilized the resources of their particular religion differently than those who like their secular counterparts were motivated by things like national identity, self-interest or need. In fact they criticized religious cohorts from their respective religious traditions for not adhering to the ethical values of that particular tradition. Furthermore, through their actions they expressed a desire to present a more moral and ethical representation of the followers of their particular religion.

The lens of flourishing located data that supported the different ways religious identities were fluid, including the identities of religious women whose voice in peacebuilding has been especially marginalised as indicated in Chapter 1.

4.4.1. Jewish women and men were mobilising spiritual capital found in their religious traditions to support the flourishing of Palestinians.

In this section, I explore the different ways in which Jewish women and men mobilised moral resources from their Jewish religious tradition in order to make
sense of their encounters with Palestinians and their involvement in peacebuilding. This section also points out that these beliefs which support ethical action are similar to the ethical concerns mobilised by non-religious Jewish Israelis.

One of the most difficult and profound identity shifts was by an Israeli Jewish settler, R.R., a National Religious Jew, who believed that the Jews were God’s chosen people who she argued had:

*the right and privilege to serve the state of Israel.*

She had previously lived in a Jewish settlement in Palestine and her sister and husband, rabbis, lived with their large family in Eli, a large Jewish settlement near Ramallah. One of her nephews was killed by a suicide bombing attack. She was persuaded to participate in an international peace project which brought potential future Israeli leaders in contact with potential future Palestinian leaders. There she encountered D., a Palestinian from Ramallah. The two women became very close friends despite the fact that R.R.’s family lived in a settlement not far from D’s town. R.R. described her transformation:

*At the beginning the project changed me; I moved from seeing things in black and white and started seeing shades of grey. It’s something I take with me everywhere. I say to other Jewish people there is a lot in between and you should be able to look at the complexity of reality...*

She was conscious that she was staking out a position frowned upon by her religious community and immediate family. She cited their objections:

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322 I travelled to Eli with RR. and interviewed them. They said they believed it was their sacred duty to occupy the land that God gave them. Ironically, they had employed Palestinian construction workers and referred them as Arabs.’

323 R.R.
All Palestinians needed to be killed or evacuated or moved to Jordan.\textsuperscript{324}

R.R.’s encounter with D and others in the project caused her to move from the position of National Religious that no compromise with the Palestinians over the land was possible to the position she articulated below:

\textit{But you live in this country and people change. You know they won’t go anywhere. So you can ignore them like a lot of right wingers do. They will say there never was a Palestinian people until Arafat came….They didn’t deserve the land….But they are here. We can’t do anything to change that. So maybe we can look at reality. I think this is what made me go [get involved]. They live here. They are here to stay. Do we want to live with them quietly, happily, peacefully?}\textsuperscript{325}

R.R.’s shift of identity towards embracing a form of solidarity with Palestinians was probably the smallest of all those interviewed, but given the standpoint from which she started, it was probably one of the most profound for allowing that any peace or compromise with Palestinians was desirable. She still insisted that it was the Jews’ spiritual responsibility to occupy ‘Judea and Samaria.’ In fact she almost seemed more at odds with secular Israeli peace activists on the Left who she referred to as ‘left wingers’. She criticized them:

\textit{Israelis need to be taught the bible that this is the Promised Land. We have nothing to apologise for. They should know how to behave. We don’t have to give up the territories for peace. God gave us the Land.}\textsuperscript{326}

Similarly M.F. and H.S., self-identified secular Israeli female Jewish activists, expressed suspicion and distaste for religious settlers.\textsuperscript{327} However, although not religious, as quoted in the previous section on moral context, they

\textsuperscript{324}Ibid. This is a common view that I heard settlers in Hebron articulate. It’s the Israeli settler equivalent of one of the Israel narratives about Palestinians whom they say want to throw all Israelis into the sea.
\textsuperscript{325}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{326}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{327}M.F; H.S.
mobilised similar aspects of their moral framework, a concern to act ethically and justly even towards their enemy.

By considering the spaces opened up by the changes in R.R.’s standpoint it becomes imaginable to expand the constituencies for peace by encouraging more National Religious settlers to engage in peacebuilding since they are considered by other Israelis to be one of the most intransigent obstacles to any Israeli government-initiated peace negotiations. It is possible to locate the different ways people mobilise different aspects of their moral frameworks that are not based on homogenous identity or need for protection and security.

In another instance, D.B. from Machsom Watch (MW), an Israeli atheist and cultural Jew described how she used to be, as she referred to herself, a ‘right wing Jew.’ She expressed how her encounters with first Israeli activists and then Palestinians caused her to change:

_I was a right wing Jew who believed that Israel had a right to occupy all the land. Then I met some Israeli women who made me aware of the other side of the story. The things I had believed in and were taught weren’t true. My change was gradual and it occurred over ten years. But then I met Palestinians who were suffering at the check points and never looked back._

D.B. was one of the few Israeli activists I met who had learned Arabic. I conducted her interview as she took me on a tour of the check points along the boundaries of Palestine and her mobile phone was constantly ringing. Palestinians whose family members had been detained at checkpoints were ringing her for help. Although her shift was gradual, based on my observations, it was one of the most

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329 Ibid.
330 The only other interviewee who mentioned learning Arabic was H.S. By and large it was far more common for Palestinians to have learnt Hebrew than for Israelis to have learned Arabic; something that also reflected and reinforced the asymmetries of power between the two sides.
profound in that her identification with the Palestinian point of view and her solidarity with them was so complete that her family and friends had started criticising her as being a traitor to Israel. This was a common charge against both Israeli and Palestinian activists who had come to identify too much with the other by their national compatriots who had not made the shift.  

For example, A.R. commented that he was constantly being harassed by the settlers he encountered, as a ‘self-hating Jew’ and a traitor to Israel. He maintained that it was his interpretation of the Torah that showed him what it meant to be a moral and ethical Jew. To respect and promote the human dignity of all people was one of the reasons he became involved in joining Palestinians in NVR activities against settlers and the Israeli military in Palestine, by, for example, working with Palestinians to harvest their olive fields when under pressure from settlers who were trying to steal or destroy the olive harvest. He privileged the verses in the Torah which proclaimed that all people, because they were created in God’s image, were deserving of dignity and respect, including Palestinians. 

He related an instance where Israeli soldiers had confused him with the religious settlers because he was wearing a kippa (a skull cap) like the settlers, and had told him to stand aside during a confrontation with Palestinians over the demolition of one of their homes. A.R. replied instead,

*I am with them [the Palestinians].*
He commented on how Palestinians have related this story countless times as an example of a different kind of religious Jew, one who cared about justice for the Palestinians and stood in solidarity with them.

Many Jews, both within Israel and in the wider international arena, support A.R.’s advocacy for respecting the human rights of Palestinians. They maintain that RHR and its members represent an ethical form of Judaism that goes a long way towards to restoring what they view as the damaged reputation of the religion caused by the violent actions of the religious Jewish settlers who are responsible for violence and human rights against Palestinians particularly in places like Hebron.335 D.B., no longer a religious Jew in part due to the shame she felt about the violence done by Jewish settlers in the name of Judaism against the Palestinians, said she was grateful to RHR because it represented a more moral and humane picture of Jewish identity.336

A Greek Orthodox-Christian Palestinian Israeli whom I interviewed from Musalaha (Arabic for reconciliation) an organisation that facilitates encounters between Palestinian Christians and Israeli Messianic Jewish ‘Christians’ as part of its peacebuilding strategy.337 He spoke of his identity as something that was continually in flux as his involvement in peacebuilding changed over time.

336 D.B.
337 Messianic Jews are Jewish Christians who believe that Jesus was the Messiah that was prophesied about in their faith. They emphasise their Jewish and Christian identity.
I see it as a journey. Your identity is all the time evolving. In many ways who I am and the way I think has been influenced by the Jewish Israeli society in which I grew up. But also the aspect of the Palestinian part of my identity becomes more clear as...I am interacting with the Palestinian society more...especially since the second intifada.  

M.S. constantly mobilised different aspects of his moral framework to make sense of his changing approaches to peacebuilding warranted by shifting circumstances over time. His participation in reconciliation projects meant that his identity was constantly changing through his encounters with Israeli Jews, Israeli Christians, Israeli Palestinians (Christian and Muslim), Muslim Palestinians and Christian Palestinians. He recounted how his identity was first profoundly shaped by attending an Israeli high school where he was taught Jewish Israeli culture in a completely Jewish Israeli environment. Although he identified himself then as an ‘Arab’ Israeli, and as a Christian rather than as a Jew or a Muslim, he strongly identified with the predominant Israeli Jewish culture. However, given the intensification of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians in Palestine, he came to more strongly identify himself as Palestinian rather than ‘Arab’ and redefined his identity from that of an Arab Israeli to becoming a Palestinian Israeli that identified with the suffering of Palestinians in Palestine. People from both Israeli society and from Palestine approached him and asked him if he could be a bridge between the two peoples. M.S. is an example of a mestiza who lives in tensions of the various spaces and strands of the matrices of flourishing and whose identity is constantly dynamically evolving in the borderlands.

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338 Greek Orthodox Christian Palestinian-Israeli male M.S., personal interview, Musalaha, Personal Interview, 5 July 2008.
339 Ibid.
The different ways in which the people above mobilise aspects of their moral frameworks that are not based on homogenous group identity or acting out of need for security, have political implications for peacebuilding and uncovers openings for building solidarities for peace with Palestinians.

4.4.2. There were multiple fluid Christian Palestinian identities.

The research also revealed how different Palestinian and Christian identities were changing and emerging. These identities challenged perceptions of what it meant to be a Palestinian. Not all Palestinians were Muslim. Below is a quote from a Christian Palestinian activist that illustrates the emergence of a different way of mobilising Christianity to support both her identity as a Palestinian and as one who is concerned with the flourishing of the Other. One of the aspects of her work and that of her organization, Sabeel, is a moral critique of American Christian evangelicalism. She described the difficulties she and other Palestinians she worked with faced in identifying themselves as both Palestinian and Christian.

*For us it becomes more difficult, of living your faith…trying to explain that what Christians are doing in Israel is not Christianity. That what Bush proclaimed today that God has spoken to him of fighting terror is not Christianity…..And then of having to live with a Palestinian community that is largely Muslim where you see a rise in fundamentalism which did not exist before, where anger is vented against the West.*

Firstly she noted how Christian Palestinians faced difficulties within their own society of being identified with the foreign policy goals of American Christian
Many Palestinian Christians whom I interviewed, particularly those who worked for *Sabeel*, sought through their participation in nonviolent resistance activities alongside Palestinian Muslims and through speaking out in their own society that they did not agree with the pro-Israel stance of the ‘Christian West.’ For example, N.F. quoted above as well as most of the other Palestinian Christians that were interviewed for this project, insisted that they were ‘one hundred per cent Palestinian.’ They were very careful to distinguish in their self-presentations how their Christian faith was distinct from that which they identified with western imperialism.

Additionally many Christian NGO leaders in Bethlehem who were interviewed for this project were quick to point out that they voted for Hamas in the 2006 elections because they felt Hamas was less corrupt than Fatah and were better positioned than Fatah to achieve Palestinian national aspirations. In these instances national aspirations took precedence over differences in religious identity.

Secondly, N.F. noted how difficult it was for Palestinians to be recognized as human beings and as Christians by some American Christians steeped in Christian Zionism. Palestinian Christians have sought to stake out a different position within global Christianity in which recognition and justice for Palestinians is part of what it means to act ethically out of love for the Other. Part of *Sabeel’s* intervention into

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341 Particularly within American evangelicalism, there is a stream of Christian Zionism that links US foreign policy support of Israel because the Jews, according to their interpretation of the Bible, are God’s chosen people. See Durham, "Evangelical Protestantism and Foreign Policy in the United States after September 11."


343 Ibid.
the conflict, has been to challenge the discourses within the powerful religious elites of western Christian Zionism which have marginalized the Palestinians as being subhuman by mobilising resources from within the liberation theology tradition for Palestinians which affirms their humanity and which acknowledges their suffering under the Israeli Occupation. They have fought for the recognition amongst these elites that Palestinians are also children of God who deserved being treated with dignity.

As the data above demonstrate, some Christians were able to mobilise different aspects of their religious beliefs to promote flourishing rather than violence or imperialism. In so doing, their identities were undergoing transformations that opened up possibilities for flourishing.

4.4.3. Palestinian Muslim identities were changing as they mobilised resources that support flourishing.

Many of the Palestinian Muslims I encountered were critical of the image of Islam created by suicide bombers and terrorists. They were keen to correct this misinterpretation of Islam through their actions as Muslims engaged in NVR and through their self-representations of what it meant for them to be a follower of Islam. The sentiment in the quote below from A.M., a Muslim Palestinian refugee who trained Palestinians in the principles and techniques of NVR best reflected the representation of Islam they wanted to project:

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Ateek, Justice, and Only Justice: A Palestinian Theology of Liberation; Laura C. Robson, “Palestinian Liberation Theology, Muslim-Christian Relations and the Arab-Israeli Conflict” Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations 21, no. 1 (2010).
I was never taught that Islam says kill your neighbour…. [It teaches] Love your neighbour. A Buddhist or a secular one, if they are a good person, or an atheist, is better than a violent Muslim.\textsuperscript{345}

This quote illustrated one of the contentions of a politics of natality; that it was possible for grassroots religious adherents (not just religious elites) to reflect on how their own as well others’ religion has been interpreted and manipulated by power elites to support certain unethical political actions and to challenge those interpretations from the margins through their actions and words. In an earlier quote about his moral context, A.M. indicated he interpreted his belief system in the light of human rights and that was what was most important to him ethically. This did not contradict, but actually reflected the version of Islam that he was taught and which he practiced. For him and other Palestinians who were participated in the interviews, Islam which advocated violence or destruction was not Islam.\textsuperscript{346}

Secondly, most of the Palestinians interviewed were eager to downplay the extent to which religion formed any part of their national identity, whilst at the same time asserting some form of religious affiliation whether Christian or Muslim.

They were conscious of a Western bias against religion as being irrational and violent and they wanted to combat that perception.\textsuperscript{347} It was important to present their claims to national self-determination on what they perceived was a more ‘rational’ ground, rational being secular according to their definition, in order to better advance their nationalistic ambitions in the global community. They

\textsuperscript{345} A.M.
\textsuperscript{346} A.R; personal interview A.M. Muslim Palestinian male, IEA, Personal Interview, 3 July 2008.
\textsuperscript{347} Muslim Palestinian female J.I., Birzeit University, Personal Interview, 24 July 2008; Muslim Palestinian male Mahdi P., PASSIA, Personal Communication, 17 July 2008; Muslim Palestinian male Mustafa M., PASSIA, Personal Interview, 17 July 2008.
argued that any perception of conflict as a religious one, or as they put it a ‘clash of civilizations,’ (conflict based on ethno-religious difference) played into the Israeli government’s deliberate attempts to portray the Palestinians as terrorists in the same vein as Al Qaeda in order to garner international approval for their extreme security measures as a necessary contribution to the greater war on terror.348

None of the Palestinians interviewed, including those working for secular organisations, self-identified as agnostic or as an atheists, although they expressed varying degrees of commitment to their religious beliefs and expressed differing interpretations of Islam.

An example of the different gendered Muslim identities that were emerging as a consequence of involvement in conflict transformation was that of a young Muslim woman in her late 20’s also the youngest director of a Palestinian NGO.349 Her own gendered religious identity as a Palestinian woman was shifting because of her work within Palestine as a feminist and as the head of a women’s organization. She told stories of the ways in which she did not identify with the older feminists in Hamas and Fatah because of her relative youth. She argued that they were a ‘good old girls’ club and she could not relate to them. It was also shifting as a result of the challenges posed by her encounters with western feminists when attending international conferences held outside of the Middle East.

On the one hand she recounted that to most of her contemporaries who were interested in establishing a secular state (other university educated young professional women and men in the small Palestinian middle class), Hamas had

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348 Muslim Palestinian male K.M., Ta’awon, Personal Interview, 2 July 2008.  
become the ‘Other’ and they looked down on Islamic fundamentalists for being ‘fanatical’, ‘violent’ and for oppressing women.\footnote{Jad, “Between Religion and Secularism.”} This sentiment towards religious Muslim extremism was echoed by many other Palestinian activists.\footnote{N.M painted a different picture of friends of his who were in various leadership positions of Hamas in Gaza. He had been friends with some of them since being exiled together with them in Lebanon in the early 1990’s. N.M.} As mentioned earlier, Israeli activists who downplayed their religion or the role religion played in the conflict, also expressed a distrust of the Jewish religious fundamentalists and viewed them as a homogenous ‘Other’ that they could not identify with or comprehend.

Although M.A. did not view herself as particularly religious, she said she made it a point to assert her Muslim identity whenever she attended international women’s conferences because she felt stigmatised for being a Muslim woman by Americans and Europeans ever since 9/11 and the ensuing ‘war on terror.’ She recounted how sometimes she would wear a hijab to jar these women, but when she did not wear it and drank alcohol, they scolded her for not conforming to their stereotypes of Muslim women.

Similar to the Palestinian Christian quoted earlier, other Palestinian Muslims echoed the sentiment expressed by one Muslim man, “We are one community” when discussing the different religious identities amongst Palestinians.\footnote{K.M.}

Even the most conservative religious Muslim person I interviewed, N.M., said that he only hoped that Palestine would become a Muslim state but that it was not imperative.\footnote{N.M.} Despite his membership in Islamic Jihad, he did not view the
conflict in terms of a holy war or a ‘clash of civilizations’ and he did not advocate violence. He was engaged in transforming the conflict through peaceful capacity building activities for Palestinians even though he himself had been imprisoned and tortured in Israeli prisons at different times in his life. He defended Islam as a peaceful religion that had a concern for acting ethically towards even one’s enemies at its heart. He expressed his ethical concern like others previously mentioned, for the flourishing of future generations of children, both Israeli and Palestinian

The participation of religious women such as R.R., N.F. and M.A. in three the different religious traditions, indicated some of the ways in which religious women at the grass roots were also exercising moral agency and experiencing identity shifts. Of the three only M.A. was a self-identified feminist, but all three spoke of having to negotiate their activism and identities within the expectations put on them by their religious traditions.

In all these accounts, changing religious identities created openings in the narratives that allow for the possibility of new and different futures. When members of a religious community, women and men, began exercising their moral imagination differently by mobilising resources of flourishing within their religion, they began forming solidarities for peace with people across religious boundaries. Religious positions were not intractable; rather religious imagination that supported flourishing is one of the resources, or fragile rays of hope, in the conflict. Simultaneously, people retained their religious distinctiveness; forming solidarities

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354 Ibid.
355 M.A; N.F; R.R.
across religious barriers did not mean that they gave up their essential identification with their religion. Similarly, because they shared similar ethical values to those who were not religious, the potential to build solidarities with the non-religious was possible. The main hindrance in this regard was the secular bias against religion that I identified above amongst both Israeli and Palestinian activists.

4.5. The evidence supporting the flourishing of Palestinians and Israelis problematized the victim/oppressor binary in unexpected ways.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the politics of natality critiqued conflict transformation approaches for being locked in a moral imaginary which privileged human needs over human flourishing. The rigid victim/oppressor binary made it difficult to explore how flourishing occurs in asymmetrical conflicts and what implications the experiences of those who flourish on both sides of the conflict have for transforming the future. It made it difficult to challenge the claims that each party to the conflict made to victimhood and to the moral high ground.

As anticipated, the evidence from the field research complicated the victim/oppressor binary, in ways that make different futures possible. It challenged the ways in which Israelis and others viewed themselves as either victims, oppressors or as rescuers and similarly the ways in which Palestinians and others viewed the Palestinians. I explore this below.
4.5.1. Insights produced in the matrices of flourishing challenged the Israeli identities as victim, oppressor or rescuer.

Three main themes emerged which problematized the identities of Israelis as either victim, oppressor or, conversely as rescuer.

The first theme was that Israeli activists challenged one of the predominant narratives about Israeli national identity in which Israel laid claim to exclusive victimhood by virtue of which they and they alone, were entitled to occupy the moral high ground in the conflict with the Palestinians. The narrative of victimhood was based on privileging past centuries of persecution, pogroms and most recently, the Holocaust. In particular the Holocaust has often been wielded as a moral club to silence any critique of the Israeli government.\(^{356}\)

Israeli activists engaged in peacebuilding were producing knowledge that challenged this narrative. Two Israeli human rights activists from \textit{B’tselem}, whom I interviewed, cited the ways in which the organisation documented a range of Israeli violations of Palestinian human rights.\(^{357}\) They referred me to numerous reports the Centre published which provided detailed documentation of these human rights violations.\(^{358}\)

Although both interviewees asserted that \textit{B’tselem} was not political in that it did not endorse a specific political solution to the conflict, it became apparent that the organisation and its workers’ ethical and moral stance including the practical working out of that stance had political implications. When asked about their


\(^{358}\)For a list of publications that document the many different forms these took see www.btselem.org
personal motivation for their involvement with this organisation, both interviewees responded that they wanted to appeal to and raise the conscience of Israeli citizens and to mobilise them out of their complacency and become active in the public arena to ‘criticise the Israeli Occupation’ (their words), and to participate in peacebuilding. 359 They hoped to do this by appealing to their fellow citizens’ sense of morality and ethics and to provoke critical thinking about Israel’s claims to the moral high ground. They observed that the moral voice of this organisation had clout with Israelis because it was difficult to accuse it of having an anti-Israeli bias, a charge that they said was leveled by the Israeli government against international organisations in order to marginalise their criticism of Israel’s treatment of the Palestinians.

Furthermore, data that located flourishing amongst Israelis indicated that many Israelis’ relationship to the Holocaust was complicated. Surprisingly, given its centrality to the story of the founding of Israel, the Holocaust narrative of victimisation did not feature as prominently in the interviews as I had anticipated. Israeli interviewees indicated ambivalence to the ways in which the Holocaust has been used to silence any criticism internationally of Israel for any moral breaches in terms of Israel’s treatment of Palestinians. 360

Below are some quotes that reflect this ambivalence:

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359 R.A; A.T.
M.F. whose great grandparents died in Nazi concentration camps mused:

The Holocaust has become a manipulative tool. But it haunts us. But it's also deeply rooted within me. I can still remember what happened 70 years ago.\(^{367}\)

The quote above essentially reflected the perspective of all but two Israelis whom I interviewed.\(^ {362}\) They expressed unease at the ways in which they thought the Israeli government was using the Holocaust to manipulate public opinion in support of the Occupation. But, at the same time, because of the Holocaust and past pogroms, they also expressed an uneasy commitment to Israel as a Jewish state.\(^ {363}\) Below are quotes from those Israelis who argued that the relationship of Israeli identity to the Holocaust was shifting.

H.S. the Israeli activist who fought in the Israeli war of Independence:

The Holocaust was not the most common experience, but a common ideology. In certain age groups, I don't know the percentage, the majority aren't European. And at least for half of those [who are of European descent] it's not a personal experience. It's something they've learned and accepted and has been an overriding aspect of the national ideology.\(^ {364}\)

J.A., an Israeli activist with ICAHD, said that he did not think that the Holocaust dominated the Israeli national narrative of victimhood as much as it used to given that many generations of Israelis have grown up since then. He commented:

The Holocaust doesn't play a role. It is an instrument. To find a just solution to the conflict you have to go back to the work the Zionists did prior to 1948.\(^ {365}\)

\(^{361}\) M.F.  
\(^{363}\) D.B.  
\(^{364}\) H.S.  
\(^{365}\) J.A.
The relationship to the victim identity symbolized by the Holocaust was complicated by the experiences of these Israelis.

The second theme that emerged was that where Israelis were engaged in conflict transformation activities, their identities as rescuers, rather than oppressors, were also being called into question and problematized. There were Israelis who were sensitive to the differences in the Israeli and Palestinian agendas and to the asymmetry of economic and military power between the two peoples and were consciously working in ways not to replicate the power asymmetries on the ground.

D.B. from M.W. best expressed one of the main moral dilemmas that Israelis engaged in conflict transformation wrestle with as follows:

*I am afraid that by my helping the Palestinians who are arrested by the Israeli military, I am in danger of reinforcing the Occupation by making it more efficient and more tolerable.*

She was acutely aware that as an Israeli she started from a more powerful position than the Palestinians with whom she worked and that her actions could have unintended political consequences. As a member of MW, an Israeli women’s organisation that monitored Israeli border personnel’s’ treatment of Palestinians at various checkpoints, she had to appeal to the Israeli military establishment in order to secure humane treatment for Palestinians. By so doing, she was concerned that she was reinforcing the authority and power of the Occupation by making it more efficient.
There was evidence for Israeli respect and recognition of Palestinians as natals rather than as victims in need of rescue. This was best expressed by J.A. from *ICAHD*.\(^\text{367}\) This organisation made a point from its founding to avoid reinforcing or normalising the Occupation.\(^\text{368}\) Before the organisation formed, J.A. and other Israeli activists who already had an extensive friendship network of Palestinians consulted the Palestinians about which issue from the Occupation they most wanted to address. Once the Palestinians identified the issue of housing demolitions, Israel’s retaliatory destruction of Palestinian homes of families related to people who were suspected to be suicide bombers and terrorists, the Israelis helped the Palestinians set up the organisation to address this problem.

J expressed his recognition of the Palestinians moral agents capable of shaping their own destiny:

*We acknowledge that the Palestinians are the ones running their own country. We are a support. Everything we do is from them. Otherwise we replicate the Occupation. We are not an equal partner in that it is their own struggle and therefore, they have more rights. They have the privilege to tell us what to do rather than the other way around.*\(^\text{369}\)

*ICADH’s* work recognized and demonstrated respect for Palestinians as human beings like them who were capable of addressing their own problems as senior partners. In practice, this meant that Palestinians not Israelis chose which houses were to be rebuilt.

\(^{367}\) J.A.

\(^{368}\) According to an interview with Nassar Ibrahim, the Policy director of AIC, normalisation was “the political, social, cultural mechanism which tries to separate the conflict from its political and historical roots and to deal with the conflict as it is now.” Normalisation reinforces the asymmetry of power and normalises Nasser Ibrahim. *AIC*, Seminar, August 2008.

\(^{369}\) J.A.
Furthermore this deference to Palestinians as senior partners included acquiescing to the Palestinian as to what other Israeli organizations *ICAHD* worked with on joint projects.

Another way Israeli activists evidenced the recognition of Palestinians as natals was through their acknowledgment of the different political goals Palestinians had from the Israelis. For example, J.A. deferred to the Palestinians as to which solution was the best solution for ending the conflict. Because the Palestinian Authority still supported a two-state solution, he endorsed that position even though he personally thought a different solution was more politically viable. He asserted:

*I'ts not my job as an Israeli to advocate one solution or the other. It's their struggle. I already have a state.*?\(^{370}\)

He said he would embrace whatever solution the Palestinians decided on. His acknowledgement of Palestinian political goals and aspirations created solidarity with the Palestinians with whom they worked which survived episodes of ‘hot’ conflict. For example, *ICAHD* was one of the few Israeli organizations that the Palestinians continued to work with during the second intifada when Israeli/Palestinian partnerships and relationships were severely tested.

The third theme that emerged from the data was that Israelis, although they occupied a position of economic and military power vis-à-vis the Palestinians, also suffered as a result of the conflict. Their privileged position did not automatically mean they were flourishing. They were also vulnerable and it was this

\(^{370}\text{Ibid.}\)
vulnerability which further undermines the victim/oppressor binary; the ‘rescuers’ and the ‘oppressors’ were also in need of empathy and care.

Many Israelis commented on how the Occupation took a toll on them personally as well as on their society. However these narratives were different than the Israeli national narrative of victimhood described above.

They recounted how Israelis also suffered from the militarization of its own society. M.F. lamented that funds were being diverted to the Occupation that would be better spent on addressing Israeli social problems like poverty and better education for her children.

_The education is going down the drain...There is no real culture....The day to day routine life is gone. There is nothing. And of course, there is extreme poverty and extreme richness, nothing much in between._  

She worried about the impact the Occupation was having on her children:

_My whole life is around wars. I was born two weeks before the '73 Yom Kippur War and my son was born two days after the second Intifada started. My youngest daughter was born during the second Lebanon War....And my children, I don’t want to be afraid all the time, be afraid they will go to the army and kill or be killed._

The militarisation of Israeli society meant that resources were not being deployed to address poverty or education or to improve the life of everyday Israelis. She commented that although her children attend a bilingual Arabic and Hebrew international school, they were becoming more ‘racist’. She recounted how her four year old daughter although learning Arabic, did not like “Arabs.”

D.B. recounted a story about her son who had been rebellious as a child:

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371 M.F.
372 Ibid.
373 Ibid.
The teacher called me and said, ‘I am very worried about him. What kind of soldier will he be?’ Not what kind of a human being, but what kind of soldier! From the age of two they have marches...they are little soldiers.\footnote{D.B.}

The emphasis on children growing up to be good soldiers rather than to be good moral human beings is indicative of some of the dehumanizing effects the militarization of Israeli society is having as a result of the Occupation.

H.S., the Israeli who participated in the birth of modern Israel, spoke about how disagreeable she found current Israeli society:

\emph{It’s an unpleasant place in many, many ways. It’s an awful place. It’s a jungle. I have to fight for myself. It’s not the country I grew up in.}\footnote{H.S.}

This quote reflected a sense of malaise and alienation that characterized many of the Israeli activists whom I interviewed.

One Israeli queried:

\emph{What is it to be Israeli? For 60 years we have been trying to decide what it is.}\footnote{Jewish Mizrahi-Israeli female T.A., \textit{RHR}, Personal Interview, 27 July 2008.}

Indeed, what it meant to be an Israeli and to identify with the State of Israel was problematized and this opened up new possibilities for different futures where new identities, communities of people committed to peace irrespective of whether they were Israeli, Palestinian, Jewish, Christian, Muslim, agnostic, atheist or secular, were formed.
4.5.2. Insights produced in the matrices of flourishing have the potential to destabilise Palestinian's identity as Victim.

Similarly the Palestinians shifting identities challenged the victim/oppressor binary in unexpected ways. Three themes emerge from the data.

Firstly, locating aspects of flourishing amongst Palestinians uncover some insights which have the potential to destabilise the Palestinian narratives of victimhood. Palestinians acting as natals engaged in transforming the conflict opened up the possibility to consider them as more than victims of oppression. Every Palestinian whom I interviewed acted in unique ways by refusing to passively accept their fate as victims of the Occupation, a label which served to erase their humanity. By taking responsibility for changing their oppressive circumstances through NVR and by not permitting their difficult circumstances to define them, they undermined the hierarchical relationship whereby they were objects in need of being rescued or cared for rather than subjects in their own right; human beings with the capacity to care and to help themselves and others.

*It is our responsibility [to end the Occupation] and together we can do it.*

The motto of *Ta’awon* best encapsulated the attitude and motivation of many Palestinians I interviewed. Others, when questioned, asserted that if they did not take responsibility for their own future and their own well-being then how could they expect anyone outside to help them? They observed that, while there were circumstances out of their control that also needed to change such as the

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378 K.M.
379 S.Q.
United States’ non-neutral stance as a third party broker of peace, it was their responsibility to identify and address the situations that they could change. The NVR activities of those whom I interviewed included demonstrations against the building of the Separation Fence, resisting housing demolitions in their communities, boycotting Israeli products, and training others in the values and forms of NRV. They were creatively acting as natals, not as victims.

In spite of the escalation of violence and reinvasion of the Occupied Territories by Israeli forces during the second Intifada, K.M. a former combatant in the first Intifada who had spent time in Israeli prisons, decided to found Ta’awon just as the second intifada began. 380

One of the circumstances K.M. identified that he argued Palestinians should take responsibility for and act on was the split between Hamas and Fatah. 381 In 2008 Ta’awon was one of the few Palestinian organizations working to strengthen Palestinian national cohesion. Despite the fact that the international community refused to give them funding for a reconciliation project to bring two sides together because of an embargo on any funding for Hamas as a ‘terrorist’ organization he raised money internally amongst Palestinians. Staff members voluntarily contributed ten per cent of their salaries to fund numerous national unity meetings between the two parties.

K.M.’s work was consistent with flourishing. Rather than wait for the American government to change and for the international community to force the end the Occupation, he identified inner resources and resilience amongst the

380 K.M.
381 Ibid.

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Palestinians and sought to develop them further as part of his responsibility to bring about peace.

Other interviewees reported that NVR activities resulted in more social cohesion within the Palestinian communities who actively resisted the Occupation.\textsuperscript{382} The impact of recruiting, training and mobilizing Palestinians to engage in boycotts and demonstrations meant that the communities engaged in NVR developed social cohesion, a sense of vision and purpose which brought them together. S.Q. observed.

\textit{It is really about individuals and communities maintaining some sort of respect. At least we were able to protest this [building of security fence around a village]; we did not surrender to it. That is the legacy for themselves and for the future...}\textsuperscript{383}

In contrast, he observed that villages who passively accepted the Occupation were politically and socially fragmented and characterized by hopelessness.

Engaging in NVR also contributed to the resilience and individual flourishing of Palestinians. Rather than succumbing to despair, they found meaning and purpose in life through their resistance to the Israeli Occupation. For instance, M.K., a leader of NVR in Bil’in stressed that his designing and participating in demonstrations against the building of the Separation Fence provided him meaning and purpose and gave him hope for the future.\textsuperscript{384} He said participation gave himself and others a voice:

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{382}S.Q.\textsuperscript{383}Ibid.\textsuperscript{384}Muslim Palestinian male M.K., personal interview, \textit{Bil’in Popular Committee}, Personal Interview, 26 July 2008.
\end{flushright}
We are here, we are going to scream. We are not going to die quietly.\textsuperscript{385}

A.M. spoke about the inner resources and resilience of those who resisted the Occupation non-violently:

\textit{It is harder to be a nonviolent activst who stands unarmed with empty hands in front of an Israeli soldier. Here you have to have the inner strength. Here we are talking about the inner transformation where you feel that you can do something where you stand on the groundless ground, where you hold up the opportunity of nothing and creating the possible from the impossible...}\textsuperscript{386}

This development of internal Palestinian capacity also directly challenged one of the prevalent Israeli government’s arguments in their national security narrative for maintaining the Occupation, that the Palestinians were incapable of governing themselves because they were too fragmented and divided.\textsuperscript{387}

Also, many Palestinians reported that NVR was a powerful tool to challenge Israeli and international perceptions of Palestinians as being inherently violent. One Palestinian observed,

\textit{If we aren’t violent then everyone will see the violence of the soldiers.}\textsuperscript{388}

By engaging in NVR, it was possible for Palestinians to expose the inconsistencies within Israel’s narrative as a moral, humane nation. One Palestinian recounted how Israel awakened the conscience of its own citizens as well as members of the international community when it responded to Palestinian NVR with violence during the first intifada.\textsuperscript{389}

K.M. contended that participation in demonstrations and boycotts widened democratic Palestinian participation in their own future whereas violent action

\textsuperscript{385}Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{386}A.M.  
\textsuperscript{387}Bar-Tal, “Societal Beliefs.”  
\textsuperscript{388}M.K.  
\textsuperscript{389}S.Q.
against the Occupation resulted in its reduction. He observed that whereas Israel’s collective punishment of the family of one Palestinian who committed an act of violence resulted in fewer Palestinians participating in the next round of violent resistance out of fear of harsh reprisals, NVR activities such as a boycott against Israeli products opened up participation to a greater number of people. To illustrate this point he cited the story of his four year old daughter whom he taught to boycott Israeli brands of potato chips and ice cream. She then insisted that other adults in the family also boycott these products. He reflected:

_Imagine that my daughter, she’s four years old and she’s dismantling the Israeli Occupation from its power when she’s not buying the Israeli chips and ice cream. My daughter is also now an activist._

If anyone were powerless, it was a four year old girl. This story of flourishing indicates that even a young child had inner resources that enabled them to participate in creating a different future. This indicates that democratic participation to secure the future of the country is open to any Palestinian.

Because Palestinians’ identity was not determined by victimhood any more than the Israelis’ identity was, they also had moral agency that could be critiqued for whether or not it promoted flourishing.

Secondly, despite being oppressed, the evidence indicated that Palestinians were also moral agents who acted out of love. Not only did Palestinians interviewed refuse to be defined by victimhood, there were numerous instances where they expressed empathy and compassion for the vulnerabilities and suffering of Israelis. This further challenged the hierarchy of the

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390 K.M.
391 Ibid.
oppressed/oppressor and the victim/rescuer binary in which Palestinians were not only the objects of oppression and/or care, but were also human subjects capable of exercising empathy towards the ‘Other’.

This recognition and reciprocity was best expressed by S.Q:

*It is looking at the deep needs and desire of the Oppressor… One of the issues is that of fear and security for Israel. It’s not over land or over borders; it is about healing the trauma of Israel.*

The trauma he was referring to was the suffering caused by the Holocaust as well as centuries of the suffering of millions of Jews throughout the Diaspora caused by anti-Semitism and pogroms. This statement exemplified empathy and acknowledgement of the significance and importance security played in the Israeli narrative. S.Q. explained how he was working to develop NVR strategies that actually incorporated the goal of healing Israelis of the trauma caused by the Holocaust. He cited Paolo Freire and Martin Luther King who insisted that it was the obligation of the oppressed to “liberate themselves and become the restorers of humanity of both” the oppressed and the oppressor. The idea that the ‘oppressed’ take a measure of responsibility to heal the oppressor further blurs the victim/rescuer binary and imbues ‘victims’ with humanity, the ability to love and care for another.

Transcending the victim/oppressor binary by parties of both sides opened up the possibility for different narratives. Neither side had claim to absolute victimhood or to the absolute morality and justice of their cause. Neither could the other side be portrayed as absolute oppressors or as inherently ‘evil’ or ‘violent.’

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392 S.Q.
393 Francis, *People, Peace and Power*, 45.
Solidarities that recognized the humanity and moral agency (the moral resourcefulness, resilience, and imagination of natals) as well as the vulnerability and suffering of the Other, were being formed that transcended this binary of opposing and seemingly incommensurate identities.

4.6. Conclusion.

In contesting three types of narratives used to sustain the conflict, the data indicated some of the ways in which moral, religious (including gendered religious identities) and national identities were shifting. Although the sample was limited, the data from these interviews indicate that black swans of flourishing exist in the Israel/Palestine conflict. An analysis of these black swans locate some of the identity shifts that were occurring which challenge different conflict narratives.

Interviewees cited the importance of their identities as moral and ethical beings as a primary motivation for engaging in peacebuilding. For these individuals, moral concerns, including a concern for future generations of children on both sides, were privileged above group security and identity, and were what prompted their peaceful engagement in the public sphere. Their encounters with the Other caused many to empathise with the perspective of the Other and to acknowledge the ways in which their own side had been morally complicit in acts of oppression. They came to see how their side did not have a monopoly on suffering or justice. They deployed the spiritual capital and moral resources from the moral context into which they were born in imaginative ways to account for their ethical
actions towards the Other and to describe the ways in which their identities were shifting as a result of those encounters.

Men and women spoke in terms of how they mobilised religious beliefs within their religious tradition that supported and explained their moral actions. This made it possible to locate some of the ways in which religious and nonreligious actors deployed their moral imagination in similar ways to act on behalf of the flourishing of people outside of their own community. Religion, viewed from a lens of flourishing, was intelligible and could be critiqued for whether it promoted flourishing or not. Considerations of religion were operating in the public sphere and they had political implications for peace or for violence.

The data also located the actions and voices of some flourishing religious women engaged in peacebuilding. There was insufficient data to form any conclusions about how these women’s actions challenged gender constructions within their respective religions or communities. That was not my focus. Rather, my intent was to see if there were examples of flourishing religious women, who Chapter 1 noted was an underrepresented group, acting as natals. If there were, then I would include some of their partial perspectives with the others in order to gain a more wide-ranging picture of different insights that were being generated. This is the same with other intersections of identities. For example, the data does not cover all the different ways in which religious Jews, Christians, Muslims or atheists construct their identities or deploy their moral imagination. Based on the examples of flourishing within these groups however, the data does indicate that
further research using this approach would be fruitful in order to explore the various intersections of religion, identity, gender, and nationality in more depth.

Finally, the data analysis indicates some of the ways in which the experiences and knowledge gained from the actions of those engaged in peacebuilding challenge the narratives each side deploy to justify their victimhood status.

The next chapter explores more of the ways in which different futures are being opened up. Then, based on the data, I make recommendations for further research and how this research might address the fragmentation in a systems model of peacebuilding.
CHAPTER 5

The matrices of flourishing: some trajectories for the future

5.1. Introduction.

This chapter examines how the narratives of conflict between the two warring parties were more fluid than was initially apparent. I analyse how people were reframing the past in different ways as they expressed their aspirations for the future. Then, because this lens identified data that the models in Chapter 1 did not sufficiently address, such as people’s moral and religious context and the ways in which people change, I look at how this research lens could be used to augment a systems approach to peacebuilding in this and other conflicts.

5.2. Reframing narratives about claims to the land open up different possibilities for the future.

The data provided some indications that Palestinian and Israeli narratives that theirs was the only legitimate claim to the land were being reframed. Some common themes emerged around forgiveness, redemption, coexistence, equality and reconciliation. By using the matrices of flourishing with its emphasis on spacetime, it was possible to locate some ways in which the past was being renegotiated in ways that opened up possibilities for different futures. The reframing of narratives about the past also contributed to the negotiation of new identities, ones of solidarity with the Other, which transcended national boundaries.

394 Bar-Tal and Rouhana, "Psychological Dynamics of Intractable Ethnonational Conflicts."
Below I explore the ways in which people from each party to the conflict were using their moral imagination to creatively engage with national narratives about the past in ways that opened up possibilities for the future.

5.2.1. Israeli’s renegotiation of their identities with respect to political Zionism indicated their openness to different political settlements to the conflict.

The interviews with Israeli peace activists pointed to a complex, changing and, at best, ambivalent relationship with political Zionism. Zionism is a multi-faceted and complex aspect of Israeli national identity which has played a central role in the foundation of the modern state of Israel. The way in which this term was most often used by interviewees was in reference to the Jewish character of the Israeli state; although Israel was a democracy, it was a democracy only for the Jews. Without prompting, a majority of the Israeli interviewees referred to Zionism. They defined it in terms that Israel was founded as a safe homeland for the Jewish people after centuries of persecution which culminated in the Holocaust. To varying degrees they questioned whether or not Israel could retain its Jewish character and still remain a democracy. All but one Israeli reflected on what they viewed were the racist implications of political Zionism. M.F. expressed the morally ambivalent relationship interviewees had to the Zionist aspect of the Israeli national narrative:

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396 D.B.
397 R.R.
I don’t want it to be a Jewish state because it’s so racist, but on the other hand, I remember what happened 70 years ago…. My mother’s parents and my father’s parents and grandparents died in the Holocaust.\textsuperscript{398}

Their encounters with Palestinians were one of the catalysts for their recognition of the validity of Palestinians’ claims to statehood. They found this recognition difficult to reconcile with political Zionism which they argued negated Palestinians claims. However, only two Israelis were willing to completely abandon the idea that Israel should remain a Jewish state.\textsuperscript{399}

That two were willing to do so was encouraging. J.A. argued for moving beyond an Israeli national identity that was exclusively Jewish in character because of the existence of a vast and growing network of Israeli settlements in Palestine made a two state solution virtually impossible without creating further violence and injustice.\textsuperscript{400} Instead, he advocated redefining Zionism in terms of Jewishness being developed and guaranteed in a cultural space within a larger nation of Israel which would also guarantee cultural spaces for the becoming of Palestinians. He argued that a state was not essential in order to forge and maintain these cultural spaces if equality and recognition were present.

Secondly all Israeli interviewees except the Jewish religious settler, acknowledged Palestinian claims to the Occupied Territories and Gaza and were working towards helping Palestinians achieve some sort of political sovereignty.\textsuperscript{401}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{398} M.F.  \\
\textsuperscript{399} H.S; J.A.  \\
\textsuperscript{400} J.A.  \\
\textsuperscript{401} R.R.
\end{flushleft}
Finally, except for the religious Jewish settler, there was recognition amongst Israeli interviewees that part of what was needed to bring about a peaceful future was for Israel to acknowledge the injustices perpetrated against the Palestinians during the Israeli War of Independence, or as Palestinians refer to it, the *Nakba* (Arabic for the Catastrophe). J.A. described redemption as one way to reframe the past in order to move towards peaceful co-existence with Palestinians.  

*Israeli Jews are here to stay. Israel is a nation. You can't turn the clock back. But you can take certain steps to redeem what you've done. First of all it would mean a just peace with the Palestinians and economic compensation. Then an acknowledgement to the Palestinians of what we've done to them, the Nakba, refugees and everything.*

This understanding that the clock could not be turned back to 1948 or earlier without causing further injustice and violence is characteristic of irreversibility of the past that distinguishes the approach to time in a moral imaginary of natality. According to J.A., provision of economic compensation could never constitute complete restoration of all that Palestinians had lost since 1948 since it was impossible to do so without creating new violent displacements of people resulting in further loss. Rather it was one means for addressing some of the injustices Israel had committed against the Palestinians by giving weight to its acknowledgement of wrong-doing. It meant rectifying the wrongs that it was possible to rectify as part of the process to bring closure to the past. This notion of redemption, in keeping with natality, indicated one way of dealing with the past in order to make new futures possible. It would be fruitful to do conduct more in-

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402 J.A.
depth research on this issue to locate different ways in which redemption was
being negotiated and contested by other Israelis as well as by Palestinians.

5.2.2. The ways in which Palestinians reframed the past opened up
possibilities for co-existence.

The Palestinians I interviewed also commented on the impossibility of
turning the clock back prior to 1948. They recognised that Israel was there to stay,
therefore it was necessary to peacefully negotiate the claims both sides had to the
land. None of the Palestinians with whom I spoke advocated the destruction of
Israel or ‘throwing all Jews into the sea’. More typical was the sentiment
expressed by N.F.:

Absolute justice would mean for me to go to West Jerusalem and live in my house.
That is no longer possible unless I take someone else’s house away from them.
What we are looking for is relative justice, the minimum amount both sides would
agree to. For me this means that Israel recognizes what it’s done to the
Palestinian people.

She as well as other Palestinian interviewees spoke about how nothing
could restore what they had lost in terms of property and lives without causing
more violence and injustice. The more important thing for her and for other
Palestinians with whom I spoke was for Israel to acknowledge the ways in which it
had harmed Palestinians and recognize what they had suffered and lost. Most of
Palestinians said that an official apology by Israel that officially recognised the
wrongs it had committed against the Palestinian people at least since 1948 if not
before, was an important precondition for any peaceful future with Israel.

403 M. Shemesh, "Did Shuqayri Call for" Throwing the Jews into the Sea"?", Israel studies 8, no. 2 (2003).
404 N.F.
Another precondition for peace that emerged was expressed best by S.Q. as equality:

*Without the premise and without the foundation of both communities recognizing the absolute equal right of the other to be here on this land, none of the political solutions will have merit and none of the political solutions will last.*

He defined equality as constituting more than just recognition and respect; it was something that was measurable in terms of equal access to education, health care, health insurance and wages. He was open to the possibility of a one state solution if Israel would guarantee equality for all citizens, Palestinian and Israeli, on those terms.

Thirdly, in 2008 when the interviews were conducted, all but one Palestinian did not link the identity of a future state to Islam. The Palestinians I interviewed did not consider religion to be a barrier to co-existence with Israel whether it took the form of a one state or a two state solution.

Finally, as the previous chapter indicated significant numbers of both Palestinians and Israelis cited that a major motivation for their involvement in peacebuilding was a common concern for future generations of children from both sides. This common concern for children was something that served as a bridge to bring people from both sides together and contributed to the development of new communities of peace that transcend national and religious boundaries.

In conclusion, interviewees did not focus on technical solutions to the conflict when asked about their vision for the future with one exception. Rather;

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405 S.Q.
406 N.M.
407 K.M., Muslim Palestinian Male, Ramallah, Ta'awon, Personal Interview, 2 July 2008.
they expressed their future hopes in terms of how best to facilitate coexistence between the two parties which involved the approaches to dealing with the past that I delineated above. Coexistence included examples of the forgiveness of past losses as defined in Chapter 2, and a reframing of the past in which both peoples’ claims to the land were acknowledged. This enabled the formation of new solidarities of those people from Israel and Palestine who were building communities of peace that transcended nationalism. Although the insight that some Palestinian and Israeli activists are open to a one state solution was not a radically new one, in 2008 it was rare. Since then it has gained more traction because of the increased growth and entrenchment of Israeli settlements in Palestine. It signified the ways in which people at the grassroots were interacting with the realities on the ground as they perceived them. The data indicated the ways in which possible futures were provisional and negotiable, rather than fixed in time and space.

The data also suggests that any future for peaceful co-existence will be built on ideas about mutual respect, forgiveness, equality, and a concern for future generations of children which emerge from peacebuilding activities. In the spaces of the matrices it is possible to uncover the different ideas that are emerging about justice, forgiveness, co-existence, equality, redemption that are emerging. The data indicates that ways in which they were being formulated were multiple, dynamic and fluid. It also indicates that work on reconciliation was taking place simultaneously with the conflict and therefore should be located and explored

408 “Israel's Election,” The Economist, 17 January 2013.
throughout peace negotiations and not only at the end of the conflict or only as part of a post-peace agreement phase. Like peace, reconciliation was on-going and contingent.

Based on the implications of the data analysed above as well as in the previous chapter, I now suggest how the lens of the matrices of flourishing might be used in order to complement current peacebuilding models.

5.3. A research lens that emphasises flourishing will augment systems approaches to peacebuilding.

Chapter 1 began by looking at a systems approach to peacebuilding with systems self-awareness being integral to this approach. Although different tracks were related and overlapped, I observed that the system was fragmented; each track acted as a world unto itself with its own rules, values, languages, norms and beliefs. Based on my observations during my fieldwork in 2008 as well as during my previous work experiences in Israel and Palestine since 1998, this fragmentation was still prevalent. For example, some interviewees completely dismissed the work of dialogue and encounter groups as normalizing the conflict rather than contributing to peacebuilding. Others dismissed some of the nonviolent resistance projects as too ‘political’ and ‘partisan’ and therefore did not

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410 J.I; M.A. Dialogue projects in particular were discounted by Palestinian NGOs as promoting normalisation of the conflict. See the statement prepared by the Code of Conduct Coalition, "The Palestinian Ngos Code of Conduct 2008," http://www.ndc.ps/PDF/Code_of_Conduct.pdf. This coalition consists of several networks of Palestinian NGOs and was referred to by J.I. and M.A.
constitute a viable approach towards peacebuilding. Additionally, some individuals expressed surprise at my interest in interviewing people from religious organisations as they discounted these organisations contributions to peacebuilding.

In order to engender greater self-awareness within the system which would transcend the boundaries of multiple peacebuilding tracks, Diamond and Black recommended developing methodologies for uncovering and sharing the knowledge that was being generated within each track across all the different tracks. The ethic and goal of flourishing in a moral imaginary of natality which privileges human beings as natals, is able to transcend the norms, rules and values of each track. As such, the research lens afforded by the matrices of flourishing provides fertile ground for promoting greater cohesion and integration of different peacebuilding approaches that comprise the peacebuilding system in this, and other instances of, asymmetrical and seemingly intractable conflict. Firstly, it is a methodological tool that could be deployed to help the system to develop more self-awareness; both as a whole as well as between its different parts. Secondly, information generated as a result of this greater self-awareness could be used to facilitate the strategic development and implementation of more comprehensive and wide-ranging peacebuilding efforts.

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412 H.S; M.A.
413 Diamond and McDonald, Multi-Track Diplomacy, 18.
5.3.1. It is an inclusive research methodology that could provide a more comprehensive picture of peacebuilding in a given conflict.

As developed above, the matrices of flourishing are a research lens for exploring the dynamic insights that are being formed as a result of the intersections of the three broad strands I identified in previous chapters. These include:

1. natals as moral beings who exercise moral imagination;
2. their social context including race, nationality, class, gender, religion and ethnicity;
3. the peacebuilding approach they were engaged in including contact approaches, NVR or capacity building.

As theorised in Chapter 2, the spaces formed by the intersections of these strands are characterised by the epistemological and ontological concerns of natality and flourishing. These spaces include spiritual capital/moral resources, borderlands/becoming divine, and spacetime/forgiveness. Human becoming and knowledge in natality and flourishing are being dynamically forged in these spaces as natals interact. Given the kinds of knowledges that I located using these matrices I think it would be fruitful to investigate the different kinds of peacebuilding efforts in other conflict situations. Below is a list of research questions I have developed, generated by this model, which could be used to conduct this investigation in order to develop a more inclusive understanding of a particular conflict and its transformation.

First of all spiritual capital/moral resources characterise the ethical concerns of natality which precede and inform subjectivity. This space includes the moral context or spiritual capital which informed the ways in which people exercised their moral imagination to act differently towards the Other and then enabled them to make sense of the ways in which their identities were being transformed on an on-
going basis as a result of these encounters. The ways in which people acted morally and ethically on behalf of people they considered as mortal enemies and who they had previously demonized provided different perspectives on the ways in which positive change, even in the midst of conflict, was already occurring.

Importantly, these moral resources were informed by the different social contexts including the ways in which individuals’ religious standpoint (irrespective of whether or not people practiced a religion or which religion they practiced) informed their moral imagination in ways that prompted them first to engage in peacebuilding. Then as people’s identities were being transformed by their engagement in peacebuilding, these moral resources helped them to make sense of the ways in which they were changing. This meant both the moral actions of non-religious as well as people from different religions could be evaluated together equally for the ways in which they either contributed to peaceful futures or towards sustaining violence.

For example, one of the things that brought people together from opposing sides of the Israel/Palestine conflict was a shared sense of morality which obligated them to engage in the public sphere in order to seek a mutual peaceful future. This shared sense of morality, although uniquely informed by peoples’ different religious standpoints, compelled them to act from a sense of love and responsibility towards their enemies, irrespective of their enemies’ religious standpoint. Christians, Muslims, Jews, atheists and agnostics all engaged as moral agents and their actions had political consequences with implications for the future.
This shared morality also included a sense of responsibility for the future of both theirs and the Other’s children, empathy and compassion that not only enabled to envision the suffering of the other but which mobilised them into compassionate and empathetic actions towards their enemies, individual forgiveness of loss of life and property at the hand of the other that enabled them to act differently, and agency that moved them beyond the narratives of victimhood in their respective cultures. The matrices of flourishing, with the emphasis on natals as moral agents, are able to observe the political consequences and implications of these actions in ways that modernist models mentioned in Chapter 1 do not.

The second integral feature of these spaces is that, as articulated in Chapter 2 and operationalized in Chapter 3, they are borderlands where people are becoming divine; people are always in the process of becoming towards some ideal which is also shifting and changing over time. This emphasis makes it possible to recognize and explore the fluid and complex identities which other models, as noted in Chapter 1, have difficulty with because they are grounded in theories, such as Burton’s human needs theory, which presume fixed and unitary identity.

This space is also where various aspects of different ethnicities were being mobilized in order to form new identities and new futures. These spaces are characterised by difference, i.e. where several paradigms for both individual and community identity exist simultaneously. In these spaces, homogenization of identities or assimilation is resisted enabling knowledge about multiple identities
which resist reduction into rigid categories to be birthed. For example multiple possibilities emerged from my field research as to what it meant to be an Israeli. Because new possibilities were opened up as to what constituted a legitimate Israeli identity, the possibility for different futures was also opened up. The assertion of this identity no longer tied to rigid claims to the entirety of ancient Israel, made compromises about the distribution of land possible.

There are multiple borderlands within and between these spaces. They are not just borderlands where different possibilities emerge for constructing one’s ethnic identity, they are borderlands for different ways of mobilizing and developing national, religious and gender identities, for developing different perspectives on how to resolve the conflict, and they are borderlands for developing new mestiza solidarities that transcend national and ethnic boundaries.

For example, I located Palestinians and Israelis who, through their cooperation with one another for a common future, were forging a new identity, a community for peace that transcended without assimilating their unique national and ethnic identities. Ethnic and national identities were being renegotiated, but this renegotiation was more about positive growth and transformation and enhancing one’s identity rather than about loss. Loss was certainly involved as people had to let go of aspects of their identity, that at minimum were based on negative stereotypes of the enemy, in order to form solidarities. However forgiveness as conceptualized in natality provided a means where individuals chose to come to terms with that loss in constructive ways. As previously indicated, these solidarities were very tentative and fragile, but they were possible.
Therefore using the matrices of flourishing as a research lens makes it possible to both locate and explore the political consequences and implications of multiple, fluid, shifting identities in other conflict situations.

Forgiveness brings me to the third facet of the spaces, *spacetime*, where past, present and future exist simultaneously and overlap and interact to produce perspectives and insights about many possible futures. Time in these spaces is not linear, but exists as eternal continuous present where the past, like the future, is fluid. Forgiveness was what enabled the irreversible losses of property and life in the past which could never be restored or compensated for, to be reframed in ways that opened up the possibilities for the future where members of both parties could flourish. It also meant acknowledging that justice, an integral part of peacebuilding, would necessarily be partial rather than absolute so as not to cause further injustice and violence.

The data indicated a few ways in which the stories each side developed about the past were not fixed and therefore, the possibility emerged that they could be reconciled. For example, as previously noted many Israelis whom I interviewed were in the process of renegotiating the significance and meaning the Holocaust had as both an integral part of their identities and as the founding narrative of the modern state of Israel as a Jewish democracy. As some Israelis let go of their sense of victimhood which many believed entitled them to a Jewish state at the Palestinians’ expense, they were more open to consider Palestinian claims to the land and find ways to co-exist.
Similarly, many Palestinians whom I interviewed were revising their claims to absolute justice for the homes and land they lost in light of the insights emerging from their activism that caused them to explore different possibilities for a peaceful common future with the Israelis. The initial data located by matrices of flourishing indicated that work on reconciliation was taking place simultaneously with the conflict; therefore what forms of reconciliation were already taking place should be considered throughout the conflict not only as part of a post-peace agreement phase or an end to the conflict. Like peace, it was ongoing and contingent.

In the spaces of the matrices it is possible to uncover what different ideas about justice, forgiveness, co-existence, equality, redemption are emerging. The ways in which they are being formulated are multiple, dynamic and fluid. By researching the ways in which these ideas are being formulated and articulated in a given conflict by those engaged in peacebuilding, it becomes possible to identify where there might be more space for negotiating peace than first meets the eye.
Below are the list of questions that could be used to guide future research into this, and other conflicts:

- What are people doing, if anything to alleviate human suffering?

- Can people, religious or not, envision themselves in Other’s shoes? Where are people showing empathy towards former enemies and what forms does this empathy take in terms of actions as well as in speech?

- Do religious or ethical beliefs exhibit or lead to empathy and concern for human suffering? And if they do, do they lead to action? How are religious and non-religious people exercising their moral imagination? Are they acting out of love for the Other or is their main motivation fear and need? In turn, how do encounters with the Other inform peoples’ moral imagination?

- How are the resources of religion, its texts and traditions, being used by those who act for the flourishing of others rather than evil or suffering?

- Even in a predominantly secular society, in what ways have the religions of some of its members previously shaped and in what ways continue to influence, the moral imaginary in that society?

- Do the predominant societal conceptions of the divine involve concern for the other and the flourishing of humanity? If not, are there suppressed notions of the divine in the cultures involved in the conflict, which have the potential to promote the flourishing of all natals, oneself and one’s enemy alike? And if there are, how are people using them imaginatively to shape their moral actions towards the Other?

- As their voices are amongst the most discounted, what perspectives are emerging from the actions of religious women who are acting as natals and who are flourishing?

- In what ways would the perspectives from what are considered to be the margins of society revise the dominant mainstream accounts of the conflict and of peace?

- How are identities, religious or non-religious, changing as a consequence of participating in peacebuilding activities?

- In what ways are individuals reinterpreting their own past narratives, those of loss and suffering at the hands of the enemies and those of
victimhood, as a result of their engagement in peacebuilding rather than violence?

- Where is individual resilience being strengthened by participation in peacebuilding projects? How can this resilience be built upon and extended to other members of society?

- Is social cohesion being build up within societies who participate in NVR or capacity building projects? If so, where and how is it manifested? How can it be built upon?

- What are the ways in which the past is being interpreted or reframed in ways that open up possibilities for the future? How are historical claims that contribute to the conflict being reinterpreted to make room for territorial compromises in the future?

- What notions of justice, coexistence, equality, recognition, respect, redemption, forgiveness and reconciliation are emerging? Do they open up or foreclose possible futures? How can they inform T1 negotiations and project design and implementation in all the various tracks?

The answers to these questions have political implications and consequences that can be identified and acknowledged. The insights generated could provide more inclusive data for those designing policy and projects in every track which would assist them with strategic planning. Therefore the remainder of this chapter focuses on a few potential strategic trajectories for future peacebuilding efforts in the Israel/Palestine conflict.

5.3.2. Locating flourishing suggests some possible trajectories for the strategic development of future peacebuilding initiatives.

Based on my limited data sample I outline five trajectories that might be useful for multiple track actors, including state and non-state, to consider as part of their future planning with respect to negotiations, policy and project planning.
First of all, those engaged in peacebuilding have access to valuable data in the form of the experiences of those people who are currently participating in their particular projects. Therefore one recommendation would be for religious and secular NGOs engaged in peacebuilding activities, including but not limited to contact approaches, nonviolent resistance, and capacity building, to conduct semi-structured open ended interviews with those people similar to the one I did as part of this research project. The purpose would be to collect more information on the kinds of experiences that are catalysts which motivate people to become involved in peacebuilding and how that involvement transformed how they perceived themselves. It would also help to identify the ways in which people were creatively and imaginatively mobilizing the moral resources from their social context, such as their religion, gender, culture, ethnicity and class.

By identifying ‘transformation’ points, what experiences and encounters caused people to change, it may be possible to develop more projects with these transformations as their goal, particularly amongst the seemingly most intransigent and difficult to reach groups on both sides. For example, what kinds of projects would bring more national religious settlers like R.R. and ultra-orthodox Jewish Israelis into meaningful relationships with religious Muslim Palestinians such as N.M. and from Hamas? More research within these two communities would help identify people in those two groups that are most open to change and would be more likely to participate.
Many interviewees had a sense of vocation. Peacebuilding was more than a job, it was a calling; it was what gave many people meaning and significance irrespective of their religious background. Locating and speaking with others engaged in peacebuilding who have a calling and networking them together would be an important means for strengthening the fragile solidarities that have emerged thus far.

The second trajectory for strategic planning might be to intentionally design projects that focus on ways of consciously sharing the knowledges between those engaged in the different tracks in order increase the self-awareness of the peacebuilding system that exists. One way to do this could be to initiate a conference, to be held biannually, to share knowledge and best practice amongst all the different parties engaged in peacebuilding, including T1, through workshops and papers. As noted earlier, there appears to be a disconnect between those working in NVR and contact approaches, yet both have access to important insights about the conflict, the ways in which coalitions of peace are being formed, and what ideas about reconciliation, forgiveness, justice, co-existence, equality, respect, recognition and redemption are emerging.

Also, the feedback of insights from the NGOs into the policy making and negotiation strategies of the T1 state actors could be strengthened. Based on my observations not only during the field research in 2008 but from prior work experience in the region since 1998, there has not been sufficient networking and engagement between T1 and the other tracks. One of the reasons, which this

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414 D.B; H.S.
project has attempted in some small measure to address, has been the tendency for T1 actors to pay insufficient attention to the ethical actions of people engaged in peacebuilding. As a consequence many of those whom I interviewed expressed alienation from their own governments who they argued did not represent them or their aspirations.\textsuperscript{415} Similarly, as one of my interviewees observed, many NGOs, do not pay sufficient attention to developing networks with T1 officials, some because they do not see the need, others because they are too focused on the particular project at hand, and others because of lack of capacity.\textsuperscript{416}

The third trajectory involves increasing the intentional development of multi-track projects that include elements of development, NVR, and dialogue as well as other tracks like business and academia which I did not address. The composition of participants should also be intentional and include men and women from a variety of religious, ethnic and class backgrounds. These projects could specifically focus on bringing together those people from different intersections of religion, gender, ethnicity and parts of society that research undertaken as part of the first trajectory identifies as being resistant and/or under-represented in peacebuilding.

The fourth trajectory would be for those engaged in peacebuilding to pay more attention to religion and the way it informs people’s ethics and values. It is possible to evaluate the ways in which religion is either used to promote violence or to promote flourishing. The religious are part of civil society and without their

\textsuperscript{415} H.S; M.A; M.F; T.A.
\textsuperscript{416} J.A.
perspectives and involvement; the picture of peacebuilding is left incomplete. Their actions and perspectives are political and have unexpected political consequences.

The fifth and final trajectory may be for people to design particular peacebuilding projects in all phases and tracks of the peace process, in such a manner that recognizes and encourages ways in which peoples’ identities and ideas about the past, present and future are complex and in flux. The conceptions of justice, reconciliation, equality, coexistence, redemption, and forgiveness, which emerge from using this research approach, could be used to inform the design of future projects and strategies as well as to inform negotiating strategies and policies at the T1 level. For example, one Palestinian interviewee said his organization was in the process of designing nonviolent resistance projects that acknowledged the suffering Israelis had endured as a result of the Holocaust; part of the goal of the project was to bring healing to the Israelis.  

These are only a few possibilities. More could easily be developed in response to the information generated from ongoing research using this approach.

5.4. Conclusion

The data indicated the ways in which technical solutions for ending the conflict might not be as significant to people as long as they incorporated broader fluid notions of justice, reconciliation, redemption, equality, and co-existence. Because these terms are fluid and are envisioned in different ways depending on peoples’ social locations, more research is needed for solutions incorporating

\[417\] S.Q.
these values in order for these solutions to be more democratic. There is more flexibility than is currently assumed by Track 1 policy makers as to the negotiating options available to them.

The matrices of flourishing are a valuable tool for developing a more holistic approach to peacebuilding as a system by locating and reflecting on the different insights and perspectives that are being generated by all its parts. The questions the matrices of flourishing constitute a means for collecting and evaluating experiences in order to develop a more comprehensive and inclusive picture of peacebuilding and of the conflict. These insights, once located, could be used to inform future strategic planning and policy by people at every level and phase of peacebuilding. Uncovering the voices and moral agency of natals from different segments of societies helps to facilitate the building and extension of coalitions of peace which are more representative of these complex and diverse societies.
CONCLUSION

This thesis demonstrated some ways in which a research methodology, the matrices of flourishing, is able to locate and analyse transformations that were occurring as a result of peacebuilding in the Israel/Palestine conflict. These matrices, drawn from natality, uncovered multiple ways in which natals were creatively exercising moral agency and were constantly becoming in ways that opened up possibilities for the future. They also uncovered and critiqued the political actions of some religious actors, including women, on an equal basis to those of non-religious actors for their promotion or hindrance of the flourishing of others besides oneself and one’s primary identity group.

The thesis explored the difficulties with existing peacebuilding approaches to the Israel/Palestine conflict because they appeared to be underpinned by metaphysical concerns at odds with their stated normative goal of social transformation. They failed to sufficiently account for how people who are moral agents with the ability to exercise moral imagination informed by their socially constructed moral context, were able to act differently out of love and concern for the Other rather than out of fear and need. They were not able to sufficiently account for the ways in which people’s spiritual capital/moral resources were informed by aspects of their social location including religion, or how people then deployed those resources in different ways. Socially constructed boundaries that relegated religion to the private sphere meant that the ways in which religion informed people’s moral actions, their moral identity and their overall fluid identity
constructions was obscured. This was particularly evident when considering the moral actions and fluid identities of religious women engaged in peacebuilding. Furthermore, they did not provide sufficient means for analysing the ways in which people’s narratives about past loss and absolute claims to the land were being reframed and renegotiated through their engagement in peacebuilding. The thesis argued that even in a systems approach to peacebuilding, the fragmentation between the different tracks meant that the knowledges being birthed about the ways in which the conflict was being transformed were difficult to access and assess.

By locating aspects of flourishing including peoples’ moral context, the ways in which their identities were fluid (thereby complicating peoples’ identities as either victims or oppressors), and the ways in which future possibilities were being opened up, this thesis uncovered evidence that indicated that the over-arching narratives surrounding the conflict and its resolution were much more complex. The data in this limited sample located examples of black swans which indicated different stories were being created based on peoples encounters with the Other.

Firstly, they were exercising their moral imagination to locate and deploy moral resources from their respective socially located moral contexts, including their religious traditions. In contrast to stories that dehumanised and demonised the Other, stories were emerging about how the Other was also human. Moral imagination was being deployed to empathise with the Other’s fear and suffering. Stories were emerging around about how coming to recognise that the Other was also a concerned parent, who wanted a better future for all children and for future
generations, was transformational. These stories about changing perspectives also
couraged individuals’ on-going engagement in peacebuilding. They were also
the stories around which fragile solidarities of communities of peace were
coalescing, which transcended boundaries of national and religious group identity.

Secondly, the data pointed to stories that complicated the narratives of of
each side that laid sole claim to the victimhood identity. The victim/oppressor
boundary which each side deployed to neatly stake out their position as victim was
transcended by the stories of those actively engaged in peace including religious
and nonreligious men and women. Through these stories, it was possible to see
the ways in which people had moral agency that was constrained and informed by
love, networks of relationships and responsibilities for the flourishing of Other as
well themselves.

Thirdly, an analysis of the stories indicated that different futures were being
opened up. Palestinians and Israelis were reframing both their individual stories of
suffering and loss as well as national narratives involving historical claims to the
land in order to move towards a common goal of peace. As a consequence of
forgiveness as defined in a moral imaginary of natality, different concepts about
forgiveness, reconciliation, co-existence, equality, and redemption were emerging
that opened up the possibilities for futures for peace which were not dependent on
specific technical solutions to the conflict. Rather, these concepts could be used to
inform creative thinking about new technical solutions that have yet to be mooted.

The data located commonalities which transcended these multiple
boundaries, including national ones, the sacred/secular binary which relegates
religion to the private sphere, the victim/oppressor binary, the barriers of human
need theory that obscure the ways in which people can act morally and ethically in
the public sphere out of love, and the boundaries of different peacebuilding tracks,
which made it difficult to accesses and assess the ways in which this conflict was
already being transformed.

Based on my analysis, I recommended trajectories for peacebuilders
involved in transforming the Israel/Palestine conflict. The data indicated that
further research using the questions outlined in Chapter 5 would be invaluable for
those engaged in different forms of peacebuilding in this and other conflicts. The
purpose of the research would be to address fragmentation within peacebuilding
systems and increase knowledge about the ways in which the conflict is already
being transformed. This knowledge could be used to inform new strategies and
projects that would facilitate its on-going transformation.

Given the limited focus of this thesis on identifying religious aspects of
people’s social context and morality, additional research using this lens to
investigate other intersections of identities, particularly those of religious women, is
indicated. Although the thesis identified examples of the ways in which some
religious women flourished, further work is needed in order to explore the
implications of this methodology for gendered identity constructions. Secondly,
initial research indicates that more focused research on those engaged in
development as peacebuilding would enrich our understanding of how people are
exercising moral agency in ways not necessarily tied to resistance. Additionally,
the data indicates that more detailed research using a wider sample and more
focused questions on the different concepts of justice, reconciliation, forgiveness, co-existence and equality that are emerging would be rewarding. Finally, given the forces of globalisation which increasingly are blurring the distinctions between domestic and international politics, I think it would be valuable use this research methodology to consider the influences and moral actions of third parties including international NGOs, other state actors like the United States who are involved in brokering peace, and the global media, who are concerned with peacebuilding in the Israel/Palestine conflict. Although I deliberately chose not to address this in the thesis because of my initial focus on the two parties to the conflict, the data from the stories I elicited in the interviews indicated an awareness of the influences of these actors which were not impartial and which also informed their identities. I predict that uncovering the moral motivations and identities of these actors would also contribute towards opening up different fluid futures.

A politics of natality provides a useful framework for identifying and analysing the political implications of the fluid and dynamic moral arrangements and identities of a wide range of actors. The initial indications from this project are that this framework is able to uncover new possibilities for hopeful futures.
APPENDIX 1
 Interviews conducted in Israel and Palestine,
 June 18-August 10, 2008

I conducted 32 official semi-structured interviews with the following people. Although I officially interviewed all the people below and recorded and transcribed their interviews, in many instances the information was not usable or not complete due to a variety of circumstances:


Bil’in Popular Committee, M.K., Palestinian Muslim male, Ramallah, http://www.palestinefreedom.org/organizations/o1885

Birzeit University, J.I., Muslim Palestinian female. Ramallah, http://www.birzeit.edu/


Combatants for Peace (CP), (3 interviewees) R.I. and M.P., Palestinian Muslim men, P.R., Jewish-athiest Israeli male, Ramallah, Jerusalem, http://cfpeace.org/

Holy Land Trust (HLT), (2 interviewees), A.M., a Muslim Palestinian male refugee and S.Q., Christian Palestinian male, Bethlehem, http://www.holylandtrust.org/

Ibdaa, A. a Palestinian woman in Dheisheh Refugee Camp, Bethlehem http://www.dheisheh-ibdaa.net

Interfaith Encounter Association (IEA), (3 interviewees) L.P. a Jewish Israeli female settler, A.M., Muslim Palestinian male, and YS., Jewish Israeli male, Jerusalem and Abu Dis http://interfaithencounter.wordpress.com/

Jerusalem Centre for Women (JCW), M.A. Muslim Palestinian female, Beit Hanina, Palestinian Partner of Jerusalem Link, http://www.j-c-w.org/

MEP (an international peace organisation), R.R., Jewish Israeli female and religious settler, National Religious Party, Jerusalem

Musalaha, (3 interviewees) M.S., a Greek Orthodox Christian Palestinian-Israeli male, A.B., a Messianic Jewish Christian female who immigrated from the United States, married to P.B., Messianic Jewish Christian Israeli male whose family originated in Iran, Jerusalem  http://www.musalaha.org/

Military Court Watch (MCW), H.S., Jewish-Atheist Israeli female and her husband T.S. (for information about the background of the Israeli war for independence).  http://www.hamoked.org,


Palestinian clinic, N.M., Muslim Palestinian male, Husan, a Palestinian village near Bethlehem,

PASSIA, (2 interviewees) Two Muslim Palestinian males, Mustafa and Mahdi, Jerusalem, http://www.passia.org/index.htm


The Center for Agricultural Services (TCAS), M.M., Hebron,  http://www.vispo.com/PRIME/palecoagra.htm#8

The Israeli Committee against Housing Demolitions (ICAHD), J.A., Jewish-Agnostic Israeli male, Jerusalem,  http://www.icahd.org/

W’iam Palestinian Conflict Resolution Center, M.Z., a Palestinian Muslim male, Bethlehem,  http://www.alaslah.org/
Informal interviews

Below is a list of people I interviewed for background information and for identifying people to interview. It also includes impromptu conversations that I had with individuals who provided me with useful contacts or background information.

Anati, Miriam, Israeli Jewish informant not with an NGO---background information and contacts

Anonymous, Palestinian Israel male, with respect to the identities of Palestinian Israelis, Jerusalem.

Basil, Palestinian Muslim male from Hebron who took me to visit NGOs in Hebron.

Beit Jala attended lecture by Palestinian on normalisation and spoke to international and Palestinian activists with the purpose of gathering background information

Bethlehem Bible College, Bishara Awad, a Christian Palestinian male church leader and college official, Bethlehem, http://www.bethbc.org


Diyar Consortium (Lutheran), Mltri Raheb and various Palestinian Christian staff engaged in peacebuilding projects, Bethlehem, http://www.diyar.ps/

Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Israel and Palestine, international staff, Jerusalem and the Bethlehem check point, http://www.eappi.org/


Rizk, Philip, involved in international reconciliation work; background information, Bethlehem.

Seibold, Juliette, British gender and development expert who was working on Palestinian development projects and was referred to me by colleagues in the UK.

Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), Israel and Palestine branch. I met with various Israeli Palestinian and Israeli Jewish women members of the organisation. I attended one of their meetings in Tel Aviv and was able to get valuable background information and contacts from these women [http://www.peacewomen.org/countries_and_regions/asia--pacific/west-asia--middle-east/israel--occupied-palestinian-territories](http://www.peacewomen.org/countries_and_regions/asia--pacific/west-asia--middle-east/israel--occupied-palestinian-territories)

Youth with A Mission (YWAM), numerous Palestinian Christian (male and female) and international staff located in Bethlehem, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

Additionally, as part of gaining a better understanding of some of the activities, I participated in an Interfaith Encounter field trip to the Israel Museum with the members of the Ma’ale Adumim/Abu Dis encounter group, participated in a Women in Black vigil on a Friday, and visited the check points with women from Machsom Watch. I was conflicted about whether or not travel to in Bil’in to witness the protests against the Separation Fence first hand. In the end, I decided against it for ethical reasons.
APPENDIX 2

List of interview Questions

Below are the questions I asked. I did not necessarily ask them in order. The purpose of questions was to elicit peoples’ stories without being directive. I wanted them to tell their stories and make sense of their lives in the way that they chose. The questions were deliberately open-ended and subject to interpretation. Depending on peoples’ response to one question, I would ask the question that most naturally flowed from their response. Sometimes people would tell their story after one question and answer all the subsequent questions without my having to ask them. Other people were not as forthcoming and sometimes I had to ask supplementary questions in order to prompt them to tell their stories.

At the beginning of the interview I would explain a little about my research. I tried to keep the explanation to a minimum so as not to prejudice their answers. I would say something like, I am interested in learning what Israelis and Palestinians engaged in various conflict resolution activities think about their lives and their work. I mentioned that since so much of the focus already was on violence and the conflict, I was interested in seeing what, if any, constructive and encouraging things were taking place. I let them know my approach was a form of appreciative inquiry.

Generally, people enjoyed talking about their work and were forthcoming.

1. How and why did you get involved with this particular organisation?

2. How do you view yourself in the context of your own society as well as within the broader context of the conflict?

3. Does religion form a meaningful part of your life? If so, how? If not, what beliefs are important to you and how you view yourself and your life?
4. What is your vision for the future? What kind of a world do you envision for your children and your children’s children? Or if you don’t have children, what kind of future would you like to see for future generations?
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A.M., Muslim Palestinian male, IEA. Personal Interview, 3 July 2008.
A.M., Muslim Palestinian Refugee, HLT. Personal Interview, 11 July 2008.


227


Interview with a, a Female Palestinian Refugee at Dheisheh Refugee Camp, *Ibdaa*. Interview, 26 June 2008 2008.


K.M., Muslim Palestinian male, Ta'awon. Personal Interview, 2 July 2008.


L.P., Jewish Israeli female, personal interview. IEA. Personal Interview, 8 July 2008.


M.A., Muslim Palestinian female, JCW. Personal Interview, 28 July 2008.


M.K., Muslim Palestinian male, personal interview, Bil'in Popular Committee. Personal Interview, 26 July 2008.

M.S., Greek Orthodox Christian Palestinian-Israeli male, personal interview, Musalah. Personal Interview, 5 July 2008.


Mustafa M., Muslim Palestinian male, PASSIA. Personal Interview, 17 July 2008.


N.M., Muslim Palestinian male, Palestinian medical clinic. Personal Interview, 5 July 2008.

229


P.R., Jewish-Atheist Israeli male, CP. Personal Interview, 2008.


R.I., Muslim Palestinian male, CP. Personal Interview, 26 July 2008.


S.M., Muslim Palestinian female, Ta’awon Personal Interview, 2 July 2008.


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