The Israel/Palestine conflict viewed from an educational perspective:

An investigation of the historical narratives of “the other”

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Thesis submitted as partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Comparative and International Education.

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Autumn 2010
Abstract

This study explores the historical narratives presented about “the other” through education. It also explores how children perceive these narratives today. The historical narratives are reviewed through literature about education and textbooks. How children perceive these narratives today are investigated based on interviews conducted during my fieldwork in Israel and Ramallah, November 2007. 15 interviews were conducted in four different schools during my fieldwork. Because of this, I used a qualitative research design for this study. I present and analyse findings from my interviews with reference to the literature surrounding the concepts of identity, culture and attribution theory. The findings in this study suggest that historical narratives of “the other” are not being learned in formal education today. The narratives are learned from other areas of socialisation. The findings also indicate that education, related to narratives and the perception of “the other” is of minor importance since education is interlinked with the society as a hole. The perceptions of “the other” cannot change in education if the society as a hole is not willing to change their cultural narratives.
Acknowledgment

Thanks to all the children involved for sharing with me their thoughts feelings and frustration, without you this thesis would never been written.

I must also thank the four schools that were willing to participate in this thesis. The schools in Israel and Ramallah who opened their door for me, I cannot mention names, but you all know who you are. I am very thankful for your co-operation and your kindness.

Most grateful thanks to my supervisor, Heidi Biseth, for contributing in getting this study completed. Without your assistant this would have been a difficult task to get on with. Thank you for guidance and constructive critic.

I will also like to thinks the staff at CIE for patience and support.

A special greeting goes to the Palestinian representation office in Oslo who helped me getting in contact with people in Ramallah and also contributed with helpful information about their perspective of the conflict. Also thanks to the Israeli embassy in Oslo for helping and creating contacts in Israel.

I am also greatly in debt to my translators for helping me with the most fundamental task of this thesis, to communicate with the children involved in this project. Expressly thanks to my translator and her contacts in Ramallah, that made it possible for me to get into the Ministry and opened up doors that had not been possible without her knowledge and participation.

Also thanks to other persons who contributed to making the fieldwork possible, you know who you are. Thanks to friends and family for support.

My most loving feelings go to Mari for being able to live with me during this period, thank you for always believing in me.

Oslo, November 2010

Morten Stensrud
## Abbreviations

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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARIJ</td>
<td>Applied Research Institute in Jerusalem</td>
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<tr>
<td>CMIP</td>
<td>Centre for Monitoring the Impact of Peace publications</td>
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<td>EFA</td>
<td>Education for All</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>FATAH</td>
<td>Palestinian National Liberation Movement</td>
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<td>HAMAS</td>
<td>Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah, meaning Islamic resistant movement</td>
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<td>IIEP</td>
<td>UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning</td>
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<td>JVL</td>
<td>Jewish Virtual Library</td>
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<tr>
<td>IMPACT-SE</td>
<td>Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intifada</td>
<td>“Uprising”, used to describe Palestinian struggle against continued Israeli occupation during 1987-1992 and from 2000 to present day</td>
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<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organization</td>
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<td>NESH</td>
<td>National Committees for Research Ethics in Norway</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organization</td>
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<td>OPT</td>
<td>Occupied Palestinian Territory</td>
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<td>PA</td>
<td>Palestinian Authority</td>
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<td>PLO</td>
<td>Palestinian Liberation Organization</td>
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<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>PNA</td>
<td>Palestinian National Authority</td>
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<td>PRIME</td>
<td>Peace Research Institute in the Middle East</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNRWA</td>
<td>The UN Relief and Work Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East</td>
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<td>US</td>
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Chapter 1: Introduction

The purpose of this research is to investigate the conflict between Israel and Palestinians from an educational perspective. This will be done by investigating the literature and narratives about the historical events that have created the conflict as we see it today.

Every culture and society creates different forms of master narrative, which functions as carriers of the cultural wisdom and autonomy of that particular group. Also, every nation or culture with a form of educational system uses these narratives to socialize their youth into cultural traditions, norms and religious beliefs that is relevant for the society that fosters them. This implies that through the educational system, children are confronted with perspectives of identity and tradition. They also learn what distinguishes them, and what binds them together with other groups, people and nations. It is possible to claim that education is one of the important components in the conflict that we see today. What children learn or even more relevant, what children do not learn in school, contributes to making it difficult to see people on the other side of the fence as more than a manifestation of 60 years of conflict. Even though education is an important component in this conflict; it is not the only one. This conflict operates on so many levels that it is nearly impossible to get a clear and precise perspective. It is often stated that the roots of this conflict is a religious battle between cultures, which might be true, but only to some extent. But at the same time it is also the questions about economy, territorial disputes and autonomist self-determination. Inside Palestine there are also tensions between different religious and political positions represented by Hamas (Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah,) and Fatah (Palestinian National Liberation Movement), and in Israel between secular groups and religious groups. By comparing the reviewed literature with my empirical data conducted through my fieldwork, I hope to contribute to explaining why it is so difficult for the parts to recognise each other and why co-existence is hard for the people involved in the conflict.

The conflict as we see it today is the result of past events; therefore we can also look at the past to try to find solutions for the situation today. The conflict we see in the Middle –East is complex and multi-dimensional. It is nearly impossible to give a clear and precise overview of it. Still, I intend to give some historical outlines that might contribute to see some important factors. To understand, or at least, try to understand the conflict that the Israeli and
the Palestinian people are living with; we have to look at the history that has brought them there. The conflict today is the result of historical events that has cut deep into the heart of the Israeli and the Palestinian people. These events are characterized by hatred, frustration and betrayal, but also include events that have been liberating and created freedom for others. It is a political and religious history where both parts are convinced of their right to the land. It is this assurance that we see the result of today, in a conflict that cuts so deeply into people’s identity and religious beliefs, that makes it is difficult for either of the two parts to recognise the others sovereignty or right to exist. This assurance is built on a cultural heritage, passed on by generations; it creates the fundament for their identity and assurance. The narrative created depicts the historical events in ways best suited for their own telling. That is why we today are being confronted with narratives so opposite to each other, that for an outsider or other than the people who are telling them, it is difficult to comprehend. These narratives depict the different important historical events and contribute to create peoples cultural and political history. These are also the narrative that is being passed on to the next generations of children. If changes shall be made, we have to look at what kind of narratives that is being passed on, not necessary focus on if they are right or wrong, but remember why they are being told and from what perspective. Both sides have underlying interests, related to social, cultural and political need and intentions. And it is crucial to understand these intentions and interests when we look at these different narratives.

In periods of war and conflict, nations tend to develop their own narratives, which from their perspective become the only true narrative. These narratives devaluate and even dehumanize their enemy's narrative. If the enemy's narrative is described at all, it is presented as being unjustifiable and the enemy is depicted as faceless and immoral with irrational or manipulative views. These narratives become embedded into everyday culture, into the national and religious festivals, into the media and into children's school textbooks (Bar-On & Adwan, 2006:310).

My aim for this thesis is to show that even though some organizations and actors are stating that curriculum and education is functioning as a producer of hatred and on-going aggression, it might not be what actually is going on in the classrooms. Education is interlinked with the broader society, the families, the communities, municipalities and the society as a hole. They are all interacting; you cannot change educational practises if you do not change the society.
1.1 Motivation

My involvement in this matter comes from a long time of interest in the situation in the Middle East from a political and humanitarian perspective. There have been numerous conflicts in the world related to politics, ethnicity and occupation, but this conflict stands out from many others, because it has been going on for such a long period of time. Still after 60 years, this conflict does not seem to end. When I am writing this, the President of the United States of America has been visiting Israel in relation to the country’s celebration of 60 years of independence, and is being honoured by the President as the most rapidly growing democracy in the Middle-East. At the same time, thousands of black balloons are dropped from the Gaza and the West bank as a symbolic demonstration that democracy for some means oppressions for others. My intention in writing this thesis is not to be biased, claiming that either of the two parts have more right to the land than the other, but simply to look at the factors involved when it comes to the structural power relations existing between the two parts an how this plays out on relation to education. This power relationship affects both sides on every level of the society. For me it is also necessary to look at why, after such a long time, the two parts are having so much difficulty recognising each other. It is from this perspective, narratives, education and educational practises are important. Reproduction of cultural narratives and continues aggression towards others is never the road to a more peaceful society. Therefore it was important for me to go into the communities and into the classrooms. How does education affect children’s perspective of “the other”? Are the reproductions of these stereotypical narratives institutionalised through education, or are they delivered through other cultural areas as home, family and friends, community and the municipalities? These questions make the fundament for my involvement in the conflict and have created the need for further investigation of the matter. Based on the above I pose the following research questions:

1: What are the historical narratives presented about “the other” through education?

2: How do students perceive narratives of “the other” today?

These questions will be investigated throughout this study. Before going into the research questions, I will give an outline of this study and reflect around the need for historical knowledge to get information about the historical events that have created the conflict as we see it today.
1.2 Outline of the study

In chapter one I will give a historical introduction to some of the most important events that have had an impact on the conflict.

In chapter two I will outline my research design and methodology. This means that I will look at the different research methods that are relevant for my thesis. The methods include sampling methods, interviews and ethical considerations related to the thesis and my fieldwork. I will also explore questions about validity and reliability regarding the methods used.

In chapter three I will give an overview over the theoretical framework for this study. In conducting this study it is relevant for me to draw on different theoretical perspectives. I will use attribution theory to explain how people are divided into different categories, what I have chosen to call “us and the others”. Further, using complexity theory, I will address the need for more than one theoretical framework when conducting research in conflict areas

In chapter four I will give an overview of some of the different literature being reviewed in this study and also give a give a brief introduction to the educational systems in Israel and the Palestinian territories, how they are structured, their educational goals and challenges for education in the two areas

In chapter five I present the interviews and data collecting during my fieldwork. I look at differences in the children’s opinions based on background, religion and terminology.

In chapter six I bring together the main findings and interpret them using the theoretical framework presented in chapter three.

1.3 Historical background

To understand the situation as it is today, it is crucial to look at the historical development in this region. What historical events have created the tension and conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians? I shall try to highlight the main events that have contributed to shape the conflict to what it is today. To grasp the essence of this we must move back in time. This account is intended as a balanced overview and introduction to the Palestinian and Israeli history, and the history of the conflict. The reason for giving an overview of these historical events is because I see it as a crucial contribution in helping the reader to understand the
situation as it is today. To understand why narratives can be powerful and to emphasise the important role these narratives can have in people’s lives and perceptions of reality, we must understand their origin. I am aware that this introduction can be considered too long and not that relevant. But I wish to highlight the importance of knowing these historical events. Knowledge of the history of the two people will broaden our understanding and contribute to see the historical narratives that will be studied from more than one side. This again can benefit the objectivity and reduce biases when conducting the interviews and fieldwork in the two areas. Knowing the history, also contribute to better understanding of the different segments and groups represented in the literature reviewed.

When I talk of the different narratives in the next section I will use information from a project called “The Prime shared history project- Peace building under fire “(Bar-On & Adwan, 2006). The narratives illustrated are from a project called Prime (Peace Research Institute in the Middle East). The Prime project is a project where six high school history teachers from each side of the conflict worked together to develop the two narratives. The narratives where then translated into Arabic and Hebrew, so the booklet could be published in both languages. The intention of Prime was not to criticize or to change the narratives, just to give a comprehensive overview of what children are being taught about their history on both sides of the fence. The project’s aim was to give the children both narratives. It is stated: “We regard history as an attempt to build a better future by looking under every rock rather than throwing them at each other” (Adwan et.al, 2003: introduction ). I will use these narratives to illustrate the different comprehensions of the conflict and the historical events from the different parts involved. Prime decided to develop an innovative school booklet that contains two narratives, the Israeli narrative and the Palestinian narrative, around certain dates or milestones in the history of the conflict. “This would mean that each student will learn also the narrative of the other, in addition to the familiar own narrative, as a first step toward acknowledging and respecting the other” (Bar-On & Adwan, 2006:310). The historical background consists of information gathered from different agents and authors.

The land variously called Israel and Palestine is a small land at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea. During its’ long history, its’ area, population and ownership varied greatly. Palestine as an area has been settled for tens of thousands of years. Fossil remains have been found of Homo erectus, Neanderthal and transitional types between Neanderthals and modern man. Archaeologists have found hybrid Emmer wheat at Jericho dating from before 8,000 B.C, making it one of the oldest sites of agriculture activity in the world.
Amorites, Canaanites, and others Semitic peoples related to the Phoenicians of Tyre entered the area about 2000 B.C. The area became known as the Land of Canaan (MidEastWeb, n.d.). The Jewish people evolved, according to archaeologists out of different invading tribes and the native Canaanite peoples. This is thought by historians to have been around 1800 -1500 B.C. The first to conquer the land was the Egyptian Pharaohs, who controlled the coastal plain when, around 1800 B.C, Abraham lead his nomadic tribe from Mesopotamia to what are now Judean hills. Abraham fought a war over wells against indigenous tribes. His descendants were forced to move on to Egypt because of drought and crop failure, but in about 1250 B.C Moses led them back. Battles with the Philistines and Canaanites pushed the Israelites to abandon their loose tribal system and unify under King Saul (Lonely planet, 2007).

In 1006 B.C, the Philistines defeated Saul at Mt Gilboa. Saul committed suicide on the battlefield, and the Israelites were divided into two kingdoms. Israel was roughly the north of today’s West Bank, while further south King David (1004-965 B.C) ruled over Judah and conquered Salem (today’s Jerusalem). David named the city Zion, from the Hebrew ziya, meaning ‘parched desert’ (Lonely planet, 2007). After Solomon’s reign (965-928 B.C), the Jews entered a period of division and periodic subjection. In the 8th century, Sargon 2 of Assyria (722-705 B.C) captured Israel and forced Judah to pay a tribute. He also defeated the Egyptians at Rapihu, now Rafah in the Gaza Strip. Around 722 B.C, the Assyrians conquered Israel, and in the time between 722 and 61 B.C there where different groups and kings that fought for the area. All of which had a different approach to Judaism. After 61 A.D, the Romans took control over the region and drove the Jews out of Jerusalem, this was around 135 A.D “The name Palestine, which became Palestine in English, is derived from Herodotus, who used the name Palaistine Syria to refer to the entire southern part of Syria” (Lonely planet, 2007: 28). Palestine was governed by the Roman Empire until the fourth century and then by the Byzantine Empire. The land shifted hand to varying powers from 600 – 1800. Muslim powers controlled the region until 1900. Between The Seljuk Turks, The Fatimid rulers of Egypt, The Crusaders and Mamelukes all had a stronghold in the land. Around 1300, Jews from Spain and other Mediterranean lands settled in Jerusalem and other parts of the land. The Ottoman Empire defeated the Mamelukes in 1517, and Palestine becomes a part of their empire until Napoleon entered the land in 1798. In 1880, there were about 24.000 Jews living in Palestine, out of a population of 400.000 (Mideastweb, n.d.). The Ottoman rulers imposed restrictions on the immigration of Jews at the same time as they actively invited Muslims from other parts of the Ottoman Empire to settle in Palestine. But Jews has never
stopped coming to “the Holy Land” and in the end of 1800 the rise of Zionism started as a social movement. Zionism developed in Eastern and Central Europe as a result of disillusion with the promise of emancipation, the continuation of anti-Semitic, the inspiration of other national movements, and the continual connection of people of Israel to the land of Israel. Its’ purpose and aspiration was to return the people of Israel to their land and create in the land of Israel a Hebrew society and a sovereign Jewish state were Jews could live in peace (Mideastweb, n.d.).

After these historical happenings and events, we now can detect the start of the conflict, as we know it today. From then and until now the conflict has been the major issue for the people living in the region. The First World War started the “fire”. The conflict escalated during the First World War when the British issued the Balfour Declaration. The declaration stated Britain’s support for the creation of a Jewish national home in Palestine, without violating the civil and religious rights of the existing non-Jewish communities (Adwan et.al, 2003). In the Israeli narratives the Balfour Declaration is seen as the first support for Zionism. It is stated that the letter sent by Lord Balfour, the British Minister of Foreign Affairs, to Lord Rothschild, a leader of the community in Great Britain, expressed support for establishing a national homeland for the Jewish people in the land of Israel. To understand why the British issued the declaration it is important to look at a broad picture. The Balfour Declaration comes at the height of the First World War. The Declaration was aimed at winning Jewish support, both from Jewish organisations in the US and Jews in Russia. Fear that the Germans were about to do the same, lead to the declaration. For the British it was also a political and regional move; they hoped that by issuing the declaration they could at a later state create a foothold in the Middle East and control the Suez Canal (Adwan et.al, 2003). The Zionist movement viewed this as the start of a long hopeful road towards an Israeli homeland. If the allies won the war, they would have a leading power that gained control over Israel, and at the same time issued their support for the Jewish people. If we compare this with the Palestinian narratives, the Balfour Declaration symbolizes the start of oppression from outside forces. Their narratives use another terminology when it comes to the declaration. The Balfour Declaration is considered a political gain for the Zionist movement on the expense of Arabs and Muslims, who originally owned the land:

Britain granted a land she did not possess (Palestine) to a group who did not own it (the Zionists) at the expense of those who possess and deserve it (the Palestinian-Arab people who formed more than 90% of the population) (Adwan et.al, 2003: 8).
For the Palestinians the Balfour Declaration of November 2, 1917 started a new era. The Palestinians saw this “unholy marriage” between the British and the Zionist movement as a justification for its’ Palestine policy. What is noteworthy for the Palestinians in these narratives is that” Britain committed this crime before her armies even arrived in Jerusalem” (Adwan et.al, 2003: 8). The narrative emphasise that they gave away the land to ensure their own political influence in the region.

There were other agreements that would be of great importance in shaping the political and cultural landscape around the same time as the Balfour Declaration. The Sykes-Picot agreement for the partition of the Middle East, which was launched in 1916, also had a profound effect for the development of the region. This agreement, made between Britain and France, planned to divide the Ottoman holdings in the Middle East after the war. This agreement placed Palestine under British control, while Jordan and Lebanon would be under French control. This imperial political struggle led to a situation where the British promised support to the Arabs for an post-war independence from the Ottoman rulers, but when the time came, the British claimed that Palestine was not a part of the area previously promised (Mideastweb,n.d.). After being under Ottoman rule for centuries, Palestine came under British military rule after the First World War (Heiberg & Øvensen, 1994). In 1920 the victorious nations, with the approval of the international community, decided to give a mandate to Britain for control of the land of Israel/Palestine. The League of Nations (later United Nations) assigned control of the conquered areas to the victors for a limited time. The result of this was that once again the area was under foreign control.

The Arabs opposed the idea of a Jewish home state, since there were already Arabs living in these areas, but their voices were not heard. For the Jews this was a victory, because the British recognized the historical connections between the Jewish people and the land of Israel and obligated itself to implement the Balfour Declaration by creating conditions that would ensure the establishment of a national home for the Jews (Adwan et.al, 2003).

From The Arabs point of view, this was the start of a bloody battle. The Arabs tried to use political channels to prevent what was happening. The Arabs demanded to: “unite Syria and Palestine, refusal to divide Syria, rejection of the British mandate, the right of self-determination for all people and the rejection of the Balfour Declaration, including the establishment of the Jewish national homeland” (Adwan et.al, 2003:10). These demands that
were made at the General Syrian Conference in 1919 were presented to the King Crane Commission, without any result. The Arab communities’ frustration, aggression and fight for self-determination can all be traced back to these events. For them the close cooperation between Britain and the Zionist movement provided the foundation for the Jewish state: the land, the people and sovereignty. This was done through “purchasing land, enacting land laws, enacting immigration laws to bring Jews from abroad, subjugating the economy of Palestine to the Jews, and Judaizing the administration of the land” (Adwan et.al, 2003: 11).

All the events mentioned above lead to the first uprisings from the Arabs between 1920 - 1929. These riots emerged out of opposition to the mandate, the establishment of a Jewish national home and the Balfour Declaration. We can also see these events as a result of religious tension between the Jews and Muslims. The Al-Buraq uprising in 1929 is said to be a direct result of disturbances and inciting practices of Jews near the Al-Buraq wall (Adwan et.al, 2003). As a result of these riots the Jews established their Haganah, their self-defence organization. The Haganah plays later an important factor in the armed struggle for the Jewish battle for independence.

This period in the historical development in the region is also where we clearly can see the two different narratives departing in different directions and the rice of extreme nationalism on both sides. The narrative now becomes a tool to legitimize the people’s right to fight for their cause and what they believed in. The Arab revolt in 1936, or the Great Uprising, started a massive attack from the Arabs towards the British and Jews (Adwan et.al, 2003). The revolt cumulated at the time the Syrian preacher Izz al din El Qassam (an activist who was agitating against the British and the Jews) was killed by British soldiers. This was the start of a battle that killed thousands of Arabs and hundreds of Jews (Mideastweb, n.d.).These revolts contributed to evacuation of Jews in different parts of the region and also lead to the Peel Commission Report. This report recommended to divide the land into two states, one Arab and one Jewish. The Arabs rejected this proposal, while the Jews agreed on partition, they did not agree about the boarders that were suggested (Adwan et.al, 2003).

Another effect of the riots was that the British put forward the White paper in 1939, here it was stated that the immigration to Palestine must be stopped or reduce. The report which was built on recommendation by Hope Simpson (Vice-Chairman of the League of Nations Refugee Settlement Commission in Greece), claimed that to sustain economic development, no more than 20.000 families could immigrate to Palestine without infringe the position of the
existing Arab population. The British started to limit immigrations into Palestine, according to the white paper. 15,000 Jews were allowed to enter into Palestine for a period of five years. However, the Zionist movement criticized this white paper, and the movement stated that the immigration would not be stopped (Mideastweb, n.d.). These events happened around the same time as the persecution of Jews escalated in Eastern Europe and Hitler and the Nazis established their power in Germany. The result of this was that a large group of Jews, especially from Poland and Eastern Europe, immigrated to Israel in fear of persecution. The Second World War faced the Jews in Europe with incredible suffering. Nazi – Germany’s attempt to exterminate the Jews, cost 6 million Jewish lives. This event, known as the Holocaust also put pressure on the immigration to Palestine. But as a result of The White paper, the boarders where closed for immigration to Palestine. It is important to understand and take into consideration that the Holocaust will forever be burned into the heart and soul of the collective Jewish identity, and has been a legitimizing factor for the Jewish people in their fight for their own land without prosecution and fear of distinction (Mideastweb, n.d.).

The history of the region takes a dramatic change after the Second World War. Events happening between 1948 and 1967 still lay as the fundament for the conflict as it is today. The two sides continued their struggle with different intentions for their own identity and national homeland. After the Arab uprising in 1936, which called for liberations from the British, and the British involvement in the Second World War, who had drained their resources, Britain turned the issue of the land of Israel/Palestine over to the United Nations to solve the problem (Mideastweb, n.d.).

What was left behind after the British withdrew would soon be known for the Jews as “The War of Independence”, and for the Arabs, “An-Nakba”, “The Catastrophe” (Bar-On & Adwan, 2006). Related to the different narratives that are being told, we can now see two different versions of these events. On November 29, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly passed Resolution 181, which calls for the partition of Palestine into two states. This resolution also gained support from the US and the Soviet Union. “The resolution divided the land into two approximately equal portions in a complicated scheme with zigzag borders. At the time the resolution was proposed the Palestinian population was 69 % and they controlled 94.5 % of the land. The plan for partition called for division that would give the Jews 57.12% of the land. Before the resolution they controlled 5.5% “(Adwan et.al, 2003: 23). The intention was an economic union between the two states with open borders, but instead the resolution turned out to be the start of the countdown for the establishment of the state of
Israel on May 15, 1948. The Palestinians, who rejected the resolution, turned their frustration towards the British. For them, Britain had betrayed the Arab people and therefore held Britain responsible for the defeat they suffered which lead to “An-Nakba”. In their narratives they focus on the British mandate, and claimed that the British government “did all it could to suppress the Palestinian people and to arrest their leaders…. The British did not allow Palestinians to exercise their right to defend themselves and their land against the Zionist movement” (Adwan et.al, 2003:21).

The Palestinian narrative also emphasises that the British government allowed Jews to establish their own armed forces, the Haganah, and that their armed brigade who were attached to the British army was equipped with arms and military training that made them better prepared for war. It is emphasised, that the Palestinians were not allowed to carry weapons under the British mandate. Such a crime would lead to years in jail. All these factors contributed to strengthen the Arab notion of betrayal and occupation. As a result, the Palestinians launched an attempt to get their land back by force. The war that began on November 29, 1947 is known for the Jews as “the War of Independence”, since it resulted in independence for the Jewish people in the land of Israel (Adwan et.al, 2003: 25). The Israeli narrative emphasise the struggle for their right to the homeland and their defensive fight against the attacking Arab armies. The battles that occurred throughout this period are depicted with different terminology in the two narratives. For the Palestinians, the events that occurred after 1947 were a traumatic experience. Their loss of land, independence and their defeat in the civil war was cumulated into hatred and frustration towards both Britain and the Jews. The Palestinians blamed Britain that had supported the Jews, which made them better equipped, organized and trained for war. They also emphasise that the Palestinians had been exhausted by British policy and Zionist terrorism for the last 30 years and did not stand a chance against their armies. In their narrative these are some of the things that are being emphasised:

The Nakba was the result of continual subjugation, killing, execution, arrests, exile, and conspiracy- international and Arab- against Palestinians; it was the accumulation of ignorance, weakness and anarchy within the Palestinian society which had to contend with Zionist bands supported by the British (Adwan et.al, 2003: 25).

When the Jews proclaimed the independent state of Israel and the British withdrew from Israel and Palestine, the land was attacked by neighbouring Arab states. Only one day after
Israel had declared independence in May 1948, Syria, Jordan and Egypt invaded the country. After initial success for the Arab forces, a UN brokered cease-fire gave the Zionists the time to better organize, regroup and train their newly established army. The Israelis were now able to bring in supplies and mobilize an army of 60,000 soldiers. This contributed to the Israeli victory and when the fighting ended Israel controlled 78% of the area between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, whereas Jordan had conquered the West Bank and East Jerusalem and Egypt controlled the Gaza Strip (Mideastweb, n.d.). From this period the Palestinian narrative talks of Zionist gangs that spread terror and conducted massacres on the Palestinian communities. The results of these events were that 750,000 of 1.4 million Palestinians run away from their homes in fear and became refugees. (Adwan et.al, 2003).

Political lobbing and intense power relations between the countries involved characterized the years between 1948 and 1967. In the years and decades after the founding of Israel approximately 900,000 Jewish inhabitants of Arab countries also had to flee or were expelled, most of whom went to Israel. These Jewish refugees all were relocated in their new home country. In contrast, the Arab countries refused to permanently house the Palestinian Arab refugees, insisting on their right to return to Israel. About a million Palestinian refugees still live in refugee camps. Israel rejected the Palestinian 'right of return' as it would lead to an Arab majority in Israel (Mideastweb. n.d.). The Arab countries refused to accept the existence of a Jewish state and instigated a boycott of Israel. They founded Palestinian resistance groups that carried out terrorist attacks in Israel, like Fatah (Palestinian National Liberation Movement) in 1959 (led by Yasser Arafat), and the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) in 1964. In May 1967 Egypt closed the Straits of Tiran for Israeli shipping, sent home the UN peacekeeping force, and threatened Israel with a war of destruction. It formed a defense union with Syria, Jordan and Iraq and stationed its troops along the Israeli border. After diplomatic efforts to solve the crisis failed, Israel attacked in June 1967 and in six days it conquered the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Desert from Egypt, the Golan Heights from Syria and the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan. The Israeli narrative emphasizes that The Six Days War came as an result of the Israeli government was concerned that they would be trapped if they did not made the first act of war. Their concern was that the aggression from the Arab states was an existential threat to the country’s existence (Adwan et.al, 2003). That might also be one of the reasons that they did so well in the war. The Israeli soldiers where more motivated than some of their Arab counterparts. The Six Day War brought one million Palestinians under Israeli rule. Israelis were divided over the question what to do with the
West Bank, and a new religious-nationalistic movement emerged, that pushed for settling these areas (Zionism and Israel - Encyclopedic Dictionary, n.d.).

The Palestinian narrative does not say much about the war in 1967. But the war contributed to the ongoing suffering and escalated the refugee problem. “What remained of Palestine was lost, in addition to the Sinai and the Golan, and the number of refugees now increased to four million” (Adwan et.al, 2003: 31). For the Palestinians there where a difficult time, they felt that their identity and self-determination was undermined or lacking. In their narrative it is stated that the period after “the Catastrophe” was a time of “political vacuum because they felt that there were no leaders, political or religious that raised their voice, no one who could organize the scattered communities” (Adwan et.al, 2003: 31). That might be one of the reasons that when Fatah and later PLO emerged, the people found a channel to hope and representation for the Palestinian people. After 1967 the Arab Palestinians started to manifest themselves as a people and to demand an independent state. In 1974 the PLO was granted observer status in the UN as the representative of the Palestinian Arabs, and several UN institutions were established to support the Palestinians and their struggle for their own state. In 1975 the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 3379, declaring Zionism to be a form of racism, which was revoked again in 1991 (UN General Assembly Resolution 3379, November 10, 1975).

A major uprising of the Palestinians in the occupied territories from 1987 onwards (the first Intifada) convinced the Israeli Government that they could not continue to rule over the Arab population. In the early 1990s the PLO renounced violence, recognized the legitimacy of Israel, and declared to only strive for a Palestinian state in the 1967 occupied areas. Subsequently secret negotiations in Oslo led to an agreement under which in 1994 a Palestinian National Authority was established under the leadership of Arafat and the PLO, to which Israel would gradually transfer land. Elections were held for the PNA (Palestinian National Authority). After a 5 year transition period the most difficult matters would be settled in final status negotiations, such as the status of Jerusalem, the Palestinian refugees, the Jewish settlements and the definite borders (Mideastweb, n.d.).

After 1967 Israel had established some Jewish settlements in these areas and from the late 1970s many more were established, including large settlement blocs. Although the Oslo agreements did not require removal of these settlements, their rapid growth undermined Palestinian confidence in the peace process. A Jewish extremist assassinated Israeli Prime
Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who partially froze settlement construction, in 1995. On the Palestinian side, Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian territory led to the construction of a terror network by the extremist Hamas and other groups, who from the mid-1990s were able to carry out an unprecedented number of suicide attacks inside Israel. The Palestinian Authority took limited action against the terror groups and even funded them, and Arafat gave the green light for attacks when that suited his strategy (Mideastweb, n.d.). These attacks and the network of fundamentalist functioned as a catalyst for the Israeli governments legitimating of their straight and brutal isolation of the Palestinian people. The conflict is bread on the fear from the Israeli, against the rage and frustration from their counterpart, the Palestinians.

The Oslo peace process failed because both the Palestinians and the Israelis did not stick to agreements they made and the leadership on both sides did little to build confidence and to prepare their own people for the necessary compromises. After the unsuccessful Camp David negotiations in the summer of 2000 a provocative visit to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, by Likud leader Ariel Sharon sparked the second Intifada, which the Palestinian Authority had been preparing for as a means to press Israel into more concessions. However, the opposite happened, as the Israeli peace camp collapsed under the violence of Palestinian suicide attacks (Mideastweb, n.d.).

Final peace proposals were presented in January 2001, which included a Palestinian state on all of the Gaza Strip and about 97% of the West Bank, division of Jerusalem and no right of return to Israel for Palestinian refugees. The Palestinian side refused to accept these terms, and the Intifada continued. After suicide attacks which had killed over 100 Israelis in March 2002, Israel re-occupied the areas earlier transferred to the Palestinian Authority and set up a series of checkpoints, which severely limited the freedom of movement for the Palestinians. In 2003 Israel started the construction of a very controversial separation barrier along the Green Line and partly on Palestinian land. These measures led to a strong decline of Palestinian suicide attacks in Israel, but also to increasing poverty in the Palestinian territories and international condemnations (Mideastweb, n.d.). Although both parties accepted the 'Road Map to Peace, launched by the Quartet of US, UN, EU and Russia in 2003, no serious peace negotiations have taken place in recent years. Israel unilaterally disengaged from the Gaza Strip in 2005, but it demanded an end to Palestinian terrorism before starting negotiations with Arafat's successor M. Abbas. Plans for further unilateral withdrawals from the West Bank were put on ice after Hamas won the Palestinian elections in early 2006, thousands of rockets were fired from the Gaza Strip into Israel, and border attacks took place.
from both the Gaza Strip and south Lebanon (which Israel had unilaterally withdrawn from in 2000). The latter had spurred the disastrous Second Lebanon War in the summer of 2006 (Mideastweb, n.d.).

Shortly after my fieldwork, on the 24.01.08, the Palestinian people living in Gaza have blasted their way out of the isolation wall in pursuit of medicine, food and water. They have been isolated from the outside world by the Israeli blockade, and the Red Cross and the United Nations are condemning the Israeli actions towards the Palestinians in Gaza. At present time, fall 2010, the conflict continues and the Israeli Government are still continuing their expansion of Jewish settlements in the West bank.

This has been an introduction to the main events that has contributed to the conflict as it is today. It is a minor introduction; to grasp the full extent of the situation, a more thorough investigation of the different perspectives involved is necessary. Still, the different aspects mentioned above are relevant to create an understanding of what factors lies behind the situation we see today. The primary cause for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict lies in the claim of two national movements on the same land, and particularly the Palestinian refusal to accept Jewish self-determination in a part of that land. These ideas can be traced back to the events of the Balfour Declaration, The War of Independence/The Catastrophe 1948, and the 1967-war. The last 30 years fundamentalist religious concepts regarding the right of either side to the entire land have played an increasing role, on the Jewish side particularly in the religious settler movement, on the Palestinian side in the Hamas and similar groups. Anti-Western resentment and anti-Semitic incitement on the Palestinian side and distrust, demonizing and aversion on both sides further complicate the conflict. However, since the Oslo peace process, a broad consensus has been formed that an independent Palestinian state should be established within the areas occupied in 1967. Polls on both sides show that majorities among Israelis and Palestinians accept a two state solution, but Palestinians almost unanimously stick to right of return of the refugees to Israel, and most Israelis oppose a Palestinian capital in East Jerusalem. This is the situation today. Nobody knows what will become the future for this area. If anything shall change, it has to be done from within. That is why education and educational practices are of great relevance for the development of the conflict. Education, formal or informal, is the heart of knowledge in every society. What is being passed on to the next generation will determine the faith of the Israeli and Palestinian children in the future.
I the next chapter I give an overview over the research methodology used in this study. This chapter involves research design, sampling, interviews, role of the researcher and ethical considerations.
Chapter 2: Research Methodology

In this chapter I will outline my research design and methodology. This means that I will look at the different research methods that are relevant for my study. The methods include sampling techniques, interviews and ethical considerations related to the study and my fieldwork. I will also explore questions about validity and reliability regarding the methods used.

2.1 Research design

A good qualitative research study design is one that has a clearly defined purpose, in which there is coherence between the research questions and the methods or approaches proposed, and which generate data, which is valid and reliable. It is also one which is realistic, conceived with due regard both practical constraints of time and money and for the reality of the research context and setting (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003: 47).

Bryman (2004) claims that there are four important components to have in mind when you chose your research design:

a. Expressing causal connections between variables,

b. Generalizing to larger groups of individuals than those actually forming part of the investigation,

c. Understanding behaviour and the meaning of that behaviour in its specific social context, and


My aim for this study is to look at the historical narratives that have influenced the educational systems for Jews and Palestinians. By doing this I will also try to see how these narratives are being expressed today. I also want to see what challenges these narratives have created for the educational practises in the region. By conducting a qualitative research based on literately review and fieldwork interviews, I will investigate how these historical narratives have influenced the historical development of the people involved, and how educational practices in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian territory (OPT) are being affected by these narratives today. In this study I imply that seeing different factors are important to see the connections between variables. Such variables will in this study be related to issues such as,
identity and religion, and their impact on narratives and perspectives of “the others”. Through the interviews, I will try to understand behaviour and meaning from the social context the children involved represents.

Based on my research questions, a qualitative research approach was relevant for this study. Such an approach is best suited when you as a researcher want to understand and interpret the social reality of those people being studied (Bryman, 2004). By conducting a literature review and combining the information from the review with empirical data collected, I hope to get a clearer picture of the different perspectives and opinions involved in the conflict. The literature review is fruitful as a tool because it gives the opportunity to get an overview of the different positions, stakeholders and actors involved in the conflict (Bordens & Abbott, 2005). The interviews conducted under my fieldwork will give me a chance to see some grassroots perspectives of the complicated issues that are addressed in the literature of the topic.

It is essential to mention that due to the size of this study, it is not possible to follow up on all the different factors that are relevant for this intricate conflict. I have therefore chosen to focus only on the issues that can be related to some areas within education and educational practices in Israel and OPT today.

A premise of this research is that education is interlinked with the broader society, i.e. the families, the communities and the municipalities. Even if educational practices and curriculum are changed into more peace-building arena, it does not change the children’s perspective of the “others” if the society around them still is broadly impaired by political and religious aggression. Socio cultural factors are more important than what you learn in school, and these are the arenas where the cultural narratives are strongest represented. To explain why the cultural resistance and the narratives sustain, I have to see the conflict from a broad perspective. I want to go into these narratives, by looking at them through the literature reviewed. By comparing the literature from a historical perspective, I will try to see how these narratives are being expressed today.

2.2 Sampling

A sample is according to Bryman (2004) “the segment of the population that is selected for investigation, it is a subset of the population…. Population is the universe of units, which a sample is to be selected” (Bryman, 2004: 542/543).
My interview and data collection was conducted in four different schools during my fieldwork in November 2007. The interviews were conducted in one school in Beer Sheva, Israel, at two schools in Ramallah, and one school in an area just outside of Ramallah. In selecting interviewees I used a purposive sampling. Purposive means that members of a sample are chosen with a “purpose” to represent a location or type in relation to a key criterion. This has two principal aims. “The first is to ensure that all the key constituencies of relevance to the subject matter are covered, the second is to ensure that, within each of the criteria, some diversity is included so that the impact of the characteristic concerned can be explored” (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003: 79). Purposive sampling means essentially that there is a strategic attempt to establish a good correspondence between the research questions and sampling. My sample was chosen to find out how today’s generation of children views and interpret their history, and to investigate which narratives are created based on this history. Since one of my aims is to see how the historical and cultural narratives are expressed today, I see it as essential to use the next generation of people who will become the bearers of these narratives, the children, to explore how they understand and interpret these today. I established my sample between the ages of 10 – 14. I chose this age because I consider them mature enough to have an individual opinion, and at the same time have some reflections about the conflict they are part of. Another reason for the sample group was that I thought they would be old enough to have learnt something about history (their own and others), religion and geography from the curriculum in school.

I have used a purposive sample because my aim for this research is not to find a conclusion or make general assumptions, but rather to contribute to the general knowledge about the conflict and issues involved. The samples were chosen on the background that I was interested in hearing what the children knew about what I have called “the other”, their narratives and the conflict in general.

The school in Beer Sheva, Israel, were the only school that I had been in contact with and pronounced my arrival to. The other schools where picked randomly by my translator and me. We arrived unexpected at these schools and explained the purpose of our visit. After some time in the principal’s office, thorough investigating my research permits and the interview guide, the children was brought to us. The interviews were conducted in a separate room and the presents of teachers or other authority personnel varied. In Beer Sheva, later referred to as school A and in School B in Ramallah, my translator and I were alone with the children. While in school C and D there were teachers or authority personnel present. The different
groups varied in age and gender. All together around 70 children in four different schools were interviewed. The interviews were conducted in groups between four and five children at the time.

The schools represent four different educational positions within the conflict. I will come back to this in chapter 5. In Ramallah my translator and I chose these schools because we wanted to have a broad variety in types of schools. The reason for this is that I wanted to see if the different types of schools emphasised different sides of the curriculum/syllabus, and also to see how the different cultural background affected the children’s perspective of the world around them. My assumption where that cultural narrative is told differently based on peoples cultural or religious background.

One problem I encountered related to the sampling were getting access to the schools I wanted to visit. In Ramallah I had no problem because I got a research permit for both the public and private schools. Getting the same permit in Israel was nearly impossible. Before entering the field I tried to get access through the Israeli embassy in Oslo, but they did not respond to my application. Instead I got an invitation to visit a school outside the city of Beer Sheva. I tried to get in contact directly with different schools in Jerusalem, and I might have conducted interviews in these schools, but because I wanted to conduct my fieldwork according to ethical principles, I felt that conducting these interviews without a research permit would be wrong. Because of this I have more data from the Palestinian side than the Israeli side.

Since all the information about the schools will be treated anonymous, it is difficult to describe the school without giving away revealing information. I consider the differences between the schools I visited in Israel and the schools in Ramallah to be of relevance. The reason for this is related to economy, geographical position and the representatives of the children attending this school. I consider the school in Israel to be a wealthy school. The children attending this school have parents from the upper segment of the society. In my finding I will return to this. I also consider this school to be lying in a geographical position that is not so involved in direct confrontation with war and conflict as schools that are situated closer to the boarders and the checkpoints. I shall not marginalize the explosions and Qassam rockets attacks from Gaza, but compared with other geographical places in Israel, this is calmer. All these factors have an effect on my findings.
I conducted interviews in three schools in Ramallah and the area around. One of them was a school for girls, one a school for boys and one where both gender were represented. All these schools represent different types of schools (religious, private, public etc.) within the educational system. This will be more elaborated in chapter 5.

Because of language problems I had to use a translator in both Beer Sheva and Ramallah. In Beer Sheva I got in contact with my translator at the Open University in Beer Sheva. In Ramallah, the Palestinian representative office in Oslo had put me in contact with a person that introduced me to a journalist that would translate for me. In both Israel and Ramallah I gave the translators direct instructions to what their role would be, and how they should behave towards the children. A problem I encountered in one of the interview sessions was related to the role of the translator. In Beer Sheva I realised that the role of my translator was undermining my research in a way that was not constructive for the results that I was hoping for. I wanted to hear what the children knew about history; their knowledge about their own history and others. The children responded in an honest and reflective way, but often I realised that the translator was correcting their answers or questioning their reply, thereby creating a tension in the atmosphere of the interview session that could be reflected in the children’s answers. This was under one of the interview sessions, and I conducted interviews with five groups in Beer Sheva altogether. I corrected the translator and instructed to only tell me what the children were responding without comment or questions from the translator. Since it only happened in this one session, I do not think that it has had a great impact on the validity. Under my transcription I emphasized the children’s first responses, before the translator questioned their reply.

I had no problems with the translator I used in Ramallah; in those sessions where translation was needed, the translator functioned as the children’s voice, telling me directly what the children were replying word by word.

2.3 Research methods

While a research design provides the framework for the collection and analysis of data, a research method is simply a technique for collecting data. These techniques can involve specific tool, “such as self-completion questionnaire, structured interview schedule, or participant observation whereby the researcher listen to and watches others (Bryman, 2004:
A number of different writers have attempted to capture the essence of qualitative research by “offering working definitions or identifying a set of key characteristic” (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003: 2). “The term qualitative research means any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, in Ritchie & Lewis, 2003: 3). In the second edition of their handbook of Qualitative Research, Denzin and Lincoln offer the following definition:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible. These practices…turn the world into a series of representations including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recording and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000: 3).

When Denzin and Lincoln (2000) state that the practises turn the world into representations, it is relevant to realize that these representations vary based on the researchers interpretation of them and the researchers own background or biases. This might also be one of the reasons why qualitative research methods sometimes are criticised of being to selective and dependent on the researcher interpretation of the data. Because of this, generalisation and replication is often considered to be difficult in qualitative research. I share the opinion of Bryman (2004) in that the motivation for a qualitative researcher is to understand and interpret the social reality of those people being studied. Because I wanted to look at how and why narratives are being interpreted and past on through generations, it was important for me to find a method that could grasp the complexity of these narratives. Bryman claims that the main preoccupations of qualitative researchers are: “seeing through the eyes of research participants, description and context, process, flexibility and lack of structure and concept and theory as outcome of the research process” (Bryman, 2004: 266). Even though my aim for this study is not to create a theory as an outcome of my research process, I hope that through the eyes of my research participants, I can get information that will share light of some of my research questions and contribute to broaden the perspective about how narratives are interpreted and viewed today.

Flexibility in social science research design and methods is necessary, as it will always involve an element of the unknown (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). A key strength of qualitative research is in fact that it can explore unanticipated issues as they emerge. Design in
qualitative research is not therefore” a discrete stage, which is concluded early in a life of a study; it is a continuing process, which calls for constant review of decisions and approaches” (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003: 47). In my study I was confronted with the need for flexibility when I under one interview session suddenly had to change my interviews from conducting interviews one on one, to conducting group interviews. Because of a flexible interview guide, and also because I conducted semi structured interviews, this change in the interview session did not affected my research in a negative way, rather the opposite.

As mentioned above, some of the criticism towards qualitative research points to the role of the researcher. Criticisms often state that qualitative findings relay too much on the researchers’ often-unsystematic views about what is significant and important. Other criticism is that qualitative research is difficult to replicate. “In qualitative research, the investigator he or herself is the main instrument in data collection, so that what is observed and heard and also what the researcher decides to concentrate upon is very much a product of his or her predilections” (Bryman, 2004: 284).

It is important to be aware of your own biases and your role as a researcher. When conducting research, especially if this research is conducted outside the researchers own culture, you have to reflect around your role and how the people participating in your study are viewing you. I will return to this in section 2.5, the role of the researcher. I will now turn to the literatures that have been reviewed as part of this study.

2.3.1 Literature review

At the early stages of my research I spent a fair amount of time reading different articles and books about the conflict between Israelis and the Palestinians. The focus on education as a producer or a reproducer of the conflict in is not a new topic. What fascinated me was how well known historical events can be presented so differently, and often in opposition to each other, depending on who tells the narrative, what kind of cultural or religious belonging the various publishers have, and for what purposes or intentions their written material shall have. The Egyptian researcher Safa Abdel-Aal (2005) studied the Israeli curriculum and media; she found that Israel's educational curricula incite the new generation for war, and racism against the Arabs. Abdel-Aal's book analyses eleven history books and five geography books for elementary school from grades three to six (ArabNews, 2005). At the same time the Centre
for Monitoring the Impact of Peace publications, CMIP (Now IMPACT-SE, Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education) gave out a report that claims that The Israeli Curricula was free of racism towards Palestinians and tried to view Palestinians from a constructive and tolerant perspective. It is the Palestinian curricula, according to CMIP that reproduces hatred and intolerance towards the Israeli trough an anti-Semitic curriculum (Groiss, 2004). This is just one example of the diversity of publications with different conclusions. This example illustrates the importance of conducting a review of this vast and broad topic. In this research documents are an important part of the data collection. “The term document covers a wide range of different kind of sources such as personal documents in both written and visual form, official documents deriving from the state, official documents deriving from private sources, mass media outputs and virtual outputs, such as Internet” (Bryman, 2004: 380). In a literature review documents are especially important as they create the background for the research literature (literature that is been reviewed). The advantages of using documents in your research are related to “access to data and cost-effective, vast amounts of information are held in documents and depending on the nature of the documents, most researches will find access to the source relatively easy and inexpensive” (Denscombe, 2007: 244).

When working with documents you must be aware of the credibility of the source and the social construction of the document, meaning that documents can owe more to the interpretations of those who produce them than to an objective picture of reality (Denscombe, 2007). It is particularly important to be aware of this when you are conducting research in the field of education and conflict. The reason for this is that literature you are reviewing may be biased or written for the legitimating of a certain point of view. In my study I have collected different kinds of documents and research material to be used in my systematic review. The majority of this literature is official documents. Most of my research materials are collected through reliable sources such as UNESCO, IIEP and Save the Children. Other documents are gathered from the Ministry of Education in Israel and the Palestine territory. I consider them to be reliable, even though some of these documents may be biased in their general objectivity; it is still relevant to take them into consideration as they create the political platform for curriculum design and educational practises in the region. Also worth mentioning is that some of the documents I have taken into the review are biased and not value free. These are represented to see the diversity in narratives and positions within the Israeli and
Palestinian community, and may contribute to clarify why the different narratives involved are as powerful as they are today.

In this study documents are important as they create the background for my research questions. Because of this, the literature must be evaluated by certain criterions. Scott (1990, in Bryman, 2004) claims that there is four important criterions when assessing the quality of documents the researchers are working with. These criterions are: authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning. Authenticity deals with the question about whether the evidence is genuine and has an unquestionable origin. Credibility is about whether the evidence is free from error and distortion. Representativeness deals with if the evidence is typical of its’ kind, and, if not, is the extent of this untypicality known. Meaning refers to if the evidence is clear and comprehensible.

I consider most of the documents involved in this study to fulfil the criterions mentioned by Scott (1990, in Bryman, 2004). They are gathered from reliable sources (UNESCO), they consist of well-documented information without error or distortion (IIEP), they are representative and their meaning is clear and understandable. On the other hand, some of the documents do not fall into this category. The documents have an unquestionable origin; I know the source of the information, but regarding this conflict it is difficult to talk about genuine evidence in the sense of correctness. Actors that might be considered biased from an objective point of view write some of the articles and literature. This literature is written for a purpose and with an intension, and is not objective in their origin (CMIP). This means that the credibility of the documents involved might have error and distortion, but that is one of the reasons why they are relevant for this study. The literature is part of creating the narratives involved and is necessary to understand the different perspectives to this conflict. The criterions of representativeness are fulfilled since the literature represented often is typical related to these topics. Finding information that is not biased is more difficult. For the actors, researchers and organisations writing this biased literature, the meaning is clear and comprehensible. Whereas for others this information can be seen as a manifestation of the different intentions and perspectives involved.

A constructive aspect of reviewing different literature is that you might find patterns or tendencies that can be interesting to elaborate around as a background for further research. “A single study should not be considered in isolation, but positioned within the “totality” of research in a field to give a more complex picture“ (Mulrow 1994, in Torgerson, 2005:6). This
means that if your research is built around more than one theoretical or academic position, it can strengthen the validity of your research and also contribute to a more general discussion and relevance.

I this study I will use a systematic review. A systematic review is “the application of strategies that limits bias in the assembly, critical appraisal, and synthesis of all relevant studies of a special topic” (Thorgerson, 2005: 7).

A systematic review differs from a traditional narrative review in that the methods are explicit and open to scrutiny. “It seeks to identify all the available evidence with respect to a given theme. Systematic reviews have the advantages of including all the studies in a field (sometimes positive and negative studies), so the reader can judge using the totality of evidence whether the evidence supports or refute a given hypothesis …. This evidence is collected, screened for quality and synthesized into an overall summary of the research in the field” (Thorgerson, 2005: 6).

Due to limited space in this study, I cannot review all the available literature within my given theme. The systematic review will be applied to this research because of its ability to include different studies in a field. Even though my main focus is related to education and the historical narratives involved in this, it is essential that I can build on a broad set of literature that is somehow related for my study. This is important because it might contribute to see the problems from another perspective and help to clarify some underlying issues. That is why I have combined historical literature with articles on textbooks and educational goals launched by the two governments as a background for this study. The general rationale for conducive a systematic review is “that it is a scientifically rigorous method for summarizing the results of primary research and for checking consistency among such studies” (Petticrev, 2001 in Thorgerson, 2005: 6).

My aim for using a systematic review is to address specific questions related to a certain topic (my research question), and the topic (reproduction of cultural narratives). My methods to address these questions will be to search, locate and collect the results in a systematic way. My intention by doing this is to reduce bias at all stages of the review, and to synthesize the result of the review in the light of my research questions. By doing this, my aim is to contribute to make the knowledge base more accessible and to identify gaps, to place new proposal in context of existing knowledge.
Thorgerson (2005) claims that the methods of a systematic review have been criticized because of the “mechanical” nature of the review process without sufficient regard to the quality and interpretation of the data. I will try to avoid this by combining my systematic review with data collected from the field. This will be done by viewing the literature reviewed with the interviews conducting during my fieldwork in both Israel and Ramallah. I will return to this in the section below.

In this research the systematic review is based on the different articles and literature related to the topic. Literature from different stakeholders and organizations will be used to see the complexity of topics and positions within the field of education, narratives and textbooks. Because of limited space, it is not possible for me to go into all the literature available, but I will try to use literature which represents the different positions involved. The criterions for selecting the documents I have used are; accessibility, relevance, language and diversity. By accessibility I mean data that where accessible for me at the time this study was conducted. I had access to different documents in the library at the University of Oslo and to electronic media such as the Internet. When it comes to relevance I have collected documents that I meant where relevant for this particular study. This means that I have selected documents that were focusing primarily on education, narratives and conflict. Because of the huge amount of literature available related to this conflict, I had to be selective in which documents to use. I have also in a broad sense collected the documents that were available in English. This was done to simplify the translation and also to be able to use terms and theories in a general and academic language easily understood in an international forum. Last, but maybe most important I have collected the documents in relevance to their diversity. This has been done to illustrate the complexity of the issues involved and also so exemplify the diversity within the different political religious and cultural traditions. I must admit that in this study there is more literature about the Palestinians than the Israelis when it comes to the educational systems. The reason for this is because it is difficult to access information from the Israeli government, since the literature is written in Hebrew, and translating these documents or Webpage’s is often not possible. I am aware that I might be questioned about the literature sample I have collected. Why is there more literature about the Palestinians than the Israelis? Why not focus more on Palestinians living in Israel and how they are confronted with the educational system there? Why not make a more concrete distinction between Gaza and the West Bank? The answer is simple. These questions are too complex to integrate into this kind of study. There are tremendous amounts of literature and positions within this field of study. I must try to
grasp a specific problem that I consider to be important related to the general conflict. By going into the different narratives I will look at one specific topic that I think is relevant. I will claim that even though this study is of minor importance in the big perspective, narratives as presented in this study might be one of the most important factors to explain the situation as it is today.

As a method for getting more qualitative in depth information, and also to avoid the “mechanical” nature of the review process, interviews were used as a supplement to my data collection. This was done to test the literature and to see if there has been changes in the way children today are being confronted with cultural narratives, both in and outside of school.

2.3.2 Semi-structured interviews

*If you want to know how people understand their world and their life, why not talk to them?*

(Kvale, 1996:1)

In an interview conversation, the researcher listens to what people themselves tell about their world, hears them express their views and opinions in their own words. “The qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from subject’s point of view, to unfold the meaning of people’s experiences, to uncover their lived prior to scientific explanations” (Kvale, 1996: 1). As one of my main focuses is how narratives is being passed on through generations and how these narratives are being interpreted, interviewing can give me the opportunity to communicate with people and have a dialog around these questions. A questionnaire would be a one-way communication, when conducting interview the interaction between the researcher and the interviewee can have a stimulating effect on your research, since you have the opportunity to follow up interesting and relevant answers. “Interviewing is one of the most common and powerful ways in which we try to understand our fellow beings ”(Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:645). As a method for getting information, interviews were an important part of my data collection.

As part of my research I conducted interviews with children between the ages of 10 and 14 years. I wanted to find out about their surroundings, their lives and their thoughts about the conflict. Narratives can also be said to be a story of how people view themselves. How children tell their story also reflects something about their social, cultural or religious
affiliation. For me it was important to hear what the children responded to my questions, as I assumed that through their answers I would get information relevant for my study. Because of this I chose to use a semi-structured interview as my main data collection approach. “Semi-structured interview is a term that covers a wide range of instance…. it typically refers to a context in which the interviewer has a series of questions that are in the general form of an interview schedule but is able to vary the sequence of questions...the questions are frequently more general in their frame of reference from that typically found in a structured interview schedule” (Bryman, 2004: 113). The advantage of using a semi-structured interview, is that is has a fairly specific approach to the topic that you want to investigate, but still it is flexible. When I was conducting my interviews I had an interview guide that I followed, but still I could change the questions, if needed. (Appendix G). This flexibility means that I was able to follow up interesting perspectives and replies.

At my first session of interviewing I run into some unforeseen challenges. The children were anxious to be interviewed one by one; they would feel safer if they could do it together. As a result I had to change my planned interviews from being an interview setting with one by one, to be conducting group/focus interviews. As it turned out, this change in interview setting was actually very constructive for my research. I got a collective reaction to the questions I was asking instead of just the individual opinion of one person. It was also fruitful as I got the chance to see how the children were reacting to each other’s answers and interpretation of the cultural narratives. I also got valuable information about how the children interacted in a group and how they were involved in the topic. The diversity within the children’s cultural and religious background also gave me valuable information about different segments within the group and in the culture in general.

2.3.3 Focus groups

Because of the sudden change in my interview session I had a problem deciding if I had conducted group interviews or focus groups. The sessions I conducted with the children had characteristics that could fall into both categories. A focus group refers to interviews using predominantly open-ended questions related to specific situations or events that are relevant to them and of interest to the researcher (Bryman, 2004). As I felt that my research questions where both open-ended and had a relevant theme for both the children and me, I felt that I had a focus group with the children. On the other hand, some of the characteristics related to
group interview is that it “span very widely” (Denscombe, 2007: 178), and my interview guide had a broad variety of questions within the subject of culture, learning and perspective of different people and groups. Based on this, the session could easily be associated to group interviews. The focus group method is a form of group interview in which:

[T]here are several participants, there is an emphasis in the questions on a particular topic, and the accent is upon interaction within the group and the joint construction of meaning…. the focus group methods contains elements of two methods: the group interview, in which several people discuss a number of topics; and what has been called a focused interview, in which interviewees are selected because they are known to have been involved in a particular situation and are asked about that involvement (Bryman, 2004: 346).

A small group, if not homogenous, can often be seen as a micro cosmos of a culture. Because of this micro cosmos, the group dynamics can be used to illustrate the cultural diversity in general. Focus groups make particular use of group dynamic: “They consist of a small group of people who are brought together by a “moderator “(the researcher) to explore attitudes and perceptions, feelings and ideas about a special topic” (Denscombe, 2007: 178). In a focus group the researcher would be interested in how the participants are discussing the issue or topic involved, more than just the individual opinion. “The distinction between the focus group method and the group interview is by no means clear-cut and the two terms are frequently employed interchangeably” (Bryman, 2004: 346).

I felt that the combination of the two turned out to be constructive. By combining the group discussion with the individual answers, I got an interesting collective pattern, but also answers that separated the individual from the group. I will come back to this in my findings. Bryman (2004) states that “one of the most important aspects of focus groups and group interviews is that it gives the researcher the opportunity to understand why people feel the way they do. In a one on one interview the interviewee is often asked about his or her reason for holding a particular view” (Bryman, 2004: 346). This is particular relevant for my study. They are the people living in this conflict, and for many of the children the conflict is part of their everyday lives. Getting information about why they children hold a certain view, and from where they have learned this, can contribute to clarify some of the underlying reasons to why narratives are so strongly imbedded into the people’s minds. As mentioned above the interview session I conducted had characteristics that both could be associated to group interviews and focus
groups. Instead of trying to put a label on the interview session, I concluded that the data collected were more important for me than what type of interview were conducted.

Even though focus groups and group interviews have the advantages of getting you a lot of information on a short period of time, it still make transcribing and coding your data more time consuming. At the same time it is relevant to emphasize that focus groups also has challenges. One of the most problematic feathers with a focus group, and this is particularly relevant when you conduct focus groups with children is the “group effect”. Krueger (1998, in Bryman, 2004: 360) suggests, “Participants may be more prone to expressing culturally expected views than in individual interviews”. I was confronted with this problem when conducting interviews in School C in Ramallah. Different factors might contribute to this, but one of them was most certain related to the present of authority personnel. In this school, I got the impression that the girl were reluctant to tell me what they were thinking. They were more concerned with trying to answer correctly according to what was considered proper from their cultural or religious affiliation. They answered collectively, responding with the same words and answers as the person asked before them. It seemed as if they were reluctant to state individual opinions. The reason for this assumption is based on the fact that once the authority personnel left the room; they changed their answers and responded very differently to the same questions they were asked before. Another factor might be that since my translator in these areas was a young female, the girls connected and felt secure by opening up to her related to questions about work opportunities and gender roles. In a more general term a common problem when working with children is that it might be difficult to know if they have understood the question and meaning correctly. If the questions asked are not understood correct, it might affect the validity of your research. To avoid this I tried to make my research questions simple and open ended. The next section will be concerned with the question of validity and triangulation.

2.4 Validity and triangulation

Validity is a concern with the integrity of the conclusion that is generated from a piece of research. Within the academic discipline there are different aspects or types of validity; measurement validity, internal validity, external and ecological validity (Bryman, 2004). Measurement validity refers to the degree to which a measure of a concept reflects that concept. Ecological validity is concerned with the question of whether social scientific
findings are applicable to people's everyday social setting and external validity refers to a concern with questions of whether the results of a study can be generalized beyond the specific research context in which it was conducted (Bryman, 2004). A more practical understanding of validity is what Ritchie and Lewis (2003) are stating: “internal validity is concerned with whether you are investigating what you claim to be investigating” (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003: 273). Internal validity also refers to “a concern with the question of whether a finding that incorporates a causal relationship between two or more variables is sound” (Bryman, 2004:540). This study is related to the content of the historical narratives, how the narratives have influenced the educational systems through history, and how these narratives are interpreted today. I have built my interview question around what I have considered to be the most important factors regarding these issues. I have used some of the literature reviewed as background for my research question. These questions are concerned with what I see as the main tendencies in the debate about textbooks and education in the region Santisteban, 2002; Moughrabi, 2001; Bar-Tal, 1998; Firer, 1985; Bar-Gal, 1993; Bar-On & Adwan, 2006. There is a general tendency in this literature that education has functioned as a reproducer of the conflict by stereotypic perceptions of “the other”. To answer these questions I have used the above-mentioned literature as the background to see if there have been changes in the stereotypic perceptions in the textbooks today. I have conducted interviews to see how the children involved interpretation the narratives and if there are changes in the way these narratives and perceptions of “the other” are expressed today.

My aim for this research is not to generalize my findings, as is the case with external validity. Neither is the concern about reliability an important aspect for me. “Reliability is generally understood to concern the replicability of research findings and whether or not they would be repeated if another study, using the same or similar methods was undertaken” (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003: 270). The extent to which replication can occur in qualitative research are often questioned. Ritchie & Lewis (2003) are claiming that since there is no single reality to be captured there is any need to pursuit replication as a goal. The concept of replication in qualitative research is according to these authors naive, given the likely complexity of the phenomena being studied and the impact of context. Because of this the idea of seeking reliability in qualitative research is often avoided (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Even though replication within the qualitative research approach is considered difficult, there are still some tendencies that can be replicated. There is not possible to conclude the correctness of one common reality, but by using similar research methods, the researcher can be able to get some
of the general tendencies within a study. The researcher’s role might contribute to some extent to the data collected, the interviews might react differently on the personality and role of the researcher, but the information they will give could be similar. By following rigours and tight methodology, and also with insuring validity within your work, replication in a general assumption is possible. Based on this, it can be possible to reach some of the similar results if another researcher would conduct the study. Even though this study would be conducted in another part of Israel and the OPT by another researcher, if the same literature and the research methodology were used, some similarities could be drawn from his/her findings. This is because the topics involved, narratives and education has an impact on children regardless of geographical positions or background, the same factors of influence, schools, family, media, religion, affiliation and identity is still present, I would argue.

To increase the validity I have used what is called triangulation, which involves the practice of viewing things from more than one perspective. This can mean “the use of different methods, different sources of data or even different researchers within the study…. The principle behind triangulation is that the researcher can get a better understanding of the thing that is being investigated if he/she views it from different positions” (Denscombe, 2007:134). In my study I have used different forms of triangulation. I have used triangulation of sources, meaning comparing data from different qualitative methods (my observations, interviews and documents) and theory triangulation, which refer to looking at data from different theoretical perspectives. I have done this by applying both attribution theory and complexity theory to my research findings (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). To increase the validity, triangulation is used to compare the results of my findings with the literature reviewed and the information collected from my interviewees. Both related to validity and triangulation there is “a fairly clear consensus among contemporary commentators that qualitative research needs very clear descriptions, both of the research methods used and on the findings, to aid checks on validity by others…. This is needed not only to display the research process but also to show the conceptual processes by which meaning or interpretation has been attributed or theory developed” (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003:276).

What is described above is what Lincoln and Guba (1985 in Ritchie & Lewis, 2003) call “transparency” or “thick descriptions”. It allows the readers to verify for themselves that conclusions reached by the researcher are valid hold and allow others to consider their “transferability” to other settings. From a more selective perspective, my general knowledge about the conflict, based on what I have read, experienced and by the information collected
through interviews and talking with different people, makes me able, from a theoretical perspective, to see factors and positions within this conflict that might be difficult for the people involved to see because of a more normative and emotional affiliation to the conflict. My role as a researcher also has an impact on my validity and my research. This will be discussed in the next section.

2.5 The role of the researcher

When conducting fieldwork it is important that you are aware of your role as a researcher and self. Your ethical standards must be high and it is important to be aware of your own biases. A researcher’s state of position, in terms of race, nationality, age, gender, social and economic status, or sexuality may influence the data (Scheyvens & Storey, 2003). Some authors have described fieldwork as an “academic tourism, research travellers or in worst case “rape research “, meaning whereby exploitative methods of inquiry have been used exclusively in the interest of the researchers own career” (Scheyvens & Storey, 2003:8). This means that when you are conducting research, it must be done according to standards with a high degree of ethics and with the purpose contribute to the general knowledge. As a researcher it important to be aware of “how well informed, how politically aware and how sensitive the researcher is to the topic in question” (Scheyvens & Storey, 2003:8).

The term professional stranger deals with some of the challenges related to conducting research in other cultures (Agar, 1996). As a person from the outside you might be confronted with different challenges, like language issues, mistrust, scepticism or your own assumptions towards what you are expect to find. It is important to take into consideration that you are entering into people’s private lives and asking them to share thoughts about topics that might be difficult for them both theoretical and emotional. How to behave and act as a researcher and a fellow human being is important when conducting qualitative research and interviews.

When conducting interviews with children this is important. Knowledge about your interviewees and their culture or language can help breaking the ice and make the “outsider” a little less strange for the people involved in your study. Some of the problem you might encounter is related to language and how people interpret your questions. Do they understand what you are asking them? Do the children understand the words you are using? This is important as it affect the validity and the outcome of your research. As mentioned earlier in
this chapter I tried to solve this by using very simple questions and terminology when talking to the children.

Because I was conducting my fieldwork in an area of great tension, I was extremely aware about my personal opinion related to the conflict. I tried to maintain a high degree of objectivity when conducting my fieldwork. From a theoretical point of view I did this by applying the ethical guidelines described by NESH (National Committees for Research Ethics in Norway, 2006) in my work. From a more personal perspective I tried to behave in a way that made the children relaxed and to give them a sense of trust in me. I did this by behaving respectfully and explain why I was doing these interviews and for what purpose. I also told them that they did not need to reply if there were question they felt insecure about or did not want to answer. I let them talk and did not interrupt or question their replies.

When conducting your research you will also be an observer in all aspects of your daily life. This means talking to people and being part of social setting. When interacting with people I tried my best to look at the world from their perspective, by listening to their stories and trying to put myself in their place. This is difficult since I do not have the cultural background or speak the language as the people I talked to. But by being in the same areas, seeing and experiencing their surroundings, costumes and daily lives, I got an impression of the lives they lived and the problems they were facing. I was only stopped in checkpoints twice, and I did not have problems with entering Israel from Ramallah. But I did experience the tension in the long line of people waiting to enter, old and young, and you do not need to speak Arabic or be a Palestinian to understand how this affects people.

Because of these experiences from the field, the literature read and the first-hand information gathered from people on both sides, have provided me with some general knowledge that can contribute to the academic debate about these issues. Because I am not emotionally involved, it makes me able to see the conflict from a broader perspective. The people they meet affect all researchers and the stories they hear, the challenge is not to get personally involved. Biases can go both ways. A common statement in social anthropology is the notion of “going native” (Eriksen, 1993). This means that you are getting so involved in what you are researching that you lose your ability to be objective and professional. The stories you hear and the people you meet might have an impact on you as a person, but it is important that these meetings do not affect your research. I will try to avoid this by applying scientific rigour to a normative and sensitive topic, and I hope to add some constructive knowledge in the field of education.
2.6 Analysing and interpreting

“Approaches to analysis vary in terms of basic epistemological assumptions about the nature of qualitative enquiry and the status of researchers’ accounts….They also differ between different traditions in terms of the main focus and aim of the analytical process” (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003: 200). “To arrive at generalized conclusions, whatever form they take, the researcher needs to interpret the data and make significant decisions that shape the final outcome of the process of analysis” (Denscombe, 2007: 293).

In this study I have no intention of arriving at a general conclusion as mentioned by Denscombe (2007), but the process of analysing was still important, since I were looking for general patterns or facts that would be of interest for my study. My interview guide was divided into different sections. The different sections were based on background, religion and terminology, and the purpose was to make the interviews easier to code, but also to see if there were similar responses and if there were patterns that emerged from the data. Because the qualitative research methods do not require standardized analysis techniques, the researcher has more freedom in the process of analysis. After conducting your coding you must try to identify ways in which codes can be grouped into categories. After the process of coding the researcher must try to identify themes and relationship among the codes and categories. This is done to come aware of patterns and themes within the data. This process will help the researcher develop concepts and arrive at some generalized statements (Denscomne, 2007). By comparing the children’s answers conducted under the interview sessions, I was able to see if there were general patterns between the different schools involved, and the reasons for these differences.

When conducting qualitative research, and as in my case, combining interview and literature review, you will end up with a huge amount of data. An important step is to try to reduce the different codes, categories and themes. When this is done you have to move towards the key concepts or themes that you can use to generate conclusions, findings or generalizations based on your research. Throughout the analysis it is important that you are aware of your own role as a researcher. “The researcher’s identity, values and beliefs cannot be entirely eliminated from the process of analysing qualitative data” (Denscombe, 2007: 300). Even though there are different opinions about the role of the researcher, the general consensus is that the researcher is important in qualitative research. To ignore the role of the researcher’s self in
qualitative research would be ill advised. As a matter of good practice, it is better to confront the issue of objectivity and the self by providing an open mind, and a reflexive account of researcher’s self (Denscombe, 2007).

2.7 Research ethics

As a concept, “research ethics” refers to a complex set of values, standards and institutional schemes that helps constitute and regulate scientific activity (NESH, 2006). This implies that when you are conducting research, especially social research, it is important to maintain an ethical standard on your research. To be sure that these ethical standards were satisfactory I followed the ethical guidelines from NESH (2006). In my study the term “Do no harm” were particularly important. My research was conducted in areas of conflict, and because of this it was important for me to do my fieldwork according to high ethical standards. Before entering the field I tried to get in contact with the different stakeholders involved. I informed the Israeli embassy in Oslo about my planned fieldwork and also asked for their assistance in getting in touch with relevant schools. The Palestinian representative office in Oslo also where contacted and they were helpful with contacts in Ramallah. At my arrival in Ramallah I got the relevant research permit from the Ministry of Education, to conduct research both in public and private schools.

All the schools involved where informed about the content of the research I was conducting (Appendix A). I had also developed a consent form in which all the principals had to sign before the interviews were conducted (Appendix B). All the schools and children participating are treated anonymously. This was also one of the criteria from the Ministry of Education in Ramallah for getting my research permit. Since I do not speak the language, and in respect of the cultures I conducted my fieldwork in, the research questions, the consent form and my interview guide were translated into Hebrew and Arabic prior to my fieldwork (Appendix C & D).

Since my interview sessions were conducted with children, it was important to make a secure and trustworthy setting around the interviews. I used a lot of time explaining who I was and what I was doing. Confidentiality was important, and it was pointed out for the children that their responses could not be traced back to them when I wanted to hear their opinions. All the children were informed that they could withdraw from the interviews at any time. It was also
of great importance for me that I did not want to put the children in a situation where they would feel uncomfortable or insecure.

To ensure ethical considerations, I used ESOMAR World research codes and guidelines for interviewing children and young people (ESOMAR, 2005). ESOMAR distinguish between children, under the age of 14 and young persons, between 14 and 17. Since all he children that I was interviewing were under 14, I used the ethical requirements mentioned by ESOMAR. This means that when interviews are conducted within a protected environment, such as a school, permission of the relevant adult overseeing that location (such as teacher or headmaster) must be contained before conducting the interviews. ESOMAR s guidelines also emphasises that the adult person shall be informed and have the possibility to know what the research is about and what kind of questions will be asked during the interviews. All these criterions where fulfilled under my research.

Scheyvens and Storey (2003) provide some guidelines when conducting research involving children. They emphasize the importance of researchers paying particular attention to accessing the view of less confident or less articulate children, particularly girls. One of my interview sessions was in a religious girl school outside of Ramallah. At first the girls were shy and insecure, but as mentioned before, since my translator was a woman and they soon realized that I was interested in hearing their opinions (and we had asked the authority persons to leave the room) they starting responding and telling me about their lives and perspectives on the world they were living in. Based on the different aspects mentioned about I consider my study to have the ethical standards that are required by NESH.

2.8 Restrictions and challenges

It has been a difficult task writing this thesis. A lot of people, in a kind and polite way, have warned me about going into this material. They have all had good arguments and intentions, and I know that I am running the risk of making a shallow perspective on a matter that is extremely important. The reason for this is very simple. It is nearly impossible to try to make a clear and precise overview over the different perspectives, actors and issues involved in this conflict; it is too broad and operates on too many levels. Even when I try to narrow it down to my main focus, which is on narratives, the curriculum and educational practises, it still only grasps a small portion of the complex web of factors involved. There are different practises
between the religious schools versus the public and private school, political and structural power groups dominate on both sides and an internal conflict is common on both sides of the separation wall. These are just some examples of the complexity.

These limitations are related to the practical implementations and educational practises that exist in the region. Other factors are also putting restriction and limitation on this study. From an academicals point of view, information and access to information is a crucial tool to get things done and to get an overview of the situation as it is today. But information and access can also be a way of denying people the right to knowing the truth about what is actually going on behind closed doors in schools and in the classrooms. When this information is unavailable, you are running the risk of conducting your research based on secondary sources. I soon experienced that getting access to the schools that I was targeting was nearly impossible. First of all Gaza and Hebron was under fire and getting in was not even a question from the Norwegian government. Further, accessing the Israeli public schools in Jerusalem was difficult because of scepticism and practical applications from the Israeli Government.

Other restrictions concerned my research questions. There were some questions, especially related to religion that I was not allowed to ask. When I conducted my interviews in Ramallah, in the West Bank, I had restrictions from the Ministry of Education related to question regarding religion, and some of my questions had to be taken away from my interview guide. I was also prohibited to use a tape recorder in some schools. This made the interview situation more difficult for me as I had to take notes at the same time as I was asking questions. I wanted to give the children my full focus during the interviews, but this was not always easy when writing, listening and asking questions at the same time.

It was also advised from the Ministry of Education that there always should be a principal or a teacher present under the interviews. This contributed (in some schools) to mould the children’s answers on a lot of areas that might have been more fruitful without these authority personnel present. I say that the authority personnel had an impact on the children’s responses. The reason for this is that in two schools some of the children changed their answers after the personnel had left the room.

These are only some of the criteria that I had to agree with for getting a research permit in some of the schools and areas I visited. All these factors affected my research, and people have asked me if it is any use trying to write this thesis, when there are so many gaps in my data. My response has been, yes, there is. The reason for this is, as a researcher, the things you
cannot do, or you are not allowed to do, also tell you a lot about the tensions and the underlying factors in the conflict. Often, they tell you more! So even though some of my data are limited, I think it is still room for saying something about the situation and the conflict.

One perspective is what you intend to do in your fieldwork; another is what you actually do. I encountered some difficulties getting access to the field. I used a lot of time trying to get a research permit to schools in Israel without constructive results. Until one hour before my train left for the airport, it was not clear that I would get access to the field at all. Only 30 minutes before my departure I got clearance from the Israeli embassy in Oslo to conduct interviews in one school in Israel. On top of this, a teacher strike in Israel at the time of arrival forced me to wait nearly a week before my interview there could be conducted.

The most challenging aspect of my fieldwork was the sensitiveness of this conflict. It turned out to be an on-going theme through the entire process. Restrictions and difficulties where always an issue and I soon realised that my fieldwork was going to be a difficult task to get on with.

There are some theoretical and methodological problems related to geography. As mentioned, at the time this fieldwork was conducted, tensions in Gaza where high and I was advised by the Norwegian Foreign Ministry not to travel into this region. As a result of this I have no first-hand information or interviews from children living in this area. If I had the opportunity to conduct some of my interviews in Gaza, I assume that the responses to some of my research question would be different. The reason for this is that the people living there are directly affected by the conflict by their isolation and this would influence the attitudes towards the Israeli. In Gaza the humanitarian situation is also crucial and affects all aspects of society, also education. I presume that this would have an impact on the children’s attitudes. My assumption is that the narratives and perspective of “the other” would be even more clear and homogenous in Gaza than in rest of the OPT. If I had conducted interviews in Jerusalem, the Israeli side, I also presume that some of the answers would have been different. This is because the people her interact more with each other and they live closer to their Palestinian neighbours, this might have affected their knowledge about the Palestinians and vice versa.

These are just some of the challenges I encountered in the field. The challenges related to documents analysis, complexity of the conflict and international factors that have an impact on the conflict are discussed elsewhere in this study.
Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

In this chapter I will give an overview over the theoretical framework for this study. In conducting this study it is relevant for me to draw on different theoretical perspectives. I will use attribution theory to explain how people are divided into different categories, what I have chosen to call “us and the others”. Further, using complexity theory, I will address the need for more than one theoretical framework when conducting research in conflict areas. A general frame of reference for my theoretical positions is that through different mechanisms, people are constructing a picture of others that is created in their own way, thereby legitimizing their own cultural belonging, identity, narratives and practice based on assumptions about others.

I will also look at some of the challenges regarding education in an area of conflict. Before going into the theoretical framework I think it is useful to begin with how this study interprets and uses the basic terminology.

3.1 Culture and “the other”

When conducting social research you will always be confronted with the term culture. All human beings have a cultural belonging and identity as being part of a system that expands outside the individual. It is of great relevance for the researcher to be aware of the cultural tradition that his/her research is conducted within. In this study, reflecting around what people see as their cultural belonging and identity is maybe the most important component in understanding people’s behaviour and their narratives.

Culture is a complex and difficult term to understand because it operates on so many levels. There are multiple definitions of culture; I will look at the term culture from an anthropological perspective. In anthropology one of the most accepted definitions of culture can be traced back to Edward Taylor (1968), who claims that: “culture is that complex whole, which consist of knowledge, beliefs, art, moral, religion, law, besides all other skills and habits that a person has acquired as a member of a society” (Taylor, 1968 in Eriksen, 1996: 15). Others like Williams (1972), views culture as something:
Concerned with actions, ideas, and artefacts which individuals in the tradition concerned learned, share and value… culture refers to all the aspects of life, including the mental, social, linguistic, and physical forms of culture. It refers to ideas people have, the relationship they have to others and larger social institutions, the language they speak, and the symbolic forms they share, such as written language or art/music forms (Williams 1972, in Masemann, 2003: 116).

Even though Taylor’s definition of culture is more general than Williams, the similarities are related to the importance of culture in all aspects of people’s lives, on an individual level, but and also from a collective perspective as part of something more profound than yourself. Even though there have been some critic of the different assumptions of the definition of culture, there is a broad agreement that even though practices are varying in different societies, the foundation and intension of culture as a mechanism for control, guide to rules and instructions, are agreed upon. Based on these definitions we can say that imbedded in people’s understanding of themselves; a notion of belonging and self-awareness is shaping people’s minds on every level and in all aspects of life, even before the individual has a kind of self-reflection around cultural and national belonging. Culture is also used as a tool to separate and distinguish one group from another. The conflict in the Middle East is, among other things, based on histories that are interpreted in people’s own ways, depending on who you ask. It is within this cultural history and the interpretations of them that narrative emerges and becomes a powerful tool to explain peoples belonging and identity.

The term “the other”, is an expression with different meanings within academic traditions. I will use it as a term taken from social anthropology where its meaning can be traced back to Margaret Mead and Claude Levi Strauss’ notion of structuring the society into binary oppositions to create order and clarity (Eriksen, 1993). The term can also be related to Edward Saids’ Orientalism, where one of his crucial points is how the West has depicted the Orient for centuries. Said is claiming that the person from the orient is depicted as irrational, childish and different, thereby implying that the West is rational, mature and normal (Said, 2001: 63). “The other” is an expression for the different narratives that is imbedded into the cultural history of all people and nations. By distinguishing someone as pure and rightful, (this is nearly always the persons own culture), it also implies that some others represent the opposite. These are “the other”, the strangers, people who represent something different and could be a threat to societies’ order and harmony. What distinguishes our own culture from other cultures is often represented by what other people do different from us selves. As part of this study I want to look at how people was and are depicted in each other’s curriculum and
Throughout this study I will use the term “us” and “the other” as a way in which people are labelled into categories based on their similarities and differences, and also try to see who are the “us” and who are “the other” within different social and cultural arenas. The term “us” and “the other” will also be associated with the main points within attribution theory.

3.2 Identity

If culture is a complex term, so is identity. A person’s identity consists of a whole range of elements. Identity is often divided into individual identity and social/cultural identity. A person’s identity can be related to a certain group, a religious tradition, a country, an ethnic group, a language group, and occupation; the list could go on and on. Within these categories a persons’ identity also reflects belonging to a part of the country, a city, a group of friends, family or other preferences that one as an individual share with others (Maalouf, 1999). Based on this we can say that identity is floating, not static. You can change your identity after which part of your identity is needed in different social settings. “An Irish catholic is different from a British trough religion. But confronted with the question about the monarchy, the Irish will claim to be a republican, and if he speaks English, he will do so in his own way. An Irish-catholic leader speaking British with an Oxford –accent would be viewed as a traitor” (Maalouf, 1999: 17).

On an individual level, we can say that identity is what makes us different from all others. Identity is being constructed according to what purpose it needs to fill. In Maaloufs, In the name of Identity (1999) he speaks of the “hierarchy” within a person’s identity. By this he means that it is assumed that some parts of a person’s identity are more profound and important than others. A certain identity can also function as a belonging and contact point to a broader group of people who shares these same values. By doing so we create the “us” and “the other”. What separate or bind people together into social, religious or ethnical groups are based on different forms of identity and roles. Maalouf (1999) claims that this is not always what happens. In situations where people’s believes are threatened, it seems that your religious identity is more important than your identity as part of a nation or a people. And if your identity within an ethnic group is threatened, then people can be willing to fight within their own religious traditions. This importance of identity and belonging is one of the factors making the conflict in the Middle East so complex. It is a multi-dimensional conflict which
both have an internal and an external dimension. The people within the conflict is not just fighting "outside" forces, they are also battling within their own group, making it even more difficult to seek reconciliation. The power of identity and religion is deeply integrated into people’s narratives and cultural roots. In OPT there are conflicts between Hamas and Fatah. They both belong to the same group of people, with a common cultural background and geographical belonging. Even so, there are factors that separate them from following the same goals as one people. The same conflict can be detected in Israel between secular and religious Jews. This is a problem for both Israeli and Palestinian politicians. Criticism in Israel and the OPT is directed towards politicians that try to make a peace agreement by either stop building new settlement (Israel) or accepting less of the geographical territory that once belonged to the people (OPT). If we follow the assumption of Mallouf, (1999) we can see that it is the degree of religious assurance and the willingness to change that separates the people. These conflicts are related to what is considered to be the values and goal to pursuit for the people involved. For extremists and patriots on both sides, co-existence will be the same as giving away their beliefs and religious affiliation. It would be considered a betrayal to people, nation and their religion. In situations like this, the religious and cultural identity is more important than other forms of identity. This example illustrates the complexity of identity and stretches the importance of not viewing identity as something static and unchanging, rather as a floating phenomenon. I will continue by claiming that identity also can be constructed for a purpose.

Some scholars are combining the notion of culture and identity, claiming that it is important to see the cultural dimension in light of peoples own tradition and history. I will use Tomlinson (2003) as an example of how identity can be related to a specific geographical and ethnographical affiliation. I will do this because one of the main areas of conflict between the Jews and Arabs is related to the geographical and ethnographical affiliation. Tomlinson (2003) puts the concept of cultural identity in a historical perspective when he says that:

> Once upon a time, before the area of globalization, there existed local, autonomous, distinct and well defined, robust and culturally sustained connections between geographical place and cultural experience. These connections constituted one’s – and ones communities- cultural identity. This identity was something people simply had as an undisturbed existential possession, an inheriting, a benefit of traditional long dwelling, of continuity with the past. Identity then, like language, was not just a description of cultural belonging; it was a sort of collective treasure (Tomlinson, 2003: 269).

This definition of cultural identity might be put to the test in today’s societies, but it is still relevant to understand the cultural roots that people have to their ethnographic and
geographical surroundings. As an anthropologist I am not agreeing with Tomlinson in the way that I interpret his position to state that culture have been static and autonomous. I think that to some degree there have always been contacts between cultures, and particular in this region and culture is seldom viewed as static. Still, I am agreeing with Tomlinson that people have an identity because of their geographical and ethnographical affiliation. Thomlinson (2003) also claims that cultural identity, properly understood, is much more the product of globalization than its victim (Thomlinson, 2003). My assumption is that the strengthening of identity we see today, on both sides, is the product of the conflict. This can be understood as reactions to external forces that are cutting into people’s lives with value system that does not necessary apply to their way at looking at the world. The power of identity is a strong force in people’s life, and cultural identity lies at the core of an individual’s self-perspective that cannot easily be tampered with. If we build further on the statements mentioned above, it is not difficult to see how nations and people in conflict or war use the perceptions of “the others” to strengthen their own cultural identity through different mechanisms. One of these mechanisms can be through narratives, which also can be reflected in the educational system. As a result, the stories they create from what they experience in their daily life become imbedded into their own identity and in their cultural narratives. As I have mentioned above, identity and conflict are often integrated. The struggle for an identity or the assurance to an identity can create conflict on different levels; political, geographical or ethnical. Therefore, before elaborating more around these issues, I will define conflict as the term is used in this study.

3.3 Conflict

Conflict can be said to be the absence of peace, struggle over values, status, power or recourses. Because the tension in the region is based on different forms of conflicts (territorial, religious, restriction in movement, humanitarian needs, food and water, right of return), a more general interpretation of the word conflict is needed. I will define conflict from two different positions, one as a dispute and the other as political violence. In terms of dispute;

[C]onflict is of course universal in the politics of family, community and nation. In that sense, any dynamic human system is by nature a conflictive one, encompassing, and the play of opposing interests. The crux lies in how such conflict is managed. So long as the social and political processes provide channels for dialog, participation and
negotiation, conflict plays a constructive role. Where such channels are blocked, and yet basic needs go unmet, then resentment and desperation builds up. The outcome is protest, repression and violence (Agerback, 1996 in Davies, 2004:27).

Dispute as defined by Agerback (1996 in Davies, 2004) can be constructive, as long as there is dialog, participation and negotiation. Such a description links the universal nature of conflict with the more crucial question of where it stems from and what people do with it.

Another analytical framework to definition conflict is as political violence. Zwi and Ugalde (1996 in Davies, 2004) divide political violence into four main types: Structural, repressive, reactive and combative violence. The structural violence is resulting from the misdistribution of resources and political power. Repressive violence by the state or others represents violence in which social groups are targeted because of their religion, ethnicity, political beliefs, etc. Reactive violence is a reaction against the repression experienced, or conversely by privileged groups against reforming government. Combative violence is the use of force to preserve or gain power, possibly linked with outside intervention (Zwi & Ugalde, 1996 in Davies, 2004).

What we see in the conflict in The Middle East is that conflicts, as in the term dispute, are not leading to a more peaceful coexistence between the two parts. A history of peace negotiation and dialog has not led to a more peaceful coexisting. Because of the lack of progress in the peace negotiation, the continuing of new settlement in the West Bank and the on-going question about right of return for the many Palestinians living in refugee camps and abroad, violence and aggression has been a way of expressing frustration towards the situation that people are living in.

The reason for using the two different definitions is that there are conflicts on more than one level for people living in the region. This means that we have to see conflict in a broader sense, not just as absent of dialog. The different forms of violence and conflict are interlinked, and different forms of conflict are present at different levels in the society. Conflict in an everyday life situation is experienced differently for a Palestinian living in Gaza or the West Bank than an Israeli living in Tel Aviv or Beer Sheva. There are fears and restrictions on both sides, but the degree of conflict or violence varies. People living next to the borders of Gaza are constantly living in fear of Qassam rockets hitting down in their back yard. People in Gaza suffer more than the Israeli people under a structural violence because of the blockade, and because of restrictions related to fundamental human needs. In Gaza the political violence
from within, through the religious influence by Hamas, creates a form of repressive violence for those who are not sympathising with Hamas religious and political beliefs. Repressive violence is also experienced every day for people entering through the checkpoint from the West Bank. They represent a social group that are being targeted based on political and religious belonging. The separation wall can be seen as combative violence as the Israelis build it to preserve Israeli interest and protect the Israeli people from act of war.

Fear and uncertainty on different levels are creating a climate for conflict that affects both parties on more than one level. Conflict operates on different levels in the two society’s, some are from within and can be characterised as dispute, others can be defined as conflict as it involves mechanism of control by structural, repressive, reactive or combative violence.

Conflict will also have an impact on the educational system. In the OPT the impact of conflict has a direct effect on education related to the restrictions in movement. Israel’s Wall is intended to act as a political border dividing Jerusalem from the OPT. According to the Applied Research Institute in Jerusalem (ARIJ) the Separation Wall severely impacts the daily lives and movement of all Palestinians;

The Israeli segregation wall will also affect the educational systems in the West Bank.

According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistic (PCBS) 26% of Palestinian students will lose their rights and access to proper education and 81% of Palestinians in regions affected by the wall will be forced to find alternative routes to their schools and Universities as a result of the wall. An additional 350 schools will be isolated outside the wall. Residents of the isolated and ghettoized communities will only be able to enter and leave the immediate area through constantly supervised illegal checkpoint manned by Israeli occupying forces. Israeli soldiers at the checkpoints engage in systematic and sustained acts of harassment and humiliation, making travel physically and psychologically damaging for Palestinians civilians (ARIJ, 2004: 4).

Another, more profound or direct effect of conflict on education is the disruption to educational opportunities, in that conflicts destroy schools and school systems as well as people (Davies, 2004). According to Davies (2004), children are damaged by war and conflict in different ways. One is the direct experience of war or violence against himself/herself or the adult who care for them. This means loss of parents or family as a result of war or conflict. This can be by physical injury or loss of lives or mental damage that makes the parents unable to care for their children. Second it is the damage done to the society around them. Their ability to learn and develop can be affected because of loss of security and sense of their place
in the world. This statement implies that there is an emotional aspect for the children, and at the same time the world around them are making their opportunity to be educated and have a sense of belonging difficult.

Another aspect of education and conflict is related to the curriculum and textbooks.

Analysts of political socialisation through education will look at the important role of textbooks and history or social science teaching in orientation towards the state, the nation and other nations. This can be through content or omission. Textbooks can be overtly nationalistic and depict the evil enemy, yet they can equally simply fail to represent reality (Davies, 2004: 118).

A good indicator regarding these questions is to look at curriculum and textbooks and how the “observer” is seeing the behaviour of “the other”. The impact of conflict affects directly or indirectly children in all segments of education, whether it is curriculum, access to schooling or the quality of education. These questions will be further investigated at a later stage in my study. These are just some of the challenges related to education and conflict.

3.4 Attribution theory

This study shall adopt a theoretical framework based on attribution theory. Attribution theory, means that ”people makes sense of their world by assigning qualities and causes to people and situations, frequently attributing positive consequences to their own action and negative ones to the actions of others. Because of this, they may develop over generalized labels to explain others behaviour, and assign blame” (Isenhart & Sprangle, 2000, in Davies, 2004:15).

Attribution theory also assumes that “over a period of time, persons would be expected to accurately characterize humans in terms of their dispositional properties” (Prus, 1975 in Breidlid, 2010:2). Heradstveit (1979) emphasises that attribution theory specifies the conditions under which behaviour is seen as caused by the person performing the action or by environmental influences and constraints. Further, he claims “attributions or casual explanations for behaviour and outcome are characterized in terms of an internal/external or dispositional/situational dichotomy” (Heradstveit, 1979: 23). This means that the people involved in conflict will be interested in structuring their reality, so that they can make sense of this reality. They want control over their environment. Therefore they want their assumptions and general theories on the conflict to be valid (Heradstveit, 1979). “Behaviour attributed to the innate nature of self and other makes behaviour more predictable and gives a
sense of control, but dispositional explanations may blur the complexity and ambiguity of reality” (Renshon, 1993, cited in Breidlid, 2010: 2). These realities are not easy to change since they often are institutionalized into the people’s notion and cultural practices.

Heradstveit (1979) claims that:

> [W]hen parties to a conflict observe the opponent, the opponents behaviour is seen to be a manifestation of the internal properties of the opponent (abilities, traits and motivation), but the observer will explain his own behaviour as a response to the situation (environmental pressures and constraints)…. this phenomenon, which is called the “fundamental attribution error”, is enhanced when the observer dislikes the actor he is observing and when the actions he is observing are seen to affect himself (Heradstveit, 1979: 48).

Put in another way, in making our inference about behaviour there is a tendency to over-emphasize situational variables when explaining our own behaviour, but when observing the behaviour of other, there is a tendency to over-emphasize dispositional variables (Heradstveit, 1979). What is relevant regarding attribution theory is that “to the extent which parties to a conflict are dispositional in their analysis of the apparent behaviour may make their subsequent beliefs very hard to change” (Heradstveit, 1979: 23). Attribution theory parallels with the notion of “us” and “the other” as they both creates an opponent with a normative perspective to legitimate their own claim or position. Thereby creating narratives where the opponent or “the other” represents qualities opposite to “us” or the group creating the narratives. Heradstveit (1979) views attribution theory from a cognitive aspect with focus on psychology. In this study I am not able to go into these psychological processes, I will consider these processes to already be part of identity and the cultural narratives studied. Attribution theory is about how people are making sense of their environment by assigning qualities and causes to people and situations. We can say that attribution theory can be used to explain why people have a curtain perception or opinions about other people. But to explain why change, both in beliefs and narratives are so difficult, it is fruitful to also look at some other factors. To try to see the conflict from a broader perspective, I will use complexity theory.
### 3.5 Complexity theory

Davies (2004) draws on different theories in what she calls Complexity theory. According to her, complexity theory is “not just a body of theory, but also a collection of often-disparate fields of study. It is not a “grand narrative” in terms of an overarching explanatory theory of behaviour, but more a way of seeing connections and possibilities” (Davies, 2004: 19). Complexity theory is fruitful when you need to go into complex studies where just one theoretical position is not enough. My point of departure is that complexity theory is also helpful when you are studying complex societies with complex issues.

As a tool for explaining people’s behaviour and also as a model for understanding why people are acting as they are, different theoretical perspectives can contribute to bring clarity into the research. In complex situations, applying different theoretical perspectives will give your research more depth and also ensure that your research contains the needed theoretical tools to grasp the multiple factors present on different levels.

Attribution theory is already mentioned as a theoretical framework, but as a supplement to attribution theory it is also constructive to be able to apply other forms of theory into my research. The reason for this is that the conflict can be viewed from different perspectives and position. The conflict in the Middle –East can be studied as a fight for resources of food and water supply, it can be viewed as a political battle between democracy and other forms of political leadership, as international play of powers relations, these are just some examples. Because of this, the complexities within the topics involved are intricate and must be seen in a broader perspective, because the different positions / perspectives interact. There is no easy solution or explanation. Because of this complexity theory can be constructive as a way of using different theories to illustrate this complexity.

Equity theory is mentioned as one theory within complexity theory. In equity theory conflict is seen from a perspective of distributive justice. This means that people become distressed or angry when they feel they are not receiving their fair share of something they value (Davies, 2004). Equity theory can be a constructive point of departure to explain the massive resistance from many of the people living in isolation in Gaza and the West Bank. Since the Israelis have control over electricity, water, food and medical supplies, the people here feel that they are deprived from their fundamental needs. Questions related to land and capital is also factors that contribute to strengthen the resistance and the attitudes towards the Israeli people. So if we combine attribution theory and equity theory as tool for explaining the situation as it
is today, we can see that multiple factors often needs more than one theoretical perspective. We can also apply field theory as a theoretical model for explaining that, “peoples actions are a product of contextual forces, with a push and pull based on expectations, commitments and loyalties. Each setting, such as family, community group, work or educational context, serves as a psychological field where competing attitudes create safe or hostile climates” (Isenhart & Spangle, 2000 in Davies, 2004: 14-15). If we look at the question related to identity, field theory can be used as a supplementary explanation for the difficulties people are confronted with in their daily life. Arabs, Palestinians and Israelis are often confronted with these “push and pull” expectations and loyalties. There are a lot of Palestinians attending school, working or hold an Israeli citizenship in Jerusalem. The difficulties relating identity and loyalties towards religion, culture and politics is important to take into consideration when conduction a study in these areas. This perspective is complex, I will not focus on this in this study, but it illustrates another dimension to the complexity of this conflict and the theoretical perspectives involved.

In Integrationist theory conflict is the product of continuous negotiation about what is valued, how behaviours are to be interpreted and the meaning of events (Isenhart & Spangle, 2000 in Davies, 2004: 14-15). The internal struggle between different positions, religious and secular can be viewed from this theoretical position. Hamas/ Fatah and secular and religious Jews are confronted with the problem, it is also a factor that is extremely relevant as a way of explaining some aspects of the conflict that makes it difficult to find a solution. Some challenges related to education and curriculum development can also be seen from this theoretical position. I will return to this at a later stage in this study.

What I have illustrated is that when conducting research in complex societies or situations, it might be constructive to see the issues being studied from more than one theoretical position. Within my study these different theories can be applied to different data, literature and analyses. What I have shown here is that by using complexity theory, I can grasp a wider perspective to the conflict by drawing on different theoretical tools and methods, thereby creating a broader frame of reference for understanding why people are acting as they are under various social settings.
Chapter 4: Historical narratives of “the other” in education

In this chapter I will give an overview of some of the different literature being reviewed for this study. I will start by giving a brief introduction to the educational systems in Israel and the Palestinian territories, how they are structured, their educational goals and challenges for education in the two areas. This will be done to illustrate the differences and similarities between the two educational systems and also to elaborate around their historical impact on education in the region. Further I will go into the discussion related to curriculum and textbooks and how the two parties have portrayed each other through the history of education. I will not go into the concrete textbooks, but rather review the literature available on the subject. This means, I have not studied the textbooks directly, I have used different literature about the textbooks. Within the literature being reviewed here, questions related to the notion of identity, self-autonomy, curriculum and “us” and “the other “are a general theme. The literature reviewed here created the background for my research questions. The focus on education in the Palestinian territories is complex. I cannot go into details about all aspects of the educational system; I will draw a general perspective to education in Israel and the Palestinian territory. Palestinians educated in Israeli schools, training of teachers and right of return are of great relevance for the development of educational system in the region. So are economy, enrolment and access to education. I will in my study narrow my focus to the curriculum, development of the curriculum and how it is being viewed from outside and within.

4.1 Educational systems and curriculum development in the “territory”

To understand the educational practices, as it is today it is important to remember how education has been used in a historical perspective. Until quite recently education for the Palestinian children has meant learning about history written by others.

Today the educational system in OPT are divided into three different school systems: private, public and UNRAW (United Nations Relief and Works Agency) schools, which are divides in the format private schools 6 %, public schools 70% and UNRAW schools 24 % of the children attending school. The enrolment in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) is approximately 1 million students when private, public and UNRAW schools are accounted
The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) formulated in 2002 a new strategy with a new vision for the future of Palestinian education potential, challenges, and objectives. In *Education Strategies, the Five-Year Plan (2001-2005), A Comprehensive Reform of the Educational System*, the ministry stated their goal as:

1. Education as a human right: All children between the ages of 6 and 16 years old have the right to receive free basic education, regardless of social or economic status, gender, or religious belief.

2. Education as the basic component of citizenship: Together with the family and the community, the school shall be a main catalyst for developing the Palestinian citizen’s character, moral values and social responsibilities.

3. Education as a tool for social and economic development: Education must meet the political, social and economic challenges of Palestinian society.

4. Education as the basis for social and moral values, and democracy: Education shall be the cornerstone for building a Palestinian society with strong commitment to ethics, principles, and openness to the global culture.

5. Education as a continuous, renewable, participatory process: Education is a life-long activity, in and out of school, fuelled by classroom learning, social relations and communications, community activities, and the mass media. (Access Mena, n.d.).

As will be discussed in the next section, these educational goals stated by the MoEHE have been problematic to put into practice. The Oslo Agreement, signed in 1994, led to the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, which assumed control of administration and services in many areas of Palestinian life, including education. Also in August 1994, the Agreement on Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities, known as the Transfer Agreement, was signed. Since then the Palestinian Authority has taken over, the fields of tourism, direct taxation, health, social welfare, culture and education in some parts of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (Nicolai, 2007). In this agreement, Israel still maintains full control of borders, movement of people and goods, between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and also between major cities in the West Bank (Santisteban, 2002). The ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) was established under the Palestinian Authority that same year. This ministry is the formal authority responsible for the education system. Their task is to established mechanisms for planning, budgeting and co-ordination. The
MoEHE is also harmonizing education between the West Bank and Gaza (Nicolai, 2007). The MoEHE developed a five-year educational plan in 2000 and, in early 2002; the Ministry began to develop an Education for All (EFA) plan. The Five-Years Plan is the guiding instrument for education in Palestinian.

When the Palestinian Authority took over the educational system in 1994, they decided to maintain both curricula, the Jordanian and the Egyptian, in their respective areas, until the Palestinian curriculum was designed and ready for implementation. This was done between 2000 and 2006 (Nicolai, 2007). In 1995 the Palestinian Authority established a center for curriculum development. The intention was to establish what content and learning material was needed to reflect the Palestinian educational practices:

Their task was to develop a plan for the Palestinian curriculum, to be implemented in phases within five years. They analysed different approaches and also looked into other countries curriculum, among them, the Norwegian, British and Dutch to find inspiration and a functional model for the curriculum. The result of the groups work was “A comprehensive plan for the development of the first Palestinian curriculum for general education”, which was submitted in September 1996 to the MoEHE for review and approval (Nicolai, 2007: 85).

The rapport criticized the content and pedagogy in the Jordanian and Egyptian textbooks and pointed out the lack of relevance for the Palestinian children’s education. One of these criticisms was that it was no correlation between what the Palestinian children was learning and what they did experience in their daily lives. As a result of this, “the group wanted a new approach to education and radical changes in the curriculum” (Nicolai, 2007: 85). The MoEHE did not positively receive the report. The ministry felt that the report was” utopian, unpractical and had too much focus on developing a western educational system. They educational leadership deemed the project as both politically and practically unviable, and decides to start again with a new leader and now incorporated into the MoEHE so as to provide a better oversight on content and structure” (Nicolai, 2007: 85). Since 2000, a new Palestinian curriculum has progressively been introduced in schools to replace the Jordanian and Egyptian curricula previously used. And for the first time in their history, the Palestinian children are being educated in a curriculum created by fellow Palestinians.
4.2 Challenges and critic

After the Oslo Accords in 1994 the MoEHE started developing their first independent curriculum. Nicolai (2007) claims in *Fragmented foundations: education and chronic crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory* that the Palestinian educational system emerges in a time of conflict and crises. This is based on the challenges the MoEHE where facing as a result of the political situation in the region and questions the content of the new curriculum. Factors like right of return, boarders, self-autonomy and how the Palestinians shall portrait the Israelis in the curriculum made the project challenging.

Palestinian curriculum must reflect the dimensions of the Palestinian identity and its special features. It should also reflect the Islamic affiliation, endeavor to achieve the unity of the Arab and Islamic worlds, work for its freedom, realize its independence, act constructively with other nations, and participate in the development of human ideas, and in humanitarian, political, economic, and cognitive issues (UNESCO, 1998: no page number).

The goals stated by the MoEHE have been difficult to implement. The new curriculum, launched by The MoEHE, where trying to implement the “need of the nation” for the Palestinian educational system. The MoEHE describes the core contents as “defined by national values, Islamic religion, national heritage, customs and traditions, and the Declaration of Independence (1998)” (Nicolai, 2007: 87). This national project has been a difficult task for the MoEHE. Different internal voices are advocating for a stronger emphasis on some topics like life skills education and peace education. Others such as teachers, administrators and parents are claiming that, “what’s the use of peace education when he children are seen violence and human rights are constantly being violated in their day to day life” (Nicolai, 2007: 87). The question of debate is related to what kind of knowledge shall be passed on to the next generation. Authors, such as Nicolai (2007), Moughrabi (2001) and Santistebans (2001), claim that it is impossible to think that the Palestinian children shall be educated in peace when they see nothing but oppression and war.

Because of these challenges we can say that the new Palestinian curriculum had a turbulent birth. The implementation did not go unnoticed from the outside world. Accusations and massive critic have been geared primarily towards the curriculum. These accusations are claiming that the Palestinian curriculum is educating children to hate and violence. These critics are especially focusing on Palestinian children being educated as anti-Semitic and anti-Israel. According to an Israeli webpage called Jewish Virtual Library (JVL, 2001). Palestinian
children are, from elementary through high school, being educated to have a strong expression of hatred towards Israel. This also includes negation of its right to exist and praise for the struggle against it. They are also claiming that Palestinian youth are educated from birth in an atmosphere of religious and nationalist incitement, with no trace of anything positive regarding Israel. The JVL (2001) are claiming that this is contributing to a deepening of their hatred towards Israel, a fanning of the flames of violence and encouragement and justification of terrorism against the State of Israel and against Jews (JVL, 2001).

In a historical perspective the Jordanian and Egyptian curriculum, from earlier days did, not portrait the Jews and the state of Israel in flattering way. They were seen as an occupying treat, so cruel and impossible that no state or country in the world would shelter them. According to the JVL (JVL, 2001: no page number), the textbooks are replete with anti-Semitic expressions of hatred and hostility towards the Jewish people, including references from the Koran attesting to the corrupt, dishonest character of the Jews, who are also anti-Islam. JVL is also claiming that the Palestinian Authority is creating a learning environment where their teachers are teaching hostility and fear towards Zionism and the Jews to the Palestinian children:

The student will acquire the following values and perceptions: Understanding the dangers arising from Zionism and from racial discrimination...assessing the negative impact of Zionism on the Arab's revival and development. The student...will make the connection between Zionism and racial discrimination and will trace the connection between Zionism and terrorist movements in the modern world (JVL, 2001: no page number).

This statement is similar to what is expressed by other organisations about the Palestinian educational system. But is it correct? Today the Palestinian Authority is claiming that the new curriculum is free of these kinds of accusations and free of anti-Jewish propaganda. Still, the debate continues about the content of the curriculum. The main critic of the Palestinian curriculum and textbooks comes from an organization called The Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education (IMPACT-SE) formerly named and referred to as the Center for Monitoring the Impact of Peace (CMIP). I will use the abbreviation CMIP in this study since the literature reviewed is from the period where they were named CMIP. This is a non-profit, non-political international NGO (non-governmental organization) founded in 1998. According to themselves the organization is dedicated to
fostering peaceful relations between peoples and nations by helping them accept the "Other" and reject violence as a means of resolving conflicts. To this end, it examines school curricula worldwide, especially throughout the Middle East, to determine whether the material conforms to international standards, and to analyze what is being taught with regard to recognition and acceptance of the "Other" (IMPACT-SE, n.d.). Since 1998, CMIP has been engaged in the research of school textbooks, teacher's guides and curricula used in the Palestinian Authority, Israel, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Iran. It has published a dozen reports, which have been used by members of the US Congress, the EU Parliament and the Israeli Knesset, to demand changes in the curricula and textbooks of Middle East countries. CMIP's reports have also been extensively used by the media (IMPACT-SE, n.d.). These CMIP reports emphasize the lack of recognition of the Jews and their right to the land. These reports claim that the Palestinian textbooks foster the Palestinian children to have a negative picture of the Jews and the state of Israel. The accusations towards the curriculum and textbooks are massive and CMIP is constructing a picture of the Palestinians as a nation of people who devotes themselves to violence and aggression. A quotation from a CMIP report illustrates his:

Ever since the PA (Palestinian Authority) became responsible for education in 1994, Palestinian children have been learning from their schoolbooks to identify Israel as the evil colonialist enemy who stole their land. The new PA schoolbooks fail to teach their children to see Israel as a neighbour with whom peaceful relations are expected. They do not teach acceptance of Israel's existence on the national level, nor do they impart tolerance of individual Jews on the personal level (Moughrabi, 2001: 5).

CMIP claims to be an organization without any normative ore hidden agenda, which focuses on peaceful relations between nations. But according to Nicolai (2007), Moughrabi (2001) and Santisteban (2001), it seems that nearly all the accusations about the Palestinian curriculum, and the anti-Zionist and violent content, are coming from a the Center for Monitoring the Impact of Peace. Why is that? It might be more easily understandable when we realize that the CMIP is a Jewish-American organization with known links to the Israeli settlement movement in the West Bank and has been known to have a right wing approach to the conflict. With that in mind, it is crucial to examine their thrust wordiness and integrity related to their evaluation of the Palestinian curriculum. “Analysts such as Avenstrup, Brown and Moughrabi have all found the evidence used by CMIP to support its accusations to be characterized by inaccuracy and questionable interpretations of text” (Nicolai, 2007: 90). As a result of this Nicolai (2007) and Moughrabis (2001) claim that by lack of knowledge or
willingness to see the conflict from both sides, CMIP are creating and upholding the stereotypical assumption of Palestinians as aggressive and violence people, when they actually are trying to adapt to the internationals community’s demand for reconciliation and tolerance towards their neighbors. They are also stating that the result of this has been devastating for the Palestinian Authority. As a direct result, “donors have sometimes shifted funding away from curriculum development and textbook production” (Nicolai, 2007: 91).

Different researchers also emphasize the effect of these accusations in their literature. Moughrabi (2001) states:

> What is beyond dispute is that the effects of CMIP's campaign have already been nothing short of disastrous. In December 2000, for example, the Italian government, referring directly to the CMIP study, informed the Palestinians that it could no longer finance the development of the new Palestinian school curriculum. At the same time, the World Bank notified the PA Ministry of Education that money allocated for the development of school texts and teacher training would have to be diverted to other projects. This rush to judgment has led to similar reactions by a number of other donor countries (Moughrabi, 2001: 6).

We can say that underlying factors like normative interpretations of the textbooks and lack of willingness to try to change the stigmatized image of each other continues to make it difficult to come to an agreement between the two parts involved. We can assume that these difficulties can be traced back to assurance and imbedded cultural tradition of viewing each other as enemies and as a treat to established values and perspectives of justice within the different cultural systems. It is important to think about how some fundamental voices, on both sides, continue to undermine the process of reconciliation and coexistent by claiming that their perception of reality is the right one. As a result of this debate and the allegations towards the Palestinians, the EU committee made an evaluation of the new textbooks in the OPT to see if the CMIP where correct in their critic about teaching of hatred and violence. Information gathered by the EU missions on the ground, as well as independent studies carried out by Israeli and Palestinian academics and educators that have examined the new textbooks, shows that:

> Quotations attributed by earlier CMIP reports to the Palestinian textbooks are not found in the new Palestinian Authority schoolbooks funded by some EU Member States; some were traced to the old Egyptian and Jordanian text books that they are replacing, some to other books outside the school curriculum, and others not traced at all. While many of the quotations attributed to the new textbooks by the most recent CMIP report of November 2001 could be confirmed, these have been found to be often badly translated or quoted out of context, thus suggesting an anti-Jewish
incitement that the books do not contain. New textbooks, though not perfect, are free of insightful content and improve the previous textbooks, constituting a valuable contribution to the education of young Palestinians. Palestinian Authority Ministry of Education has accepted the need for on-going review, revision and improvement. Therefore, allegations against the new textbooks funded by EU members have proven unfounded (European Union, 2002: no page nr).

This illustrates the everlasting problem on how different organisations or groups are contributing to reproduce the stereotypical narratives imbedded into the cultural opinion and perception of “us” and “the other”. What CMIP claims in their reports are not incorrect if it is viewed in a historical perspective. The Jordanian and Egyptian textbooks had a biased and negative approach to how they viewed and described the Jews. The Palestinians and Arabs in general must also take into consideration the part that they have played in the way biased narratives and perspectives of “the others” have been created and institutionalized into their knowledge and belief systems. They have also effected and made the road to reconciliation and co existents difficult, both for themselves and for the Jews and Israelis. Still, the crucial point here is that when people, governments or organisations are portraying biased and unreal information, it affects the parties involved on multiple levels, related to narratives and perspectives of others, but also related to economy, international relations and power relations in a global context.

4.3 Education in Israel

The information in this section is gathered from The Israeli Ministry of foreign affairs. They have the informational portal on the World Wide Web and the information here available in English.

In the Israel educational system, the number of pupils in Hebrew and Arab education is around 1.8 million persons. Approximately 77% of the total pupil population in 2002/20003 is enrolled in Hebrew education, and 23% in Arab education. Since 1989/1990, Hebrew education has increased by 19% and Arab education by 70%. In Israel school attendance is mandatory and free from the age of 6 to 18. Formal education starts in primary school (grades 1-6) and continues with intermediate school (grade 7-9) and secondary school (grade 10-12). About 9% of the post-primary school population attends boarding schools. The educational system is divided into four groups. The majority of pupils attend state schools. The State
religious schools emphasize Jewish studies and tradition. Arab and Druze schools are instructing Arabic and Druze history, religion and culture. At last we have private schools, which operate under various religious and international auspices (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2008).

According to the Israeli Ministry of Education, education in Israel is a precious legacy, following the traditions of past generations. Education continues to be a fundamental value and is recognized as the key to the future (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2008). It is stated that the educational systems aim is to prepare children to become responsible members of a democratic, pluralistic society in which people from different ethnic, religious, cultural and political backgrounds coexist. It is based on Jewish values, love of the land and the principles of liberty and tolerance. It seeks to impart a high level of knowledge, with an emphasis on scientific and technological skills essential for the countries continued develop (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2008).

When the State of Israel was founded in 1948, a fully functioning education system already existed. It was developed and maintained by the pre-state Jewish community, with Hebrew, which had been revived for daily speech at the end of the 19th century, as the language of instruction. The most profound challenge for the Israeli educational system has been integrating the large number of immigrant children that have arrived from over 70 countries throughout the years. In the 1950s, during the period of mass immigration, the country faced the challenge of providing basic education to a rapidly expanding population, as it struggled with the severe limitations of the educational infrastructure: a shortage of schools and classrooms, a lack of qualified teachers, poorly educated parents, and severe economic hardship. The mass immigration of the 1950s, mainly from post-war Europe and Arab countries, was succeeded in the 1960s by a large influx of Jews from North Africa. In the 1970s, the first sizable immigration of Jews from the Soviet Union arrived, followed intermittently by smaller groups. These years of immigration led, therefore, to a change in the pupil population in primary schools, and the rate of pupils from weaker populations increased. Given this background, the education system underwent a reform, beginning in the late 1960s (with the establishment of the lower secondary schools). The reform led to pluralism in educational frameworks and programs of study, while taking into account the needs of weaker populations (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2008). The end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s met a sharp and rapid increase in the secondary school attendance rate; during 1980-1990 the number of pupils enrolled in secondary education grew by 55 %.
Beginning in 1990, there was a large wave of immigration to Israel: from 1990-2002, nearly one million immigrants arrived from the former Soviet Union, increasing Israel’s population by around 20%. The total number of pupils grew by 34% during these years, half of the increase as a result of this immigration (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2008).

Since the beginning of the 1990s, over one million Jews from the former Soviet Union have immigrated to Israel, with tens of thousands more still arriving each year. In two mass movements, in 1984 and 1991, almost the entire Jewish community of Ethiopia was brought to the country. Over the years, many Jews from the United States and other western countries have also settled in Israel (Israeli Ministry of foreign affairs, 2008). In addition to meeting urgent demands for more classrooms and teachers, special tools and methods had to be developed to help absorb youngsters from many cultural backgrounds into one school population. The Israeli government has specifically designed educational programs to meet the needs of the newcomers. This includes preparation of appropriate curricular aids and short-term classes to introduce immigrant pupils to subjects not learned in their countries of origin, such as the Hebrew language and Jewish history. Special courses were initiated to train teachers to deal with immigrant youngsters, and retraining courses for immigrant teachers have facilitated their employment in the education system. At the same time, the Ministry of Education is involved in an ongoing process of bringing educational standards in line with modern pedagogic practices, such as mandating gender equality, upgrading teacher status, broadening humanistic curricula, and promoting scientific and technological studies. A key aspect of its policy is to provide equal opportunities in education for all children and to increase the number of pupils passing matriculation examinations (Israeli Ministry of foreign affairs, 2008).

### 4.4 Challenges and critic

Through history and to this present day it has always been important to link the people and the Israeli culture to the land they now possess. Development of curriculum and textbooks are also in Israel important in constructing the Israeli children’s identity. Like in the OPT, the strong symbolic meaning education carries is an important factor for educational developers.

How the Israeli Government depicts their Arab neighbours is of great relevance for the up growing youth. How the “other” is viewed in the educational system is relevant to how the
images of Palestinian Arabs are institutionalized into the children’s minds. Here, as in the OPT, viewing school textbooks is important to understand the political and cultural setting which education is related to. Bar-Tals (2001) build on the assumption that school textbooks provide an illustration of the shared societal beliefs. This means that they constitute formal expressions of a society’s ideology and ethos, its’ values and myths. The textbooks do not provide neutral knowledge, but constructs a particular reality, best suited for the political system that fosters them (Bar-Tal, 2001). There are many similarities between the powerful symbolic meaning of education in Israel and the OPT. Both are constructing a reality based on how they portrait and depict the other part of the conflict.

In earlier times, before the establishment of the state of Israel, all history books focused on the justifying the exclusive rights of the Jewish people to the country, disregarding the rights of the Arabs to the country, and rejecting recognition of their national rights, while noting but also denying their religious rights. These books emphasized that this country, the Jewish homeland, was conquered by different people including Arabs, was neglected through the centuries and waited to be redeemed by the Jews (Firer, 1985 in Bar-Tal, 2001: no page nr).

During the first wave of Zionist immigration to the region, most of the textbooks constructed was made and manufactured by Jews living in different parts of the world (Bar Tal, 2001). It is stated that in these early books, the Arab population was not mentioned, and if they were, they were portrayed as invisible. Bezalel (1989 in Bar Tal, 1998) claims:

[T]he Hebrew readers focus on two main justifications for their right to the land… one is of a more general human right of the right to a homeland; the second is through the historical ties between the Jews and their ancestor’s right and continues Jewish settlement during all these years (Bezalel, 1989 in Bar- Tal, 1998: 726).

What Bezalel (1998) is stating can be viewed as what I have mentioned in chapter three related to construction of cultural identity. I want to reflect around the fact that the first Israeli textbooks had a nation building intention. In these textbooks the main focus and emphasis was to legitimize the Jews right to the land, and as mentioned, in these books the Arab population was seldom portrayed at all. Bar-Tal (2001) states that around 1920-30, as the act of Arab violence increased, the geography textbooks begun to present the Arab as the enemy. He claims that “this violence was first viewed as a continuation of the pogroms in Eastern Europe, but later it was seen as hostility towards the Zionist goals, and described them as a
mob which threatens, assaults, destroys, eradicates, bums and shoots, incited by haters of Israel” (Bar-Tal, 2001: no page nr).

Geographical textbooks from that period were dominated by nationalistic values and the glory of the ancient past. It is stated that the land was neglected and destructed when the Jewish people went in exile. This justified the return of the Jews to their homeland, successfully turning the swamps and desert into blossoming land. The Jews renewal and revival of the landscape with the help of the Zionist movement after the Arabs had neglected the country, did not cultivate the land, according to the textbooks. The Arabs were characterized by primitivism and backwardness. The general perception of the Arabs in these books was as unenlightened, inferior, fatalistic, unproductive, and apathetic, with the need of a strong paternalism (Bar-Gal, 1993 in Bar-Tal, 1998).

Following the establishment of the state of Israel and until the 1970s, school textbooks continued to present a very negative picture of the Arabs. According to Firer (1985 in Bar-Tal, 2001: no page nr) the 1948 war was presented as a struggle between the few (Israeli) and the many (the Arabs), starting with the attacks by local Arab gangs and followed by an invasion by seven Arab states. The reason for the refugee problem was that the Arab fled, despite Israeli attempts to persuade them to stay and the subsequent Israel-Arab war were described as acts of Arab aggression, Arab hatred of Jews, and their anti-Semitism as motivating forces in initiating violence. The general perceptions of Arabs in the textbooks are described by Bar-Tal (1998) as;

[H]ostile and cruel, immoral, unfair, with the intention to hurt Jews and to annihilate the State of Israel. Jews, on the other hand, were presented in a very positive light. All violent acts had been forced on the Jews, who were in quantitative inferiority, but who nevertheless were presented as winning most hostile encounters because of their determination and bravery. According to Bar-Tal, Jews were also described as more advanced, educated, and industrious as well as moral, human, and fair. All the history textbooks presented a picture of the Jewish people as victims of anti-Semitism. Jewish history was presented as an unbroken sequence of pogroms, special taxation, libel, and forced conversion, with the Holocaust forming its climax (Bar-Tal, 1998: 726-727).

This statement can be seen as a good example of orientalism, and also illustrates how textbooks can be used to create narratives and attribute qualities to “the others” to legitimize own actions. From a historical perspective the textbooks tend to emphasize the Jewish people and their uniqueness and their suffering from anti-Semitism. Bar-Tal (1998) shows that these books emphasized the greatness of the Jews as a result of “surviving the persecution, their
moral and cultural superiority, and the exceptionality of the nationalistic Zionist movement” (Bar- Tal, 1998: 727). If we think of the construction of identity as mentioned by Thomlinson (2003) we can see, that geography textbooks from this period used geography as a way of strengthening and building an identity and belonging to the land. In these textbooks the authors attempted to nourish love of the country by describing it as beautiful and the pioneers who settled it as devoted Zionists. The books glorified the immense sacrifices of the pioneers. They were portrayed as “dedicated, industrious and brave laborers who drained the swamps, cultivated the land, built Jewish settlements, and defended themselves successfully against Arab violence” (Bar- Tal, 1998: 727).

All these depictions of the Arabs and the descriptions of the land and the role of the Jews have created a national narrative and perception of the Arabs as the eternal enemy for the state of Israel. Even though there have been great changes in the textbooks and in the curriculum in the Israeli educational system the last 20 years, many of these pictures and narratives are still integrated into the cultural and societal narratives. According to Bar-Tal (2001) we have to go to the 1970-1980s before it appeared books that provided an alternative presentation of the Arabs. Further, he claims that we have to go to the last few years of the 1990s before a more balanced and nuanced presentation of the Arabs and the Palestinians was presented (Bar-Tal, 2001).

4.5 Attributing “the other”

In this chapter I have given an introduction to the educational systems in Israel and the Palestinian territories today. It has also focused on the challenges that the two educational systems have, both today and through history. Textbooks and curriculum as stated in this section is viewed from a historical perspective. In the different literature reviewed I see a general tendency in that from a historical perspective, both sides have used education and curriculum as a tool to legitimize and foster values and belonging to the country. By doing this they have created “the other” as an opponent that undermines and dehumanize the right of people to exist in safe and secure surroundings. Following attribution theory this has been done because “people makes sense of their world by assigning qualities and causes to people and situations, frequently attributing positive consequences to their own action and negative ones to the actions of others. They may develop over-generalized labels to explain others behaviour, and assign blame” (Davies, 2004:15). I have tried to explain the underlying reason
for these generalisations by going through the historical events that have contributed to create the narratives people possess. All these factors have a historical dimension and might explain why the situation in the Middle East is difficult to change, but I wanted to see how the situation is today. What do the children in the areas learn about each other? It is earlier in this study stated that the new Palestinian textbooks are supposed to be free of anti-Semitism and hatred towards Jews. This is from a theoretical perspective. How these new textbooks and educational interpretations of the curriculum are practised in an everyday life is more relevant for the outcome of children’s perspective of “us” and “the others”. I will now try to see how these issues are solved today. What do children learn about their neighbours, and how are they portrayed in the textbooks today? In which way are the historical narratives being expressed today by the up growing generation?
Chapter 5: How do children perceive the narratives of “the other” today?

My main emphasis in this chapter will be related to my interviews conducted during my fieldwork. In the interviews I asked the children questions related to social background, religion, what they learn in school about Israeli/Palestinians, what they know about their own history and what they know about the history of their neighbours. To answer my research questions it was important to find out if the children are reproducing the narratives discussed in the previous chapter. Are the new generation of children being confronted with information that will change their perspective of “the other” as the enemy or are they still the bearer of these cultural narratives? I will try to see if there are differences in the children’s opinions based on their background and their religion. The finding in this section indicates that the children do not learn anything about “the other” in their formal education, they are too young. There are also some differences in the children’s responses based on their social background. The knowledge they possess is related to cultural knowledge about their own history, their knowledge of “the other” are from a more stereotypical perspective. The historical narratives are still strongly integrated into the children’s perception of reality, and some of their responses indicate that other areas of socialisation influence them.

5.1 Entering the field

I started my fieldwork in Tel Aviv on my way to Beer Sheva. Researchers often state that the first day in the field is often the hardest. For me, personally that was not the case. As everyone who has conducted fieldwork knows, what you expect beforehand, and what actually happen are two different things. At the time of arrival there was a teacher strike in Israel, I got the chance to spend some days in Tel Aviv as a tourist. The contrast between Tel Aviv and what I meet at a later point in my fieldwork was enormous. Tel Aviv is a secular, modern city, with enormous contrasts to Jerusalem and Ramallah. People were polite and open, and treated me as one of them. But that was before they realized that I was a foreigner. Then questions were asked about my intentions, my stay and my religious background. The question about my background was very important. Did I have a Jewish mother? Was I seeking my roots? Did I speak Hebrew?
A lot of people in Tel Aviv, especially the young people I talked to were well aware of the situation and the conflict they were living in. But for them, they had given the task over to the politicians, and many felt that there was nothing they could do. They felt secure after a long period without suicide attacks and conflicts in the streets, and where doing their own personal matters. In fear of generalising, I like to mention that I also talked to many young persons with desire to see changes, and questioned their own government and their way of treating the Palestinians. Even though the younger generations are more secular than their parents, especially in Tel Aviv, nearly all the persons I talked to said that even though they were not religious, they were true to the “cause”, the belief and conviction of Zionism; the belief that Jews have the right to return to their homeland.

After days of frustration, waiting and hoping, I finally got the opportunity to visit a school in a town called Beer Sheva, in the Negev, in south of Israel. Beer Sheva is a town in rapid growth due to industry and the University of Been Gurion.

After conducting my interview sessions in Beer Sheva, I went to Jerusalem for some days before entering into Ramallah. I did not know what to expect when I got into a service taxi in Al- Musrara in Jerusalem on my way to Al- Manara in Ramallah. Stories from the Norwegian media ran through my head. Only two days earlier, a dozen people had been killed by Hamas supporters under the “celebration” of Yassir Arafats day of death. In my mind I asked myself why I had decided to conduct my fieldwork here. What could I do here that had not already been done thousands of times before by others? I was driven through Qalandia Checkpoint and into the territory. After passing the checkpoint the first sign I saw stated “Palestinian territories, Israeli citizens not allowed”. As a “virgin” in conducting fieldworks, tensions inside made me nervous and insecure? The atmosphere in our little taxi was experienced as tensed when we drove through the checkpoint. An old woman on my left side folded her hands and prayed in Arabic. This act of religious practice did not make me any calmer. I looked out the window and saw the wall cutting into people’s backyard and separating the two areas decided by politics to be different worlds with different laws and religious practises. I was entering one of the most intricate conflict areas in the 20th century. After twenty minutes the taxi stopped and the driver turned to me and said,” this, my friend, is where you get off”. I hesitated for a second before entering the unknown. It is a peculiar feeling when you suddenly realize that you are totally on your own, without any safety or support. I have to admit that when I was standing in the middle of a marketplace I did not feel much like a researcher.
5.2 The Schools

I will start by giving a general introduction to the four schools involved and discuss their similarities and differences.

School A:

My first interview session was conducted outside of the city of Beer Sheva, located in the Negev, south of Israel. Due to confidentiality and ethical considerations, I will not reveal details of the location. The school represents the secular part of the Jewish community. It is a large school with students from 7th to 12th grade. In this school I conducted interviews with five groups of children. All groups consisted of three to four children, girls and boys equally represented. The age varied between 12 and 13 years, and all attended 7th or 8th grade. There were no authority personnel present during the interview sessions, and I was able to use a tape recorder. All students were Jewish.

School B:

This school is situated in the center of Ramallah. I conducted interviews with three groups, all consisting of three to four children within the age of 13 and 14. Children with different religious background are attending this school, and on a weekly basis the children meet and learn about each other’s religion. The school is part of a project called “Dialog between religions.” As a part of this project, the children choose a topic that will be discussed or learned. According to the headmaster this is done to foster respect and knowledge about the different people, traditions and religious practices. The headmaster told the children that they should consider the interview as an opportunity to talk with people from the “outside”. There were no authority personnel present during the interview sessions and I was able to use a tape recorder. All students were Arabs.

School C:

In this school outside of Ramallah I interviewed 12 children divided into three groups, they were all girls. They were between 10 and 13 years of age. During the interview session a teacher, an assistant and the headmaster were present nearly all the time. In this session I was not allowed to use a tape recorder during the interviews. All students were Arabs.
School D:

This School was a public boy’s school outside of Ramallah. 600 children attended this school. I conducted interviews with three groups in the age of 12 to 14 years. Because of confidentiality and a promise to the school administration that no information regarded the school can be traced back to them, I will give no further information. In this session authority personnel were present in parts of the session, and I was under no circumstance allowed to use my tape recorder. All students were Arabs.

Social background is important as it often affects the children’s socialisation. I wanted to see if differences in social background had an impact on the children’s responds. Factors like economy and religion might have an impact on how children view their environment and I was interested in seeing if this had an impact on the children’s interpretation of the narratives.

The schools represent different cultural and economic backgrounds. In school A, nearly all the parents had higher education and where working as doctors, teachers, university professors or within the public sector as nurses or health personnel. Others had their own companies or worked within the private sector with banking, engineering or insurance. In this school, of all the children asked, only one of the mothers was working at home. The others were working full time. From a language perspective, the children spoke nearly fluent English, and were able to express themselves in a nuanced and understandable way. Some of them had also stayed for a longer period abroad, such as Canada and the US. The cultural background within the group varied. Some of the children had grandparents or parents that had immigrated to Israel from countries such as Ethiopia, Ukraine or Russia, others were native. It is relevant to mention that I do not consider the socio-economic background of the children attending this school to be common in Israel. My assumption is that this school is handpicked for me as an example of successful educational institutions in Israel, and also because this school is situated in an area that not directly are confronted with the impact of the violence of the conflict. Thereby giving the children some distance to the direct impact of the conflict. Nonetheless, the data collected here is still relevant, since regardless of the children’s answers, it will give me information about what they know and how they view the conflict and the parts involved.
There are some similarities related to the socio-economic background between school A and B. In school B, some of the children had parents that represent the upper segments of society, not to the extent mentioned in school A, but also here most of the parents were educated. Some of the parents worked as doctors, some as teachers at universities, others as pharmacists. Still, the majority of the parents in this school were working as machinists, constructers or in the public sector. As in school A, most of the mothers where working full time, nearly all the children was born and raised in Ramallah. The children attending this school had siblings or family members who had emigrated from the West Bank to the US or Europe. Related to language, also here the children spoke nearly fluent English, and the translator only had to assist when it was necessary to explain certain Arabic words that do not easily translate to English.

In school C, most of the parents worked in the public sector or were government employees. The majority of the mothers in this school were working at home. The girls were also more reluctant to speak English. Most of the girls were born in Ramallah.

In school D the common census was that fathers worked in the public sector or were government employees. Others worked as taxi drivers or in gas stations, shops or within constructions. Also here the majority of the mothers were working at home. Most of the children were born and raised in the West Bank. In school D the interviews were conducted mainly in Arabic, and English was seldom used.

The general differences between the four schools were that school A and B had parents from the more wealthy aspect of society. This is not just related to economy and social status, but also what we can call social capital related to language and mobility (some of the parents could travel to Jerusalem because they had access). In both school A and B the majority of parents had high status jobs and long academic background.

In School C and D shared more similarities to each other both related the parents’ occupations, and gender roles. In school C and D there also were fathers with higher education, but they were in a minority. The general tendency in these schools was that the parents were less educated and from a social background which represent the middle or lower middle class.

Background has an effect on the children’s perception of reality. This can be expressed through religious or political affiliation, and It will have an impact on the historical narratives.
I will return to this. I have given this overview to contextualise the differences in background for the children involved in this study.

5.3 The influence of historical narratives

In my interview sessions I wanted to hear what the children knew about their own history and the history of “the other”, both from what they were learning in school and their general knowledge related to the topic. This was done to see how the children presented the narratives, which I have been reviewing in the literature. How is the literature presented in chapter 4 about perceptions of “the other” presented by these children today?

When I started my session in Beer Sheva, I ran into some unforeseen challenges. My intentional plan of investigating what children were learning in school about “the other” had to change. The reason for this was clear; the age group I was targeting did not learn anything from their curriculum or syllabus about “the other” in school, they were too young! If children do not learn much about the conflict with their neighbours until they are over 14-15 years old, where do they get their information and opinions from, and how does this affect the way they are perceiving “the other”?

New questions started to stimulate my curiosity. Why do they not learn anything about the conflict that affects almost every aspects of their life? Why is it incorporated into the curriculum so late? Where and by whom do they learn their narratives from? And what are these narratives teaching them about “the other”?

Since the children did not learn much about the history of the Israeli/Palestinians in the age group I had sample, I felt that it was still relevant to continue asking about what they knew about each other and where this information came from. This could give me information of the cultural narratives, since the information were collected from social arenas where these narratives are reproduced and uphold. To elaborate around this, the information you learn in school might be relevant and can contribute to a broader and tolerant understanding of other people, but it does not necessary reflect the peoples opinion in general. Therefore we can say that the narratives that people create and reproduce might be a stronger indicator for the public opinion than what you learn in school.
In school A modern Israeli history was not yet on the syllabus. The children responded that they talked about it, but not as formal teaching. Much of their historical knowledge was related to religion as mentioned in the previous section. I asked the children what they knew about the Palestinian history based on their textbooks. All the children responded that they did not learn anything about the Palestinians from their textbooks. They told me that they talked about them in relation to the war with Lebanon and Gaza. I asked them if they knew something about the Palestinian people. The general knowledge about the Palestinians varied. One of the interviewees told me that:

If I didn’t watch the news and television I wouldn’t know that they even existed. There are two different paths for the two people, no one has the right to throw the other out, and until there is total peace there should be two different countries for the two different people (Girl. School A, Group 2).

The Palestinians were here before us. They have an opinion that we took their land. Before the Holocaust Jews and Arabs lived here together, but not as a state (Boy. School A, Group 3).

The children told me that most of the things they learn in school are from the ancient times. Some of the children were now educated in early Jewish history.

We learn about the Jewish religion and talk about it. One of the things we talk about is the two different directions within Judaism, the two houses. That the Jews are divided between those who are secular and those who are religious. They don’t fight or anything but they discuss (Girl. School A, Group 1).

What this girl is stating is that there is a discussion within Judaism related to the interpretation of the bible. The discussion is related to if people shall interpreted the bible figural or literally.

We also learn about Theodor Hertzel, he is the father of Zionism (Boy. School A, Group 2).

The children were learning about the history of the Jews in a historical context. The knowledge about Zionism was something all the children had an opinion about, and most of them were eager to tell me about it. The children knew a lot about the historical events related to the old history of the Jews. When talking about the history, the children also started talking about the situation as it is today. One of the interviewees told me that:
I think it’s more important to learn about the political situation today than what happened thousands of years ago, but we don’t do that. We talk a little about it, but not enough. We have a course called democracy, we talk about it there sometimes (Girl. School A, Group 2).

This statement is a good example on how history and religion are interlinked, meaning; the study of history is also a study of how religion has had an influenced on the conflict in the region. Even though they did not learn about these themes from the syllabus, all the children had an opinion or reflection about the questions asked. Some of the children showed a broader and tolerant perspective related to how people are being portrayed, and how this often leads to generalizations. A 13-year-old girl said:

We call them Palestinians, as a group, but they are not all bad, they call us Jews, but we are different. Jews are not one group, we are people also, in the group, that’s what I talk with my parents about. They think they know us, but they don’t. To learn about other people is not enough, we have to meet them. They are not a group like cows; I must meet the persons if I shall know them (Girl. School A, Group 1).

This young girl mentions a crucial aspect to this conflict. For many Israeli children the contact with Palestinian children is not present. This depends on what part of Israel the children are living in, Jerusalem is an exception, but many Israeli children have no contact with their Palestinian counterparts. All the Israeli children I talked to mentioned that they wanted to have contact with Palestinian children of their own age. The Palestinian children held the same view. Today, for many Palestinian children, the only Israelis they meet are the persons standing in the checkpoint or guarding the towers. This affects their opinions and their image of the Israelis as the ‘enemy’, not as individuals. In school A, the majority of children interviewed had never talked to a Palestinian their own age.

The Israeli children’s knowledge about the Palestinians was usually restricted to religion. They knew that the Palestinians are Muslims and that they believe in Allah. They also had general knowledge about what part of the world Islam was practiced. Besides this the general attitude towards the Palestinians varied. Some of the children expressed that they did not care or wanted to know anything about the Palestinians.

I know enough of the Palestinians by the Qassam rockets being sent in from militant Palestinians, learning about others are cynical and hypocritical (Boy. School A, Group 4).
This statement is from a 12-year-old boy. Because of the words he used and the way he said it, I assume that this is an attitude adapted from others areas of socialization, now transferred into his perception of reality. The words cynical and hypocritical are used in a wrong way and are seldom integrated into children’s vocabulary at this age if they have not been adopted from others.

The Palestinian children, especially in school B and D had a broad general knowledge about their own history. The children were also eager to tell me about it and show me that they knew their history. Even though some of the dates and years were not correct, they told me about some of the events that have shaped the history for the Palestinians. The stories they told me were emotional and often concerned loss and repression of Palestinians and their families. To illustrate, a boy told me some of the most important historical events for the Palestinians:

In 1974, they make a committee to decide to part for the Palestine and Israel, 33 country’s agreed with this and 13 disagreed, the Israeli occupation …took our land, but we give it to them, they didn’t respect that decision, so they started to killed 3000 people in Dejazin. They killed a pregnant woman with her child, November 1988, the Palestinian national authority, proclaimed the Palestinian state, capital of Palestinian state Jerusalem and stats the resolution of the PLO … Arafat came to Palestine .Nov 15. 1988 they decide Independence Day…now we live in hell…1994 was the Oslo agreement and in 2000 the second intifada begins (Boy. School D, Group 3).

What we can see is that even though this boy knew dates and some important events, they were intermixed and difficult to understand. He had a lot of knowledge about the conflict, but the information he gave me was unclear and normative. This boy views Israel as an occupying force. He had this information from his father. As in school A, the children reproduced the parents opinions, and by doing so become carriers of the same narratives as the previous generation.

I asked the children in school B, C and D what they knew about the Israeli history. Some of the children told me about the Babylonians from ancient times and that they were Jews. Other answers were in another category:

They have no history…they came from all over the world because they don’t have their own country. They occupied Palestine and did aggression on Palestine. They are homeless people who come to Palestine and claim that they have a home here (Boy. School D, Group 2).
Some of the children used terminology of war and conflict. When the boy in school D states that they came and did “aggression”, it might be as a result of lack of better words, but it can also be an expression about the general attitude toward the Jews and Israelis, as illustrated further:

I know something about the Israeli history, they were good but their president Sharon made them bad….they come from all over the world and took it (Boy. School D, Group 2).

They are not all bad, they are humans like us but. But every time we go to another city we must pass through a checkpoint and they are staring at us, it is very bad (Girl. School B, Group 1).

They have their own section so why shall they come to ours (Girl. School B, Group 2).

Discrimination wall, they are separating us, as we were animals. They don’t trust us. Maybe there are some people that you should not trust, but you should not judge all the people because of something than some people are doing, it is stereotypical (Girl. School B, Group 1).

I asked this girl if they had the same stereotypical assumptions towards the Jews. She responded by agreeing, but she also mentioned that:

The difference is that we (Palestinian children) have nothing, and they (the Israeli) have everything. It is not right. They are people just like us. But why do they do this towards us. They took our water and land, we have no food. Some of them might be good, but some of them I hate because the way they treat us (Girl. School B, Group 1).

What this quote illustrates is that the Palestinian children experience the conflict in a different way than the Israeli children. They feel the tension and the conflict in an everyday situation related to fundamental physical needs, like restrictions on food and water. It seems that the children have various knowledge about history, their own and others. I will return to this in my closing remarks.

5.4 The influence of religion in the perspective of “the other”

Some of my questions were related to the children’s religious affiliation. Even though I was not allowed to ask too many questions about religion, some information was gathered. The
reason for asking these questions was that I wanted to see if religious praxis had an effect on and how they viewed “the other”, and if religion had an impact of their interpretation of the narratives involved. One of my interview questions was; did they consider themselves to be religious and to what extend? This involved questions on how often they attended church, mosque and synagogue. I also asked them questions related to the learning/teaching of religion outside of school.

In this section I use direct quotes from the children when referring to the interviews. The general reply in school A was that they did not consider themselves to be very religious. Some of the children attended the synagogue on a regular basis, but not more than once a week. They went to the synagogue related to the religious holidays or when it was Bar mitzvah. All the children had grandparents who were more religious than themselves and their parents, and they claimed that they had very little religious education outside of school.

Some of the children were non-believers. One girl stated that:

I feel Jewish and I live in Israel, but I do not believe. When people are killing each other because they believe, it is wrong. I think it is terrible (Girl. School A, Group 1).

I think that the Jews have had a very hard time through history and even though we do not believe, we feel Jewish as a nation (Girl. School A, Group 1).

These statements were common in the schools visited in Beer Sheva. As in Tel Aviv, the children interviewed did not consider themselves to be religious, but all implied that they supported the cause of Zionism. From this position it might seem that the Jewish cultural identity is stronger for many, rather than the religious identity.

Even so, the interesting aspect regarded religion and the children responses that they did not consider themselves religious; when I asked them to tell me the most important characteristics about the Jews and their history, nearly all the answers where related to religion:

The most important thing about the Jewish history is the bible (Girl. School A, Group 1).

We learn about the history of Abraham, Ishmael and Jacob and that there is only one God. This was about thousands of years ago before it was Israel (Boy. School A, Group 4).

Judaism is guidelines to behave against others (Boy. School A, Group 3).
In school B different religions were represented. Even here the children interviewed did not consider themselves to be very religious. They attended the mosque or church, some Fridays for the Muslims and Sunday for the Christians, but nearly all the Muslims I interviewed stated that they seldom attended. The Christians interviewed went nearly every Sunday. But according to a young boy “it is because I meet some of my friends there” (Boy. School A, Group 2). Some of the Muslims go every month to Jerusalem to pray. This is a privilege that not all the children have. A young girl stated:

She’s so lucky, I can’t go there, it is forbidden for me. My father were in prison, so I can’t go, I have no permit (Girl. School B, Group 1).

The girl who told these words is 13 years old, and has never been to Jerusalem even though it is a 30-minute drive from where she is living. The translator explained to me that it has to do with the children’s birth certificate and the permit of the father. If your father has a permit to enter Jerusalem, the children can accompany him. I asked the children if they had persons around them that taught them something about religion outside of school. Some of the children told me that they had an uncle or relative that was religious and talked with them sometimes, but the general reply was that the grandparents were religious and sometimes talked with them about religion, but they did not consider this to be very relevant.

In school C, religion influenced all aspects of the education and their daily life. All the girls considered themselves to be religious and attended the mosque regular with their parents. Their responses were influenced by religion and they viewed the world from a religious perspective. If “Allah wants” and “we put our trust in Allah”, were statements often mentioned. Here there was also more talking about the teaching of religion outside of school.

In contrast to the other schools involved, the information gathered in this school where difficult to interpret. The response to my questions where influenced by the fact that there where authority personnel present nearly all the time. The girls also followed up the reply stated by the person before her; they had difficulties expressing their own thoughts and opinions. There were also a general tendency that all the answers where influenced by their religious background, and that they hoped to answer correctly based on the teacher and headmaster present. They were shy and insecure about their response, and did not express much of their own opinion about the conflict or the situation they were living in. In one of the sessions the authority personnel left the room after some time. In this situation I noticed that
the girls opened up in a different way. From being shy and insecure, they started asking me questions about my work, if I had interviewed children in Israel, and asked what they were thinking about them.

In school D a lot of the boys were attending the mosque three times a day. School D only had three hours religion a week, but some of the boys told me that they learned more about their religion outside of school. Religion was a more important component in daily life than in the school A and B. There are no clear cut distinction here, but according to what the children were telling me, and the language and descriptions used by the children, they had a more religious focus than the two other schools. Statements like “with the help of Allah we will get our land back” and “Allah is great” were mentioned more than once in the interview session in school D. This will be illustrated more thorough in the next section.

To sum up, it is relevant to mention that when it comes to religion school A must be said to belong to the more secular segment of the Jewish community. If the interviews would be conducted in other parts of Israel, the result would be very different because of the religious assurance many Jews live by. This do not necessary have to do with geographical location, but as mentioned before, I consider School A to be secular, interviews conducted in a religious school would have given me very different responses. It seems that religion has varying degree of importance in the children’s lives. This is related to how they practise their religious beliefs and also their social background.

5.5 Terminology

The children used different language and terminology when they were talking about the conflict and the parts involved. I mention this because it might be an expression for their general attitude towards the conflict and their neighbours.

Asking young children about whom they consider to be “us” and “the other” might seem abstract and without relevance, I did this because I wanted to get an impression of what type of group mentality the children had. Did they consider themselves to be part of a religious group, national or ethnic group? I asked some questions about trust, and what kind of information they did consider to most reliable.

In school A the distinction between “us” and “the other” varied the most;
I and the Israeli living in the country are us and the others are the Palestinians and other that don’t like us (Boy. School A, Group 1).

Does the other have to be someone that hates us? Us, is the people who lives in Israel, the others is people who thinks that Israel shall exist, but don’t live in Israel…religious people that believes in the United States (Boy. School A, Group 1).

The real us are the Jews who lives in Israel, Jews living outside is a little bit us , but they do not really know what is going on, they do not know what it is like here… the Arabs that lives in Israel is somehow in the middle.. The real other people are the one that do not like us, like the PLO (Boy. School A, Group 3).

It depends on who says it. If the prime minister says it, it is the nation, if it is my friends it’s me and my group and the other as a group (Girl. School A, Group 2).

Other distinction was related the private and national” us”. Further, some of the children answered that they consider “the other” to be Palestinians and other people that does not like us. Us where interpreted to be, religious people living other places but still thinks that Israel has the right to exist.

School B, C and D had more similar answers to who they considered to be “us” and “the other”, there responses were more stereotypical. It was nearly always “us “as the Palestinians and “the other” as the Israeli or Muslim “us” and the Jewish “other”. Some also replied that they consider the Palestinians living in the West Bank as “us” and the Palestinians living in Gaza as “the other”. These responses might tell us something about the diversity within two groups. Who is considered to be “us” and “the other” is related to what social, political or religious position the question is being viewed from.

What do the children consider to be the most important knowledge for them? What they learn in school or what they learn from their parents, families or friends? Most of the children meant that the knowledge they got from their parents and friends where more important than what they learned in school, they also trusted the family the most, as a source for information and knowledge.

Family because they teach me how to behave, and I think that that is more important than what you learn in school (Boy. School A, Group 1).

In school you get information; family learns you the way of life (Girl. School C, Group 1).
It is impossible to make a general opinion about what you are learning in school, it is just a fragment of the whole picture. If you shall find out about what is right or wrong you have to seek information from different places and make up your own mind, not just listen to what everybody else are saying (Girl. School A, Group 1).

What you learn in school is just a small portion of the trough; you need more information to see the whole picture (Boy. School D, Group 1).

We cannot be educated from just school and family, all of this is important. We must not always believe the information from the media or by talking with their family and friends, we must think by ourselves (Girl. School A, Group 1).

The general assumption from the different schools was that it was a combination of what you learn in school and what you learn by parents, family and friends that was important. Still, as many of the responses illustrates, family are the most important factor to information and general attitudes. If theoretical knowledge about persons and cultures are learned at a stage in life where the children have been socialized into political and religious beliefs, can they be changed? At that stage in a person’s live, have they no already become the carrier of the narratives of the nation?

The language terminology used by the children varied among the schools. One aspect related to terminology is that children use master statements, meaning words with symbolic and normative characterizations. In School A the terminology was generally tolerant and open. No typical words of war or enemy were used to directly describe the Palestinians or the Arabs in general. The difference in the interview session from the other schools was that in school B they were more frustration and emotions. Nearly all the children that I talked to had lost someone or had family members that was injured or in jail. Their terminology was tolerant but frustrated. Words like coexistence and reconciliations were fervently used and they were hoping for peace. It seemed to be a willingness to accept a two state solution as long at the Israeli respected the Palestinian right to land.

In school C, the terminology in this session where characterized by religious influence “Good is god”, “put our trust in Allah”. The conflict and their perspective of reality where canalized through their religious assurance. School D had a much harder terminology. The boys were open and reflective but the words they used to describe the situation were different than in school B and C. In this school words like “enemy”, “hate”, “fight against Israel” were frequently used and the conflict was viewed as a fight against the enemy. This is also
illustrated in their lack of willingness to see the Jews as something else than an occupying force.

As part of my interview I asked the children if they think it is important to learn about other people and culture, and if learning about other can contribute to a broader understanding and co-existence. This might be categorized as a leading question, but I was interesting in hearing if there was a willingness to learn and understand about the people on the other side of the conflict. Most of the children told me that they thought it was important. From a general perspective they meant that it was important to broaden their perspective and knowledge. In school A, a boy said:

It is important to learn about other people’s traditions and culture. It is important to accept every people and get knowledge of them, to prevent racism (Boy. School B, Group 2).

Many of the children had responses that were tolerant, reflective and expressed a willingness and wish for peace and reconciliation. The only problem was that none of the two sides felt that they were the one that needed to start this process. Both sides assigned blame towards the other part. Statements like, “they can start by giving us our land back” or “they must stop sending rockets on our homes” illustrates that both sides is convinced that they hold the right view and the other part must change their ways. Regarding the conflict the children reacted differently related to learning more about each other. Some of the children in school A did not want to learn anything about the Palestinians. They meant that their actions talked for themselves. Others meant that it was extremely important to learn more, but also stretched that it does not help learning about them if you don’t meet them. In school A, some of the participants told me that they did not believe that learning about the Palestinians would change anything; they meant it was a task for the politicians. As a response to this a young boy replied that;

Even if the government solves it, the people have to solve it between themselves; it is not peace if the people living there hate each other (Boy School A, Group 4).

In school B a girl said:

It is important to learn about the Israelis so that we can communicate with them and know why they are taking our land and killing us (Girl. School B, Group 2).

This last statement might illustrate that knowledge to increase dialog would be constructive to try to understand each other’s behaviour.
5.6 Closing remarks

What are illustrated in this chapter are the differences and similarities between the four schools based on background, religion and their general attitudes towards “the other”.

My findings indicate that the children did not learn much about the conflict with their neighbors, not on the level and age group that I was targeting. When they viewed “the other” it was through what they had seen in the news, through religious traditions, and what they had talked with families and friends about. This implies that the information they acquired is of another character than formal education. Still, it seems that some of the information and attitudes towards “the other” were learned from school, but more as a hidden curriculum from what they experience in their daily life, not from the syllabus or curriculum. This “hidden curriculum” can be knowledge allocated trough discussion in class, through friends or the teacher’s attitudes towards the conflict or political and religious events in the media. A general tendency in school B and D was that the children knew the most important events from a historical perspective. All the children had some knowledge about history, but from what perspective varied.

Both sides knew to some extent their own version of history; this is coherent with the cultural narratives described in chapter one. They are reproducing the notion of their historical past, but are not contributing to create new narratives with more tolerant perspective toward each other. It seems that religion has varying degree of importance in the children’s lives. This is related to how they practise their religious beliefs and also their social background. Because this is a small study, I cannot draw general conclusions from the small sample involved. But it seems that there are some tendencies between school C and D that supports that both religion and social background have an effect on how these narratives are reproduced. The children attending school C and D were both more religious and came from a background with parents who were less educated and had lover income than the children attending school A and B. The terminology used in school C and D was also different from the other schools. The way they portrayed “the other” were more stigmatizing and negative than school A and B, and the terminology were either influenced of war, enemy, fight or religious beliefs. The general attitudes towards “the other” were also stereotypical in school A and B, but the terminology was different, and they had a broader willingness to se alternative solutions to the conflict.
What I have illustrated in this section is that the knowledge the children have about each other are influenced by the conflict and their background. They often adapt the already existing narratives and uphold these perspectives and opinion. The way they depict and portrait their neighbours are often from a normative and emotional position. Even though there is a general willingness for change, neither of the two parts is willing to be the part that starts this process.
Chapter 6: Closing discussion

In this study I have looked at education in Israel and the Palestinian territory. I have viewed the content of the narratives that have influenced the two educational systems from a historical perspective, and I have, through the interviews, tried to see how these narratives are expressed today. In this chapter I will use the theoretical framework to analyze the material. I will divide this chapter based on my research questions. The research questions are related to how narratives of “the other” have been used in education through history and how children perceive the narratives today. Still, this division is difficult as they somehow are related. The present is result of the past history so there is no clear-cut division, they are inter related and will overlap.

6.1 Attribution and education through history

The historical narratives of “the other” presented through education in this study, must be seen in light of the historical events that have created the background for the conflict today. Events, such as to the Balfour Declaration, The War of Independence/ The Catastrophe 1948, and the 1967-war have all contributed to create strong opposing narratives for the people involved in this conflict. Events happened in more resent time have contribute to uphold or strengthening these narratives. One of the reasons for why these narratives have been constructed is that through history and to this present day it has always been important for both the Israelis and the Palestinians to link the people and the culture to the land. Through education and textbooks they have constructed narratives to strengthen their identity and belonging to the country. Attribution theory in this study is applied as a theory for explaining why the two parts involved has constructed these narratives and attributed qualities towards each other.

This can be seen in the literature were:

Jews returned to their homeland, successfully turning the swamps and desert into blossoming land…. The Jews renewal and revival of the landscape with the help of the Zionist movement after the Arabs had neglected the country, did not cultivate the land, according to the textbooks. The Arabs were characterized by primitivism and backwardness. The general perception of the Arabs in these books was as
unenlightened, inferior, fatalistic, unproductive, and apathetic, with the need of a strong paternalism (Bar-Gal, 1993 in Bar-Tal, 1998).

The Jews’ right to the land is built on the justification of that the Arab neglected it and therefore do not cherish it as much as the Jews. From the literature reviewed in this study we can see that both the Israeli and the Palestinians people have purposefully used attribution theory as a method to attribute positive consequences to their own actions and negative ones to the actions of others. This has been done to legitimize their belonging and the right to the land, and to strengthen the identity of the people. Bar-Tal (2001) states that around 1920-30, as the act of Arab violence increased, the geography textbooks begun to present the Arab as the enemy. He claims that “this violence was first viewed as a continuation of the pogroms in Eastern Europe, but later it was seen as hostility towards the Zionist goals, and described them as a mob which threatens, assaults, destroys, eradicates, bums and shoots, incited by haters of Israel” (Bar-Tal, 2001: no page nr). In these textbooks the main focus and emphasis was to legitimate the Jews right to the land, and as mentioned, in these books the Arab population was seldom portrayed at all, and if they were portrayed, it was in a negative:

Hostile and cruel, immoral, unfair, with the intention to hurt Jews and to annihilate the State of Israel. Jews, on the other hand, were presented in a very positive light. All violent acts had been forced on the Jews, who were in quantitative inferiority, but who nevertheless were presented as winning most hostile encounters because of their determination and bravery (Bar-Tal, 1998: 726-727).

The Arabs also had extreme stigmatizing perceptions of the Jews:

The Jews were in Arab books seen as an occupying threat, so cruel and impossible that no state or country in the world would shelter them” (JVL, 2001: no page number).

The history of the conflict as described in chapter one, have created these narratives and contributed to create these stereotypical attributes of each other. Education and textbooks were used, in a historical perspective, to create a stronger identity and belonging to the land, the literature has also shown that it had a nation building function (Bar-Tal, 1998.2001). Research of the early textbooks indicate lack of attempt to provide neutral knowledge, but constructed a particular reality, best suited for the political system that fostered them (Bar-Tal, 2001). This trend seems to appear in all the literature reviewed. What authors like Bar-Tal
(1998-2001), Firer (1985), Nicolai, (2007), Santestiban (2002) and Bar-Gal (1993) is claiming, is that the negative stereotyping is not surprising. Attribution theory assumes that “over a period of time, persons would be expected to accurately characterize humans in terms of their dispositional properties” (Prus, 1975 in Breidlid, 2010:2). As a result, the stories they create from what they are experiencing in their daily lives becomes a part of their own identity, their narratives and educational practises. This is what we can see the result of in the reviewed literature and the interviews in this study. When these attributes or perspectives of “the other” are being integrated into the people’s opinion and perception over a long period of time, they are viewed as common truths and become part of the people’s historical narrative.

These attributes and construction of narratives can be seen, as people involved in conflict will be interested in structuring their reality, so that they can make sense of this reality. They want control over their environment. Therefore they want their assumptions and general theories on the conflict to be valid (Heradstveit, 1979). This structuring of reality related to attribution theory has the same purpose as Margaret Mead and Claude Levi Strauss’ notion of structuring the society into binary oppositions to create order and clarity (Eriksen, 1993). In this study I have used “us” and “the other” as binary oppositions, a term used for the same attributes used in attribution theory, to assign qualities to others and structure people’s reality. I have seen that attribution has been used for a purpose in educational practises through history. Based on these historical narratives and the socio-cultural perspectives from the past, it is difficult to turn the societal beliefs that have been passed on through generations. This has been illustrated through my interviews, in that the children reproduce narratives. Even though they do not know much about the conflict, they hold the views of their parents, family or friends:

I know enough of the Palestinians by the Qassam rockets being sent in from militant Palestinians, learning about others are cynical and hypocritical (Boy. School A, Group 4).

They have no history…they came from all over the world because they don’t have their own country. They occupied Palestine and did aggression on Palestine. They are homeless people who come to Palestine and claim that they have a home here (Boy. School D, Group 2).
The cultural socialization on both sides makes it difficult to break free from the picture created in their cultural socialization, partially because the cultural identity is so interlinked with the fight against “the other”. These destructive pictures of “the other” are for many, not all, integrated into the core of their cultural and religious identity and are not easily changeable. These pictures and narratives have marked the people on both sides. Bar-Tal (1998) claims that;

Conflict ideology transmitted to the young generation of Israelis (and Palestine), reflect the educational reality which we must consider when we try to tackle the question of whether the transmitted contents of societal beliefs correspond to the new political reality formed in the Middle East (Bar-Tal, 1998: 740).

The many years of ideological socialization are not easy to change and if change shall be done we are facing the complex task of constructing and maintaining a new social reality (Bar-Tal, 1998). In such a process, societal, cultural, political institutions and channels of communication must take an active part. As my interviews illustrate, this is not happening today. The conflict is not integrated into the educational system through formal education. I have mentioned that it does not matter what you learn in school if institutions around the children do not changes. This is based on what children’s experiences outside of school, the influence they are confronted with in their daily lives and the challenges they are facing as a result of this.

The difference is that we (Palestinian children) have nothing, and they (the Israeli) have everything. It is not right. They are people just like us. But why do they do this towards us. They took our water and land, we have no food. Some of them might be good, but some of them I hate because the way they treat us (Girl. School B, Group 1).

Quotation like this illustrates that there are other factors that might have a more profound effect on children life than just education, and these factors have a grater impact on people’s life than what you learn about “the other” in school. Even so, Bar-Tal (1998) claims that in the process of change, education and the educational systems must have an important role. He states that:

School textbooks play an important role in shaping the beliefs prevalent in a society. In view of the emerging new reality in the Middle East, these books should present students with updated information concerning both the past and present, and they should be characterized by openness and complexity. The development of a new ethos
of peace is a major objective for all societies involved in the peace process in the Middle East (Bar-Tal, 1998: 740).

From what he is stating, education and textbooks can have an important role if they are free of false premises and biased perspectives about “the other”, and contains updated information concerning past and present. His perspective is similar to the intention of the shared history project of PRIME as mention in the introduction of this study. They want to use education, as a way of getting the different parts closer to each other through knowledge and reflection about “the other”. This is positive and constructive if they succeed. If children shall change their perspective of “the other” they must learn about them. This is the problem today. Children do not get updated information from neutral parts, the information they receive is from agents that already are bearers of historical narratives, and they are not able to break free from these narratives.

6.2 How are “the other” perceived by children today?

From a historical perspective, narratives of “the other” were reproduced through education and textbooks. Today, narratives of “the other” are not learned in school in the same way as it did in earlier history, the negative presentation is no longer in the textbooks, even though some organisations are claiming that. From what I were experienced through my interviews, children do not learn about the conflict in school until after a certain age, my interviewees were between 10 and 14 years old and had not started. There are other challenges that the educational systems are facing today: the challenges of information or lack of information.

What can be interpreted from my interviews is this; today the narratives are reproduced outside of school; media, religion, family and friends are now the bearers of these narratives and these opinions. Still, it seems that some of the information and attitudes towards “the other” are learned in school, not from the syllabus or curriculum, but as a “hidden curriculum” from what they experience in their social lives at school. Even though the children do not learn about each other in formal education, the narratives and the opinions about “the other” is still strong, implying that this information is gathered from other sources of influence in the children’s lives. Because the children do not learn about “the other” and the conflict in school, the hidden curriculum is important.
Santestiban (2002) is claiming that there is a mismatch in the intended curriculum, and because of that, the hidden curriculum is more relevant both in Israel and the OPT. This statement must be seen in light of what has been said about the challenges the MoEHE had when they were creating the Palestinian curriculum. The difficulties were related to factors outside of the educational system. Factors like right of return, boarders, self-autonomy and how the Palestinians shall portrait the Israelis in the curriculum made the project challenging, internal voices were also critical to the content of the curriculum. The factors mentioned and also the allegations from CMIP and problems related to donors are all political issues that influence education. As a result of this, Nicolai (2007) and Santestiban (2002) claims that it is impossible to talk about an independent Palestinian curriculum. These authors are stating that the simplest questions for any schoolchild in any nation are unsolvable for Palestinian children:

What are the borders and extension of the Palestinian land? What are the attributes of the Palestinian state? What is the fate of millions of Palestinian refugees who live in Arab countries, in Europe and in America, and are not allowed to live in this state? Why do Palestinians not have a fully-fledged state as Israelis do? How are students going to contribute to the national construction and the restoration of their national rights? (Santisteban, 2002: 4).

Not being able to answer questions such as above, creates problems that affect the Palestinian children when it comes to identity and knowledge, but also the educational planners who are developing the Palestinian curriculum. Therefore the curriculum is not able to contribute to the state formation, which is common elsewhere (Santisteban, 2002). He also emphasizes “the role of the hidden curriculum implemented both by Israel and by the Palestinian Authority seems to be more powerful than the official school curriculum and the official political declarations and plans” (Santisteban, 2002: 15). According to this statement, it is not just the national government that is creating the curriculum. On a structural level, others also have an impact, not directly, but indirectly, based on their conditionality towards what is right or accepted as relevant knowledge for the Palestinian children. The result of this is a lack of correlation between the national curriculum and real life. These questions are difficult because, to some extent, is out of the hands of the curriculum developers. They are dependent on the Israelis, and their relationships are intertwined/linked. This example can be seen from the position of what is mentioned as integrationist theory. In Integrationist theory conflict is the product of continuous negotiation about what is valued, how behaviours are to be
interpreted and the meaning of events (Isenhart & Spangle, 2000 in Davies, 2004: 14-15). This will also have an effect on education both from outside and within. As described by Nicolai (2007), different internal voices are advocating for a stronger emphasis on some topics like life skills education and peace education. Others such as teachers, administrators and parents are claiming that, “what is the use of peace education when the children see violence and human rights are constantly being violated in their day to day life” (Nicolai, 2007: 87). The question of debate is related to what kind of knowledge shall be passed on to the next generation. This is related to what shall be the content of the curriculum, but also how others are viewing the content and the way this content is represented. As mentioned earlier, CMIP and JVL are claiming that the Palestinian curriculum is educating children to hatred and violence. The critic is especially focusing on Palestinian children being educated as anti-Semitic and anti-Israel. At the same time the international community has an impact on education through founding. Based on this conflicts and challenges are create since the Palestinian Authority have difficulties creating a national curriculum to preserve the national needs. Further we can see that if there is no correlation between what children are learning in school and what they experience in their daily lives (related to politics and the conflict), it can undermine the educational system and this opens channels for alternative ways of learning. Hidden curriculum is important to both education and the construction of identity and narratives because it combines knowledge from both a theoretical historical perspective and an emotional normative perspective. Bieber (1994, in ICAN, n.d.) claims that the hidden curriculum is a term used to describe the unwritten social rules and expectations of behavior that we all seem to know, but never were taught (ICAN, n.d.). Hidden curriculum is viewed as knowledge that is taken for granted in everyday life, like knowing one’s place, one’s individual worth, values and beliefs. The challenges with hidden curriculum is that it can take an emotional curve, be of more normative character, and not necessary theoretical or true, thereby reproducing the already existing tension. If children do not learn about the conflict and “the other” in school, the narratives will vary depending on what segment of society they are been told from, based on religion, political view and/or social background. This creates not a collective cultural feeling, but a more fragmented, sub cultural form of narrative that does not unite the people involved. It can create tensions within an already divided society. This problem can be seen from the perspective of field theory. If we look at the questions related to identity, Field theory can be used as a supplementary explanation for the difficulties people are confronted with in their daily life. Arabs, Palestinians and Israelis are often confronted with “push and pull” expectations and loyalties. The internal struggles between...
different positions, religious and secular, can be viewed as a result of this. This factor is extremely relevant as a way of explaining why it is difficult to find a solution to this conflict. As mentioned, related to identity, the people within the conflict are not just fighting “outside” forces, they are also battling within their own group, making it even more difficult to seek reconciliation. These internal conflicts are related to what is considered to be values and goals to pursue for the people involved.

6.3 The complexity of conflict

What has been illustrated in the previous section is that through history, education has been used as a political weapon to create stronger cultural narratives and give people a notion of identity and belonging. The educational practices today are not directly constructing the same stigmatising view of “the other” as in the earlier days, but the narratives and the children’s perspective of “the other” are still strong and integrated into their perception of reality. It seems that the narratives and perspectives of “the other” are even stronger today than what is illustrated in the literature reviewed for this study. To explain why, we must move away from education and look at the conflict in a broader perspective. The environment they are living in influences the children. This is particularly relevant for the Palestinians. This also illustrated by some of the responses in the different interview sessions:

They have their own section so why shall they come to ours (Girl. School B, Group 2).

Discrimination wall, they are separating us, as we were animals. They don’t trust us. Maybe there are some people that you should not trust, but you should not judge all the people because of something than some people are doing, it is stereotypical (Girl. School B, Group 1).

We must pass through a checkpoint and they are staring at us, it is very bad (Girl. School B, Group1).

What is shown is this study is that, today, education is just a minor component in the intricate web of factors, related to this conflict. The narratives created by both parts must be seen in light of the events mentioned in chapter one. This is also the reason why complexity theory has been used as a supplementary theory in this study. To understand the conflict, and why the parts involved are acting as they are and hold a curtain view, must be related to history. The
conflict in the Middle East must be seen from the perspective of power. The children’s reaction and perception of “the other” must be seen in light of their socialisation and the collective cultural narratives that have influenced the people grown up in this region. The history and the experiences both parts hold, is a history of conflict, war, international interests and in more recent time, suicidal attack, loss of autonomy and struggle for existence. The political struggle for power and resources are important factors to this conflict and has an even more profound impact on people’s life than education. The Wall, build through the land, grasps a large per cent of the agricultural areas from the Palestinians, making it difficult to produce food to the people in the region. The Palestinian people are depended on the Israeli Government to grant them food and water. This can be seen as what in chapter three has been described as structural and repressive violence, which again in Equity theory is described as distributive justice (Davies, 2004). The total blockade of Gaza, the impact of the separation wall and restrictions on movement, supplies and trade, are affecting the Palestinian people in all aspects of their lives. If we combine the situation they are living in today, with the historical perspective of loss of land and independence, it is understandable that they become distressed and angry for losing something they value. The need to see factors from different position does not make the situation easier. Both parts in this conflict are convinced of their correctness and justification of own actions and goals. To see the conflict from a broad perspective, we must see the different factors influencing the perspectives of “the other” and the narratives. The what children learn in school and the relevance of this knowledge, are not that important when confronted with war and aggression, restrictions and isolation. Education can be used as a tool, but if this tool shall be successful, other areas have to change. If these areas do not change, the impact of education about “the other” will be of minor importance.

6.4 Bring it to a close

The content of the historical narratives that have influenced the educational system for Jews and Palestinians have been a fight for legitimising the people’s right, belonging and affiliation to the land. Through history the education and textbooks have been a contribution factor in the stereotypical perspectives created by the parts involved. The historical events have been influenced by international factors related to a play of power and struggle for land, belonging and identity. The long history of conflict has created opposing narratives still strongly embedded into the peoples’ opinion and notion of each other even today.
Narratives and the perspective of “the other” are of great importance even today, these narratives must be seen in light of more reason events and how these events are influencing people in the region in an everyday live. There are different dimensions to the conflict that all have an impact on these narratives.

Today education is an important component for the parts involved as a tool to socialize children to become a part of the society, but from a broader perspective, education is just a small component in the massive stream of information that children experience in their everyday lives related to the conflict. If the general societies, with its multi-dimensional arenas do not change, education alone cannot stand against these forces of political and religious assurance.
Chapter 7: References


Chapter 8: Appendices

Appendix A: Application for Research Permit
Appendix B: Consent Form
Appendix C: Consent Form Arabic
Appendix D: Consent Form Hebrew
Appendix E: Research Permit from MoEHE
Appendix F: “Assistance Letter” from The University Of Oslo
Appendix A: Application for Research Permit

To whom it may concern,

I, Morten Skrede, am employed at the Faculty of Educational Sciences at the Educational Research Center at the University of Oslo, Norway. I am currently a PhD candidate in the Department of Philosophy in Comparative and International Education (PICI). My research focuses on the degree programme in education and development policy and planning in a comprehensive perspective, my specialization in educational policy and development, and my interest in the role of schools, the social and cultural context of student development, and the impact of education in developing countries.

I intend to write my master's thesis based on a fieldwork I would like to do in Israel and the Palestinian territories. My thesis, working title: "The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and its Implications on Education Policies in Israel and the Palestinian Territories," will be a qualitative study. My research proposal has been approved by the educational department of the University of Oslo's Department of Philosophy in Comparative and International Education.

I am writing this letter to request permission to partake in my fieldwork. A research proposal has been submitted to the University of Oslo, requesting fieldwork in Israel and the Palestinian territories. I will be conducting the fieldwork in Israel and the Palestinian territories.

The purpose of the fieldwork is to examine the role of education in shaping the children's perspective of the conflict. Through interviews with teachers, students, and parents, I aim to understand how education policies and practices in Israel and the Palestinian territories affect children's perspectives of the conflict. The research will contribute to the understanding of the impact of education on children's development.

I believe this research is important in raising awareness of the role of education in shaping children's perspectives. Understanding the impact of education on children's development is crucial in shaping future generations' perspectives. This research will provide valuable insights into the development of children's educational experiences and the role of education in shaping children's perspectives on the conflict.
practices and outcomes, if not, the problems on both sides of the conflict will be reproduced from the children and their perspectives of "the others". Is this happening today?

I intend to collect data through different methods of inquiry. My main method will be interviewing and questioning. The interviews will be approximately between 20 minutes and 1 hour. I will also be taking full field notes, using questionnaires, and searching for official documents that can provide me with data for my research area. I am arranging semi-structured and open-ended interviews, and am preparing to interview various stakeholders. Among these are officials in the educational field, principles of schools, teachers, parents, and a limited number of children in primary and secondary school.

I will be treating all individuals and the data that they provide me with confidentially. I will make sure that the participants will be informed with the intentions of the thesis prior to their involvement. I will also make sure that I have their consent. The consent form will be available for the participants to read and sign in English and/or in Arabic. However, I will also stress that the participants have a right to withdraw from participation, at any time. The master thesis will be published openly. The thesis will be published at BOK digital publications at the University of Oslo. A copy of the thesis will also be available at the University of Oslo Library. A summary of the thesis will be made and will be sent, if desired, to those concerned.

The fieldwork will mainly be self-financed, with the exception of a small amount of expenses covered by Lamkelassen, the Norwegian State Educational Loan Fund. The stipend I receive from Lamkelassen will pay for my flight from Oslo, Norway to Tel Aviv, Israel, and will be approximately 4000 Norwegian Kroner (NOK).

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Martin Storevold
Student

[Signature]

[Name]

Director of the Master programme in Comparative and International Education
Appendix B: Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Oslo, 15.10.2007

Morten Stensrud
Stenslervien 48 D
0477 Oslo.

Phone: + 47 95009211
Email Address: morten@student.uio.no

University of Education
Faculty of Education
Institute for Educational Research
Postboks 1161, Blindern
Phone: + 47 22858276
Fax: + 47 22858241

Consent Form

Participation in “The Israel/Palestinian conflict viewed from an educational perspective. Who are “the others”?

This research is a fieldwork which is part of a master’s thesis in Master of Philosophy in Comparative and International Education, provided at the University of Oslo, Norway.

The research intends to address the situation regarding how children are being socialized into cultural narratives and how these narratives are creating a picture of other people and nations. What is schools on both sides of the conflict teaching their children, and how is this affecting the conflict and the children’s perceptions of “The other”. Is education functioning as a reproducer of the conflict or can education function as an approach to reconciliation?

I, Morten Stensrud, am the researcher of this study. I am 36 years old student at the Faculty of Education, the Institute for Educational Research at the University of Oslo, Norway. I am in my final year in the Master of Philosophy in Comparative and International Education (CIE). CIE is an international master’s degree programme on education and development, policy and planning in a comparative perspective.

The research procedures will mainly be interviewing and questionnaires. Most participants will be asked to take part in one interview lasting approximately between 30 minutes to 1 hour. Some participants might be asked to give a second interview if it is found necessary. The participants’ role will therefore be to answer the questions asked as honest as possible.

The information I collect through my research in Israel / Palestinian, will be used in writing my master thesis. The thesis is an 80-120 page official document.
The master thesis will be published at DOU digital publications at the University of Oslo. A copy of the thesis will also be available at University of Oslo library. The research is an open study, which means that the ones interested will be able to get access to my collected data. However, this does not mean that they will have access to my participants, as they will be treated confidential and anonymous. As a participant you have several rights. First of all you have the right to decline participation. If you decide not to participate in the research, it will have no negative impact on you. If you do want to be a participant, you have the right to withdraw from participation in this study at any time. I will assure you that this research will not have any negative implications or be harmful to you as a person in any way. I will be treating all the information about you, and the information you provide me, with confidentiality. If it is wished for, you have the right to have any audio or video recording device turned off at any time. You have the right to ask questions about the study, the research results and the conclusions at any time. A summary of the thesis will be made and will be sent, if desired, to those concerned.

Shortly summarized the basic rights of the participant are the following:

1. To decline participation
2. To withdraw from the study at any time
3. To have privacy and confidentiality assured
4. To have any audio/video recording device turned off at any time
5. To ask questions about the study at any time
6. To receive information about the research results and conclusions at any time

I am informed and understand the intentions of this research prior to my involvement. I agree to participate in this research.

[Signature]

Date
أداة آليّة فهمك التكنولوجيا الحرة، على حق تزويق القصص السرياني أو الكهف الأوروبي في أي وقت تشاء. لديك أيضا حق
لطرح الأسئلة عن الفناء وعن نتائج البحث والخلاصه في أي وقت. أما من حيث سوف يتم الكشف عن
نظامك بذلك.

- مخصر الخروج الذي يحتوي المشتركة
  1. حق المشتركة في الأسنان
  2. رأس الأسنان في أي وقت
  3. المخاطر على الأساسين باختصار
  4. أدبي الحق في تزويق التصور أو التسجيل السرياني في أي وقت
  5. أدبي الحق في السؤال عن الفناء في أي وقت
  6. أدبي الحق في السؤال عن البحث والخلاص في أي وقت

أنا كراد المعلومات المتعلقة بالبحث وقيمت أدماه من هذا البحث. لا أود الإفصاح في هذا البحث.

الاسم: 
التاريخ: 

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

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 תשובות לקבוצת היסודיים או תשובות של מועדים בוודא שיתיק

1. מחוזי תחפושת הבכורה
2. מחוזי תחפושת הבכורה
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5. מחוזי תחפושת הבכורה
6. מחוזי תחפושת הבכורה

שאלה的最后一ליון לשער של הדגישת המקצועல נחקר על התמונות.
Appendix E: Research Permit from MoEHE
Appendix F: “Assistance Letter” from The University Of Oslo

UNIVERSITETET I OSLO

Institute for Educational Research
P.O. Box 1068
N-0317 Oslo

ASSISTANCE IN THE CONDUCT OF FIELD WORK

To Whom It May Concern:

Date: 2017-08-24

This is to certify that the Norwegian student, Mårten Sørensen, born 14.09.1972, is a second-year student at the Master degree in Comparative and International Education at the Institute for Educational Research at the University of Oslo, Norway.

At the second year, students are required to write a Master thesis of 80 to 100 pages. The thesis should be based on originality.

The following may incorporate observations and instructions that give direction on methodology and information gathering. The type of data gathered will be considered as essential material with pertinent authorities.

We hereby authorize Mr. Sørensen to carry out all pertinent assistance in the field visit and the fieldwork letter.

[Signature]
[Name]
[Position]

[Signature]
[Name]
[Position]

Interview question. (Updated version).

1. Social Background:

1.1 Gender/Age
1.2 Ethnicity
1.3 What do your parents work with?
1.4 Where do you live and with whom?
1.5 What do you think of going to school?
1.6 What do you want to be when you grow up?
1.7 What is your favorite subject in school?
1.8 Do you consider yourself religious?
1.9 How often do you attend Church/Synagogue/Mosque?
1.10 Do you learn about religion from other people? (Family, friends etc.)
1.11 Do you think what you learn in school is important?

2. Historical knowledge:

2.1 Can you tell me a little about the history of Israel/Palestine and its people?
2.2 What do you learn about the Israeli/Palestinian history in school? (textbooks/curriculum)
2.3 What do you learn about the Jewish/Muslim/Christian religion in school?
2.4 What does your schoolteacher/parent teach you about religion?
2.5 What do you learn about the Israeli/Palestinians from your textbooks/ teacher?
2.6 Do you know/learn about the Israeli/Palestinians from others? (Media, family, friends)

3. Normative questions:

3.1 Do you think it is important to learn about other people and cultures in school? Why?
3.2 When I say "the others", whom do you think of?
3.3 When I say "us" and "the others", whom do you think of?
3.4 Do you think what you learn in school is different from what you learn from you're family, friend or media?
3.5 What do you trust the most, the things you learn from school, family, friends or media?