Activists in Israeli Radical Peace Organizations: Their Personal Stories About Joining and Taking Part in These Organizations

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The present study aims to examine the personal stories of activists in radical peace organizations to understand their prejoining socialization experiences, their perception of the conflict and the changes they are trying to make, as well as the meaning of the activism for them. In-depth interviews with 16 female and male activists in 4 radical peace organizations were conducted in Israel, within the context of the Israeli-Palestinian intractable conflict. A qualitative content analysis of the interviews revealed that radical peace activists share certain prejoining socialization experiences that account for their collective activity. These include socialization in the family, social and political activities, exposure to alternative information about the conflict, and crucial life experiences. In addition, the activists share a common perception of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They see it as an issue which has been repressed and disregarded by Israeli society. They share the common goal of solving the conflict peacefully and, therefore, they try to raise awareness in society of the conflictive reality. We observed that joining radical peace organizations provides activists with a new collective arena with which they can identify and in which they can act to express their unique values and beliefs, and finally adopt a new, distinctly activist identity. The findings contribute to a better understanding of peace activists' collective action, undertaken with the knowledge that peace activists are at the forefront of attempts to make meaningful societal change.

Keywords: peace activists, Israeli-Palestinian conflict, radical peace organizations, collective action

Peace activists play an important role in the struggle for peace in the world (Schwebel, 2008), especially in societies involved in intractable conflict,[1] because they often constitute the spearhead of the peace movement. However, investigation of these activists has received relatively little attention. Limited research has illuminated which members of society become peace activists and specifically, what characteristics are related to their joining and taking part

in peace organizations, but these questions still remain underinvestigated, especially in Israel. The present study investigates female and male activists in radical peace organizations in Israel to answer these questions, and thus to contribute to further understanding of peace activism. This line of study is of special importance in societies that are still involved in intractable conflicts with a dominant culture of conflict, but concurrently, in which a peace process is taking place, and therefore, peace activism is part of the challenge that these societies face. In trying to elaborate on the significance of peace activism in Israel, we will first briefly introduce the concepts of social movements and peace organizations in general. We will then discuss peace activism in the particular context of the Israeli-Palestinian intractable conflict. Finally, we will present the study with its results and conclusions.

Social Movements and Peace Organizations

Social movements that include peace organizations as their particular form are one of the principal ways collectives give voice to their grievances and concerns about the goals, rights, welfare, and well-being, and those of others, by engaging in various types of collective action regarding various social issues (Klandermans, 1997; Snow, Soule, & Kriesi, 2007). A widely shared definition of a social movement, proposed by Wilson, suggests that a *social movement* reflects "a conscious, collective, organized attempt to bring about or resist large-scale change in the social order by noninstitutionalized means" (Wilson, 1973, p. 8). This definition emphasizes the use of noninstitutionalized means to make a desirable social change, implying the frequent resistance of formal authorities. As institutionalized means for a real change are not always sufficient, organized noninstitutionalized pressure is necessary, and such pressure is carried out by organizations with very committed members for the desired change (Fuchs, 2006; Hermann, 1996; Useem & Zald, 1982). These organizations thus constitute the backbone of any social movement, with specific sets of goals, structures, and practices (e.g., Barnett & Carroll, 1995).

The struggle for peace in the context of intractable conflict provides a situation that enables the rise of a social movement, with vari-

ous peace organizations struggling to change societal goals and policies that encourage continuation of the conflict. This is a difficult challenge, because many of the individuals in such societies hold a sociopsychological repertoire that includes rigid shared beliefs of ethos of conflict, collective memory, and emotions (Bar-Tal, 2013). This repertoire often comprises a hegemonic general worldview supporting the perpetuation of the conflict and constitutes a central barrier for conflict resolution (see the analyzed example of Israeli Jewish society, Bar-Tal, Halperin, & Oren, 2010). Therefore, peace organizations within the context of intractable conflicts strive to carry out social and political change by changing prevalent societal beliefs regarding the conflict, the ingroup and the rival.

Peace organizations are generally defined as organizations attempting to change opinions held by the public on peace-related issues, supporting peaceful conflict resolution and opposing the use of violence. Peace organizations have different specific peace-related goals and use various strategies and tactics to achieve them (Gidron, Katz, Hasenfeld, Schwartz, & Crane, 1999). These include organizations that promote dialogue between representatives of both sides; provide humanitarian services to those in need; engage in disseminating information about the conflict and its consequences; monitor immoral behavior of the ingroup; or make efforts to change public opinion about the conflict (Gidron et al., 1999; Kershenovich, 2000; Meyer, 2004).

Examples of peace organizations that have operated in the context of intractable conflict can be found in Sri Lanka (e.g., Orjuela, 2003), Northern Ireland, South Africa (e.g., Gidron, Katz, & Hasenfeld, 2002; Meyer, 2004), Serbia (e.g., Fridman, 2006), and Israel (e.g., Hermann, 2009). The present study focuses on peace organizations active in Israel in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian intractable conflict.

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[1] Intractable conflicts are violent, fought over goals viewed as existential, perceived as being of zero sum nature and unsolvable, occupy a central position in the lives of the involved societies, require immense investments of material and psychological resources and last for at least 25 years (Bar-Tal, 2007, 2013; Kriesberg, 1993).

Peace Organizations in Israel

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is well-acknowledged as a prototypical prolonged intractable conflict (Bar-Tal, 2013). Its violence has motivated groups of people to struggle for peace and to protest against the continuous bloodshed and thus, peace organizations have existed throughout the history of the conflict, although they differed considerably in strength during different periods (Hermann, 2002). In the last decade, since the collapse of the last peace talks in July 2000 and the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa Intifada in October of that year, when the conflict and violence between Israelis and Palestinians reached new heights, new peace groups and organizations have been established and some of them have been characterized by new radical noninstitutionalized activities in the public space (e.g., Dier, 2010). For them, the collapse of the peace talks and the increased violence indicated that without a radical transformation of the Israeli national ethos, peace was unattainable (Hermann, 2009). These organizations have used a variety of means, from documentation and publication of human rights violations, advocacy, criticism of the government, educational projects, and joint meetings, to street demonstrations and protests.

These groups are defined here as *radical peace organizations*. Radical organizations are characterized by two different aspects. The first is the radicalism of their ideology and the second is the radicalism of their actions (see also Fitzgerald & Rodgers, 2000; Gordon, 2010). A radical organization may have one of these aspects or both. Accordingly, radical peace organizations promote agendas that are radically different from those of the mainstream views and in fact, challenge some of the core values and societal beliefs held by the mainstream, including sectors that support a peaceful solution to the conflict. They often propagate solutions that are unacceptable to the great majority of society members and adopt action methods that are well beyond the consensus (e.g., joining the struggle of the rival, forming an organization with the rival or decide to reveal immoral behavior of the ingroup). When using these methods, members of peace organizations take substantial risks and sometimes clash with the law. These radical groups are minor and marginal, distancing themselves from the national collective, and they are often criticized and even ostracized by formal institutions and mainstream society (see Andersson, 2010). Despite their numerical marginality, however, these minorities sometimes receive wide attention from the media because of the nature of their exceptional ideology and ostracized activities. Therefore, understanding the stories of these small groups of activists in radical peace organizations, who join and take part in their activities, has great importance.

Motives and Characteristics of Activists

There is limited literature regarding the characteristics and motives of social or peace movement activists in general. Previous studies have indicated several general characteristics. One group of characteristics is biographical, age has been found to be related to social movement activity, meaning that young people are more willing to participate in protest activities. Having less investment in careers, they more readily commit themselves to, and participate in such activity with all its attendant risks (Wiltfang & McAdam, 1991). Married people participate less in protest activities because of family obligation and responsibility. Studies conducted in Israel have shown that many activists immigrated from the United States, Europe, and Latin America after the Six-Day War, and joined protest activities after being active in social movements before their arrival in Israel (Hermann, 2002, 2009; Kaminer, 1996). These studies found that most peace activists were middle class, young adults, Jewish, Ashkenazi (i.e., of European descent), academically educated, and used in public service (e.g., social work), in academia, in government ministries, and in various public organizations.

An additional group of characteristics are related to joining collective action. Studies have found that individuals join protest activities when they identify with the collective (De Dreu, 2010; Reicher, Hopkins, Levine, & Rath, 2005), have some interest in politics (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995), carry moral convictions with strong feelings that cannot be compromised, believe that protest may bring about change (Putnam, 2000), have a sense of self-collective efficacy (Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2007), are ready to incur some costs for their activity (van Zomeren & Iyer, 2009),

and are somewhat open to diverse political positions (McAdam, 1988).

Another group of characteristics is related to social structural availability. Existing social or interpersonal networks increase the degree of mobilization for protest activities. Findings indicate that people seldom join such activities unless they have been asked to by those already involved (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). In addition, the best predictor for participation in protest activity has been found to be social contact with a person who is already an activist (Schussman & Soule, 2005).

In attempting to explain the motives for social movement participation, Klandermans (2007) has distinguished three fundamental reasons why movement participation appeals to society members: instrumentality, identity, and ideological motives. Instrumentality refers to participation as an attempt to influence the social and political environment. Identity alludes to a manifestation of identification with a group; and ideology indicates a search for meaning and an expression of political views. Schwebel (2008) argued that activists are inner-motivated. Their motives are shaped by their values, such as peace, social justice, and a sustainable environment—perhaps also as a legacy of parental influence. They regard the political establishment as uninterested or even antagonistic to their cherished values and because these values are very significant to them, they are the source of both strength—their decision to become active, even risking disapproval or worse—and of potential vulnerability.

Present Research

The present study goes beyond the noted studies by trying to examine activists of radical peace organizations who enter into a particular type of activities, perceived by society members as collaboration with the enemy. Therefore, they are ill regarded by the great majority of society members, resulting in social sanctions. In this context, we aimed to empirically examine factors that lead young Jewish society members to join and act in radical peace organizations in Israel as derived from their personal stories, told to us in semiclinical interviews which allow intimate talk. Because, as mentioned above, radical peace activism has gained little research attention, no specific hypotheses

have been raised with respect to the research outcomes. Instead, we have raised general research questions: (a) What are the activists' prejoining socialization processes and experiences?; (b) What is their perception of the conflict and the change they are trying to make?; and (c) What is the significance of their specific activism for them?

To provide answers to these questions, we conducted a qualitative study that included in-depth semistructured interviews with radical peace activists in Israel, who have acted in organizations established after the outbreak of Al-Aqsa Intifada, between 2002 and 2005. As Israeli Jews speaking Hebrew and being involved in public affairs, it was possible to conduct this study with the assumption that a similar study could potentially be done also in other conflict ridden societies, where peace organization are active, by researchers who are their society members.

Method

The present study is based on a qualitative method of interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009), using in-depth semistructured interviews. This method seeks to examine how people make sense of their major life experiences. It is based on the premise that when people have major experiences in their lives, they begin to reflect on them. This method aims to expose these reflections. In fact, the researcher using this approach is trying to make sense of the participants' stories about their experiences (ibid.). We chose to use the qualitative paradigm because we were examining a complex social phenomenon that could not be detected comprehensively by a quantitative reductionist way of measurement (see Yilmaz, 2013). Accordingly, in the following section we describe the subjective experience of radical peace activists and the meaning they attribute to it, through their personal stories.

Participants

Sixteen activists (eight females and eight males) from four peace organizations in Israel (four activists from each organization) participated in the study. Their ages ranged between 21 and 32 years old. The participants were key

figures in their peace organizations and were approached by the "snowball" method. In the interpretative phenomenological analysis approach the studies are conducted on relatively small and homogeneous sample sizes (many studies that have used this approach have had samples of 5–10; Smith, 2004). Participants are selected on the assumption that their standing in the organization and their personal life stories can grant us access to information that can shed meaningful light on our research question (Smith et al., 2009).

The selected peace organizations were established after 2000 (the Second Intifada) and are considered radical organizations, that is, minor marginal groups that promote agendas which are radically different from those of the mainstream, that usually identify with the adversary and cooperate with it, whereas taking substantial risks. They clash with the prevailing societal norms and sometimes even with the law; therefore, they often are criticized by society and are even delegitimized as traitors. The following is a short description of each of them (retrieved from the Internet Web sites of the organizations).

*Remembering (Zochro*t)[2] is a voluntary association established in 2002. It "seeks to raise public awareness of the Palestinian Nakba, especially among Jews in Israel, who bear a special responsibility to remember and amend the legacy of 1948." It argues that "[t]he Nakba destroyed the fabric of relations that existed between Jews and Palestinians before 1948. In recognizing and materializing the right of return lies the possibility for Jews and Palestinians to live in this country together." *Zochrot* carries out different projects to advance understanding of the Nakba and its legacy, through testimonies from Palestinians, collecting maps and photos, publishing booklets of historical background, as well as conducting tours and educational activities for students, pupils, and teachers.

Breaking the Silence (Shovrim Shtika)[3] was established in 2004 by "veteran combatants who have served in the Israeli military since the start of the Second Intifada and have taken it upon themselves to expose the Israeli public to the reality of everyday life in the Occupied Territories." The organization "endeavor[s] to stimulate public debate about the price paid for a reality in which young soldiers face a civilian population on a daily basis, and are engaged in the control of that population's everyday life"; collects and publishes testimonies from soldiers who have served in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem since September 2000; and holds lectures, home meetings, and other public events which expose the reality in the Territories through the voice of former combatants.

Anarchists against the Wall (Anarchistim Neged Hagader)[4] is a direct action group established in 2003 "in response to the construction of the wall Israel is building on Palestinian land in the Occupied West Bank." It argues that "it is the duty of Israeli citizens to resist immoral policies and actions carried out in our name." The group acts in cooperation with Palestinians. Through the years, members have taken part in hundreds of demonstrations and actions against the wall specifically, and the occupation generally, all over the West Bank. All of their actions are coordinated by local popular committees in the villages and are essentially Palestinian led. In the last several years, the activists have been arrested hundreds of times and dozens of indictments have been filed against them.

Combatants for Peace (Lochamim Leshalom)[5] is an organization established jointly in 2005 by Israelis and Palestinians "who have taken an active part in the cycle of violence; Israelis as soldiers in the Israeli army (IDF) and Palestinians as part of the violent struggle for Palestinian freedom." They "have decided to put down their guns and to fight for peace." They "see dialogue and reconciliation as the only way to act in order to terminate the Israeli occupation, to halt the settlement project and to establish a Palestinian state with its capital in East Jerusalem, alongside the State of Israel." The organization organizes meetings between Israeli and Palestinian veterans, holds lectures in public forums on both sides, organizes joint educational projects toward nonviolence, sets up binational media teams, and participates in demonstrations against the occupation.

[2] See the formal Web site: http://zochrot.org/en.
[3] See the formal Web site: http://www.breakingthesilence.org.il/.
[4] See the formal Web site: http://www.awalls.org/.
[5] See the formal Web site: http://cfpeace.org/?lang=en.

Instrument

Collection of the data was carried out using an open-ended semistructured questionnaire that allowed to get acquainted with the life stories of the interviewees. The questions focused on the course of the activist's life, including information about his or her family, childhood and adolescence, influential agents of socialization, major experiences, development of his or her social and political awareness and identity, his or her perception of the conflict, and the process of becoming an activist. Examples of the questions are: "Tell me about your family"; "What was the political climate in your home?"; "Who or what influenced your political views?"; "Tell me about your military service"; "What were your military duties?"; "When did you decide to join the organization?–Why? What were your motives and goals?"; "How do you see the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?" and so on.

Procedure

The interviews were conducted by the third author between 2007 and 2010. The first interviewees were recruited using the email address which appeared on the formal Web site of the organization, and others were contacted by the snowball method. The interviews, which lasted between 75 and 120 min, took place according the wishes and comfort of the participants, either at the organization's offices, at the participants' homes or at a coffee shop. The interviews were recorded after receiving interviewees' permission, with the assurance of anonymity and the promise that their stories would be used for research needs only.

Two ethical issues were taken into consideration in this study. First, in this kind of study, participants share personal and identifying data and, therefore, are exposed to risks. Indeed, some of them asked to remain anonymous and, therefore, we did not include their identifying information. Their request for anonymity was probably, among others, because of the radical nature of their activities. Second, ethically, we had to make sure to describe the data and interpret it accurately and reliably. Accordingly, in the findings section we made valiant efforts to provide accurate citations from the interviews, including accurate translation from the original

Hebrew, and to interpret the findings as reflecting the citations.

Interview Analysis

The recorded interviews were fully transcribed and constituted the raw data for the content analysis. The transcripts were analyzed based on qualitative content analysis, designed to identify patterns and meanings from texts, and to gather and organize them into general categories and themes (Patton, 1990; Shkedi, 2003; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). The first phase included reading the data carefully. The second consisted of creating main categories, subcategories, and themes on the basis of the research questions and shared contents of the interviews. Salient, characterizing, and recurring quotes were aggregated into the categories. To establish the credibility and trustworthy of the study we adopted two procedures (e.g., Creswell & Miller, 2000). First, we used factual and accurate, thick and rich descriptions of the data, including the setting, the participants, and the themes of the interviews. We provided detailed descriptions to enable readers to test the study's conclusions. Second, we used peer debriefing, involving two researchers who reviewed the findings to ensure that they both fit and resonated with the experiences of the interviewers. We reached high levels of agreement among the researchers.

Results and Discussion

Qualitative content analysis of the interviews revealed that peace activists seem to share certain socialization processes and experiences, which constitute a basis for their collective activity. The following findings present the most salient themes shared by the peace activists, including: socialization in the family, social and political activities, exposure to alternative information, and major life experiences.

Activists' Prejoining Socialization and Experiences

We will first present the sociodemographic characteristics of the activists. The great majority of peace activists were young (their average age was 27, range 21–32), single (one was divorced), without children, university graduates

or during their academic studies, with middle-high socioeconomic status, from secular liberal backgrounds, and all were leftist[6] Zionists in their political attitudes. It seems that this sociodemographic profile constitutes a suitable grounding for the youngsters' collective activity, providing them with available time and energy for activity, economic comfort, a liberal worldview, and the lack of commitment to a family of their own.

Early Sociopolitical Socialization Processes

Peace activists seem to share common sociopolitical socialization processes during their childhood and adolescence, which related to their family background, early social and political activities, and exposure to alternative information.

Socialization in the family. A vast majority of the activists (14 of them) described their families as having leftwing Zionist orientation with a liberal worldview, political awareness of events in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and frequent objections to the formal policies and actions of the Israeli government. Political issues were often discussed, focusing on universal values of helping others and social equality. These processes were described by the interviewees in different ways. For example:

> I was a very curious child, and politics was something that was discussed at home a lot. In the 1960s, my father was a secretary in the Mapai party [. . .] political awareness always existed at home. [. . .] I grew up into the first Intifada [. . .] and then the Oslo Accords and all the euphoria. My sister became a radical, and was an activist in Mapam, and [. . .] when I was eight years old, she taught me all that I needed to know about parties and the political map; [. . .] she was 22. We really drew parliament seats and it was fun. I remember I was fascinated by propaganda broadcasts; I was totally into this. I've always defined myself as a leftist, Meretz (a male activist in Combatants for Peace).

> In high school, I thought that what was happening in the Territories was something that I could not stand. At 17, I had political awareness from my parents as well. They are leftists. My parents grew up in a communist country; politics was very salient there. They have political awareness, according to which they educated us. They also educated us to feel disgusted by racism (a female activist in Combatants for Peace).

> I grew up in a typical leftist home. The most influential thing was my mother's involvement in organizations that tried to promote coexistence with the Arabs citizens of the State of Israel, and her establishment of a

humanistic educational center. She was very active in Israelis-Arab meetings (a male activist in Combatants for Peace).

As shown in the quotations, the peace activists grew up in families with political awareness. The parents or other primary family members were significant socialization agents who played a major role in the formation and internalization of social values and norms. In their families, they were exposed to leftist ideology that negated occupation and put an emphasis on equal treatment of the other. These values and beliefs were internalized earlier among the activists and constituted the basis for their later collective action in radical peace organizations. This finding is in line with the observation that a family is a social agent that transmits information regarding moral codes, social values, and political issues to the younger generation and shapes its beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors (Bar-Tal & Saxe, 1990; Jennings, Stoker, & Bowers, 2009; Liebes & Ribak, 1992). It can also be assumed that the liberal climate in the activists' homes constituted fertile ground for their developing liberal views. Indeed, leftist liberal people are described in the literature as supporting social change and justice, as demonstrating flexible thinking, as well as openness to new ideas and the ability to adopt alternative opinions (e.g., Carney, Jost, Gosling, & Potter, 2008; Kruglanski, 2004).

In addition, the findings indicate that, in some respects, the activists continued the political orientation of their parents. This is in accord with the general observation that parents transmit a sense of identification with the political party they vote for to their children (Achen, 2002; Jennings et al., 2009). In the Israeli context, the activists continued the political path of their parents, and reproduced their views (Liebes, Katz, & Ribak, 1991). They absorbed their parents' leftist views that in Israel are synonymous with dovish views that express support for compromises with the Palestinians. Specifically, dovish views propagate withdrawal from the occupied territories in return for a peaceful settlement of the

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[6] In Israeli society, leftist orientation indicates willingness to make compromises to reach peace and objection to the Jewish settlement on the West Bank.

conflict, and they oppose Jewish settlement of the West Bank (Bar-Tal, Raviv, & Freund, 1994). The activists carry these views one step further and become involved in radical peace organizations to achieve these goals.

Nonetheless, two activists related that they grew up in rightist homes and their stories are somewhat different:

> I came from an orthodox background—modern, American, rightist from Jerusalem, 10 siblings [. . .]. My mother passed away when I was a young boy, and this is the second marriage [for my father]. A rightist home, with settler relatives; my sister is a settler [. . .] my grandparents were strong Zionists, but they didn't raise me as a Zionist (a male activist in Breaking the Silence).

> I grew up in Gedera and Rechovot [. . .]. Likud. A relatively normal family. [. . .] My mother passed away when I was 13, and then I stayed for a while with my father, a short time with my grandmother and a short time with my sisters. [. . .] my grandmother is a Holocaust survivor (a male activist in Breaking the Silence).

Those are the only two activists who described their families as rightists. Rightist views are considered hawkish uncompromising views regarding peacemaking with Arabs and they in turn support the idea of greater Israel and the Jewish settlement of the West Bank (Bar-Tal et al., 1994). Thus, in these two cases the obvious question is what affected the significant change in beliefs of these two peace activists (from the rightwing to the leftwing), because as described above, there is usually a similarity between parents' and children's political orientations. One explanation for this change is the finding that both activists experienced trauma in their childhood—the loss of their mothers (see Kiecolt, 1994). According to Staub (2003), a person who has experienced trauma and suffering may develop empathy toward others and even motivation to behave altruistically, because of his or her own painful experience (see also Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Tedeschi, Park, & Calhoun, 1998). Therefore, it is possible that the early experience of the significant loss motivated them later to act to promote changes in the sufferings of Palestinians and Israelis (Staub & Vollhardt, 2008).

Social and political activities. Another common socialization process is related to early social and even political involvement. Most of the peace activists were active in youth move-

ments in their childhood and/or adolescence and some of them (about a third) took part in political collective actions, including demonstrations and meetings with Palestinians (see also Gor, 2011). For example:

> In the eighth grade, I joined The Working Youth (Ha'Noar Ha'Oved) and Peace Now Youth. [. . .] and then they tried to bring the youth movement Friendship (Reut Sadaka), a Jewish and Arab movement, to the meetings. The movement itself is very radical, but in schools it talks mainly about coexistence. I also participated in a theater group of Giv'at Haviva, with many diverse activities that my parents encouraged (a female activist in Remembering).

> When I was in high school, I became involved with socialist ideas. A friend of my parents, who was a Communist in the past, heard that I was interested, so he gave me books by Karl Marx, and I dug into them quite a lot. Indeed, with Oslo and my red involvement, I enjoyed going to demonstrations with a red shirt (a male activist in Combatants for Peace).

These political activities constituted a socialization framework for youth, providing them with concrete experiences that reinforced values and provided skills for functioning on various social levels (Kahane, 1997). Youth movements are voluntary organizations usually directly linked to an adult political party, both ideologically and financially (Kedem & Bar-Lev, 1989). Youth movements in Israel are an important agent for political socialization. Many of the activities concern political issues that stand at the core of the current political agenda and, therefore, it is not surprising that youth movements serve in Israel as a springboard for many political activists, including politicians. In this context, Kedem and Bar-Lev (1989) found that political involvement was higher among former youth movement members than among nonmembers. Of special importance for our study is a finding that peace activists took part in youth movements with leftist orientation and this served on the one hand to solidify their leftist political orientation and on the other, to prepare them for political collective action. Moreover, as noted, some peace activists reported that even at this early stage of their lives, they took an active part in political collective action of leftist peace organizations, in demonstrations, and in Jewish-Arab meetings. These experiences no doubt served as socializing preparations for the later deeper participation in radical peace organizations. In this regard, the study of Roker, Player, and Coleman (1999)

showed that involvement of young people in voluntary and campaigning activities affects their political development in five ways, specifically, in developing an understanding of the needs of different groups in society; a sense of influence over political and social events; a growing sense of party political differences and voting intent; reflection on social structures and processes; and acquiring skills useful in political campaigning.

Exposure to alternative information. Another common socialization process that the peace activists shared was an exposure to alternative political information regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, mostly from books and Internet Web sites, but also by meeting a member of the rival group. This exposure provided them with a new perspective about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. About a third of the interviewees noted this experience as significant to their new perspective. The following examples reflect this theme:

> In the tenth grade, I was introduced to the idea of conscientious objection and to the radical left wing, and I started reading The Left Bank[7] and some other materials . . . and then something in me changed [. . .] and I decided to refuse to serve in the army. I participated in a graffiti workshop for "occupation conscientious objectors," and shortly after that I decided not to enlist. I read an article, and then started crying, and I told my father that I could not enlist (a female activist in Remembering).

> I had a teacher who invited me to a Palestinian-Jordanian-Israeli summer school, which was entirely apolitical. It was a summer school on cardiology for children . . . quite intensive . . . we bonded through shared thinking, and shared experience through games without political talks. [. . .] it was significant to suddenly really meet Palestinians. It was a surprising and different experience for a boy of 15 (a male activist in Anarchists against the Wall).

> I started reading and asking questions. In high school, I read The Yellow Wind[8] by David Grossman (a female activist in Remembering).

According to the classic conception offered by Lewin ([1947]/1997), every process of cognitive change requires unfreezing, which enables exploration of alternative information content and developing awareness of the need for change (Lippitt, Watson, & Westley, 1958). The unfreezing takes place when individuals encounter information that sheds new light and instigates a kind of dissonance that results in a change of perspective (see Festinger, 1957).

Bar-Tal and Halperin (2009) applied the theoretical framework of Kurt Lewin (1947) to the context of an intractable conflict, proposing that exposure to and acceptance of such instigating beliefs allow for overcoming sociopsychological barriers that close a person to alternative information about peace making possibilities in times of intractable conflict. They suggested that the unfreezing process consists of two phases: exposure to the new instigating beliefs that lead to reevaluation of the views held by individuals and then acceptance of the alternative information that leads to the formation of the new position. We learned that some of the interviewed peace activists were exposed to new alternative information during their adolescence, especially through reading, that opened their perspective. We suggest that this process was one of the experiences that crystallized their political orientation.

Major life experiences. An additional common characteristic that helps to understand the prejoining processes of the activists is the major experiences they experienced in their lives. Furthermore, we found a significant gender difference between the activists in terms of these experiences.

Among females. Almost all of the female activists (7 of 8) experienced social marginality in their childhood and/or adolescence, that is, immigration, minority status, outsider feelings, and social ostracism. For example:

> I was born in Montreal, Canada, to a Jewish family. However, my mother had converted to Judaism. Half of my family is Christian and half is Jewish. I went to a Jewish school. I had a difficult time; I was never Jewish enough for the Jews [. . .] I was always the daughter of the gentile mother. Kids are terrible (a female activist in Anarchists against the Wall).

> I didn't grow up in Israel. I was born in Transylvania [. . .] we immigrated when I was 10 [. . .]. I lived there as a minority [. . .]. We felt very very strongly that we were an oppressed national minority [. . .] (a female activist in Remembering).

We suggest that the experience of marginality might be one of the determinants that led the female interviewees to become politically active. The ongoing experience of marginality

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[7] An internet Web site, which provides a stage for criticism of the social and political reality in Israel.

[8] A moral report about the cost of occupation for both occupier and occupied.

may have enabled the female activists to observe other groups from outside the prism of the dominant societal beliefs and to empathize with them (Unger, 2000). The experience of marginality was found to be associated with social sensitivity and empathy for the suffering and pain of the other (Oliner & Oliner, 1988). Stephan and Finlay (1999) argued that empathy is a key factor that may lead to noticing that the out-group is treated with injustice, and this may lead to participation in collective action. To illustrate this, a female activist from *Remembering* said that the connection with the organization is "an emotional instinctive connection of forced immigration from roots, from home," and thus she actually related her personal experience of displacement from her home to the Palestinians' experience. In this context, a study by Sasson-Levy, Levy, and Lomsky-Feder (2011) found that women's testimonies in *Breaking the Silence* included identifying with and empathizing toward the Palestinians. In addition, marginality and experienced empathy may cause feelings of guilt because of the suffering of the other and, in turn, a willingness to change the other's situation (Stephan & Finlay, 1999). Gor's study (Gor, 2011) of women peace activists also revealed that these women had experienced various kinds of direct and indirect oppression, such as gender oppression, ethnic oppression, and social discrimination, which, *inter alia*, might explain their activism. Nonetheless, it should be noted that we do not argue that marginality is a characteristic unique to female activists; however, in this specific sample we found marginality to be a major life experience among females.

Among males. All the male activists (except for one who had refused military service) had served in the army in elite combat units, which had included violent encounters with Palestinians in the Palestinian Territories. The activists had been highly motivated to join the army, viewing military service as their patriotic responsibility. Furthermore, most of them had participated in an officer's training course and as a result, had served for an additional year (following the mandatory 3 year service):

> It was obvious that I was going to enlist, and would give all that I could in line with all of the very beautiful clichés that I grew up with. I enlisted in the Talpiyot Intelligence Unit, volunteered for half a year and even signed up for an additional year in the army; I served

four and a half years in the army, and I am very proud of that (a male activist in Combatants for Peace).

The central concern for national security in Israel positions army service at the center of Israeli civil and patriotic obligation, and attributes high status and prestige to soldiers and especially to those in combat units (Bar-Tal, Jacobson, & Klieman, 1998; Horowitz & Lisk, 1990). These attitudes are also dominant among leftist leaning Jews (Sasson-Levy, 2006). Thus, it is not surprising that the participants in our study, coming from families involved in state life and having been in youth movements, served in the army and even volunteered for combat units, and some for the officer corps. However, although the interviews reveal that the male activists were initially highly motivated and positive about their military service, their experiences in the service caused moral dilemma and strengthened leftist views. An interesting finding of this study reveals that all of those who served in the Palestinian territories reported having disturbing experiences during their military service that led to a collision with their moral values, thus causing them strong dissonance. Examples of such experiences are provided in the following quotations:

> I started to realize that the army is not as heroic and amazing as I previously thought. [. . .] and many decisions are taken at a personal level and are very unprofessional. [. . .] Also, my friends used to return from the Territories after a week, with mixed experiences, partly with enthusiasm—saying "I shot in Beit-Jalla," and partly with shock—"I killed here and there" [. . .]. And I began to understand what it does to them, and what this fighting does to my generation. My friends from high school have become crazy, some of them have experienced nightmares, and some have just become numb beasts [. . .]. And I started thinking that we have become a very violent society, and it starts from there, from the fact that a soldier has to enter people's homes and act, and the silence turns them into something inhuman, something very insensitive. [. . .] I experienced a serious crisis of trust during my military service [. . .]. It was a shocking experience. I left the army very disappointed and frustrated, and also very exhausted mentally (a male activist in Combatants for Peace).

> I served mostly in Hebron, Nablus, or Jenin, inside the Palestinian cities. I served in the military during the Second Intifada [. . .], not an easy service in the Territories during a difficult time. [. . .] Shortly after the beginning of my combat service, I realized that it didn't fit with what I know, and it contradicted my values [. . .]. And we decided to do something, but we were only soldiers. [. . .] I was naïve when I thought that we could change things from inside.

We all participated in command courses in order to try to bring a change from inside [. . .]. It was obvious that something was wrong there. [. . .] I joined the IDF to protect the country and they asked me to do terrible things (a male activist in Breaking the Silence).

The military service was viewed by the male activists as a major experience that played a significant role in the evolvement of their political beliefs. During those experiences, questions and doubts arose regarding their military service and its implications. They described a process of change that began with hard questioning about perceived misdeeds and immorality of the army. In the interviews, they expressed feelings of disappointment and frustration associated with the military activities in the Palestinian Territories. These activities contradicted their moral codes, values and beliefs. As a result, to reduce their distress, the activists decided to act in various ways: some applied for officer's courses in order "to save the situation" and to bring about change from inside the army by educating their soldiers to act differently; some asked to be moved from operational to logistic roles; some refused to perform certain assignments; and other revealed the perceived army's immoral acts to the public (see also Liebes & Blum-Kulka, 1994). In their interviews, they depicted the IDF as being far from the positive and moral image it has in Israeli society. Indeed, after completing their service, they became radical peace activists in a short time. These findings are in line with the study by Goldenberg, Bar-Tal, Ambar, and Pliskin (2013) that found that soldiers who experienced distress after witnessing or performing perceived immoral acts during their military service tended later to testify to *Breaking the Silence* about these acts.

The activists described a sobering process that can be seen as part of their maturation, according to Perry (1968), who argued that maturing youngsters moved from dogmatic unilateral beliefs toward a mature phase of accepting uncertainty and multifaceted reality that leads to developing of tolerance for various worldviews. In this regard, Lieblich (1987) interviewed a group of new veterans and showed that military service often initiated a maturation process that included doubting their earlier dogmas, developing tolerance for others and realizing how complex reality is. In addition, Kolonimus and Bar-Tal's (2011) study showed that participants

who were in their army preservice period showed the highest degree of adherence to beliefs supporting the ethos of conflict, as did participants who were recently released from the army, whereas the senior veterans showed the lowest degree of adherence to the ethos of conflict and also had critical reflections about their army service.

Activists' Perception of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and Their Desired Changes

The activists perceived the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as an issue neglected by Israeli society. They criticized Israeli society and argued that society members were passive and apathetic to the conflict and the occupation, did not care and were not aware of the situation. The activists, on the other hand, were aware of the conflict and its outcomes and were trying to set the issue on the public agenda and raise social consciousness. The following examples illustrate this perception.

We want to bring this agenda to the media, that there is an occupation and an oppression of an entire nation. And when we acted a few months ago in Tel-Aviv, we blocked a road with barbed wire. We put up a red sign to warn that anyone who passed could die, like the sign that located on the Wall. [. . .] We caused a traffic jam, but people must feel uncomfortable, those Tel-Aviv residents, who sit in coffee shops and don't care. So just to raise this issue, so they feel uncomfortable . . . (a female activist in Anarchists against the Wall).

It was obvious to me that I was coming back and doing something; that I don't want to drown and to be bitter about the situation here. [. . .] What I would like to happen here is for Israeli society to wake up, [to understand] what is in front of us. I think that most of us have forgotten a bit and fallen asleep, that we occupy another nation, and the occupation is lasting [. . .]. We are rotting. In fact, this is what I want most, to wake up, for people to understand and get up off their sofas. There must be a change (a male activist in Combatants for Peace).

I wish people would become sober, would understand that they must look differently at things [. . .] understand that there is a problem, and that we cannot be an ethnocratic state [. . .], that power leads us in an endless circle (a female activist in Remembering).

I'm choosing to do the moral deed which is to shout in any possible way (a male activist in Breaking the Silence).

In addition, the activists argued that one of the main problems of Israeli society is that the

members of society are not acquainted with the other side and, therefore, are unable to understand it and be empathic toward it. This constitutes a major barrier toward any change in the status quo. Therefore, one of the activists' main goals is to bring the two sides closer by initiating mutual meetings and providing information about the other's life and its problems. The activists believe that such steps may eventually lead to seeing the Palestinians as human beings and developing empathic feelings toward them. The following examples illustrate the above perception.

> My dialogue with people in the last year has affected me a lot, because I understand how much people don't know. [. . .] We don't give any space to the other side. We don't understand their frustration (a female activist in Breaking the Silence).

> My goal as an organization member is to bring as many Israelis to meet Palestinians [. . .]. They should make this step instead of clicking their tongues, [while sitting] on the sofa. They should come and meet a Palestinian in the Territories, because I think that there is a big difference that many Israelis have missed. When they think about Palestinians, they think about animals [. . .]. They don't think that after all he is a human being (a male activist in Combatants for Peace).

Meaning of Activism for Activists

The young activists feel that they cannot stay passive and must take action. By joining a peace organization and taking part in its activities, they feel that they are fulfilling their social and moral responsibility and commitment as members of this society. The following examples illustrate the above perception.

> I am active because I feel that something must be done (a male activist in Combatants for Peace).

> To be on this side of the political map gives me at least a feeling that I am not apathetic to the suffering happening here (a female activist in Remembering).

> I am not willing to stand and watch from the sidelines and wait for it to be over (a female activist in Anarchists against the Wall).

> We feel that no one but us will do it and tell the story that contradicts the conventional narrative about what is happening in the Territories (a male activist in Breaking the Silence).

In addition, findings reveal that after joining, the organizations have provided the activists with support for their political and social views and have represented a safe place where they could express their beliefs and realize their ideas. In the organization, they managed to accommodate their new values and beliefs and adopt and form a new distinct activist identity. The following examples present this theme.

> I started my activism [. . .] I felt the need to do so. It means connecting my beliefs with actions related to the current reality. In Combatants for Peace I felt the greatest identification, because it is really me. I've personally realized that it is enough to find out that there are other people like me, and slowly the relations have become personal [. . .]. I didn't really take part in any other organization. In Combatants for Peace I've felt very much at home (a male activist in Combatants for Peace).

> Today I define myself as an anarchist [. . .]. These activists are my family [. . .]. I met the most amazing people, whom I would not have otherwise met [. . .] I have the best friends I have ever had, people I can trust in every respect [. . .]. On a personal level, it makes me feel that I belong to a certain group. I have never felt better about myself. I am strong going forward [. . .] it gives me a reason to live [. . .]. Here I feel that I contribute not only to society but also to the world (a female activist in Anarchists against the Wall).

> There is something very powerful in the radical left. It is in many ways a social ghetto, a ghetto with people from outside who make you feel special. A ghetto to which not many belong; that has advantages and disadvantages. You adopt a set of tools and rules that are fairly difficult to get along within the general environment [. . .]. This is a group dynamic, but it allows me to be together against the mainstream with whom I had no common language. It allows me to feel that there is a safe place where I can be heard and accepted. Also, my ideology was shaped in light of these experiences (a male activist in Anarchists against the Wall).

> On a personal level, it gives me a lot of confidence. At the beginning, I went to the meetings but kept it a secret. It was difficult for me to tell anyone what I was doing [. . .]. Then I realized that this was part of me, and I felt very confident with the fact that I was telling people [. . .] even if it was annoying and even if they didn't want to hear. It is part of my self [. . .]. Some days I feel really good, I am satisfied and full, expressing myself during the meetings, my ideas come to life, [. . .] and I really make an impact and it makes me feel good (a male activist in Combatants for Peace).

As illustrated in the quotations, by joining the radical peace organizations the young people were not only able to find support for their political views and a field for collective activity but also to solidify their social identities as members of an active organization. Formation of a new social identity is a crucial precondition for collective action (Reicher, 1996, 2004). Group identification was found to be a significant factor in the explanation of participation in

protests and collective action (Klandermans, 2002; Simon et al., 1998). The new social identity provided the activists with the epistemic basis for collective action and with a clear behavioral direction. It served as a sociopsychological basis for a new personal framework with a new favorable self-conception (Kiecolt & Mabry, 2000). They could feel belonging and support, and thus successfully face the disapproval of the society. It was their groups that provided them with the social infrastructure for a new positive reference group that fulfilled their social needs (Brewer & Sliver, 2000).

Summary and Conclusion

The results of the study point out that radical peace activists share certain prejoining socialization processes and experiences that account for their collective activity. These include socialization in the family, social and political activities, exposure to alternative information about the conflict, and crucial life experiences. The early political socialization at home and in youth movements provides foundations for the formation of a worldview about the Israeli reality and especially about the conflict. In addition, all of the activists interviewed were exposed to experiences and/or information that was in contradiction to the dominant narrative in society. No doubt, this reinforced their worldview. This worldview served as a basis for early political involvement that allowed translation of worldviews into action. However, for males, the imprinting experience that transformed the worldviews into commitment and search for organized action was the military service. In their military combat service, they experienced difficult events related to the conflict, which caused feelings of dissonance, guilt and questioning of the dominant societal ethos. On the other hand, we suggest that the transformation for females was based on their experienced significant social marginality (immigration, minority status, outsider feelings, and social ostracism) for a long period in their childhood and/or during adolescence. With the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a backdrop, their experiences of marginality led them to the development of empathy and identification with the weaker side in the conflict, that is, the Palestinians. From that point

on, the continuing affiliation process leading to the peace organizations was the same among males and females. The feelings of dissonance among males and the empathy for the weak among females caused them to resist the status quo of the unbearable conflict and to call for change. They increasingly opened up to alternative information and started participating in peace organization activities (such as demonstrations, giving testimony, etc.), mostly influenced by an acquaintance or a friend, and began to implement their new ideas into actions, finally joining the radical peace organization. We suggest that the youngsters' political action is an important phase in changing self-perception. By participating in activities, they also shaped their self-image (Bem, 1972). However, especially important for understanding the process of political change is formation of a new identity. This is one of the crucial factors that underlined their new realm of collective activities (Tajfel, 1982; Turner, 1999). This occurred during their participation in the organization, where they got support and approval for their political views and solidified their social identity as members of a radical peace organization. All the interviewees reported that, in the radical peace organization, they found a positive reference group and meaningful self-fulfillment. This is a crucial development as it allowed them to find a place where each of them was able to participate in significant activities trying to move Israeli society in the direction of change. The organization became kind of Gemeinschaft (communal group) safe, active and friendly, which served as a defense against the sanctions experienced in the society.

To conclude, the present study examined the path of activists in radical peace organizations to understand the leading factors related to the decision of young individuals to "go outside" the mainstream of society, even beyond the institutionalized peace organizations, to join radical and marginal organizations and to become their leading activists. Further studies are required to deepen our understanding of the characteristics of young adults, related to their joining radical peace organizations, beyond the present study's sample of peace activists in Israel. It is also important to continue studying how changes in views and beliefs may affect

individuals who live in a situation of intractable conflict. We believe that expanding the narrow circle of peace activists can promote social change, create an alternative ethos of conflict and facilitate a peace process. Such a process could open a window for peaceful resolution of intractable conflicts, including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that has lasted over 100 years and extracts very high costs for both societies.

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Correction to McNamee and Wesolik (2014)

In the article "Heroic Behavior of Carnegie Medal Heroes: Parental Influence and Expectations" by Sharie McNamee and Faith Wesolik (*Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology,* Vol. 20, No. 2, pp. 171–173. doi: 10.1037/pac0000026), the abstract was erroneously shortened. The complete abstract is as follows.

This study investigated heroic helping behavior and the influence of parenting in Carnegie Medal Heroes. Their responses to a standardized interview questionnaire rating parental influence on their attitudes about helping on a Likert scale were compared with those of a random sample. The means of parents' influence: teaching, empathy, role-taking and/or expectations of their child to help others, were rated. Carnegie Heroes' helping behavior and decision-making was compared with the random sample's choice of response and decision-making in a hypothetical situation similar to the situations the Carnegie Heroes faced. The one significant difference that emerged between the parents' influence was that the Carnegie Heroes' parents expected their children to help others significantly more than the parents of the random sample. By expecting children to help others, parents and teachers can influence children to help, even to heroically help others, which may help to counter bullying behavior towards others.

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