Abstract

In 200 words or less, provide an abstract that summarizes the substantive focus and design of your research and its contribution to education.

Recent research on historical ethical judgments has advanced the historical thinking model. However, a comprehensive study exploring student’s historical ethical judgment within the context of ongoing, violent conflict is lacking. This study addresses this gap by investigating Israeli adolescents' ethical judgments regarding the Nakba—Israel’s most controversial historical event and a focal point of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Building on a multi-year project, this phase examines responses collected before and during the Gaza War, using a unique dataset of approximately 450 students surveyed in September 2023 and 254 matched follow-up questionnaires post-October 2023. The study explores how students’ historical ethical judgments change amid violent conflict and how their identities and thinking skills influence these dynamics.

Employing both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, the study draws on Lindsay Gibson’s (2018) framework to develop a new analytical tool for assessing students’ historical ethical judgments. It also incorporates the Stanford History Education Group’s Historical Assessment Tasks to evaluate students’ historical thinking abilities. Preliminary analysis reveals significant shifts in students' ethical stances following the Gaza War, showing how social and religious traits shape their engagement with difficult histories. An ongoing follow-up study further investigates aspects of Intellectual Humility and beliefs related to the epistemology of history.

In no more than 50 words, explain why this study is needed and important.

It will:

1. pioneer the exploration of student’s historical ethical judgment amid ongoing violent conflict;

2. enhance our understanding of the relationship between historical ethical judgment and historical thinking; and

3. add important layer to the understanding of teaching the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, an issue with local, regional, and international implications.

Complete the following sentence in 100 words or less

Most scholars now believe...

That:

1. The ethical dimension adds meaning to history education, helping students learn from past injustices and guiding them to act ethically in the present and future;

2. Personal and social factors significantly influence students' historical thinking;

3. There is a correlation between historical thinking and historical ethical judgments.

However:

1. The relationship between historical thinking and historical ethical judgments has not been empirically studied;

2. No research has examined how personal and social factors influences historical ethical judgments;

3. Ethical historical thinking in the context of ongoing violent conflicts remains significantly under-researched.

Complete the following sentence in 100 words or less

As a result of my study...

We will gain five main insights:

1. How students evaluate the ethics of historical events that significantly impact their lives compared to those with minimal current relevance, and how their social and personal identities influence these judgments.

2. How different historical thinking skills affect the sophistication of students' ethical judgments.

3. How social and identity-related factors shape students' historical ethical judgments.

4. How dramatic changes in the current reality influence students' ethical stances, and how their historical thinking abilities and identity characteristics impact this dynamic.

5. A deeper understanding of how the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is taught and ways to enhance it to foster reconciliation.

Complete the following prompt in 250 words or less

How has your personal positionality (e.g., identity, experiences, disability) enhanced or impeded your ability to contribute to the work you propose in your application?

As an Israeli Jew, my life is deeply intertwined with the intricacies of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. My identity and experiences are invaluable for the proposed work but also present a potential risk that demands vigilance.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is an immediate and ongoing reality for me. While drafting this proposal, missile alarms frequently interrupted me. Meanwhile, Israeli planes continue to strike Gaza and Lebanon with rising tensions involving Iran. I grew up fearing bus rides due to suicide bombings. Yet, I also ventured into the West Bank, witnessing firsthand the injustices resulting from the Israeli occupation.

My intimate knowledge of the conflict and the diverse Israeli populations equips me with a nuanced understanding. This is vital not only for the analysis but also for crafting the research design, phrasing the questionnaire, and selecting target groups. Furthermore, my extensive network across various Israeli communities grants me access to conservative religious students, who are often suspicious of academic research.

However, I recognize the potential biases stemming from my proximity to the subject. Despite adopting a critical perspective, I cannot deny my Israeli habitus. Two key factors will mitigate this bias:

1. My Buddhist faith: Although ethnically Jewish, my Buddhist beliefs emphasize compassion and equality, which temper my allegiance to the Israeli side and offer a more balanced view of the conflict.

2. I intend to work on this project at UBC with Lindsay Gibson. I believe that the distance and the collaboration with international researchers, will help me develop a broader perspective.

Repeat applications must provide the title and one-paragraph summary of their previous proposal(s) for every year applied.

“Historical Thinking and Ethical Judgments in an Ongoing Conflict: Israeli Students’ Engagement with the Nakba”

The proposal submitted last year, which reached the semi-finals, also aimed to examine how Israeli adolescents deal with the Nakba. In this sense, it serves as the foundation for the current proposal. However, due to recent developments and reviewers' feedback, I have made several significant changes:

1. The previous proposal included only one round of data collection. The current proposal involves two double rounds, totaling four rounds of data collection.

2. The current proposal addresses the Gaza war and the changes in adolescents' attitudes that followed. The previous research plan was written before the outbreak of the war.

3. The previous proposal was written before I completed the textual analysis of the representation of the Nakba in Israel’s history education (published in Theory and Research in Social Education). This analysis is now a crucial foundation for developing the analytical framework to evaluate students' ethical judgments.

In other words, while the research topic is similar, the current study not only allows for a much deeper exploration, but it also has additional aspects that were not covered in the previous proposal, including:

1. The impact of the ongoing Gaza war on students' ethical stances.

2. How students' historical thinking abilities and identity characteristics influence changes in their ethical positions.

3. How the objectives and ethical features of educational materials in different educational systems affect the ethical judgments of students who graduated from these systems.

Career statement (500 words)

Born during the first intifada, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been an inextricable part of my life. My aspiration is that my research and educational contributions will potentially contribute for a safer, more harmonious future for subsequent generations of both Israelis and Palestinians.

At 15, I began my academic journey at the Faculty of Mathematics at Tel Aviv University, finishing my matriculation exams three years in advance. Drawn to the complexities of social behavior, I transitioned to economics. Excelling in my B.A., I served three mandatory military years as a macroeconomics researcher. There, I spearheaded a research project that garnered an award from the directorate’s head and I earned the “Outstanding Researcher” award.

By 21, I became an analyst for a top Israeli hedge fund. Two years in, despite lucrative material prospects, I felt a void. I could not envision a lifelong pursuit of mere financial gains. Concurrently, volunteering for an African refugee aid organization deepened my appreciation for education’s transformative societal impact.

Pivoting to education, I wanted to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I delved into Jewish history education, examining its influence on perceptions of Zionism and Palestinians. My M.A. research centered on the Kibbutz Artzi movement’s history teachings, epitomizing the socialist-Marxist strand of the Zionist movement.

My doctorate investigated the history education in the Religious Zionist movement, a key player in understanding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Religious Zionism is the most prominent force in Israeli society that champions the settlement movement in the occupied territories and aspires to provide a governing and cultural alternative to Israel’s secular-liberal value system. The dissertation won the Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Studies award. I plan to adapt it into a book manuscript by the end of 2025.

While my dissertation is a historical monograph, I also published several articles about current educational trends. Moreover, I initiated and led a collaboration between Tel Aviv University and the Israeli Ministry of Education, resulting in seminars for over 1,700 history teachers and paving the way for future partnerships.

In 2022, I took a break from my career to help my father, whose business was severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2023, having established a comprehensive historical and thematic understanding of the official objectives and characteristics of Israel’s history education, I started a multi-year postdoctoral project on the ethical dimension of teaching the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This project is supported by The Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace and the Israel Science Foundation. that year I also earned the vice-presidency of the International Society of History Didactics.

First, I conducted a textual analysis of how the Nakba is ethically represented in Israel's history education. Alongside Lindsay Gibson, I published this phase findings in Theory & Research in Social Education. In the second phase, which I seek to pursue through the NAEd/Spencer Fellowship, I will analyze adolescents’ ethical perceptions and how they have changed following the war. Following this, I plan to implement several educational interventions to explore different didactic approaches, aiming to foster understanding, empathy, and ethical responsibility.