EDUCATION FOR PEACE OR CONFLICT?
A CASE STUDY OF PALESTINIAN REFUGEE COMMUNITIES 
IN LEBANON

UPPSALA UNIVERSITY

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Master's Thesis
Spring 2019

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Word count: 21302
Abstract

This thesis studies the effect of education on youth within vulnerable settings to resist joining armed groups. Two alternate causal mechanisms are derived from existing research. The first explanation hypothesizes that higher education increases the resistance among youth to join armed groups, since it reduces grievances by promoting social cohesion and equality. The second explanation posits that higher education increases the risk of youth to join armed groups, since raised awareness of injustices and discrimination fosters grievances. To test these hypotheses and further explore the causal relationship, the thesis is designed as a qualitative case study. Palestinian youth living in refugee communities in Lebanon who attend schools are compared to those who do not attend school. A field study to Lebanon was conducted in late spring of 2018 to interview representatives of organizations working with Palestinian youth. Eight in-depth interviews serve as material, which are analyzed using the method of structured, focused comparison. Considering the empirical evidence within the limitations of the study, I evaluate the explanatory power of the two causal mechanisms and provide an account of additional factors that may inform the foundation for future research.

Keywords: education, resilience, mobilization, armed groups, Palestinian refugees, youth, Lebanon
Acknowledgements

First, I want to give special thanks to my supervisor Karen Brounéus for helping me set direction and chisel out the essential parts of this research project, for pushing me to stay clear and focused, and for transmitting hope and giving optimistic feedback. Michelle, for providing me with invaluable contacts and insider information of Beirut as well as proofreading my draft. Furthermore, I want to extend my gratitude to all the people who agreed on participating in the interviews for sharing their valuable time and insights with me. Without your help and cooperation this thesis would not have materialized. Värmlands nation, for granting me a scholarship that enabled the field study. Dad, Marie, and Calle, for hosting, feeding, and encouraging me during an intensive part of writing. Chiara for being the best flat mate ever, for holding my hand through important parts of the process, and for giving thorough and crucial input on the draft. Finally, I want to thank Karl for encouraging me to finalize the process and giving informed and thoughtful comments on the draft.
# Acronyms

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<th>Acronym</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANERA</td>
<td>American Near East Refugee Aid</td>
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<td>AUB</td>
<td>American University of Beirut</td>
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<tr>
<td>CYC</td>
<td>Children and Youth Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>DFLP</td>
<td>Democratic Front for Liberation of Palestine</td>
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<td>DIS</td>
<td>Danish Immigration Service</td>
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<td>ISIS</td>
<td>Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organization</td>
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<td>OPT</td>
<td>Occupied Palestinian Territories</td>
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<td>PFLP</td>
<td>Popular Front for Liberation of Palestine</td>
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<td>PLO</td>
<td>Palestine Liberation Organization</td>
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<td>PRL</td>
<td>Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon</td>
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<td>Palestinian Refugees from Syria living in Lebanon</td>
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<td>PYO</td>
<td>Palestinian Youth Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</td>
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<td>UNRWA</td>
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1. Introduction

“Ideologies are not defeated with guns, they're defeated by better ideas.”
- President Obama, 2015

Popular idea holds that the answer to intolerance, hatred, radicalism and terrorism is education. Often, policy makers, scholars, and the public call for strengthened education in the wake of terrorist attacks, crises and conflict (e.g. Nye, 2005; Obama, 2015; UNESCO, 2017). However, the scholarly literature does not yield a clear answer to the question of whether education reduces the participation in violence and terrorism. On the one hand, Østby and Urdał (2010) claim that there has previously been a consensus that education has a general pacifying effect on conflict by reducing socio-economic and political grievances. On the other hand, studies by Krueger and Malečková (2003) and Berrebi (2007) claim that perpetrators of terrorist acts in some settings are more highly educated than the average person in their country. Furthermore, there is an increasing scholarly awareness of the fact that education can be used as a means of indoctrination to certain political and religious agendas (King, 2005; Thyne, 2006). These contradictory findings indicate that the relationship between education and participation in violence remains an unresolved theoretical puzzle.

Conventional civil war literature typically explains mobilization to armed groups as a consequence of either greed or grievances (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004), or as a complex interaction of the two (Bara, 2014). Concerning minors, the literature on child recruitment has primarily focused on coercion and forced recruitment (e.g. Beber & Blattman, 2013). Considering the increase in radicalization and violent extremism over the past decades, scholars have explained the mobilization as an outcome of external factors such as extremist religious communities, or internal factors such as social isolation and self-radicalization (Hayes, 2017). Youth, especially within marginalized and vulnerable communities, are particularly vulnerable to external impact and pressure during identity formation. They are viewed as easy targets for recruiters, as witnessed in places such as Uganda, Sri Lanka, Colombia, Nepal and Sierra Leone (Hart, 2008).

Yet, even in the same vulnerable context, some youth mobilize while others do not (Clark-Kazak, 2011). The concept of resilience has recently gained traction within social sciences, specifically as a tool in attempts to prevent radicalization and recruitment. However, understanding of which factors affect resilience and how it may be increased is still insufficient.

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1 In this study, the terms join, mobilize, and enlist to armed groups are treated as synonyms.
This thesis aims to study the effect of education on resilience among youth, defined as people between 15 and 25 years old (Urdal, 2011), to mobilize into armed groups. As such, it aims to better understand the mixed evidence on the relationship between education and violence, which has been called for by Østby and Urdal (2010). Furthermore, it aims to explore other potential factors that affect youth mobilization and resilience, and as such build on and further the understanding of the existing theory on resilience. In this context, resilience and resistance to join armed groups are treated as synonyms. In a broader perspective the study aims to enhance the knowledge of how to increase resilience within vulnerable communities, which is important to inform discussions on efforts to prevent engagement in political violence. The study poses the research question:

What effect does education have on youth within vulnerable settings to resist joining armed groups?

To be able to answer this research question and study the causal relationship, I develop two alternate theoretical explanations and causal mechanisms that are derived from existing research. The first explanation theorizes education’s positive effect on resilience, and hypothesizes that higher education increases the resistance among youth to join armed groups, since it reduces grievances by promoting social cohesion and equality. The second explanation posits education’s negative effect on resilience, and hypothesizes that higher education increases the youths’ risk to join armed groups, since raised awareness of inequalities, injustices and discrimination fosters frustration and grievances.

To test the theoretically driven hypotheses and attempt to map out this unresolved theoretical problem, the thesis is designed as a qualitative case study. As such, the study contributes to the sub-national evidence from single countries, where the effect of education is less clear than in cross-national evidence (Østby & Urdal, 2010). Palestinian youth living in refugee communities in Lebanon who attend schools are compared to the ones who do not attend school. A field study was conducted in late spring of 2018 to interview representatives of organizations working with Palestinian youth in Lebanon. Eight in-depth interviews serve as material to study the causal pathway linking education to resilience through a structured, focused comparison of the two cases. Within the study’s limitations, the findings may indicate that the causal mechanism postulating education’s negative effect on resilience, with an alternation, appear to more accurately explain the effect of education on resilience. However, these findings should be treated with caution, since the explanatory power of education is deemed weak and the relationship is more likely one of causal complexity. An account of additional factors that may affect the youths’ resilience is provided.
2. Theory and Argument

This chapter aims to situate the study in the existing research field, as well as to present the theoretical framework and arguments.

2.1. Situating the Study

The following section serves to introduce the main debates and relevant theories explaining why some individuals mobilize into armed groups. It also includes a theoretical overview of the situation within refugee communities, often viewed as a breeding ground for violence, aiming to enhance the understanding of the context of the study.

2.1.1. Motivations to Mobilize

The scholarly literature on motivations to mobilize and rebel typically centers on themes such as limitations on access to political power, resources and opportunity, as well as feelings of alienation, isolation, and coercion (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; Brown & Langer, 2010; Eck, 2014; Hayes, 2017). There are three major schools of thought in this field of study.

The first school of thought emphasizes grievances that underlie participation, and highlights motivations rooted in an individual frustration with the economic position in society. Poverty, lack of access to education, and political alienation are usually brought up as examples of factors causing frustration. Discontent, when aggregated across individuals in a social class or ethnic group, provides the foundation for mobilization. Consequently, one’s identity is the key determinant of participation. This school of thought builds on Gurr (1970)’s theory on relative deprivation and level of inequality, and includes scholars such as Boix (2008), Brown and Langer (2010), and Basdau et al. (2015).

The second and third schools of thought build on Mancur Olson’s (1965) analysis of collective action and free riding, which observes that common interest is not sufficient to motivate participation. As a starting point, these scholars accept the idea that individuals weigh the costs and benefits of participation. Consequently, the second school of thought emphasizes the importance of selective incentives. In this view, participation must be beneficial not only to groups but also to individuals, which requires that private (material) benefits must be made available in exchange for participation. Lichbach (1995) identifies a range of possible private goods that might be offered to recruits; from money, loot, and land to positions of authority. While those examples serve as “pull” factors, Azam (2006) emphasizes protection from violence as a “push” factor to recruitment.
Critics of this interpretation of Olson’s collective action theory claim that the focus is too narrow and materialist, and therefore, the third school of thought emphasizes the importance of social sanctions. Strong communities can bring social pressure to bear that change how individuals evaluate the costs and benefits of joining a movement, thus linking the individual’s decision to the characteristics of the community in which he or she is situated. Taylor (1988) offers a definition of such strong communities. The importance of preexisting social networks and shared collective identities for mobilization was also put forward in earlier works, such as Moore (1966) and Scott (1976).

Arjona and Kalyvas (2007) present an alternative explanation, in addition to the greed-grievances explanations, to why individuals engage in political violence. A person may be attracted to political violence by the promise of non-material rewards such as security. Berrebi (2007) suggests that other non-material incentives offered by terrorist organizations may include martyrdom, political influence etcetera, that are closer to individual human capital endowments and associated aspirations than those offered by the labor market.

Moreover, Olson (1965) introduces a second explanation for participation in collective action. He argues that coercion could resolve the free-rider problem that undermines the capacity for collective action. This explanation has received far less attention in the literature. In fact, Humphreys and Weinstein (2008) argue that the focus on individual’s agency in making choices about participation overlooks essential practices of recruitment such as abduction. Eck (2014) further explores the practice of coercion as a rebel recruitment strategy.

The greed-grievances dichotomy presented by Collier and Hoeffler (2004), argues that economic factors (i.e. greed) have stronger explanatory power in determining the incidence of civil war than grievance factors. This view has received considerable critique; see for example Vinci (2006). Several scholars argue that these explanations – greed and grievance – are not necessarily rival. Humphreys and Weinstein (2008) suggest that different logics of participation may coexist in a single civil war. Some of these factors may even interact and produce stronger effects. For example, is it plausible to expect that material incentives will be more effective for poor people, other things equal. These complex interaction effects are further explored by Bara (2014).

Lastly, a group of scholars have investigated the role of religion in mobilization. For instance, Basedau, Pfeiffer, and Vüller (2016) argue that religious identity structures offer opportunities for mobilization, religious leaders have the capacity to justify the use of violence, and religious beliefs may also help combatants overcome the fear experienced in battle. Isaacs (2016), on the other
hand, argues that violent actors adopt religious rhetoric to solve the logistical challenges associated with violence, including access to mobilizing resources and recruitment and retention of members.

I argue that these explanations are highly relevant to consider when studying participation in violence within refugee communities, as these elements coexist and possibly reinforce motivations to mobilize.

2.1.2. Linking Challenges in Refugee Camps to Radicalization

In the literature, refugee camps have often been described as breeding-grounds for violence, see for example Zolberg et al. (1989), Lischer (2005), and Lebson (2013). However, Hart (2008) argues that political violence may be considered as a product of the complex interplay between experience, current circumstances and collective aspirations. Weine et al. (2009) list a few radicalization “push” factors acting upon youth in diaspora communities, which contribute to community and family challenges, and potentially the risk of radicalization and recruitment. A selection of relevant factors for this study is presented in this section. The aim is to depict the kind of challenges that constitute the vulnerable settings this study targets.

First, experiences of war exposure and forced migration may result in a life in refugee camps with inadequate schooling and exposure to radical ideologies. These factors can have an adverse impact upon community cohesion and family support, contributing to problems in refugee youth, including behavioral, educational, health, and criminal problems (Halcón et al., 2004). Second, governmental and non-governmental services may become overwhelmed in the host country. Being underserved in areas of education, health, mental health, and youth and family services further contribute to the challenges faced by the communities (Weine et al., 2009). Third, refugee camps may be impoverished, isolated, and crime-ridden with drugs and gangs. Living in such areas is highly demoralizing and may contribute to a greater susceptibility to radicalization and recruitment (Weine et al., 2009). Fourth, the existence of divisions within communities, i.e. along clan or sect lines, may impede the delivery of community-level support as well as community collaborations with social services, health services, and law enforcement (Weine et al., 2009).

2.1.3. Youth in Refugee Communities’ Participation in Violence

The participation of minors in political violence is generally understood as a matter of coercion (e.g. Beber & Blattman, 2013). While this aspect is critical, Hart (2008) forwards the theoretical proposition that the experience of growing up in situations of systematic oppression may lead to an early development of political understanding. He proposes three specific dimensions of
displaced children’s experiences that may account for their engagement in political violence; life in the socio-historical space of a displacement camp, frustrated transition to adult status, and the embeddedness of ‘politics’ within everyday life. He maintains that it is necessary to consider how context and experience inform action in efforts to restrain children’s involvement in political violence (Hart, 2008). Yet, it is important to note that this theoretical argument has not been empirically investigated and can as such not be treated as evidence. Nevertheless, I argue that for this study, it is central to consider the socio-historical space of refugee camps and the increased political awareness it may produce among its inhabitants.

Stresses common to most refugee adolescence include trauma exposure and community violence, family loss and separation, poverty, troubled schools, inadequate housing, social and cultural transition, and discrimination (Lustig et al., 2004; Ellis et al., 2008). The obstacles to physical movement and socio-economic advancement growing up in a displacement camp should be considered for the frustrations they might cause the young in their efforts to achieve adult status. The possibilities for establishing a viable life are curtailed by border controls, asylum policies, restrictions on employment, and system of surveillance. While there are certainly numerous examples of militants within displacements camps seeking to mobilize young people, there is a growing evidence to suggest that the recruiters are often providing an outlet for the frustrations and resentment of teenagers (Hart, 2008). Furthermore, Hart (2008) argues that the anger and frustration of young camp residents may be understood not simply as a response to their current condition but in relation to an extended, even intergenerational, experience of oppression and marginalization.

There is a general observation that young males are the main protagonists of criminal as well as political violence (Urdal, 2006). Youthful age structures, so called youth bulges, have also been associated with political instability, violence and recruitment to international terrorist networks (Zakaria, 2001). Urdal (2006) finds in his statistical cross-national study that the presence of youth bulges increases the risk of conflict outbreak significantly. Collier (2000) argues that the mere existence of an extraordinary large pool of youth is a factor that lowers the cost of recruitment since the opportunity cost for a young person generally is low. If young people are left with no alternative but unemployment and poverty, they are increasingly likely to join a rebellion as an alternative way of generating an income. However, the youth bulge theory has received quite some criticism and is currently under revision. For instance, Pruitt, Berents and Munro (2018) criticize it for classifying young men as predisposed to violence, and instead draw on feminist work to argue that constructions of masculinity lead to assumptions about youth in
these contexts. Other scholars argue, in line with the grievances’ explanation, that if the labor market cannot absorb a sudden surplus of young jobseekers, a large pool of unemployed youth will generate strong frustrations (Moller, 1968; Choucri, 1974; Cincotta et al., 2003).

Nevertheless, Clark-Kazak (2011) notes, based on her observations in the refugee camp Kyaka II in Uganda, that, contrary to structural explanations of young people’s participation in political violence, several young Congolese people actively resisted military recruitment, even under pressure and threats. Their response suggests the need for deeper scrutiny of why some young people do not engage in political violence. In addition to understanding why children and young people join armed groups and forces, it is important to analyze the prevention and protection mechanisms that children and young people draw on to resist recruitment (Clark-Kazak, 2011). This is especially important for refugee youth since they are a group that is particularly vulnerable but show a similar inconsistent recruitment pattern. The present study aims to contribute to this knowledge gap by employing the concept of resilience as a tool to understand resistance to military recruitment.

2.2. Previous Literature and Theoretical Arguments

The following sections map out previous literature on the concepts of resilience and education with relevance to the research question. Furthermore, it outlines the theoretical framework guiding the study by providing definitions of key concepts as well as presenting the theoretical arguments. Lastly, it presents the two derived hypotheses and causal mechanisms that the study aims to test.

2.2.1. Resilience Explained

Resilience is a concept derived from engineering perspectives on the durability of materials to bend and not break (Weine et al., 2013). Being exported to social sciences, it generally refers to an individual’s capacity to overcome challenges that have a negative impact on their emotional and physical well-being (Hayes, 2017; UNESCO, 2017). In the context of violent extremism, resilience is defined as “the ability to resist, or not adhere to, views and opinions that portray the world in exclusive truths, which legitimize hatred and the use of violence” (UNESCO, 2017, p. 20). In national security debates, the concept of resilience figures as a goal and means to handle complex, dynamic and partly unpredictable threats (Dalgaard-Nielsen & Schack, 2016). Resilience is not just a property of individuals but of families, communities, organizations, networks and societies. In addition, resilience varies in relation to culture, context, language, history, child and adult development (Weine et al., 2013). Yet, Dalggaard-Nielsen and Schack (2016) maintain that the exact definition of the concept remains unclear, and more empirical studies are needed to
identify what resilience consists of more specifically to gain a better understanding of which resources and actors should be engaged and how.

Researchers and practitioners have conceptualized resilience as a scale that balances risk and protective factors. When protective factors outweigh the risk factors, then resilience is more likely (Hayes, 2017). Hayes (2017) points out several risk factors, including group marginalization (through racism, classism, sexism), low levels of attachment to parents, strained peer relationships, series of convictions for petty crimes, and substance abuse. Furthermore, an ethnographic study of a refugee community in the US by Weine and Ahmed (2012) show that multiple risk factors combine to create an opportunity structure for violent extremism, which consists of three levels of risks: 1) youth’s unaccountable time and unobserved spaces; 2) perceived social legitimacy of violent extremisms; 3) contact with recruiters or associates.

Consequently, building resilience in such contexts means strengthening protective resources at each of these levels to outweigh the risk factors (Weine et al., 2013). Resilience resources identified by existing research include economic and human capital, interaction in local networks, trust, trusted sources of information, a net of voluntary organizations such as sports clubs, and stable ties between community members and local government service providers (Dalgaard-Nielsen & Schack, 2016). The importance of social capital is emphasized across several studies (e.g. Ledogar & Fleming, 2008; Bernier & Meinzen-Dick, 2014; Dalgaard-Nielsen & Schack, 2016). In this context, it can be understood as the existence of stable trust-based relationships and networks among the actors of a community, including local authorities (Dalgaard-Nielsen & Schack, 2016).

Families are often viewed as the strongest buffer against risks, and their importance is confirmed by existing scientific literature (Weine et al., 2013). Factors associated with family resilience involve connectedness, values and flexibility. Some potentially modifiable family protective factors that impact recruitment and radicalization may be roles of parenting and parental involvement in education (Weine et al., 2009; 2013). In their study on Danish communities, Dalgaard-Nielsen and Schack (2016) found that a home where family members take an active interest in each other, with room to talk about sensitive issues, is key to building resilience to militant Islamism. A strong family-network helps create structure in life, and many of those who get radicalized lack that structure (Dalgaard-Nielsen & Schack, 2016). However, families under adversity have other needs and priorities and require community support and guidance to look after their children, teenagers, and young adults (Weine et al., 2013).
2.2.2. Community Resilience

A body of literature within resilience theory has developed dealing with the challenge to prevent violent radicalization and extremism in communities, that is, community resilience. Weine et al. (2008) argue that knowledge about community and family processes in refugee and immigrant groups could, if effectively harnessed, significantly mitigate risks of radicalization and recruitment.

In instances when parents are overwhelmed, face significant challenges or are not present, networks such as voluntary associations and trust-based networks become important. Such associations permit community members to form bonds and to build trust, which in turn enable them to call on others for help and to leverage the resources of a broader network (Dalgaard-Nielsen & Schack, 2016). Consequently, community resilience involves shared problem-solving and safe community spaces for youth to hang out under adult supervision. Protective resources include organizational outreach to families, mentoring, and faith communities (Weine et al., 2009; 2013). What exactly constitutes a community is debatable, but Dalgaard-Nielsen and Schack (2016) suggest that civil society actors and associations, local businesses, and local government are typically included. Moreover, for many people, especially youth, their community is virtual, mediated by the Internet through which they are in contact with their home country and with friends and family spread throughout the diaspora (Weine et al., 2013).

Schools and youth clubs are two public sector institutions that have been ranked high on resilience contribution potential (Dalgaard-Nielsen & Schack, 2016). Two preconditions are emphasized by Dalgaard-Nielsen and Schack (2016): that these institutions manage to create a sense of community among their student body and that they effectively convey liberal norms and teach critical thinking, so that students are able to take a critical approach to the extremist messages they encounter. Also, personal continuity, cultural sensitivity, and freedom from prejudice are emphasized. Furthermore, the role of municipal youth clubs is highlighted. The close, regular contact between staff and youth frequently permits staff to notice signs of radicalization and either respond themselves or introduce other relevant actors early in the process. It is also pointed out that youth who receive insufficient support and attention from their families can find substitute role models in the staff (Dalgaard-Nielsen & Schack, 2016).

Weine et al. (2013) argue that the community resilience approach is based on the underlying assumption that any stable community would naturally want to protect its members by opposing violent radicalization and terrorist recruitment. However, this may not always be true. Not everybody in a given community necessarily opposes radicalization and recruitment or even sees
it as such. Furthermore, it is not clear whether the assumption is applicable in communities that are not stable, in the sense that they may be stressed, impoverished, and may have been exposed to considerable traumas, hardships, transitions and suffering (Weine et al., 2013). Moreover, the authors maintain that it is necessary to listen to and observe its residents and learn about the community characteristics, i.e. their history, culture social structure, values, needs, resources, and daily experiences, to determine precisely what resilience means for them. They argue that further community-based research designed to understand the strengths and vulnerabilities of the communities at risk (Weine et al., 2013). The present study aims to contribute to this literature.

2.2.3. Education for Peace or Conflict

The relationship between education and conflict has attracted interest from scholars over the last decades. The emerging consensus in the literature has been that education has a general pacifying effect on civil conflict, most notably Thyne (2006). However, some more recent studies claim that perpetrators of terrorist attacks in some settings are more highly educated than the average person in their country (Krueger & Malečková, 2003; Berrebi, 2007; Brockhoff, Krieger & Meierrieks, 2015). Østby and Urdal (2010) argue that the relationship between education and conflict can be complex and multidimensional, depending on different mediating factors and the level of analysis. In their literature review, Østby and Urdal (2010) distinguish between explanations relating to levels, expansion, inequality, and content of education. In the following I map relevant parts of this literature and build two rival theoretical arguments and causal mechanisms of the effect of education on resilience.

**Education’s Positive Effect on Resilience**

Most arguments presented in the literature relates to *levels of education*, or government investment in education. These propositions generally claim that more education fosters peace. According to Østby and Urdal (2010), the explanations for this claim can be grouped into three categories: grievances, opportunity-cost, and stability explanations.

Gurr’s (1970) relative deprivation reasoning proposes that grievances arise when expectations are not met. In line with this reasoning, education can have both a direct and indirect effect on the grievances that provoke political violence. Aoki et al. (2002) claim that government investment in education can have a direct and lasting positive impact on people’s lives, which may directly lower grievances in a society. Thyne (2006) on the other hand, argues that educational investment, measured by educational spending or primary education enrollment, can reduce grievances and conflict indirectly by its ability to create economic development and social equality. Drawing on the work by Ferranti et al. (2004), it is expected that a poorly funded system
of education generates poverty and inequality, each of which has been found to increase the likelihood of civil war (e.g. Fearon & Laitin, 2003; Collier & Hoeffler, 2004).

In the civil war literature focusing on the economic causes of war, education is viewed as an opportunity factor. Soldiers must be paid, and the cost of recruitment is related to their income foregone by enlisting. Greater levels of education increase the opportunity cost of young people. Hence, rebel recruitment is costlier and rebellion less likely the higher the level of education in a society (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). In line with this reasoning, Barakat and Urdal (2009) assume that increasing education at any level will help reduce the pool of potential rebel recruits considerably in countries with large young male cohorts.

Moreover, scholars argue that education create social and political stability. Higher education encourages political participation and channel conflicts of interests through institutional pathways and thus reduces the risk of political violence (Huntington, 1968; Alesina & Perotti, 1996; Hegre 2003). More recently, education has been argued to promote social cohesion, such as learning how to work together peacefully, which in turn enables socioeconomic stability (Thyne, 2006). Heyneman (2003) provides four explanations in which education leads to social cohesion. First, schools teach the principles that underlie good citizenship as well as expected behaviors and consequences of not adhering to those behaviors. Second, classrooms bring together people of different origins and teaches them how to work together peacefully. Third, schools aim to provide equal opportunity for students, giving each of them a chance in life. Finally, school systems combine the interests and objectives of a range of societal groups while trying to establish a common foundation for citizenship (Heyneman, 2003). Thyne (2006) suggests that the percentage of eligible students attending secondary and postsecondary education tells us whether the government provides a space to create social cohesion among those who are most likely to rebel.

Following the presented logic, I argue that one possible casual mechanism that links education to resilience, which is portrayed in Figure 1, is expected to work as follows. Education creates social cohesion and equality by providing equal opportunity, bridging differences between societal groups and teaching how to cooperate peacefully. Social cohesion and equality in turn reduce grievances and strengthen communities and social networks, which enhance resilience and resistance among youth to join armed groups.

H1: Higher education increases the resistance among youth within vulnerable settings to join armed groups.
Figure 1. Causal mechanism of the positive effect of education on resilience.

Education’s Negative Effect on Resilience

At the same time, however, scholars have argued that rapid expansion of education could increase the risk for political instability (Huntington, 1968). Such measures may produce a much larger group of highly educated young people than the labor market is able to absorb (Urdal, 2006). Prevailing unemployment among highly educated youth may cause frustration and grievances that could motivate political violence. In fact, Choucri (1974) stresses that high unemployment among educated youth is one of the most destabilizing and potentially violent sociopolitical phenomena in any regime. Regarding the Middle East and North Africa region, Lia (2005) argues that the expansion of higher education in many countries in the Middle East has produced large masses of unemployed and easily mobilizable youths, which has had a radicalization effect and provided new recruits to militant organizations. Bhatia and Ghanem (2017) provide evidence from eight Arab countries that indicates that while higher education is associated with reduced radicalization, and unemployment on its own does not seem to impact radicalization, unemployment among the educated leads to a greater probability of radicalization. However, they remain cautious in claiming a causal story and call for more research on education in the Arab world.

According to the relative deprivation theory, educational inequality could give rise to conflict, as comparisons with those in the same society who do better may inspire radical action and even violence (Gurr, 1970). In line with such reasoning, uneven distribution of education could breed grievances that could potentially cause conflict. Furthermore, de Soysa and Wagner (2003) argue that socioeconomic or political inequalities that coincide with identity cleavages in society may enhance group grievances and thus facilitate mobilization for conflict. In fact, schooling policies are often used as a discriminatory policy by governments against minority groups.
The final line of argument relates to the quality and content of education. Expanding access to education of relatively low quality may raise expectations that do not match employment opportunities. This has particularly been noted with reference to the Middle East (Salehi-Isfahani & Dhillon, 2008; Steer et al, 2014). Furthermore, Stern (2000), King (2005) and Berrebi (2007) argue that educational content that advocates particular political or religious messages may increase an individual’s inclination to join militant organizations. Thyne (2006) contends that extremist education is often the result of government failure to provide an adequate education to the population, creating a space to be filled by extremist elements in society.

Moreover, the literature does not give a clear answer to the question whether more education would reduce the participation in terrorism (Krueger & Malečková, 2003). Berrebi (2007) provides a few theoretical propositions as to why increasing education could lead to greater risk of terrorism. For example, he points out the potential importance of 1) educational content that advocates particular political or religious messages, 2) reasoning skills which make individuals more aware of social injustices and discrimination, which may contribute to a sense of social responsibility and civil engagement, 3) limited economic opportunities to qualified individuals because of contextual factors such as heritage or social standing, and 4) the selection of terrorists by terrorist organizations. The final argument was originally formulated by Bueno de Mesquita (2004) and suggests that terrorist organizations are likely to screen the pool of potential recruits and select the better-educated (and wealthier) individuals. Additionally, Lee (2011) argue that terrorists belong to the subgroup of the population that has acquired information about the political process, is connected to politicized social networks, and is able to devote time and energy to political involvement. Since all of these aspects are costly, people who are politically involved are likely to be relatively wealthy and well educated. Because of high opportunity costs related to violence, members of violent groups will tend to be lower-status individuals from the educated and politicized section of the population.

Drawing on the arguments presented above, I argue that a second possible causal mechanism that links education to lower resilience, as seen in Figure 2, could work as follows. Education enhances reasoning skills, which leads to increased awareness of societal injustices, inequality and discrimination. Such raised awareness coupled with limited opportunities and prevailing unemployment may cause frustration and grievances, which may lead to lower resilience, a strong desire for societal change and higher likelihood among youth to join armed groups.

H2: Higher education increases the risk among youth within vulnerable settings to join armed groups.
3. Research Design

The following sections provide a thorough description of the methodological considerations and decisions made to realize this study, which examines the research question: *What effect does education have on youth within vulnerable settings to resist joining armed groups?* It elaborates on the qualitative case study method, case-selection, data collection, and ethical considerations. It also explains how the theoretical concepts have been operationalized into measurable indicators that informed the semi-structured and open-ended interview questions, as well as the performed field study and the eight interviews that serve as material. Lastly, it discusses the limitations of the chosen design.

3.1. A Qualitative Case Study

A *qualitative case study* research design is chosen for the study, since the aim is to improve the understanding of what links, i.e. the causal pathway, education to resistance to join armed groups, as well as to explore other factors that affect mobilization and resilience. As previously explained, the research community does not yet fully understand how, and in which direction, education impacts resilience to mobilization into armed groups. Case studies are particularly suited for studies attempting to identify specific casual mechanisms, as they “may allow one to peer into the box of causality to locate the intermediate factors lying between some structural cause and its purported effect” (Gerring, 2007, p. 45).
Moreover, qualitative case studies offer depth of analysis. It is possible to extract diversity and richness of information and knowledge not measurable in large-scale cross-case quantitative studies, in which information must be coded into uniform parameters. Furthermore, it is easier to verify the accuracy of a causal relationship in a small-N study than for a large set of cases, thus enhancing the internal validity (Gerring, 2007). One important trade-off is that it limits the possibilities to apply the results to the larger population under study, i.e. youth within vulnerable settings in other countries and contexts. Essentially, the case-selection strategy determines the generalizability of the results of a case study (Gerring, 2007), which is further discussed in the following section.

The method and logic of structured, focused comparison is applied to test the hypotheses on the effect of education on resistance to join armed groups. This method is “structured” in that a set of questions is asked of each case under study to guide and standardize data collection. This ensures the extraction of comparable data and enables a systematic comparison and cumulation of findings of the cases. Furthermore, it is “focused” in that it only deals with certain aspects of the examined cases (George & Bennet, 2004).

To collect data, the study is designed to carry out in-depth interviews. In-depth interviewing helps to develop a fuller and richer understanding of causal mechanisms and to learn of individual perspectives. They can also be used to identify what theories within a certain field have missed (Brounéus, 2011). The downside of in-depth interviewing is that it is rather time-consuming and costly, and can, just like other data collection methods, leave room for errors. For this purpose, a set of semi-structured and open-ended interview questions have been drafted to reflect the research objective and theoretical focus of the study, see Appendix III.

Ideally, I would ask the same set of questions to respondents of the two subgroups of youth who attend school and those who do not, to strictly compare the cases to establish whether the empirical evidence lends support to any of the two causal mechanisms presented in the theory section. However, due to ethical considerations discussed more in depth below in section 3.5, it was deemed necessary to design the study to carry out interviews with representatives of organizations working with Palestinian youth. This means that the data are not measured at the most appropriate level of analysis. Yet, the representatives are considered able to provide insightful accounts of the youths’ experiences, a field of study otherwise difficult to explore. It was therefore deemed appropriate to carry through the field study. Nevertheless, it is important to note that this decision has implications for the findings and inferences that can be made, which are duly discussed in the limitations’ section 3.7.
3.2. Case Selection

The cases of Palestinian youth living in refugee communities in Lebanon who attend school, and the ones who do not, are selected for the study based on the principle of purposive sampling (cf. Gerring, 2007; Powner, 2015). They are selected since they: 1) can be considered representative of the larger population of cases, i.e. youth within vulnerable settings, 2) provide variation on the independent variable – education, which also serves as isolation, 3) exhibit variation on the dependent variable, resistance to join armed groups, and 4) share characteristics in other important aspects, which serve as controls for variables such as socio-economic status and geography. This case-selection strategy is known as the most-similar cases design. Such design is useful for hypothesis-testing as well as exploration of causal mechanisms (Gerring, 2007), which suit the aim of this study.

Among the larger population of cases of youth within vulnerable settings, the focus on Palestinian youth living in refugee communities in Lebanon is chosen for the study. The Palestinian refugee community in Lebanon (PRL) constitutes a typical example of a marginalized and systematically discriminated minority (Hanafi & Long, 2010; Yassine, 2010; DIS, 2014; Chaaban et al., 2016; UNHCR, 2016). Since the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948 and the event that Palestinians call ‘Nakba’, roughly 100'000 Palestinians sought shelter in neighboring Lebanon (Yassine, 2010). According to Yassine (2010), their presence in Lebanon has since been deemed as a threat to the country’s sectarian political system and a security issue, and most Palestinians have not been able to acquire Lebanese citizenship (Yassine, 2010). As such, most of them are de facto stateless, and the lack of state protection leaves them in a vulnerable position (DIS, 2014). Today, the estimated number of Palestinian refugees who still reside in the country ranges between 260-280'000. 63 percent of these people live in 12 official refugee camps. Since the outbreak of the war in Syria, another 42'0003 Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS) add to that total (Chaaban et al., 2016). However, PRS fall outside the scope of this study, since their conditions and experiences are profoundly different to those of PRL. Lebanon considers the Palestinians in its territory sometimes to be refugees under the care of UNRWA and other humanitarian organizations, and sometimes as foreigners (DIS, 2014). A series of legal and institutional barriers deprive Palestinian refugees of basic rights, such as access to public education, health care, social security, work opportunities, and property ownership (Yassine, 2010).

2 An Arabic term meaning ‘the catastrophe’, the event in which Zionist militia expelled over 750'000 Palestinians from their homes (Yassine, 2010).
3 Recorded in November 2015.
The two cases are selected based on variation on the independent variable, i.e. education, with the variation being “present” and “absent”. Hence, only in the first case youth receive education, why the second case serve as isolation. In Lebanon, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) provides primary, secondary and vocational education to Palestinian refugee children and youth. However, there is a high dropout and non-attendance rate in UNRWA schools. Enrollment rates for 2015 have been estimated in a survey conducted in collaboration between the American University of Beirut (AUB) and UNRWA by Chaaban et al. (2016). Focusing on youth in the 15-25-age span, the results show that on average, 61.2 per cent of PRL youth are enrolled at the secondary level. However, 14.5 per cent of the enrolled males and 8.2 per cent of females from the age 16 to 18 reportedly dropped out from school during the year. Also, approximately one-third (34.3 per cent) of those aged 15 to 18 who are enrolled do not attend school. Less than seven per cent of the PRL students, for all age groups, are enrolled in private and public schools. 6.2 per cent of PRL above the age 25 are university degree holders. Moreover, in the 19 to 24 age group, 5.5 per cent of students attend UNRWA vocational schools and 5.5 per cent private vocational schools. Around 11.7 per cent of PRL never went to school (Chaaban et al., 2016). These figures clearly show that there is a large number of Palestinian youths who do not attend school.

Furthermore, the dependent variable, i.e. resistance to join armed groups, varies between “present” and “absent”. Incidents of recruitment of Palestinian youth to armed groups have been reported in media and reports. There are multiple armed groups operating in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. Out of approximately 27 groups, about 15 are armed Palestinian factions, important ones being Fatah, Hamas, Jihad Islamic Movement, PLO, and PFLP (for full list, see Dot-Pouillard, 2015). Landinfo (2008) reports that none of the Palestinian factions practice forced recruitment. However, especially the Islamic organizations are able to pay wages to new members and are therefore more successful in recruitment (Landinfo, 2008). Furthermore, since the beginning of the Syrian civil war, the presence of jihadist groups within the camps has increased, particularly in the Ein el-Hilweh camp in southern Lebanon. Such groups include al-Qaeda, the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), and Jabhat Fatah al-Sham (previously known as Jabhat al-Nusra). These Islamist organizations attempt to attract youth with money to join their forces. Even an organization like Hezbollah may use their power and influence to recruit Palestinian youth to their activities, such as fighting in Syria, in return for salary and welfare services (DIS, 2014). In 2016, Lebanese security sources said that more than 200 young people had been recruited by operatives from Syria who infiltrated the Ein el-Hilweh camp (Khoury, 2016), while dozens had succeeded in crossing the border into Syria to join ISIS in its strongholds in Syria and
Iraq (Dot-Pouillard, 2015; Khoury, 2016). Thus, there is a large variety of armed groups operating in the camps. While Palestinian youth have reportedly been recruited to multiple of them, most of the youth resist joining.

Moreover, the two cases share characteristics on other important aspects, which serve as control variables, that is, variables that are held constant across cases (cf. Powner, 2015). The Palestinian youth living in refugee camps in Lebanon share other traits such as culture, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status, language, and geography. All these variables could potentially influence the dependent variable, but since they are held constant, I can ensure that this is not the case.

Lastly, even though these two selected cases can be considered typical cases of youth within vulnerable setting, and as such be representative of a broader set of cases, it should be noted that plenty of country-specific characteristics of Lebanon applies. Aspects such as the legal barriers to employment of Palestinians, the historical and ongoing conflict with Israel and the Palestinian popular resistance movement, and the neighboring civil war in Syria do influence the results of the study. Therefore, the generalizability of the results should be considered limited to cases that exhibits similar background factors.

3.3. Operationalization of Theoretical Framework

This section provides an explanation on how the theoretical framework and the two casual mechanisms have been operationalized into measurable indicators, to allow for testing of the two hypotheses and comparison of the causal patterns. To do this, it is necessary to identify observable implications that would appear in the data if the hypotheses were correct (Powner, 2015). The indicators informed the interview questions that were posed to the respondents of the study.

The independent variable ‘education’ is translated into a binary variable, with the indicator as being present or absent. For the subgroup of youth that attend a UNRWA school or a public or private university the variable is present, and for youth that do not attend any school the variable is absent. This definition strictly refers to formal education in schools, and does not include informal forms of education. Since the research concerns youth, defined as people aged between 15 to 25 years old (Urdal, 2011), the focus is on higher education, i.e. secondary and university level education. Important is also to distinguish between enrollment and attendance, since it is presumed that youth must attend school for education to have an effect. Therefore, education is measured in attendance rather than enrollment. The interview questions focus on attendance and on determining whether youth that do not attend UNRWA schools attend other types of schools. The interviewees were asked the following questions:
Q: How would you describe the education provided by UNRWA?
   a. What do you think is the reason to the high drop-out rates in the UNRWA schools?

Q: Is there any alternative education provided to the Palestinian youth?
   a. Religious schools?
   b. Private schools?

Q: Is it common that Palestinian youth do not attend school?
   a. If yes, what is the reason for that?

Q: To your knowledge, what do the youth generally do when they are not in school?
   a. Are there any supervised community spaces or youth organizations?

The *first casual mechanism*, which theorizes education’s positive effect on resilience, focuses on social cohesion and equality. Social cohesion has been defined as a two-dimensional concept by Berger-Schmitt (2002). First, there is the inequality dimension, which concerns the goal of promoting equal opportunities and reducing disparities and divisions within a society. This also includes the aspect of social exclusion. Second, there is the social capital dimension, which concerns strengthening social relations, interactions and ties. It embraces all aspects that are generally considered as the social capital of a society (Berger-Schmitt, 2002). If this causal mechanism and hypothesis are indeed correct, I expect to observe indicators such as: making friends with Lebanese peers, feelings of belonging to the Lebanese society, feelings of equality and equal opportunity to the Lebanese, and expressions for stronger networks across nationalities. Moreover, I expect to observe the absence of indicators such as: feelings of marginalization and social exclusion, feelings of inequality and unequal opportunities, feelings of frustration and anger, and a belief in military action. The following questions were posed to the participants in the study:

Q: In your view, how does education impact the Palestinian youth?
   a. Hopes for a better future?
   b. Employment opportunities?
   c. Their position in comparison to Lebanese peers?
   d. The community and social networks?
   e. Their attitudes towards armed groups?

Q: Do you think that education leads to social cohesion?

Q: In your view, how does non-attendance, or dropping out of school, affect the Palestinian youth?
   a. Their position in comparison to Lebanese peers, i.e. social cohesion and equality?
The second causal mechanism, which posits education’s negative effect on resilience, focuses on enhanced awareness of inequalities, injustices and discrimination. Merriam-Webster defines awareness as “knowledge and understanding that something is happening or exists”. These injustices apply to the Palestinian refugee community in Lebanon, and grievances would be a result of comparisons to the Lebanese community that enjoys civil rights in Lebanon. If this causal mechanism and hypothesis are indeed correct, I expect to observe indicators such as: inclusion of these topics in the classroom, knowledge of the legal and structural discrimination in the society, feelings of frustration and anger, expressions of wanting to achieve change, and a preference for armed groups. I expect to observe the absence of indicators such as: expression of increased motivation and hope for the future, and expression of resistance to military action and the use of violence. The first question is considered to capture both mechanisms and is therefore repeated for clarification. Consequently, these interview questions were asked:

Q: In your view, how does education impact the Palestinian youth?
   a. Hopes for a better future?
   b. Employment opportunities?
   c. Their position in comparison to Lebanese peers?
   d. The community and social networks?
   e. Their attitudes towards armed groups?

Q: Does the education include any discussion of the situation of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon?
   a. For example, the injustices and discrimination they face in the Lebanese society?
   b. The right to return?
   c. Their future in Lebanon?

Q: In your view, how would such discussions affect the Palestinian youth?
   a. For example, could raising awareness help them resist joining armed groups?
   b. Or could such discussions rather function as motivation to join armed groups?

Q: Would you say that the educated youth, or the youth that do not attend school, harbor more frustration and a desire for change? Why?

The dependent variable ‘resistance to join armed group’ is also translated into a binary variable, which can be either present or absent. For youth that do not join armed groups the variable is present, and for youth that do mobilize the variable is absent. ‘Joining’ armed groups is understood as participation in any capacity, such as fighters, cooks, porters, spies etc. (DCI, 2012). The variable is translated into the following questions:
Q: According to your understanding, which youth join armed groups? When I say join, I mean participation in any capacity.
   a. How can that be explained?
   d. Do the armed groups, to your knowledge, prefer any kind of individual?
   e. In what situations are youth particularly susceptible to extremist messages?
Q: Which youth do not join?
   a. How can that be explained?
Q: Is there any difference between youth that attend school, and the ones who do not, when it comes to joining armed groups?
   a. If yes, in what way?
Q: In your opinion, what are the most important factors to strengthening youth to resist joining armed extremist groups? Or in other words, to prevent them from joining?

Ultimately, the ability of an indicator to capture the theoretical concept it is intended to capture and nothing more, determines the validity of the study (Powner, 2015). One option to ensure high validity is to use standard measures. However, for qualitative research with the goal to capture nuances and individual perspectives based on the understanding of a wide-range of answers that the participants give to open-ended question, this is not always possible or desirable. The above is an attempt to construct as valid indicators as possible. The indicators and observable implications are also used to analyze and structure the material.

3.4. Data Collection

The main source of data for this study is in-depth interviews. A field study was conducted in Lebanon during four weeks in late spring of 2018 to carry out in-depth interviews with representatives of organizations working with Palestinian refugee youth. In total, eight interviews were conducted and serve as material. According to Brounéus (2011), a general rule of thumb is to include between 10 to 40 interviewees. Eight interviews thus make up for a rather small N, which limits the scope and the inferences that can be made. This was mainly caused by time and budget constraints. Yet, the interviews at hand were deemed sufficient to answer the research question, and the variety of answers appeared to diminish.

The interviewees were selected based on the criterion that they were, at the time of the field study, working for an organization supporting Palestinian refugee youth. The organizations were approached both via email and phone calls. I introduced the research project and asked if a representative from the organization would be willing to participate in an interview. To increase the interviewees’ comfort, they were asked to indicate preferences for the time and place of the
interview. All the interviews except one were conducted in the city of Beirut, since that is where the majority of the organizations working with Palestinian youth are located. The participants held various positions within the organizations, were of ages ranging from roughly 20 to 65, and worked with youth in different camps, which added to the variety of knowledge and experience shared in the interviews. I also attempted to contact teaching staff from UNRWA, unfortunately, without success.

Prior to the interviews I provided information about the research project and asked for informed consent, see Appendix I and II. A set of previously formulated semi-structured and open-ended interview questions, based on the theoretical framework, were used to guide the conversations, see Appendix III. The interviews lasted between 45 minutes to 2.5 hours. All interviews were conducted in English and no translators were present. The interviews were conducted in-person in calm settings; either at the interviewee’s office or in a space we could speak in private proposed by the interviewee. I recorded all the interviews with the consent of the interviewees for note taking purposes.

Some aspects of bias and reliability are important to consider. Five of the interviewees are Palestinians and three are Lebanese. The nationality was not part of the selection criteria, since any representative working for an organization engaged with Palestinian youth was considered able to provide insightful information. The fact that most of the respondents are Palestinians may skew the data. For instance, respondents may have understated instances of recruitment, due to social desirability bias. However, Palestinians that have grown up in the refugee camps themselves possess invaluable insights into life in the camps. It should be noted that the Palestinians participating in the study were able to provide the most detailed accounts on recruitment, and their accounts did not deviate in any important aspect to the non-Palestinian participants. In fact, the Palestinians were keen on sharing their refugee experiences in Lebanon, and they were indeed open and inviting and showed interest in the study. Moreover, six out of eight sources held key positions at their organizations, lending centrality, authenticity and contemporaneity of the data. Five of the interviewees worked for international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), while three of them for local NGOs.

Furthermore, the interaction between the interviewees and the researcher is closely connected to the reliability of the study. Establishing a relaxed and trustworthy interview situation enables mutual understanding and honesty and minimizes the risk of misinterpretation and bias. As an outsider to the Israel-Palestine conflict with limited previous knowledge, I had an impartial approach to the data. While trying to be aware of and minimize any form of personal bias, it is
possible that my background and Western education influenced my interpretation and analysis of the data. During the interviews I rephrased questions and paraphrased answers to make sure we understood each other correctly.

Lastly, news articles and a variety of secondary sources such as reports, surveys and academic articles have been used to triangulate the data extracted in the interviews and to lend support to the findings of the study. Only secondary sources deemed trustworthy were consulted, including government’s country of origin information reports (which are primarily used to assess refugee statuses), a survey conducted by UNRWA in collaboration with the American University of Beirut, and peer reviewed academic articles.

3.5. Ethical Considerations

The method of in-depth interviewing involves specific responsibilities and challenges on the part of the researcher. To ensure the golden rule of ‘do no harm’ (Brounéus, 2011) a few decisions and considerations were made during the whole research process. First, due to the sensitivity of the topic of recruitment to armed groups, considerations were made as part of the case selection. In order to ensure the security and safety of respondents, a country and setting in which they could speak freely about this topic had to be selected. Therefore, Lebanon was chosen as the destination for the field study since it is a comparatively open society and political landscape and the research was not deemed to pose any foreseeable security issues to the respondents and/or the researcher. Second, a decision was made to not interview the Palestinian youth themselves. Again, due to the sensitivity of the topic and the fact that the definition of youth includes minors it was deemed unethical to interview them directly. Third, the interview questions were designed in an open-ended fashion, to allow the interviewees to decide how much they want to speak (cf. Brounéus, 2011). Forth, an application for ethics approval that included information about the research project, a risk assessment, and the interview questions, adhering to the guidelines of the Department of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University, was reviewed and approved by the course convenor prior to the field study.

Before the start of the interview, I clearly explained the purpose of the interview and the research project. The interviewees were given information regarding the research, contact information, and a consent form (see the Appendices). They were informed that participation was completely voluntary and given the option to withdrawal from the interview at any given point, to make sure they always felt in control. To ensure the confidentiality of the interviewees, all of them consented orally to avoid the need of a written signature. No personal information has been collected to safeguard their privacy and security. They were asked if they consented to use name
of the organization in the study, to which four out of eight interviewees consented. All names reported in this study are pseudonyms. The collected data and interview recordings have been stored without any personal information in spaces that require a password to access.

3.6. Time Frame

The time frame of the study sets the boundaries and delineates the case to make it scientifically comparable. The time frame of this study is set to start from the beginning of the civil war in Syria in 2011, since that is the starting point for Islamic fundamentalist armed groups to enter the refugee camps in Lebanon in efforts to recruit inhabitants to fight in the war. The ending point is set to June 2018 when the data collection was finalized.

This time frame is deemed sufficient to be able to evaluate the causal mechanism. However, recruitment to Palestinian factions and other Islamist armed groups has been ongoing for a longer period, and the interviewees may be drawing on experiences previous to 2011. Yet, the interview questions posed to the interviewees were framed in present tense, i.e. how can we understand this phenomenon as of today, which begs for up-to-date answers. The interviewees would therefore specify if they were speaking of past events and experiences.

3.7. Limitations of the Research Design

One main caveat, which has previously been mentioned, should be raised about the chosen research design. Due to ethical considerations, this study makes no attempts to interview Palestinian youths themselves, but rather, representatives of organizations working with the youth. This means that the data are not collected and measured at the most appropriate level of analysis. The representatives of the organizations provide accounts drawing on indirect experiences from working with the youth, which is why data are collected at an aggregated level instead of the individual level. As such, inferences are limited in scope and can only be made regarding other groups of youth in vulnerable settings. However, the fact that data are collected at the aggregated level minimizes the sensitivity of the research to outliers.

Furthermore, the rather small N (eight interviews) also limits the possibilities to make inferences, since it does not allow for such rigorous testing of the hypotheses as large-N studies do. Yet, as mentioned earlier, the variety of answers appeared to diminish, and the number of interviews were still deemed sufficient to answer the research question at hand.

To conclude, due to the aforementioned reasons I am not able to draw anything but tentative conclusions based on the results of this study. However, the results may indicate causal patterns that can be further explored in future research.
4. Empirics and Analysis

The following sections present and analyze the findings of the study according to four themes that were derived from the theoretical framework and the two causal mechanisms. First, a brief overview of the Palestinian refugee camps and the Palestinian youth in Lebanon is provided. Second, the two cases are analyzed separately using the logic of structured, focused comparison. Third, a comparative analysis is presented, and the explanatory power of the causal mechanisms is evaluated. Lastly, an account of additional factors that may affect the causal relationship identified by the study is provided.

4.1. The Camps

Sari Hanafi (2008), a renowned professor at the American University of Beirut (AUB), argues that for 60 years, the refugee camps in Lebanon have been treated as spaces of exception. The urbanization process of the unregulated camps has resulted in a large population suffering from poverty, living in slum areas surrounding the cities (Hanafi, 2008). The 12 official Palestinian refugee camps suffer from serious overcrowding, poor housing conditions and insufficient infrastructure; in particular sewage, water and electricity. The environment is considered extremely congested and unhealthy (UNHCR, 2016). PRL are directly dependent on UNRWA operations, such as education, health care, social services, infrastructure, protection and emergency response, to sustain their livelihoods and needs (Chaaban et al., 2016).

In this situation nothing is legally defined. The Lebanese army does not exercise control and generally refrains from entering the camps⁴ (UNHCR, 2016), nor is there a Palestinian authority in the camps (DIS, 2014). Instead, several different armed groups are in fierce competition with each other for power and influence: pro-Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) groups, pro-Syrian groups, Islamic fundamentalists and other groups including jihadist groups (DIS, 2014). The situation in the camps is commonly regarded as ‘no-law zones’ (Dot-Pouillard, 2015), and often results in sporadic factional armed clashes and political killings. For instance, in August 2015, tensions between rival groups reportedly resulted in six days of fighting between the Fatah Party and the Salafist Jund al-Sham and their respective allies, which led to six Palestinians being killed, and some 3’000 Palestinian refugees being displaced (UNHCR, 2016).

4.2. Palestinian Youth in Lebanon

“The youth are the most important issue. [...] We need to understand what it means to be born in a camp and to be raised and called refugee when you never fled anywhere.” Amalia

⁴ Which is a continuation of the legacy of the 1969 Cairo Agreement that was abrogated in 1987 (UNHCR, 2016).
The main feature of the Palestinian youth is that they do not have a certain future. Their life is dominated by poverty, a lack of basic rights, and social and institutionalized discrimination. They are expected to contribute financially to their families, as the families depend on their support. Said, an UNRWA official working with the Education Program in Lebanon, explains that the high rate of unemployment and the fact that there is nothing in the horizon for a just solution to the Palestinian plight put them in a hopeless situation. Amalia, who is running an NGO focusing on youth empowerment and psychosocial support, explains that some have the desire to leave Lebanon for a better life elsewhere, while some desire to stay to take part in the struggle for Palestine. As previously discussed, they face many legal barriers living in Lebanon, but also visa restrictions if they would try to leave Lebanon, as the travel document issued to refugees is not recognized by many countries. Whether they still maintain a hope for a better future is crucial to the path they will choose. Zabed, a manager at the American Near East Refugee Aid (ANERA), suggests that there are two categories of Palestinian youth: the ones who are proceeding with their higher studies, and those who left school early.

4.3. Youth Attending School

“Education is not a reason for people to get armed or not; they consider education as an arm itself.”
Wafaa

The ones who continue with higher education and reach the upper secondary stage are only the elite of the Palestinian youth, according to Zabed. Those who pursue a university degree are unsure what will happen and what they will do, and most of them are studying a degree that they cannot use in Lebanon. Wafaa, a representative from an organization that provides child protection and educational support, argues that Palestinians commit to education because they have nothing else to do, and after graduation they find that there is no work for them. Either they are left with the obstacle of trying to find a job in Lebanon, or they try to get an opportunity to leave Lebanon to work outside the country.

As previously mentioned, UNRWA provides educational services to Palestinian refugees in Lebanon (PRL), since enrollment to public schools is restricted for the Palestinian community. According to Said, UNRWA serves around 32’000 PRL students at 66 schools across the country, out of which nine are secondary schools. Wafaa points out that UNRWA as a service provider is doing well in terms of educational access to Palestinians. She says that it is rare to find a Palestinian who has never been to school or has had difficulties accessing school. In contrast to the Lebanese public schools, UNRWA also provides the schoolbooks, which reduces the financial burden for families in extremely poor conditions. Children are allowed access to
education with no limitations, thereby ensuring educational equality to all children and youth in Lebanon no matter the nationality. Also, the UNRWA has been providing educational services to Palestinian refugees since 1950, which is why the schooling system is not an example of rapid expansion of education.

4.3.1. Social Cohesion and Equality

On a societal level, since the Palestinian children are separated from the Lebanese children and youth in different schools at the elementary and secondary level, education does not contribute to a cohesive process. Spaces for interacting, learning to work together peacefully and combining interests and objectives are limited, and the Lebanese community seems to lack knowledge about the Palestinians’ situation. Both Malik, a community facilitation officer in one of the camps, and Amalia mention that some Lebanese people do not know that there are Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon:

“Imagine that in Lebanon, when I say I am Palestinian, they say: ‘OK, are you coming by bus every day from Palestine?’ There are Lebanese here that don’t know our situation.” Malik

Furthermore, Wafaa explains that due to the heavily restricted employment opportunities to Palestinians, as well as the system of kinship in Lebanon (cf. DIS, 2014), Lebanese and Palestinian peers with the same educational background compete on an uneven playing field. She maintains that while Palestinians respect that the Lebanese government wants to protect its citizen, they end up with no perspective for their future in the country. Amalia adds that the system contributes to a perception of inequality between peers:

“When you are denied working in 72 professions according to Khazaal (2017), there is a huge human humiliation to that. Like I’m not equal to a Lebanese peer, and we study the same thing in the same college, get same grades maybe a better grade.” Amalia

On an individual level, higher education could foster limited social cohesion. Both Malik and Amalia point out that Palestinian youth who attend the Lebanese university have more Lebanese friends since they interact more. They might also meet Lebanese in total solidarity with them and their cause. Zahed agrees with this but adds that such cohesion is very limited since few Palestinians reach the university level of education. However, Amalia argues that those Palestinians are also more exposed to racism and social discrimination than the ones who stay in the camp.

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5 In Arabic it is called ‘wasta’, a term for having someone who talks on your behalf (Wafaa).
6 39 professions according to Khazaal (2017).
Regarding the curriculum and whether principles of good citizenship are taught, Said at UNRWA emphasizes that they focus on global citizenship. They concentrate on international values and aspects and teach Palestinians that one day they will have a country where they will be good citizens and live like others in a peaceful country. They will have civil rights and be able to elect their president and so on. In other words, the teachings do not focus on good citizenship within the Lebanese state, in coexistence with the Lebanese people, and cannot be considered to directly contribute to social cohesion in their current situation.

To sum up, due to contextual factors such as separated elementary and secondary schooling systems and various barriers to employment opportunities to Palestinians, education in Lebanon does not ensure equal opportunities nor bridge differences between societal groups. As such, it does not promote social cohesion and equality other than to a limited extent on an individual level, when Lebanese and Palestinians students meet at the university.

4.3.2. Communities and Social Networks

Wafaa suggests that because Palestinian communities live in the same camp, go to the same school, and might even be relatives, they are like a big family. At some point, Palestinians feel like they are living in large cages in the country. Masoud, the director of Children and Youth Center in Beirut (CYC), also touches upon this. The youth do not like to go outside the camp because they do not belong to the community outside. Inside the camp they are all equal. In this sense, the communities can be considered strengthened. Not because of education or social cohesion and equality in the Lebanese society, but because of isolation and shared experiences of discrimination and marginalization.

However, the Palestinian students that do make it to university level and attend the Lebanese university will have better prerequisites to make friends will Lebanese peers and develop a network reaching outside the immediate Palestinian community. This could possibly be an asset in the future search for jobs, as having someone to speak on one’s behalf is important in the Lebanese society.

Within the Palestinian community, Wafaa argues that educational level, and even more field of education, has become the main social hierarchical system. For instance, medicine, pharmacy and engineering graduates are more appreciated than graduates of business-related studies, despite the top ranked ones are being listed as prohibited professions for Palestinians to practice in Lebanon. Art-related studies would even be rejected. She maintains that youth follow these paths aiming to satisfy their social respect and superiority.
4.3.3. Political Awareness

Considering the educational content of the curriculum, Said explains that UNRWA follows United Nations’ neutrality principles, values and rules, and adopts host government curriculum in all countries they run their operations. This means that they focus on Palestinian traditions, cultures, norms and values, but do not engage in discussions about the situation (i.e. discrimination and injustices) of Palestinians refugees in Lebanon, or Israel and the Israelis. Zahed at ANERA argues that such topics are not discussed openly in schools because they do not want to “provoke things”. Therefore, there are some restrictions from UNRWA, even though this is the story of the Palestinian people. These policies oppose the recommendations by UNESCO (2017) that highlight the need for learners to be given platforms to discuss sensitive “burning bridge” issues in an appropriate manner.

Said at UNRWA stresses that the Palestinian refugee identity is currently of high concern in the curriculum. Palestinians need to know that they are Palestinians, that they are not persons without identity. Even if they are not living in their country, they should know that they have the right to live in a country like any other person in the world. Said says the teachers should clarify to the students that there was a Historical Palestine and they can use the Historical map of Palestine, but they do not go into details; for example the struggle with Israel, what happened in 1948, whether Israel occupied Palestine or not, or that West Bank and Gaza could be a country for them. UNRWA schools do not have a specific subject for Palestinian history and geography but teaches the Lebanese history and geography as part of the Lebanese curriculum. Malik mentions that UNRWA used to teach a subject called History of Palestine but stopped teaching this subject after the Oslo Accord in 1993. Since then, it is not allowed to teach the Palestinian history. Amalia says this is a problem that everyone talks about in the community. Al-Hroub (2014) mentions this circumstance as a reason for students’ educational apathy and dropout rates in UNRWA schools. Both Masoud and Malik believe there is a particular reason for this:

“They want to start putting in the minds of the new generation that Palestine doesn’t exist. It’s called Israel.” Malik

Nevertheless, Zahed at ANERA says that the right to return usually is discussed in schools, and there are events highlighting the national right of Palestinians to go back to Palestine. Several of the interviewees mention an event that happened in the spring of 2018. A group of donors from the European Union came to visit one of the schools, and one of the UNRWA staff removed a Palestine map from the wall inside the school. This incident sparked a lot of debate and
confrontation with the Palestinian community and highlights the controversial nature of the topic.

Moreover, UNRWA prohibits discussions about jihad, violent Islamism, extremism and terrorism, and such topics are therefore completely avoided. According to Zahed, it is not allowed in schools, not only because UNRWA does not want it but also because the people do not want it.

Whether education enhances reasoning skills, which would in turn lead to a raised awareness of the injustices and discrimination faced by Palestinians, several interviewees point out that such awareness does not come from education, it comes from their living conditions. Masoud at CYC illustrates a reality for many Palestinians growing up:

“That children, they are not waiting for anybody to remind them, to raise their awareness, their knowledge, because they are living it! They hear the mother and father complain; everyday no job, everyday no medicine, everyday no water, everyday no food, everyday with a shortage of this and that.” Masoud, CYC

In summary, because UNRWA must adhere to UN neutrality principles as well as the Lebanese curriculum, which restricts the discussions of the Palestinians’ conditions in Lebanon and Israel and the Israelis, there is no clear connection between educational content and raised awareness of the injustices, inequality and discrimination Palestinians face in Lebanon. Rather, such awareness stems from the reality of growing up in a refugee camp.

4.3.4. Perceived Grievances

“Education has nothing to be linked with their enrollment to armed groups. The attituded does, the frustration does.” Wafaa

Palestinians are forbidden from practicing in 39 professions, including medicine, dentistry, law, engineering, pharmacy and psychology, or any profession that require affiliation of a syndicate (Khazaal, 2017), resulting in strictly limited economic opportunities to qualified individuals. Unemployment rates are reportedly high, 23 per cent for PRL. The main source of income is self-employment at 41 per cent. The majority of those who are employed work in low-skilled and low-paying jobs that are often subject to harsh, insecure and exploitative conditions (Chaaban et al., 2016).

Said at UNRWA argues that educated youth generally have better employment opportunities, and even if they do not have it in their current situation, they still have the hope. However, other interviewees portray a different picture. Wafaa says that the moment Palestinian youth are done
with universities, they have nothing to do. They face the reality of no job offers. In fact, *Amalia* says that most educated youth are seeking to leave Lebanon. Some of them might try to get a scholarship in e.g. Cyprus or Russia, but that is very hard. *Wafaa* argues that this causes frustration for educated youth, especially for men, since they carry cultural responsibilities that do not relate to women. *Malik* also describes this situation. Without a job they cannot get married, since the man is responsible to cover everything, including the house, furniture, equipment, and the wedding. Palestinian girls are generally outgoing and possess skills, but they can more easily convince themselves to stay at home and learn household work, according to *Wafaa*.

Drawing on these findings, the legal and institutional barriers to employment produce frustration and a desire to change the current situation, especially among educated male Palestinian youth. Thus, the lived and experienced injustice, inequality and discrimination can be considered linked to the frustration and grievances that the Palestinians hold.

On the other hand, *Rashida*, a representative of an NGO that organizes cultural events and workshops for youth, found that the Palestinian youth studying at university level she worked with were demotivated and did not believe that change could happen within the Lebanese state. She suggests the opposite and argues that a university degree would lower the frustration among Palestinians:

> “Because they were Palestinians and they earned these [university] degrees, they were less bitter about the Lebanese situation. They interpret it as a political decision, not a people’s decision. Although big part of the Lebanese people is with this decision.” *Rashida*

However, she draws on two examples of Palestinians who were hired as assistant professors at a prestigious university in Lebanon, which can only be considered rare examples of very successful youth. Therefore, these examples should not be generalized.

Whether violence is regarded as a mean to achieve change, *Zabed* at ANERA maintains that Palestinians came to a different understanding of how they could highlight their rights in the world. For example, they are supported by different European countries that emphasize the Palestinians cause, they have a rich calendar in celebrating days of Palestinians events, and they network with political parties around the world. Such strategies also require a certain level of education.

Education is considered extremely important among the Palestinian refugee communities in Lebanon, especially amongst the older generation. “Education is life,” says *Said*, having grown up in the UNRWA schooling system himself. Putting such great importance on education dates to
1948 when the Palestinians fled to the adjacent countries of Palestine. Masoud explains this importance:

“Palestinians at the time believed that one of the main reasons Palestine got defeated and they had to flee was the lack of education. So, when they came here [to Lebanon] as refugees they put one aim for their children – the education.” Masoud, CYC

Consequently, there is a belief that education is a means to fight for the right to return to Palestine. Zabed at ANERA tells that when he was a child, they used to stand up in the mornings and chant an oath with the central message: “We have to be educated to claim our rights”, yet this is not practiced anymore. Wafaa says that some parents think that education is the only way to make Palestinians’ voices heard and get the power to force the world to listen to them. Nevertheless, Zabed suggests that some Palestinians are left with no other choice:

“In the meantime, when you come to the life in the camps, Palestinians now believe that military action is one of the choices. When you are having nothing in hand, of course, the only choice.” Zabed

4.4. Youth Not Attending School

The other category of youth – the dropouts – are those who leave school early. As previously mentioned, approximately two-thirds of PRL youth in the ages 15-25 are enrolled in school, around ten per cent of youth (aged 16-18) dropped out from school during the year, and approximately one-third (aged 15-18) of those who are enrolled do not attend school. Around twelve per cent of PRL never went to school (Chaaban et al., 2016).

The reasons to why youth decide to drop out of schools are plenty. One major issue is the loss of hope, mentioned by almost all interviewees. They lose hope of getting a job linked to the education and feel like the education is useless. Zabed point at the absence of example; youth see skilled persons such as engineers and medical doctors who do not find jobs. The loss of hope turns into despair because they think the situation will not improve. Another reason to drop out is because of poverty. Wafaa mentions that they think that quitting school is an opportunity to start working and contribute to the household already. A third reason is because of the security situation in some camps, especially in Ein el-Hilweh and Beddawi. Zabed says that children sometimes do not want to go to school because they are afraid that clashes may erupt at any time. Said at UNRWA explains that the schools are affected by the recurring military clashes:

“Ein el-Hilweh is a difficult camp in terms of military clashes. A lot of factions, a lot of Islamist fundamentalists, so from time to time clashes flare up among these forces inside the camp and this impact our education, our schools. Sometimes the schools are closed because of the clashes.” Said, UNRWA
Girls also drop out from school because of culture and tradition according to Wasim, a representative from the organization SB Overseas. Either they are subject to early marriage, they know that at the end they will be wives staying at home, or because their parents do not want them to leave the house to go to school. Finally, some youth drop out because of problems with UNRWA schools. The main ones are the big number of students in the classes, which may be up to 50, and the quality of education. Amalia and Wafaa also point out that, even if children perform low and fail subjects, they are pushed to the next grade, which fosters illiteracy. They find the education too hard, so they quit. Zabed adds that UNRWA try their best to provide quality education but is under constant pressure both financially and security wise in the camps.

Most of these findings are in line with the results from a study conducted by Al-Hroub (2014) on Palestinians school dropouts.

Malik says that most of the youth, i.e. around 70 per cent, are doing nothing. They sit around in the camps smoking cigarettes and Aruguleh (water pipe), hang out in cafés or engage in violent activities. He explains that these youth are more exposed to influences from “bad” people. This picture is also described by Zabed and Amalia. The youth are on their phones; Facebook and social media, and they follow news about Palestine closely. A major concern among youth in the camps is drug usage. There is a lot of drug abuse and dealing, for which they also get arrested. Malik believes that the youth use drugs to escape their situation. Zabed explains that only in the Burj el-Barajneh camp there is program for drug addicts run by volunteers. These circumstances provide multiple risk factors and an opportunity structure for violent extremism according to Weine and Ahmed (2012) and Hayes (2017).

Zabed explains that the choices they have are very limited. They may try to go for a vocational training program, for example Siblin training center run by UNRWA, but because of limited intake based on merit it is difficult for school dropouts to be accepted. Another option is the job market, where youth usually end up doing heavy work in industries, constructions or agricultural work depending on the season, or work in mechanic shops or cafés. A lot of hopeless youth try to leave the country, which is usually done illegally by paying a smuggler to take them to Europe. The fourth option is to join an armed faction, to get recruited by someone who pays them some money to carry guns, a problem that is worsened if it is an Islamic radical group.

4.4.1. Social Cohesion and Equality

Staying out of school contributes to increased isolation and exclusion from the rest of the society. Masoud at CYC explains that many youths suffer from depression, from an unhappy life, thinking it is better to die to escape the circumstances. The youth do not like to go outside of the camp,
not because they do not know their way outside, but because they do not belong to the community outside the camp. That is why you find them in corners, smoking.

Hence, not only are the youth isolated from the Lebanese community due to living in refugee camps and restrictions to partake in the society on equal term, they are also increasingly isolated from their own community, which negatively affects social cohesion and equality.

4.4.2. Communities and Social Networks

Zabed at ANERA suggests that youths dropping out of school create a burden and increase the pressure on Palestinian families. The families are helpless; if they try to put the youth back to school, he or she will stay there for a week and then leave again. Because it is still the same environment and the same suffering. So, the youth try to avoid school and end up in the streets. The problem is aggregated when considering children and youth with special needs. According to Wafaa, dropout children mark a failure in life to Palestinian parents.

Masoud at CYC argues that dropping out of school leads to weak family relations. When youth are out of school and when they are living in misery, facing discrimination within the community, they also get closer to delinquency and “wrong” behavior. It can be smoking, drugs or violence. This is a very critical age when they want to behave as a man or woman. Some of the parents try to protect their sons or daughters through marriage. Having a family, the youth will be more settled, but on the other hand it means more responsibility, something they will not manage. So, either they will have weak family relations, with several children already at the age 25, or they divorce.

Moreover, since school is considered the main space for networking and making friends, Wafaa suggests that youth that do not attend school are generally not part of such networks. Instead, they become neglected community members and are sometimes subject to bullying.

Consequently, on top of being increasingly isolated from their community, staying out of school may also lead to increased burden and pressure on Palestinian families and bullying. Marrying at a young age may be a counterproductive measure and produce weak family relations, not least because minors are not ready for such responsibilities.

4.4.3. Political Awareness

Palestinian youth acquire an awareness of injustices and discrimination, as well as the conflict with Israel, from the experiences of growing up in the camps. Zabed at ANERA points out that the conflict with Israel is the story of Palestinian people. If a child or youth asks a teacher or a
parent “Why am I a refugee?”; what will be the answer? They must be told about 1948, this is the story, and now Israel is occupying their land. It cannot be avoided, there is no other story.

_Amalia_ describes the refugee camp as a _highly political environment_, which echoes the proposition by Hart (2008). She explains that the youth follow the news of Palestine every day. There are constantly organized events in the camps. For example, when Palestinian prisoners were on hunger strike in an Israeli prison, there was a sit-in in the camp in solidarity. The youth are very much engaged with what is happening.

Moreover, the history of civilian suffering due to the lengthy conflict with Israel is kept in the collective memory by yearly commemorations. Thus, even though the Palestinian history is not taught in school, life in the camps contributes to such knowledge:

> “Here in the camp we have so many occasions. We have Nakba, we have [Sabra-Shatila] massacre, we have the Land Day, we have the Deir Yassin massacre, we have Jenin, the war in Lebanon and how we lost three camps. All of these occasions, every year we commemorate in the camp and we talk to the children.” _Masoud, CYC_

While discussions about jihad, violent Islamism, extremism and terrorism are completely avoided in the school environment, such discussions could happen in the streets or in some of the mosques. But it is not something open for everyone to hear, according to _Zabed_. However, it is everywhere in the media, and youth are usually exposed to it from Facebook and Whatsapp. It is not a matter of preaching; Internet is available for everyone. _Amalia_ says that the youth she works with have an open debate on it because the situation is so extreme. The youth are very particular on the fact that Fatah al-Islam, the extremist group that was part of the war in Nahr el-Bared camp in 2007, came from the outside and infiltrated the camp. They want people to know that.

When the interviewees were asked whether there is any _alternative education_ provided to the Palestinian youth, such as religious or private schools, most of them answered ‘No’ or ‘I don’t think so’. _Said_ at UNRWA mentions that they can enroll in Lebanese schools, but very limited spaces are given to Palestinians. _Zabed_ at ANERA says they usually allow five per cent of Palestinians. He also says that there are some private schools that collect high fees from students. Religious schools are limited, and they usually collect fees from children as well. _Masoud_ tells there are kindergartens that belong to some Islamic organizations, but apart from that religion is kept out of schools. However, there are plenty of NGOs that provide educational support to children and youth, both to those who are enrolled in an UNRWA school, and to dropouts aiming to reregister. Thus, to the knowledge of the eight interviewees consulted in this study, there is no, or
possibly extremely limited and inaccessible formal education that advocates particular political or religious messages.

To conclude, the findings of this study suggest that an awareness of injustices and discrimination, as well as the conflict with Israel, is acquired through the experiences of growing up in the camps. This is intensified by the vast number of events and commemorations, alongside the easy access to Internet, which creates a highly political environment. The study does not find support for any widespread alternative education that could propagate certain political or religious views.

4.4.4. Perceived Grievances

Malik explains that around 70 per cent of the youth in the Nahr el-Bared camp are not doing anything. He continues to describe that the situation triggers aggressive behavior and a desire for change:

“This is making youth, they are more in conflict, more aggressive between each other. The only nice thing here is that we don’t have weapons. I think if we would have these weapons, we would shoot each other, because of how much we are suffering from this life. […] They want to live, they want to eat, they want to work, they want to have money. They want to have a normal life.” Malik

Malik continues that the violence has “exploded” in the community, which is making him worried about their future. Instead of fighting for their right to return, they fight in a “bad” way, which has a negative effect on their community. Zahed believes that it is the pressure that people experience inside the camps that trigger violence and clashes between the military factions.

On the other hand, Amalia points out that she finds the youth that give up on school are more hopeless and would be the ones that try to leave the country, just work at a shop to help the family, or do drugs, rather than fight for their cause. However, she adds that the dropout phenomenon is so vast so there is diversity within the dropouts.

Palestinians nowadays believe that military action is one of the choices to achieve change. Several of the interviewees suggest that male youth who dropped out of school, are unemployed, and only stay in the streets, are more prone to look for opportunities with factions. However, for youth to join any military faction; Islamic or liberal, under the circumstances that are prevailing in Lebanon, Zahed argues that it should be the only choice. He says that since the Oslo Accords in 1993 the political option is not open. If they would have another choice, there would not be violence. Nevertheless, recruitment to military factions is very limited, according to Zahed. They do not have resources to recruit everybody.
To sum up, the study finds that the lack of opportunities and harsh living conditions trigger aggressive behavior and violence within certain groups of youth, as an expression for a desire for change, while some others rather give up on the situation and become idle or try to leave the country. Military action is believed to be one of the choices to achieve change.

4.5. Comparative Analysis

This section provides a comparative analysis of the two cases presented above, according to the themes that were derived from the theoretical framework. Moreover, it evaluates the explanatory power of the two causal mechanisms considering the findings of the study.

4.5.1. Social Cohesion and Equality

The findings of this study suggest that education in Lebanon does not ensure equal opportunities nor bridge differences between societal groups. The main reasons are contextual factors such as separated elementary and secondary schooling systems and various barriers to employment opportunities to Palestinians, as well as the educational content. The effect is rather a perception of inequality. Education can only be said to contribute to social cohesion and equality to a limited extent on the individual level, when Lebanese and Palestinian students meet at the university. However, this small effect is highlighted by the fact that only 6.2 per cent of PRL above the age 25 are university degree holders (Chaaban et al., 2016). Moreover, Palestinians that attend university are also more exposed to racism and discrimination.

When considering youth that do not attend school this pattern is accentuated. Not only are the youth isolated from the Lebanese community due to living in refugee camps and restrictions to partake in the society on equal term, they are also increasingly isolated from their own Palestinian community, which negatively affects social cohesion and equality.

4.5.2. Communities and Social Networks

Education cannot be said to directly affect and strengthen the Palestinian communities and social networks within the Lebanese society, other than the few Palestinian students that do make it to university where they get an opportunity to develop a social network reaching outside the Palestinian community. However, living in the same camp, going to the same school and many being relatives create a feeling of belonging due to isolation and shared experiences of discrimination and marginalization. In this sense, the Palestinian community could be considered strengthened. More importantly, educational level and field of study has become the main hierarchical system within the Palestinian community and connotes social respect and superiority.
Youth that do not attend school may experience an increasing isolation from their own community and non-attendance creates a burden and increased pressure on Palestinian families. They are sometimes subject to bullying and generally not part of the same network with their educated peers. Marrying at a young age may be a counterproductive measure and produce weak family relations. Moreover, due to the system of social hierarchy based on educational level and field of study, youth that do not attend school will be categorized lowest in rank and have difficulties earning social respect.

4.5.3. Political Awareness

This study suggests that there is no clear connection between educational content and raised awareness of the injustices, inequality and discrimination Palestinians face in Lebanon. This is because UNRWA must adhere to UN neutrality principles as well as the Lebanese curriculum, which restricts the discussions of the Palestinians’ conditions in Lebanon, as well as the conflict with Israel and the Israelis. The study does not find support for any widespread alternative education that could propagate certain political or religious views. Rather, such awareness stems from the experiences of growing up in a refugee camp, which should apply equally to youth no matter attending school or not. This is intensified by the vast number of events and commemorations, alongside the easy access to Internet, which creates a highly political environment in the camps.

4.5.4. Perceived Grievances

The legal and institutional barriers to employment produce frustration and a desire to change the current situation, especially among educated male Palestinian youth that carry certain cultural responsibilities. Thus, the lived and experienced injustice, inequality and discrimination can be considered linked to the frustration and grievances that the Palestinians hold. Nevertheless, there is a belief that education is a means to fight for the right to return to Palestine. As such, education could possibly channel grievances into fighting in a constructive manner, including speaking up for their rights and networking with political parties in other countries. However, Palestinians believe that military action is one of the choices to achieve change; and when nothing in hand, sometimes the only choice.

For youth that do not attend school, the lack of opportunities and harsh living conditions trigger aggressive behavior and violence within groups of youth as an expression for a desire for change. This tendency could possibly become more destructive with time. Some of them may look for
opportunities with military factions. Yet, some others rather give up on the situation and become idle.

4.5.5. Evaluation of Causal Mechanisms

The broad conclusion of these findings is that the hypothesized causal mechanism of the positive effect of education on resilience, linked with increased social cohesion and equality as well as strengthened communities and social networks (Figure 1), does not find significant support in the case of Palestinian refugee youth in Lebanon.

On the other hand, the hypothesized causal mechanism of the negative effect of education on resilience, linked with enhanced awareness of inequalities, injustices, and discrimination, and increased frustration and desire to change (Figure 2), seem to find support in the case of Palestinian refugee youth in Lebanon with an alteration. Instead of suggesting that injustices and discrimination would be learned and understood more clearly through enhanced reasoning skills and awareness, the findings rather point to the fact that such awareness is not learned, but lived. For Palestinians that commit to school and get themselves an education, these injustices and discrimination are felt more strongly, see Figure 3.

![Figure 3. Fine-tuned causal mechanism of the negative effects of education on resilience.](image)

Therefore, based on the findings of this study, the causal mechanism postulating education’s negative effect on resilience appear to more accurately explain the effect education has on youth within vulnerable settings to resist joining armed groups. In other words, higher education appears to increase the risk that youth join armed groups.

However, when comparing with the group of youth that do not attend school, the findings suggest that the harsh living conditions Palestinians face in Lebanon are accentuated. The youth end up in an even more vulnerable position, where they become more isolated from their
respective communities, families experience increased burden and pressure, and aggressive behavior and violence is the outcome. As such, they are more exposed to militia recruiters and criminality.

Therefore, it is important to stress that these findings do not mean that education directly affects the willingness to mobilize with armed groups. Instead, the variable ‘education’ may be viewed as having a weak explanatory power to explain mobilization in the case of Palestinian youth in Lebanon. The findings corroborate with Brockhoff, Krieger and Meierrieks (2015), suggesting that the effect of education on political violence and terrorism is indirect and mediated by country-specific conditions.

4.6. Additional Observations

While the case study was intended to shed light on the causal mechanisms that link education to resilience, a few additional explanations for joining, as well as for resisting to join armed groups, were found. In fact, along the research process I encountered reasons to believe that education may be a necessary but insufficient condition to explain resistance to join armed groups. It does not seem sufficient to theorize about education as present or absent, since the absence of education puts youth in an even more vulnerable position where they are more exposed to militia recruiters and criminality. Therefore, I argue that it seems more reasonable to theorize about education in combination with other factors when studying resilience. Combining education with different types of factors may even strengthen its effect. Since the case study provided an opportunity to probe for other factors affecting mobilization and resilience among Palestinians youth, these findings are presented in the following sections. For instance, the reasons to why some Palestinians youth join Palestinian factions and Islamist armed groups appear to be quite different.

4.6.1. Joining a Palestinian Faction

In an aim to further the understanding of the local context and how resilience can best be increased among Palestinian youth, it is necessary to map out the factors for why some individuals join armed groups. This section discusses the motivations revealed by the study to why some youth join Palestinian factions.

“Palestinians are only thinking about holding weapons, being armed, to fight for the right to return. At the opportunity they’re told ‘this is a weapon, go fight for your right to return’, they would. We call it right-fighters” Wafaa
To most Palestinians, joining a Palestinian faction serves the purpose of highlighting the Palestinian cause, which can be classified as an identity-based grievances factor to mobilize. As such, Amalia explains that it has to do with the politics of being Palestinian and returning to the homeland. She suggests that Palestinian youth are very identity driven people, so a faction that is going to help them express and work to realize the cause, would be attractive to the youth. Rashida explains the effect of the cultural workshops that her organization hosts, and suggests that more knowledge and awareness about the Palestinian cause would encourage youth to support the armed resistance:

“The more they know, the more they become rigid about the Palestinian cause. The Palestinians we work with realized, by themselves, that this country [Israel] doesn’t want peace with us. They realized that we need to support the resistance, even if it’s armed. Because the people we are dealing with are all armed, you know.” Rashida

Further, Palestinians often join factions due to poverty. Malik says that some youth earn small salaries from PLO and some Palestinian factions just to be members, without carrying out duties. According to Zabed, around 100 USD per month could be provided to join a faction. Enlisting to earn money sorts as selective incentives-based motive.

The absence of examples and role models that surround the youth is also an important explanatory factor. Both Zabed and Wasim argue that male youth who lack positive examples in their locality may think that joining a faction will make them strong and powerful. Zabed illustrates this with a conversation with a PRL that dropped out of school. When asked what he wants to be when he grows up, the boy responded:

“I want to be like Lino’ [a nickname of one of the Palestinian leaders]. He walks around with people protecting him with guns.” Zabed, ANERA

Another important aspect of joining a faction is the need for self-protection. Such a motive is a non-material reward of security. Zabed explains that the Palestinian experiences of persecution and massacres in Lebanon in the Palestinian youth with a felt need for self-protection, which for some involves guns. Furthermore, Wafaa explains that in the Lebanese society, access to services and protection is dependent on political affiliation, both for Palestinians and Lebanese. The main Palestinian parties are Fatah, Hamas, Jihad al-Islami, and the Palestinian parties coordinate with specific Lebanese parties. However, not all political groups in Lebanon are armed. This system of protection and access to services is also described in Hanafi and Long (2010) and DIS (2014).

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7 A leader of a Fatah militia according to Dot-Pouillard (2015).
8 Referring to the civil war, Israeli invasion, Sabra-Shatila massacre, and the ‘war of camps’ (Zabed).
Religious motives could also be a factor encouraging youth to join a faction. There are two types of factions; Islamic, such as Hamas, and liberal, for example Popular Front for Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and Democratic Front for Liberation of Palestine (DFLP). According to Zabed, not all Islamic groups are radical. Rashida explains that there are mosques inside the camps that are explicitly connected to Hamas, so people who go there learn about them and potentially become supporters:

“If they are too attracted to the Islamic tradition, they would join Hamas. The people that I know who are with Hamas, they are very pious, very religious.” Rashida

Amalia suggests that preachers and imams can be very charismatic and able to provide support and act as role models to the youth. Waisim proposes that if parents are Islamic the youth will learn how they are talking and thinking, and potentially imitate their behavior. Nevertheless, Zabed argues that there are very limited cases where Palestinians join factions because of religious reasons. The liberal faction, according to Amalia, are more secular and do not believe in mixing religion and politics. They associate the resistance against Israel with nationalism and nationhood, and to them, getting back Palestine has nothing to do with religion. Thus, there appears to be a lack of consensus on the importance of religion to joining armed factions.

Moreover, the Palestinian factions engage in education of their members. Malik argues that education is a priority to the factions since revolution is seen as equal to education and weapons. More education means more knowledge, vision for the future and awareness for the community, which results in a ‘right’ revolution. Therefore, some factions also cover university fees for students. Amalia comments that the factions fill in for subjects that are absent in the UNRWA curriculum, for example the history of Palestine, the Israeli occupation, discuss incidents that appear in the news, and the Palestinian resistance movement.

These findings indicate that there are alternative sources of education and knowledge in the Palestinian community apart from the formal education provided by UNRWA that could potentially affect the resilience among Palestinian youth. Therefore, these findings call for a revision of the definition of education.

However, the interviewees did not provide a clear answer to whether recruiters select the more educated individuals to join Palestinians factions. Rashida tells that there is a notion that says: “the more educated you are, the more you will benefit us”. Conversely, Amalia believes that recruitment happens through networks, either the familial network or the larger social network. She suggests that factions would prefer a brave, strong, charismatic and outspoken personality who is not
afraid to go on TV and defend the Palestinian cause. Such qualities may well be developed as a result of education in schools, but they may equally well be formed due to community engagement or other circumstances.

Regarding girls’ participation in Palestinian factions, the interviewees provide diverging experiences. Zahed claims that there is no recruitment for girls at all, but they could function in other capacities that are not linked to the military. More common would be to find them in the Red Crescent society, in a medical support party, supporting children or joining the Palestinians scouts. Malik, on the other hand, says that some Palestinian factions recruit girls, because they believe that the role of the woman in the community is equal to that of the man. In fact, one icon in the Palestinian popular resistance is a woman, Leila Khaled.

To sum up, there are multiple factors as to why Palestinian youth join Palestinian factions. The primary factor that is emphasized during the interviews is the Palestinian cause and the fight for the right to return. Secondary factors discussed are poverty, absence of role models, the need for self-protection, and religious motives. The general system of kinship and connections in Lebanese society is significant to consider, since political affiliation decides what kind of protection and services a person will have access to. Also, it seems plausible that individuals are recruited through social networks rather than based on educational level.

4.6.2. Joining an Islamist Extremist Armed Group

The following section presents the factors identified by the study for why some Palestinian youth in Lebanon join violent Islamist or extremist armed groups.

“How is it possible to open this border [to Syria] for me to go fight, and close that border [to Israel] to fight?” Malik

One line of explanation refers to a disappointment with Palestinian factions. Malik argues that some Palestinians do not trust the Palestinian factions like they used to in the past. They believe that the leader lost the hope and is corrupted. These Palestinians still believe in the resistance to return to their homeland, but they have no opportunity to fight or to hold weapons. Malik suggests that they want to escape their situation and if someone pushes them to go and fight somewhere else, they will go.

Amalia suggests that a political history of oppression by the state is important to consider. She argues that the phenomenon is not just limited to the refugee camps, but rather to the type of environment where people suffer extreme poverty and injustice, that have been neglected and marginalized by the state. Some people in such circumstances may find joining an extremist
organization as the path to justice. This explanation resonates with Hayes (2017), who emphasizes the effect of marginalization on radicalization, as well as Krueger and Malečková (2003) who conclude that terrorists are more likely to spring from countries that lack civil rights.

The ideological steaming is critical. Both Malik and Masoud explain that such Islamist organizations do not only offer money, but also offer a longer and better life after death. They promise that martyrs go to paradise where seventy angels are waiting for them. Such motivations sort under non-material rewards. Rashida argues that it mostly has to do with mosques and how religion is portrayed to them:

“The people who join such parties are both skeptical about the options they are offered, and they strive for the options that ISIS or al-Nusra offers, which are a better quality of not only life but afterlife. They lack motivation and purpose in their current worldview. And they definitely have a relationship with mosques and sheiks who keep a rising ‘fitna’.” Rashida

Wafaa maintains that if a Palestinian commits to prayers in a moderate way, that person would not think that armed groups are needed for the world to be more peaceful. But some others get manipulated by the religious extremists. If a youth goes more frequently to prayers than others, it raises concerns that he might be fed with some affiliated knowledge.

Regarding recruitment, Masoud claims the militias have people in the community who are experts in exploiting poor people in weak positions. Malik argues that recruiters can read people. They can see who is suffering and hopeless, fighting with parents and in the streets. Recruiters generally look for people with a weak level of knowledge of the Palestinian cause. According to Malik, such knowledge is more important than the level of education.

Media is another source for recruitment. According to Berger and Morgan (2015), initial contact for new recruits is usually done through social media. ISIS alone reportedly has hundreds of online platforms including at least 46,000 accounts. Zahed says that extremists’ messages are everywhere in the media and that youth are usually exposed to it from Facebook and Whatsapp. Nevertheless, the interviewees do not mention the Internet as a main tool for recruitment in the camps.

Recruitment of girls by extremist groups, according to Malik, is not common in the Palestinian community because of culture and traditions. Recruiters are usually men coming from outside,

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9 An Islamic term about conflicts between Muslims (Rasibida).
who contact a mullah and talk to the youth. Without any serious relationship or contact with the parents it is not allowed for a man to meet a girl and sit alone to talk to her.

Nevertheless, Wafaa suggests that Palestinians are not easily tricked by recruiters, because of the track record of past failures of organizations promising to fight for the Palestinian cause.

To summarize, Islamist extremist militias may channel frustration and negative sentiments some people have towards Palestinian factions, but also frustration with living conditions of extreme poverty, unemployment and political oppression. Ideological influences can provide a path to finding purpose. Recruitment is more likely to happen in mosques that emphasize conflict between Muslims or by recruiters from outside the camps.

4.6.3. Possible Factors to Enhance Resilience

This section analyzes possible factors to enhance resilience amongst the Palestinian youth that were brought forward by the interviewees, aiming to deter youth from engaging in armed groups and political violence. Amalia suggests this task should be tackled from both a top-down and bottom-up approach.

Concerning the top-down approach, there should be a significant reform in the legal system in Lebanon so that Palestinians are given their rights. Most interviewees emphasize dignity as the single most important factor. For Palestinians to be able to study and practice the same professions as anyone else in the country would drastically increase their sense of dignity, equality and justice. Regarding the bottom-up approach, Zahed and Masoud argue that an entire package is needed, including house, family, friends, education, health care and job. Said at UNRWA suggests that education and employment are the two factors that contribute to stability in the region.

First, improving education as a measure to prevent dropout and support UNRWA to enrich their educational program with for example sports and arts activities to add incentives for children to stay in school. Said at UNRWA argues that education is the main factor for strengthening youth, since it contributes to building their personalities. The end of the academic path is not weapons, it is secondary education, vocational education or university, and then job opportunity, either in Lebanon or somewhere in the world.

Second, to empower the family. Wasim at SB Overseas believes that family is the most important factor to enhance resilience since they spend the most time together and have the strongest influence on the children and youth within the community. However, parents have to care for

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10 A person knowledgeable in Islamic teachings.
them, talk to them and advise them in a constructive way. Zahed argues that such empowerment will reflect in retention of children in schools.

Third, Malik emphasizes the sociability and social network that exists in certain camps to prevent recruitment. The fact that everyone knows each other helps the families keep track of their children and youth. Wajaa suggests that if a person has good relationships, is not bullied at school or in their neighborhood, he would prefer to go with his friends to being armed.

Fourth, Amalia stresses the importance of role models, someone to look up to that supports and influences the youth. Zahed argues that examples of successful Palestinians are very important to encourage youth to stay in school and study. The youth must be shown that they have a future other than violence.

Fifth, provide purposeful occupations. Zahed and Amalia argue that a meaningful activity, for example volunteering in the community, makes youth feel that they are working for the cause and doing something important. Moreover, both argue that engaging youth in social clubs and sports clubs is the best way to enhance social cohesion with the Lebanese and Syrian communities. Dalgaard-Nielsen and Schack (2016) also emphasize voluntary organizations such as sports clubs as a resilience resource.

Sixth, Rashida believes it is important to provide youth with a better perspective on religion to prevent radicalism. She argues that since it is religion that hooks them on, if they are provided a better perspective on religion in other mosques, they are still hooked, but to something better.

Lastly, Zahed argues that awareness sessions on media, on how to understand a message well, on whether it is good or bad, and on how brainwashing can be avoided, is good for prevention purposes.

Concerning resilience to mobilization with Islamist extremist groups specifically, there are some additional points raised by the interviewees in the study.

Several of the interviewees argue that highlighting the main theme of the Palestinian cause, which is the right to return, is essential to prevent participation in Islamist extremist groups and political violence. They argue that this is part of the Palestinian identity of youth growing up as refugees in Lebanon. Malik points out that fighting for the right to return is equal to defending the Palestinian dignity. Zahed explains the importance of character:

“The worst thing is not telling people about their cause, because this is part of their character. If youth is built up without any character, what do you expect from him? He will go anywhere. He will
Rashida stresses that when youth know more about the Palestinian cause, they find purpose and hope in their existence:

“The ones I work with, the more they learn, the more they give up on their despair and they want to lead a more purposeful life. [...] The more they know, the more they become rigid about the Palestinian cause. They try to find their purpose; they try to find their role and how to fight back. Culturally, not necessarily armed.” Rashida

That is why Malik believes that Palestinian factions can help prevent youth from joining Islamist groups. As previously discussed, the factions engage in education of the youth about Palestine, the history, the identity, and the enemy. Some of the factions would also educate the students of jihad, violent Islamism and terrorism, so that the students would be more aware.

Moreover, Wafaa explains that there are community spaces and informal gatherings in the camps that are called “The League” made up of Palestinians originally from the same city or village in Palestine. In those community spaces people meet, interact, discuss their roots, Palestine, and religion. There are also local community initiatives that are committed to organizing events to commemorate important occasions in Palestine and the camps, as well as to address topics such as violent Islamism and terrorism. Amalia mentions the Palestinian Youth Organization (PYO) that does everything from community service to political activities and film screenings. The idea is that without proper knowledge and awareness of who they are, where they come from, and where they are going, the youth are blind. Once again, I argue that these findings call for a revision of the definition of education and suggest that community-based learning could be relevant when studying resilience.

Consequently, the study suggests that there are multiple factors, in addition to education, to consider when aiming to enhance resilience among Palestinians youth. Apart from a significant reform to the legal system in Lebanon, an entire package of factors is suggested. These factors aim to increase their motivation and hopes for a better future, thereby enhancing their sense of dignity and, ultimately, lowering their incentives to join armed groups.

All these factors could be important to consider when studying the causal relationship between education and resistance to join armed groups. The present study suggests that education may be a necessary but insufficient condition, and that the relationship is more likely one of causal complexity. I argue that is seems more reasonable to theorize about education in combination
with other factors when studying resilience. Combinations of the variable education and any of the aforementioned factors may even strengthen its effect. The presented factors largely corroborate with the push and pull factors identified in UNESCO (2017).

4.7. Alternative Explanations

As previously mentioned, this study finds that it is likely that education should be viewed as a necessary but insufficient condition to affect youth’s resistance to join armed groups. Therefore, possible alternative explanations include combinations of education and the aforementioned factors identified by the case study. Varying combinations could all serve to strengthen the explanatory power of either education-resilience models, as presented above.

Another alternative explanation concerns the definition of education. As this case study indicates, there are multiple forms of education and sources of knowledge available to Palestinian youth in Lebanon. Therefore, it might be that community-based learning, religious leaders and teaching, or media such as Internet and movies have a stronger effect on resilience than formal forms of education.

Further, socio-economic status could function as an underlying variable and produce a spurious relationship. It may affect the willingness to study, especially if the parents have graduated from higher education, as well as expectations on work opportunities both within and outside the country, which in turn could affect the frustration and resistance to join armed groups. A Palestinian family that have managed to partake in the economic society and reached a level of financial stability will have the means to travel abroad for work, as well as connections at the job market. Nevertheless, most families in the refugee camps belong to the same socio-economic status.

Lastly, throughout the interviews the reference to male and female recruiting stood out. Conducting a gender analysis of recruitment in PRL camps might contribute to a better understanding of the youths’ resilience, or vulnerability respectively, to recruitment. For instance, it may be that especially young men are motivated to join armed groups in their aspiration to live up to masculine stereotypes and gender expectations particularly embedded in their culture and traditions. For reference, see Sjoberg (2014).

4.8. Limitations of the Results

This section reflects on the limitations of these results. One main issue, which has been discussed in the research design section, concerns the data collection and the level of measurement. The design to collect data through in-depth interviews with representatives of organizations,
concerning their experiences from working with Palestinian youth, implies that the data are not measured at the most appropriate level. Ideally, the interviews would have been carried out with respondents of the two subgroups of youth who attend school and those who do not. However, interviewing the youth on this topic was deemed unethical. This decision may influence the results and introduce bias, and interviewing the youth might have produced slightly different results.

Moreover, the study covers a rather small sample of participants, i.e. eight interviewees, which also limits the possibilities to make inferences. A larger sample would have allowed for a more rigorous testing of the hypotheses and might have shed light on a greater variety of aspects.

As with all qualitative case studies the generalizability of the results is restricted. I suggest that the results should only be consider in cases that exhibits similar background-factors to Lebanon, such as limited employment opportunities and an ongoing conflict in the vicinity.

Another weakness of the research design is the difficulty to rule out reversed causality, i.e. the possibility that youth drop out of school because they are already radicalized. This aspect could better be addressed by conducting a longitudinal study.

Consequently, these aspects implicate that I am not able to draw anything but tentative conclusions based on the results of this study. Nevertheless, the causal patterns and factors that have been identified may be further explored in future research.

5. Concluding Remarks

The final section sums up the previous discussion of the results and answers the research question. It also raises new questions and reflections that can be subject for further scrutiny.

5.1. The Verdict

This thesis aims to contribute to the literature on education’s role in political violence and resilience by testing two theoretically driven alternate causal mechanisms. It conducts a case study on Palestinian refugee youth in Lebanon to analyze the effect of education on youth in vulnerable settings to resist joining armed groups. Data was collected during a field study in Lebanon. Eight in-depth interviews with representatives from organizations working with Palestinian refugee youth in Lebanon were conducted and serve as material to this thesis.

Based on the findings I argue that the empirical evidence does not lend significant support for the first causal mechanism, which predicts a positive effect of education on youths’ resilience by
linking it with enhanced social cohesion and equality and strengthened communities and social networks. In contrast, I argue that the empirical evidence seems to lend support to the second causal mechanism, which predicts a negative effect of education on youths’ resilience due to increased awareness of inequalities and injustices – with an alteration. The findings suggest that awareness of injustices, inequality and discrimination is not learned, but lived. For Palestinians that commit to higher education, these injustices and discrimination are felt more strongly because of legal and institutional barriers to employment, which causes frustration and a desire for change, thereby potentially increasing the risk to join armed groups.

Therefore, based on the findings of this study, the causal mechanism postulating education’s negative effect on resilience appear to more accurately explain the effect education has on youth within vulnerable settings to resist joining armed groups. In other words, higher education appears to increase the risk that youth join armed groups. However, these findings do not indicate that education directly affects the willingness to join armed groups. The variable ‘education’ may be viewed as providing weak explanatory power with regard to resilience in the case of Palestinian youth in Lebanon. Instead, I suggest that education may be a necessary but insufficient condition, and that the relationship is more likely one of causal complexity. The findings and conclusions of this study should be treated as tentative and may only be generalized to youth in vulnerable settings in other countries and contexts, to the extent that similar barriers to employment and vicinity to ongoing conflicts, as can be found in Lebanon, exist. This may be the case for countries in the same region.

Lastly, based on the empirical evidence, multiple factors that may affect resilience among Palestinian youth are proposed, namely: identity-based grievances related to the Palestinian cause, poverty, presence or absence of role models, a felt need for self-protection, religious and/or ideological affiliation, informal or community-based education, heritage of political oppression, recruitment tactics, media, social networks, family and community ties, and employment opportunities. Below, I suggest how they may inspire future research.

5.2. Suggestions for Future Research

The findings and additional observations of this study suggest that education may be a necessary but insufficient condition to explain resistance to join armed groups. A call for future research is to study effects of combinations of factors using the method Qualitative Comparative Analysis. A suggestion is to study what combination of factors, including education, would be a sufficient explanation for resilience to recruitment. Employing the proposed factors enhancing resilience in this study could be a good start to gain a better comprehension of the causal complexity at work.
Moreover, another suggestion for future research is to study the effect of different forms of education and to revise the definition of education in this context. For instance, based on the findings of this study, there is reason to believe that informal types of education, such as community-based learning, have more explanatory power, when studying resilience to join armed groups, than formal education. The definition of education may be part of the reason as to why the scholarly community cannot agree on whether education increases or decreases participation in violence.
References


Appendices

I. Information Regarding the Research Project

My name is Caroline Kölegård. I am conducting interviews for the purpose of my master’s thesis at the Department of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University, Sweden.

My research concerns community resilience and youth in vulnerable settings. The purpose is to explore the effect of education on resistance among youth to mobilize into armed groups. As such, it aims to build on, and further the understanding of, existing theory on community resilience as well as the complex link between education and violence. In a broader perspective, it aims to enhance the knowledge on how to increase resilience within vulnerable communities, which is important to inform discussions on efforts to prevent youth engagement in political violence.

What are the possible risks and what are my rights?
There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this interview. Participation is voluntary and if you agree to participate you can also decide to stop the interview at any time.

How will you protect the information you collect about me, and how will that information be shared?
I will not collect any personal information about you, other than the name of the organization you work for. If you wish that the name of your organization should remain anonymous as well, I will conceal all such information by removing it from the interview notes. The results from this study will be presented in my master's thesis, and possibly in other publications and presentations. Pseudonyms will be used for quotes.

Financial Information
Participating in this study will involve no cost to you. I offer no financial compensation for participation.

Who can I contact if I have questions or concerns about this research study?
If you have questions, you are free to ask them now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at c.kolegard@gmail.com or on +46707443088.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research, you can contact my Thesis Advisor, Associate Professor Karen Brounéus at the following office at Uppsala University:

Department of Peace and Conflict Research
Uppsala University
Gamla Torget 3, 1tr
753 20 Uppsala
Phone: +4618-471 2327
Email: karen.brouneus@pcr.uu.se
II. Informed Consent Form

I confirm that (please tick box as appropriate):

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<td>1.</td>
<td>I have read and understood the information about the project, as provided by the researcher.</td>
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<td>I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my participation.</td>
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<td>I voluntarily agree to participate in the project.</td>
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<td>I understand I can withdraw at any time without giving reasons and that I will not be penalized for withdrawing nor will I be questioned on why I have withdrawn.</td>
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<td>The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained (e.g. use of names, pseudonyms, anonymization of data, etc.) to me.</td>
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<td>I have been given the choice to deny the recording of the interview.</td>
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<td>• I would like the name of my organization used in this project, and I understand that what I have said or written as part of this study will be used in reports and publications so that anything I have contributed to this project can be recognized.</td>
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III. Interview Questions

Basic information
Name of organization:
Position/responsibilities within the organization:

General Questions
1. Would you mind briefly describing the work provided by your organization?

Specific Questions I – Palestinian youth
2. Can you describe the youth you work with?
   a. How are they doing in general?
   b. What kind of family situation do they have?
3. What is your experience working with these youth?
   a. What are their main concerns and hopes?
4. To your knowledge, what do the youth generally do when they are not in school?
   a. Are there any supervised community spaces or youth organizations?

Specific Questions II – Education
5. How would you describe the education provided by UNRWA?
   a. To what extent are the parents involved in the education?
   b. What do you think is the reason to high drop-out-rates in the UNRWA schools?
6. Is there any alternative education provided to the Palestinian youth?
   a. Religious schools?
   b. Private schools?
7. Is it common that Palestinian youth do not attend school?
   a. If yes, what is the reason for that?
8. In your view, how does education impact the Palestinian youth?
   a. Hopes for a better future?
   b. Employment opportunities?
   c. Their position in comparison to their Lebanese peers?
   d. The community and social networks?
   e. Their attitudes towards armed groups?
9. Do you think that education leads to social cohesion?
10. In your view, how does non-attendance, or dropping out of school, affect the Palestinian youth?
    a. Their position in comparison to Lebanese peers, i.e. social cohesion and equality?
    b. The community and social networks?
11. Would you say that the educated youth, or the youth that do not attend school, harbor more frustration and a desire for change? Why?
Educational content
12. Does the education include any discussion of the situation of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon?
   a. For example, the injustices and discrimination they face in the Lebanese society?
   b. The right to return?
   c. Their future in Lebanon?

13. Does the education include any discussion of Israel and Israelis?
   a. If yes, how are they portrayed?

14. Does the education include any discussion of jihad/violent Islamism/terrorism?
   a. If yes, in what way?

15. In your view, how would such discussions affect the Palestinian youth?
   a. For example, could raising awareness help them resist joining armed groups?
   b. Or could such discussions rather function as motivations to join armed groups?

Specific Questions III – Resilience
16. According to your understanding, which youth join armed groups?
   a. How can that be explained?
   b. Which armed groups are the most common?
   c. What kind of recruitment tactics do these armed groups use?
   d. Do the armed groups, to your knowledge, prefer any particular kind of individual?
   e. In what situations are youth particularly susceptible to extremist messages?

17. Which youth do not join?
   a. How can that be explained?

18. Is there a difference between youth that attend school, and the ones who do not, when it comes to joining armed groups?
   a. If yes, in what way?

19. In your opinion, what are the most important factors to strengthening youth to resist joining armed groups? Or in other words, to prevent them from joining?
   a. How important do you think the family is for preventing recruitment? Why?
   b. How important are friends for preventing recruitment? Why?
   c. How important is a job for preventing recruitment? Why?

20. Are there any circumstances in which the family, friends or work could encourage the youths to join?
   a. If yes, in what circumstances would that be?

Specific Questions III – Life in the refugee camps
21. Who is controlling the different refugee camps?

22. In your view, does it matter who is controlling the camp, when considering recruitment to armed groups?
   a. If yes, in what way?

Closing the Interview
23. Is there anything you would like to add, that I did not ask you about?