Perceptions of Joint Activities in the Wake of the War in Gaza
A Look at Palestinian/Israeli Grassroots Peacebuilding

Kerry Spinks
# Table of Contents

**CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION**  

**CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW**  

**HISTORY OF JOINT ACTIVITIES IN THE ISRAELI/PALESTINIAN PEACE MOVEMENT**  

The 70s and 80s  

The First Intifada  

The Oslo Years  

The Second Intifada  

Recent Trends – Prior to January of 2009  

Conflict Resolution Theory Behind Joint Activities  

Typography of Joint Activities  

The Role and Scope of Joint Activities  

The Challenges of Conducting Joint Activities  

The War in Gaza  

The Effects of the War in Gaza on People’s Attitudes Toward Joint Activities  

The Ability of Joint Activities to Play a Role Currently and in the Future  

The Next Steps in Grassroots Peacebuilding  

**CHAPTER 3 – METHODS**  

**CHAPTER 4 – FINDINGS**  

The Role of Joint Activities Prior to the War in Gaza  

Humanizing the Other and Forming Relationships  

Expanding a Constituency for Peace  

Modeling Peace  

Identifying and Empowering Leaders  

Peace Education  

Rights, Justice, and Ending the Occupation  

The Scope of Joint Activities Prior to the War in Gaza  

Small Scale  

Slow and Accumulative Process  

We Must Talk  

Examples of Successes  

The Challenges of Joint Activities Prior to the War in Gaza  

Lack of Resources  

The Broader Political and Social Landscape as a Barrier to Peacebuilding  

The Issue of Normalization  

The Israeli Government Does Not Want Peace  

Ulterior Motives  

Asymmetries  

Lack of Top Down Support  

Media  

The Effects of the Gaza War on People’s Attitudes Toward Joint Activities  

Deepened Divisions
CONTINUED COMMITMENT

THE WAR ON GAZA AND THE ABILITY OF JOINT ACTIVITIES TO PLAY A ROLE

YET ANOTHER POINT OF ESCALATION OR AN UNPRECEDEDENT EVENT?

A TEMPORARY DECLINE OF ACTIVITY

A SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE AS A NET TO BREAK THE FALL

THE FUTURE OF JOINT ACTIVITIES

KEEPING AN EYE ON THE LARGER CONTEXT

TIME WILL TELL

THE NEXT STEPS IN GRASSROOTS PEACE BUILDING

REEVALUATE AND UNIFY

KEEP PUSHING FORWARD

PROVIDE A VENUE FOR PROCESSING

MARGINALIZE THE EXTREMISTS/STRENGTHEN THE CENTER

INDIVIDUAL IDEAS FOR THE NEXT STEPS

CHAPTER FIVE – DISCUSSION

THE ROLE OF JOINT ACTIVITIES AS A PEACEBUILDING TOOL IN THE CONFLICT PRIOR TO THE WAR IN GAZA

THE SCOPE OF JOINT ACTIVITIES PRIOR TO THE WAR IN GAZA

THE CHALLENGES OF CONDUCTING JOINT ACTIVITIES PRIOR TO THE WAR IN GAZA

THE EFFECTS OF THE WAR ON GAZA ON PEOPLE’S ATTITUDES TOWARD JOINT ACTIVITIES

THE POTENTIAL OF JOINT ACTIVITIES TO PLAY A ROLE IN PEACEBUILDING IN THE CURRENT CLIMATE

THE POTENTIAL OF JOINT ACTIVITIES TO PLAY A ROLE IN PEACEBUILDING IN THE FUTURE

THE NEXT STEPS IN GRASSROOTS PEACEBUILDING

CHAPTER SIX – CONCLUSION

WORKS CITED

APPENDIX A – JOHN PAUL LEDERACH’S PEACEBUILDING PYRAMID

APPENDIX B – SAMPLE A INTERVIEWEES

APPENDIX C – SAMPLE A INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (SELECTED FROM SUMMER 2008 STUDY)

APPENDIX D – SAMPLE B INTERVIEWEES

APPENDIX E – SAMPLE B INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Chapter One – Introduction

The Israeli Palestinian conflict has wreaked havoc on the lives of the inhabitants there for over one hundred years. Palestinians have suffered the continual loss of territory, loss of loved ones in wars and incursions, oppressive policies, collective punishment, and more recently, the building of walls around the West Bank and Gaza as well as restrictions on movement. Israelis too have lost loved ones in wars, suicide bombings, and rocket attacks and face ongoing insecurity. Most recently, the conflict has seen a tremendous escalation in the form of a three-week war in Gaza – the Israeli government’s retaliation for rockets fired by Hamas and other militant groups into southern Israeli towns.

With these recent negative developments, it is easy to become pessimistic about prospects for peace. However, just as there are forces that are escalating the conflict, at the same time, there are a multitude of forces working towards peace, although these activities receive much less attention. The purpose of this study is to capture the perceptions of those peacebuilders conducting joint activities between Israelis and Palestinians in terms of what their work has accomplished thus far and what the war in Gaza will mean for their work now and in the future.

My guiding research questions are as follows:

1. What do people perceive have been the role and scope of joint activities as a peacebuilding tool in the conflict prior to the war in Gaza?
2. What have been the challenges of joint activities prior to the war in Gaza?
3. What effect has the recent war in Gaza had on individuals’ attitudes toward joint activities?
4. How has the war in Gaza changed the potential of joint activities to play a role in peacebuilding now and in the future?
5. What should the next steps be in terms of grassroots peacebuilding?
It is my hypothesis that joint activities prior to January of 2009 have mostly influenced the individual level with the predominant success of changed attitudes and perceptions of “the other.” With regard to challenges, I predict that structural challenges associated with the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza will have presented the largest impediments. Furthermore, I hypothesize that the recent war will have discouraged would-be participants and organizers of joint activities, making them resistant to take part in such activities. It is my prediction that this new development will have a deeply negative impact on the ability of joint activities to play a role in peacebuilding in the current situation. At the same time, I hypothesize that practitioners will find it more important than ever to continue their joint activities in the wake of the recent war in order to contain sentiments of anger and hatred and maintain a foundation for eventual peace.

Before moving forward in my exploration of joint activities, it is first necessary to describe what is meant by the term. In the field of peacebuilding, the term joint activities is often used interchangeably with the term people-to-people. However, while used to describe essentially the same type of projects, in the Palestinian Israeli context these terms can carry with them varying connotations.

The term people-to-people became a formalized notion in the September 1995 Oslo II Interim Agreement, and with this formalization came a great deal of foreign funding. While some organizations carried out projects under the framework of Oslo, others objected to framework and preferred not to be associated with people-to-people as they saw it as synonymous with Oslo. Today, there are still those practitioners who use the term as associated with the Oslo years and those who use the term more broadly.

---

It is for the above reason that I have chosen to use the more neutral and all encompassing term ‘joint activities.’ For the purposes of this paper, I will use Gershon Baskin and Mohammed Dajani’s characterization of joint activities and define them as any and all activities “aiming at promoting peace, goodwill, and understanding between the Israeli and Palestinians peoples.”

It is my hope that this paper will serve a number of functions. While there is a large body of literature that examines individual types of joint activities as well as individual projects, literature that examines this field as a whole is more limited. It is my hope that this paper will build on previous works that look at this type of work collectively. This study is further significant because of the crucial time in which it is being conducted, a time of heightened emotion and augmented insecurity. This paper attempts to “take the pulse” of the peace camp during this difficult time in the hopes that it can add to the body of knowledge that practitioners are utilizing in making decisions about how to proceed given the current political and social climate.

---

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

History of Joint Activities in the Israeli/Palestinian Peace Movement

The 70s and 80s

In an attempt to put modern efforts into context and to provide a basis for historical comparison, the following section reviews the history of joint activities within the context of the wider peace movement and political events. The section begins by exploring approximately the last four decades of developments and ends with an attempt to assess the current state of joint activities.

Activities dedicated to bringing about peace in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict began shortly after the 1967 war. Meetings during the 70s and 80s were small in number and generally consisted of independent activists, academics, and journalists. For example, the PLO and NGOs approved by the PLO engaged with the Israeli Communist Party and members of the Israeli peace and democracy movement, academics worked through institutions such as the Weizman Institute of Science and Birzeit University, and New Outlook magazine became a forum for joint work in the form of public dialogue on the conflict. Gatherings during this time were often brokered by European or American Peace Groups and were hosted at Academic institutions mostly outside of the Middle East.

---

3 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
The participants in these early meetings, however, were largely at the margins of their societies. Most Israeli peace activists at the time were concerned with other issues in the region, such as the Lebanon war, or showed unilateral interest in issues such as opposing the increasing settlements across the Green Line. Similarly, Palestinians were finding ways to oppose the occupation on their own. On a larger scale, neither side perceived a need for joint activities.\(^6\)

**The First Intifada**

It wasn’t until the intifada in 1987 that peace activism experienced a dramatic shift toward a concentrated effort to end the Israeli occupation and resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.\(^7\) The growing recognition in both societies that only a political solution could resolve the conflict created a new atmosphere that rejuvenated existing organizations and inspired the creation of new organizations.\(^8\) Existing institutions, such as Hebrew University, Tel Aviv University (with the establishment of the Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research), and the Alternative Information Center in Jerusalem, began to direct their attention to projects designed to address the conflict.\(^9\) New endeavors included organizations such as B’tselem, Physicians for Human Rights, Homoked, The International Center for Peace in the Middle East, the Israel-Palestine Center for Research and Information (IPCRI), Women in Black, and many more.

On the Palestinian side, several think tanks were established that created connections with Israeli institutions. Factions of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), including the Communist Party and a breakaway faction of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and eventually Fatah, supported many of these new collaborations. During this time,

---

\(^6\) Ibid 286-287  
\(^7\) Ibid 286-287  
Palestinian civil society also expanded, establishing a variety of charitable, health, and educational organizations and local leaders began to emerge.¹⁰

It was during these years of the first Intifada that Israeli and Palestinian activists began to seek ways to work together. Some of this work focused on human rights, but more attention was given to dialogue between the two sides at both local and leadership levels. These meetings were either one-time events or sustained activities and mostly took place overseas because, at the time, Israelis were prohibited from contacting the PLO. As activities continued, more and more prominent members of the Israeli and Palestinian societies became participants.¹¹

According to Walid Salem and Edy Kaufman, “within the context of empowerment during the first intifada, while stones and rubber bullets were being exchanged in the streets of Jerusalem, an active public dialogue was taking place at Mount Scopus and other places, showing the determination of a significant group of academics to call for the end of occupation and respect for the self-determination of both nations.”¹²

The encounters during the first intifada represented the first steps in establishing the possibility of an eventual settlement. In fact, when formal negotiations began in the 1990s, many of the prominent players were already acquainted and had developed working relationships due to these prior encounters.¹³ For example, some participants in the Oslo Track I negotiations had been involved in earlier joint work conducted by third party peacebuilder Edy Kaufman through his work at Harvard University.¹⁴

---

¹⁰ Ibid, 287
¹¹ Ibid, 287-288
The number and types of peace activities continued to grow, as did the atmosphere of protest and demand for change. For example, at the instigation of Women in Black, women’s groups organized joint activities around Israel that culminated in a march in 1990 demanding bilateral talks between Israeli and Palestinian leaders. By the time of the Madrid Conference in 1991, the persistent efforts of these peace activists had resulted in direct negotiations. Naomi Chazan credits the growing peace movement with the election of the Labor and Meretz parties in the 1992 elections and the signing of the Oslo agreements in 1993 – the first formal agreement between the Israelis and Palestinians.\textsuperscript{15}

According to Chazan, the peace activists had “undoubtedly played a key part in redesigning the political agenda, altering the terms of public discourse, and influencing underlying values.” She attributes their success at the time to their collective focus on a unified goal: to initiate bilateral negotiations between Palestinian and Israeli leaders on the basis of Palestinian self-rule. This cohesive goal helped to attract mainstream audiences. She also attributes their success during this time to the relatively receptive social and political atmospheres as well as the apparent novelty of the joint work, which attracted media exposure.\textsuperscript{16}

**The Oslo Years**

Joint activities became a formalized component of Oslo within Annex 6 of Oslo II. Within this chapter, “both sides agreed to co-operate on a range of issues such as economics, tourism, education and culture.” In cooperation with the Kingdom of Norway, the ‘People-to-People’ program was established. With the establishment of this program, officials recognized

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid, 288
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid, 289-291
that political agreements alone were not enough to bring about peace and that reconciliation at the grassroots level would need to take place.\textsuperscript{17}

Following the signing of the Oslo Accords, there was a rapid increase in new joint activities as well as the flourishing of existing activities. Additionally, some Israeli organizations that had not been involved in peace work began to promote joint projects with Palestinians in order to normalize Israeli-Palestinian relations. The PLO lifting of restrictions on social and political organization strengthened many organizations established during the first intifada and offered opportunities for the establishment of new organizations, some of which worked to interact with Israeli organizations. Women’s organizations such as Kol Ha’Isha, Isha l’Isha, Tandi, Na’amat, and the joint venture of Jerusalem Link also flourished during this time, with several making connections across conflict lines.\textsuperscript{18}

It was during the Oslo years, however, that many of the dynamics of joint activities began to change. For instance, independent intermediaries were often replaced with officials and bureaucrats who brought political undertones to their work. Additionally, donors often inadvertently undermined grassroots initiatives by favoring larger organizations, and sometimes more energy and resources were allocated for travels abroad than were perhaps appropriate. Logistical challenges added additional difficulties to joint activities, as Palestinians dealt with closures, checkpoints, and permits. According to Naomi Chazan, an overall lack of strategic vision, a vacuum of leaders, lack of coordination, and misuse of resources were common challenges.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{17} Colin Knox and Padraic Quirk, \textit{Peacebuilding in Northern Ireland, Israel and South Africa}, 138
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid, 292-293
\textsuperscript{19} Naomi Chazan, "Peace Action and Conflict Resolution: An Israeli-Palestinian Exploration,"Ibid, 294-295
Additionally, the peace camp found little support on the official level despite the rhetoric in favor of joint activities. According to Ron Pundak:

“just as the whole agreement was only partially implemented, or even less than so, this chapter became a document devoid of meaning. Furthermore, the moment these steps were ignored by the governments, they became hostage to the diplomats and politicians who even used the P2P [people-to-people] element as instruments in the arsenal aimed at harming and weakening the other side.”

Pundak’s discussion of the two governments sabotaging joint activities is echoed by Alon Liel. According to Liel, would-be people-to-people participants who were members of the PLO had to have permission from Yasser Arafat and those who were not PLO members encountered other challenges from the government. Likewise, he claims that the Israeli government “had on their blacklist almost every meaningful Palestinian activist that was ready to be included in the people-to-people political dialogue."

It was also during this time that cohesiveness became a challenge as the peace camps found themselves struggling to define a new role for themselves in relationship to the new atmosphere of official negotiations. While Israeli peace movement saw the Oslo agreement as the culmination of their efforts, Palestinians were apprehensive about joining in the hype that the agreement had created, as they were still living under occupation and had seen no tangible changes in their situation. As a result of these differing interpretations of Oslo, Palestinians and Israelis participated in joint activities for disparate reasons. Palestinians saw these new joint projects as venues through which to assert the struggle to end the occupation, while the Israeli

---

objective was simply to engage in the encounter itself to normalize relations with the assumption that peace had been achieved.\textsuperscript{24}

The assassination in 1995 of Yitzhak Rabin, who had been the Israeli political leadership behind the Oslo Accords, greatly shocked the peace camp. Rabin’s assassination was followed by the election in 1996 of Likud’s Benjamin Netanyahu, who had always been unsupportive of Oslo, further complicating the political climate.\textsuperscript{25} Many in the peace camp took this election as a sign that the Israeli public was not yet ready for peace. Although it was promised by Netanyahu’s administration that the people-to-people program would continue, many saw this nod to the program as simply providing the government with “a fig leaf of respectability.” The insincerity of the Israeli government seemed to delegitimize people-to-people work especially for Palestinian facilitators already struggling with the stigma of normalization.\textsuperscript{26}

With these challenges, in addition to disagreements over a final settlement, the growing divide between peace activists widened and organizations began to focus on internal efforts rather than joint activities. By the late 90s joint activities began to decrease dramatically, and with few changes on the ground, a discouraged public, and leaders unsupportive of Oslo, the peace process was quickly unraveling.\textsuperscript{27}

**The Second Intifada**

In July of 2000 the Camp David Summit failed and a few months later Ariel Sharon made his infamous trip to the Temple Mount/Haram al Sharif, inciting the second intifada, which

\textsuperscript{24} Naomi Chazan, "Peace Action and Conflict Resolution: An Israeli-Palestinian Exploration," 294-295
\textsuperscript{25} Naomi Chazan, "Peace Action and Conflict Resolution: An Israeli-Palestinian Exploration," 296-299
\textsuperscript{26} Colin Knox and Padraic Quirk, *Peacebuilding in Northern Ireland, Israel and South Africa*, 138-139
\textsuperscript{27} Naomi Chazan, "Peace Action and Conflict Resolution: An Israeli-Palestinian Exploration," 296-299
would spiral into a devastating cycle of violence.\textsuperscript{28} The renewed violence brought about all but a complete halt to peace activities.\textsuperscript{29} The juxtaposition of such horrifying violence with the period of hope and optimism that had preceded it made this time period that much more difficult for both societies to endure. On the Israeli side, the renewal of violence validated the far right in their objections to the peace process and discredited peace advocates. Similarly, on the Palestinian side, massive retaliation campaigns turned people against contact with Israelis.\textsuperscript{30} It was during this time that joint activities came to be associated with the stigma of normalization for Palestinians cooperating with the “Israeli war machine.”\textsuperscript{31}

The second intifada also resulted in a host of new structural barriers. For example, travel between Israel and the West Bank or Gaza became nearly impossible. External funding also became difficult to acquire on the Israeli side as liberal Jewish donors became disenchanted with peace activities.\textsuperscript{32} Most Palestinian organizations felt obligated to refuse USAID funding in the post 9/11 era as they were degraded by contracts that included conditions and stipulations on “terrorism.” European funding was also objectionable because it required cooperation with Israelis, which was extremely difficult for Palestinians given the policies of the Israeli government. Additionally, Palestinian government restrictions increased. For example, the Palestinian Ministry of Higher Education prohibited cooperation with Israeli institutions of higher learning or NGOs.\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{29} Naomi Chazan, "Peace Action and Conflict Resolution: An Israeli-Palestinian Exploration," 300-304
\textsuperscript{31} Manuel Hassassian, "Civil Society and NGOs Building Peace in Palestine," 81
\textsuperscript{32} Tamar Hermann, "Civil Society NGOs Building Peace in Israel," 53
\textsuperscript{33} Manuel Hassassian, "Civil Society and NGOs Building Peace in Palestine," 81
In response to the second intifada, some organizations on the Israeli side continued peace work independently even though joint activities had declined drastically. A large number of Israeli organizations narrowed their focus to either human rights work or political activism. Palestinian organizations, on the other hand, increased service delivery and human rights work, but were often hesitant to partner with Israeli organizations. Most continued interaction was done on an individual, informal basis. Despite mounting challenges, however, a select number of joint initiatives persevered through the second intifada, including the Jerusalem Link, the Palestine-Israel Journal, IPCRI, the Alternative Information Center, and Bereaved Parents.

Recent Trends – Prior to January of 2009

Peace activities in general and joint encounters specifically did experience a slight renewal starting in the Spring of 2003 in an attempt to renew negotiations. One prominent example during this time culminated with the publication of the Geneva Accords, which attempted to address all issues of a final status agreement. Though the Accords were met with mixed reception, they did inspire a host of peace initiatives including the Labor party’s renewal of a modified withdrawal plan which culminated in Sharon’s eventual disengagement from Gaza.

Whether or not joint activities enjoyed a full recovery between the second intifada and the recent war in Gaza remains a question. On the one hand, the tone of some authors in recent years paints a picture of a field that was still struggling. For example, Manuel Hassassian claims, “several joint organizations totally froze their functions as a result of the second intifada

---

34 Naomi Chazan, "Peace Action and Conflict Resolution: An Israeli-Palestinian Exploration," 300-304
36 Tamar Hermann, "Civil Society NGOs Building Peace in Israel," 53
36 Naomi Chazan, "Peace Action and Conflict Resolution: An Israeli-Palestinian Exploration," 304-305
and, to date, they are functioning separately with much less stamina and enthusiasm.” Similar to Hassassian’s assessment, the history segment of the Palestinian Israeli Peace NGO Forum claims:

“The past six or so years of intifada have been defined almost as much by the lack of contact between citizens and civil society, as they have been by the ongoing violence and diplomatic stagnation. This has served to polarize the Palestinian and Israeli populations even further, and to reinforce negative attitudes about the “other”, which constitutes a major impediment to reconciliation at the people-to-people level.”

On the other hand, Jodi Shams Prinzivalli frames recent activity in a more positive light. She points out that peacebuilding is often ignored in the media and implies that there is a wave of unrecognized peacebuilding work being carried out by a “multitude of organizations doing the unsung work of coexistence and cross-cultural dialogue using peaceful means.” According to Prinzivalli, “too much attention is paid to the divisiveness and not enough to the more than 200 groups currently working toward a different way of life, bridging differences.” By Prinzivalli’s estimate, it would appear that joint activities had slowly begun making a recovering since the beginning of second intifada. It could also be argued that this figure is likely to largely underestimate the amount of activity going on, as it does not account for informal initiatives nor does it project the number of total projects conducted by these organizations.

Conflict Resolution Theory Behind Joint Activities

The following section explores the conflict resolution theories behind joint activities. The Israeli Palestinian conflict is classified as a protracted conflict and, as such, it bears the characteristics common in protracted conflicts as have been outlined by several scholars on the

---

subject. In their article, “The Power of Possibility: The Role of People to People Programs in the Current Israeli-Palestinian Reality,” Herzog and Hai summarize the work of several scholars on protracted conflicts including Kriesberg, Bar Tal, Teichman, Burton, and Montville and define the elements of protracted conflicts as: substantial length, deep-rooted identity issues, a zero-sum conceptualization of the conflict (each side sees each other’s goals as mutually exclusive), prolific violence, a feeling of victimization on both sides, centrality of the conflict in the lives of the groups involved, costliness, and dehumanization of the other. According to Daniel Bar-Tal and Yona Teichman, individuals living in such conflict areas develop what is known as a “conflict repertoire” as a coping mechanism. Social beliefs develop, “which include several components: belief in the justness of one’s own goals; the centrality of concepts of security, patriotism, and unity; a vision of peace as a utopian goal; a feeling of victimization; and an exaggerated, positive self-image mirrored by an excessively negative image of the adversary.”

Joint activities attempt to counter these engrained negative images of the other by bringing Palestinians and Israelis together in order to break down these stereotypes. The philosophy behind such work is grounded in the “contact hypothesis.” This social-psychological framework finds its origins in civil rights era interracial dialogues and suggests that prejudices are rooted in the lack of everyday normalized contact and that if adversaries are provided that contact through joint activities, they will shed their stereotypes.

Similar to Bar Tal above, Herbert Kelman characterizes societies engaged in protracted conflicts as having institutionalized conflict by developing “conflict norms” that determine

---

41 Ibid, 16
people’s perceptions of and behavior toward the other. According to Kelman, individuals living in conflict situations internalize their negative attitudes toward the other. These attitudes are then carried down through social institutions from generation to generation. It is through this process that individuals’ and societies’ commitment to the conflict arises and aggressive and uncompromising behavioral responses are dictated. Each party to the conflict views themselves as purely virtuous and the other as demonic. When these images are held by both sides, interactions between the two reinforce the conceptualization of the other as aggressive and untrustworthy. This dynamic fosters increased dehumanization and de-individuation of the other and breaks down empathy and communication. A “win-lose” conception of the conflict emerges and is reinforced.43

Kelman also asserts that in negotiating a protracted conflict, parties must work to transform the relationship described above in order to create a stable and durable peace. He claims that peace goes beyond the end to violence and must manifest itself in the form of equitable and cooperative coexistence between the two peoples. To this end, he outlines four criteria for transforming relationships between societies in the post agreement phase of conflict. These criteria include: “1) Mutual acceptance and reconciliation, 2) A sense of security and dignity for each nation or community, 3) A pattern of cooperative interaction between the nations or communities, and 4) Institutionalization of a dynamic process of problem solving.”44 Joint activities play key rolls primarily in Kelman’s third and fourth criteria.

John Burton conceptualizes conflict as arising from parties seeking to rectify the deprivation of basic ontological needs including: “a need for consistency in response, a need for stimulation, a need for security, a need for recognition, a need for distributive justice, a need to appear rational, a need for meaning in response,” “a need for a sense of control,” and a need for “role defense.”45 From this theory of conflict, Burton derives that peacemakers may be able to “provent” conflict by increasing awareness and understanding of basic human needs through “controlled communication.” With this concept of controlled communication, Burton calls on third parties to create a safe environment in which adversaries can analyze their situation and dispel misperceptions of each other. 46

It is from Burton’s concept of controlled communication that he, Kelman (who has done a great deal of work in the Israeli Palestinian context), and several other scholars have developed the Interactive Problem Solving Approach to conflict resolution, which is most commonly manifested in the Problem Solving Workshop. These workshops are one of many forms that joint activities can take and involve bringing together politically influential (but not official) parties to the conflict in a private setting in order to discuss the conflict and engage in joint problem solving. These meetings are confidential and are generally facilitated by academics. It is the goal of these workshops to make changes on the individual level, which will ideally influence the official level.47

The work of social psychologist Morton Deutsch also lends support to joint activities in his theories of cooperation versus competition. According to Deutsch, people in a shared situation experience either promotive interdependence or contrient interdependence. Promotive interdependence indicates that goals are positively correlated meaning that the achievement of one's goals is linked to the other’s achievement of their goals. Contrient interdependence describes a relationship in which goals are negatively correlated meaning that the achievement of one's goals decreases the probability of the other’s goal attainment. Deutsch also characterizes two forms of actions that individuals can take. He defines effective actions as those that increase chances of goal attainment and bungling actions as those that worsen chances for goal attainment.48

Through his research on intrapersonal, interpersonal, intragroup, and intergroup processes, Deutsch has found that, assuming actors engage in effective actions, cooperative groups (those that are promotively interdependent) show the following characteristics (to name a few): “more effective communication, …more acceptant of the ideas of other members, …more influenced by the ideas of other members, …more friendliness, more helpfulness, …more coordination of effort, …higher productivity,” and “greater sense of basic similarity.” Perhaps most importantly in terms of conflict resolution, Deutsch claims that a cooperative process “leads to the defining of conflicting interests as a mutual problem to be solved” and “facilitates recognition of the legitimacy of each other’s interests.”49

With his “Crude Law of Social Relations,” Deutsch further claims that “the characteristic process and effects elicited by a given type of social relationship also tend to elicit that type of social relationship.” In other words, cooperative relationships (as well as competitive relationships) are self-perpetuating. Cooperation induces further cooperative attitudes such as

49 Ibid 435-436
openness, friendliness, emphasis on common interests and increasing mutual power. According to Deutsch, understanding the types of relationships that exist can indicate whether those involved in those relationships will engage constructively or destructively should conflict arise.\textsuperscript{50}

Joint activities seek to create a venue through which cooperative relationships can be created so that both Israelis and Palestinians will find merit in achieving mutual gain and will have a better understanding and empathy for the other’s perspective. These relationships may take the form of friend, colleague, dialogue, professional partner, and many more. In line with Deutsch’s theory, joint activities ultimately seek to create a dynamic in which those who have participated in these activities will handle the Israeli/Palestinian conflict constructively rather than destructively.

Joint activities also find theoretical support in John Paul Lederach’s conflict resolution pyramid.\textsuperscript{51} John Paul Lederach describes three levels of society at which peacebuilding interventions can take place with varying techniques according to level. The top and smallest layer of the pyramid refers to senior political, military, and religious leaders. The middle and next largest layer refers to mid-level leaders from a variety of segments of society including academia, religion, and civil society. These leaders have connections to the top layer of the pyramid. The bottom and largest layer of the pyramid refers to grass-roots leaders who have the greatest access to the daily realities of the wider community. Like all conflicts, formal negotiations are necessary to resolve technical, or “transactional” aspects of protracted conflicts. Such negotiations take place at the top layer of Lederach’s pyramid. However, with protracted conflicts, there is also a need to address the deeper ontological needs of both societies, known as a “transformational process.” According to Lederach’s theory, these processes should take place

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid 438
\textsuperscript{51} A diagram of Lederach’s Pyramid can be found in the Appendices of this paper.
at all levels of the pyramid. Herein lies the aim of people-to-people exercises. As a transformational process, joint activities largely aim to prevent popular opinion from lagging behind transactional developments at the official level if and when they occur. Therefore many scholars call for a “bottom-up” process in addition to the “top-down” process. Herzog and Hai include the combination of these processes in their concept of a “legitimization strategy.”

Ambassador John McDonald and Dr. Louise Diamond also emphasize an approach to peacebuilding that takes place on multiple levels. With their concept of multi-track diplomacy, McDonald and Diamond expand Montville’s idea of track II diplomacy (carried out by individuals with connections to the official level) to encompass citizens from a variety of backgrounds. According to McDonald and Diamond, international peacemaking is a “living system” in which “the web of interconnected activities including individuals, institutions, and communities” can “operate together for a common goal: a world at peace.” McDonald’s and Diamond’s “tracks” include: Government, Nongovernment/Professional, Business, Private Citizen, Research/Training/Education, Activism/Advocacy, Religion, Funding, and Communication/Media. As joint activities take place on all of these levels, they encompass precisely the holistic approach prescribed by McDonald and Diamond.

Louis Kriesberg offers a characterization of protracted conflicts that is also useful in establishing theoretical support for joint activities. According to Kriesberg, protracted conflicts occur in six phases as follows:

“(1) the eruption of conflict episodes with high potentiality of generating intractability, (2) escalation marked by destructive qualities, (3) failed peacemaking efforts, (4) institutionalization of destructive conflict, (5) de-escalation leading to transformation, and (6) termination and recovery from intractable conflict.”

52 Avivit Hai and Shira Herzog, “The Power of Possibility,” 17-19
53 Ibid, 19
Conflicts can move in both directions through the phases and are only loosely ordered as they can be taking place at the same time for different actors. As conflicts move through the stages the basic components of the conflict change, either contributing to or relieving the intractability of the conflict. These components include conceptions of identity for self and other, perceived and actual grievances against the other, goals in terms of changing the other or reducing grievances, and the means for achieving these goals. Additionally, internal, external, and relational factors can all shape the intractability of conflicts.  

Kriesberg goes on to describe how various actors can act to counter intractability at various stages of conflict. While a description of appropriate interventions at each phase is beyond the scope of this paper, I shall focus on that which pertains to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Given the Oslo Accords in the early 90s, it possible to place the Israeli/Palestinian conflict in the category of “post agreement” (though the appropriateness of this characterization is debatable given the fact that the agreement was never truly carried out). According to Kriesberg, agreements intending to end conflicts often unravel and therefore it is important to continuously build relationships and institutions that will sustain the agreement. At this stage in protracted conflicts, Kriesberg says, both sides can establish “institutions with equitable engagement by persons from different sides in the conflict, to plan and to carry out cooperative activities.” Kriesberg also emphasizes the role that reconciliation should play during this time, encompassing, “justice, truth, respect, and security.” Joint activities clearly seek to bring both

---

56 Ibid 83-94
sides of the conflict together equitably, often with the aim of fostering reconciliation between the two parties.

**Typographies of Joint Activities**

As a jumping off point to explore just what kind of activities organizations have conducted along these lines, I will refer to the typology developed by the Israel-Palestine Center for Research and Information (IPCRI) in their research of joint activities between the years of 1993 and 2002. Through findings from interviews with administrators of these projects, IPCRI finds that joint activities can be broken down into ‘product oriented’ and ‘classic’ (namely dialogue) activities falling into the following categories:

- **Track II**: defined as activities designed to brainstorm possibilities for formal agreements and influence officials thusly (for IPCRI this category also includes Track 1 ½, involving officials and non-officials)
- **Professional Meetings**: aimed at bringing individuals together from the same area of expertise for professional collaboration not directly connected to issues of peacebuilding
- **Professional Training**: designed to share technology and know-how (generally from Israelis to Palestinians)
- **Formal Education Activities**: with students and teachers, encouraging peace education on both sides
- **Cultural Activities**: in which populations are exposed to cultural events of the other or in which both sides produced some sort of cultural expression together
- **Capacity Building, Institution Building, or Service Provision** designed to increase the abilities of the Palestinian side
- **Environmental Cooperation**
- **Women’s Issues and other Shared Identity Issues** (such as religious leaders or bereaved parents): involving projects focusing on aspects of common identity cutting across the Israeli/Palestinian divide
- **Grassroots Dialogue Groups**
- **Political Struggle, Solidarity, and Advocacy groups** expressing sympathy, empathy, and advocacy on behalf of the other either through joint activities or individually.\(^58\)

---

Other types of joint activity mentioned in the literature more recently include visits and exchange programs in which families from both sides of the conflict visit each other to build trust, cooperation and understanding, especially among younger generations. These activities have been conducted on a minimal level, however. Also more recently, in their concept paper proposing an international fund supporting joint activities, the Alliance for Middle East Peace (ALLMEP) has captured current endeavors with the following categories:

- Business and Joint Economic Development
- Civic Activism and Empowerment
- Community Building
- Culture and the Arts
- Education
- Environmental Studies and Protection
- Healthcare
- Interfaith Cooperation and
- Understanding
- Media
- Reconciliation and Dialogue
- Science
- Sports and Recreation
- Youth Activities

The Role and Scope of Joint Activities

Many authors see the role of joint activities as building peace by inspiring a groundswell of nonviolent activism for eventual social and political change. Along these lines, Jodi Shams Prinzivalli relates current organizers and participants of joint activities to those unknown activists who came before Martin Luther King, Jr., creating a foundation for his success in the

---


American civil rights movement. According to Prinziviall, “the way must be prepared, regardless of when true peace will prevail.”

In their study of dialogue groups working in the conflict, Ifat Maoz, Zvi Beckerman, and Mara Getz Sheftel also find that facilitators conduct the work because they believe it is an avenue of creating social change. Similarly, in their discussion of dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians, Ned Lazarus and Mohammed Abu-Nimer see the work as “fueling a grassroots movement for nonviolent social change.”

Scholars also see the role of joint activities as building peace by fostering peaceful relationships. For example, according to Rafi Nets-Zehngut and Danial Bar-Tal, joint activities “can foster links between different levels of society, create interdependence through common goals, and provide benefit for the members of society.” Ronny Shtarkstall frames this phenomenon as “develop(ing) informal and social routes for peace.”

It is difficult to measure the impact of joint activities as it is often intangible and often relates to the individual changes in perceptions of ‘the other.’ Perhaps the most systematic assessment of joint activities was conducted by IPCRI in their study of people-to-people activities between 1993 and 2002. In this study, IPCRI collected data from Israelis and Palestinians who administered joint activities during this time period through a variety of methods. On the topic of impact, IPCRI defines three levels of analysis and develops conclusions.

---

64 Rafi Nets-Zehngut and Daniel Bar-Tal, "The Intractable Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and Possible Pathways to Peace," in Beyond Bullets and Bombs: Grassroots Peacebuilding Between Israelis and Palestinians, 3-13 (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007).
at each of these levels based on the data they collected in this study. The first level of analysis is *the formal peace process*, “whether peacebuilding affected peacemaking.” According to IPCRI, most people interviewed found that joint activities have not had much, if any, influence on the formal peace process. Many also felt, however, that this was never the main objective of joint activities. IPCRI’s next level of analysis is *public opinion/attitudes* at large on both sides. Here again, those interviewed felt that joint activities had little effect. IPCRI found that there was a great deal of difficulty, however, with these first two levels of analysis in that they attempt to crudely quantify intangible concepts.66

IPCRI’s last level of analysis is the *qualitative effect of joint activities on the individual level*. Here they found that many interviewed stressed the gradual nature of this type of work and that, “success is not easily measured, but its effects may be greater than anticipated.” They found that the potential for transformation was much greater on this level.67

The study conducted by Ifat Maoz, Zvi Beckerman, and Mara Getz Sheftel found similar results to that of IPCRI when interviewing facilitators of dialogues between Israelis and Palestinians. They found that facilitators were skeptical about their ability to make change on a societal or political level. However, on a personal level, they found that facilitators see their activities as very effective in creating change.68

**The Challenges of Conducting Joint Activities**

Those conducting joint activities have faced numerable social, political, and logistical challenges. The following section seeks to explore these challenges as outlined by scholars on

66 “YES PM: Years of Experience in Strategies for Peace Making,” 32-35
67 Ibid, 35-36
68 Ifat Maoz, Zvi Beckerman and Mara Getz Sheftel, ”Can Talking to Each Other Really Make a Difference?,” 44-46.
the topic. Since much of the literature addresses joint activities conducted during the Oslo years, elements of the following section speak directly to those programs while most of the section outlines the challenges of the work in a broader sense.

Many of the challenges to conducting joint activities have surrounded *donor issues*. While there was a great influx of funding during the Oslo years, the field lacked the capacity to meet the partnering demands. Programs were often funded haphazardly with little sensitivity for operational and logistical asymmetries between Israeli and Palestinian organizations.\(^69\) Additionally, many of the donors were often out of touch with the needs of the implementing organizations as well as the political realities on the ground. For example, organizations conducting important ‘uni-national’ work were often overlooked for funding. Lack of coordination led to duplications of some projects while other projects received no funding at all.\(^70\) Furthermore, donors and implementing organizations did little during these years to outline goals and expected outcomes and follow up was often conducted remotely and insufficiently.\(^71\)

Many practitioners also claim *insufficient funds* as a challenge to their work. During the Oslo years, approximately USD 25-35 million was donated for joint activities. While this sum seems like an exorbitant amount, it actually amounts to little more than a few dollars per person when divided by the number of people living in Israel and Palestine. Additionally, many donors give only enough money for short-term projects, which greatly impedes the sustainability and consistency of efforts.\(^72\)

\(^{69}\) Naomi Chazan, "Peace Action and Conflict," 292.


\(^{71}\) Ibid, 31-32.

In addition to donor issues, asymmetries between the two societies have also posed difficulties in conducting joint activities. Palestinian participants and organizations have faced structural restrictions such as checkpoints and closures that have turned even the simplest tasks into major endeavors. Beginning in 1994, Palestinians have been denied access to Jerusalem and Israel by the Israeli government, making it necessary for them to obtain permits in order to enter. To this day, Palestinians are often unable to obtain permits or are denied entry, often preventing organizations and individuals from fulfilling program requirements and participating which further emphasizes the asymmetry between the two sides.  

Starting with the years following Oslo, disparity between Israelis and Palestinians with regard to objectives began to challenge joint activities. While funding proposals speak of cooperation and mutual understanding as the objective for joint activities, the Palestinian objective in participating in such activities is often political, with the aim of educating Israelis on the Palestinian suffering under the occupation. Israeli participants, on the other hand, often participate in joint activities in order to simply form relationships and get to know the other. This divergence in agendas has brought about the negative connotation and stigmatization of “normalization.”

The stigmatization of normalization is a phenomenon that prevails with regard to Palestinian participation in people-to-people activities today. While Palestinians, for the most part, would like to normalize relations with Israelis, for them justice is a precondition for such normalization. Without this precondition, many Palestinians feel that normalizing relations with Israelis is synonymous with normalizing the Israeli occupation – creating the appearance of

---

73 Ibid, 24.
75 Naomi Chazan, "Peace Action and Conflict Resolution," 294
76 Mohammed Dajani and Gershon Baskin, "Israeli-Palestinian Joint Activities," 100
peace while covering up the continued injustices. Knox and Quirk characterize this phenomenon as follows: “Amongst the Palestinian NGO there is a deep sense that ‘Israel does not want peace’, a fear that they are being duped. The increased levels of security force intervention through the implementation of Oslo II and the development of settlement activity makes cross community work seem contrived and irrelevant.”

The stigma associated with these activities, carries with it serious weight in Palestinian society. The Arabic word for normalization is tatbi’a, and for Palestinians “evokes Palestinian and Arab ‘enemy images’ of Israeli Jews as a Monolithic occupying army, and narratives rejecting the integration of Israelis into the Middle East.” The powerful inference in this label is that a person has abandoned his or her principals and given in to an enemy. It is because of this stigma that many Palestinian peace activists conducting and participating in joint activities today prefer to refer to their work as “dialogue” with the aim of educating Israelis regarding issues of justice and ending the occupation. Israelis, too, have suffered some stigmatization for the peace work. Some have been called self-hating Jews or have been accused of threatening the existence of the state of Israel by collaborating with its enemies.

Another challenge in using joint activities as a peacebuilding tool has been reaching the masses. Traditionally, the participants in joint activities have generally been the elites from both societies, with the hope that these individuals would have influence on the people in their communities. While joint activities would benefit widely from expanding its target audience, the problem inherent in expanding this base is the language barrier (often exercises are conducted in English as the lingua franca) and the difficulties in reaching some of the more grassroots

---

77 Mohammed Abu-Nimer and Ned Lazarus, "The Peacebuilder's Paradox and the Dynamics of Dialogue,” 22
80 Mohammed Dajani and Gershon Baskin, "Israeli-Palestinian Joint Activities," 100
audiences. For example, in their chapter on people-to-people, Gershon Baskin and Mohammed Dajani report difficulties in reaching public schools in Palestine because up until recently, the Palestinian Foreign Ministry has prevented such activities in their schools.81

There is also wide disagreement between Israelis and Palestinians as well with regard to media exposure. Palestinians often dislike exposure, as there is a great deal of pressure from their communities not to participate in such activities and some participants have even been threatened at times.82 Furthermore, many Palestinians feel that media exposure is “propagandist” and serves the Israeli interest of showing that peace has been achieved and that the occupation is over.83 As a result of unwanted exposure, many organizations, political movements, and Palestinian authority officials have boycotted joint activities at various times through the years.84

Israelis, on the other hand, have a great deal of interest in media exposure for joint activities. From their perspective, they want to prove to their communities that there are Palestinians who want peace. Frustrations have arisen at times when Israeli participants want to issue a joint statement or declarations to the press and are met with resistance from the Palestinians involved. Organizations generally adhere to the Palestinian wishes on this regard out of concern for their safety. The subsequent lack of exposure, however, greatly impedes joint activities’ ability to reach the wider community.85

Perhaps one of the biggest impediments discussed by many scholars on the topic of joint activities has been the absence of a “top-down” process and lack of official support for “bottom-up” processes. Joint activities are only one part of a more comprehensive peace process and cannot transform a conflict independent of an official process and coordination between the two.

81 Mohammed Dajani and Gershon Baskin, "Israeli-Palestinian Joint Activities," 97-98
82 Ibid, 99
84 Mohammed Dajani and Gershon Baskin, "Israeli-Palestinian Joint Activities," 99
85 Ibid.
Israeli and Palestinian leaders have rarely, if ever, taken action to promote such activities or make public statements encouraging participation or support,\(^{\text{86}}\) nor have they contributed any material support.\(^{\text{87}}\) Compounding their lack of support, leaders have often “overlooked, misunderstood, or sabotaged the engagement of committed citizens and their attempts to reach out to new constituencies.”\(^{\text{88}}\)

The above section outlines the challenges of conducting joint activities that have been documented over the last several years. A few months ago, these challenges were compounded by a severe outbreak of violence in the form of the war in Gaza. The next few sections seek to outline the events of the war as well as summarize what little writing that has been done thus far on the effects the war has had on joint activities.

**The War in Gaza**

Recently the world watched yet another bloody chapter of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict unfold. The recent war in Gaza comes at the end of a ceasefire between Hamas and Israel that had only temporarily subdued violence that had plagued the two parties since Hamas gained control of the Gaza strip following the 2006 Palestinian elections. This ceasefire began to unravel in November of 2008, as Israeli commandos killed Hamas fighters during a raid of a tunnel that Israel suspected had been built to kidnap Israeli soldiers. In response to this raid, Hamas resumed firing rockets into southern towns of Israel. Israel responded with more attacks in Gaza, and the cycle of violence began.\(^{\text{89}}\)

\(^{\text{87}}\) Mohammed Dajani and Gershon Baskin, "Israeli-Palestinian Joint Activities," 96
Hamas maintained the position that they could not renew the ceasefire unless Israel lifted
the three-year siege on the Gaza strip that Israel imposed after Hamas came to power. This
siege has had devastating effects on economic and humanitarian conditions in Gaza. Israel
refused this condition presumably on the basis of security and the attacks between the two sides
escalated. This Israeli military killed more fighters and Hamas and other religious militants fired
more rockets.

The violence escalated into a full scale war on Saturday December 27, 2008, with Israeli
fighter jets dropping bombs over Gaza. Within the middle of the first week of the war 370
Palestinians had already been killed. One author called these attacks “the most potent Israeli
assault in Palestinian-populated territory since the 1967 Six Day War.” Hamas’s immediate
response was to fire more rockets, which killed three civilians and one soldier. A few weeks
into the conflict the Israeli military began a ground offensive, which was met with guerilla tactics
by Hamas.

Because of crossing closures, the Palestinians in the Gaza strip were trapped with no way
to escape the violence. Homes were raided and mosques and schools were attacked. In one such
incident 43 people died when the Israeli military shelled a street where many civilians had taken
shelter next to a United Nations school in Northern Jabaliya. Israel argued that they had
intelligence indicating Hamas military presence at the school, but UN officials insisted this was
not the case.

90 Ibid.
91 Ibid.
92 Ibid.
93 BBC News, Gaza Crisis: Key Maps and Timeline, January 18, 2009,
94 Steven Erlanger, A Gaza War Full of Traps and Trickery, Jan 11, 2009,
The already critical humanitarian condition was worsened with humanitarian aid organizations unable to enter the strip and the 1.5 million people in Gaza suffered from severe shortages of fuel and food.\(^95\) Hospitals were also unable to cope with the large amount of injuries and deaths as they quickly began to run out of some of the most basic medical supplies.

In addition to continuing to launch rockets into southern Israeli towns, Hamas has also been accused of using civilians as human shields. It has been reported that they planted traps in civilian homes and other buildings such as mosques and schools. Police were also instructed to wear civilian clothing.\(^96\)

The violence came to an uneasy halt with a ceasefire by the Israeli government on January 17\(^{th}\) which was reciprocated by Hamas on January 18\(^{th}\).\(^97\) There are many who speculate that the Israeli government wanted the violence to end before the inauguration of Barak Obama in order to get off to a positive start with the new administration.\(^98\) The official explanation for ending the war, however, was that Israeli had achieved its aims. Likewise, Hamas claimed a “great victory.”\(^99\)

At the end of the war, it was estimated that more than 1,300 Palestinians had been killed, 65% of whom were civilians.\(^100\) Within Gaza, 4,000 buildings have been destroyed and 20,000 buildings were severely damaged, leaving tens of thousands of Gazans homeless. On the Israeli side, thirteen people had died, 10 soldiers and 3 civilians.\(^101\)

\(^95\) Civilian Deaths Mount in Gaza War, Jan 5, 2009, aljazeera.net (accessed April 27, 2009).
\(^98\) Ibid.
The war in Gaza comes two years after a similar war in Lebanon in which Israel launched a military offensive into southern Lebanon in retaliation for rockets fired into Israel by Hezbollah militants. In this Lebanon war there was also a large number of civilian deaths but in the end, Israel was unsuccessful in driving out Hezbollah and withdrew, as there was no successful end to the war in sight. Hezbollah claimed the war as a major victory, though it suffered greatly. According to Norman Finkelstein, this war in Lebanon had a direct impact on Israeli policy in Gaza. In his recent article in Counterpunch, he quotes New York Times Middle East Correspondent, Ethan Bronner, who points to indicators that part of Israel’s motivation in the Gaza war was to reassert “Israeli deterrence” because “it’s enemies are less afraid of it than they once were.”

While asserting its capability to defend itself and/or eliminating Hamas may have been Israel’s aim, it brought upon itself a great deal of criticism from the world community. In fact, many have accused Israel of war crimes and efforts have been made to bring those responsible to justice. Accusations include the use of excessive force, targeting civilian and UN buildings (including 37 schools, 6 health centers, and 2 warehouses), and using white phosphorus in densely populated areas.

Very little scholarly work has been written on the war in Gaza thus far as it occurred so recently. Therefore there is little to draw on to address my research questions addressing the recent events. For a preliminary look at the post war climate and its impact on joint activities, I

---

103 Ibid.
turn to recent articles addressing both coexistence activities between Jewish and Arab Israelis and joint activities between Palestinians and Israelis.

**The Effects of the War in Gaza on People’s Attitudes Toward Joint Activities**

There are many reports that several groups had to cancel activities during the war in Gaza either because participants wanted to cancel or because facilitators were too emotionally involved to lead discussion. According to Sylvie Berkowitsch-Gassenbauer, in times of conflict a break-down of dialogue occurs not only on an individual level but also a wider social and political level. She claims that, “when things get more extreme, people tend to ally together more to justify their own group.” Along the same lines, one practitioner claims that efforts to continue promoting peace have been “choked by a patriotic speech in favor of war.”

In some cases this increased nationalism and sense of sole ownership of grief and justice has manifested itself more seriously. In her very moving account of life in Sderot during the war, Nomika Zion, a member of “The Other Voice” paints a picture of increased blindness to the plight of the other. She relays that it has actually become dangerous to speak in favor of peace in the wake of the war: “It scares me when a friend from the ‘Other Voice’ is verbally attacked by other residents of Sderot while being interviewed and expressing a critical opinion about the war, and afterwards gets anonymous phone calls and is afraid to return to his car for fear that something will happen to him.” There seems to be a general sentiment in the midst of the war that violence is the only solution.

---

106 Ibid.
The Ability of Joint Activities to Play a Role Currently and in the Future

In answering to the critique that dialogues have stopped just when they are needed most, Ifat Maoz claims that during escalation of the conflict, it is normal for dialogue groups to temporarily suspend their activities. According to Maoz it can be “not only difficult but also potentially destructive to try to establish a dialogue when emotions are running too high.”\(^{110}\) In one such example, a group continued communication through the war via facebook and friendships actually “disintegrated” because of the arguments over the war.\(^{111}\)

Another practitioner, Farhat Agbaria, compared the recent war in Gaza to the second intifada and the war in Lebanon, expressing that the war in Gaza has been a much more grave assault on the Palestinian people. He fears that it will take much longer for joint activities (specifically dialogue) to return to their current levels than after the other outbreaks of violence, and questions whether or not it is possible for them to return to the pre war levels at all.\(^{112}\) Similarly, a practitioner working at a mixed Kindergarten in Beersheba called the war in Gaza, “the worst crisis we have gone through.”\(^{113}\)

The Next Steps in Grassroots Peacebuilding

With regard to what the next steps should be, practitioners vary in their opinions as to when to reconvene activities. Some feel that they should reconvene as soon as possible, but others say that it is too soon to say when activities should resume. While some facilitators of joint activities reflect on participants’ weariness with this type of slow and gradual process, Abu

Awad from the Parents’ Circle points out that anger from the recent events can and has, in some cases, inspired groups to take tangible political action.\textsuperscript{114}

Chapter 3 – Methods

This Study is actually a continuation of a previous study conducted in Palestine in the summer of 2008. This original study was an overview of joint activities examining the foundations, the challenges, and the conditions for effectiveness of joint activities with special attention to the formal notion of people-to-people. The recent war in Gaza raised new questions about joint activities and their ability to play a productive role in the current climate. Thus, as described in the introduction section of this paper, this study builds on the previous study and seeks to identify the effects of the war in Gaza on joint activities as perceived by practitioners in the field.

For the purposes of this study I have chosen to employ a qualitative methodology. Specifically this study is an elaborated case study focusing only on joint activities in the Israeli/Palestinian context at this critical time period. I have chosen to employ interviews as my method of inquiry, specifically utilizing the “responsive interviewing” technique as outlined by Rubin and Rubin in their book, *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*. This technique is rooted in the interpretive constructivist philosophy.115

Since I am aiming to assess people’s perceptions of joint activities, qualitative methods are appropriate as they are an effective “means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem.”116 Specifically, qualitative interviewing allows for exploring nuance and subtlety and answering questions of how past events explain current situations. Furthermore, qualitative interviewing is an effective tool for

---

gaining fresh perspectives and allows for multiple layers of discovery.\textsuperscript{117} As the war in Gaza is a recent event, very little literature exists on its effects. Therefore qualitative interviewing is the most appropriate means for uncovering the issues and nuances of the war’s effects, as perceived by the practitioners of joint activities.

This study is divided into conceptions of joint activities before and after the war in Gaza. The original concept for this study was to conduct follow up interviews with those individuals interviewed in the previous study from 2008. Unfortunately, however, these individuals were unavailable for further interviews. Therefore, the study utilizes two separate samples of interviews. Sample A consists of interviews conducted in Palestine in July of 2008 and sample B consists of interviews conducted in Washington DC in March of 2009. Findings related to the pre Gaza war conception of joint activities are drawn from both samples A and B. Findings related to the post Gaza war conception of joint activities are drawn only from sample B. The following is an explanation of these two samples beginning with sample A.

Sample A interviews were conducted with seven Palestinians who were either involved in joint activities at the time of the interview or who have been involved in joint activities previously. These interviewees joint activity involvement include the following categories, borrowing from IPCRI and ALLMEP’s typographies in the previous chapter:\textsuperscript{118}

- Formal educational activities
- Youth Activities
- Track II
- Professional meetings
- Political struggle, solidarity, and advocacy
- Grass-roots dialogue

\textsuperscript{118} A list of interviewees as well as interview questions can be found in the appendices of this paper
Handwritten notes from these interviews (they were not recorded and transcribed) were reviewed for segments relevant to the current study. These relevant portions of the interviews were then entered into an excel spreadsheet. Patterns were identified and grouped into columns and labeled according to themes. Themes that were related were then grouped together to create broader themes under larger headings. Orphans were analyzed at each stage and where deemed significant, were kept, and where deemed insignificant were discarded.\(^\text{119}\)

Sample B interviews were conducted in March of 2009 in coordination with the Alliance for Middle East Peace (ALLMEP), a coalition of more than 60 NGOs conducting joint activities in the conflict. Interviews were conducted during their recent summit in Washington, D.C., on creating an International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace. Eight individuals were interviewed who are working in one or more of the following aspects of joint activities in their professional and/or personal lives, again borrowing from IPCRI and ALLMEP’s typographies:

- Formal Education Activities
- Environmental Cooperation
- Environmental Studies and Protection
- Youth Activities
- Health Care
- Professional Training
- Professional Meetings
- Capacity Building
- Institution Building
- Women’s Issues
- Media
- Dialogue

\(^{119}\) This technique of analyzing data is borrowed from Carl F. Auerbach and Louise B. Silverstein, *Qualitative Data: An Introduction to Coding and Analysis* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2003).
Interviews were recorded and then transcribed. Sample B interviews were analyzed separately from sample A in much the same process as described above. In presenting the findings, themes are presented under the research topic to which they relate.

There are, of course, many limitations to this study. As with any qualitative study, quantity was sacrificed for quality and depth of information. Furthermore, I was the only person who analyzed the data. An analysis carried out by additional researchers would help to increase the reliability of the findings. The study would also benefit from employing additional methods such as surveys or case studies of individual organizations. Additionally, this study was conducted within a limited time frame. More time could have allowed for additional interviews as well as follow up interviews to assess the development of perspectives over the passage of time. Lastly, and perhaps the largest limitation to this study, is the fact that sample B included predominantly American and Israeli Jews and therefore the Palestinian perspective is largely absent from the post war findings. Bearing these limitations in mind, the next chapter relays my findings.
Chapter 4 – Findings

The Role of Joint Activities Prior to the War in Gaza\textsuperscript{120}

Humanizing the Other and Forming Relationships

Patterns among the interviews in sample B, reveal that a significant role of joint activities is providing an opportunity for the humanization of the other. Given the separation of the two societies, these interactions are often impossible without such organized activities. Within the context of joint activities, participants confront their stereotypes of each other and break them down, enabling them to identify the commonalities that they share with each other by virtue of being human. According to Vivian Silver, “people we were brought together who hadn’t had any contact with the other side, and that contact de-demonized the other side.” In effect, participants are no longer able to believe in their negative preconceived notions of each other. The experience “demystifies and humanizes the other.”\textsuperscript{121}

In addition to describing the phenomenon, many of those interviewed relayed anecdotes relating to the humanizing role of joint activities and the powerful effect that it has on the individuals involved. In one such anecdote Vivien Silver recalled: “and there it was, right out on the table, what each side so clearly thought of the other. They were so convinced that their stereotypes were true of the other. That led them to think, wow, what I had thought all my life, is not necessarily true. Here I am meeting face to face with people like me who have the same

\textsuperscript{120} As mentioned in the previous chapter, findings relating to joint activities before the war in Gaza are drawn from both sample A (all Palestinian) and sample B (predominately Israeli).

\textsuperscript{121} Melodye Feldman, American Jew, Seeking Common Ground, Interview: Washington, DC (March 2, 2009).
kinds of dreams that I have.”

In reflecting on the experiences of youth in her program, Melodye Feldman relayed that, “they say to us, I look into they eyes of my enemy and I see myself reflected back.”

The natural outcome of the humanization of the other as described by practitioners is the formation of relationships. Patterns in the data from sample B showed that Israeli and Palestinians have been able to form relationships through joint activities that never would have been possible otherwise. These relationships have taken many forms including friendships and working partnerships and have formed even among some of the most traumatized participants. A few respondents described longtime personal and professional relationships that had built and developed over the course of many years. Along these lines, David Litwack described, “a level of trust among the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and the West bank…as a result of that which has been built up over years.” Similarly Gidon Bromberg claims, “when you’re working with someone for 10 years, you know everything about him, or everything about her. You’ve stayed at their homes, you know their family members, you understand the human side completely.”

Patterns among the data from sample A revealed a conception of the role of joint activities similar to that described above, though framed slightly differently. The theme that emerged among many interviewees in sample A emphasize that joint activities help each side to know the other. According to respondents, joint activities have helped Israelis and Palestinians to break down stereotypes of the other and understand each other’s needs, feelings, problems, and narratives, leaving room for more empathy for each other. As Nidal Foqaha pointed out,

---

124 David Litwack, American Jew, Save a Child’s Heart, Interview: Washington, DC (March 5, 2009).
125 Gidon Bromberg, Israeli Jew, Friends of the Earth Middle East, Interview: Washington, DC (March 3, 2009).
there is a generation of Palestinians who don’t know any Israelis but the soldiers who make daily life very difficult. According to Foqaha, joint activities allow people to “know a different face,” Israelis supportive of coexistence and Palestinian rights.\textsuperscript{126}

**Expanding A Constituency for Peace**

Another theme that emerged from the respondents in sample B is the idea that joint activities play a role in expanding the number of people supportive of peace and therefore create the grassroots support necessary for achieving and sustaining an eventual negotiated agreement. Patterns among the interviews in this sample suggest a belief among respondents that their work has the potential to create a political dynamic in which decision makers will have to take notice and act accordingly. According to Rabbi Michael Cohen, expanding the number of supporters of peace will eventually “put pressure on the political leaders to do what they need to do.”\textsuperscript{127} In describing this phenomenon of linking the grassroots to the official process, Hillel Shenker claimed that joint activities are a “key component of the cultivation of the constituency within both societies that will be a backbone for the political support to be able to achieve that solution.”\textsuperscript{128} He further emphasized that “going top-down is not enough; you’ve got to combine the top-down and bottom-up activity.”\textsuperscript{129}

With the role of expanding the constituency for peace in mind, a few interviewees emphasized the crucial importance of targeting mainstream audiences on both sides with their work. Vivian Silver lamented that the field needs to improve in this respect, because, “we’re not

\textsuperscript{126} Nidal Foqaha, *Palestinian, Palestinian Peace Coalition-Geneva Initiative*, Interview: Ramallah, Palestine (July 15, 2008).
going to change Israeli society until we start targeting large numbers of mainstream Israelis.”

Similarly, Gidon Bromberg emphasized that “there is no underestimating how important is the change of Mr. Average, not Mr. Left Wing that is committed to peace in the first place, but it’s Mr. Average in Palestine, Mr. Average in Israel…they’re the people that we can truly impact and they’re the people, they’re the silent majority that can make a political difference.”

Though not a prevailing theme, a few interviewees also characterized a constituency for peace as a tool to combat would-be spoilers. For example, Gidon Bromberg finds it important to “empower those who would move to cooperate so that they can defend themselves, because there are spoilers out there who are against cooperation, who don’t want to see good will.” This barrier would be crucial in the case of an eventual peace agreement. According to Rabbi Michael Cohen, “when the peace treaty does come, or when we get close to it, maybe soon, that 10% [of the Israeli and Palestinian societies that violently oppose peace] is going to draw blood. And that’s why you need to strengthen the center now so that they can withstand that.”

Relating to the idea that joint activities can expand the constituency for peace, another theme that emerged from the data in sample B is the idea that joint activities have a multiplying effect. Facilitators of these activities have found that participants in their projects are often inspired to engage in future projects with the people they’ve met or with new partners. In one such example, Rabbi Michael Cohen described the alumni involvement at the Arava Institute claiming, “we work to provide them with seed money so they can continue to work on cross-border environmental projects. We have a whole research department where we do a lot of

131 Gidon Bromberg, Israeli Jew, Friends of the Earth Middle East, Interview: Washington, DC (March 2, 2009).
132 Gidon Bromberg, Israeli Jew, Friends of the Earth Middle East, Interview: Washington, DC (March 2, 2009).
cross-border environmental research, which many of our alumni get involved in those projects…they continue to work together, continue to be friends.” 134 Hillel Schenker shared another example in which an issue of the Palestine Israel inspired the creation of another journal. According to Schenker, “it was like what we did became the pilot for future activity.” 135

Within the theme of the multiplying effect of joint activities, a few facilitators find that this phenomenon also takes place in the transfer of knowledge from participants to the people around them such as their families and villages. For example, David Litwack described this phenomenon among people involved with Save a Child’s Heart: “there is a ripple effect we’ve seen from the patient level, from the child, to the parent, to the doctor, and that’s something we’ve seen.” 136 Lou Kanavati characterized the phenomenon as, “like a positive cancer. You know what cancer is like, it spreads like crazy. Imagine a cancer being positive. Paying it forward. It’s amazing how little contact it takes.” 137

While a theme of building a constituency for peace was not prevalent in sample A, there was one individual who espoused this concept. Nidal Foqaha suggested that joint activities can be a signal of support for the political process. Additionally, he emphasized that joint activities create a sort of social fabric that can remain in tact even when political processes (such as Camp David II and the Tabo Accords) collide and collapse. 138

136 David Litwack, Israeli Jew, Save a Child’s Heart, Interview: Washington, DC (March 5, 2009).
Modeling Peace

A theme emerged among sample B that joint activities play a role in modeling peace. Facilitators of joint activities indicated that their activities set an example for their societies and show them that peace is possible. This demonstration of peace, according to those interviewed, is a comfort to those segments of society that are perhaps pessimistic about the prospects of peace as well as those who are tempted to pursue peace but are still hesitant out of feelings of isolation. According to Rabbi Michael Cohen, joint activities “model that cooperation is not a pipe dream, that it really, it can be a reality. And so it’s really kind of the proof in the pudding, if you will, when those kinds of activities are going on.”139 Similarly, Hillel Schenker finds that even for people who are not participating, “the very fact of hearing that such a venture is possible and is taking place through everything that we are experiencing, is something that broadcasts a code to people.”140 Along these lines, Lou Kanavati described joint activities as, “a comfort; it’s a comfort zone. People have to feel some comfort and hope for peace…and that comfort can offset the fear of others. People are afraid to say they want peace…The more people that are willing to step forward,”141 the more the societies will see that peace is possible.

Identifying and Empowering Leaders

The final theme that emerged among sample B with regard to the role of joint activities is the idea that joint activities can help to identify and/or empower leaders. According to Lou

Kanavati, “We have to look for the leaders, and you don’t find leaders until you pursue them. They are not going to come up. And you pursue them with the work that we do. We create leaders.”

For some organizers of joint activities, this element of their work is primary. For example, at the Arava Institute, the main “goal is to create a cadre of environmental leaders for the Middle East, that’s the raison d’être the Institute.” In contrast, organizations such as the Palestine Israel Journal target existing leaders to empower them with the information and tools they need. According to Hillel Schenker, “we are aiming for the audience that makes the difference. As Margaret Mead once said, it’s always a small group of people, who with the final analysis are the catalysts for making change.”

**Peace Education**

Unique to sample A was the theme of Joint activities as a means to educate people about peace. Respondents seemed to feel that through joint activities, facilitators have been able to teach their societies practical approaches to peace. According to one respondent, joint activities have resulted in increased knowledge and skills as well as changed behavior and attitudes. He also finds that participants are more committed to non-violence and peace after participating.

Dr. Fathi Darwish framed this educational role of joint activities as performing a task that the two governments cannot. According to Darwish, NGOs can reach the people because they are part of the people. They can teach the two societies that peace process is central to the core of a common future.

---

Rights, Justice, and Ending the Occupation

Another theme that was unique to the sample A group was the idea that joint activities should operate with the aim of ending the occupation. Respondents framed the approach in different ways including obtaining rights for the Palestinian people, working for justice, but overall this group sees ending the occupation as the key role of joint activities. According to Nader Abu Amsha, joint activities should be a venue for developing tools to struggle together against the illegal occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. He further defines justice as a prerequisite to reconciliation.147 Similarly, Naseef Muallem claims that joint activities need “different objectives.” According to Muallem these projects should work to help negotiate the complete Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories.148 As George Rishmawi put it, rights have been denied and joint activities must work to alleviate the problem.149

The Scope of Joint Activities Prior to the War in Gaza

Small Scale

With regard to the scope of joint activities, patterns in the interviews from sample B show that, overall, facilitators of joint activities find that the impact of their work has been small in scale. Many of the interviewees spoke of changes occurring primarily on the level of the individual or small communities. Vivian Silver equated the work of the field to, “a drop in the bucket considering the effects of the occupation and the huge amount of effort it takes to carry out these projects.”150 At the same time, Zyad Abu Zayyad emphasized the importance of

147 Nader Abu Amsha, Palestinian, East Jerusalem YMCA, Interview: Beit Sahour, Palestine (July 9, 2008).
148 Naseef Muallem, Palestinian, Palestinian Center for Peace and Democracy, Ramallah, Palestine (July 15, 2008).
149 George Rishmawi, Palestinian, Interview: Beit Sahour, Palestine (July 21, 2008).
change at this level. According to Abu Zayyad, “we are dealing with human beings so the personal level is very important, and no one can expect that you can change the world in one activity or two activities. It’s a psychological process and an accumulated process…It’s like giving drops of water, but at the end there will be a change.”

Along these lines, a few respondents in sample B indicated a sense that joint activities could have a greater impact if more resources were available. For example, Gidon Bromberg claimed, “I think the spectrum of activities have achieved many good results on a small scale, because the resources of peacemaking organizations are limited, so there is no possibility of impacting large scale, the resources have never been invested.” Melodye Feldman also spoke of the missed potential of joint activities. According to Feldman, “it’s not going to solve the Palestinian/Israeli conflict, but if there were more funds for programs like us, then we might be able to create this movement internally from the bottom up with participants from all of these programs…if they had money, I think we in ourselves could form a movement inside Israel and Palestine that might rise up to counteract this lack of movement on both the Palestinian and Israeli sides.”

**Slow and Accumulative Process**

A theme that emerged among sample A is that the work of joint activities is a long and accumulative process and it was therefore too early to say what the impact has been. Respondents emphasized the goal of joint activities to create change in people and insisted that these types of changes take time. For example, Dr. Darwish pointed out that people have been suffering for more than 60 years and that changing the situation of war and considering each

---

other’s enemies is an extremely challenging process that takes time and resources.\(^{153}\) Another respondent compared joint activities to other forms of nonviolence and expressed that this kind of work has slow effects.\(^{154}\)

**We Must Talk**

Another theme among sample A interviews was sense of commitment to continue despite difficulties. A few respondents insisted on this perseverance even without funds. Dr. Fathi Darwish referred to this work as “the only way” and claimed that the field must continue to learn from difficulties and analyze their work. Darwish claimed, joint activities “cannot stop; we have to continue.”\(^{155}\)

**Examples of Successes**

While no themes emerged as to what the successes of joint activities have been, a few respondents in sample A did relay their own singular examples of what they think joint activities have accomplished. For example, one interviewee credited joint activities with the fact that most Palestinians are believers in peace and nonviolence.\(^{156}\) George Rishmawi gave joint activities credit for the International Solidarity Movement (ISM) and claimed that these activities brought Palestine to the stage for many people in different ways.\(^{157}\)


\(^{154}\) Sample A #5, *Palestinian*, Interview: Bethlehem, Palestine (July 16, 2008).


\(^{156}\) Sample A #5, *Palestinian*, Interview: Bethlehem, Palestine (July 16, 2008).

The Challenges of Joint Activities Prior to the War in Gaza

Lack of Resources

A predominant theme that emerged from the sample B interviews in terms of challenges is the struggle to obtain and maintain enough funds to carry out joint activity work. This challenge is ongoing for most of the organizations conducting joint activities, as all are not-for-profit. Vivian Silver pointed out that the challenge of maintaining funds affects the continuity of the work as well. According to Silver, “Your funding comes to an end, your project comes to an end, and then you have to start all over again.”\(^{158}\) A few respondents credited the void to the loss of international funds. For example, David Litwack claimed that, “our biggest challenge is a financial one right now, trying to make up for this loss of European Union funding.”\(^{159}\)

Trends in the sample A interviews also revealed the lack of funding as a challenge to conducting joint activity work. As in sample B, one respondent specifically alluded to the lack of international funding.\(^{160}\) Also similar to sample B, another respondent noted the challenge of maintaining continuity when funds run out.\(^{161}\)

The Broader Political and Social Landscape as a Barrier to Peacebuilding

A dominant pattern among the sample B interviews is the problem of the overall political situation negatively affecting joint activities both psychologically and logistically for both facilitators and participants. Among the elements of the conflict that were mentioned are the building of settlements, incursions in the West Bank, housing demolitions, the wall, suicide

---

161 Sample A #5, *Palestinian*, Interview: Bethlehem, Palestine (July 16, 2008).
bombings, rockets in Southern Israel, restrictions on movement, and the failed peace process. In terms of psychological challenges, Vivian Silver reflected on the “the trauma of what it means for Palestinians to come through the checkpoints, the excruciating shame we Israelis feel at the pain we put them through. It’s a horrible situation.”162 Similarly, Melodye Feldman claimed that when students in her program return home, “there is no support for them to continue their work…now they have to pass through and get permits to see each other, now borders can be closed. So they don’t have that openness.”163 According to Ziad Abu Zayyad, violent incidents can also be a huge setback: “one suicide attack can influence the Israeli public opinion in a negative manner, which maybe a thousand joint activities can achieve to bring the situation back to how it was before the suicide attack.”164

While there were some similarities, respondents from sample A framed the emotional challenges of working in a conflict environment somewhat differently. Interviewees in this group referred more to the stagnancy of the situation in terms of the lack of changes on the ground as a psychological barrier. Respondents feel that it is harder for people to involve themselves in peace activities when they don’t see any benefits around them. Fathi Darwish claimed that he sometimes gets fed up and feels like the work is nonsense because there have been no changes (he insists, however, that it is crucial to continue).165

While not a predominant theme, a few respondents from sample A spoke of their conflicted feelings in terms engaging in joint activities at the same time as suffering under the occupation. One respondent relayed a story during the second intifada in which he was supposed to go to a joint activity but then his son was almost killed when an Israeli fighter jet bombed the

165 Dr. Fathi Darwish, *Palestinian, Tawasul*, Ramallah, Palestine (July 15, 2008).
town and the shelves in his shop collapsed on top of him. He found himself asking, “How can I go when these occupiers almost killed you?” Naseef Muallem who was unable to visit his sister when she was dying in Haifa also posed the conundrum, how can Palestinians meet Israelis when they can’t even meet their own family?

The wider political context also has logistical implications on joint activities. Patterns in the interviews from Sample B reveal that facilitators have encountered challenges with regard to the most fundamental aspect of joint activities, and that is simply meeting. Almost all respondents referred to problems bringing people together due to restrictions on movement primarily for Palestinians. For example, according to Hillel Schenker, there is always “the question of permits for Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza to be able to come to our office in East Jerusalem…we are not always successful in getting a permit.” Some organizations have even had to hire full time staff in order to deal with the challenge of obtaining permits. In another example, Lou Kanavati related an experience where he had to cancel an activity because of a closure. According to Kanavati, “I drove all the way to Jenin. They wouldn’t let me in. There was a closure, and they begged me to wait to the next day to go, and I told them I couldn’t…” Like the respondents in sample B, many of the respondents in sample A also named restrictions on movement as a major logistical challenge to conducting joint activities.

Within the political context a few interviewees from sample B mentioned Hamas as an impediment to joint activities as well. According to Vivian Silver, the Negev Institute for Strategies of Peace and Development (NISPED) “worked in Gaza with two main organizations throughout all of these years, until Hamas took over in June 2007. Once the Hamas took over,

---

166 Sample A #5, Palestinian, Interview: Bethlehem, Palestine (July 16, 2008).
the Palestinians were threatened and they themselves couldn’t work. Not because they didn’t want to, but because it was just too risky with Hamas there.” A few interviewees from sample A also named Hamas as a challenge to joint activities as well. According to one such respondent, peacebuilders are attacked from many sides including Hamas.

**The Issue of Normalization**

Another theme that emerged from the sample B interviews is the stigma of normalization as a challenge to joint activities. According to respondents, Palestinians are often under threat from their societies because of the stigma often associated with conducting joint activities. According to Hillel Schenker, working for peace is “not so simple on the Palestinian side, peace is not, you know, such a sexy word in the Palestinian community. They tend to call themselves, anti-occupation, pro achieve a Palestinian state, pro democracy, pro etcetera, etcetera, but peace cannot be the flag on the Palestinian side.”

Putting the issue into context, Vivian Silver explained that “the whole issue of normalization became really prominent after the second intifada and then each Palestinian organization had to take a stand on how they define normalization and whether they were prepared to work P2P or not.” In response to this challenge, Silver claimed that Israelis have to question, “whether or not we have a moral right to expect the Palestinians to do this if they’re under such a threat. That’s our responsibility in all this.”

---

170 Sample A #1, *Palestinian*, Interview: Washington, DC (July 9, 2008).
A few respondents from sample A also brought up the theme of the stigma of normalization as a challenge to joint activities. For example, Nidal Foqaha brought up that many Palestinians don’t believe in dialogue with the Israeli side and that he and his colleagues have been accused of normalizing. Another interviewee who is a self proclaimed nationalist, claimed he was once accused by a normalization committee of having engaged normalizing activities because of his joint activity work. Though he remains resolved to continue the work, the experience of being blamed by his own people still scared him.

The Israeli Government Does Not Want Peace

A theme unique to sample A interviews is that the Israeli government is overtly challenging peace. Most respondents reported that the Israeli government has actually blacklisted and punished Palestinians involved in peace activities. According to one respondent, good people who want to make peace have not been allowed into Israel. Another respondent claimed that he cannot get a permit because he is blacklisted.

A few respondents also reported that the Israeli government has shut down offices. For example, Naseef Muallem said that the first closure in Jerusalem occurred in 1993 and it became necessary to have a permit to enter. The Palestinian Center for Peace and Democracy Office was located in Jerusalem and eventually had to close. According to Muallem, the Israeli government essentially “emptied Jerusalem” of most of the Palestinian peace organizations. At the time of his interview, Dr. Fathi Darwish also claimed that the Israeli government had closed more than

---

175 Sample A #5, Palestinian, Interview: Bethlehem, Palestine (July 16, 2008).
176 Sample A #1, Palestinian, Interview: Washington, DC (July 9, 2008).
177 Sample A #5, Palestinian, Interview: Bethlehem, Palestine (July 16, 2008).
178 Naseef Muallem, Palestinian, Palestinian Center for Peace and Democracy, Ramallah, Palestine (July 15, 2008).
20 NGOs in the last 3-4 years. Darwish also reported that the Israeli army had destroyed NGO offices in Nablus the week before his interview.\textsuperscript{179}

\textbf{Ulterior Motives}

Also a theme unique to sample A is the idea that the Israeli government, facilitators, and participants sometimes involve themselves in joint activities for the wrong reasons. According to respondents the Israeli government has sometimes used joint activities to show that peace exists when in actuality there have been no changes on the ground and the occupation continues. According to Naseef Muallem, in the past, pictures have been broadcast of joint activities to show the world (that didn’t know better) that peace had been achieved. Muallem said such practices have strengthened fundamentalism and “beautified the ugly face of the Israeli government.”\textsuperscript{180} With regard to organizers, a few interviewees from sample A feel that some organizations have only become involved in order to benefit from funds allocated for joint activities. According to one respondent, some NGOs became involved after Oslo only because the funds were available, not because they felt invested in the work.\textsuperscript{181} Additionally, respondents accused some participants of participating only to leave their situation for a vacation.

\textbf{Asymmetries}

Another challenge outlined by interviewees in sample A is the asymmetry between Israelis and Palestinians. This asymmetry has manifested itself in a number of ways. For example, Naseef Muallem claimed that Israeli NGOs sometimes have not treated their

\textsuperscript{179} Dr. Fathi Darwish, \textit{Palestinian, Tawasul}, Ramallah, Palestine (July 15, 2008).

\textsuperscript{180} Naseef Muallem, \textit{Palestinian, Palestinian Center for Peace and Democracy}, Ramallah, Palestine (July 15, 2008).

\textsuperscript{181} Sample A #1, \textit{Palestinian}, Interview: Washington, DC (July 9, 2008).
counterparts as equals. According to Muallem, donors often favored Israeli organizations as well. George Rishmawi relayed that Israelis often speak better English and so Palestinians are left feeling as though they didn’t truly have a chance to express themselves. In relation to this challenge many respondents in sample A named ‘meeting as equals’ as a requirement for their participation in joint activities.

**Lack of Top Down Support**

A theme also emerged in sample A, that joint activities need more support from the official levels including the Israeli and Palestinian governments as well as the International community. In terms of the local governments, this support should take the form of both funding and ideological support. With regard to the international community, respondents called for additional funding as well as political pressure on Israel, especially from the United States. According to one interviewee, the United States has a “strong hand” to make changes.

**Media**

Though not a dominant theme, a few interviewees from sample A also reported as a challenge the fact that the media only reports on violence. According to Nidal Foqaha, “The voice of violence is louder than the rational voices or the voice of peace.” Such reporting has a negative effect on the general public’s support for peace.

---

184 Sample A #1, *Palestinian*, Interview: Washington, DC (July 9, 2008).
The Effects of the Gaza War on People’s Attitudes Toward Joint Activities

Deepened Divisions

Patterns in the interviews from sample B show that facilitators of joint activities find divisions between Israelis and Palestinians have deepened in response to the war in Gaza. Respondents characterized people’s emotions as fearful and angry and indicated that both societies have “withdrawn back to their own sides” and “taken up their own cause.”

According to Hillel Schenker, “that’s why we’ve seen a return to the right in the Israeli elections, and that’s why we’ve seen the gaining of support for the concept of resistance, as it is called in the Palestinian society, rather than dialogue and negotiations because the perception is that dialogue and negotiations do not bare fruit.” In terms of how these divisions have manifested within joint activities, Michael Cohen claimed, “Gaza put us back so far I mean, Gaza showed the real fault lines that lay underneath all of the cooperative activities, and just kind of like, they broke under the surface. We were able to contain them, try to patch them up, and now they’re back…and so it really just brought all those mistrusts about how both sides view each other in the worst-case scenarios.” Similarly, Ziad Abu Zayyad pointed out that the deepening divisions have made it much more challenging for peace organizations because “as Israeli Jews, Israelis will tell you, ‘Listen, what can you do? What, are you against the army who is defending us, who is protecting us?’ As a Palestinian, people will tell you, ‘Do you want to make peace with the Israelis who are shooting us and they are killing Palestinian civilians?’”

---

186 The remainder of the findings in this chapter are drawn only from sample B (predominately Israeli).
In addition to divisions among the general public, patterns among sample B interviews also include the widening of divisions within the peace camp along national lines. These divisions existed before but were brought to the surface and augmented by the peace camp’s inability to make a united stand in response to the war. As Ziad Abu Zayyad pointed out, “it was very difficult for us to reach a joint statement between Israelis and Palestinians, and between whom? Between organizations which call themselves a coalition of peace NGOs. So the war, of course, made us much more far from each other than we were before the war.”

According to Melodye Feldman, “There is a divide and it has gotten worse, and its brought up old wounds and new wounds, but there are people who are still very committed to the process.” Vivian Silver put the divide into context by claiming that, “there is a deep disappointment on the part of Palestinians that the Israeli peace camp just dissipated during the war. I think that the Israeli peace camp has continuously disappointed the Palestinians side through it all.”

A few respondents also gave examples of Israelis and Palestinians who would otherwise want to participate in joint activities feeling conflicted about cooperating in the wake of the war in Gaza. In a sense, it seems that people are questioning whether their participation in joint activities condones the actions of the other. Melodye Feldman finds the youth with whom she works asking, “if we sit together are we traitors to our own people, our own communities? But at the same time, if we don’t get together, we won’t have the opportunity to meet each other and to share our anger with each other.”

With regard to the decline in the number of Arabs in his

---

program after the war, Rabbi Michael Cohen claimed, “even as Arabs…who wanted to work for cooperation…[they] really felt it was just too much of a stretch right now.”

**Continued Commitment**

Despite the wider divisions, peacebuilders in sample B have found that their “primary” participants have not lost their commitment to the activities. For example, according to Hillel Schenker, the Palestine Israel Journal has found that the war in Gaza “did not cause any of the primary Israelis or Palestinians to say, I no longer want to be involved…People have continued to be committed to the venture, to the dialogue.” Similarly, Lou Kanavati claimed, “If I said Gaza, they would all, they would all be willing to work with them. Absolutely. No doubt about it.” According to Rabbi Michael Cohen, while there have been “very difficult conversations during the three weeks of the war at the Institute…the good thing is, things didn’t fall apart.”

**The War on Gaza and the Ability of Joint Activities to Play a Role**

**Yet Another Point of Escalation or an Unprecedented Event?**

Another theme that emerged among sample B interviews is the characterization of the war in Gaza as one more escalation in the long history of escalation points in the conflict. While recognizing the gravity of the recent war, many respondents didn’t seem to see the recent war as unique in comparison to other outbreaks of violence such as the recent war in Lebanon. There was a sense among many respondents that the war in Gaza would not greatly change the

---

operations of joint activity organizations. Along these lines, Melodye Feldman claimed, “we’re still working with young people who live in a state of war and violence, at least since 2000. So in many ways I don’t see what we did prior to Gaza and after Gaza any differently…The violence was there and Gaza was an escalation of the violence, as was Lebanon 2 ½ years ago.”

Along these lines, David Litwack put the war into context as follows: “Gaza was a flare up. It was an increase in the level of the conflict, but the conflict is ongoing. So it’s not, it didn’t change the paradigm, it really didn’t change anything.” Similarly, Gidon Bromberg claimed, “the scale of human loss, of course, has been horrific this time, but the destruction of Gaza happened many times as we’ve seen over the last ten years.” Bromberg went on to claim that the overall political situation in terms of the continued building of settlements and the restrictions on the movement of Palestinians remains, “the greatest impediment, and the greatest reason for pessimism in the political process on the Palestinian side, more so than the war in Gaza.”

In stark contrast to the theme above, a few respondents characterized the recent war in Gaza as an unprecedented event with serious implications for joint activities. For example, Ziad abu Zayaad claimed, “the war in Gaza, it was a new precedent. Nothing before the war in Gaza could be compared to the war in Gaza…I mean by the casualties, I mean by the destruction, I mean by the human suffering that was caused by this war.” Vivian Silver indicated a similar perspective and lamented that people are “losing hope that the situation can ever change, will it ever change?” According to Silver, “it’s going to be more challenging then ever” to conduct joint activities in the wake of the war in Gaza.

200 David Litwack, Israeli Jew, Save a Child’s Heart, Interview: Washington, DC (March 5, 2009).
201 Gidon Bromberg, Israeli Jew, Friends of the Earth Middle East, Interview: Washington, DC (March 3, 2009).
A Temporary Decline of Activity

Patterns in the interviews from sample B indicate that many organizations have seen a decline or complete cessation of joint activities during and after the war in Gaza, but the general sentiment among many respondents is that this is only temporary. In fact, a few respondents pointed out that their activities have already resumed. According to Melodye Feldman, during the war, “it was difficult for the Israelis to travel, and parents were fearful. So we postponed the second retreat, but it will take place in a few weeks.”204 Similarly, Gidon Bromberg finds that, “during the wars and violence, we have to postpone activities, but as soon as the war stops, we renew activities. We’ve had joint activities since the war in Gaza.”205 With regard to the near future, peacebuilders felt that there would be a decline in joint activities, “but nothing at the level of the second intifada.”206

With regard to the temporary decline of activities, a few respondents feel that “time is going to have to set in for some healing.”207 Along these lines, Rabbi Michael Cohen claimed, “as they say, time is the great healer, and these groups will, you know, they are continuing to work together but at present are not back to their old strength.” Perhaps less optimistic than the respondents in the above paragraph, Cohen continued, “I’m not sure how long the recovery rate is going to be in terms of groups getting back after this event.”208

204 Melodye Feldman, American Jew, Seeking Common Ground, Interview: Washington, DC (March 2, 2009).
A Social Infrastructure as a Net to Break the Fall

A theme among a few respondents in sample B was that the relationships created by the many years of previous joint activities would help to sustain joint activities through the current crisis. According to Hillel Schenker, “there are thousands of people who have an ongoing and in-depth knowledge of each other, friendships, knowledge of where each other are. We are not starting from scratch. Now, so that, I think probably in human terms, is the most important thing. But there are organizational infrastructures out there in place, channels of communication, so that’s very important.”209 Similarly, Gidon Bromberg claimed, “I think that relationships that were developed have proven to be lasting relationships by the time of this Gaza war, while at the time of the second intifada many relationships were still developing, and therefore were very vulnerable to cessation because of the second intifada.”210

The Future of Joint Activities

Keeping an Eye on the Larger Context

In terms of the future of joint activities, a theme emerged among many respondents in sample B that what happens in the political arena will have a tremendous impact. Facilitators of joint activities feel that the next steps of the Israeli government will affect joint activities both in terms of people’s attitudes toward peace as well as the logistics of carrying out activities. According to Ziad Abu Zayyad, “we are waiting to see what will happen on the political level. If there will be any breakthrough, then many things will change, even in spite of the war, in spite of what happened in the war. If there will be political progress, things will become much better,

and the functioning of peace NGOs on both sides will become much easier." Alternatively, Melodye Feldman pointed out that “if there are more closures, if there are more restrictions, we may see a cessation of programming just because we can’t do it.”

In addition to the Israeli political context, patterns in the interviews from sample B show that many respondents feel that international players (primarily the United States) will also play a large role in determining the future of joint activities. Many peacebuilders seem to be hoping that the new American administration will alter the current stagnation in the Israeli Palestinian peace process and thus create a more hospitable environment for joint activities to build peace. For example, Hillel Schenker claimed, “one of my primary sources of hope in the current circumstance was the Obama victory in the American elections and the change in policy, the readiness to put diplomacy rather than military unilateral action at the forefront, the readiness to be actively engaged into pursuing Israeli Palestinian peace, and I think that’s critical.” Similarly, Vivian Silver claimed, “I hope the Obama, the American administration starts losing their patience and starts putting pressure on all of us. Because it’s just unacceptable where we are at right now.” Rabbi Michael Cohen also claimed that, “the US is going to have to make some very difficult calls when it comes to Israel, and if the Palestinians see that, they will respond in kind. And the US is going to have to play hardball with the Palestinians as well.”

---

212 Feldman claimed that based on her experience, she does not foresee this happening; Melodye Feldman, American Jew, Seeking Common Ground, Interview: Washington, DC (March 2, 2009)
Time will Tell

Despite their confidence in the ability of joint activities to persevere through the current climate, there was also a theme among a few of the interviews that it is too early to tell just what the effects of the war will be on joint activities. According to Vivian Silver, “it’s a little premature to draw real conclusions. I don’t think we have an inkling for what the war actually did for relations between Jews and Arabs in Israel, exacerbated by the elections in Israel. I don’t think we have an inkling of what the war did to us internationally yet, and so I’m not sure, it’s really too early to tell what it’s done to P2P projects.”

Silver went on to explain, “People are still shell shocked from the war. We’re too vulnerable and the people are all scared. Can we move forward? In six months I think we’ll have perspective, right now there is no perspective at all.”

The Next Steps in Grassroots Peace Building

Reevaluate and Unify

In terms of the next steps for facilitators of joint activities, a theme emerged among the interviews that now is a crucial time for practitioners in the field to do some reevaluating both between and within the peace camps. There was a sense among respondents that this self-reflection should be aimed at finding ways to unify the peace camp. Melodye Feldman called on organizations to start asking the questions, “How political should we be? What statements

---

should we be making together?" Similarly, Hillel Schenker claimed, “we have to now begin very serious evaluation process of, what do we do now? In the wake of two things…the Gaza war and the results of the Israeli elections.” Schenker went on to say, “we have to say to ourselves…where did we go wrong vis-à-vis the rest of Israeli society? Who should we be communicating, in other words, yes, we’ve been talking only about Israeli/Palestinian, but we also as Israeli/Israeli, and Palestinian/Palestinian.” Vivian Silver also emphasized that it is necessary for “both sides to say that we reject violence, and that we have an alternative way of dealing with this.”

**Keep Pushing Forward**

With regard to the next steps for grassroots peacebuilders, another theme that emerged among many respondents was the idea that in spite of the recent violence, facilitators of joint activities must not give up. Facilitators seem to feel that joint activities play a critical role in times of crisis and they relayed a sense of duty to perform this role during this difficult time. Along these lines, Hillel Schenker characterized joint activities as, “the crucial antidote to the current atmosphere. You know when people say, I’m pessimistic, I’m resigned, I see no hope on the horizon, I say, first of all don’t give up, but second of all be proactive…we are the antidote, being out there, being proactive, saying we’re not giving up. And not only that, we are looking for the new answers necessary in the current circumstances.”

Similarly, Gidon Bromberg called on organizations to continue doing “the very hard work of bringing people back together,

---

recreating trust, and undertaking all those small steps that are never enough.” 222 Rabbi Michael Cohen also emphasized that “grassroots groups can’t lose sight of their mandate and their vision. They can’t be sidetracked when events like this happen…if we keep allowing the violence to define the reality, then we’re never going to get anywhere.” 223

Related to the theme above, a few respondents described a feeling that continuing was not optional. For these respondents, there is no choice but to carry on with their work. Along these lines Hillel Schenker claimed, “for the sake of the two, the future of the two peoples, we must, despite the fact that so far we have not succeeded, we have no alternative but existentially to continue to seek a resolution of the conflict for the sake of both peoples.” 224 Similarly, Vivian Silver said, “we have no choice, for those people who want peace, we know that we need each other to move things forward. And it will bounce back. I hope. I have no other alternative but to believe that it will.” 225

**Provide a Venue for Processing**

Another theme that emerged among a few respondents regarding the next steps is the idea that joint activities can also play a role in the current climate by creating a place for Israelis and Palestinians to process their emotions toward each other. According to Melodye Feldman, “we get comments from people in Gaza and in the south of Israel saying they want to get together, maybe not for peace, but to get together to meet the other side and tell them their stories.” Feldman feels that joint activities can be “a place where they can come to vent what’s going on and to share their stories with each other, and we should not be afraid to provide that space for

---

them.”

Similarly, Hillel Schenker claimed that “through all of the crisis points…the fact of maintaining and cultivating an ongoing communication is extremely important in centering, sort of grounding all the people who are involved in our mutual realities and our ability to continue to seek answers and move forward.”

**Marginalize the Extremists/Strengthen the Center**

Patterns among a interviews showed that some facilitators of joint activities feel that in the current climate, these organizations should work to marginalize the extremist elements of both societies and strengthen the center. It seems respondents feel that strengthening the center will create an environment more conducive to peace on the official level. David Litwack claimed that joint activities must “attempt to strengthen those moderate elements that are within both sides of the political spectrum. I mean that’s really the task, to strengthen moderate, increase the moderate voters on both sides.”

Similarly, Michael Cohen claimed, “part of why we need to strengthen NGOs is because we need to strengthen that group in the center; we need to raise the profiles, so that when Palestinians and Israelis look around and want peace…they’ll understand well, I’m not alone in this.”

**Individual Ideas for the Next Steps**

This section outlines a few singular ideas proposed by respondents in terms of the next steps for grassroots peace building. Though patterns were not seen in the interviews around these ideas, this author found them worth mentioning by themselves. For example, Vivian Silver suggested “bringing Palestinians into the Israeli school system and having school kids hear

---

Palestinian stories, meet them as people; I think that could have a positive effect on Israeli public opinion.” At the same time, Silver questioned, “Can that happen now? I don’t know.” Silver also claimed that “there has to be a huge push to end the occupation, because the occupation stands in the way of it all.”

Other ideas were posed by Gidon Bromberg, who suggested that “we need to find a way to work with the Gaza leadership, and to work with the more moderate elements of Hamas. We need to understand Hamas, because they’re not going to disappear…There are many voices within Hamas, we need to…strengthen the moderate voice of Hamas so that we can promote a reasonable solution.” Bromberg also suggested that “it should be the objective of people-to-people groups to identify how they are impacting and improving the lives of Palestinians and Israelis, be it through environment, better health services, better education.”

---

Chapter Five – Discussion

The previous chapter illustrates a broad range of complexities faced by facilitators of joint activities both in their daily work and in the face of crisis. This next chapter seeks to draw from the findings and connect them to the broader discussion of the field both in terms of conflict resolution theory as well as the general and academic discourses regarding peacebuilding in the Israeli Palestinian context.

The Role of Joint Activities as a Peacebuilding Tool in the Conflict Prior to the War in Gaza

One of the primary roles of joint activities as described by the facilitators of these projects is to bring Israelis and Palestinians together and give them the chance to know each other on a personal level. These interactions allow participants to shed stereotypes of each other and form relationships. This role as described by practitioners finds a great deal of support in the conflict resolution theories outlined in the literature review of this paper. As parties to a protracted conflict, Israelis and Palestinians have often developed what Bar-Tal and Teichman call a “conflict repertoire” and Kelman refers to as “conflict norms.” In both characterizations of reactions to conflict, these theorists describe how negative images of the other become engrained in the psyches of the parties. These engrained conceptualizations of the other are compounded by the lack of contact between Israelis and Palestinians. In his article on dialogue during the second intifada, Mohammed Abu-Nimer quotes David Newman of Ben Gurion University who points out that, “the truth remains that the vast majority of Israelis and Palestinians remain totally

unaware of one another’s aspirations and dreams…Most Israelis and Palestinians have little contact other than…through the telescope of an army rifle.”

Bringing Israelis and Palestinians together through joint activities provides them with the contact that is absent from their everyday lives. The fact that facilitators find that their activities allow participants to shed stereotypes provides further merit to both the contact hypothesis as well as Burton’s concept of controlled communication. Considering the theories together suggests that bringing adversaries together in a controlled and safe environment provides opportunities to explore their situation, gain an understanding of each other’s needs, and dispel each party’s misperceptions of the other.

Another role that practitioners feel that joint activities play is creating a constituency for peace by expanding the number of people supportive of peace and therefore creating the grassroots support necessary for achieving and sustaining an eventual negotiated agreement. This role of joint activities also finds ample support in conflict resolution literature. For example, in his conceptualization of the dynamics of protracted conflict, Kriesberg suggests that broad participation of the civil societies on both sides of a conflict can present opportunities for the de-escalation of the conflict by providing space for negotiations to occur. Once negotiations are successful, this broad base of support can help to minimize rejectionist efforts. This element of combating would-be spoilers was also one aspect of building a constituency for peace found within the findings.

The linkages that facilitators of joint activities hope to make between the grassroots and official levels are perhaps best illustrated by Lederach’s triangle as described in the literature review of this paper. According to Herzog and Hai, joint activities are located at the mid-level, creating crucial connections between the officials and their constituencies.\(^\text{236}\) My findings imply that facilitators of joint activities believe these linkages can help to ensure that the grassroots are not “left behind” in the case of an eventual negotiated agreement\(^\text{237}\) as was the case with the Oslo Accords.

Facilitators of joint activities find that their work has a multiplying effect contributing to their ability to create the above-mentioned constituency for peace. This multiplying effect has manifested in the form new projects inspired by joint activities as well as the spread of knowledge through interpersonal relationships. The fact that joint activities instigate new projects relates directly to Morton Deutsch’s concept of cooperative versus competitive relationships outlined in the literature review of this paper. According to Deutsch, cooperation induces further cooperative attitudes in a self-perpetuating cycle.\(^\text{238}\)

Facilitators of joint activities also find that their projects play an essential role in peacebuilding because they model the peace that they believe can be a reality. For practitioners of these kinds of projects, the simple act of participating is a means of demonstrating what is possible and that peace can be a reality. For peacebuilders it’s a way to “walk the walk.” Rabbi Michael Cohen recently presented this element of joint activities as a way to counterbalance the political level’s inability to demonstrate peace in his Op-Ed article in the Washington Post as follows: “In the ebb and flow of diplomacy and the ups and downs of the peace process, these

organizations have been modeling for years what the political leaders have failed to achieve — a vision of what peace can look like. Their actions say that such a peace is no mirage, but a reality.”

Facilitators of joint activities also feel that their work plays an important role in indentifying and empowering leaders. This is a role that has not been widely mentioned in the literature on joint activities. Leaders created at the grassroots level could play a number of roles in the peace process. These roles could include expanding current peacebuilding activities (the multiplying effect mentioned above), taking positions at the official political level, or facilitating the connection between top-down and bottom-up processes.

Unique to sample A was the theme that joint activities can play a role as a venue through which to end the occupation. According to Mohammed Abu-Nimer, Palestinian participants of joint activities are up against the accusation from their societies that by participating in this work, they are giving up the struggle for justice. Like the respondents in sample A, Abu-Nimer argues that joint activities can and should be “a complementary avenue to accomplish such changes.” He asserts that joint activities are the main way through which the realities of the occupation can be communicated constructively to Israelis, a necessary process for instigating political change within Israel.

Lastly, the research findings indicate that facilitators of joint activities find that their work plays a role in educating the two peoples about practical approaches to peace. While there is considerable literature on programs whose aim is education, these facilitators suggest that their

---

240 Avivit Hai and Shira Herzog, ”The Power of Possibility,” 19
work teaches peace education even when that is not the aim. This educational role of joint activities relates loosely to the role of ‘modeling peace’ as described above.

**The Scope of Joint Activities Prior to the War in Gaza**

While practitioners see joint activities as playing a crucial role in peacebuilding, the work has remained limited in scope, mainly having made changes on at the individual and community levels. These findings confirm the findings of IPCRI and Maoz et al outlined in the literature review of this paper. According to IPCRI’s research, the potential for transformation through joint activities is mostly successful on the individual level. According to Diana Chigas, the true impact of joint activities is often unclear and difficult to measure. As she points out however, “all forms of unofficial intermediation from track-one-and-a-half consultation to track-three activities – have shown demonstrable successes in dealing with the psychological, cultural, and institutional elements of intractability.” She further emphasizes that these types of activities are not meant to achieve the goals of “traditional diplomacy.”

My findings show that in many cases practitioners attribute the lack of scope to the lack real financial investment into the work. In a recent article posted on the Palestinian Israeli Peace NGO forum, Daniel Noah Moses and Aaron Shneyer echo this sentiment. They compare the Israeli Palestinian case to Northern Ireland claiming that the $650 million provided for joint activities in Northern Ireland enabled peacebuilders to reach 1/6 of the population of Catholics and Protestants leading up to the Good Friday Agreement. The authors claim that in the Israeli Palestinian context, less than 5% of the population has had the opportunity to become involved in joint activities. Extrapolating from the Northern Ireland case, Moses and Shneyer estimate

---

Chigas defines “track three” as grassroots and local communities
that reaching the “critical mass” as was done in Northern Ireland would cost approximately $1 billion per year. This is a small sum, they argue, in comparison to the funds spent fueling the conflict.245

Also with regard to the scope of joint activities, peacebuilders emphasized that the process of transformation through joint activities is a slow and accumulative process. According to Herbert Kelman, the transformation of relationships between former enemies is a gradual one.246 Drawing reference to the deeply embedded stereotypes of the other as demonic as outlined by Kelman’s conception of “conflict norms,” Diana Chigas points out that such engrained perceptions are “resistant to change” even with the addition of new information about the other. According to Chigas, this new information is counter to everything adversaries “know” to be true about the other and therefore parties to a conflict will try to only accept information that confirms that which they already believe.247 The idea that such negative attitudes are so deeply entrenched lends credence to the idea that such transformations would require a great deal of time and persistence.

The Challenges of Conducting Joint Activities Prior to the War in Gaza

With regard to challenges, facilitators of joint activities find that the lack of funds has been a huge impediment. This challenge is consistent with the literature review of this paper and seems to have prevailed throughout the last several years conducting joint activities. According to Herzog and Hai, funders have at times inadvertently “contributed to the disabling

environment” as their funds are often insufficient to make a true impact and are distributed only for short-term projects.  

Facilitators of joint activities also name the broader political and social landscape as presenting psychological and logistical challenges to building peace. As Abu-Nimmer points out, individuals in a state of conflict are constantly faced with the “possibility of being hurt and deprived of their basic human security and other survival needs.” Additionally, as was illustrated in the literature review, the political and social climate has created and reinforced asymmetries between the two peoples. These asymmetries have additional psychological implications (as will be outlined later in this chapter). This dynamic again relates to Burton’s concept as conflict rising out of the deprivation of ontological needs and illustrates the complex realities of building peace in the midst of ongoing conflict.

The research findings show that the issue of normalization as described in the literature review also continues to be a challenge for facilitators of joint activities. As mentioned in the literature review, Palestinians often see justice as a prerequisite to reconciliation. Therefore normalizing with Israelis is often seen as legitimizing the occupation and carries with it an extremely negative connotation. This conceptualization helps to explain the dominance of “ending the occupation” as the role of joint activities among sample A respondents as described above. According to Mohammed Abu-Nimer and Amy Hubbard, conceptualizations of reconciliation and justice often differ between conflict parties. While the party to the conflict with less power often seeks to rectify inequity, the party to the conflict with more power often

248 Avivit Hai and Shira Herzog, "The Power of Possibility: The Role of People-to-People Programs in the Current Israeli-Palestinian Reality," ed. Herman Buenz, Fredrich Ebert Stiftung, 2005: 30
seeks to create harmonious relations. These differences relate to the discussion on asymmetry below.

Reflecting the literature on joint activities, facilitators of joint activities also find that asymmetries between Palestinians and Israelis pose challenges in terms of their activities. According to the Arab-Jewish group, Ta’ayush, creating joint groups is not enough. They suggest that projects based on the concept of “coexistence” can inadvertently perpetuate power asymmetries by civilizing the interaction between adversaries while “tacitly accepting the essential division into two different – and often opposing – national-ethnic groups, one of them occupying the position of the dominant majority and the other that of a subaltern minority.”

Herbert Kelman’s third component for transforming relationships as described in the theory section of the literature review is “patterns of cooperative interaction.” Within this component, Kelman prescribes conditions for constructive cooperation. One of these conditions is that interactions must be carried out with sensitivity to the anxieties of the other and commitment to cooperate on the basis of equality and reciprocity. According to Kelman, groups often struggle with this condition as the party to the conflict with less power is afraid of being dominated and is sensitive to any signs of arrogance by the more powerful party. Conversely the party to the conflict with more power must juggle offering assistance without reinforcing the inequitable power dynamic. According to Kelman, balancing this dynamic requires sincere respect by both parties for the other’s perspective and experience.

Another challenge to joint activities as described by facilitators in sample A is the fact that the Israeli government has targeted and punished Palestinian peacemakers. This challenge relates to Kriesberg’s discussion of the internal, relational, and external factors that can shape the dynamics of intractable conflicts as outlined briefly in the literature review of this paper. With regard to relational factors, Kriesberg says that leaders often try to influence people in the other camp either to “intimidate them or convince them not to feel threatened,” depending on their objectives. Such actions often lead to “misunderstandings and unintended interpretations,” contributing to the intractability of the conflict.²⁵³

Facilitators of joint activities in sample A have also been frustrated by the fact that governments, facilitators, and participants have sometimes been involved in joint activities with ulterior motives and were disingenuous in their efforts to build peace. Participating in or facilitating joint activities without genuine intentions violates another of Kelman’s conditions for cooperative interaction. According to Kelman, cooperative activities must emphasize “a genuine functional value in meeting the real, interdependent needs of the two societies.” According to Kelman this condition is crucial for creating the trust necessary to transform relationships.²⁵⁴

The last challenge described by facilitators of joint activities is the lack of official support from both the local governments and international community. This challenge relates to the legitimization strategy described by Herzog and Hai and outlined in the theory section of the theory section in the literature review of this paper. According to Herzog and Hai, “bottom up”

and “top down” processes are “mutually reinforcing.” Without the support from the official level the legitimization strategy fails to complete itself.\textsuperscript{255}

### The Effects of the War on Gaza on People’s Attitudes Toward Joint Activities

In the immediate context following the war in Gaza, facilitators of joint activities have found that the Israeli and Palestinian societies have become entrenched in their own cause out of fear and anger. These sentiments echo those outlined in the literature review of this paper. This division is much the same reaction that the two societies had during the second intifada. According to Mohammed Abu-Nimer, in the “reality of war,” both sides retreat into the comfort and security of their own national identity. They fail to acknowledge the fear and insecurity of the other and deny them their dignity. In the wake of violence, Abu-Nimer says parties to the conflict feel helpless and begin to lose hope. The consequence of these divisions is that people on both sides become unwilling to reach out to each other.\textsuperscript{256}

Divisions have also widened within the peace camp as well, as was demonstrated in the inability of the organizations to face the war with a united front. As mentioned in the literature review, these divisions began shortly after the Oslo Accords and have been exacerbated by outbreaks of violence in the past. Here again, reactions relate to those during the second intifada. Mohammed Abu-Nimer claims that during the second intifada, both sides of the peace camp “violated each other’s collective trust.” He explains that during this time, Israelis felt as though Palestinians were insincere in their support of Oslo and their dedication to nonviolence and Palestinians felt that Israelis were insincere with regard to solidarity in the Palestinian struggle.


\textsuperscript{256} Mohammed Abu-Nimer, "Dialogue in the Second Intifada: Between Dispair and Hope," Global Dialogue 4, no. 3 (Summer 2002): 132-133
for rights. The research findings indicate that similar feelings may be emerging in the wake of the Gaza war.

A trend emerged among facilitators of joint activities that the war in Gaza, despite the gravity of the situation, should be seen as yet another escalation of the conflict. Kriesberg characterizes the escalation phase of conflict as a time in which “grievances, goals, and methods change in ways that perpetuate the conflict in increasingly destructive fashion.” During this phase, he says, increased violence yields additional grievances and old grievances are brought to the surface. Both sides become more resolved in the absolute fulfillment of their objectives and less willing to make concessions. Fighting begins to lose its connection to the attainment of objectives and instead becomes a method of retribution out of anger, hate, and the desire for revenge. A protracted conflict such as the Israeli Palestinian conflict can fall into this phase many times during the course of its history. From the perspective of many facilitators of joint activities, such eruptions of violence are challenges that they must deal with routinely and thus do not change their operations.

In stark contrast to this perspective was the theme among a few respondents that the war in Gaza was an unprecedented event with serious implications for joint activities. This conceptualization of the war echoes the idea that emerged within the literature review that the war in Gaza is perhaps the biggest crisis that joint activities have ever faced. In the recent Jerusalem Post article outlined in the literature review, Farhat Agbaria, an organizer of joint activities, compares the war in Gaza with other phases of escalation. He claims: “This is not

Lebanon 2006…This is not an intifada. We are talking about war. Our people were being killed by the Israeli army. We saw the pictures.²⁵⁹

The Potential of Joint Activities to Play a Role in Peacebuilding in the Current Climate

Peacebuilders have seen a cessation or decline in their joint activities, but feel confident this is only temporary and in many cases activities have resumed. Again, it is helpful to draw comparisons to the second intifada. As was mentioned in the literature review of this paper, joint activities saw a severe decline with the start of the second intifada. While the war in Gaza has only just happened, practitioners seem confident that a decline of the magnitude that was seen during the second intifada will not occur this time. A possible explanation lies in the infrastructure of relationships that has been developed since the second intifada as described below.

Another theme that emerged in the research findings is that facilitators believe joint activities have created a social infrastructure since the second intifada that will sustain the field through the current crisis. As discussed in the theory section of this paper, one of Herbert Kelman’s essential components of transforming relationships is mutual acceptance and reconciliation. A prerequisite to this component of reconciliation, Kelman argues, is the “basic human acceptance of the other and respect for the other’s life welfare, and dignity.”²⁶⁰ Similarly, Mohammed Abu-Nimer also refers to mutual recognition as a prerequisite to reconciliation. For Abu-Nimer recognition means being able to imagine the other’s, “pain, aspirations, history, and the political and personal context.” Abu-Nimer claims that those joint activities that have not

achieved this level of acknowledgement are more likely to fall apart in times of violence. The research findings suggest that perhaps more groups have reached this level than at the time of the intifada and will be able to sustain their work, though only time will tell.

**The Potential of Joint Activities to Play a Role in Peacebuilding in the Future**

In trying to gauge the potential of joint activities in the future, the grassroots peacebuilders find themselves looking to the official level, both locally and internationally. It is hoped among peacebuilders that the Israeli and Palestinian governments will take steps toward a negotiated settlement and that the international community, particularly the United States will pressure both governments to take these steps. Within his exploration of the dynamics of intractable conflicts described briefly in the theory section of this paper, Kriesberg offers suggestions regarding the steps various players can take to interrupt intractable processes and de-escalate the conflict. With regard to the official level, Kriesberg cautions that making too many concessions can make the actors appear weak. Therefore he suggests that parties to the conflict engage in direct and indirect negotiations through official back-channel or unofficial track-two diplomacy. At the international level, Kriesberg suggests that actors can withdraw support from one or both sides of the conflict or help create new options otherwise unattainable for adversaries.

Despite their relative optimism, the research findings show that peacebuilders feel it is still too early to tell what the long term effects of the war in Gaza will be in terms of grassroots peacebuilding. It is still too recent and people are still reeling from aftermath. In order to truly

---


assess the impact of the war, a re-evaluation will be necessary after the passing of some time, perhaps in six months to a year.

**The Next Steps in Grassroots Peacebuilding**

In the wake of the war in Gaza, facilitators of joint activities feel that it is necessary for the peace camps on both sides to do some reflecting and reevaluating both internally as Israelis and Palestinians as well as together. This sentiment is echoed by Ron Pundak, who in an article for the Palestinian Israeli Peace NGO Forum calls on the field to “self reflect, examining once more our beliefs and actions.” He goes on to emphasize the interdependence of the two peoples and calls on both to take responsibility in the implementation of each party’s right to self-determination. Pundak calls the war in Gaza a “wake-up call” and suggests that Israelis must work within their own constituency to “lessen the deep roots of fear” that “can be too easily triggered to initiate another cycle of violence and hatred.” Both sides, he says, must work together to navigate this newly observed reality.263

Findings further show that in the wake of the war in Gaza, facilitators and their core participants feel obligated and determined to continue working for peace despite the many challenges. Robi Dublin of the Parents Circle-Families Forum shared this same sentiment in a moving article he wrote in the aftermath of the war:

“one thing is for sure is that we have to talk to each other, and face up to the truth that neither nation will disappear in a puff of smoke, we also have to compromise for the sake of those children screaming for safety, we must stop the method of revenge, and look for new solutions which do not involve killing.”

Abu-Nimer calls these groups who persevere through crisis the “committed few” for whom “there is always hope.” According to Abu-Nimer, “they see no option besides dialogue and

action for peace.” This feeling of commitment and obligation despite all odds is also shared as a pattern among sample A in the pre-Gaza analysis.

In the aftermath of the war, facilitators of joint activities feel that they must give Israelis and Palestinians opportunities to respond to the conflict proactively and to process their feelings toward each other through joint activities, even if it is not with the aim of bringing about peace. As mentioned previously in this chapter, the recent violence has caused Israelis and Palestinians to retreat into the safety of their own national identities out of fear and anger at the other side. According to Mohammed Abu-Nimer, joint activities can be a venue for beginning the process of restoring trust and resuming peace work, especially for those who have had to halt their work during the violence.\(^{264}\)

Lastly, facilitators of joint activities feel that in the current context, it is important to marginalize extremists by strengthening the center. According to Diana Chigas, unofficial intermediation (which includes joint activities), can empower and give voice to moderates across conflict lines who previously have been marginalized. This, she says, can help to change the conflict dynamics and thus contribute to challenging the institutionalization of the conflict.\(^{265}\) Ron Pundak recently stressed urgency in this regard claiming, “there is no option but peace, and we must work together to get there as soon as possible, before the extremists on both sides will divert us to a tragic future.”\(^ {266}\)

\(^{264}\) Mohammed Abu-Nimer, "Dialogue in the Second Intifada: Between Dispair and Hope," *Global Dialogue* 4, no. 3 (Summer 2002): 137


Chapter Six – Conclusion

Peacebuilders have confirmed much of the literature that is out there on the role of joint activities in humanizing the other and building grassroots support for an eventual successful political settlement of the conflict. While these roles continue to be crucial, this study also offers additional ways of conceptualizing joint activities that should not be overlooked when assessing the value of these programs. Joint activities offer support to Palestinians and Israelis in a situation where it is difficult to maintain hope. They do this by demonstrating that peace is possible and providing an avenue for people to be proactive. The comfort that joint activities offer to the public cannot be underestimated.

This study also confirmed a sense of lost potential in terms of what joint activities could achieve if given the adequate resources to reach the wider Israeli and Palestinian audiences. The consideration of this possibility raises the questions: how would the role of joint activities change if given these additional resources? Could these projects effect change on a political level in addition to the personal and communal level should the resources be invested?

In the wake of the war in Gaza, this study has also revealed a great obstacle in terms of the effectiveness of the peace camp, and that is an augmenting divide. This division reminds us that peacebuilders too, are the products of their societies and susceptible to the effects of the conflict in the same ways as their constituencies. As was pointed out by those interviewed, it is crucial during this difficult time for the peace camp to reassess its goals, methods, and philosophies.

Along these lines, it is interesting to note the difference in perceptions of the war in Gaza as an escalation like any other versus the perception of the war in Gaza as an unprecedented
affair. Perhaps this difference in perception derives from the fact that the war is still recent and it is too early to say what the impact will be. On the other hand, it could also represent a symptom of the divisions mentioned above.

Furthermore, the differences between sample A and sample B are worth noting and have potentially important implications. Though this is not meant to be a comparative study, it is striking that the Palestinian sample predominantly stressed the role of joint activities in ending the occupation while no pattern existed along these lines among the predominately Jewish sample. This pattern mirrors the divisions that occurred after Oslo. In moving forward it will be important for the peace camp to assess whether or not they are serving the needs of both peoples.

It is also worth bringing attention again to a very serious limitation of this paper, and that is the absence of equal representation from the Palestinian perspective in the post-Gaza portion of the study. It is important to consider how the inclusion of this voice might change the findings. Had this voice been included equally, would the findings paint a picture so optimistic as is represented here?

The war in Gaza has presented the peace camp with an important opportunity to reorganize and remobilize, and it has become abundantly clear that it is necessary to do so. Perhaps the silver lining of this recent tragedy will be that those working for peace will emerge stronger than ever before if this reevaluation, unification, and remobilization are carried out successfully.

This study also illustrated the opportunities that are available for de-escalation in the political arenas, both domestically and internationally. With the changes that are occurring both in the American and Israeli administrations, it seems that the current time is a critical point in the history of the conflict. Israelis, Palestinians, and the international community will be watching
in the coming months and years to see if the leaders will embrace this critical opportunity to change the paradigm. Whatever changes do or do not occur will have a profound effect on the ability of grassroots organizations to carry out their work.

As was demonstrated by this study, in many ways it is still early to see what the effects of the war in Gaza will be on joint activities. The current situation raises a number of questions: is Gaza just another escalation or does it represent an unprecedented challenge? Will there be progress on the political front? Will the international community intervene? How long will both sides need to heal? In terms of further research, it will be necessary to revisit this topic in six months to a year to see how dynamics have evolved.

The field could also benefit from a number of other inquiries. For example, the divisions within the peace camp merit further exploration in terms of what the sources of these divisions are and what can be done to bridge the divide. Research of this nature along with further inquiry into the issues raised above will help to inform the peace camp in how to be more unified and thus more effective in going forward.

Furthermore, it is important in the post-Gaza setting to gain perspectives not just from those who are continuing the work of joint activities, but also those who have stopped working in the field either because of the war in Gaza or for other reasons. Along these lines, perspectives should also be gathered from participants of these activities in addition to facilitators.

Despite the divisions and many challenges to conducting this work, it is important to commend the resilience of joint activity facilitators in continuing their work during this difficult time. As mentioned in the previous chapter, facilitators believe that the social infrastructure that is needed to withstand such atrocities has been developed in the years since the second intifada. Even though joint activities have declined somewhat and it is still too early to see what lasting
It is noteworthy that stopping the work does not seem to be an option or even a temptation for the facilitators of these projects. It is this author's opinion that this fact alone speaks volumes about the value of this work and should be considered as tangible evidence that the peace camps have progressed over the years and are making a crucial difference in the long and difficult process of building peace in the Israeli Palestinian conflict.
Works Cited


Appendix A – John Paul Lederach’s Peacebuilding Pyramid

Types of Actors

Level 1: Top Leadership
Military/political/religious leaders with high visibility

Level 2: Middle-Range Leadership
Leaders respected in sectors
Ethnic/religious leaders
Academics/intellectuals
Humanitarian leaders (NGOs)

Level 3: Grassroots Leadership
Local leaders
Leaders of indigenous NGOs
Community developers
Local health officials
Refugee camp leaders

Approaches to Building Peace

Focus on high-level negotiations
Emphasizes cease-fire
Led by highly visible, single mediator

Problem-solving workshops
Training in conflict resolution
Peace commissions
Insider-partial teams

Local peace commissions
Grassroots training
Prejudice reduction
Psychosocial work in postwar trauma

Appendix B – Sample A Interviewees

1. Anonymous (Palestinian) – Interview: Bethlehem, Palestine, 7/9/08

2. Naseef Muallem (Palestinian) of Palestinian Center for Peace and Democracy (PCPD) – Interview: Ramallah, Palestine 7/15/08

Currently the Director General, Naseef Muallem was involved in joint activities through PCPD during the Oslo years. During this time PCPD facilitated Palestinian/Palestinian projects and Palestinian/Israeli joint projects. Palestinian/Palestinian projects were aimed at increasing Palestinian support for negotiations and a two state solution. Palestinian/Israeli projects were aimed finding ways to contribute to the peace process and the accomplishment of a two state solution.

3. Dr. Fathi Darwish (Palestinian) of Tawasul – Interview: Ramallah, Palestine 7/15/08

Currently the General Director of Tawasul, Dr. Fathi Darwish has been involved in joint activities for over 15 years both professionally and personally through several organizations. He worked for the Palestinian government for many years with his last position being Minister of NGO Affairs charged with organizing cooperation between government and nongovernmental bodies. Personally, he has been involved in activities such as a UNESCO project in 2000/2001 between Israeli and Palestinian Academics. He also serves on the Palestinian steering committee for the Palestinian Israeli Network for Peace.

4. Nidal Foqaha (Palestinian) of The Palestinian Peace Coalition/Geneva Initiative (PPC/GI) – Interview: Ramallah, Palestine 7/15/08

Nidal Foqaha is the Executive Director of PPC/GI, an organization affiliated with the Palestinian political system that has been involved in all the negotiations to date starting with Oslo. In 2003 PPC/GI became involved on the unofficial level with the Geneva Initiative. The organization regularly coordinates a variety of joint activities between Israelis and Palestinians between groups such as junior and senior professionals, young leaders, and journalists. They target individuals who shape public opinion and who have the ability to penetrate Palestinian society.

5. Anonymous (Palestinian) – Interview: Bethlehem, Palestine 7/16/08

6. George Rishmawi (Palestinian) of The Palestinian Center for Rapprochement between People (PCR) – Interview: Beit Sahour, Palestine 7/21/08

As Director of PCR, George Rishmawi organized weekly dialogues in the 90s (independently of the formalized people-to-people programs) between Israelis and Palestinians. Participants included average people, university professors, engineers, musicians, retired individuals, historians, reserve officers, etc. International visitors also participated in the weekly dialogues.

7. Nader Abu Amsha (Palestinian) of YMCA East Jerusalem – Interview: Beit Sahour, Palestine 7/23/08
Nader Abu Amsha is currently the Director of The East Jerusalem YMCA Rehabilitation Program and Beit Sahour YMCA. Through the YMCA, Nader Abu Amsha was involved with joint activities between Israeli and Palestinian counselors for training in the early nineties. He has also worked in coordination with some Israeli human rights organizations on work related to defining peace and the relationship between Israelis and Palestinians in their context.
Appendix C – Sample A Interview Questions (selected from Summer 2008 study)

1. Describe your experience or your organization's experience with People to People activities.
2. What do you perceive were the outcomes of the People to People activities you engaged in?
3. In your opinion, were the People to People activities that you participated in successful? Why or why not?
4. What are some of the challenges to conducting People to People activities today?
5. Do you think that People to People activities can play an important role?
6. Some critics say People to People hasn't achieved anything, what do you think?
7. Anything else I haven’t covered here, that you would like to add?
Appendix D – Sample B Interviewees


Ziad Abu Zayyad co-founded the Palestine Israel Journal in 1993 and has been the co-editor of the journal since that time. The purpose of the journal is to encourage dialogue between civil societies on both sides of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and broaden the base of support for the peace process. The journal is a venue for academics and other intellectuals, opinion and policy makers, grassroots organizations and activists to voice their views and take part in the public debate for a democratic and just solution to the conflict. Personally, Abu Zayyad has been involved in joint activities for most of his life, organizing meetings between Israeli and Palestinian professionals including teachers and doctors as well as students and other groups. Most recently Abu Zayyad brought together Russian Jewish immigrants to Israel with Palestinians who have studied abroad in Russia.


Gidon Bromberg is the Israeli Director of Friends of the Earth Middle East, an organization focused on Israeli/Palestinian, Palestinian/Jordanian, and Jordanian/Israeli cross border environmental issues. With offices in Tel Aviv, Bethlehem, and Amman, the organization is a joint activity in and of itself and employs a joint focus on ecology and peace. Friends of the earth works on in both environmental advocacy as well as community based projects based on practical problem solving.


Rabbi Michael Cohen has been involved in peace activities in the Israel Palestinian conflict for decades. Currently he is working with the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies where he was a founding faculty member in 1996. The Arava Institute brings together Israeli and Arab undergraduate and graduate students to conduct joint research on environmental and natural resource issues.


Melodye Feldman is the Executive Director of Seeking Common Ground, an organization she co-founded shortly after Oslo with the Building Bridges for Peace (BBfP) program. The program brings together Palestinian, Israeli, and American young women and men for a summer intensive in the United States and a yearlong follow-up program in their home communities in the U.S. and the Middle East.

Lou Kanavati works with Colleges for Reconciliation, an organization whose mission is to promote peace-building and constructive co-existence among Palestinian, Israeli, Jordanian, and neighboring communities in the Middle East through fully accredited college-level, professional educational programs at Hamline University.


David Litwack is the Executive Director and volunteer surgeon for Save a Child’s Heart, Israel’s largest humanitarian organization founded in 1995. The organization’s mission is to improve the level of pediatric cardiac care in developing countries around the world where adequate medical facilities are not available to do pediatric cardiac surgery and deal with congenital heart disease, or where doctors don’t have the skills to administer the care. Since it’s founding, Save a Child’s heart has saved over 2,000 children from more than 33 different countries. Of those 2,000 children, 40% have been Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank. The organization also trains Palestinian physicians to be able to provide the care themselves. Save a Child’s Heart sees its work as building bridges of peace between people and nations. Their philosophy is that every time they save a child, that child and his or her family become ambassadors for peace in their particular village.


Hillel Schenker has been involved in peace work since 1977 when he became the Managing Editor of New Outlook Magazine. Currently, he is the Co-Editor of the Palestine Israel Journal, which publishes a bi-monthly journal dealing with issues related to the conflict. The Journal has Israeli and Palestinian co-editors and a board made up of an equal number from each society. The composition of each issue is also made up of an equal number of Israeli and Palestinian authors.


Vivian Silver is the Executive Director of the Negev Institute for Strategies of Peace and Development (NISPED). NISPED, an affiliate of the Negev College, focuses on promoting peace and development through a number of civil society programs. Their activities include cross-border projects with Palestinians, Jewish-Arab partnerships, economic development and community empowerment of Arab Bedouin, training and education to promote entrepreneurship, small and medium enterprises, cooperatives and people-centered enterprises.
Appendix E – Sample B Interview Questions

Pre Gaza

1. Please briefly describe your experience or your organization's experience with joint activities before January of 2009.
2. What do you perceive were the positive outcomes or successes of the joint activities in which you participated before January of 2009?
3. What do you perceive were the negative outcomes or failures of the joint activities in which you participated before January of 2009?
4. What were some of the challenges to conducting joint activities before January of 2009?
5. What role, if any, do you think that joint activities played before January of 2009?
6. What, if anything, do you think joint activities had achieved prior to January of 2009?

Post Gaza

1. What effect do you think the war in Gaza has had on people’s attitudes toward joint activities?
2. What role can or should joint activities play in the current political and social climate?
3. What effect, if any, has the war in Gaza had on the potential for joint activities to play a role in the future?
4. In light of the war in Gaza, what do you think the next steps should be in terms of grassroots peacebuilding?
5. How does the war in Gaza compare to the onset of the second intifada in terms of its impact on joint activities?