



Peace Building Between Israel – Palestine: Eliminating Borders Through Public Health Initiatives

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Peace Building Between Israel – Palestine:
Eliminating Borders through Public Health Initiatives

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Abstract

The conflict between Israelis and Palestinians is a long and complicated one. There has been fighting since the turn of the 20th century. The land is historically known and important to Christians, Jews, and Muslims for religious reasons, specifically for the birth of Jesus and his life there, and the ascension of Muhammad. Muslims, Christians, and Jews believe they are entitled to live in the land of Israel/Palestine.

There is a lot of insecurity for both Palestinians and Israelis, but for different reasons. The Muslims and Christians say they have been violently forced from their homes on the land, which is now known as Israel. Many Palestinians refuse to recognize Israel as a separate state, and at times are violent in their fight to take control of the land. In addition, many Israelis do not agree that the land of Palestine was taken away. They believe the land has been their Promise Land for over 3000 years, therefore placing denial of one another's past and existence at the core of the issues.

Healing Across The Divides (HATD) is a non-profit organization in Israel founded in 2004 by Dr. Norbert Goldfield. Its mission is to improve the health of marginalized people living in Israel and Occupied Palestinian Territories via community-based intervention. This non-profit funds and provides technical/managerial consultation to community based organizations in Israel and the West Bank. HATD hopes that by improving health and bringing these groups together will aid in the ability to have Israelis and Palestinians willingly come together to cooperate and be part of the peace building process.

My thesis seeks to answer the following questions: does attempting to improve public health for people living in Israel and Palestine through Healing Across The Divides' engagement in the community facilitate peace building? Does integrating the two groups together through public health services and education break down tension and barriers? Can cooperation between programs in Israel and Palestine change the attitudes of citizens who suffer from the Israel Palestine conflict?

I hypothesized that community organizations, such as Healing Across The Divides, can help to improve public health, break down relational borders between Israelis and Palestinians, and facilitate peace building between them. My research found that the overall health of the participants that HATD serves is improving. Positive communication, interaction, and an increase in trust to some degree are elements that are needed and are present for breaking down relational borders and moving towards peace. It should be emphasized that many of the staff of the community based organizations and participants did not complete my research questionnaires because of some of the political questions related to the conflict. However, HATD is moving in the right direction by facilitating joint meetings, cross-communication, and shared resources between Israeli and Palestinian staff that are essential in forming trusting relationships and understanding one another to move towards peace.

Dedication

To the people in Israel and Palestine who are living in violence, fear, disease, poverty, despair, or uncertainty; may they be filled with hope, and continue to strive for peace in their nations, communities, families, and within themselves.

“All I want is peace Christine. All I want is to sleep at night, and dream in peace. Who wins in the end Christine? No one does.”

-Iyad, the taxi driver, a Palestinian Arab born in Jerusalem

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List of Acronyms

GPI	Global Peace Index
HATD	Healing Across The Divides
IDF	Israel Defense Force
IEP	Institute of Economics and Peace
JNF	Jewish National Fund
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
WB	West Bank
WHO	World Health Organization

Definition of Terms

Haganah: A militia formed to seize land from the Palestinians, and later became the Israeli Defense Force or IDF (Spangler p. 92)

Nakba: The word used by Palestinians to describe the catastrophe of losing their land and having the state of Israel come into existence (Nisselson p. 24)

Shoah: The word used mostly by Israelis to refer to the Holocaust and the traumatic events that occurred during World War II (Nisselson p. 25)

Plan Dalet or Plan D: A strategic plan created by Zionist militias whose objectives included taking over land given to Palestine, protecting Jewish settlements that were in the Palestine territory, attacking civilian institutions in the Palestine community, and securing other geographic important areas within Palestine (Spangler p. 102)

Corpus Separatum: An international zone of Jerusalem and Bethlehem that was used as a corridor between the dividing of Jewish and Palestinian land (Spangler p. 101)

Law of Return: An Israeli law passed in 1950 that organizing Jewish immigration to Israel by creating an inalienable right for Jews anywhere in the world to move to Israel with the support of the state (Spangler p. 113)

Hamas: A Palestinian group who views the Israeli/Palestinian conflict as a religious dispute. They devote themselves to Allah and try to spread Islam throughout Palestine. They also refuse to recognize Israel as a state (Waldman p. 74)

Haredim: Once a minority group in Israel that is growing fast made up of ultra-orthodox Jews (Cincotta/Kaufmann p. 1)

Present absentees: Palestinians who had been expelled from their homes in Palestine but remained living under Israel jurisdiction after the Nakba (Spangler p. 113)

Fatah: A Palestinian organization that was founded in 1958 by Palestinian refugees and was supported by Syria that was in favor of armed attacks against Israel (Spangler p. 122)

Yishuv: Pre-state Jewish community (Stein p. 129)

al-thawra al-kubra: The Arab revolt or Great Revolt that took place between 1936 and 1939 in response to the continued Jewish immigration into Palestine (Brownson p. 9)

Operation Cast Lead: the 23-day battle in 2009 where the Israel Defense Force attacked Hamas with the goal of stopping weapons being smuggled into the Gaza Strip, as well as to stop Hamas from launching rockets into Israel (Lambeth p. 102).

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Chapter I

Introduction to Research

My research focuses on a population that has been in conflict with each other for the last 120 years. Rights to the Holy Land that has been marked as the state of Israel since 1948, along with the territories of the West Bank and Gaza, have been the source of conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. Continued violence from both sides, changes in government, and a complicated, long history, make moving towards a peaceful resolution very difficult, and at times, seemingly impossible.

Today, the state of Israel has a population of 8.5 million people. About 20 percent (1.8 million) are Palestinians or Israeli Arabs, who are citizens of and live in Israel (Israel Population, 2017). Of the 8.5 million, 389,250 are Israeli Jews who live in the disputed occupied territory of the West Bank, along with 2,345,000 Palestinians (West Bank Population, 2017). Gaza, the largest city in the West Bank, has about 660,000 Palestinians (Gaza Population, 2017). The entire land of Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza has been fought over for more than a century. Recent political events during the past month of December 2017 have caused tensions to erupt in renewed violence, especially in the West Bank.

Many NGOs have formed over the years to help with various issues of the conflict. One of these organizations, Healing Across The Divides, was formed in the United States in 2004. It is the only NGO that works on health care with people from both Israel and the West Bank. Its focus is assisting local community organizations in Israel and the West

Bank to improve the healthcare of the population these groups serve. In return, Healing Across The Divides' staff hopes that working in these communities will build trust between communities and move towards an attitude of peace with "the other" (HATD, 2004).

Significant literature exists supporting the notion that improving healthcare leads to breaking down barriers in countries in conflict and moving towards peace; however it can be difficult to collect data during the actual time of the conflict. While Healing Across The Divides measures the levels of healthcare improvement in the populations that the community groups are serving, it does not collect data on whether the work that is being done is causing the staff and/or the participants to have a change in attitude towards peace. My research created questionnaires for staff, participants, and board members of Healing Across The Divides in order to gain a better understanding of the impact of the organization and its relation to peace building.

Chapter 1 introduces my research problem regarding the Israeli Palestine conflict followed by my research objectives and questions that I seek to answer. Following the research questions is my justification for my research and my hypothesis. Finally, I explain the various methods for how I tested my hypothesis.

Research Problem

Before 1948, when Israel declared itself a country, the land of Israel that we know today was known as Palestine (Letwin et al., 2015, p. 1048). Until the mid-nineteenth century when Jewish migration to Palestine began, there were no areas of conflict. A conflict arose at the beginning of the 20th century when Britain was in control of Palestine Mandate and supported the creation of a nation where all-Jews could reside on Palestine

land (Waldman, 2011, p. 73). The land is historically known and important to Christians, Jews, and Muslims for religious reasons, specifically the birth of Jesus and his life there, and the ascension of Muhammad (Shapira, 2012, p. 78).

Muslims, Christians, and Jews believe they are entitled to live in the land of Palestine. There is a lot of insecurity for both Palestinians and Israelis, but for different reasons (Nisselson, 2010, p. 29). The Muslims and Christians say they have been forced to leave their homes on the land, which is now known as Israel. At the same time, many Palestinians refuse to recognize Israel as a separate state, and can be violent in their fight to take control of the land (Waldman, 2011, p. 77). In addition, many Israelis do not agree that the land of Palestine was taken away, therefore placing denial of one another's past and existence at the core of the issues (Nisselson, 2010, p. 30). "While the imperative to remember the Shoah is linked for Israelis to the maintenance and protection of the Jewish homeland they already possess, the desire to commemorate the Nakba is associated with Palestinians struggle to achieve statehood" (Nisselson, 2010, p. 29).

Many native Palestinians are refugees still living in camps in other countries since 1948 and are not allowed to return to Palestine (Waldman, 2011, p. 74). They feel they have lost their state. After the 1967 War between Israel and the surrounding Arab countries, Israel divided the West Bank into three Areas: A, B, and C. Palestinians have been completely in control of Area A since 1994 (Steves, 2017). Area A is the smallest area geographically, but where most of the Palestinian cities and towns are located (Steves, 2017). Control of Area B is "under Palestine civil authority but is largely off-limits to Palestinian security forces" (Steves, 2017). Israel has made it clear that it will

send its troops into Areas A and B if any violent outbreaks occur, which in turn will block Palestinians from moving freely in those areas (Steves, 2017).

Israel is completely in control of Area C, which is 42% of the West Bank (Btselem, 2017). Palestinians are rarely given authorization from Israel to develop or build on land there (Btselem, 2017). “From 2010 to 2014, Palestinians applied for 2,020 building permits, of which a mere 33 – or 1.5% – were approved” (Btselem, 2017). In regards to Gaza, a major humanitarian crisis is affecting the 2 million people who live there in poverty. While Israel claims not to be in control of Gaza since its disengagement in 2005, it still controls Gaza’s border, sea and air space, as well as policies around the movement of goods and people along the border (Btselem, 2017).

The Israeli military monitors and controls the borders of all of the Palestinian territories, and has various checkpoints throughout, which often causes tension (Medalia, 2017). Because Israelis control the borders, many Palestinians feel they are treated unfairly. Both adults and children suffer from post-traumatic stress and other mental disorders (Hoyle, 2017). Today in modern times, the West Bank does not have a mail service that connects with the rest of the world. Palestinians must send and receive mail and packages through friends or contacts in Israel. In addition, Palestinians are not allowed to have 3G internet service, so they are obliged to use the internet of restaurants and cafes, or illegally purchase an Israeli SIM card in order to have access via their smart phone (Steves, 2017).

Various Israeli checkpoints and roadblocks that have been setup do not allow Palestinians to easily go to work, school, hospitals, get food, etc. It affects their daily lives, and those that remain living in the West Bank need permission to enter Israel.

(Slater, 2012, p. 46). At times, Israeli militants impose a curfew in the West Bank and do not let Palestinians leave their homes for days or weeks at a time. Palestinians face discrimination on a daily basis (Medalia, 2017). On the other side, those living in Israel fear for their lives when tensions are high because Palestinians have sent suicide bombers and other forms of attack against Israelis (Slater, 2012, p. 98).

Moreover, the long-standing Israeli-Palestinian conflict has had a significant economic impact on Palestinians. Unemployment in the West Bank is high as opposed to Israel's low unemployment rate (Spangler, 2015, p. 40). Healthcare in the West Bank is poor, and in Gaza, there are greater challenges (Medalia, 2017). Those who need healthcare find it difficult to receive the health services that they need (Medalia, 2017). Nonetheless, Israelis live in fear for their lives as Palestinians violently attack civilians at random times by using bombs and other means to try to regain the land that they consider was once theirs (Waldman, 2011, p. 77).

An additional challenge is that "at present, there are approximately 1.3 million Palestinian citizens of Israel, comprising of about 20 percent of Israel's total population and about 12 percent of Palestinians worldwide" (Waxman, 2017, p. 1). The relationship between Israeli Jews and Palestinians living in Israel has deteriorated over the past decade. Furthermore, all of the attempts to address solutions to the problem have not included the opinions of the Palestinians living in Israel. "For decades, international discussion of what has become known as the Palestinian "problem" or "question" has focused almost exclusively upon the dire predicament of Palestinians living under Israeli occupation in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem" (Waxman, 2017, p. 1). The Israeli government has yet to be formed with anyone from any Palestinian/Israeli Arab

party, and their concerns around political and legal rights, division of land, and economic status have been ignored during any discussions or attempts at arriving at a peaceful solution (Waxman, 2017, p. 2).

Research Objectives and Questions

This thesis sought to answer the following questions: does attempting to improve public health for people living in Israel and Palestine through Healing Across The Divides' engagement in the community, facilitate peace building? Does exposing the two groups to each other through public health services and education break down tension and barriers? Can cooperation via programs in Israel and Palestine change the attitudes of citizens who suffer from the Israel Palestine conflict?

Justification for Research

The Israeli Palestine conflict is important for many reasons. First, it is causing other nations to choose sides with either Palestine or Israel. It is also increasing conflict and tensions between Jews and Muslims around the world. Many Palestinian refugees live in camps in other countries and cannot return to their homes. There is a lot of instability in Palestine because the Israeli government is in control. This research is significant because no data has been collected by Healing Across The Divides to see if the work they are doing is improving relations or building a foundation for peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

Hypothesis

I hypothesize that community organizations, such as Healing Across The Divides, can help to improve public health, break down relational borders between Israelis and Palestinians and between Israeli Jews and Palestinians living in Israel, and facilitate peace building between them.

I tested this by using working examples from the Healing Across The Divides Center, along with questionnaires that I created, to measure if and how several of the Healing Across The Divides initiatives have affected attitudes and attempts to build peace between Israelis and Palestinians. I also conducted interviews and provided questionnaires for leaders, staff, board members, and participants in the programs to gain their perspectives on how these initiatives are affecting relations with the “other side.” I also supported my findings with literature that shows how improving health care can lead to peace building.

Chapter II

Background of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

In Chapter 2, I begin with a brief history of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict starting with the Zionist movement in the mid-nineteenth Century. I describe how Israel and Palestine formed as states, the different phases of land division, and who their first leaders were. I explain the formation of Fatah and Hamas, the various battles that have taken place, and what has developed in regards to the conflict within the past ten years.

The Israel-Palestine conflict originated with the Socialist-Zionist movement to settle the land of Palestine in 1882 (Waldman, 2011, p. 1). The Zionists considered Judaism not only a religion, but also a nationality. They traced back their roots to the biblical eras of King Solomon and David in 950 B.C. and believed they deserved to have their own ethno-religious state (Beauchamp, 2017). The Palestinians claim that Jewish settlers in the 19th century decided to claim the land of Palestine, however Israelis claim that they have always lived on the land that dates back to biblical times (Spangler, 2015, p. 88).

Palestine was under British rule from the end of World War I in 1918 until Israel became a nation in 1948. Britain initially tried to limit Jewish immigration, but aided the Zionists at the same time by issuing the Balfour Declaration in 1917. The declaration stated that the Jews could establish a home in the land of Palestine as long as it was clear that no original communities who previously lived there were injured, removed, or had their rights violated (Shapira, 2012, p. 73). The Palestinians were against the Zionist

invasion from the beginning, and despite trying to limit the number of Jewish settlers that came to Palestine, the Zionists took advantage of the opportunity and the British had a hard time setting limits on Jewish immigration.

Part of what aided the Zionists with Jewish settlements in Palestine was the formation of a non-profit called the Jewish National Fund (JNF). This organization was created to raise money to support settlers arriving in Palestine. They were very successful at collecting funds and used the money to buy Palestinian land that would be given to Jews who were migrating from other countries. The JNF is part of the controversy today. The money that is raised is only used to help Jewish people, both in Israel and in other countries, and denies access to assistance and land for Palestinians who are citizens of and live in Israel. In addition, much of the land that the JNF distributes and sells was originally Palestinian land that has been confiscated (Spangler, 2015, p. 90).

Israel had laws against the discrimination of citizens based on ethnicity or religion. The JNF, however, found a way around this by working together with the Israeli government. The Israeli state gave or loaned land to the JNF that had been previously confiscated from the Palestinians. Once the JNF had control of this land, the laws around discrimination no longer applied to the citizens, and the JNF could deny Palestinians from buying back or leasing the land (Spangler, 2015, p. 91).

The first group of Zionist settlers came during the Ottoman period. In 1908, a Zionist organization formed called the Palestine Office, which was designated in helping the first settlers and their relations with the Ottomans. They were different from the JNF in that wealthy donors funded them. In 1918, with the British in control, the group was renamed the Zionist Commission for Palestine. Their work was to repatriate Palestinian

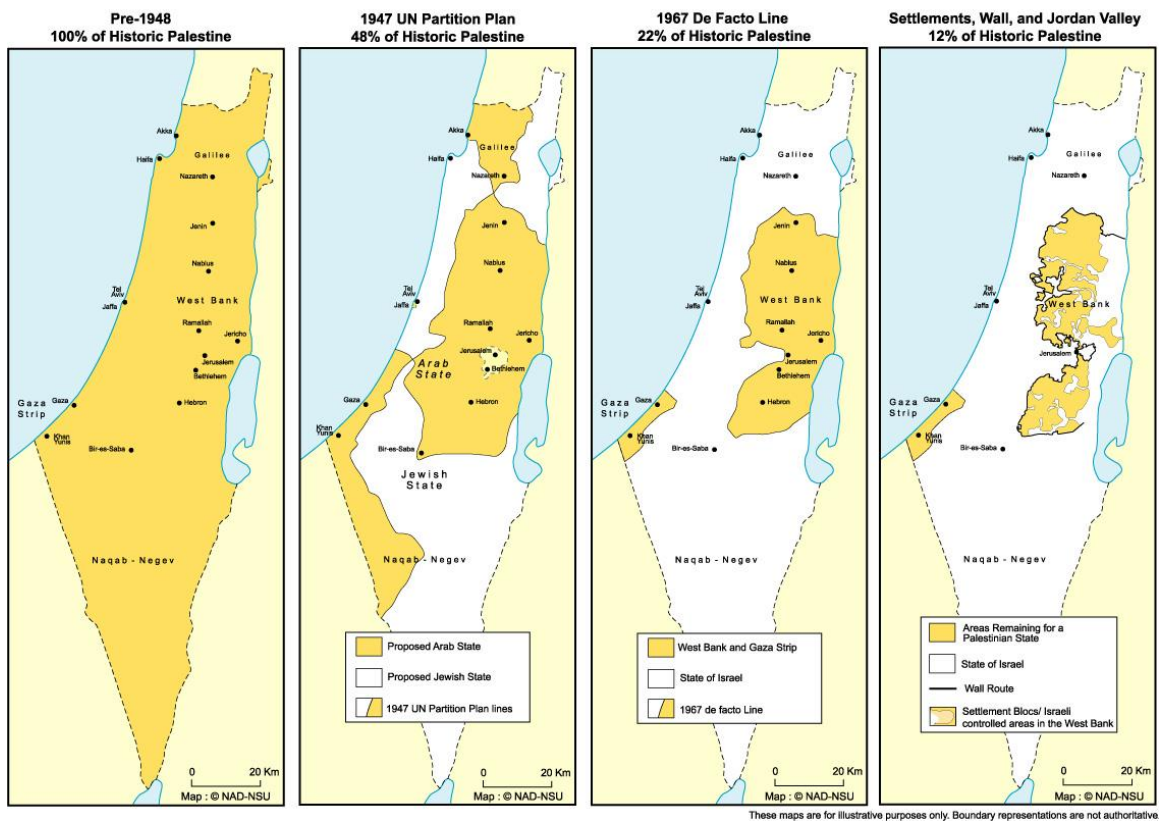
Jews that were pushed out by the Turks. In 1921, the same group again was renamed the Zionist Palestine Executive. Their purpose was to make sure that the settlers were honoring the promises that were stated in the Balfour Declaration (Spangler, 2015, p. 92).

In 1929, the group changed its name to the Jewish Agency, which is what it is known as today. During that time, its main goal was to work together with the Zionist Organization and JNF to assist with the logistics of new settlers in Israel (Shapira, 2012, p. 80). It helped organize community centers for newcomers, offered language classes, assisted with finding housing and jobs, and helped with emergencies around the settling of Jews after the Holocaust and the large numbers of Ethiopian and Soviet Jews that migrated. It also created Haganah, which was a militia formed to seize land from the Palestinians, and later became the Israeli Defense Force, or IDF (Spangler, 2015, p. 92).

The Palestinians faced a lot of hardship due to the arrival of the Jewish settlements. One of the requirements was that all land must be registered to pay taxes. Many of the Palestinians did not register their land in fear of confiscation, or did not have the money to pay taxes. However, if the land was not registered, even if families had lived there for generations, the Palestinians had no defense or proof of ownership so the land was easily taken away (Spangler, 2015, p. 93). Some Palestinians found local leaders to register the land under their names because they could afford to pay the taxes for them. They were referred to as absentee landlords. However, when it came time to show proof of ownership, there was no documentation, and the JNF could easily purchase the land from the absentee landlord and immediately evict the Palestinian family that lived there.

In November of 1947, Britain gave up control of Palestinian Mandate. The United Nations Resolution 181 divided the land of Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab Palestinian state (Kelman, 2007, p. 289). Israel was given 55% of the land; Palestine was given 44% (Spangler, 2015, p. 101). The area of Bethlehem was the last 1%, which was to be considered the international zone, or corpus separatum. The two states were to have their borders open, since both countries would have to cross territories to get to their own lands (Spangler, 2015, p. 101). The Zionists were in favor of this division, because it positioned them to have easy access to more Palestinian land. On the contrary, the Palestinians rejected the division because they believed all of the land was theirs from the beginning.

Figure 1. The boundaries of Israel-Palestine Pre-1948 to present (2017)



Map credit: Stephen Lendman

On May 14, 1948, Israel self-declared itself a separate state, which began the Nakba, or the catastrophe, referred to by Palestinians. The Nakba was when large numbers of Palestinians were displaced from their homes (Spangler, 2015, p. 102). According to the Israelis, the Palestinians left their homes on their own. According to the Palestinians, the Israelis forced them out of their homes. This displacement occurred in two parts. The first was when Jewish Zionist militias worked together and successfully forced hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their homes with almost no retaliation. The second part was when a war began and the majority of Palestinians that remained left the land out of fear (Spangler, 2015, p. 102).

Apart from losing their land and homes, Palestinians lost control of key assets for living. Among these were fertile lands, water, transportation routes, and jobs. Moreover, the Zionists took more land from Palestine than was originally allocated to them by the United Nations (Spangler, 2015, p. 102). The Zionist militia created a strategic plan, known as Plan Dalet, or Plan D. The objectives of this plan included taking over land that had been given to Palestine during the partition, protecting Jewish settlements that were in the Palestine territory, attacking civilian institutions in the Palestine community, and securing other geographic important areas within Palestine (Spangler, 2015, p. 102).

By the time the British were no longer in control of Palestine and Israel had declared itself a state, about half of the Nakba had been completed and 370,000 Palestinian refugees had been displaced or left their homes (Spangler, 2015, p. 103). On the day that Israel declared themselves an independent state, six Arab armies from Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Iraq invaded Israel. However, the invasion was more for individual reasons in hope to gain some of the land of the West Bank for themselves

instead of in support of Palestine. Since Palestine did not have support or strength in an army to fight back against Israel, the Jewish militia continued to seize more territories and expel more Palestinians (Spangler, 2015, p. 103). At the end of the Arab-Israeli War, the “green line,” or border of separation, was formed to indicate what land belonged to Israel, which included East Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Golan Heights, and the Sinai Peninsula (Usher, 2005, p. 25).

David Ben-Gurion was the first prime minister of Israel and was an advocate of an all Jewish State from the beginning. He favored this idea because he believed the state would allow Jews to have unlimited immigration, a strong Jewish economy, and a strong army. He was confident that all of the land would become part of Israel, whether it be given, or taken by force (Spangler, 2015, p. 99). Among the laws he created for Israel, he had a “to do” list for the new government. When creating this list, the laws excluded Arab Palestinians, and only pertained to the Jewish citizens of Israel. His list included the following:

Civil equality, freedom of religion; freedom of conscience, language, education and culture, equality for women; freedom of association and expression; universal suffrage. General conscription law. Nationalization of water sources, natural resources, unused lands. Control of imports and prices. Taxes – progressive, inheritance, increment. Encouragement of childbirth. General education. Demobilization benefits. Labor laws. (Spangler, 2015, p. 110).

About 700,000 Jews migrated to Israel within the first four years of becoming a state. Many of them were survivors of the Holocaust, and others were Jews who had been living in predominantly Arab countries. Among the new laws created was the Law of Return in 1950, which gave Jews from anywhere in the world the inalienable right to immigrate to Israel with the support of the state (Spangler, 2015, p. 113).

By 1949, 750,000 Palestinians had left their homes, between 370 and 540 villages had been demolished, and almost all of the Palestinian community centers and cultural sites had been destroyed. The state of Israel had expanded from the 55% that had been partitioned by the United Nations to 78% of the land, leaving 22% for Palestine (Spangler, 2015, p. 103).

The years following the creation of the state of Israel continued to be difficult for Palestinians. In addition to losing their land, Arab Palestinian citizens living in Israel after 1948 were labeled by President Ben-Gurion as security risks and mandated them to live under military law (Medalia, 2017). This meant that their civil rights were taken away, they could be arrested and detained for up to six months without any charges or rights, and they were often tortured while being detained. Both adults and children suffered severe psychological damage. Violence and trauma that were a result from the conflict over the last 50 years caused psychological distress, depression and anxiety disorders, and PTSD (Hoyle, 2017). Moreover, military rule required Palestinians to request and receive permission to leave their town or village to do daily tasks such as job interviews, visiting friends and family, going to school, doctor's appointments, etc. One can imagine that the loss of rights and the vast changes in the everyday lives of the Palestinians caused feelings of frustration, anger and hatred towards Israelis (Medalia, 2017).

Some of the Palestinians that fled remained inside of Israel territory. These people became labeled as "present absentees," or those who no longer lived in Palestine, but found a new place to live in Israel. Anyone who had left their place of residence after the date that the United Nations divided the land in 1947 could be considered a present

absentee. Israel took advantage of the land left behind by the present absentees and the Israeli state took hold of 94% of the “abandoned” land (Spangler, 2015, p. 119).

Palestinian refugees were left without help from the United Nations. Since the refugees came about between 1947 and 1949, universal laws within the UN were yet to be established. Some refugees were able to rebuild their lives in places like Syria and Jordan. Their communities were open to giving the refugees opportunities to gain employment and go to school. However, in countries such as Lebanon and Egypt, the communities were more closed off to the refugees in fear of mixing Muslims with Christians. In addition, Palestinians were not allowed to obtain employment nor have political rights (Spangler, 2015, p. 121). For some, this remains an issue today.

In 1958, Palestinian refugees from Gaza founded an organization that was in favor of armed attacks against Israel, called Fatah. Its plan was to fight back to the growing aggressions by the Israelis in hope to grow the Arab unification and presence and eventually conquer all of Israel (Spangler, 2015, p. 122). However, their plan backfired, and instead led to occupation of more Palestinian land by the Israelis (Spangler, 2015, p. 122)

With constant tensions rising between Arabs and Israelis, the Six Day War occurred from June 5-10, 1967. Egyptian President, Gamal Abdel Nasser, shook things up by sending 80,000 troops to the Sinai area in late May. Israel tried to hold off fighting, however on June 5th, the Israel Air Force struck Egypt three times, quickly ending their involvement in the war. On June 9th, Syrian troops that had entered Israel were attacked and forced to head back to Damascus (Ajami, 1992).

It was during this short amount of time in which Israel gained control over the Egyptian Sinai, the Syrian Golan Heights, as well as the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip (Waldman, 2011, p. 73). Spangler suggests that this war “created the platform for the current Palestinian-Israeli conflict” (Spangler, 2015, p. 122). Waldman suggests that the nature of the conflict between the two groups is not just a dispute over land, but a mixture of anti-colonial struggle, ethnic conflict and religious war, which is what makes the problem so difficult to solve (2011, p. 75).

Winning the Six-Day War was Israel’s first opportunity to show the Middle East the strength of their country and their army. At the end of the fighting, Israel was in control of three times more land than when they started fighting on June 5th. Although the Arabs were confident at the beginning that they would come out of the war victorious, the result was not what they had planned, and furthered the sentiment of defeat among the Arab Palestinians.

The fact that Israel clearly had won the war and access to more land was a confirmation of the strength of their militia and the country they had formed only 20 years before (Ajami, 1992). The problem that the Israeli government faced after obtaining control of all of the land was how to maintain exclusive ownership of the Palestinian territory, while having to deal with the many Palestinians living in it, and, at the same time, making room for more Jewish settlers. This has been a central issue of the Israel Palestine conflict ever since Israeli control was established (Spangler, 2015, p. 124).

In 1964, Egyptian President, Gamal Abdel Nasser, “at an Arab League Summit in Cairo, sponsored an alternative to Fatah, the Palestine Liberation Organization” or the PLO (Spangler, 2015, p. 122). In 1969, Fatah and the PLO merged as one group, with

Yasir Arafat as the leader. The main goal of the PLO was to advocate and fight for the rights and interests of the Arab Palestinians. The concerns of the PLO included all of the Palestinians, those living in Israel, those living in the West Bank and Gaza, and those who had been dispersed to different refugee camps throughout the Middle East (Spangler, 2015, p. 122).

In the 1990's, a chance for peace between the two groups was created. The Oslo Accords were a set of agreements between Israel and Palestine that were decided on and signed during this time (CNN, 2016). They laid out a timeline for a process of creating peace in the Middle East. Oslo 1, also known as the Declaration of Principles, can be considered one of the most important parts of the history in the relations between Israel and Palestine. After many years of violent fighting, September 13, 1993 became the first time that Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) came together to acknowledge the existence of the other side and negotiate to try to arrive at a peaceful agreement around issues they had been fighting over for almost a century (Rosler, 2016, p. 55). "The new thinking was encouraged by historical events, developments on the ground, intervention by outside powers, and direct interaction between the parties" (Kelman, 2007, p. 290).

During the Oslo Accords, the two leaders involved were Yitzhak Rabin, the Prime Minister of Israel, and Yasser Arafat, the Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization. One of the greatest results from the Oslo Accords was the mutual recognition of Palestine and the PLO by the people of Israel, and the recognition of Israel as a separate country by the Palestinians. In addition, there was a shift from an enemy, terrorist mindset to having a more positive view towards each other (Rosler, 2016, p. 61).

Sasley (2010) states that the Oslo Accords were crucially important because they “went against every Israeli government since 1967; as such, it was a dramatic revolution in foreign policy” (p. 693).

The Oslo Accords were created after more than twenty-five secret meetings between 1992 and 1993. Jan Egeland, the Norwegian State Secretary at the time, mediated the meetings. Direct interaction between the two sides—at the unofficial and eventually at the official level—contributed significantly to persuading the parties of the availability of a credible negotiating partner on the other side with whom they could agree on a mutually acceptable formula for a two-state solution (Kelman, 2007, p. 291).

The following agreements came out of the meetings: Israel must withdraw from Jericho and the Gaza strip, and eventually the West Bank, autonomy for Palestinians who lived in those cities for at least five years, and the creation of an interim Palestinian government in Gaza, and Jericho in the West Bank (CNN, 2016).

Other specific details such as the future of Jerusalem were left undiscussed (CNN, 2016). Although the Accords lacked focus on issues such as border control, control of the city of Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees, and settlements, they established a foundation for the two sides to begin moving towards a peaceful resolution (Hallward, 2011, p. 192).

A second set of accords, referred to as Oslo II, were signed on September 28, 1995. Just two months after this, the Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin, was assassinated at a peace rally (CNN, 2016). Because of the drastic shift in the mindset of the Rabin administration towards creating peace with Palestine, many citizens had opposing views and were not necessarily in support of his decisions. The Oslo Accords

seemed to work for about five years, but in 2000, disagreements over issues in Israel and Palestine arose again, along with demonstrations, attacks, and suicide bombings (CNN, 2013).

In June of 2002, the construction of a separation wall began between the Israel and Palestine borders that was led by Israel's Defense Minister, Binyamin Ben-Eliezer. It was built to be 650 kilometers long, and ran into the West Bank on Palestine territory to allow more Jewish settlements to build homes. With the building of the wall, many Palestinians lost access to water, roads, and homes, as well as half of the land of the West Bank (Lagerquist, 2004, p. 6). The wall came into effect in 2003 and divided the land into four parts A, B, and C, and D. In the beginning, the Israeli government claimed that the fence was only temporary, however after some time, it became clear that the wall was there to stay, and is still in effect today (Lagerquist, 2004, p. 8).

Figure 2. Part of the wall built in 2003 that divides Israel and the West Bank



Photo Credit: Thesis author

In August of 2005, Israel's Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, ordered all Israeli civilians and military to vacate Gaza as a sign of peace towards Palestine (Lambeth, 2012, p. 93). In 2006, Hamas won the Palestinian legislative elections and assumed

Administrative control of Gaza Strip and the West Bank. In 2007, Hamas led a military victory over Fatah, the secular Palestinian nationalist party, which had dominated the Palestinian National Authority since the late 1950's. Once Hamas came into power, they continued to attack Israel for the next two years by sending bombs and rockets over the border. While not many people were hurt or killed from these rockets, the Israeli civilians were living in fear not knowing when these attacks would occur (Lambeth, 2012, p. 93).

From 2008-2009, in response to the attacks from Hamas, Israel attacked the Gaza strip, injuring and killing thousands of Palestinians and leaving many people homeless (Letwin, Adely, Veve, 2015, p. 1048). Operation Cast Lead (December 27, 2008-January 28, 2009) consisted of Israeli air strikes on Hamas with the goal of hurting the group by forcing them to stop launching rockets into southern Israel and to stop weapons from being smuggled into the Gaza Strip (Lambeth, 2012, p. 101).

Operation Cast Lead only lasted 23 days, however it achieved what it had set out to accomplish by showing Hamas the strength in the Israeli Defense Force. It was the strongest use of military power that Israel had used since the Six Day War in 1967 (Lambeth, 2012, p. 103). At the end of Operation Cast Lead, 1300 Palestinians had died, four Israelis were killed, and thousands of innocent civilians on both sides were injured (Hallward, 2011, p.185).

Since 2009, relations between Israel and Palestine have continued to be complicated and unstable. More rocket attacks by Hamas into Jerusalem persisted in 2012 and 2014 (Miller, 2016, p. 443). Recently, there has continued to be acts of violence from both sides against each other, and no peace treaties have been developed, making it difficult to arrive at an agreed upon solution. The latest Israeli election in 2015 of Prime

Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has brought a right wing government into power that is committed to settlement expansion. He claims there will be no Palestinian state as long as he is leading the country, making the hope of a two state solution non-existent. With the arrival of new settlements in the West Bank and the continued use of the “Separation Fence”, Israel’s strong economy and political control proves to be dominant over the West Bank and Gaza (Farsakh, 2016, 380).

Today, in 2017, Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza still need special authorization in order to travel to Israel. The Israeli government actively discourages Israeli Jews from visiting the West Bank, and Gaza almost never grants permission to Israeli Jews to visit. Palestinians living in Israel are only allowed into Gaza under unusual circumstances (Spangler, 2015, p. 120). At the entrance to Area “A,” a sign is posted that prohibits Israeli Citizens from entering the territory. It indicates that entering the territory can endanger their lives.

Figure 3. Sign at the entrance of Area “A”



Photo Credit: Thesis author

The most recent development that has added fuel to the conflict was the announcement on December 6, 2017, by President Donald Trump. He announced that the American Embassy would move from Tel-Aviv to Jerusalem. Currently, no other country has their embassy located in Jerusalem. At the same time, he declared that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel and belongs to the Jews (Carey, Lee, & Smith-Spark, 2017). This declaration caused riots, fires, and protests from the Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza, and in Israel. Some of the riots and protests became violent, and the IDF used rubber bullets, tear gas, and force against the rowdy protestors. Three hundred people were injured in the West Bank and a few men were shot (Carey, et. al, 2017). This announcement by President Trump reinforced the United States' support for Israel and took away any hope that Americans would support the Palestinian claim of having part of East Jerusalem as their capital in a two-state solution.

As long as Israel's leaders believe that they can claim the left over 22 percent of Palestine to create room for more Jewish settlements, a peaceful atmosphere between them is going to be hard to achieve (Klug, 2011, p. 150). Israeli writer Etgar Keret says: "The Israeli military can win the battles, but peace and quiet for the citizens of Israel will only be achieved through political compromise" (P. 151).

Chapter III

Background of Healing Across The Divides

Chapter 3 introduces Healing Across The Divides, the NGO based in the United States that I worked with to collect my data. Furthermore, this chapter explains the goals of HATD and some examples of their initiatives.

In 2004, Dr. Norbert Goldfield founded a non-profit organization called Healing Across The Divides. Its mission is to “improve the health of marginalized people living in Israel and Occupied Palestinian Territories via community-based intervention” (HATD, 2004). Its vision is “peace building through measurably improved health for marginalized Israelis and Palestinians via community based interventions” (HATD, 2004).

This non-profit provides technical/managerial consultation and financial funding to community-based organizations in Israel and the West Bank. The organization focuses on bringing community groups together as desired to develop ideas on how to work together to improve the health of those they serve (HATD, 2004). HATD hopes that offering to bring these groups together will aid in the ability to have Israelis and Palestinians willingly come together to cooperate and be a part of the peace-building process (HATD, 2004). HATD hopes to expand its services into Gaza sometime in 2018 (N. Goldfield, personal communication, Appendix 2).

In 2004, HATD started working with three initiatives. Today it has grown and is currently supporting ten initiatives (N. Goldfield, personal communication, Appendix 2).

Five of them are based in the West Bank and five are in Israel (HATD Representatives, personal interview, Appendix 1). Three-year grants are provided to these community organizations. In order to facilitate peace building, Goldfield (2004) suggests it is important for health professionals from both sides to work collaboratively and identify societal based health problems that they can work on and share (2012, p. 149).

Healing Across The Divides is the only organization that works on improving health conditions at the community level on both sides of the conflict (HATD, 2017). It strives to:

- Document improved health status in the context of individual and community empowerment.
- Enhance awareness of health and human rights.
- Improve effectiveness and efficiency of community-based groups.
- Facilitate interaction and working together when desired between community-based groups.
- Increase awareness on the part of policymakers and other interested parties of the obstacles to improvement in the health of both Israelis and Palestinians (HATD, 2017).

HATD measures success in several ways: measurable improvement in health using validated evaluation instruments; increased capacity of the community groups that HATD funds; and assumed responsibility for the initiative by either the Israeli government, the Israeli private sector and/or Palestinian Authority (HATD, 2004). Some successful examples that have stemmed from HATD initiatives include a program that provides education about nutrition and exercise for young mothers and their children and

using community health workers to increase mammography rates to ultra-orthodox Jewish women. HATD is also funding and working together with the Israel AIDS Task Force and an Israeli counseling organization to educate African refugee asylum seekers on AIDS and AIDS prevention. It also works on empowering women who are victims of domestic violence and engaging with Palestinian children in the West Bank about drugs and alcohol prevention (HATD, 2017).

Starting in 2016, HATD has led an annual study tour with people from the United States to the Middle East. On these trips, the tour members visit sites in both Israel and the West Bank with leaders and staff of the community groups that HATD supports. They learn about the programs and gain unique perspectives through their interactions with the groups. 2018 will be the third year that the tour will take place (HATD, 2017).

Every 4-6 months, the staff from HATD meets separately in Israel and in the West Bank with local grantees. In July and December of 2017, two successful joint meetings of Israeli and Palestinian grantees took place in Jerusalem. For the first time ever, the meetings were held with staff from the Palestinian organizations from the West Bank that HATD supports, together with their Israeli counterparts. The meetings consisted of some training, and were mainly to learn, exchange ideas, and share their experiences. They communicated about similarities between their organizations, overlapping health issues, and learned about each other's programs.

These two meetings were a positive step for both the staff and the HATD organization. Permission from the Israeli military to cross the border was needed in order for the Palestinians in the West Bank to attend the meetings in Jerusalem (HATD, 2017, p. 2).

Chapter IV

What is Peace?

Chapter 4 examines various definitions of peace. It describes the differences between positive and negative peace, and how the Institute for Economics and Peace annually measures peace by using the Global Peace Index. This chapter also looks at literature that supports my hypothesis that improving healthcare can have an impact on peacebuilding in communities.

According to Goldfield (2012), “peace is a political process and requires the intervention of individuals/groups that have political standing” (p.147). He believes that health professionals working in their professional capacity can contribute to peace building. Peters (1996) defines peace as “a relationship in which no damage is done to each other, each can develop his/her potential, and conflicts are resolved nonviolently” (p. 2). Killelea (2014) defines peace as “harmony achieved by the absence of war, conflict or violent crime” (p. 108). He separates peace into two categories, positive and negative peace. There has not been peace between the people and the governments of Israel and the occupied Palestine territories for the last 75 years. Apart from the disagreement about land, other ongoing challenges cause a divide between these groups in areas such as the economy, resources, and access to health services (Goldfield, 2012, p. 148).

Presently in Israel and the West Bank, there are many Bedouins with little or no access to health care. Often women are victims of violence with no outlets for help.

Ultra-orthodox Jewish women have lower mammography rates as compared to the rest of the Israeli population and higher rates of childhood domestic accidents. Furthermore, many Palestinians in the West Bank have post-traumatic stress disorder and live in fear of being displaced by Jewish settlers. There are also tens of thousands of Africans seeking asylum and a significant number living with HIV with no ways to treat it. Additionally, there are many Palestinians living in the West Bank that have diabetes and few treatment options (Healing Across The Divides [HATD], 20).

Building peace within a country after a long civil war is very challenging. “Of 105 countries that suffered a civil war between 1945 and 2013, more than half (59 countries) experienced a relapse into violent conflict- in some cases more than once- after peace had been established” (Caplan, 2017, p. 134). There are various theories as to why countries in conflict do not maintain peace; researchers have not come to a clear consensus. Possible reasons include the involvement of the United Nations in making a peace agreement, having a democratic nation before the war, creating peace settlements that include the division of land, and creating an accountable government. Additionally, different scholars use varying definitions of peace, which changes the results of their data and does not provide consistent results. Many other theories are also considered, but no direct cause that links to peace has been conclusive (Caplan, 2017, p. 135).

Bar-Tal (2013) suggests that while leaders are very important in negotiating peace effectively, the process for building long lasting peace needs to happen simultaneously from top down and bottom up (p. 400). He goes on to say that “an essential and necessary element is to convince the masses to change their socio-psychological repertoire, from supporting the conflict to favoring the emergence of stable and lasting peaceful relations

with reconciliation” (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 401). Furthermore, he suggests that if meetings are held locally between representatives from both sides to begin to form relationships and build trust, this in turn can encourage the leaders to begin to work on political and economic issues between the groups (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 401). Healing Across The Divides pursues such an approach between different staff members of Israeli and Palestinian groups that it funds.

Dr. Herbert C. Kelman from Harvard University has spent the second half of his career working with peace negotiations in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He developed an interactive problem solving method using a social-psychological approach to resolving the conflict (Kelman, 2006, p. 21). He suggests responding to the parties needs directly in order to create valuable relationships. “As the relationship is transformed, the parties become better able to engage in joint problem solving, generating agreements that meet their needs and elicit their commitment and are therefore conducive to relatively stable and enduring changes at the level of internalization” (Kelman, 2006, p. 21).

Kelman claims his biggest contribution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was his involvement in creating and implementing ideas through political influencers about the possibility of negotiating an agreement that would satisfy the basic needs and protect the most important interests of both sides (Kelman, 2007, p. 291). He acted as a third party and facilitated numerous meetings and workshops using the interactive problem solving method between an equally divided group of Israelis and Palestinians, which eventually led to influencing the Oslo Accords in 1993 (Fisher, 2010, p. 422).

Goldfield believes that although peace building is a long-term process, it is possible to create lasting effects and to promote peace building in both communities. He

suggests two key ingredients to peace building through health: both societies, via funded community based groups, need to focus on measurably improving health initiatives. They also need to cooperate and interact with each other as much as possible, thus increasing trust and understanding between groups (HATD, 2004).

Measuring Peace

Over the last 30 years, various indices have been developed in order to measure peace throughout the world. “The purpose of this research is to better understand the cultural, economic, and political conditions associated with peaceful environments” (Kilillea, 2014, p. 109). In May of 2007, the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) created the Global Peace Index (GPI) as a way to measure peace by ranking countries around the world according to different criteria. The GPI measures peacefulness based on three criteria: “the level of safety and security in society, the extent of domestic and international conflict, and the degree of militarization” (GPI, 2017, p. 2).

The most recent report from 2017 shows that 93 countries became more peaceful in 2017, and 68 countries became less peaceful, improving the overall global level of peace by 28% (GPI, 2017, p. 9). From 2015 to 2016, 81 countries became more peaceful, and 79 countries became less peaceful, with the average GPI score dropping 53 % (GPI, 2016, p. 8). Although the world has become substantially less violent since World War II, the last ten years have increasingly become more violent. More specifically, terrorism is at an all-time high (GPI, 2016, p. 3).

In 2016, Israel ranked 144 out of 163 countries with an index rating of 2.656. Palestine was close behind at 148, with an index of 2.832. (GPI, 2016, p. 11). This past

year in 2017, Israel remained at 144 and Palestine moved up three spots to 145 (GPI, 2017, p. 11). 2016 was the first year that Palestine was measured separately from Israel, and therefore does not provide enough data to comparably measure peace relations between Israel and Palestine before 2016 using the GPI.

Positive and Negative Peace

Killelea separates peace into two categories: negative peace and positive peace. He describes negative peace as the absence of violence. It is easy to understand and can be quantitatively measured. The annual GPI report is based on negative peace. Positive peace is “derived from preventative solutions which are optimistic and facilitate a more integrated society” (GPI, 2016, p. 109). The Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) defines positive peace as “the set of attitudes, institutions, and structures which when strengthened, lead to a more peaceful society” (GPI, 2017, p. 78).

The IEP uses the Eight Pillars of Peace to support positive peace and to construct a framework to measure the ability of a country to create and sustain peace (GPI, 2017, p. 78). The Eight Pillars of Peace include “sound business environment, good relations with neighbors, high levels of human capital, acceptance of the rights of others, low levels of corruption, well-functioning government, free flow of information, and equitable distribution of resources” (GPI, 2017, p. 78).

The Eight Pillars are a way to measure a country’s strengths and its capability to recover from negative impact, as well as measure its weaknesses to help foresee violence and corruption (GPI, 2017, p. 78). The countries with the highest rating of peace excel in all of the pillars. Although obtaining a high level of positive peace is a

slow process, it is a good indicator of how peaceful a country will be over a long period of time (GPI, 2017, p. 84). “Over the last ten years, the defining characteristic of countries that have transitioned to more or less peaceful states has been their performance on positive peace” (GPI, 2017, p. 84). For the purpose of this study, the questionnaires that I created focused on positive peace.

Peacebuilding Through Health

The World Health Organization (WHO) has a program that is called Health as a Bridge to Peace. They assert that “cooperation among health professionals and health interventions in conflict zones can contribute not only to improved outcomes for populations who suffer from the impact of war, but also to build a lasting peace” (Rubenstein & Kohli, 2010, p. 1). In 1995, the World Health Organization was quoted as saying:

Health is valued by everyone. It provides a basis for bringing people together to analyze, to discuss, and to arrive at a consensus acceptable to all. The potential for using health as a dialogue, and even peace, has been demonstrated in situations of conflict (Gutlove, 2000, p. 1).

Peacebuilding through health can be the basis for a country’s stability for the future. More than just bringing physical and mental health to a society, patients can come together and share information to learn from each other, grow their networks through communication and cooperation, have some understanding for the “other side” by sharing similar experiences, and work against unfair policies to try to find a solution (Rubenstein & Kohli, 2010, p. 2).

In the early 1990’s, the WHO, together with other health professionals, came up with tools that aid in building peace between groups that have tension and conflict

(Goldfield, 2011, p. 8). These tools include: “strengthening communities, communicating knowledge, personalizing the enemy, extending solidarity by use of health professional clinical skills, constructing common goals, and non-cooperation and dissent” (Goldfield, 2011, p. 9). These tools are all examples of actions that can be taken to help in building positive peace. Bar-Tal (2013) agrees that “education constitutes one of the most important methods for promoting the peace culture” (p. 410).

MacQueen and Santa Barbara (2000) support the research that shows the connection between improving healthcare and peace (p. 293). While it is difficult to measure a control group during times of conflict, they agree that five health-peace mechanisms or procedures can be implemented through healthcare workers (MacQueen & Santa Barbara, 2000, p. 294). “Health work in zones of conflict can initiate and spread peace through conflict management, solidarity with indigenous health workers, strengthening of the social fabric, public dissent, and the restriction of the destructiveness of war” (MacQueen, Santa Barbara, 2000, p. 293). Similarly, the Institute for Resource and Security Studies launched a Health Bridges for Peace Project in 1996, which educated healthcare workers in the field to facilitate dialogue, problem solving, and promote community reconciliations through positive interactions and techniques to create a peaceful environment (Gutlove, 2000, p. 2). This Health Bridges for Peace Project was used in 1997 in Yugoslavia, as well as in North Caucasus in 1998 (Gutlove, 2000, p. 2).

In contrast, Rubenstein and Kohli (2010) argue that although the idea of peace building through health services and programs is a good idea, there is still a lot of uncertainty between groups on how to achieve this (p.1). They state that “the idea is best understood as cross-border or cross-group initiatives toward increasing understanding,

cooperation, and trust, addressing health concerns of populations, and mobilizing health professionals as advocates for peace” (Kohli, 2010, p. 1). Furthermore, although using health initiatives to build peace is a nice idea, little research has been done, and it is uncertain if the two are connected (Kohli, 2010, p. 1).

Chapter V

Research Methodology, Analysis, and Limitations

Chapter 5 highlights my thesis and explains the methodology in how I tested my hypothesis. In addition, I provide an analysis of the data I collected which is displayed in seven tables. I also discuss the limitations I faced when conducting the research. Finally, I describe my experience of the HATD seminar I attended in Israel and how what I witnessed and learned supports my thesis.

For my thesis, I hypothesized that community organizations, such as Healing Across The Divides, can help to improve public health, break down relational borders between Israelis and Palestinians, and facilitate peace building between them.

Methodology

I tested my hypothesis by creating seven questionnaires that were distributed to four different types of groups associated with Healing Across The Divides in Israel and the West Bank in November and December of 2017. One questionnaire was for the two leaders or representatives of Healing Across The Divides (one in Israel; one in the West Bank). I created three different questionnaires for staff that work in the programs that HATD supports. One was for Israeli staff, one was for staff who are Palestinians living in Israel, and the third was for Palestinian staff living in the West Bank. I also created three questionnaires for participants of the programs that HATD supports. One was for Israeli

participants, the second was for Palestinian participants that live in Israel, and the other was for Palestinian participants living in the West Bank. Finally, I created a questionnaire for the board members of HATD. All of the board members live in the United States and many have had direct contact and experience with the various initiatives in Israel and the West Bank.

The purpose of the questionnaires was to survey the points of views of the leaders, participants, staff, and board members about HATD and its connection between improving health and peace between Israelis and Palestinians. The questionnaires included questions about their experience with HATD and if HATD has contributed to peace building through the program that they participate or work in.

Questions were answered on a scale from 1 to 5, which represented the level from which they strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). In addition, some of the questions were open-ended and asked for further explanation of the previous question. At the end of each of the questionnaires, there were general questions that collected demographic information such as age, sex, length of time they have been with HATD, and the organization that they are associated with.

The Palestinian participant questionnaire, along with the questionnaire for Palestinian participants living in Israel, were translated into Arabic. The Israeli participant questionnaire was translated into Hebrew. The two representative leaders, board members, as well as the staff in the community centers who participated spoke English. The Israeli and Palestinian HATD staff, respectively, distributed questionnaires by email to the Israeli and Palestinian organizations. The staff and the board member

questionnaires were also available to be completed through a secure online link. All of the questions were optional for everyone who participated.

My aim was to collect a minimum of twelve questionnaires from participants in HATD programs (six Palestinians and six Israelis), as well as a minimum of twelve staff from various funded HATD programs. I also aimed to have six out of twelve Board Members complete the questionnaire. I collected data through a variety of ways, mainly via the questionnaire, but also through phone calls, interviews, and in person conversations in Israel on December 5, 2017.

I received fifty-four completed questionnaires in total. The breakdown was as follows: two Israeli staff, two Palestinians living in Israel staff, one Israeli participant, twenty Palestinian staff in the West Bank, and twenty Palestinian participants of HATD in the West Bank. In addition, I received completed questionnaires from the two representatives as well as from seven board members. I performed an in person interview on December 5th, 2017 in Israel with the two representatives and an interview over the phone with the Director and Founder of HATD, Dr. Norbert Goldfield on December 17th, 2017.

After collecting the data from the questionnaires, I transferred the numbered responses onto a spreadsheet to calculate the percentage of people who selected each of the five answers. I organized the average of the quantitative responses into tables for each questionnaire that I created, therefore having seven tables. In addition, I tabulated the data from those who took the online questionnaire in Qualtrics and included it in the tables. Finally, I analyzed some of the key responses from the open-ended questions and summarized the main themes based on the answers.

Dr. Norbert Goldfield supported my research by providing me with names and contact information of the two representative leaders (with their permission). In addition, on December 5th, 2017, I attended a seminar with staff members from the Palestinian and Israeli community based groups from both the West Bank and Israel. The seminar was led by Dr. Goldfield and the two representatives of HATD. Beyond my personal interaction at the meeting, I supported my data with literature that supports how improving health care can lead to peace building. This research complied with Harvard University's policy on the use of human subjects in research (<https://cuhs.harvard.edu/>).

HATD Seminar in Israel

On December 3rd, 2017, I traveled to Israel to meet with the two representatives and some of the staff from organizations that Healing Across The Divides supports. I attended a seminar held on December 5th, 2017 at the Ambassador Hotel in East Jerusalem that included the Director of HATD, Norbert Goldfield, the 2 representatives from Israel and the West Bank, and 15 other people who are staff in the community programs that HATD supports. One Palestinian staff member had to leave the meeting early because the Israeli police were demolishing the home of a neighbor in East Jerusalem and the Palestinian staff member was worried about any actions that his teenage children might undertake against the Israeli police/army. Another Palestinian staff said that her husband did not know that she was attending this meeting and if he knew, he would not allow her to come because it involved working with the "other side."

This was the second meeting in which staff from the West Bank and Israel were present. HATD funds 10 community initiatives, and staff from 8 of the 10 groups were

present. Employees from one of the organizations could not attend and one other Palestinian community based group refused to attend due to the interaction with the “other side.”

Present at the meeting were staff from HATD sponsored organizations who work in the following areas:

- Medical care/ HIV prevention for African refugee asylum seekers mostly in the Tel Aviv area– Israel Aids Task Force and Assaf, Israel
- Drug Abuse Prevention among Palestinian Youth in East Jerusalem – Al Maqdese, West Bank
- Working with Sephardic Jews in Yeruham in Southern Israel and Bedouin in the surrounding unrecognized Bedouin village of Rahme (meaning that it is subject to demolition by the Israeli government and no government services such as water or electricity are provided) on building and maintaining a sustainable farm and improve communication between Jews and Bedouin – Earth Promise Israel
- Violence against Palestinian women living in Bedouin Villages in the Negev- Maan, Israel
- Teaching overall health and increasing communication between Ethiopian mothers and daughters – Open Door, Israel
- Decreasing obesity in Palestinian women Nablus – Family Defense Society
- Improving women’s health through chronic disease self-management in Nablus, West Bank – Balata

- Chronic Disease self- management in Abboud, West Bank– Caritas

The meeting was conducted in English and led by the two representatives, Patrick and Nehad. Two members provided translation in Arabic for a couple of the staff that needed assistance. Dr. Norbert Goldfield opened the meeting with an introduction explaining his reasons for starting HATD and that his goal is to improve the confidence and well-being of the staff so that they can in turn help those they serve.

Following the introduction, Patrick, the Israeli representative, gave a presentation on goals of the initiatives. Before he began, he announced that there were three rules to the meeting. He said that everyone should be present, open minded, and explained that this was a safe environment and that it was ok to disagree as long as everyone was respectful of one another. Patrick continued by explaining in depth what each initiative should focus on. He thoroughly went through the steps of creating a vision, having goals that support the vision, identifying objectives, and the actions needed to make the initiatives successful.

After Patrick's presentation, the staff from the various organizations were paired together to do group work. One group from an organization in Israel was paired together with a group from the West Bank. The staff learned about the other organization and presented to the group an understanding of what the other group does. By working in pairs, they were able to see the similarities between their organizations.

Next, they talked about what a successful story for their organizations consists of, in regards to the individuals that they work with. Many examples were given of women losing weight and learning about their health, greater awareness about drugs and alcohol, families that are helped by the programs, growth of the initiatives, people feeling happier

and more confident, and participants sharing their stories about improving their health overall.

Finally, Patrick and Nehad led a session on communication. Members at the meeting indicated that they would like to have better ways to communicate with other staff from HATD within both Israel and the West Bank. A joint calendar of events was suggested, along with creating a collaborative Facebook group, WhatsApp group for texting, and using other forms of social media to stay connected. One of the staff members suggested visiting each other's organizations and attending events that they hold if those from the West Bank are able to get permission to go to Israel. Patrick and Nehad also explained the new shared Google Drive on the Healing Across The Divides' web site that contains documents that each organization can access and share for future use.

At the end of the day, the staff commented that it was interesting meeting people from other organizations and that they enjoyed meeting and working with the staff from the "other side." One person commented that the more they meet, the more they learn. They also commented that sharing experiences from their organizations with others helped them see similarities and learn from the others present. One person suggested having field visits or holding a meeting during one of the organization's events.

In my opinion, attending the HATD seminar was an illustration of trust building in action. The seminar was a way to share personal stories, build a foundation of trust with each other, and have a positive experience working with the "other side." When they were working in groups, they had to open up and be vulnerable to share about the work that they do and to find similarities with their counterpart. This group work created a

deeper understanding of one another. Furthermore, the groups were eager to facilitate better ways of cross-communication between the groups in Israel and the West Bank. Suggesting to hold future events together and using social media to create communication groups shows willingness to collaborate. Sharing a joint calendar with folders and documents for all groups to have access to and use also promotes positive interaction and establishing trust between groups.

Analysis

The data I collected for this project were obtained in three ways. The main source of data was collected through the seven questionnaires from those who work and participate in programs with HATD. The second way was through interviews that I had with the director and leaders of HATD. The third way was by attending the HATD seminar in Israel on December 5th, 2017. The data collected from the questionnaires are displayed in seven tables below with an analysis following each table.

Table 1. Summary of responses from the HATD representatives

Healing Across The Divides Representatives	2 Total Responses	1 Male 1 Female	Ages 46, 52
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Question	1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. No Opinion	4. Agree	5. Strongly Agree
	Representative 1			Representative 2	
Working with HATD programs has had a positive influence on my views and attitudes towards Israelis/Palestinians.	4			4	
Working with HATD programs has the potential to facilitate positive communication/interaction between Israelis and Palestinians living in Israel.	3			4	
While working in this organization, I have seen an increased overall trust between Israelis and Palestinians.	2			4	
Participating in this organization has enabled me to learn and understand different viewpoints of Israelis/Palestinians.	4			4	

Directing and participating in these programs has the potential for providing a foundation for Israelis and Palestinians living in the West Bank to break down barriers and begin building peace.	2		4

Source: Thesis author

I began with the two representatives of HATD, one male from Israel and one female from the West Bank, ages 52 and 46. Although they describe their relationship as close friends, Table 1 shows that their views about the conflict are very different from each other (HATD Representatives, personal communication Appendix 1). Both representatives agreed that working with HATD has positively influenced their attitudes towards Israelis and Palestinians and has enabled them to learn and understand different

viewpoints of Israelis and Palestinians. However, they were in disagreement that working with their programs has the potential for providing a foundation for Israelis and Palestinians living in the West Bank to break down barriers and begin building peace, as well as increase trust overall. The West Bank representative disagreed, and the Israeli representative agreed. Overall, the Israeli representative had a much more positive and hopeful point of view about peacebuilding and the conflict than the Palestinian representative. In addition, they shared the results of their groups who were asked to complete questionnaires and an explanation of why a group did or did not complete the questionnaire. The breakdown was as follows:

One group is new and just signed with us last week so they were not included. Group 2 works with children, so they did not qualify. Group 3 did not want to participate because they thought the questionnaire was too political. Group 4 had members that were interested, however their organization thought that the questionnaires were too political and did not allow them to respond. Group 5 had no issues responding (Nehad, personal communication, Appendix 1). Two of my groups work with African Asylum seekers so they did not qualify to respond. One group has just newly signed with HATD so they did not participate. The other three groups were mostly against participating. Some of them asked how peacebuilding is connected to their community center. Others were very cautious and are trying not to take sides in the conflict. They thought the questions were too political and didn't necessarily even trust where the questionnaire was coming from. I am just happy that it opened the door to the idea of peacebuilding and planted a seed in their minds. Now in the future, they can start thinking about what they are doing and how their actions are connected to peace (Patrick, personal communication, Appendix 1).

Table 2. Summary of responses from the Palestinian Staff

Palestinian Staff	20 Total	2 Male	Ages
Living in Palestinian Authority	Responses	18 Female	20-45

Question	1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. No Opinion	4. Agree	5. Strongly Agree
Working in/with a HATD sponsored program has improved my organization's effectiveness.	n/a	n/a	30%	60%	10%
Initiatives through HATD have the potential to provide a foundation for Israelis and Palestinians to break down barriers and begin building peace.	n/a	5%	35%	25%	35%
By working in/with a HATD program, the organization I work with has changed for the better.	n/a	n/a	10%	60%	30%
Participating in the HATD program has the potential to facilitate a more positive attitude of Palestinians towards Israelis.	5%	5%	35%	35%	20%
By participating in this project, I have witnessed a positive change in the	5%	10%	25%	40%	15%

attitudes of Palestinians towards Israelis and Palestinians living in Israel.					
Participating in this project has the potential to help me learn and understand different viewpoints of Israelis/Palestinians.	n/a	10%	35%	40%	15%
Improving our organizational effectiveness can strengthen our ability to engage in peace building.	15%	n/a	10%	50%	25%
The program I work with resulted in health improvement in the population that we served.	n/a	5%	30%	30%	35%
I believe that working peacefully with Israeli Jewish organizations is possible.	5%	n/a	20%	30%	45%

Source: Thesis author

When surveying the Palestinian staff in the West Bank, I received 20 responses, 2 male and 18 female. Their ages ranged from 20 to 45. Most of their answers towards peace building between Israelis and Palestinians were positive. 90% agreed and strongly agreed that working with HATD has improved their organization's effectiveness. 65% agreed and strongly agreed that the groups that they work with improved their health from the program. 75% agreed and strongly agreed that working peacefully with Israeli Jewish organizations is possible. 55% agreed and strongly agreed with the following statements:

- Initiatives through HATD have the potential to provide a foundation for Israelis and Palestinians to break down barriers and begin building peace.
- Participating in the HATD program has the potential to facilitate a more positive attitude of Palestinians towards Israelis.
- By participating in this project, I have witnessed a positive change in the attitudes of Palestinians towards Israelis and Palestinians living in Israel.
- Participating in this project has the potential to help me learn and understand different viewpoints of Israelis/Palestinians.

Table 3. Summary of responses from the Palestinian Staff in Israel

Healing Across The Divides Palestinian Staff Living in Israel	2 Total Responses	1 Male 1 Female	Ages 34, 42
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Question	1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. No Opinion	4. Agree	5. Strongly Agree
	Staff 1			Staff 2	
Working in/with a HATD sponsored program has had a positive influence on my view of Israeli citizens living in Israel.	4			3	
While working in/with a HATD sponsored program, I have witnessed an increase in trust between Israeli citizens and Palestinians living in Israel.	4			3	
Working in/with a HATD sponsored program has enabled me to learn different viewpoints of Jewish citizens living in Israel.	4			5	
Working in/with a HATD sponsored program has enabled me to understand	3			4	

different viewpoints of Jewish citizens living in Israel.			
The HATD sponsored program I work with resulted in health improvement in the population that we served.	4		5
HATD sponsored programs provide a foundation for Israelis and Palestinians to break down barriers and begin building peace.	4		3
I think I can trust most Israeli citizens living in Israel.	2		n/a
The Israeli citizens are just as much victims of the conflict as Palestinians living in Israel are.	2		n/a
Working in/with a HATD sponsored program has had a positive impact on my organization in general.	4		5
I believe that working peacefully with Palestinian and Israeli organizations together is possible.	4		5

Source: Thesis author

Contrary to the Palestinian staff in the West Bank, the Palestinian staff who work with organizations in Israel were more reluctant to respond to the questionnaire. I only received two completed staff questionnaires. I received verbal feedback from two Palestinian staff that work in Israel at the seminar I attended. They indicated that many thought the questionnaires were too political. Because of the instability in the region right now, some of them did not trust where the questionnaire was coming from, even though their responses were anonymous.

Of the two staff that responded, one was male and one was female, ages 34 and 42. Overall, their responses were positive. They both agreed that working in/with a HATD sponsored program has enabled them to learn different viewpoints of Jewish citizens living in Israel. They also agreed that working in/with a HATD sponsored program has had a positive impact on their organization in general and that working peacefully with Palestinian and Israeli organizations together is possible.

However, one did not agree, and one did not answer, that they could trust most Israeli citizens living in Israel or that the Israeli citizens are just as much victims of the conflict as Palestinians living in Israel are. One person agreed and the other had no opinion regarding the following statements:

- HATD sponsored programs provide a foundation for Israelis and Palestinians to break down barriers and begin building peace.
- Working in/with a HATD sponsored program has had a positive influence on my view of Israeli citizens living in Israel.
- Working in/with a HATD sponsored program has enabled me to understand different viewpoints of Jewish citizens living in Israel.

Table 4. Summary of responses from the Palestinian Participants

Palestinian Participants	20 Total	0 Male	Ages
Living in the West Bank	Responses	20 Female	19-50

Question	1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. No Opinion	4. Agree	5. Strongly Agree
Participating in the Healing Across The Divides program has affected my view of Israelis in the West Bank.	5%	45%	25%	20%	5%
Participating in this HATD program has improved the health of me/my family.	20%	10%	20%	25%	25%
Participating in the HATD program has the potential to facilitate positive communication or interaction between Israelis and Palestinians through new intercultural programs in the future.	20%	15%	30%	20%	15%
Participating in this HATD program has the potential of increasing overall trust between Israelis and Palestinians living in the West Bank.	5%	20%	25%	30%	20%

Participating in this project has the potential for me to learn different viewpoints of Israelis/Palestinians.	15%	30%	5%	25%	25%
Participating in this program has the potential to provide a foundation for Israelis and Palestinians living in the West Bank to break down barriers and begin building peace.	10%	30%	25%	25%	10%
I would be willing to participate in a similar program if I knew I would also be working with Israelis.	15%	25%	10%	25%	25%

Source: Thesis author

Table 4 shows the Palestinian participants who live in the West Bank completed twenty questionnaires. All of them were women who participate in a program that helps them learn how to lose weight and become more aware of the negative effects of obesity. Their ages ranged from 19-50. Their responses were not as positive as the Palestinian staff. Twenty-five to fifty percent of them disagreed or strongly disagreed with all of the questions. 50% of them agreed and strongly agreed with the following statements:

- Participating in this HATD program has improved the health of me/my family.
- Participating in this HATD program has the potential of increasing overall trust between Israelis and Palestinians living in the West Bank.

- Participating in this project has the potential for me to learn different viewpoints of Israelis/Palestinians.
- I would be willing to participate in a similar program if I knew I would also be working with Israelis.

Thirty five percent of them or less agreed with the following statements:

- Participating in the HATD program has affected my view of Israelis in the West Bank.
- Participating in the HATD program has the potential to facilitate positive communication or interaction between Israelis and Palestinians through new intercultural programs in the future.
- Participating in this program has the potential to provide a foundation for Israelis and Palestinians living in the West Bank to break down barriers and begin building peace.

Even though many of them disagreed with statements that involved interactions with Israelis, it was not a surprise. Until now, the Palestinian participants have not had any contact or interactions with Israeli participants from other initiatives. Their initiative focuses mainly on educating and improving their weight and health. With the restrictions on Palestinians from the West Bank entering Israel, it is more difficult for groups that are based in the West Bank to work together with Israeli groups. This is a goal for HATD that has yet to be accomplished.

Table 5. Summary of responses from the Israeli Staff

Healing Across The Divides Israeli Staff	2 Total Responses	0 Male 2 Female	Ages 27, 31
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Question	1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. No Opinion	4. Agree	5. Strongly Agree
	Staff 1			Staff 2	
Working in/with a HATD sponsored program has had a positive influence on my view of Palestinians living in Israel.	3			5	
While working in/with a HATD sponsored program, I have witnessed an increase in trust between Israelis and Palestinians living in Israel.	3			5	
Working in/with a HATD sponsored program has enabled me to learn different viewpoints of Palestinians living in Israel.	4			5	
Working in/with a HATD sponsored program has enabled me to understand different viewpoints of Palestinians living in Israel.	4			5	

The HATD sponsored program I work with resulted in health improvement in the population that we served.	4		5
HATD sponsored programs provide a foundation for Israelis and Palestinians to break down barriers and begin building peace.	2		n/a
I think I can trust most Palestinians living in Israel.	4		4
Palestinians living in Israel can play an important peace-building role between Israeli citizens and other Palestinians living in Israel.	4		3
Working in/with a HATD sponsored program has had a positive impact on my organization in general.	4		5
I believe that working peacefully with Palestinian and Israeli organizations together is possible.	4		4

Source: Thesis author

Similar to the Palestinian staff who work with organizations in Israel, the Israeli Jewish staff were reluctant to fill out the questionnaires. I received two responses from two female staff, ages 27 and 31. They both agreed or strongly agreed with 6 out of 10 statements:

- Working in/with a HATD sponsored program has enabled me to learn different viewpoints of Palestinians living in Israel.
- Working in/with a HATD sponsored program has enabled me to understand different viewpoints of Palestinians living in Israel.
- The HATD sponsored program I work with resulted in health improvement in the population that we served.
- I think I can trust most Palestinians living in Israel.
- Working in/with a HATD sponsored program has had a positive impact on my organization in general.
- I believe that working peacefully with Palestinian and Israeli organizations together is possible.

One staff member disagreed, and the other staff members did not respond that HATD sponsored programs provide a foundation for Israelis and Palestinians to break down barriers and begin building peace. One person agreed, and the other person had no opinion, with the following statements:

- Working in/with a HATD sponsored program has had a positive influence on my view of Palestinians living in Israel.
- While working in/with a HATD sponsored program, I have witnessed an increase in trust between Israelis and Palestinians living in Israel.

- Palestinians living in Israel can play an important peace-building role between Israeli citizens and other Palestinians living in Israel.

Table 6. Summary of responses from the Israeli Participants

Healing Across The Divides Israeli	1 Total	0 Male	Age
Participants Living in Israel	Responses	1 Female	49

Question	1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. No Opinion	4. Agree	5. Strongly Agree
	Participant 1				
Participating in the HATD program funded by HATD has had a positive influence on my view of Palestinians living in Israel.		5			
Participating in the HATD program has facilitated positive communication for me with Palestinian citizens living in Israel.		4			
Participating in the HATD program has facilitated positive interaction between Palestinian citizens living in Israel and me.		4			
Participating in this project has increased overall trust between Jews and Palestinian citizens living in Israel.		4			

Participating in this project has enabled me to learn different viewpoints of Palestinian citizens in Israel.	5
Participating in this project has enabled me to understand different viewpoints of Palestinian citizens in Israel.	5
Participating in this program has built a foundation for Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel to break down barriers and begin building peace.	3
Participating in this program has improved the health of my family and me.	3
Participating in this program has the potential for providing a foundation for Israelis and Palestinians living in Israel to break down barriers and begin building peace.	4

Source: Thesis auth

Similar to the Israeli Jewish staff, neither Israeli Jewish nor Israeli Palestinian participants wanted to complete the questionnaires. It is not certain, however, I speculate that the fact that the Israeli staff and Palestinian in Israel staff did not want to complete the questionnaires likely interfered with or influenced the program participants completing them. The Israeli participant questionnaire was translated into Hebrew. The person who completed it was a 49-year-old woman. She agreed and strongly agreed with seven of the nine questions (see Table 6). She had no opinion regarding the following two statements:

- Participating in this program has built a foundation for Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel to break down barriers and begin building peace.
- Participating in this program has improved the health of my family and me.

Table 7. Summary of responses from the HATD Board Members.

HATD Board Members	7 Total Responses	3 Male 4 Female	Ages 51-79
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Question	1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. No Opinion	4. Agree	5. Strongly Agree
Participating in the Healing Across The Divides program has had a positive influence on my view of Israelis/Palestinians.	0%	0%	14%	43%	43%
Participating in the HATD program has the potential to facilitate positive communication/interaction between Israelis and Palestinians living in Israel.	0%	0%	0%	29%	71%
Participating in this HATD program has increased overall trust between Israelis and Palestinians.	0%	17%	33%	50%	0%
Participating in this program has enabled me to learn different viewpoints of Israelis/Palestinians.	0%	0%	14%	14%	71%
From my experience with HATD, the community programs that HATD supports	0%	0%	0%	43%	57%

have the potential for providing a foundation for Israelis and Palestinians to break down barriers and begin building peace.					
I would be willing to participate in a similar program if I knew I would also be working with Israelis.	15%	25%	10%	25%	25%

Source: Thesis author

Finally, I asked the board members to complete a questionnaire with similar questions to the staff and participants. I received seven out of twelve board members responses, 3 male and 4 female. They ranged from ages 51-79 and all of them live in the United States.

They completed the questionnaire online through a secure link. The board members have had varying interactions with HATD. Some of them have visited HATD programs in Israel and the West Bank and have worked with different groups, while others have only had contact through the Director, Dr. Goldfield, and other board members. Their responses overall were positive.

Eighty-five percent or more of the responses agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements:

- Participating in the Healing Across The Divides program has had a positive influence on my view of Israelis/Palestinians.

- Participating in the HATD program has the potential to facilitate positive communication/interaction between Israelis and Palestinians living in Israel.
- Participating in this program has enabled me to learn different viewpoints of Israelis/Palestinians.
- From my experience with HATD, the community programs that HATD supports have the potential for providing a foundation for Israelis and Palestinians to break down barriers and begin building peace.

Fifty percent agreed that they would be willing to participate in a similar program if they knew they would also be working with Israelis. Fifty percent agreed that participating in HATD programs increased overall trust between Israelis and Palestinians. Thirty three percent had no opinion, and 17% disagreed.

Research Limitations

One of the big limitations in my research was that much of the literature is biased due to strong opinions about the ongoing conflict. There is no middle ground around the issues and many feel very passionate and “right” about their theories and opinions around both the history and current problems. Because the conflict has been ongoing for years, many groups have been affected in different ways, which provides a basis for ongoing tension. In addition, because the Israeli Palestine conflict is a current issue, a solution has not been reached or decided. In fact, recent events in the region have caused Palestinians in the West Bank to be angry and have caused violent protests to break out. Current data

and information surrounding the problem is new and constantly being collected and documented.

A second limitation is that a significant percentage of both populations have “tuned out” to the conflict and are simply trying to live their lives in whichever way they can. Often they are not interested in engaging with other groups outside of their own immediate community due to fear. A third limitation is using the appropriate language when describing the Israel Palestine conflict. Since many Palestinians will not acknowledge the formation of a Jewish state and vice versa, it can be difficult when explaining the conflict. In addition, many people on both sides of the issue find the problems so personally devastating that they felt questions around the issue were invasive.

A fourth limitation was that I only received one completed Israeli participant questionnaire, 2 Israeli staff questionnaires, and 2 Palestinian staff living in Israel questionnaires. When I attended the meeting, a couple of the staff explained that many of the Israeli participants and the staff felt that the questionnaire was too political. They also did not trust where the questionnaire was coming from and some thought that the Israeli government requested it. Unfortunately, with such a discrepancy in the quantity of answers, it limited the ability to make an accurate analysis to make comparisons between the groups.

Chapter VI

Research Conclusions

This chapter explains the conclusions that I found from my research. It restates my research questions, objectives, and suggestions for research going forward. It also provides my final thoughts on the project as a whole.

Research Objectives

This research sought to find whether improving healthcare through HATD community based programs in Israel and the West Bank can help to improve public health, break down relational borders between Israelis and Palestinians, and facilitate peace building between them. I used the following questions to guide my research:

- Does attempting to improve public health for people living in Israel and Palestine through Healing Across The Divides' engagement in the community facilitate peace building?
- Does bringing groups together through public health services and education break down tension and barriers?
- Can cooperation between organizations in Israel and Palestine change the attitudes of citizens who suffer from the Israel Palestine conflict.

Research Findings

The fact that most of the Israeli staff, Palestinian staff in Israel, and Israeli participants did not fill out the questionnaire tells us that the Israelis would prefer not to engage with issues related to the conflict at this time. Because of the current state of the region, many of them are trying to just live their lives and do not want to participate in activities that involve a political stance. Furthermore, they are hesitant to trust any information that is related to the conflict, and therefore preferred not to respond.

A key finding was based on the importance to test whether or not the HATD initiatives increase willingness on the part of either community leaders and/or participants to consider engaging with the “other.” Both Israeli staff, Palestinian staff living in Israel, and 75% of Palestinian staff agreed that working peacefully with Palestinian and Israeli organizations is possible. Half of the Palestinian participants said they would be willing to participate in a similar program if they knew they would be working with Israelis. The Israeli participant did not respond.

Comparative Analysis Supporting My Thesis

The following three sub-sections discuss suggestions to improve public health, break down relational borders, and facilitate peace-building activities.

Improve Public Health

In regards to the program participants, 50% of the Palestinian participants said that their HATD program improved their health and/or their families’ health. The Israeli participant had no opinion. In regards to the program staff, 65% of Palestinian staff

agreed that the health of the groups that they work with improved. In addition, both Israeli staff and Palestinian staff who live in Israel said they agreed and strongly agreed that the health improved in the groups that they serve. One of the staff commented that hundreds of women are now more aware of the risks of obesity, and that participants increased their awareness about unhealthy behaviors such as smoking, drinking alcohol, and the negative effects on the body (Appendix 3). Therefore, HATD assists in improving the health of individuals through supporting community based organizations.

Break Down Relational Borders between Israelis and Palestinians

In regards to the Palestinian participants, 50% of them said that participating in the HATD program has the potential to learn and understand different viewpoints of Israelis and to increase overall trust between Israelis and Palestinians living in the West Bank. The Israeli participant also agreed with both of these statements in addition to agreeing that HATD has facilitated positive communication for her with Palestinians living in Israel. The Israeli participant and 35% of the Palestinian participants agreed that participating in the HATD program has the potential to facilitate positive communication or interaction between Israelis and Palestinians through new programs in the future, which would be a step towards working together and breaking down relational borders.

Fifty- five percent of Palestinian staff in the West Bank, both Israeli Jewish staff, both Palestinian staff in Israel, Board members and both of the representatives all agreed or strongly agreed that working with HATD has helped them to learn and understand different viewpoints of Palestinians and Israeli Jews. One Israeli staff said she strongly agreed that she had seen an increase in trust between Israelis and Palestinians living in

Israel. Fifty- five percent of Palestinian staff said they have witnessed a positive change in the attitudes of Palestinians towards Israelis and Palestinians living in Israel. One of the Israeli staff and one of the Palestinian staff in Israel also agreed. The two representatives both agreed that working with HATD programs has positively influenced their own views and attitudes towards Israelis and Palestinians.

Positive communication, interaction, and an increase in trust to some degree are elements that are needed and are present for breaking down relational borders and moving towards peace (Appendix 3). While not all of the staff and participants agreed 100%, the majority agreed that HATD can facilitate, or already has facilitated, an increase in positive relations between the groups in Israel and Palestine, as well as an understanding in views of the other. One of the staff members suggested organizing community dialogues for people to share their stories to build empathy. A second employee agreed that HATD should continue to facilitate networking between the staff in order to continue learning about one another (Appendix 3).

Facilitate Peace-Building Between Israelis and Palestinians

Only 35% of Palestinian participants, along with the Israeli participant, agreed that participating in the HATD program has the potential to provide a foundation for Israelis and Palestinians living in the West Bank to break down barriers and begin building peace. Both of the Palestinian staff in Israel responded to this question. One agreed and the other had no opinion. 60% of the Palestinian staff in the West Bank and 100% of the Board members thought the HATD initiatives have the potential to provide a foundation for Israelis and Palestinians to break down barriers and begin building peace.

Of the two Israeli staff, one did not respond to the question and the other disagreed that HATD programs provide a foundation for Israelis and Palestinians to break down barriers and begin building peace. In regards to the same question, the Israeli representative agreed with this statement, while the West Bank representative disagreed.

Some of the HATD board members commented that building peace in the region at this time seems only possible through the communities from the bottom up. They thought that not becoming focused on politics and peace building, but continuing to focus on improving the health of the participants should remain at the core of the company's mission. They were in agreement that continuing to facilitate joint workshops in a neutral area in order to exchange experiences and knowledge is important (Appendix 3).

As previously mentioned, Goldfield believes that although peace building is a long-term process, it is possible to create lasting effects and to promote peace building in both communities (HATD, 2004). While peace building on a societal scale is not occurring in the current situation, the data shows that HATD is moving in the right direction by facilitating joint meetings, cross-communication, and shared resources between Israeli and Palestinian staff. These actions reflect the tools needed to build peace that were previously mentioned: "strengthening communities, communicating knowledge, personalizing the enemy, extending solidarity by use of health professional clinical skills, constructing common goals, and non-cooperation and dissent" (Goldfield, 2011, p. 9).

Most of the groups and many of the staff refused to respond, (Nehad/Patrick, personal communication, December 5, 2017) and many of the responses did not indicate that HATD initiatives are currently facilitating peace building. However, the research

indicated that the initiatives are improving the health of their participants and have caused a positive change in the attitudes towards one another. It also shows that the HATD initiatives have the potential to provide a foundation for Israelis and Palestinians to break down barrier and begin building peace in the future.

Recommendations

I recommend that Healing Across The Divides replicate this research every year. This will help to monitor change, positive or negative, in the relations and create steps towards peace building between HATD funded organizations. With more familiarity of the questionnaire, the staff and participants will become more trusting and accustomed to it over time. Since this was the first year that any data was collected, the questionnaires should be modified and tailored specifically to each program. I would also recommend changing the language to make the questions less political. Having the community staff on board and helping the participants fill out the questionnaires is critical since they already have a relationship built and are trusted.

I would also encourage HATD to continue to facilitate communication and interaction between the groups who are willing as much as possible. Having the twice-yearly seminars with Israeli and Palestinian grantees that are willing to meet and encouraging staff to communicate via social media platforms and attend other group events are other ways to create a trusting environment between the groups. If one group has a positive experience through these interactions, other groups may follow their example.

Final Thoughts

The work that Healing Across The Divides is doing in the Israeli and Palestinian communities is moving those who are involved in the conflict in the right direction towards peace building. The region is presently going through a difficult time with tension and fighting on top of a long complicated history. To many, peace seems so far away, and to some, even impossible. There has been over a century of battles over identity and land, and neither side is willing to let go of what they believe to be the truth.

My research is significant in that it provided HATD with information about how the work they are doing is affecting participants and staff involved in the initiatives and their relations with each other. Since HATD was founded in 2004, no such data has been collected. Although many people refused to respond to the questionnaires, and there is still room for improvement, planting the seeds with the notions of peace building and breaking down relational barriers is a way to open the door to positive change. By attending the seminar in Israel, along with the questionnaires and interviews, positive results have been identified, as well as areas that are open for improvement going forward.

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Appendix I

In-person interview on December 5, 2017, in Jerusalem, Israel

I interviewed the two representatives for Healing Across The Divides. Nehad is the Palestinian representative who coordinates the programs in the West Bank. Patrick is the Israeli representative who coordinates the programs in Israel. The answers are paraphrased and not direct quotes.

Q1: How long have you worked for Healing Across The Divides?

N: 1 year and 9 months

P: Over 6 years

Q2: What are your thoughts on the meeting that occurred today?

N: I thought the meeting was good. It was different with people from the West Bank working together with Israelis. It was good because it was not political.

P: I thought the meeting was the climax of what we are trying to do at Healing Across The Divides. It supports the vision by bringing together people not paying attention to the culture, but discussing common issues that each group has. Hopefully they learned new ideas that they can go back to the communities and share with their groups.

Q3: What are your biggest challenges?

N: For us, it is difficult for people in the West Bank to visit. We need a permit and for Israelis to come to the West Bank is even more difficult. It is a very sensitive time in their communities. One woman even shared with me that she could not tell her husband that she was going to Jerusalem today for a meeting with Israelis because he would not have let her go.

P: My biggest challenge is having staff meet deadlines that I set. I want my staff to see that projects and requests that I have are for learning to improve and to be used as tools, instead of being a burden to them. This includes having them fill out the questionnaire related to HATD.

Q4: Do you enjoy working with Healing Across The Divides?

N: Yes, I like working to improve health in Israelis and Palestinians.

P: Yes, the work is rather therapeutic and keeps me sane in an insane world. It is what gives me a bit of hope.

Q5: What does a typical day look like for you?

N: We try to look for new organizations to work with. We send emails, go to visit sites, write proposals. We also monitor money to make sure it is not being used for political reasons. Patrick and I meet in person about every six weeks to discuss work, but we are also friends.

P: I spend a lot of my time evaluating reports we receive from the organizations, also visit sites and possible new organizations. I communicate a lot with Norbert, the founder, and am currently organizing documents that show data from 2017. I think that the relationship that Nehad and I have and show to our organizations as friends is a model for the groups that we work with.

Q6: How many organizations do you currently manage?

N: I work with 5.

P: I also have 5 that I am managing.

Q7: What was the response/reaction to the questionnaires that were distributed to your groups?

N: One group is new and just signed with us last week so they were not included. Group 2 works with children, so they did not qualify. Group 3 did not want to participate because they thought it was too political. Group 4 had members that were interested, however their organization thought the questionnaires were too political and did not allow them to respond. Group 5 had no issues responding.

P: Two of my groups work with African Asylum seekers so they did not qualify to respond. One group has just newly signed so they did not participate. The other three groups were mostly against participating. Some of them asked how peacebuilding is connected to their community center. Others were very cautious and are trying not to take sides. They thought the questions were too political and didn't necessarily even trust where the questionnaire was coming from. I am just happy that it opened the door to the ideas and planted a seed in their minds. Now in the future, they can start thinking about what they are doing and how their actions are connected to peace.

Appendix II

Phone interview on December 17, 2017 with Founder and Director of Healing Across The Divides, Dr. Norbert Goldfield.

I thought it was important to interview the man who founded Healing Across The Divides in 2004. It was interesting to gain his perspective on the current situation, in addition to how it has changed over the last 13 years since he started the organization.

Q1: How has HATD changed/evolved since 2004?

Organizationally we have evolved. I think we have gotten better not worse. There is no question that since starting the organization, the situation between Palestinians living in Israel and Israeli Jews and Palestinians in the West Bank has gotten worse. Those who are committed, and believe the conflict is worth addressing, and believe that it is a barrier in the Middle East, make it worth still pursuing.

Some ways the organization has improved are the following:

When we started, we did not have representatives and we do now. When we started, we had 1-year grants. We learned that in order to get anything accomplished, we needed more time, so now our grants are for 3 years. We always have insisted on measurable results and we continue to do that. We feel that if the information isn't useful for the organizations, then it isn't useful for us. We started HATD with three projects, and we now have 10. Ten is definitely our maximum. In the beginning, it was hard to get projects in the West Bank and now we have five. It also took several years to get a stable representative in the West Bank.

Q2: What are your goals for HATD in 2018?

Organizationally, we want to pursue development/fund-raising more effectively. In regards to fundraising for the programs, many Americans don't want to give money to the conflict on either side. We need to find new ways of being financially strong. In addition, I want to focus on 1 or 2 projects in the West Bank and make them be sustainable after we finish our three year grant. I also want to keep the other programs sustainable and get good results from them.

I want to run a successful study tour this spring. The study tour is a source of support to our programs – both financially and organizationally. Some who attended in the past are

coming again and, in fact, two individuals are coming earlier to make a documentary film on Healing Across The Divides

I would like to get our work into Gaza, however it is very complicated and I, myself, can't go there. We work with an organization in the West Bank with offices in Gaza so I want to see if there can be an expansion of the existing program in the West Bank into Gaza.

Q3: What are your thoughts on the joint meeting that occurred on December 5, 2017?

Everyone left the meeting feeling good. I saw it as peacebuilding in action. It was real and legitimate, and what can be done at this time. A good example is that some of the Jewish women in the room had never sat in a room with Palestinian women from the West Bank. Patrick and Nehad work well together and are good examples because today it is not that common to see an Israeli Jew working well in a good relationship with an individual from the West Bank. Also from the meeting, at least two groups, one from Israel and one from the West Bank, are going to work together in the future. Also from the meeting came various ways of communicating via social media like through WhatsApp groups, Facebook, etc.

Q4: Do you agree? Working with HATD programs has the potential to facilitate positive communication/interaction between Israelis and Palestinians living in Israel.

Yes, I have seen it happen at our meetings.

Q5: What suggestions do you have on how to increase peacebuilding between Israeli Jews and Palestinians living in the West Bank?

I believe that I can do my part to try to help and make a difference through HATD.

Q6: While working in this organization, have you seen an increased overall trust between Israelis and Palestinians?

No. However, that being said, the groups that have worked together have established trust, but overall no.

Appendix III

Responses to open ended questions on the questionnaires that support my thesis:

Q: The HATD sponsored program I work with resulted in health improvement in the population that we served.

Hundreds of women are now more aware of risks of obesity.

They became more aware of unhealthy behaviors such as smoking, drinking alcohol, and the negative effects on the body.

Working on common issues and problems such as health problems, diseases, and encouraging people towards a healthier lifestyle.

By providing awareness campaigns and nutritional sessions among the people in need, which resulted in a healthier lifestyle

Q: How can HATD break down relational borders between Israelis and Palestinians?

Through networking between HATD grantees and learning about each other. Also, HATD shares experiences of others and makes the networking happen.

Coordination and communication give good results

In my mind, communication between individuals has the potential to grow into peace building on an individual level.

Talking and meeting, more activities, increase similar projects

Create joint health care and wellness exercises

One possibility is to organize community dialogues where individuals share their stories- the power of story is largely untapped in this conflict. Sharing stories builds empathy and uncovers commonalities.

Q: What can HATD do to improve its ability to facilitate peacebuilding between Israelis and Palestinians?

Networking among NGOs and providing regular meetings for those NGOs to help understand and update all of these organizations on the current issues.

Stay out of the politics and just deliver services that improve the lives of all the people in the community.

Sharing tools and information, support financially activity based on partnership, marketing in the field what we do, having a bi national annual conference on community health

In the region, changes seem to be possible right now only through communities (bottom up)

I do not have any suggestions because as long as there is an occupation real peace building cannot happen. With Israel being the occupying power, the playing field is not equal and not conducive for peace building at this time.

Conduct joint workshops in a neutral area. Exchange of experiences especially of institutional work, joint scientific conferences

Meeting with Palestinians who live in Israel and with Jewish people who believe in our rights to freedom.

You should discuss concrete solution to ending the occupation. Peace building cannot happen when there is an occupation.

I think that for organizations such as HATD, the goal of peace building must remain secondary to a primary goal of improving health and wellbeing in communities. By increasing communications between grantees, we increase the possibility of peace building, but if we elevate peace building to a primary goal, we risk sabotaging our primary goal and we risk being looked at as an organization wishing to "impose" its peace building agenda on unwilling or at least unready populations.