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The Psychological Effects of Israel's Security Narrative on Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza and its Implications for Conflict Management

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Introduction

People see what terrorism can do. They don't want the options for terrorists to come here, and that's why the people of Israel want the wall. They want to prevent the children to die [sic] in these bombings. -Eli Beer, Israeli (Online NewsHour: The Barrier, 2004)

First of all, this wall doesn't secure them. For every action there is a reaction. It does not protect them. There are different ways of entering. I'm not one of those who carry weapons and go to fight, but some people will do anything to reach the other side. -Omar Al Baz, Palestinian (Online NewsHour: The Barrier, 2004)

Israel began constructing a separation barrier in 2003 in response to increasing terrorism and suicide bombings by the Palestinians during the Second Intifada (Dowty, 2005, p. 171). The separation barrier is an elaborate 400-mile security system of concrete walls, fences, barricades and checkpoints built to protect Israeli citizens (Vick & Arik, 2010). The wall portion of the barrier was constructed of thick reinforced concrete, stands approximately 25 feet tall, and separates the West Bank and Israel boundaries. There is bitter contention over whether the barrier was properly placed along the official partition boundaries. The concrete barriers were built in the denser populated areas along the West Bank, while a series of electronic fences were constructed in the less populated areas (Author Field Notes, 8 June 2010). A written description of the wall cannot convey the magnitude of the size of the wall. I saw the wall for the first time as a participant in a study abroad in Israel in June 2010. The enormous, gray concrete wall was daunting as it jutted up from the arid land and almost appeared misplaced on the landscape. The wall had an imposing presence when seen for the first time in Jerusalem. The wall created dark shadows on the streets as it blocked the sun. As the bus navigated the city streets, the dark gray wall obstructed any view. Traffic was forced to take a series of streets to circumvent the barrier. Streets that were once thoroughfares were now dead-end. It was difficult to determine if the wall was for keeping people out or for caging people in (Author Field Notes, 8 & 14 June 2010).

Palestinians call the security system of concrete and fencing the Separation Wall. The Israelis call it the Separation and Security Barrier. The diametrically opposed perspectives of the concrete divide are symbolic of the divide between the people. The term "Separation Barrier" is used by Israelis and represents to this author their attitude of wanting to be shielded away from the Palestinians. The term "Separation Wall," as used by Palestinians, is representative to this author of their perception of being encaged and walled off by the Israelis. The Wall, as it will be referenced henceforward for simplicity and neutrality, has evolved into a symbol and metaphor for the division of two people living on one land.

The Wall is the physical manifestation of Israel’s security narrative. The Wall is a protective barrier for the Israelis who feel vulnerable to terrorist attack by the Palestinians. The threat of being shot or mortared is a deeply felt fear for most Israelis. This emotion of fear may be the biggest barrier to resolving the protracted conflict.

The Wall creates a cocoon of security for Israelis. The deep sense of security Israelis feel since the construction of the Wall was captured in my field notes. A Rabbi, who works for Rabbis for Human Rights and was close by when a suicide bomber attacked at a nearby café, stated, “I feel safer with the Wall, especially after the Second Intifada.” Despite his grassroots work for human rights and peace, the Rabbi says because of that experience, he believes the Wall is necessary to give Israelis a sense of security and protection from terrorist attacks (13 June 2010).

The Wall is a crucial piece of Israel’s political platform and supports its security narrative. According to the Foundations for Middle East Peace, the Separation Barrier was a political party platform issue in the 2006 election. Three of the political parties vehemently advocated for the barrier and its ability to separate boundaries and yield a more secure Jerusalem. The Kadima Party made completing the construction of the barrier around Jerusalem one of its primary priorities, if elected (2006). The Likud Party acknowledged the barrier was successful in establishing a boundary and deterring terrorism, but it alone did not prevent terrorists from entering Israel (2006). The Shas Party espoused the belief that separation to prevent terrorist entry was critical, especially since Hamas’ rise to power (2006). Only the Meretz Party acknowledged the negative impact the barrier had on the Palestinian people: “From the outset, the separation fence was a mistake. It is not possible to have a wall in the heart of a city. This is a crazy thing that creates today tremendous damage to the Palestinians. We have to erect a security unit that will monitor the borders in Jerusalem” (Foundation for Middle East Peace, 2006, p. 9).

The Wall limits the movement of Palestinians and any necessary economic resources into the West Bank and Gaza. The Israelis constructed the Wall because they feel *insecure* and want to control where Palestinians could go and to monitor the resources that may be used in terrorist activity against them. However, the Wall itself is not enough to make them feel secure. Israel constructed manned checkpoints as a second layer of security to restrict the movement of Palestinians into Israel. Israel’s need to establish an absolute secure environment is supported in Joanna Long’s (2006) article, *Border Anxiety in Palestine-Israel*” where she explains:

This is precisely what the new “security fence” is designed to prevent: the leaking back inside of that which was cast out so that Israel could live, a leak which would contaminate the Israeli body and question its integrity. “Suicide bombings” expose the border between Israel and Palestine as permeable, fragile, “loose” and therefore require reinforcement, in the form of a wall, to seal and secure that leaky border. (p. 112)

The security narrative, actualized through actions such as mandatory military service and building the separation wall and checkpoints, has become the national ethos.

However, the focus on Israeli security has paradoxically created an insecure environment for Palestinians. According to Salim Tamari, Institute of Jerusalem Studies (2004),

In some unexpected way, the fence is galvanizing people against Israel and away from internal disputes, which is a situation I don't think foreseen by Israel. So in a way, the wall may indirectly bring about political changes, which in the long run could be good, because it will focus on the situation of occupation. It will highlight the segmentation and apartheid situation that Palestinians are living, and mobilize more and more people against it. (Online NewsHour: The Barrier, 2004)

Israel's security narrative has become the metaphorical building block of the Wall because of the fear and vulnerability many still feel. The feelings of fear and vulnerability justify Israel's need to build a secure state for its citizens. All states want security for their citizens. Nevertheless, when the security of one's state is at the economic and psychological expense of another group of people, there will likely be negative consequences and outcomes. The situation becomes a security paradox. The attempts by Israel to create long-term security may actually create more insecurity. As literature will support, as a partial consequence of the Wall, Palestinians have been forced to endure economic, health and security hardships. Palestinians often react to protect their culture, their way of life, their society, or their survival. The Wall has made the Palestinians "invisible to Israeli population...by an intentional crippling of the economy; the strangling of access to food, water, medicine, and education; and the imposition of a sense of isolation and political impotence" (Bowman, 2004, p. 151).

Palestinians cannot equally compete with the powerful and influential Israel because they do not have the resources to do so. As a result, Palestinians experience fear and humiliation as a response to the actions constructed out of Israel's security narrative. The Wall was constructed from Israel's desire to protect and create a secure environment for its citizens. While the physical manifestation of the Israeli security narrative was the separation barrier, conflict, fear, and insecurity were the actual building blocks used to construct the Wall.

Jewish history is filled with conflict and violence that culminated in the Holocaust. Jews were given a portion of Palestinian land in 1948 by the United Nations as a place to establish a Jewish State. As a result, Palestinians lost land, homes, livelihoods, and social networks. Consequently, the Israel-Palestinian conflict ensued.

The Israel-Palestinian conflict remains a protracted conflict despite multiple international attempts to build peace. The deep-rooted sense of division can be summarized in diverging Israeli and Palestinian views leading up to the 1948 formation of the State of Israel. For Israel, May 14, 1948 is celebrated as the day of Independence; for the Palestinians, it is lamented as al Naqba or the Catastrophe. Regardless of international attempts to garner a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Territories for the past 60 years, the conflict has continued and escalated over the years. There was the War of 1948, Sinai War of 1956, Six Day War of 1967, Yom Kippur War of 1973, War with Hezbollah in 2006, and two violent Palestinian uprisings: the First Intifada between 1987-1993 and the Second Intifada between 2000-2006 (Little, 2007). Frequent Israeli air strikes in Gaza and active Palestinian terrorism, including the use of suicide bombers, continue to be publicized as contemporary news. There have been glimmers of hope for conflict resolution with diplomatic summits and accords, but even after preliminary agreements, conflict continues.

After attending the St. Mary's University International Relations study abroad to Israel in June 2010, I observed one primary theme that resonated amongst Israelis and Palestinians: security. A second

theme that resonated, amongst Palestinians, was injustice. The extremely personal and intimate responses from the Israelis and Palestinians, who participated in our learning endeavor, were indicative of the deep emotional and cognitive effects of years of violent conflict and tension. Many on both sides of the conflict expressed a deep level of humiliation, vulnerability, and fear. Israelis need to *feel* secure, yet, so do Palestinians. “Insecurity” for Palestinians is the Wall and Israeli military manned checkpoints that restrict their movement and inhibit their development as a society. The Wall destroyed Palestinian homes, land, and social ties. Palestinian freedom of movement, economic development, and ability to form a state are now dependent on the security interests of Israel. Moreover, though the Western world speaks, promotes, and actively supports Israel’s security, a collective voice advocating for the security guarantees of the Palestinians remains grossly underdeveloped.

The need for security is a primary Israeli narrative. Many of Israel’s policies, since its formation as a State, have been security focused (Bar-Tal & Teichman, 2005). Because of the security narrative, Palestinians live under occupation and endure the consequences of occupation. This paper will explore the psychological effects of Israel’s security narrative on Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza and its implications for conflict management.

Methodology

A literature review and discursive analysis of various published texts, official reports, websites, and newspaper articles were analyzed to support the thesis. Additionally, recorded narratives, including personal interviews and personal observations as part of the St. Mary’s University International Relations Master’s Program Israel Study Abroad from 5-16 June 2010, were incorporated into the thesis to support the hypothesis that Israel’s security narrative produces negative psychological effects on Palestinians.

Israel’s Security Narrative: The Blocks for the Building of the Wall

Israel’s security narrative is well documented in both peer-reviewed journals and textbook research and is extensively expressed by participants in my study abroad classroom and in personal interactions. Ethnic and experiential narratives are culturally and socially important as they “identify which elements of shared culture and what interpretation of history bind the group together and distinguish it from others” (Kaufman, 2009, p. 404). Narratives can be a nation’s link to its heritage and it can define a nation’s identity. State identity will lay the foundation for their purpose and inspire its defense posture. According to Kaufman, “the symbolic politics theory of ethnic war [as] a key cause of war is the existence of a group narrative justifying hostility toward the ethnic adversary” (p. 404).

There are also psychological explanations for war. Abraham Maslow identified the pyramid of needs—five levels of needs built upon in order to achieve the pinnacle of self-actualization. The stages or “hierarchy” of needs identified by Maslow start at the base and move to the pinnacle as each is realized or fulfilled. The needs are physical needs (biological needs of food, water, shelter), safety (includes security), affection and belongingness (love), esteem (self-esteem/respect for others), and the pinnacle, self-actualization (Cashman, 2000). Psychologists have identified three of these needs as relevant to politics: self-affection, self-esteem (dignity), and self-actualization (p. 38). Power, security

and control are other needs identified as relevant to politics (p. 38). In the Maslow theoretical construct, once an individual reaches self-actualization by fulfilling the physical and psychological needs for security, belongingness, and self-esteem, he or she is thought to be more trusting of his or her environment and will likely oppose any type of force. If needs are not met, and self-esteem is low, individuals are more apt to be anxious, hostile and uncooperative and more likely to support the use of force (p. 39).

It is important to understand how Israel's need for preserving a Jewish State identity and sustaining an environment of security assurance is intrinsically foundational to its narrative. As research will indicate, these needs have contributed to the protracted conflict with the Palestinians, and metaphorically, provided the foundation stones that would eventually form the Wall. According to Moller (1999):

When two actors, be they states, nations or even individuals, have come to regard each other as potential enemies, both tend to take steps for their own protection...a vicious circle often results which may manifest itself...in a growing oppression that spurs rebellious action which may well become violent and nasty, 'requiring' even more severe oppression, etc. (p. 3)

Israel's security narrative is based on a long history of violence against Jews in the form of pogroms and persecution, culminating with the Holocaust. This violent history becomes metaphorical building blocks for the Wall. The progressive security narrative, espoused by the Israeli Jews for the past century, is encapsulated by the words of Tolan (2006):

The Holocaust survivors often represented the shame of Jews going like sheep to the slaughter...the phrase *Never again* was not only a promise by Jews not to repeat the past; it indicated a desire, rooted in shame, to distance themselves from the image of the victim. (p. 119)

However, many Jews did see themselves as victims, yet "only a part of the victimization came at the hands of Muslims or Arabs, but the past left a frame of reference in which Arab attacks today are seen as a continuation of the same unreasoning hatred of Jews" (Dowty, 2005, p. 221).

Many Israelis continue to see themselves as victims and confess still feeling vulnerable. Dowty (2005) points out that Israelis "do not see themselves as being so powerful, but still feel quite vulnerable" (p. 206). The Jews have felt, since the days of Zionist Theodore Herzl, that a Jewish homeland was needed to give protection to the Jews. The land of Palestine was to again become that Jewish homeland. The land of Palestine was the home of the most sacred land for the Jews and home to their revered Temple Mount.

The narrative of security has been infused in the Jewish mindset through the extensive history of violence and genocide aimed directly at the Jews and has produced a security dilemma environment. Therefore, according to Rotberg (2006), "achieving a sense of security, one of the basic Zionist reasons for returning to Israel and establishing a Jewish state, became the central need and value...the status of a cultural master-symbol in the Israeli-Jewish ethos. Israeli society became a 'nation under arms...living always, in a 'dormant war'" (p. 27).

The ethnic security dilemma is not a new concept. In the article “Narratives and Symbols in Violent Mobilization: The Palestinian-Israeli Case,” Stuart Kaufman (2009) quotes a study by Jack Snyder and Robert Jervis, two noted security dilemma researchers, who defined the ethnic security dilemma and how it can produce hostile narratives: “in virtually every case...the security fears of the parties to civil conflict were intertwined with their predatory goals” (p. 406). The study found that in ethnic dilemmas, there is a predatory and security component. In some instances, the predatory component may be the motive that produces a security narrative. On the other hand, one’s security fear may produce predators, who are “defined as actors who prefer exploiting others to cooperating with them, even when short-run security threats are small” (p. 406).

There was a simmering desire by Zionists to establish a Jewish homeland after years of persecution and pogroms. Theodore Herzl was politically savvy and realized that previous attempts to establish a homeland were likely unsuccessful because they lacked solidarity and focus. Jewish victimization and insecurity were the necessary impetus to put the plans in solid motion. The principles of Zionism are based on the Jewish need to establish a sovereign homeland as a place of refuge and safety for all Jews. Their safety and survival were contingent on establishing a place of refuge because they were living in an anti-Jewish world (p. 416). The Holocaust was the trigger that drove the United Nations (UN) to support partitioning the land of Palestine to give the Jews their safe haven. Additionally, the Jewish community had the political backing needed to formally establish the State of Israel (p. 416).

The Israeli narrative also incorporated the deep-seeded sense “that [since] Israel was born into an uncharitable, predatory environment...[and] that Zionist efforts at compromise and conciliation were rejected by the Arabs...[who were] hell-bent on the destruction of Israel,” (p.416) their only alternative was to be steadfast in the defense of their State. This narrative produced the “tough and self-sufficient ‘new Jew’” (p. 416). No longer would Jews be seen as weak. Jews would now be seen as strong and determined as they defended their homeland against all hostilities.

Fear undergirded the security narrative and defined how many Israelis feel on a daily basis. Moaz and McCauley (2005), in their article “Psychological Correlates of Support for Compromise: A Polling Study of Jewish-Israeli Attitudes toward Solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict” insist it is not the fear but the perceived threat that determines the response behavior (p. 793). The Israeli security narrative can be linked to the threat they feel towards preserving their very existence. A threat instills fear, and the fear can produce a correlating self-protection behavioral response. One of the study’s findings, which negatively correlated Israeli zero-sum perceptions (we win or they win, no compromise) with whether or not Israelis support a compromise “was associated with believing that Palestinians hate Israelis and would destroy Israel if they could” (p. 802).

Current threats also continue to perpetuate the security narrative. According to Sara Jones (2010) in her coverage of “Israel’s National Security: The Great Debates” for the Nixon Center,

The threats to national security being discussed by the upper echelon of the Israeli defense community include the nuclear threat, conventional threats, the threat of terrorism posed by state and non-state actors, and the challenge to Israeli legitimacy. These threats emanate from the following state and non-state actors: Iran, Syria, HAMAS/Hezbollah, and the West Bank and the Palestinian Authority. The challenge to Israeli legitimacy stems from its continued occupation of Arab territory and the suffering of the Arab civilian population.

The emotional impact of the security threat could be heard in the voices of many of the Israeli Jews encountered during my study abroad. While discussing security with the students, the tone of the discussion turned to fear of possible attacks from Palestinians or from outside Middle Eastern countries and fear of the Arab rhetoric of pushing the Jews “into the sea.” This rhetoric was taken literally and seriously: “The outside sees us as very strong—Israeli Jews. We see ourselves as weak and vulnerable” (Field Notes, 7 June 2010). For Israeli Jews, history has shown what happens if they do not take the threats seriously—pogroms, the Holocaust, and suicide bombings. Therefore, they take any rhetoric threatening their security seriously. Their existence depends on it. “Israel does not think long-term” (Field Notes, 7 June 2010). Israel is concerned about its security now. The ongoing narrative, justified in the minds of Israelis because of their extensive history of violent persecution, is a strong impetus for many of the security policies and measures aimed at ensuring the Palestinians and the Arab world do not succeed with actualizing their threatening rhetoric.

Israel’s steadfast security narrative has evolved into a progressively staunch security strategy that attempts to create a state where Jews can live free of fear. “There is tension between the historically fragile Jewish Identity and the Zionist claim of political, religious, and physical strength. The myth of strength was created because of the weakness (and fear of weakness)...” (West, 2003, p. 9). As a result, security drives many governmental and policy decisions becoming “a sort of rubber stamp for many kinds of laws, policies, and actions...” (Bar-Tal & Teichman, 2005, p. 118). Israel implemented compulsory military service and became known as a “nation in arms” or “nation in uniform” (p. 118). Furthermore, because security was given the highest priority, Bar-Tal and Teichman also noted that military service and military strength are celebrated and embedded as a societal ethos. Israel would fully support and build the highest caliber military to deter any aggression. It was not only Israel’s right but also Israel’s duty to defend against threats, including any attacks by Arabs. Israel should never rely or depend on any outside military support for defense. Territorial integrity remained the key to maintaining and sustaining national security (p. 119).

Bar-Tal and Teichman declared Israel would defend itself and deter any aggression to protect the citizens and the State of Israel. One extreme measure to deter aggression and create a more secure Israel was constructing the Security Barrier. The history of violent persecution formed the building blocks that later created the concrete barrier wall that would be used to shield and protect Israel from the people who threaten its security: the Palestinians. The Wall and checkpoints that are to provide Israelis a security cocoon has paradoxically created a Palestinian insecurity cage. Palestinian insecurity, created by the wall and checkpoints, may actually impede Israel’s security and thus, also impede any progress towards conflict resolution.

Psychological Effects of Israel’s Security Narrative: The Palestinian Response

We certainly are in dire straits in every possible way. We are in a state of siege, cut off from the rest of the world, and internally we are in a state of fragmentation. You're seeing children with malnutrition. We've never had that in Palestine. Polio, measles, things like that that are coming back again because with the siege and the fragmentation, people are unable to carry out a massive national vaccination program—Hanan Ashrawi (Online NewsHour: The Barrier, 2004).

The psychological effects on Palestinians from actions induced by Israel’s security narrative have produced a myriad of negative emotions including fear and humiliation. The psychological effects of conflict on populations are well documented in the literature. Various psychological theoretical constructs have been utilized to analyze the impact of conflict on both individuals and on civil society. However, when studying psychological effects of conflict on populations, there are significant limitations in the research methodology. Populations living in conflict and experiencing traumatic events can have recall bias of events. Individuals react to stressful situations differently and may make associations that are not causally related (Do & Iyer, 2009, p. 7). These limitations and biases were considered when examining the research literature.

There are multiple emotions, including fear and humiliation that the Palestinians express in response to Israel’s security narrative. The emotional responses are intertwined, not independent, of each other. Palestinian emotions of fear and humiliation are linked to feelings of non-identity and powerlessness. Fear can elicit many behavioral responses, including acts of violence. Fear is an emotional response to a perceived threat (Moaz & McCauley, 2005, p. 793). The foundation of Israeli fear was understood from their history and developed into their current security narrative because of the perceived threat by Palestinians. However, often overlooked in the discourse on this protracted conflict is the Palestinian fear. Palestinians also experience fear. There are many causes, including the loss or lack of identity. According to Helena Lindholm Schulz (2004), fear comes when there is a feeling of loss or of troubled identity and in “protracted conflicts, both parties regard themselves in terms of victims...feelings of a humiliated, threatened, or denied identity... Israeli and Palestinian identities represent troubled identities” (p. 89). The core of the Palestinian identity is one of suffering, which is symbolized with the al Nakba or “catastrophe” narrative. While May 14, 1948 was the day of Independence for Jews, it was *the catastrophe* for Palestinians (p. 90). The Palestinian identity changed on May 14, 1948 as their homeland was partitioned by the United Nations and Israel announced its independence. Israelis celebrated their new statehood, while the Palestinians lamented the lost land, denial of state sovereignty, and the loss of the prospect of establishing a national identity. The preceding years were filled with anguish, as Palestinians failed to see the UN plan for two states realized. Palestinians spent years under the control of Jordan and Egypt, who imposed their state and ethnic identities on Palestinians. Even today, over 60 years after the UN partition, there is no independent state identity for Palestinians.

When a group’s identity is threatened, it can experience many emotions. Often, it will express negative emotions and engage in negative behaviors to protect and preserve the group’s identity. According to Julia DiGangi (2006),

Both the Israelis’ and Palestinians’ perception that the other side is attacking their core identity creates a host of other psychosocial problems, including insecurity, anxiety and hostility...when one side acts to protect itself, it provokes the other to retaliate, thereby unleashing a vicious cycle of violence that leaves little room for empathy and, thus, reconciliation. (p. 4)

Identity is a psychological root of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and is crucial for human existence for several reasons, including the collective sense of belonging that strengthens social ties with shared beliefs, values, and purpose (pp. 4,7).

During the study abroad, there was a group session with Israeli and Arab-Palestinian students who were participating designed to in the sessions to open dialogue between Israeli and Arab-Palestinian young adults. The study session offered the opportunity for the Israeli Jew and Arab-Palestinian students to share their personal feelings towards the conflict and for the study abroad students to examine those attitudes and behaviors. One young Arab-Palestinian man, a university student who was born and raised in Jerusalem and a non-citizen of Israel was asked: “Who are you?” Student: “I am no one.” Author: “Are you Israeli?” Student: “No, I am Palestinian. I have no country.” He went on to explain: “ I have a Jordanian passport, but I am not Jordanian. I have family roots in Lebanon but I cannot visit them because of the passport issue.” Palestinians do not have a state so they cannot issue passports. The student poignantly explained that if he goes to Lebanon to visit family via Jordan, he might not get back into Israel and to his home in Jerusalem again. Another young adult Palestinian male student, who was an Israeli citizen, expressed what appeared to me to be an internal struggle with his identity: Student: “I am Palestinian with an Israeli passport. I did not choose this nationality, I was told my nationality.” The depth of the identity conflict resonated with his final thought: “I lost my family on the Israeli day of Independence, “The Catastrophe.” They [Israelis] celebrate, I hurt” (Field Notes, 9 June 2010).

Archbishop, ‘Abuna’ Elias Chacour encapsulated the complexity of the struggle for Palestinian identity: “There are four components to my identity...First I am Palestinian, Second, I am Arab...Third, I am Christian...Fourth, I am Israeli... (Little, 2007, p. 322). However, Palestinians remain stateless and the lack of state identity is a common theme expressed by Palestinians throughout the study abroad sessions.

I annotated in my field notes on 13 June 2010 the extreme confusion about who or what it meant to be Palestinian. From the moment of my arrival in Israel, the term “Arab” was used to describe Palestinians, and it was difficult for me to ascertain “who” are the “Arabs” that the Israelis keep referring to? In my lexicon, “Arab” is a regional descriptor that identified people of the Arab countries. I soon realized the term “Arab” was synonymous with “Palestinians.” A rigorous literature review could not yield a definitive reason for the usage of the term “Arab,” except that it is used by Israeli Jews to describe those Israeli citizens of Palestinian ethnicity. Moreover, from the Israeli Jewish perspective, there has never been a State of Palestine, just a land inhabited by Arabs during the Ottoman Empire. A blog entitled “On the Usage of ‘Palestinian Arabs’ in the 1920s” captures the unspoken meaning behind the reference of Arab:

Palestinian is now applied only to Arabs, as if there is/was a political, social and demographic identity of Arabs as distinctly "Palestinian". Not Syrian. Not Jordanian (more on this later) or any other Arab community...I've said it before and I will say it again, in the history of the world, Palestine has never existed as a nation. The region known as Palestine was ruled alternately by Rome, by Islamic and Christian crusaders, by the Ottoman Empire and, briefly, by the British after World War I. The British agreed to restore at least part of the land to the Jewish people as their ancestral homeland. It was never ruled by Arabs as a separate nation. (2011)

From this author’s evaluation, it appears that the Israeli use of the term “Arab” is an attempt to *not* acknowledge Palestinian identity, because there is no Palestinian state. Israelis have state identity; Palestinians have no state identity, which echoed in the dialogue of an Arab-Palestinian student from

the Jerusalem Interreligious Young Adult Council. In 1948, the United Nations took away the immediate possibility of a unified Palestinian homeland, a central core of their identity. The removal of identity and the seeds of Palestinians non-existence were extolled from Israeli leaders. Former Prime Minister Golda Meir proclaimed in a June 15, 1969 interview for the *Sunday Times* (London):

There were no such thing as Palestinians. When was there an independent Palestinian people with a Palestinian state? It was either southern Syria before the First World War, and then it was a Palestine including Jordan. It was not as though there was a Palestinian people in Palestine considering itself as a Palestinian people and we came and threw them out and took their country away from them. They did not exist.

Identity is also linked to the spoken language. “One problem is communication and language. Only Palestinians can speak Hebrew and Arabic” (Field Notes, 9 June 2010). Language is a central tenet of identity. Being bilingual is a necessity for survival for Palestinians. Long (2006) highlighted how imperative it is for Palestinians to speak Hebrew in her article “Border Anxiety in Palestine-Israel.” However, it does not always prevent tragic incidents.the way Palestinians are routinely treated at checkpoints (arbitrary delays, rejections, detainments)

Palestinian fear was also documented by Anna Baltzer (2007) in her book “Witness in Palestine: A Jewish American Woman in The Occupied Territories.” Baltzer, a Jewish American woman, wrote of her personal experience in the Occupied Territories and documented the inhumane treatment of Palestinians at the checkpoints, which resulted in the unnecessary loss of fragile lives. She chronicled the Palestinian daily experience and struggles from living caged and controlled by the Wall and the security checkpoints. Baltzer noted in a chapter of her book entitled, “The Crime of Being Born Palestinian,” the death of her friend Dawud’s six month-old baby boy at an Israeli checkpoint. The family rushed their infant son to the hospital, because he had trouble breathing. According to Baltzer, the family hurried to get to the hospital in Ramallah and was stopped at the Atara checkpoint where an Israeli soldier asked for identification. They were forced to wait 20 minutes despite explaining the infant needed emergency medical care. She [the mother] begged the soldier to at least look at her baby. Instead, he demanded to search the car, even after the IDs had been cleared. The 6-month-old baby boy died at Atara Checkpoint. Checkpoints and ID cards. Mention those words and anyone who has lived under apartheid can produce dozens of horror stories like Dawud’s. (2007, pp. 294-295)

In addition, Palestinian fear is inextricably tied to their identity. The statement “I am no one” underlies the deep sense of powerlessness that comes from being stateless and under the control, or perceived occupation, of the Israelis. The statement by Golda Meir, “Palestinians do not exist” has become infused into the mindset of many Israelis when encountering the Palestinians. Palestinian fear, real or perceived, is an emotion that perpetuates their feelings of insecurity.

Consequentially, Palestinians have responded to the fear with negative reactions. Schultz argues, “insecurity in relation to the other, has forced the parties [Israel/ Palestinians] to nurture an ideology of security and guerilla warfare respectively” (2004, p. 90). Furthermore, “conflicts have been triggered when actors fear their identity is threatened or lost; ‘conflicts tend to reinforce identities’” (p. 86). The violent reactions to the threatened or lost identity, though certainly not condonable, can be understood. Palestinians who participate in suicide bombings or terrorism may be trying to preserve some semblance of identity: a

means of human survival and self-preservation. Therefore, when identity is threatened, reconciliation is difficult. Each side in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is trying to preserve its identity. As a result, each is unable to see the violent or repressive actions against the other with empathy (DiGangi, 2006, p. 5). The Wall hides the faces of the Palestinians and keeps them out of the view of their Israeli neighbors. Nevertheless, Palestinians still exist and endure restricted lives behind the Wall that imprisons them.

The security barrier induces more than fear from Palestinians, it extracts feelings of humiliation: “Palestinians view the complex of barriers and guarded gates as a humiliating tool of control by an occupying power” (Online NewsHour: The Barrier, 2004). Palestinians have no self-determination because they are stateless. They have limited political control, except from within the occupied territories. Their daily lives and identities are under the power and control of Israel. Palestinian humiliation is intimately linked with the loss of, the lack of, and the imposing of identity on them. This is clearly supported by the checkpoint experiences Palestinians are subjected to on a daily basis. Israeli military manned checkpoints and identification cards required for Palestinians to gain entry into parts of the West Bank or Israel greatly restrict or prohibit their movement and access to necessary resources. Tobias Kelly (2006), in his article, “Documented lives: Fear and Uncertainties of Law during the Second Palestinian Intifada” stated:

For many Palestinians, it is at checkpoints, and more specifically in the processes through which identity documents are checked and verified...the forms of legal identification that they hold are central to the life chances of many Palestinians, as it is these documents that help determine the ability of the holder to move around the West Bank and access rights and resources. (p. 90)

In other words, the identity documents give Palestinians a sense of security. They are vital to gain access to the basic resources, such as employment, food and water, which are necessary to sustain life.

However, the Palestinian identity documents also produce a level of uncertainty and fear for two reasons. First, the documents have changed over time. Identity cards were first issued during the period of the Balfour Declaration and were changed once the State of Israel was formed. The identification cards/papers also changed as the political environment changed. Secondly, the Palestinians who were inside Israel from 1948-1952 were treated differently than those living in the West Bank and other Palestinian areas (p. 93). Those in the West Bank after the occupation could continue to have Jordanian travel passports, because they were considered Jordanian citizens until 1988 when the “Kingdom of Jordan nullified its claim to the West Bank, and West Bank Palestinians ceased to be considered citizens...[T]hey therefore became stateless persons, holding multiple forms of legal identification that were used to control their movement and their access to resources” (p. 94).

Under the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), the Palestinians in the West Bank were issued green identification cards that were the color of the cards issued by Israel to individuals who had “security” records (p. 95). While the PNA kept the registry for those issued cards (referred to as a population registry), Israel had the legal power to “vet and veto any new entries” (p. 95). Kelly documented the daily lives of residents of Bayt Hajjar, the West Bank, and their experience and attitudes toward the checkpoints and documentation papers. After the Second Intifada, the identification cards became more a means to separate the Israeli Jews from the Palestinians (p. 95). Israeli checkpoint soldiers

those who could and could not cross the border to Israel based on their papers. The Palestinians were at the mercy and whim of the soldiers. The residents of Bayt Hajjar became accustomed to manipulating the process to get through checkpoints, including altering documents. Some of the wealthiest residents of Bayt Hajjar became so by manipulating and altering various identification documents (pp. 97-98). The residents' attitude towards the documents was one of economic necessity: crossing to Israel is a means for making a livelihood; many Palestinians held many menial jobs in Israel and the money they made provided for their families (p. 99). Palestinian workers are a necessity for cheap unskilled labor in Israel, and Palestinians need the work (p. 96).

For Palestinians, identity papers are also a source of fear: identity papers are the means of proving whether or not one existed. The residents of Bayt Hajjar saw individuals who held foreign passports move with relative ease through the checkpoints. Having the right identity papers would determine, on a daily basis, how easy or difficult it would be to make a living to provide for the basic necessities of life. Kelly points out, "the residents of the village approached each and every Israeli checkpoint with considerable apprehension, never knowing what they might be subjected to" (p. 101). It is inconsistency and unpredictability of the process that left Palestinians feeling fear and frustration:

Crucially, although the collective experience of being Palestinian in the West Bank was produced through encounters with the law, in the shape of identity documents, it did not produce a determinate mapping of legal status. Instead, collective experiences were produced through anxieties and fears caused by the very indeterminacies of legal process. (p. 103)

Some Israelis also recognize Palestinian humiliation. While the security barrier system is central to Israel's security program, not all Israelis agree it is a beneficial system. According to Mary Schweitzer, who moved to Israel almost 30 years ago and gathered at the Wall in 2004 to demonstrate against it: "There's nothing about security in the wall. The wall represents humiliation. It represents degradation. There is no reason at all that Jews should be building ghettos. Jews should be the first people to stand against ghettos" (Online NewsHour: The Barrier, 2004).

Palestinian humiliation is heavily influenced by the actions that support Israel's security narrative. Jews experienced much humiliation of their own throughout history; primarily during the Holocaust. Yet, it seems many do not see how their security actions produce humiliation for the Palestinians. I observed, during a tour of Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial, the following quote on the wall of one of the memorial exhibits: "March 14, 1944 (Dan, my son) I hope that you will never have to know the degradation and insults...the weakness of a people on foreign soil, a people without a homeland. Egon Redlich, Terez in Ghetto, murdered Auschwitz, Quote, Yad VaShem Jerusalem" (Field Notes, 13 June 2010). Because Israel needs to feel secure, the Palestinians are forced to endure the rigors of its security barrier system and are left with deep feelings of humiliation. The quote "I hope you will never know the degradation and insults..." written by a Jewish man at Auschwitz, cries out that the people of the world should never be forced to endure degradation and insults as a people. Yet, it is Israel, the homeland of the Jews, that forces Palestinians to endure the humiliation and degradation of their security barrier system. The Palestinians are a people without a homeland and suffer humiliation on a daily basis at the hands of people whose very ancestors experienced such degrading humiliation during the Holocaust.

Lucy Nusseibeh (2008) examined the importance of human security and found, while Israelis still live in fear despite the implementation of staunch security measures, the majority of Palestinians live in fear as well (p. 20). The Israeli security narrative, which underlies the heightened security measures, actually produces fear and insecurity.

The system of checkpoints set up by the Israelis could be said to protect their national security, as it makes it very difficult for Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza to enter Israel or even to move from one part of the occupied territories to another. But the checkpoints have a strongly adverse effect on Palestinian human security, as they create fear and humiliation via the treatment Palestinians receive at these checkpoints. (p. 21)

Nusseibeh also pointed out that living in occupation leads to feelings of humiliation and want, and the humiliation can “be as devastating as physical violence and can provoke extreme forms of hatred” (p. 21). Additionally, as a consequence of their security narrative, Israeli’s impose their control on the lives of the Palestinians. Israeli fears lead them to perceive that the presence of their army and system of walls and checkpoints... as helping their security. They fail to see that by denying the Palestinians their basic human rights, this increases the levels of anger and frustration and, in fact, makes the situation less secure. (p. 22)

The oppressive environment produced by the Wall has left many Palestinians feeling fear and humiliation. As a result, some Palestinians have responded to the oppression with violence aimed at Israelis. Nusseibeh discussed how the emotions of fear and humiliation could lead Palestinians to commit acts of violence and hatred. Israel’s focus on security has been at the psychological, economic, and social expense of the Palestinians. It has created an imbalance of power, which Nusseibeh stated, exacerbates the conflict. It is the imbalance of power and the emotions of fear, humiliation, and anger that have driven the Palestinians to attempt to express their own power. Palestinians often associate power with guns. Those who have grown up in an environment of armed Israeli soldiers are found to want to use guns as a means to “...express their power and to overcome their humiliation” (p. 22).

The Palestinians are the ones seen by the world community as terrorists, not the Israelis, whose security tactics oppress and control the Palestinians. Their violent responses may be from years of feeling frustration, fear, and humiliation at the hands of Israelis. In addition, any time there is a suicide bombing or violent protest in response to the oppression, Israel validates its need to have the security barrier system in place. It becomes a vicious cycle of validation of violence and oppression. According to a Palestinian female interviewed for the PBS’s Online NewsHour story, “The Barrier” (2004), “They call us terrorists. Those who have tanks and helicopters are not terrorists, but we are? We have nothing to defend ourselves. What can we do?”

The United Nations (UN) Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary- General for Children and Armed Conflict issued a report on the Middle East in April 2007 that analyzed the impact of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict on children. The report found that while the Wall was constructed to protect Israelis, it had a devastating impact on the Palestinian children. One of the most detrimental impacts was on school children. Because of the checkpoints, school children in the West Bank had restricted access to their schools. Palestinian youth have grown up with the Wall and checkpoints as part of their daily lives. The only Israelis most Palestinian children have seen are Israeli Defense Forces: “Not only

do they not see normal Israelis...but they witness the violence of the soldiers" (Vick & Arik, 2010). According to the report, political violence has produced a “push/ pull” effect on Palestinian children:

Political violence is seen by some as legitimate resistance to over 40 years of occupation without a recognizable horizon for peace...’pull’ factors are those elements who seek and encourage the culture of martyrdom, and the appropriateness of violence to counter occupation and the enticement of vulnerable children into acts of violence...’push’ factors, those realities of humiliation, killings, arrests and profound rending of Palestinian society by the on-going occupation. (p. 22)

Of course, the Wall is not solely responsible for the conflict’s negative psychological impacts on the Palestinians. A variety of factors at a multiplicity of social and political levels must be considered to appreciate fully the psychological ramifications of the conflict. For example, after the election of Hamas in 2006, Israel withheld Palestinian Authority (PA) customs and taxation revenues, which had a direct detrimental effect on Palestinian health, education and social protection programs. The customs and taxation revenues are approximately 68 percent or 1.9 billion dollars per annum of the PA budget (p. 19). As a result, the financial crisis has contributed to limiting or reducing health services. Many small medical facilities have closed or limited their services to emergency life-saving services, which has jeopardized primary, secondary and tertiary care services. Israel, in a sense, punished the Palestinians for the election of Hamas, an organization designated by the West as a terrorist group, by withholding necessary revenues needed for Palestinians to receive the basic services. However, many Palestinians elected Hamas because they saw it as a political party that would bring about economic change and political reform. The cost to Palestinians for electing Hamas has increased economic and social suffering. The Palestinians held free elections but experienced retaliation by Israel for electing a party that was not amenable to negotiating with Israel.

Palestinians who experience psychological or physical suffering and oppression cannot fulfill or sustain basic needs. Therefore, they cannot begin to feel safe and secure. The Palestinians will react in a manner they perceive as necessary to secure those needs, and those needs will dominate their lives until they are fulfilled. This behavior is very predictable according to the Abraham Maslow’s (1943) Theory of Human Motivation, which is a hierarchy of needs. His hierarchy is based on levels of need, and each level in the hierarchy of needs must be satisfied or fulfilled before one can move on to the next level of needs. Maslow cites safety in emergencies such as war, disease, or catastrophes “as an active and dominant mobilizer of the organisms resources” (p. 379). Therefore, the behavior of many Palestinians, based on Maslow’s Theory of Human Motivation, is predictable because of the human desire to achieve satisfaction of wants that are prioritized in the hierarchy of needs. Fear, humiliation, and violence, can all be traced back to the unfulfilled wants and needs of the first two levels of Maslow’s needs. Unless these needs are met, the reactions of the Palestinians are likely to be aggressive or violent. The Wall and security measures produce an insecure environment that limits and/or controls the Palestinian access to basic needs.

Ginges and Atran (2008) examined Palestinian humiliation in their study on “Humiliation and the Inertia Effect: Implications for Understanding Violence and Compromise in Intractable Intergroup Conflicts.” They designed a study to investigate how humiliation influences inter-group conflict. The study was a compilation of three separate studies of Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza. The authors recognized the limitations of a study on analyzing subjective data, such as “feelings” and

“humiliation,” by stating and recognizing that “any discussion of humiliation is limited by the paucity of empirical investigation into its qualities” (p. 282). Ginges and Atran’s proposed the hypothesis:

Humiliation is associated with a loss of power in a public context...[therefore] we propose that an outcome of this loss of power is an *inertia effect*; a tendency towards inaction...actually suppresses rebellious or violent action but which also suppresses mutually-beneficial compromises to inter-group conflicts. (p. 282)

This hypothesis is contrary to what most would believe would be produced from experiencing humiliation, expecting that humiliation would result in some form of aggression or violence. The researchers found humiliation, followed by insult and oppression, were the most common emotions experienced by the respondents who were subjected to standing in lines at Israeli checkpoints. Further analysis concluded that those respondents that felt humiliated when recalling standing at checkpoints were less likely to report feeling joy as an initial response from hearing about suicide attacks (Ginges & Atran, 2008).

The Ginges and Atran study conclusions seem contrary to many of the other study findings on the behavioral response associated with humiliation. However, while the study concluded that humiliation creates an inertia effect, meaning that it does not in the short term, as noted by the researchers, support violent acts, such as suicide bombings, the significant conclusion was that the outcome of the humiliation would lessen the likelihood that they would “support a mutually beneficial compromise” (p. 292). The negative effects of humiliation were found to decrease the likelihood of Palestinian willingness to work towards compromise, which, if the study could be reproduced, would have significant implications on any type of successful conflict management.

The vast research on Palestinian humiliation is influenced by the powerlessness they feel. Israel is in a position of power in the protracted conflict. When one player in a conflict holds the *power*, it is inevitable that it will cause the other to feel *powerless*. Feeling powerless can lead to feelings of humiliation. Palestinians have felt humiliation since 1948 when Israel became a sovereign state; and a Palestinian state has yet to be realized. According to Mark Tessler (1994), in his book on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict:

The outcome of the war brought psychological as well as political developments that propelled the conflict forward...the extent of their victory caused such a great increase in pride and self-confidence of the Israelis that they became less willing to make those concessions which were needed if there was to be any hope of reconciliation with the Arabs. On the other hand, the extent of the Arab defeat brought about such a blow to the pride and self-reliance of the Arabs that they became more opposed than ever to acknowledging the existence of an enemy who had so deeply humiliated them... (pp. 283-284)

Research shows that Palestinian humiliation continues today. It has been over sixty years since the formation of the State of Israel. Palestinians *lost* the moment the UN partitioned their land. Palestinians lost land, lost social and cultural relationships, and lost economic prosperity. Conversely, Israelis gained land, prosperity and economic growth, State sovereignty, and the overwhelming support of the West. The Palestinians are not afforded little protection of their way of life.

The Palestinian discourse about occupation and the Wall consistently reflects the negative psychological effects that they experience from being subjected to humiliation, fear, and restriction of movement, not to mention impeded access to schools, water, resources and economic prosperity on a daily basis. The psychological effects are a contributing factor to violent actions, such as terrorist activities and suicide bombings. Some Palestinians believe they have no other means to express their frustration, humiliation and fear. They feel powerless to the control and oppression of Israel. They live in the shadow of what they visualize as a concrete cage, encapsulating them in a prison where their daily survival and prosperity is at the discretion of Israel. The Wall prevents them from seeing Israelis as little more than its Israeli Defense Force. Concomitantly, Israelis are shielded from viewing the oppressive conditions of the Palestinians who are forced to live behind the concrete wall. According to Vick and Arik (2010) in their article, “The Barrier,”

The Wall has done more than to keep out suicide bombers. No less important, it has created a separation of the mind. Israelis say they simply think much less about Palestinians. And a generation of Palestinians is coming of age without even knowing what Israelis look like, much less the land both sides claim as their own. The absence of familiarity, names, basic knowing — the absence of the foundations of empathy — does not bode well for the chances of the two peoples one day living as neighbors in peace. (How Israel's Wall has Changed a Generation of Palestinians: Palestinians, Contained)

The security the Wall is intended to provide Israel is paradoxically creating insecurity. The Wall does not foster an environment conducive for building the foundation for conflict management. Zeedani’s observation offers a fitting conclusion:

[C]heckpoints and, for that matter, the monstrous separation wall, are not the sort of fences that “make good neighbors.” They are a form of violence and will only breed and nurture resentment and hatred, and they incur enormous costs in material and nonmaterial losses on the Palestinians. Israel’s legal and moral right to protect its citizens and soldiers from attacks is not in question — well over 1,000 were killed during the Second Intifada, and a very high percentage of them were civilians, including children. What is in question, however, is Israel’s legal and moral right to collectively punish, humiliate, besiege and impoverish a whole nation in order to prevent or reduce attacks against its own citizens by a small minority of militants. (, p. 95)

Towards Conflict Management

“Both know what each wants, but not what each other needs” ~Archbishop Elias “Abuna” Chacour (Field Notes, 8 Jun 2010)

Security must be a central policy for any state in order for a state to survive. Israel’s security narrative is one that has grown out of history but also one that has come to possibly impede any conflict management with the Palestinians and the entire Arab world. Israel’s reactions to feeling threatened or

insecure was to build the separation barrier and to force Palestinians through checkpoints to prevent terrorist style attacks. As the research has shown, these actions helped cultivate an environment of fear, humiliation, anger and violence from the Palestinians. The Palestinians, without state sovereignty, are unable to defend their land. They have minimal control of their economic prosperity and have difficulty meeting their basic needs. The literature supporting the negative psychological effects of conflict on Palestinians in both the West Bank and Gaza is substantial. The literature supports the negative psychological effects the Wall has on the Palestinians. This now begs the question of how the negative psychological effects of the security narrative influences conflict management. There have been numerous attempts at establishing peace through accords and agreements but the protracted conflict continues.

Conflict management and eventual resolution are daunting tasks. The conflict, from this author's research and personal experience during field study interactions, is one based on Israel's security and preserving the State of Israel. The protracted conflict and its inherent psychological effects on the Palestinians produce a vicious cycle of oppression and violence that is impeding conflict management. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be characterized as an asymmetric conflict where attitudes are based on perceptions and misperceptions of each other. Moreover, when there is violence, perceptions tend to be negative and demeaning. These negative attitudes are influenced and bolstered by emotions such as fear, anger, and hatred (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, & Miall, 2009, p. 10). The research on the psychological effects of Israel's security narrative supports the hypothesis that the narrative actually evokes negative Palestinian emotions, which often produces aggressive or violent reactions. Israel's narrative induces structural violence. It creates stress on the structure that provides basic necessities for the Palestinians. Israel's *power* to control the Palestinian identity through restriction of movement has adversely impacted Israel's ability to produce a safe and secure environment for itself, or for Palestinians, and will likely impede any type of conflict management. The importance of recognizing what each other's needs are and the root of each group's fears is crucial if the conflict management process is to gain positive momentum and make marked progress towards peace. Herbert Kelmen (2008) echoed this in his article "A Social-Psychological Approach to Conflict Analysis and Resolution,"

The conception of conflict as a process driven by collective needs and fears implies, first and foremost, that conflict resolution—if it is to lead to a stable peace that both sides consider just and to a new relationship that enhances the welfare and development of the two societies—must address the fundamental needs and deepest fears of the populations...security, identity, recognition, and the like—are not inherently zero-sum, although they are usually seen as such in deep-rooted conflicts. (p. 172)

Importantly, Neil Altman (2004), in his article "Humiliation, Retaliation, and Violence," emphasizes how the intractability of the conflict becomes cyclical:

The intractability of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is attributable in significant measure to the vicious circle of humiliation, retaliation, and violence that has become entrenched between the two peoples. The Israeli government seems to believe that direct and inevitable retaliation for Palestinian suicide attacks will break the will of Palestinians to engage in such violence, and further, that failure to engage in such retaliatory actions will communicate weakness and lead Palestinian militants to believe that they can realistically achieve their goal of destroying the Israeli state. On the Palestinian sides, the idea

seems to be that terrorizing the Israeli population will lead Israelis to end the occupation in the West Bank and Gaza. (p. 16)

Palestinian fear, humiliation, retaliation, violence, and Israel’s concomitant fear and subsequent oppression have created a vicious cycle in the protracted conflict. Cognitive frameworks of distrust and mutual victimization have become the norm. This heightened state of insecurity will keep the fear alive and will continue to perpetuate and rationalize the conflict actions. According to the World Peace Foundation report in 2003, “Each side fears destruction, and, in another sense, each side fears peace. If peace comes, each side will have to reorganize itself. This process is difficult because it is psychologically easier to organize against a clearly defined opposing force than without one. In order to move beyond the traditional opposition, each side must recognize and legitimize the other sides fears as well as its own. “(West, 2003, p. 3)

The plethora of research, including the works cited by Maslow and Nusseibeh on the psychological impact of conflict on, not just Palestinians, but all human societies indicates that there will be some type of violence and aggression that stem from feelings of fear, humiliation and fighting for the basic needs for survival. If this is known and supported through peer reviewed literature, one would have to ask the question why one state uses such measures against a weaker, less powerful one. Is it that each side unconsciously fears peace as the World Peace Foundation report stated: Dr. El-Sarraj in his interview with Lenora Meldrum (2002) sheds light on this paradox:

Well, I came to believe very much that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is essentially a conflict between two kinds of victims. Jews, who have been victimized by persecution and discrimination and the Holocaust in Europe and in their attempt to address their history in the form of Israel. They have helped hurt the Palestinians because essentially the establishment of Israel was at the expense of the Palestinians who became the new victim. And, I believe that there is only one way in which the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be addressed and can lead to peace—only if this picture is understood by the two sides. The victimization and the cycle of violence between the two communities has led me to believe that only respect of humanity and human rights is the key to resolution for any conflict—if the people, particularly the political leaders, are aware of the deep psychological impact of the conflict in the two communities. I have been part of the Palestinian delegation to the peace talks with the Israelis and I was armed with my knowledge of the cycle of violence in trying to bridge the gap between the two sides and I believe I was able to help in that respect. That has for me meant also a form of coping with my own victimization by using my experience to help to reach peace. (p. 132)

The words of Dr. El-Sarraj urge Israelis and Palestinians to see past their own individual victimization. Only then might the metaphorical and physical Wall come down and the seeds of peace be planted in its place.

Conclusion

Israel’s security narrative, manifested in the construction of a Wall, contributes to the negative psychological effects on the Palestinians, and the effects are impeding the conflict management process. If there is to be effective conflict management, the Wall has to come down. Israel’s history of

persecution has understandably led to the formation of the Wall in symbolism and in physical manifestation. The Wall not only hides the Palestinians out of view of Israelis, it cages them into an environment of fear and humiliation and prevents them from having economic security, prosperity, access to health services and education opportunities.

The impact that these negative effects have on building peace and managing the conflict in the region is significant. The Palestinian children who have grown up during this protracted conflict and experienced the psychological effects of the Wall and the elaborate security barrier system that oppresses them will become the adults in the conflict management process. Conversely, the Israelis who continue to raise future generations with this segregating security narrative will produce adults who will likely continue to perpetuate the divisive strategies produced from the narrative. This “vicious cycle,” as Altman calls it, will likely continue to plague the peacebuilding and conflict management processes. West writes: The Israeli-Palestinian relationship has been shaped throughout by fear. This fear must be considered and managed. Palestinians fail to appreciate the fear of Israelis. In turn, Israelis often fail to confront their fears, and a fearful nation with massive weapons is a dangerous nation. (p. 8)

The psychological effects are well known and well documented, but unless the findings are used to change the environment that produces the negative psychological effects, then the research becomes little more than interesting informative articles. The research must be used to positively affect conflict management discussions. Each side must build a relationship of respect and dignity and must take responsibility for the actions that produce a more fruitful conflict management environment. “Facing fear means facing history and responsibility” (p. 9).

The full impact of the psychological effects and the role they have in the conflict management process must be researched further and suggestions on ways to manage issues of security without conflict have to be considered. Dignity and respect must be incorporated into the discourse. Further research needs to examine how the behaviors from living in a conflict environment and the psychological effects that occur impede the conflict management process. Additionally, there should be research on how to produce a shared environment where the Wall can come down and both Israelis and Palestinians feel safe. Once each side recognizes how each other’s actions and reactions perpetuate the protracted conflict, perhaps they can start to work towards positive actions, which will make conflict management and perhaps resolution possible.

Limitations of Study

The primary limitation of this study is the first-hand personal experiences from my study abroad interactions. The individuals who were part of the interaction shared their personal experiences, but one must be careful not to transpose their feelings, emotions, or reactions on the entire population studied. Our interactions were restricted to less than two weeks time and the participants were selected to give us their perspectives on the conflict. This could produce a bias in both directions: to either support or oppose the conflict and the program in which we participated. The organizer of the study abroad did bring in many perspectives from Israelis and Palestinians and included time in the West Bank in order for the students to examine the life of the Palestinians in that occupied territory.

The interactions encountered can support and supplement other peer-reviewed research utilized in this research project. Additionally, it was crucial to identify the limitations, biases, and statistical limitations of the research in order to prevent inaccurate inferences of causal relationships. The selection of research takes into account that individuals will look for causes to make sense and explain why something, such as the negative psychological effects, occurred. The criteria for causation were considered when reviewing literature to ensure that it adhered to parameters of inferring causation from correlation studies, as correlation does not always prove cause and effect. The limitations of bias and causation were considered when selecting and incorporating the literature into this thesis project.

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