GET ON THE PLANE: WHY UNDERSTANDING THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT IS BEST DONE BY TRAVELING THERE

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International travel seems necessary for understanding international conflict and yet, bringing entire classes of students to the locus of the conflict can be daunting. This essay uses one such example of a class trip to demonstrate the potential learning that occurs with international travel and why, particularly when studying international conflict, onsite learning is crucial.

The genesis of this trip comes from the favorite learning experiences in college: two different international trips taken by author Andrea Schneider (“Andrea”). The first was during her junior year in a seminar on Greek-Turkish relations. The class traveled to both Greece and Turkey, meeting with government officials, NGO’s, and even the Prime Minister of Turkey, Suleiman Demiral, (who was overthrown in a coup a few years later). The second experience she helped plan (little did she know how those skills would later be used as a professor), after she persuaded her professor that a class on the Conventional Defense of Europe would be best experienced by going to Europe. It was a whirlwind tour of NATO headquarters, visiting United States troops stationed on the Fulda Gap, and visiting Berlin and Warsaw; it made a huge impression. There was something about seeing the land and meeting the people that turned the abstract into something tangible.

Years later she could still wax on about these two classes more than any others in college despite the fact that the subject matter of other classes, for example of English Constitutional History, was far more relevant to her job.¹ Once tenured and with children old

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¹ Princeton still continues this tradition with their summer courses. In fact, President Shirley Tischman has said that a Princeton education is not complete without this type of course.
enough to leave, she decided that she wanted to provide her students a similar experience.

Why would a trip be an important part of a conflict resolution class? How could she justify a trip to Israel to her Dean based on more than her love of travel? And, perhaps most importantly, why would this on-site learning experience be worth the significant amount of money her students would have to spend to go?

This essay will explain the significance of this type of experiential learning and why a trip to the conflict area itself is a different and deeper kind of learning. The first part of this essay discusses the latest thinking on experiential learning theory. The second part of this essay will discuss the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—the focus of these classes and trips—to review what students learn before traveling to the region. We will start with some of the typical assumptions that U.S. students have about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and then outline the crucial pre-trip information that must be discussed. In the third part of this essay, we use a five-sense rubric to organize the different types of experiences and learning that students valued on these trips. We conclude with some examples of student learning to demonstrate the qualitative difference that occurs when studying international conflict is linked to international travel. Based on the latest research, we now know that the reason these trips in college were so memorable for Andrea was not what she learned, but rather how she learned.2

I. EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING THEORY

Learning theory tells us that teachers must do more than just lecture in order to impart skills.3 Experiential learning—even better, adventure-learning—is the way to lock in lessons and build skills.4 For the last five years in a series of meetings, groups of negotiation scholars have debated the best way to teach negotia-

2 2 VENTURING BEYOND THE CLASSROOM: RETHINKING NEGOTIATION (Christopher Honeyman, James Coben, & Giuseppe DePalo, eds., DRI Press 2010).
3 The now ubiquitous quote for this proposition often found on university websites is, “Students learn from 10% of what they read, 20% of what they hear, 30% of what they see, 50% of what they see and hear, 70% of what is discussed with others, 80% of what they experience personally, and 95% of what they teach to someone else.”— William Glasser, an expert in the field of education.
4 Id. See Lynn P. Cohn & Noam Ebner, Bringing Negotiation Teaching to Life: From the Classroom to the Campus to the Community, in 2 VENTURING BEYOND THE CLASSROOM: RETHINKING NEGOTIATION (Christopher Honeyman, James Coben, & Giuseppe DePalo, eds.,
tion skills as part of the Rethinking Negotiation Teaching (RNT) series. After working on the Canon of Negotiation and the Negotiator's Fieldbook, many teachers recognized that the only way to challenge the narrow and limited American canon we established was to move the meetings across the globe.

Arguably, RNT conference organizers could have flown experts in from Rome, Istanbul and China in order to learn from them. After all, in total dollars spent, it might have saved money to fly all the experts to a central location in the United States and have the same meeting. Except, of course, it would not be the same meeting. First, not everyone would attend. Moreover, organizers recognized from the outset that in order to get a feel for a culture, its issues, and its conflicts, there is only one way to learn: we had to get on a plane. The plethora of chapters about adventure learning in Istanbul, contained in Volume Two of the series, were only possible because we had all been there. And we know that reading about negotiating in the Spice Market can only go so far in truly understanding.

Adventure-learning activities typically consist of direct, active, authentic, engaging, and collaborative experiences, taking place outside traditional classroom settings. They involve some elements of real or perceived risk to ego and to one’s comfort zone. Adventure learning emphasizes participation, collaboration, dialogue, and openness to inquiry, all of which are excellent tools for skill building and development, attractive for both educators and students. Such experiences develop critical thinking skills, which in turn

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5 Rethinking Negotiation Teaching, Hamline University School of Law, http://law.hamline.edu/rethinkingNegotiation.html (last visited July 21, 2013) (explaining the genesis of the conferences and the books that have been published as a result.).


7 The Negotiator’s Fieldbook (Andrea Kupfer Schneider & Christopher Honeyman, eds., 2006).

8 James Coben, Christopher Honeyman, & Sharon Press, Straight Off the Deep End in Adventure Learning, in 2 Venturing Beyond The Classroom: Rethinking Negotiation (Christopher Honeyman, James Coben, & Giuseppo DePalo, eds., DRI Press 2010) (discussing preparations and what happened during their trip to Istanbul to negotiate in the spice markets.).


10 Salvador S. Panga, Jr., Gwen B. Grecia-de Vera, A Look at a Negotiation 2.0 Classroom: Using Adventure Learning Modules to Supplement Negotiation Simulations, in 2 Venturing
helps the student obtain the knowledge necessary to bridge the gap between theoretical learning and practice.\textsuperscript{11}

Why is this? Why is it that being somewhere is wholly different than reading about it or even video chatting with other professors? There is something else, other senses that must be affected in order to truly “get it.”\textsuperscript{12} Perhaps it is that such adventure-based experiences deliver a more powerful and personal experience for students.\textsuperscript{13} Though simulations can be useful by providing an opportunity for dialog and reflection,\textsuperscript{14} to truly understand a conflict, one needs to experience the conflict by more than just reading and discussing.

When we read about a conflict, we are using one sense, that of sight. Perhaps we might empathize with people in the situation, we might even feel sorrow for their plight or anxious about the outcome of the conflict. (And we should not underestimate that physical feeling. Recall the viral sensation Kony 2012\textsuperscript{15}—its power depends on moving us to feel disgusted and angry.) But these experiences tend to be rare in the learning process. Our reading for a typical international conflict class consists of reviewing history, outlining theory, and analyzing steps taken. Traveling has a greater and different impact because it engages us more than the sense of sight. The Spice Market experience, as told by a variety of negotiation professors, was so rich because it engaged all of our senses.\textsuperscript{16}

We could smell the spices. We were crushed into little stores with large crowds moving around. We were nervous negotiating in front of one another. We could hear the multitude of different lan-


\textsuperscript{12} Manwaring, McAdoo, & Cheldelin, \textit{supra} note 9, at 485 (adventure learning involves direct, active and engaging learning experiences which involve the whole person, have consequences, and that take participants out of their comfort zone).

\textsuperscript{13} See \textit{id.}


\textsuperscript{15} See \textit{KONY 2012}, \textsc{YouTube} (Mar. 5, 2012), \url{http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y4MnpzG5SqC}.

\textsuperscript{16} Nadja Alexander & Michelle LeBaron, \textit{The Death of the Role-Play}, in \textit{2 Venturing Beyond The Classroom: Rethinking Negotiation} 188 (Christopher Honeyman, James Coben, & Giuseppo DePalo, eds., DRI Press 2010); Michelle LeBaron, \textit{Learning New Dances: Finding Effective Ways of Addressing Intercultural Disputes, in Intercultural Dispute Resolution in Aboriginal Contexts: Canadian and International Perspectives} (Catherine Bell & David Kahane eds., 2004).
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languages. We could touch the different fabrics and carpets, and, most importantly, we could savor the various spices, Turkish delight, Turkish coffee, and other great tastes.

To create a similar situation of adventure and experiential learning on the ground, we have now traveled with two different groups of approximately thirty students to Israel to study the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in 2011 and 2013. There was a terrific mix of speakers, visits to historic and religious sites, and interaction with residents, but what made it especially different from classroom learning was the role of all senses in locking in a greater depth of knowledge.17

II. ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT AND WHAT TO LEARN BEFORE YOU GO

What we often find when teaching about Mideast conflict is that students will throw their hands up in frustration. The solution seems obvious—there will be a land trade, limited refugee return, some joint or international governance of Jerusalem, and security guarantees. This is actually backwards to most conflicts that law students will study, in that we already know most parameters of the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.18 Perhaps students in other disciplines would be more comfortable having studied other long-term international conflicts, perhaps intractable, to give some

17 Adam Kamp, Is What’s Good for the Gander Good for the Goose? A Semi-Student Perspective, in 2 VENTURING BEYOND THE CLASSROOM: RETHINKING NEGOTIATION 198–199 (Christopher Honeyman, James Coben, & Giuseppo DePalo, eds., DRI Press 2010) (“Simulations can only teach so much: while they may serve a purpose, they fail to capture the richness of real-world negotiations.”); see also Manwaring, McAdoo, Cheldelin, supra note 9 (experiencing and seeing the conflict makes it more real to the students. i.e. students know a bit about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but have no idea there was a wall in the middle of Jerusalem); Sukh-simranjit “Sukh” Singh, As We See It, in 4 THE RETHINKING NEGOTIATION TEACHING SERIES 236 (2012).
perspective; however, law students spend most of their ADR and negotiation classes trying to figure out the solution—determine the criteria, be creative, and ask good questions. In legal disputes, or in deal making, the terms of the solution are the puzzle. Problem solving is the goal of the skill set that we teach. So, the purpose of the mediation or negotiation may also be to create understanding and, more often, to figure out a solution that will work.

In the Mideast, this is backwards. We know the solution—what we do not know is how and when it will be implemented. So we often assume that there must be something wrong or misguided or psychologically limited in explaining why the Israelis and Palestinians have not yet reached settlement. (And we have plenty of writing in that vein as well—explaining the lack of BATNA overlap, 19 explaining the team breakdown, 20 and explaining the flawed leadership. 21) So, students read this and assume there is something irrational in the inability to settle. A key reason to travel is to be able to understand what is going on and to develop an understanding of either why these barriers exist or to understand why the analysis we typically use with legal disputes is too thin for this issue.

Of course, before getting on the plane, students need to be taught whatever book learning one can provide. 22 The goal of the pre-trip class has been that anything best learned through reading (versus the other senses discussed below) should be done in advance. With fuller knowledge, the students’ experiences will be richer, their questions will be better, and their understanding will be deeper. 23 In his article Outward Bound to Other Cultures: Seven

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19 Russell B. Korobkin, Symposium, Barriers to Peace in the Middle East, 6 Nev. L.J. 299 (2006).
22 Rethinking Negotiation, supra note 2. As with most experiences, preparation is key. For example, in Negotiating Learning Environments, the authors use the example that before a teacher offers answers, he must learn the student’s questions. By learning his student’s questions, the teacher can offer an insightful and meaningful response. The same is true with adventure learning: to have an insightful and meaningful experience, the students need to be equipped with the necessary tools and knowledge.
23 Harold Abramson, Outward Bound to Other Cultures: Seven Guidelines, in Venturing Beyond the Classroom: Rethinking Negotiation (Christopher Honeyman, James Coben, & Giuseppe DePalo, eds., DRI Press 2010).
Guidelines, Professor Harold Abramson discusses seven guidelines to complete before getting on the plane. This framework aims to help reduce cultural mishaps and prepare for surprises that may come up during the experience by helping professors and students adequately prepare before they get on the plane.

Our class reading list included reading on general dispute resolution theory and history of the conflict, as well as the assignment to read the New York Times and the Jerusalem Post starting immediately. The students were also responsible for researching a particular topic and presenting it to the class. These topics attempted to cover a mix of the history, political and legal structure, religions, and the actual sites we were going to visit. For example, this year’s topics ranged from the Israeli elections to the Druze religion to the history of kibbutzim.

We also used role-plays in teaching negotiation in order to have students practice their skills and try out what it would feel like to be in that situation. For the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Andrea often used the Partisan Perception exercise. Spoiler alert: the scenario, first written by Roger Fisher in the 1970s, depicts a scene in which Israeli troops and Palestinian residents are at a standoff about 100 yards apart on the West Bank. There has been rock throwing and Israeli troops are armed. A boy, clutching a metal item, runs toward the Israeli troops. The troops give or-
ders to stop, then shoot in the air, and then more shots are fired.\textsuperscript{32} The boy is killed.\textsuperscript{33} It turns out that he was carrying a metal box, which had the effects of his dead sister.\textsuperscript{34} When running the exercise, you divide the class equally into Israelis and Palestinians. Each side receives the same instructions but copied on different colored paper so students assume the instructions are different. When asking the students to explain what happened to a United Nations observer (played by the professor), their accounts are strikingly different. The exercise teaches partisan perceptions, ladder of inference, and other tools in negotiation, showing how greatly assumptions affect a situation. Andrea has also used the video game Peacemaker to teach the class and to focus on partisan perceptions.\textsuperscript{35} All of these exercises are designed to teach particular aspects of the conflict and to create understanding in U.S.-based students, who often just do not grasp the feelings and complexity of the conflict.

III. EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING THROUGH THE FIVE SENSES

Why is experiential learning so much more powerful than classroom learning? In the field of dispute resolution, we spend a lot of time talking about the importance of understanding the parties. Our classes include role-plays to get students to operate in conflict. And yet we know that fake role-playing is not sufficient—even if the emotions are real in role-plays.\textsuperscript{36} Beyond the role-play, our teaching now strives to bring in more and to bring in movement to make the experience deeper.\textsuperscript{37} Perhaps the best element of travelling to a conflict area is that the rational and intellectual approach has to be balanced with the senses, most of which we try

\textsuperscript{32} Id.
\textsuperscript{33} Id.
\textsuperscript{34} Id.
\textsuperscript{35} Kathleen Goodrich & Andrea Kupfer Schneider, \textit{The Classroom Can Be All Fun \& Games}, 25 \textit{Ohio St. J. on Disp. Resol.} 87 (2010); \textit{see also} Andrea Kupfer Schneider \& Julie MacFarlane, \textit{Having Students Take Responsibility for Their Learning}, 20 \textit{Conflict Resol. Q.} 455, 455–463 (Spring 2003).
\textsuperscript{36} Course Memorandum for the Negotiation Workshop, Spring 2013, Andrea Kupfer Schneider (on file with the author).
\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Rethinking Negotiation}, supra note 2. In their article, Alexander \& LeBaron note that while role-play is a good tool, its use should be “limited and complemented with other experiential activities.” A brief list of other experiential activities includes: structured and informal outdoor activities, as well as in-classroom activities. Taking these experiences outside of the classroom creates a demand for a new skill set.
to turn off when dealing with conflict.\textsuperscript{38} We thereby make participants aware of different cultures. Culture has been described elsewhere as a pattern of thinking based on a value by a group of people over time. But, for many of us, our culture also has crucial sensory elements.\textsuperscript{39} Even the legal culture has this—the architecture of the court, the sound of the gavel, and the bailiff instructing the parties to rise. So this next section outlines the five senses and how what we visited falls under each of those in terms of creating a richer understanding for our students.

A. Sight

Of course, seeing the classic sights—the Dome of the Rock, and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher (in which each denomination has a space),\textsuperscript{40} and the Tel Aviv beach with its skyscrapers—has the expected impact, but the more surprising unexpected sights connected to the conflict are discussed below.\textsuperscript{41}

1. Golan Heights/Galilee Border

There is only one good way to understand the strategic importance of the Golan Heights—to be on top of them. A map, even a 3D video, does not show the extent of the strategic importance. From the water lines, to the strategic oversight lookouts would have, to the military advantage of tanks or missiles from the height, to even understanding how close all of the countries and capitals.

\textsuperscript{38} Id. The Coben, Honeyman, & Press chapter entitled \textit{Straight off the Deep End in Adventure Learning} discusses their planning meeting for the Istanbul experience. During that meeting they addressed the flaws from a previous experience in Rome and stated that their Istanbul experience would highlight the importance of directly experiencing real negotiations and engaging in self-reflection after.

\textsuperscript{39} Id. Kamp, supra note 17. (Kamp discusses whether such a culture shock is possible to experience when negotiating in your own country, as opposed to getting on the plane and going elsewhere. “Indeed, part of what made the negotiations at the Spice Market such a terrifying experience was the cultural shock.”); Singh, supra note 17.


\textsuperscript{41} For example, students are immediately struck by the fact that all highway signs in Israel are in Hebrew, Arabic, and English, reminding them at every exit about all of the populations affected by the conflict.
are located—you have to be up on the Golan to get it. The role of the Golan Heights is also evident when driving to and from the lookout points. All along the road there are signs warning of landmines from previous conflicts. It was disconcerting for students to see these warnings even though they were aware that the area was disputed. The area also serves as training grounds for the Israeli military and the roads are filled with military vehicles.

Even more troubling was the background noise during the 2013 trip when the students were fortunate enough to have three U.N. Peacekeepers talk to them about their work in Syria (after Andrea chased them down of course). The U.N. was using the Golan to keep an eye on the events in Syria. Like many of the conflicts in the Middle East, the students have read about the Syrian Civil War, but until that moment it had been a world away. While the Peacekeepers were speaking to the students, they all of a sudden stopped and grew quiet. Booms were heard in the not-so-far distance. Those booms were bombs being dropped in Syria. For many of the students, it is not a sound that they will soon, or ever, forget, and brought the conflict into a much closer perspective than simply reading or watching the news.

2. Separation Barrier

The Separation Barrier separates Israel from the West Bank. It was first constructed in 1994, during the Oslo accord negotiations.43 While some sections are a fence, other sections consist of a twenty-six foot tall concrete wall.44 Proponents argue that the fence is necessary to protect Israelis from terrorists and opponents argue that the fence is a way to illegally annex land from the West Bank. The result of the wall has been to physically divide towns

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44 Israel High Court Ruling Docket H.C.J. 7957/04: International Legality of the Security Fence and Sections Near Alfei Menashe, Supreme Court of Israel, Sept. 15, 2005.
and cities. Whether you call it a fence or barrier or wall, seeing the separation barrier is breathtaking in its stark perspective. You can see the neighborhoods sheared in half, you can see how long it now takes to drive around them and go through checkpoints, and you can see how ugly it is. In Jerusalem or driving alongside it while going up Highway 6, the barrier is no longer abstract. Whatever you think about it, you need to see it to judge it.

3. Har Homa/Arab Neighborhoods

On a tour of Jerusalem with the NGO Ir Amin, you can see the different levels of development, the housing, lighting, plumbing, and state of schools. You can see the new Jewish neighborhood Har Homa and the differences with Arab neighborhoods as well. During our tour with Ir Amin we stopped in a newly developed Jewish suburb, complete with playgrounds, schools, new roads, and spacious houses. From the suburb, students could see Arab neighborhoods with visibly poorer infrastructure and amenities. Our guide explained that many of the roads in the Arab neighborhoods had not been renovated in years and that it was often impossible to get building permits to expand the living quarters in the neighborhood. Often, he explained to the students, the families would apply for permits and never get an answer so they would simply begin building and stop only if the Israeli government told them to stop.

4. Museum of the Seam

To encourage even more creative thinking, we also visited Museum of the Seam, an art museum housed in a former British garrison on the border between East and West Jerusalem. The art,
unconnected specifically to the conflict, but reflecting on the right to protest, was another method of using sight to encourage more creative and broader thinking about the conflict. The exhibit showcased a variety of pieces reflecting on the right to protest various issues, both violent and non-violent. The exhibit purported to reflect on the importance of taking responsibility when protesting. While protesting is a right, along with that right comes the responsibility of considering your actions.

5. Populations—Arab, Secular, and Orthodox Clothing

As we were touring, we also could see all the different types of clothing that demarcated the population groups—Arab, Orthodox Jew, and secular Israelis of both religions. One of the most interesting contrasts was on the day we were at Haifa Law School in the morning, with its large Arab population, and then Bar Ilan law school in the evening which has a large orthodox population. The common ground between the two? Head coverings for the women.

6. The Ubiquity of the Military

Even though most students are aware that they would see members of the military walking around with machine guns, it still comes as quite a shock to experience it. As one student put it:

Seeing all the people walking around with AK-47s is jarring no matter how much you prepare for it. I personally have travelled a lot and have seen this before in other countries, but it never ceases to completely throw me at first. I clearly remember when our bus came to a check point and a blonde woman who couldn’t have been much older than eighteen came onto the bus with her massive gun. I don’t think I really ever got used to it on the trip even though I knew I would see that.

B. Hearing

1. Speakers

In Israel we met with several speakers in Arab and Jewish NGOs, law professors, law students, Justice Aharon Barak of the within our regional conflict, to advancing dialogue in the face of discord and to encouraging social responsibility that is based on what we all have in common rather than what keeps us apart.” During our trip, the exhibit was called The Right to Protest. The art pieces reflected protests from various time in history and on a wide variety of issues. The exhibit presented protest not only as a right, but also as an obligation and a privilege that requires a deeper understanding to resolve the conflict.
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Israeli Supreme Court, the Knesset, and others. Ostensibly, we could have VOIPed or called these speakers; we could have watched recordings of their past speeches. These telecommunications would fail in comparison to speaking and hearing from these individuals and were conversations rather than speeches. For example, when meeting with Justice Barak we could hear the tone of his voice and ask directed questions. He talked to us with the candor that may not be achieved through telecommunication and cannot be received through a recording. This experience with Justice Barak typified our experience with each and every speaker we met.

2. Sounds of the Market, the Languages and the Call to Prayer

Much like the professors’ experience in Istanbul, hearing the sounds of the Arab market, the language, and the bargaining, made it more real. Additionally, just the sounds of the languages—both Arabic and Hebrew—were different. Few of the students on the trip were fluent in either Arabic or Hebrew, though there were a few who were on the verge of conversational. The Muslim call to prayer was also a new sound for most students. During our trip to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, students heard the sound up close, as there is a Minaret just outside the walls of the church. As another student told the story in Nazareth, while outside of the Church of the Annunciation:

Our guide had one of our students read from the Biblical excerpts where the Angel Gabriel came to Mary and told her that she would bear a son by the power of God and name Him Christ. In the middle of the student reading this passage, the Muslim call to prayer began to blare over the loud speakers. Perhaps a typical reaction to having a very thoughtful and contemplative moment drowned out by a loudspeaker in a foreign language would be annoyance, or even disdain. This student [reading the passage] reacted differently. When he heard the call to prayer and understood that it was a repetition of the words Allah Akbar, God is Great, it seemed fitting. While a

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Christian meditated over the coming of Christ to Earth, Muslims echoed back: God is Great. This kind of experience cannot be had through conjuring up the situation in a classroom. The juxtaposition of sound mirrors the juxtaposition of religion and society in this example. This learning could only be had in that place, at that time.\textsuperscript{53}

3. The Sound of the Tide at Kinneret

While near the Sea of Galilee, the students also had the opportunity to meet with attorneys and hear about what role the Sea of Galilee plays in Israel and the surrounding countries. As the only source of fresh water, it is a precious resource that has played a role in the region for years. Seeing, and hearing, the lake itself while learning about the impact of one lake on an entire region may have been eye-opening to some students.\textsuperscript{54}

C. Taste

Many international travelers remember the food best from the places that they visit and these trips were no exception. Several events on the trip were designed to both be delicious and educational.


\textsuperscript{54} As one student put it, “. . . seeing the Sea of Galilee in the shadow of the Golan Heights can also tell you something a book cannot. From our hotel, I had to walk out a long dock to get to the water. I had heard human consumption and drought had been shrinking the lake, but walking over drying lakebed to reach the water drives the point home. The lake itself, which supplies the National Water Carrier and 30 percent of Israel’s freshwater needs, is big. But it’s not that big. It didn’t look big enough to supply so much of Israel’s fresh water. It was too easy to imagine the magnitude of the disaster if something happened to it. From the observation point at Mt. Bental, I could see Mt. Hermon to the north. I imagined all the fresh water flowing from the headwaters around the mountain around the Golan and into the Sea of Galilee. I had read the Galilee region was critically important to Israel’s water supply, but looking out of the lake and toward Mt. Hermon, I was struck by how fragile the water supply chain really was.” Avid Sterman, Sea of Galilee Rises 50 cm. in a Month Amid Rainiest Winter Since 1994, TIMES OF ISRAEL (Jan 3, 2013), available at http://www.timesofisrael.com/sea-of-galilee-rises-50-cm-in-a-month-amid-rainiest-winter-since-1994/; Jennifer Steinhauer, House Member Is Rebuked After Nude Swim in Israel, N.Y. TIMES (Aug. 20, 2012), available at http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/21/us/politics/after-skinny-dipping-in-israel-rep-kevin-yoder-is-rebuked.html (in 2012, a Kansas Congressman admitted that he went skinny dipping in the Galilee while on a Congressional trip).
1. The Eucalyptus

We had one experience where the tasting was purposely designed to highlight the conflict. The Eucalyptus is a restaurant based on biblical foods—spices and herbs used 4000 years ago. Chef Moshe Basson came to speak to us during the meal and discussed how he purposely hired Arab and Jewish employees. The chef discussed the different foods that the students were eating and how these foods reflected the different cultures but with the same geographic background.

2. Dinner in a Druze Village

On each trip to Israel, we took the students to a Druze village located in Usefiya. Usefiya is located in the northern part of Israel. During our visit, the students were welcomed into the homes of a Druze family for an excellent dinner and to learn more about the Druze religion. The Druze religion dates back to eighth century and recognizes facets of each of the three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. People are born in to the religion and have the opportunity to decide to leave, but converts are not allowed. The meal was served family style and was never ending. Not only did the food taste amazing, but the students were encouraged to eat as much as possible to show their appreciation for their hosts and for having the opportunity to learn more about the Druze religion.

3. Diversity of Foods

As we stopped for other meals and traveled around the country, each meal was a good reminder of how close the country is to its neighbors and also the diversity of populations: Yemeni, Iraqi, and North African. The mix of European or Western-style food with Middle Eastern food was a surprise to many students and again, more subtly, pointed out that many initial assumptions about this country were incorrect. One student tells the following story:

When having lunch in the shuk [in Jerusalem], let your Israeli guide order lunch for you. When he tells you not to ask ques-

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58 Id.
59 Id.
60 This was not a challenge, of course.
tions, do not. Enjoy the results. At a shwarma lunch counter with an entirely Hebrew menu and Hebrew-speaking staff, my guide ordered me the “Jerusalem Mix” shwarma wrap on laffa bread. I tasted the succulent onions and chicken mixed with hummus and other inexplicable sauces. I also bit into a texture that was unfamiliar yet pleasant, reminiscent of alligator meat, and quite delicious. I asked the guide what it was, and he explained that chicken livers and hearts were included in the Jerusalem Mix. I would not have eaten this on my own, and there is no way that I could order something similar in the states. I tasted the culture by trusting the guide and not asking questions. Until later!

D. Smell

Closely linked to taste is the sense of smell. Smell was highlighted not only through the food but also through markets, crowds, and religious sites. One student vividly recalled the smell of incense from a passing Russian Orthodox group on the Via Dolorosa. Another student pointed out, since the foods and spices smell different than home, “we were subconsciously noting all the time that this place is different than home.” Food bloggers and travelers to Israel regularly note similar experiences.

As one student explained after the trip, the smells and sounds of everything going on around can add to the cultural understanding and perception even, more generally, to the conflict. Taking in both the sights and smells at the same time, she explained, painted an entirely different picture and helped to develop her experience and understanding:

Even just the smells of being in the Middle East add to the already existing multiple layers of complexity. Walking through the market you are exposed to the smell of car and bus exhaust fumes, the freshly baked bread and pastries, unfamiliar spices, raw fish, and fresh fruits. Each smell represents something dif-

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E. Feeling

Finally, the physical and emotional senses of feeling—either physically touching something or being touched through our experiences—was highlighted in a variety of ways. Empathy is clearly created more when speakers’ talks are delivered in person. In addition, experiencing the religious sites was a transformative feeling for many.

1. Pain of Loss—Parent’s Circle

Implicit in the Israeli-Palestinian are the feelings related to the conflict. Again, these feelings are best understood through experience, not through just reading about them. Parent’s Circle is a joint Israeli-Palestinian organization that focuses on helping families who have lost a family member or child in the conflict heal. It uses restorative justice techniques to foster conversations about the conflict and discussions about how the group can influence the public and decision-makers to choose dialogue and peace over violence and war to achieve a resolution based on empathy and understanding. (Restorative Justice is aimed at fostering conversations between victims of crimes, the offenders, and the community. It is focused on healing through conversations between the parties about their personal needs and allows both parties to focus on the healing process.)

Robi Damelin, one of the founders of the organization, lost her son David to the conflict. Her son’s killer was one of the individuals released from the Israeli prison system in exchange for the release of Gilad Shalit. The stress, hopefulness, frustration, and optimism of all of our speakers created substantial feelings in the students that would not have been elicited through readings or even movies. In both 2011 and 2013, Parent’s Circle was perhaps

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the most powerful meeting in which we participated. As one student said, “I don’t think that the full magnitude of the conflict really hit anyone until we heard from two members of the Parents Circle.”

During the 2013 trip, we also met with a group called Encounter, which takes “mainstream American Jewish leaders” to meet with Palestinians in Palestinian territories.65 The purpose of the program is to expose American Jewish leaders to the real stories and lives of Palestinians. Though we were not able to participate in an encounter, we met with two facilitators who spoke about the impact that Encounter has had and their success stories. This meeting helped reinforce how important dialogue is in the region; furthermore, hearing the two facilitators’ backstories was very enlightening, especially one facilitator’s revelation that her family was not immediately receptive to her work.

2. Religious Sites

As we know, Israel contains many significant holy sites for the three major religions: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. And, although this fact is something that can be understood without a visit, experiencing how the sights are nearly on top of one another and seeing the people flock to these places is something that cannot truly be comprehended without seeing it first-hand. The crowding and moving together on the Via Dolorosa and at the Western Wall, serve to remind all of us how many people find this place so important. Seeing other visitors and pilgrims was also eye-opening. Pilgrims will actually carry crosses with them on Via Dolorosa. Students put their own notes in the Western Wall. Some were baptized at Yardenit, near the site where Jesus was baptized. In 2013, two of the students even had the opportunity to see and pray at the Dome of the Rock.66

IV. LEARNING FROM THE TRIP

As a component of the trip to Israel, Andrea gave her students an assessment of basic facts about Israeli geography and govern-

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mental leaders along with questions about their sense of day-to-day life in Israel and impressions of the peace process both before and after the trip in 2013. Anonymity hopefully increased accuracy in the assessments. Two major themes emerged from comparing these assessments: first, the factual learning increased measurably and, second, qualitative understanding of the conflict and peace process also improved dramatically.

Students started the semester with what you would expect an American student to know about the Mideast and they knew more facts and geography about Israel than Palestine. Eighty-three percent of the students surveyed before the trip knew that Benjamin Netanyahu is the Prime Minister of Israel; after the trip, 100% got the answer to this question. Students did just as well in a question on what two countries border the Gaza Strip pre-class: 78%. Upon return, 100% of the students knew the answer to this question. One hundred percent of the students knew where the Golan Heights was upon return. These increases can be attributed to the fact that we visited the Knesset of which Benjamin Netanyahu is the Prime Minister; visited the Golan Heights, and alluded frequently to Gaza while in Israel. Students experienced the place and retained the information even a month after returning. Students did not fare as well in pre-trip questions about Palestinian political leaders or geography. About half of the students correctly answered pre-trip questions about what territory the PLO and Hamas control and the leaders of the respective organizations. Post-trip, the numbers improved dramatically. One hundred percent of the students surveyed knew that the PLO controls the West Bank and Hamas controls Gaza and 89% could name Abbas as the chairman of PLO. Students went from about fifty-fifty on Palestinian political and geographical knowledge to nearly 100% success after visiting.

Learning about the peace process and Israeli culture increased just as dramatically. Students went into the trip with almost no sense of day-to-day life in Israel and blank answers about the peace process. After the students returned, they gave well-articulated narratives of their opinion of Israeli culture and how to achieve peace in the region. Clearly, it is difficult to quantify narrative answers, so following are some examples from individual students. One student remarked in two different parts of her survey that “in order to solve the conflict, each side has to listen to what the other is saying,” invoking the sense of hearing. This student also said later that it helped to “see the conflict through the eyes of the peo-
ple living there.” Many students reflected after the trip that they felt like they received a biased picture from the U.S. media that the region is dangerous and unwelcoming; in contrast they actually felt both safe and welcomed. Several students also reflected about the feeling of fear-based decision-making and said specifically that they gained more knowledge there than they ever would have from a “theoretical, third-party perspective.”

V. Conclusion

Adventure-learning is designed to be educational by engaging all of the senses in the learning process. For international conflict in particular, adventure-learning delivers a level of education about and involvement in the conflict that enhances student growth while providing qualitative empathy crucial to fully comprehending the conflict. In other words, you have to get on the plane!