

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY  
SCHREYER HONORS COLLEGE

DEPARTMENT OF INTERCOLLEGE PROGRAM

ISRAEL AND PALESTINE CONFLICT: A GRASSROOTS RECONCILIATION  
PROGRAM CASE STUDY

DANIELLE R. LICHLITER  
SPRING 2013

A thesis  
submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements  
for a baccalaureate degree  
in Bachelor of Philosophy  
with honors in Bachelor of Philosophy

Reviewed and approved\* by the following:

Mark Brennan  
UNESCO Chair in Rural Community, Leadership, and Youth Development  
Thesis Supervisor

Richard Stoller  
Coordinator of Academic Advising and International Programs  
Schreyer Honors College  
Honors Adviser

\* Signatures are on file in the Schreyer Honors College.

## **ABSTRACT**

There have been many different organizations, programs and political peace processes that aim to solve the Israel-Palestine conflict. None of these approaches have achieved success in creating peace in the Middle East. This thesis will look specifically at micro-level grassroots initiatives that work to achieve peace through reconciliation. A case study is presented of one grassroots program, Building Bridges for Peace, which provides a year-round reconciliation program for teenagers in Israel, Palestine and the United States. This program will be evaluated in order to determine the successes and shortcomings of this approach. By comparing this program to the experience and framework of leading reconciliation theorist and practitioner Herbert C. Kelman, this thesis will examine the Building Bridges for Peace program from a social science perspective. The author presents her analysis of this grassroots organizations as well as recommendations for Building Bridges for Peace specifically and other similar organizations.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	iii
Chapter 1 Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2 Literature Analysis: Herbert Kelman’s Problem-Solving Workshops.....	3
Chapter 3 History of Middle East Peace Initiatives: Failures and Analyses .....	11
Chapter 4 Building Bridges for Peace: A Case Study of a Grassroots Initiative.....	16
Chapter 5 Analysis and Conclusions .....	28
REFERENCES .....	33

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to firstly thank Deborah Oakes, my Division of Undergraduate Studies advisor, for inspiring me to find a path at Penn State that was uniquely my own and make the most of my education. Having your whole-hearted support at the beginning of my Penn State career gave me the confidence to not settle for anything less than what I really wanted.

Mark Brennan, I feel incredibly lucky that I signed up for your class last semester. At that point, I barely knew what the world reconciliation meant and look where we are now. Thank you for your passion for making the world a better place, one Môt hai ba yo at a time. I could not have done this without your help!

A huge thank you also goes out to Eric White, for helping me navigate my way through the Bachelor of Philosophy and believing in my passions and my curriculum. You really helped my dream become a reality.

Finally, thank you to Rich Stoller for stepping in as a caring, inquisitive advisor and thesis reader. You went above and beyond your job description and your honest critiques and genuine support are the only reason my thesis is now complete. I cannot thank you enough.

Thank you all! You have been absolutely pivotal in shaping my education and I am incredibly grateful.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

The conflict between Israel and Palestine is religious, geographic, historical, and political. It is both complicated and highly controversial. People in the Middle East and around the world hold strong and divisive opinions regarding this conflict. Several attempts at peace have occurred throughout recent history that have included Israel and the Palestinians but also Egypt, the United States, and other actors. Unfortunately, these attempts at peace have achieved very limited success and the conflict in the Middle East persists to this day. A recent escalation in violence occurred in November of 2012 between Gaza and Israel. This violence shows that the conflict is ever-present and contention and death are still occurring (Wedeman, 2012). For this reason, this paper attempts to evaluate the peace processes that have been employed throughout history in order to determine their success.

Many diverse techniques have been used to move toward peace. These range from large macro-political attempts at peace to individualistic grassroots movements. This paper will include a case study of one grassroots organization's attempt at achieving peace through a year-round reconciliation program. Building Bridges for Peace, will be examined in detail in order to explore the program's history, philosophy, and specific activities. This approach works with ordinary individuals and is a micro-level, grassroots solution that aims to achieve reconciliation through empathy and conversations (Breeze & Feldman, 2008). This technique has not yet been proven as a failure nor has it been

able to achieve widespread success. Therefore, the achievements and shortcomings of Building Bridges for Peace will be examined in detail. This paper will also review the ways in which this organization can apply other reconciliation techniques in order to provide a more holistic approach to reconciliation.

There are infinite definitions of reconciliation just as there are infinite ways to evaluate the benefits and threats of reconciliation. This creates a situation in which any solution, any evaluation or any critique must recognize the limits of its application. It is understood that the lens for this grassroots case study evaluation is narrow, but purposefully so. This paper chooses to look specifically at how one organization fits into one definition of reconciliation in order to develop a microscopic evaluation of a macroscopic problem.

This case study reveals an ideal opportunity: the opportunity to work with a group of young, influential and malleable minds from both Israel and Palestine. It is essential that the techniques for reconciliation are implemented in the most impactful ways possible in order to make the most of this unique opportunity. For this reason, critiques and further suggestions will be presented by the author with the end goal of an all-encompassing, high-impact reconciliation program.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Analysis: Herbert Kelman's Problem-Solving Workshops

Reconciliation is not a new concept or idea. It is rooted in many religions and dates back thousands of years (Berman, 1993). Yet in the Middle East where the problem is deeply rooted in religious conflict, religious reconciliation is not an option.

Fortunately, there have been other approaches, particularly in the field of political science, that are evaluating reconciliation through an academic lens. While many have studied peace specifically, defined as the absence of outright conflict, reconciliation theorists ask if just creating peace is enough to end conflict. In the field of reconciliation, it is often believed that peace is either not possible without reconciliation or peace is simply insufficient to resolving the entirety of the conflict (Kibble, 2010).

There are many distinct definitions of reconciliation. The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines "reconcile" as "to restore to friendship or harmony; settle, resolve" (2013). The International Institute of Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) defines reconciliation as "a process through which a society moves from a divided past to a shared future" (Bloomfield, Barnes & Huyse, p. 12, 2003). The definition given by IDEA is the one that will be used throughout this paper. It is important to recognize that reconciliation can be defined as "both a *goal* - something to achieve - and a *process* - a means to achieve that goal" (Bloomfield et al., p. 12). For the sake of this paper, the term reconciliation will focus on the process. There are also definitions of reconciliation that are more abstract and less literal. For example, Dr. John Lederach, a global leader in

international peace building, defines reconciliation as “the place where truth, mercy, justice and peace meet” (Breeze & Feldman, 2008, p. 77).

One leading researcher and practitioner in the field of reconciliation is Herbert Kelman, an Emeritus professor and past Director of the Program on International Conflict Analysis and Resolution at Harvard University. He has four decades of experience in the field of reconciliation (Fisher, 2010). “Kelman’s many theoretical and research accomplishments are well-known and widely acclaimed” (Pettigrew, 2010, p. 347). Kelman’s approach to reconciliation is widely accepted by traditional theorists because it is regarded as being very realistic and practical in a field that is often based on spirituality and theory rather than practice (Fisher). Kelman’s “lifelong efforts have been dedicated to finding methods of dealing with such difficult, deep-rooted conflicts by deconstructing and reconstructing elements of identity” (Spillmann & Kollars, 2010, p. 350). In 2010, Kelman was given the honor of being named a Pioneer in U.S. Peace Psychology by *Peace and Conflict: the Journal of Peace Psychology*. An entire issue of the journal was dedicated to his lifetime of reconciliation work (Pettigrew). The following section will explain how Kelman got involved and stayed involved with reconciliation throughout his career as well as his approach to reconciliation that he utilized in his work.

“Kelman’s work...is closely intertwined with his life, and indeed, his identity as a professional and as a human being” (Fisher, 2010, p. 415). It is therefore important to explore how Kelman’s interest in conflict resolution is rooted in his upbringing. Herbert C. Kelman was born in Vienna, Austria into a Jewish family in 1927. Eleven years later, Austria was annexed into Nazi Germany and Kelman and his family lived there under

Nazi control for one year. They escaped to a refugee camp in Belgium and eventually were granted visas to the United States in 1940 (Kelman, 2010).

Kelman and his sister became heavily involved in a moderate Zionist youth organization in Vienna and later in the United States. He spent his early years as an activist for oppressed peoples and publishing articles in local magazines. He was arrested several times during non-violent protests and was deeply invested in the American civil rights movement. Kelman completed an undergraduate degree in psychology followed by a Masters in Social Psychology from Yale University (Kelman, 2010). He is a trained social psychologist and has spent four decades committed to his practice and analysis (Spillmann & Kollars, 2010; Fisher, 2010). Kelman notes, “the fusion of scholarship with social activism was particularly appealing to me and, indeed, has remained so to this day” (p. 366).

Kelman’s research gradually shifted toward a more international focus as he was involved in the “beginnings of the peace research movement in the 1950’s” (Kelman, 2010, p. 367). Kelman co-authored an interdisciplinary book that was published in 1965. This publication increased his credibility in the field of international relations (Kelman). Thomas Pettigrew (2010), a close friend and scholar colleague of Kelman, explained “as a child of the Holocaust, Herb has sought to develop peace and reduce conflict with interdisciplinary work that is typically out of the mainstream” (p. 346).

In 1966, Kelman met Australian diplomat John Burton (Kelman, 2010; Spillmann & Kollars, 2010). Burton had been working on a method of unofficial diplomacy that was originally coined *controlled communication* (Kelman). This involved bringing together “high-level representatives of parties in conflict in an academic setting for confidential,

unofficial, analytic communication under the guidance of a third-party panel of political and social scientists” (Kelman, 2010, p. 369). Burton’s *controlled communication* laid the framework for much of Kelman’s future work and became the foundation upon which Kelman created his most well-known contribution to reconciliation techniques: interactive problem solving implemented through Problem-Solving Workshops (Fisher, 2010).

After the Middle East war in 1967, Kelman pondered about applying Burton’s *controlled communication* to the Middle East conflict. Kelman and Burton worked together on this idea but there was no explicit implementation. In 1971, Kelman and a colleague from Harvard, Stephen Cohen, planned a pilot workshop for the Middle East with the help of two Arab scholars. The original plan involved inviting Israelis, Palestinians and Egyptians to participate in this workshop. However, it was later discovered that in the presence of the Palestinians, the Egyptians would not be able to move forward with any sort of peace making. Kelman then decided only two parties should be involved in his Problem-Solving Workshops (Kelman, 2010).

In an article that overviews his entire lifetime of reconciliation work, Kelman (2010) explained: “Although interactive problem solving is firmly anchored in John Burton’s model, we did develop...our own style of running workshops, which is reflected in the ground rules, the agenda, and the third-party interventions that have characterized our work over the years” (p. 371). The following section will overview Kelman’s ground rules, his agenda, and the importance of having a third party within Kelman’s Problem-Solving Workshops or PSW as they will be referred throughout the rest of this paper.

### *Problem-Solving Workshops*

Kelman “considers the PSW as a uniquely social-psychological approach because the social interaction between the parties in the causation, escalation and resolution is, for him, the prime focus” (Fisher, 2010, p. 417). Throughout his career, Kelman completed over 80 of these workshops in the Middle East working with “individuals who are not officials, but politically influential—individuals who are more free to engage in the workshops process, but at the same time, occupy positions within their societies that enable them to influence the thinking of decision makers and the general public” (Kelman, 2010, p. 375). The first workshops Kelman facilitated were one-time events but he later moved to a model of Continuing Workshops that occurred over a series of months or years (Fisher; Kelman). The following quote explains the importance of this transition.

“The initiation of the Continuing Workshop was a significant event for Herb’s work and also for the PSW method in general, demonstrating that one-time workshops, although having some educational value, were inadequate to do justice to the challenges of protracted and intractable ethnopolitical conflicts” (Fisher, p. 422).

Regardless of whether the workshops were implemented as one-time or continuous, the PSW model remained the same and employed the same ground rules.

The PSW model brings together between three and six carefully selected individuals from each side of the conflict who are committed to engaging in dialogue. (Spillmann & Kollars, 2010). These workshops are dual purposed: to create change within the individuals and then to transfer this change to the political realm (Kelman, 2010; Fisher, 2010).

The workshops begin “with a needs analysis, which was designed to enable the parties to know and understand each other’s needs, fears, and concerns, and to penetrate each other’s perspectives” (Spillmann & Kollars, 2010, p. 351). Kelman (2010) explained that during his first continuing workshop, two of the three meetings were entirely dedicated to rebuilding trust and developing empathy so the third workshop was able to “engage in constructive joint thinking toward resolving some of the difficult issues of the conflict, and they committed themselves to continuing the group” (p. 380).

The workshops then move into the problem solving stage in which participants brainstorm solutions to the conflict. Initially, the brainstorms focused on creating overarching solutions yet later in Kelman’s career they became more focused on finding solutions to specific issues within the greater conflict. This brainstorming time is dedicated to ensuring that the needs, fears, concerns, etc. that were previously learned are addressed through the solutions that are created (Spillmann & Kollars, 2010).

This is achieved through a four-step process. First, the participants work with their parties to explain and analyze what they see to be the problem. Then, participants describe the problem to each other through presentations of their proposed solutions. Thirdly, the participants openly discuss their ideas and intend to positively encourage the other side to compromise. Finally, the compromises and plans are brought back to the real political environment and presented to the public and the authorities with the intention of implementing the compromises that occurred in small group discussions (Spillmann & Kollars, 2010).

Throughout Kelman’s career, he has maintained a specific set of ground rules for his Problem-Solving Workshops (Fisher, 2010). The first ground rule addresses privacy

and confidentiality within the workshops. There are no recordings of the workshop nor is any audience or outside observer allowed in the room. Kelman (2010a) notes the importance of privacy and confidentiality by explaining,

“This ground rule makes it possible for the participants to engage in the kind of interaction that problem-solving workshops require. Confidentiality gives them the freedom and safety to think, listen, talk, and play with ideas without having to worry that they will be held accountable outside for what they say in the workshop” (p. 398).

Other rules include listening to the complaints, arguments and hardships of others (Spillmann & Kollars, 2010), having no pre-conceived expectations of agreements (Kelman, 2010a), and having an environment of equality between all participants (Fisher, 2010).

Another extremely important ground rule for Kelman’s Problem-Solving Workshops is the role of the third-party facilitators. Facilitators do not take sides or share their opinions (Spillmann & Kollars, 2010) but instead establish the ground rules and ensure that these rules are upheld throughout the workshop (Kelman, 2010a).

While not explicitly considered a ground rule, Kelman also believes it is essential for his workshops to have an ethnically balanced team (Kelman, 2010). Fisher (2010) explains the rationale behind ethnically balanced teams:

“Rather than seeing this as some kind of compromise to achieve adequate impartiality, he pointed out that such a team likely has a higher degree of engagement in the conflict and also sensitivities to aspects of the parties’ identities and behaviors that a truly impartial third party would not have” (p. 420).

By including Arabs on his facilitation team, Kelman, who is Jewish, achieved this ethnic balance (Fisher).

Kelman's approach aims to solve the conflict by working with prominent individuals who are not actually decision makers or global leaders. They do, though, have the power to influence the political decision-making process. In order to understand the importance of working with these individuals, it is essential to gain an understanding of the context in which they aim to create political change. In the following chapter, this paper will look at that context specifically by exploring the history of past political peace processes to understand how global leaders have attempted to create peace on a macro-level without utilizing reconciliation.

## **Chapter 3**

### **History of Middle East Peace Initiatives: Failures and Analyses**

There have been several macroscopic (top level) attempts at creating peace within the Middle East in the past few decades. In 1977, Egyptian President Anwar El Sadat shocked the world with a declaration of his intention to go to Jerusalem to meet with the Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin. Sadat was openly invited to Israel and visited in November of 1977. A few months later, U.S. President Jimmy Carter hosted a peace summit between Israel and Egypt at Camp David in Washington. This summit led to the creation of a formal peace treaty in 1979. As part of the treaty, the United States provided military and economic aid to both countries. Since then, the United States has provided approximately \$4.3 billion in aid annually to Israel and Egypt, with about 75% of these funds going to Israel (Arieff, 2009). While this peace treaty showed that peace is possible between neighboring countries in the Middle East, it did not address the core conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

In 1993, after several years of uprising in the Palestinian territories, a secret peace conference was held in Oslo where, for the first time in history, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel held face-to-face negotiations. These negotiations led to the Oslo Accords which were signed on September 13, 1993. These Accords stated that Israel and the PLO would reach a peace agreement by 1999. Israel also agreed to “gradually transfer power and responsibility for the West Bank and Gaza to the Palestinians, and to recognize Arafat’s Palestinian Liberation Organization as the

representative of the Palestinian people and as a negotiating partner” (Arieff, 2009). The PLO agreed to formally recognize, through a letter that accompanied the Oslo Accords, Israel’s right to exist as well as denounce terrorism and acts of violence. The Accords also enacted a division of security responsibilities between the PLO and Israel (Arieff).

Unfortunately, the Oslo Accords did not create widespread peace. In 1995, there was widespread disapproval of this agreement and the peace negotiations were essentially ruined as a result of protests and acts of violence. Palestinian militants intensified their attacks on Israel and a Jewish extremist murdered the then Prime Minister of Israel, Yitzhak Rabin (Arieff, 2009).

In May 2000, Israel withdrew their troops from Southern Lebanon. Two months later, President Clinton brought Arafat and the new Israeli Prime Minister back to Camp David. This “Camp David Two” was the closest any officials have gotten to a formal peace agreement toward ending the Israel-Palestine conflict. Yet after two weeks of progress, Camp David Two ended without any formal peace agreement (Arieff, 2009).

Following Camp David Two’s failure, a second Intifada broke out in the occupied territories in September of 2000 due to Israeli and Palestinian frustration at the inability to achieve a peace agreement. During this period of violence, President Clinton directed former Senator Mitchell to head a committee with the aim of ending the Intifada and returning peace to the region. When Clinton left office in 2001, Mitchell’s findings were given to the George W. Bush Administration but no further involvement occurred. Mitchell’s findings divided the blame between both Israel and the PLO yet neither side actively took responsibility nor enacted his recommendations (Arieff, 2009).

While it is apparent that the peace process has failed in many ways, it is not so easy to understand why these failures have occurred. The following section will review three analyses on the reasons for this failure as well as what needs to happen in order for the peace process to be successful.

In their article *The Past's Promises: Lessons from Peace Processes in Northern Ireland and the Middle East*, Maney, Ibrahim, Higgins and Herzog (2006) explain why the peace process has not worked in the Middle East. They attribute this failure to the lack of grassroots support. They argue that a lack of connections between ordinary citizens and the people in power within the community can cause any attempts at peace to fail. Looking specifically to the Israel-Palestine conflict, they explain:

“Israel’s occupation and Arafat’s efforts to consolidate power stunted the development of Palestinian civil society. Within Israel, the strong state for many years has constrained the development of both Jewish and Arab-Palestinian civil society. Even with more state facilitation, the relative absence of equitable, positive interaction across ethno-nationalist lines on the grass-roots level translates into weak cross-communities organizational capacities” (p. 194).

If new, strong grassroots support exists, the authors have faith that peace will eventually occur in the Middle East (Maney, et al.).

Another viewpoint comes from David Kibble in his article *Are Israel and Palestine Ready for Peace?* In this article, Kibble (2010) details perspectives that select theorists hold in terms of Israel and Palestine’s readiness for peace. While it is suggested that these regions are not currently ready for peace, Kibble believes there is still some hope for peace that must be held on to. He argues:

“We must urge the education systems in both Israel and Palestine to develop an understanding of the other among the young people they serve. We must urge too the continued forging of contact between both sides

through charities and pressure groups that are already involved in that process. It is the generation of mutual understanding that will lead to peace between the two sides because peace is something that takes place between people, not something that takes place when politicians sign a piece of paper” (p. 72).

Kibble believes that wherever there are human beings there is also hope. He believes that through education and opportunities for creating a mutual understanding we can create peace. Kibble does not suggest that macroscopic peace processes are the solution; rather it is important that the individuals in the Middle East find microscopic peace within their communities (Kibble).

The final perspective to be evaluated is that of Zasloff, Shapiro and Coyne who authored a United States Institute of Peace briefing. This briefing discusses the importance of creating an educational track and the necessity of education for the success of the overall peace process. The brief states that “education can be an important component of fostering positive change in social values, attitudes and skills that are necessary to overcome the pain of conflict and to cope with the frustrations involved in a peace process” (Zasloff, Shapiro & Coyne, 2009, p. 1).

With this in mind, detailed steps are explained for the implementation of an education track. The first step is to “establish regular meetings between the two ministers of education” (Zasloff et al., 2009, p. 6) in order to discuss each ministry’s current position in terms of readiness for peace. The second step is to “create a Palestinian and an Israeli ‘National Education Advisory Committee’” (p. 6) that would determine the best way to help students cope with the challenges of the conflict. The final step is to “establish a joint Israeli-Palestinian Education Advisory Committee” (p. 6). This committee would be responsible for monitoring the success and progress of the individual

National Education Advisory Committees. This briefing also states that education holds an important place within the negotiation stage. The briefing concludes that the peace process lacks education which education is essential for developing a greater understanding between both sides (Zasloff, et al.).

While each of these analyses were independently constructed, it is clear that there are many similarities. All three analyses conclude that Camp David and Camp David Two were simply not able to achieve peace. They show there is a need for reconciliation; for understanding and empathy to come before peace; for long-term, grassroots education that directly supports and benefits the individuals who are involved in the conflict.

In fact, many organizations have been working toward this type of grassroots reconciliation. One example is an organization called Seeking Common Grounds that focuses on the grassroots: fostering relationships, promoting education and creating empathy between individuals. In the following chapter, this organization and its reconciliation programs will be examined in detail.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Building Bridges for Peace: A Case Study of a Grassroots Initiative**

This chapter is a case study of Building Bridges for Peace (BBfP), a program run by the organization Seeking Common Ground (SCG). In order to explore how this organization employs grassroots reconciliation, this chapter will look at the history of the organization, the people involved, and the organization's philosophy. It will also provide an in-depth look at the BBfP program and compare this organization to similar programs.

#### *History*

Founded in 1993 by Melodye Feldman and Kerry Stutzman, Seeking Common Ground is a non-profit organization located in Denver, Colorado (Culver, 1996). "SCG's mission is to empower individuals to change the world by creating peaceful communities through integration, socialization, communication and leadership development" (Breeze & Feldman, 2008). The vision of this organization is to "transform us-versus-them attitudes by connecting individuals face to face with those they have been taught to fear" (About SCG, 2012).

Through a variety of hands-on, interactive programs, SCG brings together young people from diverse backgrounds on opposing sides of conflicts in order to develop their leadership and communication skills. In the past eighteen years, SCG has approximately 2,000 participants from Israel, Palestine and the United States as well as South Africa and Northern Ireland. Participants have been involved in short-term national programs as well

as long-term international programs (About SCG, 2012).

Seeking Common Ground announced in August 2012 that they are changing the name of their organization to Building Bridges. Their most well known program, Building Bridges for Peace (BBfP), will also be shortened to the same name: Building Bridges. Executive Director Erin Breeze explained that BBfP “has often been confused with our organization name, Seeking Common Ground. This change allows us to communicate more clearly and powerfully about our work” (Seeking Common Ground is Now Building Bridges, 2012). In addition to the name change, Building Bridges has implemented other changes and created new programs that will be discussed in the following section. For the sake continuity, the former names, Building Bridges for Peace and Seeking Common Ground, will be used throughout this paper, unless referencing the new program specifically.

### *Overview of SCG*

SCG provides a wide variety of programs, each focused on the idea of developing a greater sense of cross-cultural understanding. The most widely known program that SCG offers is the BBfP program (Breeze & Feldman, 2008). This program will be discussed in its entirety in a following section.

SCG also offers a program called Face to Face/Faith to Faith. This is “an interfaith program created in partnership with Auburn Theological Seminary for young women and men from South Africa, Northern Ireland, Israel and the U.S.” (Breeze & Feldman, 2008, p. 15). This program is based on the methodology used in the BBfP program and works to promote an understanding of diverse religious backgrounds. The

Denver Participant Encounter And Community Engagement (P.E.A.C.E.) program works with high school students to foster opportunities for international travel to conflict regions to promote peace (Breeze & Feldman).

SCG also provides consulting and training for other organizations, educators, contact theory practitioners, etc. with the intention of sharing the knowledge their organization has gained in the past twenty years. These trainings also occur within the wider community as educational workshops based on themes of peace, stereotypes, diversity, conflict, etc. (Breeze & Feldman, 2008).

In addition to the previously mentioned name change, SCG has also opened one full-time staff position in Jerusalem, developed an interactive Alumni Network and instituted a program that works with students from over 20 high schools in Denver. (Seeking Common Ground is Now Building Bridges, 2012). Each month, SCG offers a wide range of events including movie screenings, ping pong and community celebrations that occur across the United States and sometimes around the globe (About SCG, 2012).

### ***Feldman and Breeze***

Melodye Feldman is a co-founder of Seeking Common Ground. She began her career working as a rape crisis counselor in the 1970s. After completing a Masters of Social Work at the University of Denver, she “became the Executive Director of the Longmont Coalition Against Domestic Violence and was a board member of the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence” (SCG Staff, 2009). During this time, Feldman lobbied Congress to criminalize domestic violence (SCG Staff).

Feldman's experience working in the Middle East began long before she co-founded SCG. She visited Israel for the first time in the 1960s and worked extensively to understand the Jewish and Israeli perspective. In 1987, she was in Israel during the First Palestinian Intifada, which inspired her to begin exploring the Palestinian perspective. She met with locals, government officials, peace activists, and non-governmental organizations in Israel, Gaza and the West Bank (SCG Staff).

Feldman stepped down in 2009 and was succeeded by Erin Breeze. Breeze joined SCG in 2004 as the BBfP program director and also oversaw the Denver P.E.A.C.E. Program. She studied as a George J. Mitchell Scholar while completing a Masters of Arts in Peace and Development Studies from the University of Limerick (SCG Staff, 2009). She has spoken as a guest lecturer on the peace process in Northern Ireland at several universities in Colorado (Erin Breeze, 2001).

### *Philosophy*

The following quote explains the philosophy behind the foundation of SCG.

"SCG programs were designed in response to the overwhelming lack of opportunities, both in the United States and around the world, for individuals to acquire the skills to communicate, cooperate and cohabitate with the 'other.' While communities worldwide speak to their desires for peace, they often lack the tools and knowledge to create and sustain peaceful relationships — the foundation for equitable, just and inclusive societies" (Breeze & Feldman, 2008, p. 15).

Melodye Feldman (2008) explains that this program's "goal is not to 'normalize' the situation...there is nothing 'normal' about living in conflict with each other. We invite the participants to attend our programs to facilitate dialogue that addresses the

conflict and does not shy away from the difficult complex issues within the conflict” (p. 44).

SCG believes in the importance of including both *insiders* and *outsiders*. Insiders are people who are “vulnerable to the conflict, usually live in the area, experience the conflict and suffer its consequences personally” (Breeze & Feldman, 2008, p. 30). Outsiders are people who choose “to become involved in a conflict. Though [they] may be intensely engaged, they have little to lose personally” (Breeze & Feldman, p. 30). In their Best Practices Report, Breeze and Feldman cite the work of Chigas and Woodrow (2004) who explain that good relationships between the insiders and the outsiders have proven to be beneficial to peace projects. These partnerships can be successful as long as the goals and objectives are explicitly and preemptively defined. For this reason, SCG participants and staff members alike are a mix of both insiders and outsiders (Breeze & Feldman).

### ***Building Bridges for Peace Program***

The BBfP program began in 1994 with the goal of bringing youth between the ages of sixteen and nineteen from the US, the West Bank and Israel together “for a yearlong leadership development and peacebuilding program” (Breeze & Fedelman, 2008, p. 6). Participants span diverse socioeconomic statuses, genders, ethnicities and political perspectives. They spend two-weeks during the summer in Colorado focusing on leadership development, peace promotion activities, and communication. Throughout the following year, participants become involved in a follow-up program within their communities which functions as a follow-up to the two-week immersion. Consistent

themes of communication, leadership development and peace promotion are addressed throughout the year (Breeze & Feldman).

Hoping to increase the success of their programs, SCG implemented several changes to their programs. While originally the Palestinian students were from both the West Bank and Gaza, due to heightened tension and border closure, the students for the program have been only come from West Bank since 2000. In 2007, BBfP also stopped offering programs to all youth and instead focused on females specifically. The following quote explains SCG's reasoning for making this change in gender.

“Women often possess qualities that encourage a more collaborative approach to strengthening intergroup relations and approach conflict resolution from a place of greater inclusion, consensus and empathy. These qualities model a style of inclusive leadership that creates more peaceful relationships and communities. Predicated on this female-centered paradigm, SCG's programs teach participants how to transform relationships with former adversaries from a place of antagonism and fear to mutual respect and understanding” (Breeze & Fedelman, 2008, p. 3).

In an effort to reach a wider demographic of the population, in the summer of 2007, SCG also piloted a BBfP program just for young men. (Erin Breeze, 2001) This year the program is also switching to a two-year model where participants will attend two summer-intensive sessions and the monthly sessions in their home communities which continue throughout the two years as well (About SCG, 2012).

During BBfP, participants are divided into groups in four different ways. Each group is intentional and serves a different purpose. The *homegroup* is made of people who come from the same geographic location. There are currently four *homegroups*: American, Jewish-Israeli, Arab/Palestinian-Israeli and Palestinian. This specific type of grouping provides participants with opportunities to interact with members of their home

community and to speak their native language. *Cabin groups* are made up of approximately 8-10 individuals from each of the four *homegroups*. This gives a diverse group of participants the opportunity to get to know each other on a much more intimate, personal level. There are two facilitators for each cabin group who lead activities and create a safe living community. *Dialogue groups* are groups of about ten participants. During large group activities, the participants often have smaller discussions with their *dialogue groups*. These groups are equally as diverse as the cabin groups and are created to allow for a comfortable space that fosters deeper communication between participants than what might occur in the larger group setting. The final way participants are divided is into *small groups*. *Small groups* are random pairings or groups between three and six participants that are used for a variety of activities throughout the two-week summer intensive session (Breeze & Feldman, 2008).

SCG has developed a wide variety of activities that they implement during BBfP in order to promote intergroup contact. One such activity is called In Their Shoes. This activity aims to create empathy between participants by humanizing the other. Empathy occurs when you find an awareness of yourself within the specific context you are in (Freire, 1970). In this activity, two participants from different *homegroups* (groups of individuals from the same geographic region) are paired together. In order to create an intimate and highly personal environment, the participants sit facing each other with their knees touching (Breeze & Feldman, 2008). This type of intimate body language is essential to creating an environment in which individuals feel comfortable sharing and communicating (Sharma, 2011). The participants are then read statements such as:

“How do you feel when you hear that a bus has just blown up?”

How does it feel to cross a checkpoint?  
 How do you feel when you are discriminated against?  
 How do you feel when you hear that someone you know was  
 killed?  
 How do you feel when you see a soldier?  
 What are you most afraid of?” (Breeze & Feldman, 2008, p. 80)

Participants are then instructed to respond to these questions speaking as if they were their partner, the person sitting across from them. After each response, guided by a facilitator, the partner who was listening takes a turn adding to or clarifying what was said and making any necessary corrections (Breeze & Feldman).

To evaluate the impact of this activity, participants then anonymously report how the activity made them feel and what they learned from the exercise. The responses showed a deeper ability to empathize. One individual explained:

“This was the first time that I felt that I am truly connecting with the other person. It was the first time I felt that the other person is listening to me and relating to me. I thought I wouldn’t have the chance to be heard like that but it happened and I’m glad. I now appreciate this program more” (Breeze & Feldman, 2008, p. 80).

This quote exemplifies the importance of this activity. It teaches the participants to really listen to their partners and to see things from another point of view. It gives the participants the opportunity to really understand what the other person is feeling by feeling it themselves.

Another activity is called Historical Timelines. This activity focuses on developing a common acknowledgement of the history that has occurred within the conflict while embracing perspectives from both sides. The activity begins by having each participant record their version of the history of the conflict starting at whatever point they want and ending in the present. With their *homegroup*, participants then share

and discuss their timelines. A group timeline is compiled by each *homegroup* and then presented to all BBfP participants. These timelines are then hung up on the wall and participants are given an opportunity to spend more time reading and understanding the timelines. A debrief of the information follows in a facilitated *small group* dialogue (Breeze & Feldman, 2008).

These are just a few of the many unique activities implemented throughout the BBfP program. Each activity was carefully and intentionally designed in order to meet the goals of the program and to foster greater understanding between participants.

### ***BBfP Metrics of Success***

The BBfP program has very explicit metrics of success. These were each carefully laid out and evaluated in Feldman and Breeze's *SCG Report on Theory, Best Practices and Evaluation*. The metrics are divided into three areas of focus: Intergroup Contact, Participant, and Alumni. The following lists summarize these metrics of success based on the three categories (Breeze & Feldman, 2008).

#### *Intergroup Contact:*

1. Creation of equal playing field for both Israeli and Palestinian participants
2. Development of intergroup friendships
3. Improvement of intergroup attitudes
4. Creation of environment that fosters disclosing personal information
5. Creation of a feeling of shared identity between participants

#### *Participant:*

1. Participant develops/strengthens strong communication and dialogue skills
2. Participant puts skills into practice in home community
3. Participant develops/strengthens ability to empathize
4. Participant gains sense of hope for future

#### *Alumni:*

1. Alumni participate in conflict-resolution activism
2. Alumni share experience with friends and family (Breeze & Feldman)

This approach to measuring success is holistic as it focuses both on the individual and the group as well as the lasting effects of participation on alumni of the program.

### ***Social Science in the SCG Framework***

The main technique utilized in the BBfP program is called “intergroup contact intervention” (Breeze & Feldman, 2008, p. 6). For the purpose of this paper and for the SCG Report, “‘Intergroup Contact’ refers to actual face-to-face interaction between members of clearly defined groups” (Breeze & Feldman, p. 6). Breeze and Feldman believe that BBfP’s implementation of intergroup contact theory can be replicated in any geographic region as it was not designed solely for the Israel-Palestine conflict. It has been implemented in the United States working with Native American communities and Muslims, Jews and Christians as well as in Northern Ireland and South Africa (Breeze & Feldman).

Intergroup contact intervention is based on Gordon Allport’s Contact Hypothesis. This hypothesis explains that by bringing together groups under specific conditions, it is possible to reduce prejudice (Crisp, Stathi, Turner & Husnu, 2008). It explains that “Allport originally asserted that maximally positive outcomes will be observed if the contact involves equal status between the groups, common goals, no competition, and institutional support” (Crisp et al., p. 2).

In 2006, Thomas Pettigrew and Linda Tropp published research claiming that while these criteria may help the process of reducing prejudice, they are not essential

(Crisp et al., 2008). Intergroup contact, they argue, has positive effects “regardless of target group, age group, geographical area, or contact setting” (Crisp et al., p. 2).

### *Similar Programs*

There are many programs that have similar goals as BBfP and achieve them through similar means. One such example is Seeds of Peace, a non-profit organization that hosts International Camps in the United States. These camps bring individuals from opposing sides of conflict face-to-face for dialogues and activities. Their programs focus on conflicts specifically in the Middle East, South Asia and the Balkans but, like SCG, also incorporate outsiders by including individuals from the United States and the United Kingdom. Seeds of Peace differs from BBfP particularly in terms of the types of individuals they seek to enroll in their programs. Seeds of Peace boasts having extremely low acceptance rates and participants who were hand-selected by their government or school. BBfP does not require this type of recommendation and does not publically share their acceptance rates. Seeds of Peace also has a competition component in which the participants compete in a Camp Olympics with activities that range from sports to fine arts. This type of team-building technique is not utilized by BBfP (International Camp, 2013).

Kids Creating Peace is another grassroots summer camp program. This program is located in Israel and brings together Jewish, Christian and Muslim children between the ages of eight and twelve for a four day summer camp. The camp is based in a large park and is supposed to emulate a safari (Thomas, 2005). The leaders of the camp include both Israelis and Palestinians. This organization is also currently implementing a pilot

dialogue program for Israeli and Palestinian teenagers that aims to empower the participants through conversation (Kids Creating Peace, 2012). This program differs from BBfP in that it is a short-term program that does not provide opportunities for continuous relationship building throughout the year. Their main programs also work with much younger children than BBfP although the new dialogue program works with teenagers.

Examining organizations that have similar programs but achieve their goals through alternative means allows for a greater understanding of the diverse possibilities of grassroots reconciliation. In order to evaluate the possibilities for growing and expanding the BBfP program specifically, the following chapter will detail the author's analysis of BBfP. This will provide insights on how SCG can improve their program but also how other organizations can benefit by utilizing BBfP's existing techniques.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Analysis and Conclusions**

This paper has presented various techniques of peace and reconciliation. Chapter 2 established Herbert Kelman's importance within the field of reconciliation. Kelman's dual-purposed Problem Solving Workshops, which work with influential individuals rather than global leaders, were explained and analyzed. Chapter 3 examined the macro-level peace processes that have occurred in the Middle East. It was established that this type of reconciliation has been unsuccessful at achieving peace in the region, both in a political sense and in the eyes of social scientists. Chapter 4 was a case study of the non-profit organization, Seeking Common Ground. This chapter explained this organization's grassroots approach which aims to achieve microscopic peace through working directly with the individuals who are living the conflict. This final chapter addresses how Kelman's approach can best be applied to BBfP in order to better the program. The author will provide her suggestions and analyses for BBfP.

It is important to first determine what aspects of Kelman's work are directly applicable to the BBfP program. Kelman's ground rules can be easily applied to this program. Many of the ground rules, such as privacy, having an ethnically balanced team, and third-party facilitation already occur during BBfP. Yet, Kelman establishes these ground rules in an extremely clear and consistent manner throughout his career. It could be beneficial for BBfP to adopt this technique and to establish explicit ground rules for their organization.

One of Kelman's ground rules is to establish a dual purpose in his workshops: first, to have the participants brainstorm solutions to the conflict and second, to implement political change within their community or country. This change occurs by creating a detailed plan of action and, in some cases, specific legislation which is then pitched to government officials and global leaders. The dual purpose of Kelman's Problem Solving Workshops is starkly different than that of the BBfP program. Kelman is meeting with highly influential people (Kelman, 2010) whereas BBfP works with ordinary citizens who are in their teenage years (Breeze & Feldman, 2008). It would be neither possible nor logical for BBfP participants to influence the same type of large-scale change that is encouraged through Kelman's workshops. Yet it is certainly possible to find a dual purpose for the BBfP program that aligns with the mission and vision of SCG.

BBfP could aim to help participants make small, incremental changes within their home communities that are realistic for their abilities and skills. The participants could also make detailed plans of action just like Kelman's Problem Solving Workshop participants are expected to do. For example, the BBfP participants could spend time during the summer-intensive session planning how they are going to bring what they learned in the program back to their home communities. This type of plan would be much more focused on the individual and creating change within their communities as opposed to achieving macro-level peace.

BBfP does, when financial resources allow, create opportunities for the families of participants to be involved in BBfP events in their home community (Breeze & Feldman, 2008). If a participant's plan of action included introducing his or her family to

the topics and ideas addressed during the summer intensive, families might be more willing and/or interested in attending these types of activities. This would be a step toward reaching the dual purpose that was previously addressed. Participants' plans of action could also include a step-by-step outline for creating educational programming about their experience for their local school or community center. This type of plan would be supported by Zasloff, Shapiro and Coyne whose briefing (mentioned in Chapter 3) focused on the importance of education in reconciliation. Israeli participants could create a plan of action leveraging the votes of their peers for leaders who support reconciliation and peace. The Palestinian participants, though, would have to find more creative ways to advocate on behalf of their preferred governing officials an undemocratic system.

From the case study evaluation of BBfP, it is clear that many of the aspects of this program could be applied to other programs or organizations who strive to achieve similar goals. The BBfP method was never designed to be specifically for the Middle East and thus is applicable to other settings and other conflicts (Breeze & Feldman, 2008). Organizations around the globe can easily look to Breeze and Feldman's Best Practices Report to gain insight and suggestions for their own reconciliation programs.

One specific activity, the Historical Timelines activity, could easily be used by other organizations. This activity focuses on helping participants gain a better understanding of the history of a conflict from the opposing perspectives. It gives participants an opportunity to really acknowledge the differences between what each believes to be true. In a report from 2008, Kelman (2010b) explains the five key

conditions for reconciliation. One of these conditions is the confrontation of history.

Kelman explains:

“...we have to recognize that the different narratives of different groups reflect different historical experiences—and that, therefore, their experienced truths may in fact not be identical. Reconciliation, in my view, does not require writing a joint consensual history, but it does require admitting the other’s truth into one’s own narrative” (Kelman, 2010b, p. 18).

Whether aiming to achieve conflict resolution on a large scale, such as the Israel-Palestine conflict, or on a much smaller scale such as in an office setting, confronting history is crucial in creating progress. This specific activity created by SCG can be adapted and implemented in a variety of settings and used by organizations with varying goals.

Returning to our original definition of reconciliation, it is essential to remember that reconciliation is a process and takes time. After trying one-time workshops, Kelman discovered that his workshops were much more effective as continuing workshops that offered several distinct opportunities for participants to partake in dialogue. BBfP also employs this idea with their follow-up programming in the participants’ home communities after the summer-intensive session. Other organizations, such as Kids Creating Peace, that host one time workshops, might benefit from using BBfP as a model for future follow-up programs.

Seeking Common Ground also excels in their ability to evaluate their own programs. Not only do they have clearly defined metrics of success, but they also received funding to create an extensive, all-encompassing report that evaluates their work since they began reconciliation programming. Their evaluation is backed in theory,

statistical evidence and personal interviews. This type of evaluation would serve as an ideal model for other organizations in any field (not just reconciliation) to evaluate the successes and shortcomings of their organization. It is important to recognize, though, that there are limitations to this type of evaluation due to the need for confidentiality within the programs.

In reconciliation, it is essential to develop a holistic approach. By understanding the macro-level political peace processes that have occurred as well as reviewing what social scientists believe is necessary for reconciliation, this type of holistic reconciliation can be achieved. I can only hope that through collaboration and the utilization of diverse reconciliation techniques, one day, real micro-level and macro-level peace can be achieved in the Middle East.

## REFERENCES

- About SCG. (2012). In *Seeking Common Ground*. Retrieved February 15, 2013, from [http://s-c-g.org/Seeking\\_Common\\_Ground/About\\_SCG.html](http://s-c-g.org/Seeking_Common_Ground/About_SCG.html)
- Arieff, I. (2009, May 1). Middle East Peace Prospects. In *CQ Global Researcher*. Retrieved April 4, 2013
- Berman, H. J. (1993). *Faith and Order - The Reconciliation of Law and Religion*. Grand Rapids, MI: Emory University. Retrieved April 4, 2013
- Bloomfield, D., Barnes, T., & Huyse, L. (2003). Reconciliation after violent conflict: A handbook. *International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance*, 12. Retrieved January 12, 2013
- Breeze, E. E., & Feldman, M. (2008). Building Bridges for Peace: A report on theory, best practices, and evaluation after 15 years. *Seeking Common Ground*, 3-80. Retrieved December 9, 2012
- Crisp, R. J., Stathi, S., Turner, R. N., & Husnu, S. (2008). Imagined intergroup contact: Theory, paradigm and practice. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 2. Retrieved February 14, 2013
- Culver, V. (1996, July 24). Building bridges to understanding Girls of different cultures gather. *The Denver Post*. Retrieved March 18, 2013
- Erin Breeze. (2001, March 15). In *US-Ireland Alliance*. Retrieved March 25, 2013, from <http://www.us-irelandalliance.org/content/217/en/?idNumber=8>

- Fisher, R. J. (2010). Commentary on Herbert Kelman's Contribution to Interactive Problem Solving. *Peace and Conflict, 16*. Retrieved April 3, 2013
- International Camp. (2013). In *Seeds of Peace*. Retrieved April 4, 2013, from <http://www.seedsofpeace.org/camp>
- Kelman, H. C. (2010). Looking Back at My Work on Conflict Resolution in the Middle East. *Peace and Conflict, 16*. Retrieved April 1, 2013
- Kelman, H. C. (2010a). Interactive Problem Solving. *Journal of Peace Research, 16*. Retrieved April 2, 2013
- Kelman, H. C. (2010b, February 22). Conflict resolution and reconciliation: A social-psychological perspective. , 16-20. Retrieved January 13, 2013
- Kibble, D. G. (2010). Are Israel and Palestine Ready for Peace? *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice, 22*. Retrieved April 2, 2013
- Kids Creating Peace. (2012). In *Success for Kids, Inc.*. Retrieved April 4, 2013, from <http://dev.sfk.org/en/kids-creating-peace>
- Maney, G. M., Ibrahim, I., Higgins, G. I., & Herzog, H. (2006, March). The Past's Promise: Lessons from Peace Processes in Northern Ireland and the Middle East. *Journal of Peace Research, 43*(2). Retrieved April 1, 2013
- Pettigrew, T. F. (2010). Herbert C. Kelman: A Tribute. *Peace and Conflict, 16*. Retrieved April 1, 2013
- Reconcile. (2013). In *Merriam Webster*. Retrieved February 4, 2013
- SCG Staff. (2009, November 11). In *Seeking Common Ground*. Retrieved March 21, 2013

- Seeking Common Ground is now Building Bridges. (2012, August 27). In *Seeking Common Ground*. Retrieved March 18, 2013, from [http://www.s-c-g.org/Seeking\\_Common\\_Ground/News/Entries/2012/8/27\\_Seeking\\_Common\\_Ground\\_is\\_now\\_Building\\_Bridges.html](http://www.s-c-g.org/Seeking_Common_Ground/News/Entries/2012/8/27_Seeking_Common_Ground_is_now_Building_Bridges.html)
- Sharma, V. M. (2011). *Body Language*. N.p.: V&S Publishers. Retrieved March 24, 2013
- Spillman, K. R., & Kollars, N. D. (2010). Herbert Kelman's Contribution to the Methodology of Practical Conflict Resolution. *Peace and Conflict, 16*. Retrieved April 1, 2013
- Thomas, A. (2005, September 2). Israeli and Palestinian Children Participate in Peace Camp. *Common Ground News Service*. Retrieved April 4, 2013, from <http://www.commongroundnews.org/article.php?id=967&lan=en&sp=0>
- Wedeman, B. (2012, November 22). After 8 days of fighting, calm returns to Gaza. *CNN*. Retrieved March 17, 2013, from <http://www.cnn.com/2012/11/22/world/meast/gaza-israel-strike>
- Zasloff, B., Shapiro, A., & Coyne, A. H. (2009, August). An Education Track for the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process. *United States Institute of Peace*. Retrieved April 2, 2013

# ACADEMIC VITA

Danielle R. Lichliter

DRL5140@psu.edu

---

## Education

Bachelor of Philosophy: Non-Profit Management with International Emphasis, 2013,  
The Pennsylvania State University, State College, PA

## Honors and Awards

- President's Freshman Award, Undergraduate Scholastic Awards, 2010
- Dean's List, All Semesters, 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012
- Schreyer Ambassador Travel Grant, Schreyer Honors College, 2011 and 2012
- Schreyer Internship Grant, Schreyer Honors College, 2012
- Education Abroad Africa Grant-in-Aid, Office of Global Programs, 2012
- Change Agent Scholarship, Humanitarian Engineering and Social Entrepreneurship, 2012
- IES Ambassador of the Year Scholarship, IES Abroad, 2013

## Professional Experience

- Social Media Manager for non-profit organization called World In Conversation, an organization that facilitates radical cross-cultural dialogues around the globe

## International Experience

- Study Abroad, Granada, Spain, January-May 2011
- International Volunteer, Poznan, Poland and Copenhagen, Denmark, June-July 2011

- International Agriculture Course, Vietnam and Cambodia, May 2012
- Humanitarian Engineering and Social Entrepreneurship Program, Nyeri, Kenya and Kigali, Rwanda, June 2012
- Grant Management Internship, Mexico City, Mexico, July-August 2012