

**The Sixth Annual Graduate Education Symposium
in Peace and Conflict Resolution:**

**Experiential and Field-Based Learning in
Preparing the Next Generation of Peacebuilders**



School for
Conflict Analysis
and Resolution



May 27th 2016
School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution,
George Mason University, Arlington, VA¹

¹ This report was prepared by Ron Fisher based on notes from Molly Tepper and from Mimi Pierre and Miranda Salinas who served as rapporteurs for the sessions. Photos are courtesy of Molly Tepper and Craig Zelizer.

Introduction and Summary

The sixth annual Graduate Education Symposium in Peace and Conflict Resolution was held on Friday, May 27, 2016, in conjunction with the Annual Conference of the Alliance for Peace Building (May 24-26). This continuing event offers an annual opportunity to bring together faculty, staff and administrators of graduate programs in peace and conflict resolution to discuss the challenges and opportunities that programs face in responding to an evolving field and a rapidly changing world. The symposium has covered a variety of topics designed to assist participants in successfully educating the next generation of peacebuilding professionals and to increase the chances of their finding suitable employment. Each year, the symposium has attracted an increasing number of graduate programs in the field, particularly ones that focus more on ethno-political and international conflicts along with domestic issues. The symposia have been hosted by various peace and conflict resolution programs, more recently in the Washington DC area, and have received ongoing support from the United States Institute of Peace and the Alliance for Peacebuilding. The event thus provides an ongoing forum for the educators of graduate programs to discuss how they are training the next generation of peacebuilders in terms of innovations in curriculum, skills building and program development as well as to foster collaborative learning and cooperation among programs. The symposium has usually been divided into two sessions: the first designed for Program Directors and/or designates to discuss program specific topics and issues; and the second to bring in participants from the wider peace building community to hear about challenges, issues and developments in the field from an educational and training perspective. The development and holding of the symposium has therefore been aligned with the existence and functioning of the Education and Training Affinity Group of the Alliance for Peacebuilding:

<http://www.allianceforpeacebuilding.org/our-work/affinity-groups/education-and-training/>).



A Diverse Audience of Peacebuilders Attended the 2016 Symposium

This year's symposium was hosted by the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at the Arlington VA campus of George Mason University, and focused on the topic of experiential and field-based learning in preparing the next generation of peacebuilders. The morning session was by invitation and brought together approximately 30 program directors, faculty and administrators from approximately 20 graduate programs to focus on some of the opportunities, experiences and challenges in offering field-based courses to their students. Following a welcome and an introduction, a panel presentation brought together faculty from three different programs to share some of their field-based experiences in graduate education. Breakout groups then allowed for more focused discussion of a number of challenges and issues in mounting and implementing such offerings. The public session in the afternoon added in approximately 30 professionals and students in the peacebuilding field to hear a summary of the morning's deliberations along with a keynote address, and to engage in workshops to interact with program faculty presenting on their experiences in offering experiential and field-based learning opportunities to their students. Four workshops were organized into two concurrent sessions, based on proposals submitted to the Planning Committee prior to the symposium. A final session engaged the approximately 60 participants in communicating their "takeaways" from the symposium and their "asks" for future symposia. The closing comments captured the highlights of the day and confirmed the high degree of engagement and enthusiasm demonstrated in having a forum to discuss graduate education in the context of an evolving field and a challenging global context.

2016 Symposium Planning Committee

Cassie Ammen, George Mason University
Kevin Avruch, George Mason University
Ron Fisher, American University
Emily Mallozzi, Alliance for Peacebuilding
Tom Matyok, UNC Greensboro
Agnieszka Paczynska, George Mason University
Mara Schoeny, George Mason University
Molly Tepper, George Mason University
Necla Tschirgi, University of San Diego
Craig Zelizer, Peace and Collaborative Development Network

Symposium Agenda

Morning

9:00 Registration and Gathering, S-CAR Department Room 5183, 5th Fl. Metropolitan Bldg.

9:30 Welcome: Julie Shedd, *Associate Dean for Administration, School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution*

9:35 Introductions and Overview of the Session and the Symposium: Necla Tschirgi: *Professor of Practice in Human Security and Peacebuilding, Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies, University of San Diego*

10:00 Opening Panel: Opportunities and Challenges for Field-Based Learning

Chair: Agnieszka Paczynska, *Associate Professor of Conflict Analysis and Resolution and Director of the Master's Program, S-CAR, GMU*

Intersections of Social Justice: An Online Course to Support Summer Field-Based Social Action and Reflection, Andria Wisler, *Executive Director, Center for Social Justice Research, Teaching, and Service (CSJ), Georgetown University*

Representing Self, Staying Safe and Gaining Trust: Practical Ethics in Fieldwork, Pushpa Iyer: *Associate Professor of Conflict Resolution and Director of Center for Conflict Studies, Middlebury Institute for International Studies at Monterey*

Ethical Challenges Experienced in Field-based courses in Liberia and Other Contexts, Agnieszka Paczynska, *Associate Professor of Conflict Analysis and Resolution and Director of the Master's Program, S-CAR, GMU*

10:45 Refreshment Break

11:00 Open Space Groups Sessions with Group Reports and Discussion

- 1) Administrative and Pedagogical Challenges
- 2) Ethical Issues
- 3) Power Discrepancies between North and South Actors
- 4) Learning Objectives and Skill Development

12:15 Closing Comments from Prof. Agnieszka Paczynska and Prof. Necla Tschirgi followed by Lunch Break

Afternoon

12:30 Registration, Founders Hall Art Gallery

1:00 Welcome: Julie Shedd, *Associate Dean for Administration, School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution*

- Introduction of Keynote Speaker: Craig Zelizer: *Associate Director, Conflict Resolution Program, Department of Government, Georgetown University*
- 1:15 Keynote Session: Siddharth Ashvin Shah, *MD, MPH, President, Greenleaf Integrative Strategies, Arlington, Virginia*: Trauma, Stigma and Wellbeing in Peace-building: Influencing current and future practitioners
- 2:15 Report on AM Discussion: Tatsushi Arai: *Associate Professor of Peacebuilding and Conflict Transformation, School for International Training Graduate Institute*
- 2:30 Workshop Session I: Two Concurrent Sessions:
A. Adina Friedman: Connecting the Dots: Multiple Encounters & Simultaneous Journeys as Key to Experiential Field-Based Learning
B. Sherrill Hayes, David Smith and Ernest Ogbozor: Extraordinary Careers Require Unusual Instruction: How Faculty, Students and Community Partners Develop Experiential and Field-Based Educational Experiences
- 3:40 Refreshment Break
- 3:55 Workshop Session II: Two Concurrent Sessions:
A. Thomas Hill and Zachary Metz: Teaching Applied Peacebuilding in the 21st Century: Walking the Talk
B. Amy Knorr, Jayne Docherty and Roger Foster: It Is All One World: How Local Practice Can Prepare Students for Careers “Over There.”
- 5:00 Closing Comments, Reports and Discussion: Mara Schoeny: *Associate Professor Conflict Analysis and Resolution, S-CAR*, Necla Tschirgi: *Professor of Practice in Human Security and Peacebuilding, Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies, University of San Diego*
- 5:30 End

Opening Panel: Opportunities and Challenges in Field-Based Learning

Following a welcome by Julie Shedd of S-CAR and an overview of the history and nature of the symposium by Necla Tschirgi, an opening panel chaired by Agnieszka Paczynska launched the topic of the symposium with three presentations. The theme and presentations of the opening panel were drawn from the work of a research team on a three year project titled *Linking Theory to Practice: Conflict Analysis and Resolution Pedagogy* led by Agnieszka Paczynska and Susan Hirsch of S-CAR and supported by the US Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education. The project involved the development and assessment of a variety of experiential and field-based courses in sites of active or recent conflict, and examined a number of innovations and issues, including the nature of the pedagogy, the ethical challenges, the effecting of change in students, and the identification of best practices. The results of the project are captured in a forthcoming book edited by the team leaders and entitled *Comfort Zone: Ethics, Pedagogy, and Effecting Change in Field-Based Courses* (Ohio University Press, 2017).



Necla Tschirgi Presented an Overview of the Annual Symposium

In the first panel presentation, Andria Wisler discussed the creation of an online course that provides an opportunity for students returning from a field-based summer engagement to connect their experience with the academic work completed during the subsequent year. The online course creates a community of inquiry that provides the students with a base to share and reflect on their field-based experience in a supportive environment of peers and mentors. Andria's course thus challenges students to combine reflection and action, and to think about their identities as agents of social change and members of the local or global community. Although Andria's course is offered at the undergraduate level, the processes and learnings transfer readily to the graduate level.

Pushpa Iyer discussed some of the challenges and lessons involved in offering field-based courses in a number of post-conflict regions over the past several years to graduate students. The courses require both pre-and post activities to support the development of research agendas and the reflective elements, and focus on ways of navigating the interrelated issues of identity, trust and safety. In terms of identities, Pushpa noted the contrast between her identity as a woman of color and the white, Western, privileged identity of most of her students. She provided examples of how these identities were differentially responded to in different cultural settings, as well as how the group had to navigate with a sense of practical ethics through cultural conflicts between Western and local values and practices. In search of an effective preparation for students, Pushpa has developed a specialized course on fieldwork and reporting for students seeking to engage in field-based learning.

In the final presentation, Agnieszka Paczynska analyzed some of the challenges in practical ethics that students encountered in field-based study trips, specifically in a very different culture and context in the country of Liberia. She described a number of incidents in which students prematurely thought they understood the community's conflict and attempted to provide solutions. In another incident, students provided assurances that they would generate funds to assist in a community problem, but then realized they would not be able to follow through. According to Agnieszka, this tendency of students to oversimplify problems and provide quick solutions needs to be addressed in pre-departure courses which caution students that structural violence and related conflicts cannot be resolved quickly. Ideally, such lessons can be taught through experiential learning activities on anticipated issues so that students can explore their response to such challenges in a safe learning environment without serious consequences.

Open Space Groups

Following some of the topic suggestions provided on the initial agenda, participants formed into four discussion groups and reported out the essence of their deliberations to the subsequent plenary session, and this led to further discussion of the topics and related issues.

The group on administrative and pedagogical challenges raised the very challenging dilemma in field-based courses as to whether we are intending to change the world or simply learn from it? The group noted that skill development should be incorporated into field-based curriculum if the intention is to change the world. There was also some discussion of the issue of the territoriality of universities and programs in offering field-based courses. The group on ethical issues made some useful distinctions, such as practical versus professional ethics, and

universal versus contextual human rights. The group also discussed the importance of trustworthiness, the need for communicating ethical guidelines, and the linkages between peace work, privilege and ethics. The group on power discrepancies between North and South actors asserted that we must constantly be aware of a host of power dynamics, and we must be honest about who the real beneficiaries are of field-based learning. The group also raised the question of the best ways of preparing students for field experiences, given that most students have never done facilitation. The group on learning objectives and skill development identified various modalities in which to deliver skills, including simulations, short-term trips, and internships. It was noted that there is a lack of professional fellowships to support field experiences. In the ensuing discussion, it was identified that the relationship between field experience and academic aspects of programs needs to be further developed. The question was also raised as to whether faculty and administrators have to be trained in field supervising, when this often may not be the case.

Keynote



Siddharth Shah Presented the Keynote Address

Following the registration and the welcome of new participants by Julie Shedd, the afternoon's keynote speaker was introduced by Craig Zelizer. Siddharth Shah is a medical doctor who also carries a Master of Public Health, and is currently President of *Greenleaf Integrative Strategies* (<http://www.greenleaf-is.com/>), a consulting organization that brings science and organizational know-how to support leadership resilience, organizational well-being and personal sustainability. Through collaborative interventions, Siddharth works with people and organizations to improve the way they respond to significant work and life challenges. In particular, he has led teams to address psychosocial trauma in the aftermath of several human-made and natural disasters over the past fifteen years. Drawing from both his personal experience and his professional work, Siddharth described the challenges of tending to the traumas brought about by working with violent conflict. He raised awareness of stigmas and

barriers that can interfere with well-being practices, and he brought forward information from the field to support the teaching of practical skills in academic programs and critical thinking in practitioner organizations.

Report on the Morning's Discussions

In order to use the outcomes of the morning's agenda as a springboard for the afternoon sessions, Tatsushi Arai presented a succinct report of the panel presentations and the open space discussions. In particular, he deduced a number of questions from each presentation that represented the opportunities and challenges of field-based learning. To stimulate further discussion, Tatsushi then posed challenging questions in general and specifically for students and the practitioner community. In general, the key question is how do we understand the relationship between field-based learning in the theater of conflict and learning about conflict formation? For students, the question was what needs and perspectives do you find important that were not addressed sufficiently in the morning session? And for practitioners, what are the experiences and capacities that peace and conflict programs need to pay greater attention to? These questions then served as a source of stimulation and focus for the workshop sessions and the closing discussion of the afternoon.



Tatsushi Arai Presented a Summary of the Morning Session

Workshop Session I:

Workshop IA: Based on numerous experiences in organizing study trips abroad, primarily in the Middle East and North Africa, Adina Freeman engaged participants in a discussion on the ways to maximize the benefits of experiential field-based learning. She stressed the value of students having multiple encounters in diverse communities, so that through

reflection they can decide if peacebuilding is a professional field they wish to pursue. To maximize field-based learning, it is essential to connect theory and practice, to interact with people from multiple cultural and professional backgrounds, and to have the opportunity to build relationships and create bonds. Students need to reflect on their personal experiences, not only individually but within each study group, in order to bring about greater personal meaning of their experiences and to make important decisions about their future in the field.

Workshop IB: This session jointly presented by Sherrill Hayes, David Smith and Ernest Ogbozor began with a theoretical foundation on the concept of High Impact Practices which can be developed in the three areas of teaching, service and research, each of which offers a plethora of opportunities for experiential learning. The presentation then described the Forage Center's annual three-day simulation, called *Atlantic Promise*, which engages students in a challenging and complex international emergency scenario (<http://foragecenter.org>). The goal is to prepare students for an international experience, which most do not have, and to help them assess whether or not this type of work is right for them. To supplement students existing knowledge of conflict management, the simulation presents a range of challenging situations, such as negotiating with prisoners and conducting a village assessment following violent attacks. Using a combination of individual and team reflection, the simulation helps fill the gap in graduate education by providing experience in practical skills, which many employers require, in a cost effective manner.

Workshop Session II:

Workshop IIA: In this session, Tom Hill and Zach Metz provided a variety of assertions and guidelines for teaching peacebuilding with a focus on experiential and field-based components. They noted that educators need to be open-minded, be ready to create collaborative networks, and pay close attention when matching candidates with appropriate peacebuilding settings. Thus, it is important to collaborate with multiple agencies and to make individual assessments based on the needs and goals of each person. When students are well matched with settings, the meaningful connections they develop can build their strengths and can be transformative in a life-changing manner. While field-based experiences will touch on subjects such as violence, mistrust and intractability, students must be encouraged to shift their thinking toward peaceful approaches that harness the constructive energy of conflict.

Workshop IIB: This jointly presented session by Amy Knorr, Roger Foster and Jayne Docherty brought forward a number of ways that graduate programs can engage with local communities through action research and other peacebuilding activities. The first part described several partnerships with community organizations, such as a boys and girls club and the local police department, to help students work on nonviolent and conflict resolution skills. A number of lessons learned from these collaborative efforts included the importance of field practice being for academic credit or remuneration and the need for long-term engagement to foster ongoing relationships. The next part outlined how research courses could be rendered more pragmatic by providing action research and monitoring and evaluation services to organizational clients affiliated with the university, including a summer peace program and a women's leadership and peace program. Through working with real-life clients, students engage in useful professional skills, and need to manage the needs and expectations of both students and clients. The final

portion of this workshop described the experience of program engagement in a long-term fashion with a neighboring rural community. In addition to working on social and environmental issues, students have more recently engaged in social research in order to support and empower the community. In addition to individual student projects, an action research course incorporating monitoring and evaluation has also served as a vehicle to provide students with professional experience in engaging with the community, navigating personal and professional relationships, and grappling with ethical issues. The conclusion from all these domestic field experiences is that students do not need to travel internationally in order to gain valuable peacebuilding experience.

Closing Session

In the symposium's final session, facilitated by Mara Schoeny and Necla Tschirgi, participants briefly shared their "takeaways" and/or "asks." Their responses provided a rich overview of the benefits and learnings from the symposium as well as an indication of what foci might be useful topics for future symposia.



Mara Schoeny Co-Facilitated the Closing Session

A content analysis revealed two themes: 1) the importance of continuing the conversation on graduate education in peace and conflict resolution both through the symposium and electronic connections, and 2) the importance of consciously preparing the next generation of peacebuilders through practical experience and skill training aligned with experiential and field-based opportunities with a focus on self-care as well as professional development. The first theme included requests for various forms of electronic exchanges, including email, webinars, links to field placements and the repository of information on graduate education in the field. Coincidentally, many of these "asks" already are and can be further addressed through the Education and Affinity Group of the Alliance for Peacebuilding and its web page. The second theme provides some potential direction for next year's symposium Planning Committee for the 2017 topic. The overall tenor of the closing session was that the symposium was a valuable opportunity for graduate program faculty, staff and students as well as peacebuilding practitioners to share their ideas and innovations on how the peace and conflict resolution field can best prepare the next generation of professionals.