

*Towards a Typology of Peace Education*

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One of my students walked into class recently wearing a blue tee-shirt bearing the white, trisected circle commonly known as the “peace sign”, underneath which bold white letters declared: “Back by popular demand.” Even a humanities teacher like myself recognizes such a basic principle of science as Newton’s Third Law – every action engenders a reaction. Perhaps the silver lining to the stormclouds of war-without-end that have loomed over our country since 9/11, to the Columbine-style massacres at suburban schools and the structural violence in urban ones, has been a resurgence in the desire for students and educators alike to explore the human potentialities for peace.

Hundreds of programs exist in the US right now that claim to address violence prevention, peaceable schools, AND peace studies in K12 students of all levels. In 1999, Partnerships Against Violence’s PAVnet website (Derzon, J., Wilson, S., & Cunningham, C., 1999) listed approximately 160 such programs (p 6). Today, that list has grown to almost 400 (PAVnet Online, 2007) and even that number cannot possibly account for all of the individual, unnamed or unadvertised principal and teacher initiatives going on beneath the radar. Far from the product of some counterculture movement by a gaggle of tie-dye wearing radicals, this renewed valuing of positive socio-emotional competencies has in fact been enshrined by several states as part of the standards and outcomes based climate created by No Child Left Behind.

The Illinois State Frameworks, for example, have a Social/Emotional Learning Strand with explicit goals for students to “develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success, use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships, and demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts.” The Massachusetts State Frameworks require students to develop skills in “Mental Health, Family Life, and Interpersonal Relationships” so that they may learn “how to manage interactions with other people.” The New York State Frameworks require that “students will acquire the knowledge and ability necessary to create and maintain a safe and healthy environment.” Nationwide, teachers interested in exploring some form of peace education may now have not only the blessing, but the mandate of their Departments of Education.

Yet despite signs of a “Peace Education Renaissance”, the disconnectedness of these hundreds if not thousands of efforts can be frustrating. At the university level, publications like the *Global Directory of Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution Programs* profile (as of 2007) 450 undergraduate, Master's and Doctoral programs and concentrations in 40 countries and 38 U.S. states. No such authoritative publication exists at the K12 level. The guidance counselor conducting a dating violence prevention program in Omaha may not necessarily feel a connection with the social studies teacher in Austin conducting lessons about Gandhi or the Serbian OTPOR resistance movement, and neither might consider themselves in the same line of work as the Spanish teacher in Boston who organizes a pen pal exchange between his students and their counterparts in Mexico City. All teachers face feelings of isolation once the classroom door closes, and for this reason, professional organizations like NCTA, NSTA, NCSS and others seek to bridge those gaps between classrooms, cities and states, linking teachers through the ties of their discipline.

The time has come to forge those collaborative links between teachers of Peace Education in all its myriad forms, and the first step in that process is to arrive at a

definition of “Peace Education”. Peace Studies is a field recognized by the United States Government since 1984. The Peace Studies Association, the professional academic body of the U.S. Institute of Peace, was established three years later, and since that time at least six scholarly journals have been devoted to the field (Bucknell University, 2006) <sup>1</sup>.

Definitions of Peace Studies vary across institutions and subfields, but all employ an interdisciplinary approach to study the human history and capability of settling conflicts without the use of violence, viewing war and violence not (entirely) as biological and inevitable realities of the human condition, but as products of social conditioning, which are potentially changeable. Additionally, “because violence often occurs as a result of conflicts related to economic and social inequalities, issues of justice are also considered a key component of the Peace Studies field” (University of North Texas, 2006). While it is tempting to consider Peace Education as a content area specific to Social Studies classes, the goals of nonviolent conflict management, of the creation of peaceable spaces, is the goal of any school-based anti-violence, anti-bullying or anti-racism program. Every teacher wishes to create a safe space in her classroom, and students need to be taught skills and competencies toward that end.

Hundreds of K12 programs nationwide claim to address these competencies, and many have been evaluated through research that shows they are succeeding in their aims. Much of this research has itself been evaluated, with positive results; for example, the Vanderbilt Institute for Public Policy Studies’ Center for Evaluation Research and Methodology closely examined 584 independent studies of such programs and (Derzon, J., Wilson, S., & Cunningham, C., 1999), and focused on 82 to “rate” on a scale of 1-4, concluding in its summary that “school-based programs are effective in preventing and reducing violence and other antisocial behaviors. They accomplish this reduction by successfully reducing the mediating conditions and behaviors they seek to alter” (p. 30).<sup>2</sup>

These programs are widespread and they are effective. What potential good news for supporters of peace-work! Yet as far as I know, neither the Institute of Peace nor anyone else offers an agreed-upon typology that helps us to label these programs as “Peace Education”, or to organize them within that category. This is a shame, as a typology of Peace Education could be of great use for the purposes of program design and choice, curriculum development, teacher training, funding, and especially as a framework for researchers evaluating the efficacy of these programs. I am going to be brazen enough to propose such a typology, an “arbitrating key” that divides such programs into three primary categories: “Cultural Encounter” programs, “Conflict Resolution” programs, and “Academic” programs.

1. “*Cultural Encounter*” programs: Programs that focus on bringing students from cultures in conflict into contact with one another for joint activities, in order that lines of communication (and eventually, bonds of friendship) will replace ignorance and mutual hostility. Examples could include:

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<sup>1</sup> Bucknell’s page also mentions the role of the Consortium on Peace Research, Education, and Development (COPRED) in legitimizing the field, and puts the count of higher learning institutions offering Peace Studies programs at 160 in the US alone, and 500 worldwide.

<sup>2</sup> To be fair, the report did call for a need for more stringent research methods, as the overwhelming majority of the 584 studies they examined did not meet their standards for rigor.

- The Seeds of Peace camp in Maine that has since 1993 been bringing together Israeli and Palestinian teenagers, and more recently students from Pakistan and Indian, as well as Greece and Cyprus.
- MIT's MEET Program, where Israeli and Palestinian students work jointly on science projects.
- Concord Carlisle MA High School's CCNN Japan Sister City exchange, where students from the US and Japan, travel to one another's homelands, stay with families, and maintain the bonds of peace between these two former "enemy" cultures.
- People-to-People Student Ambassadors, founded in 1956 by President Eisenhower to facilitate cultural exchange, because, in the words of his granddaughter (Eisenhower, 2007), "[h]e believed that if people could visit each others' homes, attend their schools, and see their places of worship, then the misunderstandings, misperceptions, and resulting suspicions—which were making war a viable option—would disappear. He wanted people to know and understand that while we are all very different, our values, goals, and day-to-day issues are very much the same" (<http://www.ambassadorprograms.org/about.aspx>)

2. "*Conflict resolution*" programs: These programs are designed to help students develop tools for identifying and resolving conflicts. While Cultural Encounter groups almost invariably teach and foster these skills, they have a specific focus on cultural/national identity and history. The end product is a change in one's sense of cultural narrative in order to accommodate the humanity and legitimacy of someone from the "enemy" culture. Conflict Resolution programs, as I define them, do not need this historical context – they focus simply on getting kids to manage their anger and day-to-day conflicts, within their own culture as well as with members of "outside" groups. Instead of breaking down barriers of culture (although that may be an element of the process), the goal here is to help students develop alternatives to a socialization that taught them that name-calling, put-downs and slurs, social exclusion, pranks, fists, knives and guns are the traditional solutions to conflicts of interest within as well as outside of their culture. While the applications to large scale political relations may or may not be explored, the main focus is far more "local" and "everyday practical" for most American students. Indeed, the impetus for the creation or implementation of these programs is often a desire to reduce relational and physical violence within a classroom, school or neighborhood community. Often these programs involve creating classroom (or schoolwide) environments where conflict resolution skills are always present and practiced. Many times these programs help students develop greater participation in classroom and school decision-making as well.

- Boston, MA's *Peace Games* targeted towards urban inner city youth in the metro area
- The *Teaching Students to be Peacemakers* curriculum, developed in 1960 at the University of Minnesota, and employed by schools nationwide. Its philosophy (Johnson & Johnson, 2006) is that "schools need to become conflict positive places where destructive conflicts are prevented and where constructive conflicts are structured, encouraged, and utilized to improve the quality of instruction and

classroom life. To do so, students must be taught the procedures and skills they need to manage interpersonal conflicts constructively. The steps for creating a conflict positive school include (a) creating a cooperative context, (b) using academic controversies in classroom instruction, and (c) implementing a conflict resolution / peer mediation program.”

- *Responsive Classroom*, created in 1981 and employed nationwide, which believes (Northeast Foundation for Children, 2006) that “there is a set of social skills children need in order to be successful academically and socially: cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, and self-control.” Schools implementing R.C. attempt to create safe (violence-free) environments through the fostering of these communities, in the belief that the skills which students learn in order to maintain these communities will follow them out into the communities they join and form as adults.

- ESR (Educators for Social Responsibility), founded in 1982 and based in Massachusetts, exported a program (ESR, 2006) “to help students develop social skills, emotional competencies, and qualities of character that increase interpersonal effectiveness, and reduce intolerance and aggressive, anti-social behavior.”

3. “*Academic*” programs: A catch-all category for programs and curriculum that examine war, peacemaking, socialization, anti-racism, gender roles, etc. as specific content matter. They help give students a vocabulary for discussing these subjects in the context of the theories behind them and their historical applications. While a hands-on element is often present, the focus here is explicitly on the theory, ideas, and historical events (or the construction of historical events) that inform such practices.

*Examples:*

- Facing History and Ourselves, which began as a set of teacher resources on the Holocaust but has expanded to cover issues of social justice, racism, violence and reconciliation all over the world and in America.

- *Eyes on the Prize* and *Eyes on the Prize II* – A video series and accompanying curriculum materials that detail the tactics and successes of the American Civil Rights Movement

- *A Force More Powerful* – A curriculum based on Ackerman & Duvall’s textbook and DVD set of the same name that details examples of successful nonviolent struggle in history

- *Teaching Tolerance* – A series of resources for teacher and students interested in antiracism, pro-diversity work.

The lines between my three categories, “Encounter”, “Conflict Resolution” and “Academic”, may well be more permeable and “blurry” than I have indicated, but they represent a start to a very important process. With this or an equivalent typology in place, one could examine whether certain *types* of peace education programs foster certain skills more than others, and why. Because of the wildly different contexts and learning environments in the United States, a typology could be very helpful in determining what peace education approach might work best in a given location. For

example, a traditional classroom servicing students with strong basic skills might be well suited to an academic program. A classroom in a school or community plagued with structural violence might also choose such a program, but would certainly at least combine it, if not replace it entirely, with a conflict resolution program that helped students develop a hands-on approach to transforming the discord in their own lives. A curriculum or unit focused on service learning could make use of the encounter group model to engage in dialogue with relevant populations.

Again, the lines between these typology categories do blur (what curriculum does *not* have a content-based academic approach, and what good classroom does not seek to inculcate in its students good relational tools?), but the following hypothetical example might serve to better illustrate the differences: Ms. Gonzales has the goal of reducing bullying. In a conflict resolution model, she has her class role-play and dialogue with one another, using lessons to try and build self-esteem, empathy and perspective-taking. She might employ more of an encounter model if the violence she is seeking to staunch seems to be practiced along racial or neighborhood divides; with the support of her principal and community leaders, she sets up meetings, joint sports events, etc. where the two “warring camps” can encounter one another in safe spaces, see one another as human, and build bridges of friendship. If Ms. Gonzales wants her kids to use their knowledge bullying in their school to help them understand the social environment set up by the Nazis in Europe that permitted and encouraged the dehumanization of the Jews, she would be employing an academic model. Finally, let us not forget that this typology would remind Ms. Gonzales that the work she is doing takes place in a larger national context of commitment to promoting peace and reducing violence.

Even though this particular typology may not be perfect, the creation of such a typology is a worthy goal if we are to take the best advantage of the opportunities for peace education all around us. Such programs are not “optional extras” in a time where state and federal mandates call for basic-skills education; researchers are becoming increasingly attuned to how peaceable, positive school climates are prerequisites for basic skills learning. Cohen, et al. (2006) have assembled an impressive literature review that

suggest[s] that we now have a research-based school climate-related guidelines that predictably reduce school violence, promote learning and school success in ways that lay the foundation for adults being able to love, work and participate in a democracy (p 2).

Cohen cites 13 studies that support his claim that “to the extent that students feel safe, cared for, appropriately supported and lovingly ‘pushed’ to learn, academic achievement should increase. And in fact, this is what a series of studies from America and abroad has shown” (p 5). As teachers, we have the power and the duty to help students develop not only into smarter and more capable citizens, but more peaceful ones. For our war-torn country and world, such a new generation cannot come soon enough.

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