

GRASSROOTS PEACE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION EDUCATION: EXPLORING RESPONSES TO STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE

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Summary

This article highlights the need to take peace and conflict resolution education seriously as a space that requires ongoing action and reflection and in which people theorize and experiment with approaches aimed at shifting conflict dynamics and addressing structural violence. The article provides a brief overview of the key similarities and differences between the fields of peace education and conflict resolution and highlights some of the pedagogical commitments that undergird these fields. It is followed by an analysis of the forms of structural violence that disproportionately impact African American youth in the United States, examining the intersecting and multi-layered nature of the violence that African-American youth face in the U.S. The article then pivots to consider how practitioners are engaging with these challenges, analyzing youth programming offered by the Connecticut Center for Nonviolence, a community-based organization engaged in educational activities with youth of color who are impacted by various overlapping forms of structural violence. This analysis draws on preliminary evaluation data and reports, as well as the author's work with the Connecticut Center for Nonviolence over last seven years, in which I served as a researcher, facilitator, and strategist.

Keywords: Peace Education; Conflict Resolution Education; Structural Violence; African-American Youth.

Resumo

Este artigo destaca a necessidade de levar a sério a paz e resolução de conflitos na educação como um espaço que exige ação contínua e reflexiva e em que as pessoas teorizam e fazem experiências com abordagens que visam mudanças na dinâmica do conflito e a lidar com a violência estrutural. O artigo fornece uma visão geral das principais semelhanças e diferenças entre os campos da educação da paz e resolução de conflitos e destaca alguns dos compromissos pedagógicos que sustentam estes campos. Ele é seguido por uma análise das formas de violência estrutural que desproporcionalmente impactam na juventude afro-americana nos Estados Unidos, examinando a intersecção e a natureza multicamadas da violência que os jovens afro-americanos enfrentam no EUA. O artigo então passa a considerar como os praticantes estão envolvidos com estes desafios, analisando a programação oferecida aos jovens pelo Connecticut Center for Nonviolence (Centro de Não-Violência de Connecticut), uma organização baseada na comunidade envolvida em atividades educativas com jovens de cor que são impactados por várias formas sobrepostas de violência estrutural. Esta análise baseia-se em dados preliminares de avaliação e relatórios, bem como o trabalho do autor com o Connecticut

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Center for Nonviolence nos últimos sete anos, em que eu servi como pesquisador, facilitador e estrategista.

Palavras-chave: Educação da Paz; Resolução de Conflitos Educacionais; Violência Estrutural; Jovens Afro-americanos.

Introduction

FOR DECADES, academics, practitioners, and others engaged in conflict resolution have sought to make sense of the far-ranging impacts of structural dynamics on conflicts (Avruch, 2013). Debates about the significance of economic, cultural, and political systems and the impacts of those systems on the possibilities for conflict resolution/transformation have deeply shaped the field. In particular, Johan Galtung's article entitled "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research" played a seminal role in bringing into sharper focus the limits and dangers of analyses of conflict dynamics that omit structural dynamics (Galtung, 1969).

While there is a growing body of critical work in conflict resolution regarding the need to take structural violence seriously, here, I argue that conflict resolution education in the United States often does not offer analyses of or ways of responding to structural causes of conflicts. For communities impacted most disproportionately by forms of structural violence, a focus on interpersonal and group-level conflict dynamics without structural analysis may tacitly reinforce the legitimacy of inequality and undermine the effectiveness of interventions. This offers a challenge to critical theorists and researchers in the field of conflict resolution, highlighting the need to more effectively bridge the gap between theory and practice by understanding forms of praxis by communities that are actively engaged in resisting, disrupting, and building alternatives to violence and oppression.

In this article, I argue that peace and conflict resolution education offers a dynamic space in which practitioners can attempt to both address immediate conflict dynamics and analyze and respond to systemic causes and impacts. This article focuses specifically on educational work with youth of color in the U.S. and the need to take structural violence seriously when attempting to shift the conflict dynamics impacting their lives.

The first section provides a brief overview of the key similarities and differences between the fields of peace education and conflict resolution and highlights some of the pedagogical commitments that undergird these fields. It is followed by an analysis of the forms of structural violence that

disproportionately impact African American youth in the United States, examining the intersecting and multi-layered nature of the violence that youth face within what Michelle Alexander calls the “New Jim Crow” (Alexander, 2012). The article then pivots to consider how practitioners are engaging with these challenges, analyzing youth programming offered by the Connecticut Center for Nonviolence, a community-based organization engaged in educational activities with youth of color who are impacted by various overlapping forms of structural violence. This analysis draws on preliminary evaluation data and reports, as well as my own work with the center over the last seven years, in which I served as a researcher, facilitator, and strategist.

This article highlights the need to take peace and conflict resolution education seriously as a space that requires ongoing action and reflection and in which people theorize and experiment with approaches aimed at shifting conflict dynamics and addressing structural violence.

Toward Peace and Conflict Resolution Education

Conflict Resolution Education (CRE) seeks to support learners in productively engaging with conflict dynamics. This approach often involves understanding processes of conflict escalation and learning strategies for de-escalation and collaborative problem-solving. Conflict resolution education “models and teaches, in culturally meaningful ways, a variety of processes, practices, and skills that help address individual, interpersonal, and institutional conflicts and create safe and welcoming communities” (Jones, 2004, 233). Gerrard (2007), in surveying CRE in schools in the US over a 25-year period, summarizes the goals of these programs as “primarily to facilitate constructive resolution of interpersonal conflicts; secondary-level goals may target general individual social or emotional growth and well-being, critical thinking, and school climate” (11).

In practice, conflict resolution education offers an eclectic variety of approaches to addressing conflicts, including mediation and negotiation skills, restorative justice approaches, emotional literacy and anger management, communication and listening skills, facilitating the understanding of differing points of view, and community and team building. It is important to note that while conflict resolution education is often employed to respond to anti-social or violent behavior, there is a strong commitment

to proactively fostering constructive community-building and the prevention of destructive conflict dynamics. Given this wider purview, CRE often overlaps and is integrated with violence-prevention programs; social and emotional learning; anti-bias, multi-cultural education; and peace education (Jones, 2004, 236).

In comparison to conflict resolution, peace education, according to Oetzel and Ting-Toomey (2006) “has a stronger emphasis on social justice orientations and the larger systemic issues of violence than conflict education programs” (2006). Peace education seeks to empower future generations to bring about a nonviolent society and it does so through the integration of a broad range of thematic topics. In *Education for Peace: A Resource Guide for Educators and the Community* (Romano, 2016), I built on Ian Harris’s work (Harris, 2004) and identified nine areas of study that frequently appear in the peace education literature. These key content areas included peace history, nonviolence education, disarmament education, media literacy, international education, human rights education (HRE), development education, environmental education, and conflict resolution education.

Peace education, in its many forms, often emphasizes the need to analyze how power functions within systems in order to challenge militarism, injustice, and inequality. In discussing peace education, Aspeslagh and Burns stress the importance of examining the broader social political context of conflicts (e.g., the effects of international laws and treaties on conflict, investment patterns, communication structures, and access). He contends that comprehensive peace education projects must therefore raise the historical consciousness of learners by “cultivating the skills for political participation (e.g., being able to read codes of law, lobby, and organize) if they are to navigate the possibilities for change within a complex social setting” (Burns and Aspeslagh, 1996, 165).

The study of nonviolent movements in peace education provides a lens with which to rethink the way in which history is represented, privileging analyses of how people organize and leverage collective power to influence systemic changes. While both conflict resolution education and peace education highlight the fact that conflict can be a constructive force, peace educators more often emphasize approaches that seek to intentionally escalate conflicts, making latent dynamics more visible, through approaches such as nonviolent direct action.

Pedagogy

Peace education and conflict resolution education often involve pedagogical approaches that are experiential, seeking to actively engage the views of participants rather than relying primarily on more didactic approaches. In the U.S. context, John Dewey's work on democracy and education (1916) has deeply shaped the alternative educational landscape and influenced a wide array of educators' views on the role of education in responding to community conflicts, needs, and issues. Dewey's approach highlighted the need for educational methodologies that create experiential opportunities for people to engage with the pressing problems and issues they face in their lives. Dewey was concerned with learners working to solve everyday problems, and his approach was also permeated with larger concerns regarding the abuse of power and the need to have an actively engaged citizenship in order for governments to reflect the interests of the public.

These equalitarian commitments were fiercely criticized by his peers at the time and most famously taken up by Lippmann in his book *Public Opinion* (originally published in 1922), in which he argued against the desirability of popular participation (Lippmann, 1997). While Dewey was seen as too progressive for some, Dewey, like many other authors of his day, was largely silent on issues of racial justice. Shannon Sullivan writes, "We especially need to be wary of our devotion to Dewey when it comes to race. Given Dewey's insistence that philosophy be informed by the context of 'real life,' it is dismaying that Dewey wrote very little about the contradictive role that race and racism play in lived experience" (Sullivan, 2003, 110).

While Dewey's pragmatic, problem-solving approach has deeply impacted how people think about responding to community-level conflicts in the US through participatory and democratic educational methods, Brazilian educator and activist Paulo Freire stands out as one of the most influential thinkers in shaping the field of peace education. In his seminal book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972), he argues for the importance of democratic education and warns of the dangers of "banking methods" of education that often reconstitute repressive dynamics. His work highlights educational assumptions about learners as "empty vessels" divorced from their social/political context that should be filled by "good education," in

which it is assumed that the teacher's role is to "regulate the way the world 'enters into' the student" (Freire, 1972, 49).

Freire refers to this traditional form of education as the "banking method" because information is deposited only to be withdrawn later in exactly the same form in which it entered. He contends that these forms of education are disempowering and undemocratic because in practice, they train students to be passive and uninvolved in deciphering what is, in fact, valuable knowledge and their role in constructing or altering it. This passivity obscures the role of education and how it is structured in reproducing the status quo and shaping our thinking. For the purposes of peace education, Freire's focus on critically evaluating and shifting the oppressive impacts of structural forces in education provides support for students to also critically evaluate how social structures more broadly can contribute to violent outcomes and highlight the need for transformative action.

Freire argues that the disempowering effects of such education extend far beyond the classroom. He writes,

"Translated into practice, this [banking method] is well suited to the purposes of the oppressors, whose tranquility rests on how well men fit into the world the oppressors have created, and how little they question it" (Freire, 1972, 50).

Freire is not alone in his critique of the disempowering and anti-democratic effects of colonial and oppressive forms of education. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, peace educators continued to integrate a wide array of critical pedagogical practices (Lazlo, Yoo and Pauling, 1986). Feminist writers played a pivotal role during this period by highlighting gender-based violence and the role of women as peacemakers (Reardon, 1993). Feminist authors (Reardon, 1993; Woehrle, 1995) made important contributions by questioning 'libratory' frameworks such as Freire's for their patriarchic blind spots (Lather, 1998) and warning of the need to take a wider array of epistemologies seriously. Bell Hooks's work *Teaching to Transgress* (1994) further developed Freire's work in the U.S., examining the need to more actively engage with students regarding issues of race, class, and gender and to be weary of de-politicized forms of multi-cultural education and disengaged forms of teaching regarding issues of structural violence.

As this section highlights, both conflict resolution and peace education continue to grow into larger and more complex bodies of work over time. Both analyze and respond to pressing conflicts in one's immediate environment and to address systemic causes of conflicts and violence over the long-haul. This space, which I term, peace and conflict resolution education (PCRE), is by no means a fully consolidated approach. Rather it is an emergent space in which community members; educational practitioners; theorists; and, researchers from a wide range of backgrounds are developing educational approaches and forms of praxis with people impacted by destructive conflicts and various forms of structural violence.

Impacts of Structural Violence on African-American Youth

*“Indict. Convict. Send these killer cops to jail.
The Whole Damn System... Is Guilty as Hell”*

This is the chant of protestors on the streets of Ferguson, Missouri, in the United States, following the shooting death of African-American teenager Michael Brown. Their claim echoes that of activists and social theorists before them: a singular violent act (in this case, the shooting of an unarmed teenager) is produced or at least made much more likely by a set of systemic relationships guiding the distribution of various kinds of resources and shaping perceptions of human dignity and threat.

When Michael Brown, an unarmed 17-year-old African-American teen, was killed by a white police officer on August 9, most people had never heard of Ferguson, Missouri. In the weeks that followed, the violent response to ongoing protests by local and federal authorities fueled a national and international debate about racism, police brutality, the militarization of police departments, racial profiling, and economic oppression in the United States.

For many, the sight of armored vehicles and SWAT teams with weapons drawn on African American protestors on the streets of Ferguson was a shocking reminder of the presence of racial tension, conflict, and inequality in the U.S., even during a “post-racial” period. For others, the news of nonviolent protesters facing intimidation and violence at the hands of local and state police with full military gear, the imposition of a curfew, and the arrests of journalists and others engaged in legal protest actions was no

surprise in a country with a deep and long history of racial subjugation and segregation.

Ferguson will likely be a topic of discussion for many years to come amongst policy makers, advocates, activists and academics from a wide variety of disciplinary backgrounds. The events that unfolded highlight the deeper issues of racial conflict and raise important questions about how African-American youth are impacted by structural violence in the US and the possibilities for transforming these conflicts.

Youth Living in the New Jim Crow

Michelle Alexander's book *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Color Blindness* (2012) offers an analysis of why more African Americans are under the control of the criminal justice system today — in prison or jail or on probation or parole — than were enslaved in 1850. In this work, Alexander draws parallels between the Jim Crow period from the 1870s until the late 1960s in the United States, which legally sanctioned a racial caste system in the U.S., and the wide-spread imprisonment of African American in the U.S. today. She writes, "As the rules of acceptable discourse changed, segregationists distanced themselves from an explicitly racist agenda. They developed instead the racially sanitized rhetoric of "cracking down on crime" (43).

Currently, African Americans are incarcerated at nearly six times the rate of whites, and African American youth comprise 26% of juvenile arrests and 44% of youth who are detained. Although African Americans and Hispanics are only a quarter of the US population, as of 2008, they made up 58% of all prisoners. Felony convictions enable discrimination in housing, education, employment, and voting rights (Department of Justice, 2006). Such disproportionate numbers of men and women of color in the criminal justice system negatively impact youth in minority communities, who are not only targets of state surveillance but also regularly traumatized by the loss of loved ones to incarceration (Alexander, 2012). While African-American boys bear the brunt of negative consequences, women of color and black girls are also heavily impacted by the criminalization of the black body. Between 1980 and 2010, the number of women in prison increased from 15,118 to 112,797 (The Sentencing Project, 2012).

The School-to-Prison Pipeline

The School-to-Prison Pipeline is a concept that is commonly used to describe the disturbing national trend in which youth are funneled out of public schools and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems. Many are youth of color, and young people with learning disabilities or histories of poverty, abuse, or neglect are disproportionately impacted by “zero-tolerance” policies in schools that criminalize infractions of school rules. Further, the growth of “school safety officers” (police) in schools commonly escalates minor school infractions into criminal offenses (Brown, 2015), with the negative impacts felt most by urban youth of color.

Students of color are especially vulnerable to push-out trends and the discriminatory application of discipline. Students that experience exclusionary discipline practices in schools are also less likely to be academically successful. For many children and youth who enter the American criminal justice system as children, the consequences are dire. According to a 2008 investigation by the Associated Press, “13,000 formal abuse claims reported between 2004 and 2007 by state run juvenile facilities nationwide” (Bernstein 2014, 84).

Youth and poverty

In addition to the challenges faced by African American youth because of discrimination by school personnel, law enforcement, and judicial systems, living in poverty also plays a significant role in increasing youth criminalization and youth experiences with violence (Males and Brown, 2014). Though the U.S. is one of the wealthiest countries in world, the statistics on children in poverty are startling, particularly for children of color:

- One in five children in the US lived in poverty in 2012.
- More than 7 million, over 40% of poor children, lived in extreme poverty. For a family of four, this means living on 8 dollars per day per person.
- Nearly one in three children of color live in poverty.
- 39.6% of Black children, 36.8% of Native American/Alaskan children and 33.7% of Hispanic children live in poverty in the US. (Children’s Defense Fund, 2014).

Poverty is a critical risk factor in the physical, mental, behavioral, and emotional health of youth (Yoshikawa et al., 2012). These forms of deprivation and exclusion also make it more likely for youth to engage in high-risk activities that not only compromise their safety but bring them into contact with law enforcement, who are likely to apply harsher penalties to youth of color and African-American youth in particular. Decades of research have demonstrated that there is a statistically significant link between low wages, income inequality, and crime (Gould, Weinberg and Mustard, 2002). Given the large numbers of African-American youth living in poverty, these young people are at the greatest risk of becoming victims of violent crimes; homicide remains the leading cause of death among African American youth aged 10-24 in the US.

Police Violence

Police shootings in the U.S., especially of African-American youth, have garnered international attention as of late. While the issues are currently in the spotlight, there remains a lack reliable data on police shootings because there is no official government database or mandated reporting requirements in the U.S. (Lowery, 2014). Some U.S. record-keepers now estimate an average of 928 people (McCarthy, 2015) were killed by police annually over the last eight years. That is nearly double the numbers originally published by the FBI for the same year. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, African Americans between the ages of 20 and 24 are the ethnic group most likely to be killed by law enforcement, being killed at rates 4.5 times higher than any other groups (Wales, 2014). Additionally, racial profiling practices, such as ‘stop and frisk’, have also gained greater attention because they are ineffective and violent toward youth of color (New York Civil Liberties Union, 2016). African-American youth are most at risk of experiencing police brutality, persistent surveillance, and harassment.

These intersecting forms of structural violence shape the conflicts that youth face and impact their well-being and opportunities. The analysis presented in this section is incomplete as it features some of the most poignant structures impacting African-American youth, yet these structures are embedded within larger and more complex economic, political and cultural systems in the U.S. that shape racial and economic inequality. For peace

and conflict resolution educators to be most effective, they face the difficult challenge of continually developing pedagogical processes for examining these complex and shifting dynamics of structural violence while also working together to try to influence change. The next section offers analysis of work taking place in the field and pedagogical and curricular resources that community educators are developing in responses to these challenges.

Peace and Conflict Resolution Education with Urban Youth of Color in the US: The ThinKing Summer Youth Program

The Connecticut Center for Nonviolence (CTCN), a community-based not-for-profit organization, developed the ThinKing Summer Youth Program (TSYP) for youth in the city of Hartford, CT. In Hartford, Connecticut, over 90% of the students are youth of color, and over 90% of the students attending Hartford Public Schools are living in poverty. Nearly half of the men incarcerated in Connecticut were from three cities: Hartford, Bridgeport, or New Haven. Youth in Hartford are impacted by multiple intersecting forms of structural violence (Werblow and Diamond, 2013).

The first Thinking Summer Youth Program (TSYP) began during the summer of 2012, as a three-week course for high school students directly affected by incarceration. Nearly half the students in this program had parents who were incarcerated or had been previously. This first year, the cohort size was 27, and according to the evaluation reports from the program, 89% of participants identified as Black/African American. A total of 12% of participants reported being of Hispanic/Latino ethnicity (Werblow and Diamond, 2013, 2).

Peace and Conflict Resolution Curriculum

TSYP is based on the *Leaders Manual* of Kingian nonviolence, which was developed by Bernard LaFayette and David Jehnsen in 1995. Dr. LaFayette is a world-renowned civil rights leader who worked closely with Martin Luther King Jr. and has mentored the senior leadership of the Connecticut Center for Nonviolence (CTCN) in the design and implementation of their training programs. The first summer program ran 5 days per week for 6 hours per day over a 3-week period, and the program has continued each summer.

The TSYP curriculum covers a number of key areas that blend both conflict resolution education and peace education themes, including the following:

- Nonviolent philosophy and principles based on of Dr. Martin Luther King
- Introductory conflict analysis and resolution skills
- Models for social justice organizing
- History of the U.S. civil rights movement

The curriculum includes a focus on conflict analysis aimed at supporting students in identifying various types of conflict and escalation patterns. Students also learn about types of intervention strategies that can be used, such as dialogue or conflict management strategies, and they discuss when various approaches to de-escalation are most appropriate based on the type and level of conflict. The curriculum does not use the term conflict resolution but rather conflict reconciliation, and they attempt to contextualize these aspects of conflict resolution and conflict management while highlighting the larger goal of creating reconciliation both in terms of interpersonal relations and in addressing larger structural issues of inequality.

In terms of the central concern here, addressing structural violence, there is variation in how trainers approach the exploration of conflicts in the curriculum because they may explore larger structural issues contributing to conflict dynamics or focus mainly on interpersonal or group dynamics. For example, in thinking through “distributive conflicts” (which is one of the conflict types examined in the curriculum), students are often asked to think of examples of situations in which there is a perception that there are not enough resources to be distributed for everyone. This type of conflict can be explained by facilitators simply as an escalating conflict between siblings over the last slice of a piece of cake or as broader issues, such as the lack of jobs for youth in the community, which raises questions about the systemic context of the conflict.

There are numerous other ways in which the TSYP curriculum creates opportunities for analysis of structural violence. One of the core elements of the curriculum is the six Kingian Principles of Nonviolence based on Dr. Martin Luther King’s work. One of the principles of nonviolence that students study highlights the need to address “underlying conditions” or “forces of injustice,” though the term structural violence is not generally used in the leaders’ manual or consistently used by trainers. In this section

of the program, youth and facilitators actively work to define and give examples of conditions and systems impacted racial and economic inequality.

Themes of structural violence are also overtly engaged in other aspects of the curriculum. For example, in defining violence at the start of the program, facilitators often present ideas of negative and positive peace, which directly echo Johan Galtung's work (Galtung, 1969) on structural violence. In addition, the analysis of the civil rights movement is centered on analysis of mechanisms of segregation in terms of understanding both the legal apparatus and other informal and cultural structural supports that upheld these social conditions. Here, students also learn introductory models for community organizing, influencing policy and legal changes and disrupting widespread social practices that perpetuate oppression based on actions that were utilized in past movements.

In terms of pedagogy, TSYF draw on a wide array of experiential and participatory pedagogical approaches, including arts workshops led by experienced arts educators trained in Kingian nonviolence. Students in the summer program learn movement songs and examine the role of music in the Civil Rights movement, engage in drumming activities for team-building, and make puppets of historical social movement figures. When students learn about the types and levels of conflict, they often use engaged learning practices, construct role-plays of conflicts from their own lives, and conduct real-time analyses of the conflict dynamics, including patterns of escalation and de-escalation, as the plays unfold.

Outcomes from the Training

Pre-and post-test results from the first year of the program “indicate that the three-week program significantly increased intentions to use non-violent strategies and also increased youth's self-efficacy, including confidence in their ability to stay out of fights. When asked, “The last time you were in a serious conflict situation, what was the conflict about? How did you respond?” There was no change in the number of students who responded with physical violence; however, there was a 325% increase in the number of participants reporting that they had de-escalated the conflict and a 75% reduction in the number of participants who said they had escalated the situation” (Werblow and Diamond, 2013, 2).

Furthermore, student conceptions of violence expanded greatly after completing the initial three-week training in 2012 because “youth were 92% less likely to define violence as only a physical act and 81% more likely to describe violence as something that is both physical and nonphysical” (Werblow and Diamond 2013, 2). This more robust understanding of what constitutes violence raises questions about student understanding of violence as the result of structural conditions.

The most recent evaluation of the program in 2015 directly asked youth if they could give an example of “systemic or structural violence”, either past or present, and ten out of the 17 youth responded to that question on the survey. Two responded ‘no,’ they could not give an example. Four youth gave historical examples mentioning segregated schools, bathrooms, or water fountains, or not having the right to vote. Two youth mentioned either police brutality or Blacks being killed by White police officers. Three youth responded with contemporary examples pertained to racial slurs and the media or, more specifically, being called an “oreo” (a person who is Black but acts White) in fourth grade, racial slurs at a football game, and “television showing us it’s okay” (Diamond, 2015, 2)

Implications of Findings

In terms of building awareness and understanding of structural violence, the data highlighted above indicate that students in the TSYF analyzed violence in increasingly complex ways after participating in the program. Participants reported that they were better able to prevent the escalation of potentially dangerous conflicts in their daily lives. It is also significant that within this wider view of violence, participants were able to identify a variety of forms of structural violence on the survey. They did so by offering both contemporary and historical examples and a number of pathways through which structural violence can be manifested. Participants cited political institutions, the media, and the sanctioning of cultural stereotypes as examples of systemic or structural violence.

The student responses to the survey reflect the complexity of supporting learning about structural violence in peace and conflict resolution education. The TSYF drew on a range of concepts and theories from peace and conflict resolution research and from the experiences and knowledge of participants in order to examine structural violence. The preliminary

data in the survey indicate that participants saw a variety of structural elements at play in conflicts after participating in the program, which allowed for broad, multiple, layered, and likely contested interpretations of structural violence.

This highlights a generative set of tensions for peace and conflict resolution educators as they negotiate the need to account for complexity, equitably co-construct meaning within communities and also create ‘actionable’ knowledge in addressing structural violence.

This presents numerous challenges in terms of the ethics of engagement for educators as they navigate the possibilities for developing new ways of thinking about structural violence. First, they must consider how they and other participants with varying degrees of power and privilege are contributing to knowledge production? If and when, they or other participants, are “downloading” dominate frames for making meaning about structural problems? If the educative processes being used are supportive of effective action in addressing critical issues from the viewpoint of people with differing needs?

It is also notable in this case that 7 out of 17 participants didn’t respond to the question about systemic or structural violence. As highlighted earlier in this section, the TYSP curriculum teaches about structural violence, however a wide variety of terms are used to make sense of structural factors that impact conflicts. This is not surprising considering the complexity of structural violence and the multiple intersecting forms that impact the lives of people in the community. It is not clear from the 2015 data highlighted above if students may have understood the underlying analytical frame of structural violence and simply did not answer because they were unfamiliar with the exact terms used on the survey or if there were other reasons they refrained from responding.

Toward Action

While students reported that they felt a high degree of self-efficacy in responding to interpersonal and group conflicts in their daily lives, the degree to which they felt they could or would respond to structural violence remains unclear. This raises important questions for peace and conflict resolution educators regarding what is needed to support student interest and efficacy in responding to structural violence.

In the case of TSYP, for youth interested in taking action, the main avenue of support for sustained participation offered by CTCN is to become a nonviolence facilitator for future trainings and presentations. Youth who become leaders then go on to offer trainings for their peers, as well as working with a wide range of adults in the community, including professional educators, policy makers, activists, and others. Future research could explore whether youth facilitators see this as an effective intervention in responding to structural violence and, if so, how they theorize the potential impacts of educational intervention within these larger systems.

While CTCN employs a training-of-trainers model to support ongoing educational interventions to build capacity for addressing structural violence, there are numerous other ways that peace and conflict resolution educators may be able work with youth of color in responding to underlying structural causes of violence. For example, youth participatory action research offers a methodology for young people and their allies to develop research designs to examine the causes and impacts of structural violence and explore ways of disrupting those processes (Fine, 2008). There are also a wide range of organizations that work with youth to identify political issues youth are interested in organizing around and support youth in developing and conducting political campaigns (Kwon, 2013).

Shawn Ginwright, in his book *Black Youth Rising* (2009), argues that sustaining creative and nurturing educative spaces for and with African-American youth is itself a powerful form of organizing in response to structural violence. In explaining the importance of these critical and creative spaces as incubators for transformation, he contends that “caring relationships can confront hopelessness and foster beliefs about justice among young people. These caring relationships are not simply about trust, dependence, and mutual expectations. Rather, they are political acts that encourage youth to heal from trauma by confronting injustice and oppression in their lives” (Ginwright, 2009, 56).

Conclusion

This article offers an overview of the broad thematic and pedagogical terrain of peace education and conflict resolution education. It examined the need for conflict resolution education to be expanded to make addressing structural violence a core element of practice. In particular, the

article focused on the need to take multiple forms of structural violence seriously, especially when working with African American youth and youth of color in the U.S. This paper demonstrates that this approach, which I have termed peace and conflict resolution education, can generate rich opportunities to support learning about immediate conflict dynamics and their systemic causes and impacts.

The paper examined the work of the Connecticut Center for Non-violence's ThinkKing Summer Youth Program to provide an example of ways in which practitioners are integrating elements of peace and conflict resolution education. The data about student learning from this program offered clear insights into ways that the student understanding of violence expanded, became more complex over time, and led to increases in self-efficacy with regard to responding to destructive conflict dynamics.

While this approach was helpful in allowing for wider learning about structural violence, the data allowed for a larger inquiry about peace and conflict resolution praxis. In particular, questions about the ethical demands of examining and identifying the key structural causes of conflict highlight a central tension in the field. That tension centered on competing demands between continuously engaging with the complexity of structural violence while also responding to the more immediate needs of participants in conflict. The article also highlighted the fact that shifts in the understanding of structural violence do not necessarily translate into an immediate increased sense of agency among participants. This raised questions about additional ways of supporting youth in exploring forms of action that can address structural dynamics.

CTCN offered a model whereby youth interested in taking action on structural violence were supported in leading community education around peace-related themes. This approach seemed well-suited to integration with other pedagogical approaches and methodologies explicitly aimed at supporting youth action. In particular, education in support of youth organizing and youth participatory action research methodologies can provide complimentary approaches that could make the work of programs like TSYP more effective in the long run.

The coupling of participatory education that draws on people's situated knowledge and experiences of structural violence and generates critical discussion of the theoretical literature offers a rich area for future research on pedagogical innovation in peace and conflict resolution education. The

ways in which the people impacted most heavily by structural violence and their allies are exploring key questions of praxis, negotiating ways of theorizing about structural violence, and exploring possibilities for transformative action while balancing the risks and opportunities of intervention provides a dynamic space for knowledge production in the field. Further research is needed because much of the social science research on Black and Latina/o youth has been dominated by studies that focus on “problem” adolescent behavior. Typically, these studies explain youth crime, delinquency, and violence as individual pathological behavior (Akom, Cammarota and Ginwright, 2008) and miss the many ways in which youth are impacted by structural violence yet are creatively resisting and building alternative worlds.

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