

Peace and War

Linda M. Woolf and Michael R. Hulsizer

Webster University

Almost since its inception, psychology has addressed issues of peace and war. Individuals such as William James, B. F. Skinner, and Carl Rogers endeavored to use their knowledge of psychology to tackle a myriad of complex problems associated with mass violence. In fact, Rogers was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1987 for his work on international peace projects in Northern Ireland and South Africa. Today, many psychologists work around the globe endeavoring to reduce violence and build more peaceful communities and future psychologists can now receive graduate training in peace psychology.

Although peace and conflict resolution education has filtered into the primary and secondary educational levels as well as the graduate level, this same information has been slower to integrate into the undergraduate curriculum (Harris, 2007; Jin, 2007). Regardless, many psychology faculty members have an interest in integrating psychological aspects of peace, war, and international relations into their courses as well as a desire to offer entire specialized courses on these topics for their students (Murphy & Polyson, 1991).

As psychology has contributed substantially to the development of peace education, we are uniquely suited to fully integrate topics such as the causes, consequences, and prevention of human cruelty, violence, conflict, terrorism, and war and conversely, effective conflict resolution, forgiveness, reconciliation, mediation, and peace into the curriculum. However, Nelson and Christie (1995) argued that it isn't simply enough to merely add material related to peace and conflict into the curriculum. Rather, teachers need to engage students actively in learning about peace as a means to develop critical thinking and values about peace as well as learning more peaceful behaviors (e.g., prosocial behavior; cooperative problem solving) and methods of constructive conflict resolution.

Unfortunately, although there is a broad theoretical and review literature related to peace education, few studies have been systematically conducted exploring the effectiveness of classroom activities designed to teach about issues of peace and conflict. In this chapter, we provide a mix of

activities designed for student engagement grounded in our experience in the classroom and the literature.

Activities

Conflict Resolution Skills Workshop

Describes the Coleman Raider model, which is used in a workshop format to teach basic conflict resolution, negotiation, and mediation skills. Discusses the methods of teaching these skills, course objectives, and includes learning activities. Students develop both a conceptual and experiential understanding of various methods to conflict resolution from competitive to cooperative approaches.

- Raider, E., Coleman, S., & Gerson, J. (2006). Teaching conflict resolution skills in a workshop. In M. Deutsch, P. T. Coleman, & E. C. Marcus (Eds.). *The handbook of conflict resolution: Theory and practice* (2nd ed.) (pp. 695-725). Hoboken, NJ US: Wiley.

Genocide Case Analysis

To counter the idea that genocide is simply the result of hate caught aflame, students analyze an instance of genocide focusing on the stages of genocide and the psychosocial factors involved both prior to and during a genocide. Students are provided with a psychosocial model of genocide and background information about particular genocides. Students study these materials and then engage in active group discussions and write case analyses.

- Totten, S., Parsons, W. S., & Charny, I. W. (Eds.). (2008). *Century of genocide: Eyewitness accounts and critical views* (3rd ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Woolf, L. M., & Hulsizer, M. R. (2005). Psychosocial roots of genocide: Risk, prevention, and intervention, *Journal of Genocide Research*, 7, 101-128.

Holocaust Course

Describes a course designed to teach about the psychology of the Holocaust. Includes information about activities used in the class and learning

outcomes by topic (e.g., altruism, prejudice, and social identity).

- Albrecht, T., & Nelson, C. (2001). Teaching the Holocaust as an interdisciplinary course in psychology. *Teaching of Psychology, 28*, 289-291.

Incorporating Online Hate Sites into Peace Psychology Classes.

Hate-related websites can serve as examples of social psychological theories in action—albeit for destructive purposes. By exposing students to online hate sites, students become aware of the threat these groups pose to world peace. To better understand these sites and formulate means to counteract their influence, students are asked to conduct an analysis to determine the social psychological theories at work, recruitment strategies employed, and best means to minimize the impact these sites have on individuals.

- Franklin, R. (2010). *The hate directory*. Retrieved from <http://www.hatedirectory.com>
- Woolf, L. M., & Hulsizer, M. R. (2002/2003). Intra- and inter- religious hate and violence: A psychosocial model. *Journal of Hate Studies, 2*, 5-25.
- Woolf, L. M., & Hulsizer, M. R. (2004). Hate groups for dummies: How to build a successful hate group. *Humanity and Society, 28*, 40-62.

Integrating the Topic of Terrorism into Introductory Psychology

Discusses methods of integrating information about the psychology of terrorism and its aftermath into an introduction to psychology course. Designed to help students discuss and process the events surrounding a terrorist attack.

- Gurstelle, E., Heinzen, T., Makarec, K., De Oliveira, J., Holle, C., & Campbell, E. (2003). Helping students in introductory psychology process terrorist attacks. *Psychology Learning & Teaching, 3*, 40-47.

Interview Concerning the Teaching of War & Peace

Focuses on the benefits and challenges of teaching courses related to the psychology of mass violence and peace. Includes descriptions of classroom activities such as a demonstration landmine designed to highlight the stressors associated with work in defusing as well as living around landmines. The landmine activity can be supplemented with a chapter written by Cox and Langholtz (1998).

- Howe, T. R. (2004). Lessons learned from political violence and genocide in teaching a

psychology of peace: An interview with Linda Woolf. *Teaching of Psychology, 31*, 349-353.

- Cox, B., & Langholtz, H. (1998). The psychological consequences of mines left behind following a conflict. In H. Langholtz (Ed.), *The psychology of peacekeeping* (pp. 179-193). Westport, CT: Praeger.

Native People as Mascots: In Whose Honor?

The following activity proposed by Scott Plous focuses on making students aware of the everyday racism that permeates the culture through the use of sports mascots. Although this may seem to be unrelated to war and peace, the process of dehumanizing the “other” is a fundamental antecedent of violence and is often a component of denial of past atrocities. Students come to understand the relationship between common cultural images of the “other” and patterns of racism but also, the role of trivialization and dehumanization of victims in perpetuating a legacy of violence against victim groups.

- Rosenstein, J. (1987). *In whose honor?* New Day Films.
- Churchill, W. (1994). Crimes against humanity. In M. Anderson & P. Hill (Eds.), *Race, class and gender: An anthology* (pp. 366-373). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Plous, S. (2010). *Understanding prejudice*. Retrieved from <http://www.understandingprejudice.org/>.

Peacebuilding Project

Students often believe that peacebuilding involves large-scale endeavors to bring peace to an entire region. This exercise is designed to highlight the reality that peace is often accomplished not by sweeping treaties but rather by the collective effect of numerous small-scale efforts over time. The goal is for students to design a small peacebuilding project or activity that could actually be implemented. Student draft a proposal including key participants, proposed program, potential sources of funding, etc. This proposal is addressed to a specific person—an individual who may not be the most recognizable within an organization or government but rather who would be best able to facilitate the project. Over the past several years, our students have selected a range of projects both local and global (e.g., a Chechen refugee camp activity program for adolescents and a local high school diversity project).

- Fisher, R., Schneider, A. K. Borgwardt, E., & Ganson, B. (1997). *Coping with international conflict*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Persuasion and War

Describes a social psychology class project in which students learn about persuasion techniques and then evaluate the use of those techniques in war propaganda and materials produced by the U.S. military's Psychological Operations division (PSYOP). Students evaluate a range of media from print to radio and historical periods from the Holocaust to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Students learn about various influence techniques, the difference between persuasion and propaganda, and methods of message inoculation.

- King, S. (2004). PSYOP and persuasion: Applying social psychology and becoming an informed citizen. *Teaching of Psychology, 31*, 27-30.

Role-Playing Exercises to Confront Prejudice

One powerful antecedent of mass violence is stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination. Much of the social psychological literature is devoted to exploring antecedents to prejudicial behavior. Unfortunately, relatively little has been published regarding strategies to reduce stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination. The following articles explore role-playing activities designed to enable participants to address prejudiced comments.

- Lawson, T. J., McDonough, T. A., & Bodle, J. H. (2010). Confronting prejudiced comments: Effectiveness of a role-playing exercise. *Teaching of Psychology, 37*, 257-261.
- Plous, S. (2000). Responding to overt displays of prejudice: A role-playing exercise. *Teaching of Psychology, 27*, 198-200.
- Plous, S. (2010). *Understanding prejudice*. Retrieved from <http://www.understandingprejudice.org/>

Survivor Interview

Survivors of atrocities such as the Holocaust and the Rwandan genocide as well as victims of war around the globe are often available to speak to a class and answer questions. Such first person accounts engage students in a way to learn about war, ethno-political conflict, and genocide that cannot be achieved through simply reading about events. It is important however that such interviews be done with care and arranged through organizations with speaker's bureaus. Often students may volunteer individuals that they know but these potential speakers may experience unanticipated emotions while presenting or drift into non-related political discourse. The United States Holocaust Memorial and Museum (USHMM) sponsors a speaker's bureau and has published guidelines for survivor presentations. These guidelines are easily adapted for

non-Holocaust related speakers. Additionally, the USHMM makes available a spectrum of resources and activities for those wanting to integrate Holocaust lessons into their teaching (<http://www.ushmm.org/education/foreducators/lesson/>).

- USHMM (2010), *Guidelines for arranging a survivor presentation*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from, <http://www.ushmm.org/remembrance/survivoraffairs/speakers/>

The Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq: Teaching Resources and Essential Questions

The New York Times has created a series of lesson plans associated with the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Each lesson plan includes a list of resources, materials, activities, discussion questions, and homework. For example, an activity listed in the lesson plan entitled "Terror on Trial" suggests dividing the class up into small groups charged with researching countries which have been accused, by the United States, of sponsoring terrorism (e.g., Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Sudan, and Syria).

- Schulten, K. (2010, July 6). *The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq: Teaching resources and essential questions*. Retrieved on from <http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/07/06/the-wars-in-afghanistan-and-iraq-teaching-resources-and-essential-questions>

Video Games Project

According to Singer (2010), the video game *Modern Warfare 2* grossed \$310 million dollars in sales within two days. Video war games are best sellers with millions choosing to play war within the comfort of their home each year. However, the military also uses video games for everything from recruitment to robot control training for demining. In this exercise, we bring a war video game into class. We discuss the structure of the game in relation to social psychological topics such as deindividuation, dehumanization, social role theory, social identity, and aggression. We also discuss the disparities between the presentation of war in a video game context versus war in a real-world setting.

- Grossman, D. (2009). *On killing: The psychological cost of learning to kill in war and society* (Revised edition). New York: Back Bay Books.

Resources

Free Edited Peace Psychology Textbook Chapters

Excellent text highlighting the many facets of peace psychology. Text is divided into four main

sections. The first section includes chapters concerning direct violence examined from a psychological perspective. Topics range from an analysis of intimate violence to a discussion concerning weapons of mass destruction. The second section addresses issues involved in structural violence such as social injustice and globalism. The last two sections concern a broad spectrum of issues related to peacemaking and peacebuilding. Originally published by Prentice-Hall.

- Christie, D. J., Wagner, R. V., & Winter, D. D. (Eds.). (2001). *Peace, conflict, and violence: Peace psychology for the 21st century*. Retrieved from [http://academic.marion.ohio-state.edu/dchristie/Peace Psychology Book.html](http://academic.marion.ohio-state.edu/dchristie/Peace%20Psychology%20Book.html).

Handbook on Peace Education

Includes a significant amount of information related to teaching peace from a psychological perspective. Many chapters are written by prominent peace psychologists, with chapter titles such as “What does peace psychology have to offer peace education,” “Intergroup contact: Implications for peace education,” and “Contributions of developmental psychology to peace education.” Consisting primarily of theoretically based chapters as well as reviews of the literature, the text includes references to various classroom activities. Good reference text for anyone wanting to infuse material related to peace and conflict into any psychology course.

- Salomon, G., & Cairns, E. (Eds.). (2010). *Handbook on peace education*. New York: Psychology Press.

Information Resources on the Psychology of Peace and Mass Violence

These two resources contain annotated bibliographies of material related to genocide, torture, human rights, ethnopolitical conflict, terrorism, and peace written from a psychosocial perspective. Information concerning books, journal articles, book chapters, and Internet resources are organized by topic. Resources also include bibliographies of supplemental background reference materials and list of relevant journals.

- Woolf, L. M., & Hulsizer, M. R. (2004). Psychology of peace and mass violence—War, ethnopolitical conflict, terrorism, and peace: Informational resources. *OTRP-Online*. Retrieved from, <http://teachpsych.org/otrp/resources/resources.php?category=Diversity>
- Woolf, L. M., & Hulsizer, M. R. (2004). Psychology of peace and mass violence—Genocide, torture, and human rights: Informational resources. *OTRP-Online*.

Retrieved from <http://teachpsych.org/otrp/resources/resources.php?category=Diversity>

Instructional Resources on the Psychology of Peace and Mass Violence

Consists of resource materials for developing whole courses and lectures on peace and mass violence. Provides lecture suggestions with selected references for integrating specific topics into the psychology curriculum. Includes sample syllabi for entire courses related to topics such as war, genocide, terrorism, altruism and aggression, the Holocaust, and peace. For incorporating specific topics into existing courses, lecture suggestions and selected references are given. Includes information concerning relevant videos, Internet resources, and professional organizations.

- Woolf, L. M., & Hulsizer, M. R. (2004). Psychology of peace and mass violence: Instructional resources. *OTRP-Online*. Retrieved from: <http://teachpsych.org/otrp/resources/resources.php?category=Diversity>.

Peace Education Text

Chapters focus on an array of topics from the conceptual basis of peace education to assessment of programs. Includes a section devoted to peace education around the globe and programs designed to mediate violence in regions such as the Middle East, South Africa, and Northern Ireland. These chapters are particularly useful in stimulating discussion on topics such as intergroup behavior, conflict resolution, and reconciliation.

- Salomon, G., & Nevo, B. (Eds.) (2002). *Peace education: The concept, principles, and practices around the world*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Caveats and Conclusion

Both teaching courses related to peace and war as well as integrating material related to these concepts into existing psychology courses can be very gratifying and rewarding. We would be remiss, however, if we did not include a bit of cautionary advice.

War and peace are potentially very political topics for both students and teachers. To avoid challenges associated with accusations of political bias and potentially volatile classroom situations, one should keep in mind the following recommendations.

1. Stay grounded in the research and scholarship on the various topics. Much of peace psychology is grounded in social psychology, particularly research related to social influence, social

relations, and social cognitive factors. Additionally, teachers can draw on research related to military psychology, ethnic and minority relations, international relations, sociology, anthropology, and political science.

2. Mix up examples from history. Although it is tempting to always focus on current wars and events, these may be too emotionally or politically charged for students to engage in critically. For example, students may react negatively if your primary example for discussing groupthink is the decision to go to war in Iraq. However, other examples from history (e.g., the Bay of Pigs decision) may be less threatening. If students make the connection to current events, you can use this as an opportunity to have students evaluate the situation using the tools provided in previous discussion. For example, if students bring up the Iraq war decision, you can use that teaching moment to evaluate the Iraq war decision, the media coverage suggesting groupthink (e.g., from the *NYTimes*), and the application of the concept. For almost every topic, you can step back a couple of decades. Thus, if one is concerned about analyzing a current war situation, one can instead analyze prior wartime scenarios. For example, in discussing the effectiveness of threats and sanctions, one need not talk about current "hot topics" but can look at research analyzing the problems associated with threats and sanctions in general and in relation to their use during the Vietnam War.
3. Be respectful and encourage students to be respectful of others' opinions as well. It is important that you know your own biases so that you can work to keep them out of the classroom. Ideally you will want to create an environment whereby student know that they can state their opinions but also know that they must back up their opinions with research and scholarship.

4. Work with your departmental chair and university administration if you are teaching a course or material that may be construed as controversial. Bottom line is that it pays to know the institution where one teaches and the cultural standards. Preparation before you teach the course or module and examining potential pitfalls can save you a fair amount of stress down the road.

Caveats aside—the psychology of war and peace should be an integral part of the curriculum that not only shapes what our students know but how they interact with the world. If our students are to become global and socially responsible citizens and potentially future psychologists, it is imperative that they learn about peace from the intrapersonal to international level.

References

- Harris, I. (2007). Peace education in a violent culture. *Harvard Educational Review*, 77, 350-354.
- Lin, J. (2007). Love, peace, and wisdom in education: Transforming education for peace. *Harvard Educational Review*, 77, 362-365.
- Murphy, B., & Polyson, J. (1991). Peace, war, and nuclear issues in the psychology classroom. *Teaching of Psychology*, 18, 153-157.
- Nelson, L., & Christie, D. (1995). Peace in the psychology curriculum: Moving from assimilation to accommodation. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 1, 161-178.
- Singer, P. (2010). Meet the Sims ... and shoot them. *Foreign Policy*, (178), 1. Retrieved from Academic Search Premier database.