



How peace education motivates youth peacebuilding: Examples from Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the impact of four peace education programs involving Pakistani youth to illuminate peace education's role in peacebuilding efforts in conflict contexts. It argues that alumni tried to replicate their individual transformations as stimulated by these peace education programs. They did so through community-level projects modelled after the same program processes that had transformed them. Impact on peacebuilding was supported by peace education programs combining different theories of change, focusing on follow-on projects, and providing support structures for alumni. Because alumni modelled their projects after their program experiences, programs should be more transparent in order to maximize impact.

1. Introduction

Despite the growing number of studies assessing the impact of peace education programs in conflict settings, these assessments usually focus on individual transformations in attitudes and/or beliefs resulting from encounters across conflict divides (e.g. [Rosen and Salomon, 2011](#); [Schubotz and Robinson, 2006](#)). This emphasis on individual-level transformations ignores the connection between outcomes for individuals at the micro-level and outcomes that influence the development of peace at the macro-level. By focusing on the micro-level, researchers have not been explicit enough as to how peace education contributes to peacebuilding. This tendency to observe only micro-level effects is a common problem in both peace education assessment ([Ross, 2010](#)) and in peacebuilding evaluation more broadly ([Gürkaynak et al., 2008](#)). By contrast, [Ned Lazarus \(2011\)](#) and [Karen Ross \(2017\)](#) both highlight the community-level impact of peace education programs with Israeli and Palestinian youth by illuminating program components that led to the engagement of alumni in peacebuilding or social change activities (see also [Ross and Lazarus, 2015](#)). This article expands on the work of these scholars to further illustrate how peace education can both inspire and support youth to engage in peacebuilding activities in conflict environments.

With this goal in mind, I examine four peace education programs involving Pakistani youth to explain how transformations experienced by participants, as a result of the programs, led to their efforts to better their communities. Accordingly, the article moves past studies that only look at individual attitude transformations resulting from peace education. This examination illustrates how alumni have integrated

transformations they experienced into community action at the meso-level, in an attempt to connect the micro to the macro ([d'Estree et al., 2001](#)). [Tamra Pearson d'Estree and her colleagues \(2001\)](#) describe the meso-level as an important bridge between the micro and the macro, because it assesses the level of society where participants operate in their communities or institutions. Focusing on this level illustrates the role of peace education in peacebuilding by examining how individual alumni, having experienced micro-level transformations in attitudes and beliefs, engaged in community-level peacebuilding activities. This exploration also responds to what [Salomon \(2011\)](#) calls the challenge of a “ripple effect” for peace education, particularly in settings of conflict, which entails how these programs radiate beyond individuals to influence others who did not participate in the programs. In seeking to fill this gap, the article answers the following questions: How do peace education programs contribute to peacebuilding beyond individual, micro-level transformations? Or, put another way, how do transformations in peace education program participants' attitudes and beliefs lead them to undertake activities that build peace at the meso-level? What role do these programs play in preparing participants for and supporting them during these activities?

I argue that, as a result of their participation in peace education programs, alumni modelled their community projects on their experiences in the peace education program. They did so with the goal of replicating their own transformations with others in their communities. This argument highlights the meso-level impact that came about as a result of these peace education programs. It also highlights how alumni contributed to the local peacebuilding context by utilizing the same processes with their community members that they recognized to be

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effective in their own transformations. Finally, it asserts that context should be a key consideration when preparing participants to replicate transformations they experienced upon returning to their communities.

The structure of the article is as follows. First, I describe two theories of change that explain participants' transformations in these programs, namely, "building bridges theory" and "shifts in consciousness theory." The next section profiles the four programs examined in the article, followed by an elucidation of the research methodology. The findings section and its subsections illustrate the meso-level impact of peace education by describing the projects that alumni completed and specifying the transformations that alumni experienced, as well as the replication of these transformations with others in their communities. The article then argues that three factors contributed to meso-level impact: the combination of program goals emphasizing both building bridges and shifts in consciousness, the programs' encouragement of participants to complete projects in their communities, and the programs' logistical and financial support structures for alumni. I conclude that programs should be more transparent in their pedagogical processes and think of alumni as capable educators and leaders in their communities, while also considering the constraints alumni may face upon their return.

1.1. Peacebuilding theories of change explaining participants' transformations

The two theories of change that are related to participants' transformations are building bridges theory and shifts in consciousness theory (Allen Nan, 2010). Categorizing these transformations according to these theories of change helps to explain the transformations that alumni experienced that they tried to replicate with their community members.

Building bridges theory is focused on facilitating transformations in attitudes held by individuals in conflicting groups with the aim of building positive relationships between these groups (Allen Nan, 2010). This theory assumes that building these relationships will decrease intergroup prejudice. While the overarching goal of peace education is facilitating changes in participants' knowledge, attitudes, skills, values, and behaviours in support of building a culture of peace (Iram, 2006), in programs that take place in conflict contexts, the emphasis is on building relationships across groups in conflict with each other (Salomon and Cairns, 2010). This is because the negative feelings that exist between conflicting groups are so profound in these contexts that the first step towards a culture of peace is transforming how these groups think and feel about each other, through creating opportunities for encounter among people from these groups (Salomon, 2008). Thus, in such contexts programs are usually guided by building bridges theory.

However, building bridges theory is not the only relevant theory for peace education in conflict contexts. The second peacebuilding theory of change explored here – shifts in consciousness – argues that when individuals experience personal transformations in consciousness through reflection, dissonance, and other experiences, they can develop new ideas for cultivating peace. When this occurs on a large scale, it can lead to social change (Allen Nan, 2010). The emphasis of the shifts in consciousness theory of change is on participants' commitment to peacebuilding, which resonates with Bajaj's (2008) argument that peace education should inspire "transformative optimism" in support of cultivating action for peace. Bajaj adapts the term transformative optimism from Rossatto (2005), describing it as cultivating an awareness of the structural challenges that a community faces, while also instilling in community members a belief in their ability to create change in spite of these challenges. Facilitating such awareness can create shifts in consciousness in which individuals develop a deeper understanding of their peacebuilding capacity.

2. Research context: four peace education programs with Pakistani youth

This study examined the impact of four programs. Each program brought Pakistani youth to the United States and focused on facilitating mutual understanding between Pakistanis and Americans and increasing participants' leadership capacity. Participants were required to engage in some sort of community service while in the United States and strongly encouraged to complete follow-on projects upon their return to their communities. The programs differed in terms of their duration, their target populations, and their structure. Some programs were standalone, with all the sessions provided by the staff, while others enrolled participants in schools or universities in the United States. Each program is described below.

The Benjamin Franklin Summer Institute with South and Central Asia (BFSI) was a one-month intensive peace education program in Virginia that included high school students, aged 16 to 18, from Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, India, and the United States. Over three years, 119 youth participated in the program, 26 of them being Pakistani. The program aimed to cultivate civically active youth who would take leadership responsibilities in their communities and to improve relationships and mutual understanding between students from the different countries in the program (Benjamin Franklin Summer Institute with South and Central Asia (BFSI, 2012). Participants took part in five types of activities related to these goals: educational workshops, field trips and site visits, leadership and teambuilding activities, community service, and social, cultural, and recreational activities. They also planned individual follow-on projects to put what they learned into action in their community upon their return.

The Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) program brings 900 high school students, ages 15 to 17, from 39 countries with "significant" Muslim populations to the United States to attend high school for one academic year. The program began in response to the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, with the first cohort coming to the United States in 2003. The purpose of YES is to build bridges between the United States and countries involved in the program by cultivating meaningful relationships during the exchange. Participants are placed in different communities throughout the country, where they live with a host family, attend a local high school, represent their country and culture, and develop leadership skills. More than 9500 participants have taken part in the program since its inception, 1120 of whom are Pakistani (United States Department of State, 2018). The local partner organization in Pakistan, iEARN, actively involves alumni in the pre-departure orientation process and supports alumni's community activities upon their return to the country.

The Global Undergraduate Exchange Program (UGRAD) enrolls roughly 250 undergraduate students under 25 from various countries at universities in the United States for one semester. Students live on campus or with a host family and take a full course load as non-degree international students. The program began internationally in 2008 and has been bringing Pakistani students since 2010, with at least 100 students coming from Pakistan every semester. Pakistani participants conduct at least 20 h of community service while in the country, give presentations about Pakistan, explore American culture, engage with the local community in the United States, and conduct follow-on projects in Pakistan (IREX, 2018). Global UGRAD seeks to support students in developing their knowledge, bolstering their capacity and commitment to leadership in their home communities, and building positive relationships between Pakistani and U.S. students; it is designed to build participants' capabilities and to provide them with skills to sustainably address social and economic needs in their communities.

Study of the United States Institutes (SUSI) brings roughly 20 undergraduate students, ages 18–25, to the United States in each of several institutes for a five to six week program. Multiple institutes are

organized each year around different themes such as civic engagement, religious pluralism, social entrepreneurship, and women's leadership. The program is housed at a university for the first four weeks, where participants take part in lectures, discussions, and experiential learning activities. All institutes include active engagement with U.S. students to increase understanding between SUSI participants and Americans. Participants also conduct community service, engage in leadership and teambuilding activities, and take part in a one or two week study tour. Emphasis is placed on participants transferring their new skills and knowledge into bettering their communities back home. Over 100 Pakistani students have attended this program.

Alumni from these four programs and all other exchange programs funded by the U.S. State Department are connected to the Pakistan-U.S. Alumni Network (PUAN), a platform administered by the U.S. Embassy in Pakistan, which provides connections and funding opportunities supporting the community projects of alumni. The U.S. government places a strong emphasis on supporting alumni work. There are over 25,000 alumni of State Department programs in Pakistan (USEFP, 2018), around 5000 of them having travelled to the United States. The YES program also has their own alumni activities coordinated through iEARN Pakistan, and Global UGRAD alumni can win small grants to support their community work. Thus, all four programs emphasize mutual understanding between groups, leadership, and the importance of participants' follow-on community impact.

3. Methodology

The research on these programs was conducted using a qualitative interpretivist approach. In-depth interviews, focus groups, and participant observations were conducted with alumni from all four programs in Lahore, Islamabad, and Karachi. I conducted 35 interviews and six focus groups with these alumni in December 2015. The data collection led to a total of 59 alumni being involved in interviews or focus groups where they examined their experiences before, during, and after participating in their respective program. The interviews and focus groups took place in Pakistan in private study rooms on university campuses and in cafes. There was significant separation in time and space from the sites of the programs, the in-country projects, and the interviews and focus groups. Separation in time and space can allow participants to make a break between the activities themselves and the research process with its extensive consent procedures.

Alumni varied with respect to how much time had passed since their program participation, the shortest amount of time being four months, and the longest being nine years. The mean amount of time that had elapsed for alumni after their program participation was slightly over three years. Participant responses gave the impression that because program participation was a significant life experience for them, they had strong memories of these experiences. I kept time lapse in mind when analysing the data.

3.1. Participants

The study included 15 participants from BFSI, 26 participants from UGRAD, 11 participants from the YES program, and 7 participants from SUSI. Of these participants, 34 were women and 25 were men. Participants were based in the following cities at the time that the research was conducted: Lahore (22), Islamabad (20), Karachi (7), Rawalpindi (4), Bahawalpur (1), Gilgit Baltistan (1), Peshawar (2), and other areas in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province (2). Most participants were college students living on campus at the time; many students were originally from different cities or rural areas.

In data collection and analysis I paid careful attention to how alumni's local context influenced their transformations and the constraints on carrying out their community projects. Elements of conflict, such as its drivers, manifestations, and intensity, vary across the regions of Pakistan, which makes it difficult to generalize beyond particular

locales to the rest of the country (Durrani et al., 2017). For example, Peshawar and other areas of KP have experienced high levels of violence and insecurity at the hands of militant groups. The population in this region generally holds strong anti-American views because of the negative impact of the War on Terror on them. Karachi, the most populous city in Pakistan, is characterized by high rates of crime, sectarian conflict, and target killings, although it has become more secure since the government's 2013 crack down on gangs and militant groups (Abi-Habib and ur-Rehman, 2018). Conversely, Bahawalpur and Gilgit experience much less conflict than KP and Karachi. Lahore, Islamabad, and Rawalpindi are major urban centres that are also more stable but have still suffered bombings at the hands of militants (Batten-Carew, 2017). Regional differences in gender relations also had an effect on my data. Gender inequality persists in Pakistan in terms of access to education, work opportunities, freedom of movement, and violence against women (Durrani et al., 2017). Disparities between men and women are more extreme in rural areas.

3.2. Data collection

Interviews and focus groups began with extensive consent procedures in which I explained to participants that, although I had been a resident assistant for BFSI in 2011 and 2012, I no longer had an official connection to any of the programs. I stressed that their responses would remain anonymous and would not influence future funding decisions on projects they may propose. I encouraged them to not only speak about positive experiences but to discuss hardships as well. Participants candidly described challenges they faced during and after the programs, which gave the impression that they were not only highlighting positive experiences to appease me or in the hopes of receiving future project funding.

Interviews, which lasted between 30 and 90 min, were semi-structured and composed of open-ended questions. Questions were aimed at understanding participants' experiences leading up to, during, and after the program and at assessing how these experiences shaped their beliefs and attitudes towards groups that their group is in conflict with and about local peacebuilding. Participants were asked to discuss their program experiences in detail and how they thought they had transformed by participating. Some examples of open-ended questions used in the beginning of the interview were: "What was your experience like in the program?" and "What was the biggest change that you experienced from the program?" Other topics included how participants might have experienced transformations during the programs. To measure the impact of the programs on communities, our conversations also explored participants' community projects and any challenges they faced upon returning home. We also discussed the ethical challenges involved in returning participants to conflict contexts after inspiring them to create peace. Alumni explained their view on this issue based on their personal experience and the experiences they witnessed of other alumni.

Focus groups followed the same general formula in their order and content, although they allowed for more discussion between participants, as they explored their transformations, their community projects, and the challenges of returning home. These group conversations lasted between one and two hours. Focus groups have limitations. They may censor certain participants, and participants' responses will be tailored to other group members. However, when focus groups have a trusting environment, as occurred in this study, they can allow researchers to develop a nuanced understanding of participants' perspectives through their interactions with one another and can mitigate power differentials between participants and the researcher (Gibbs, 1997).

Interviews and focus groups were conducted in English, one of the official languages of Pakistan and the language of the programs. Focus groups and interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Pseudonyms were assigned to every participant using a name generator and are used herein with the exception of alumni whose projects and

names appear on program websites.

In interviews and focus groups, alumni self-reported their transformations. Self-report is inherently limited. However I conducted lengthy interviews, which provided context for their responses and allowed me to weed out some false interpretations. This approach builds on Karen Ross's (2017) research on youth encounter programs in Israel. Her method prioritizes the perspectives of alumni of the programs that she examines. Accordingly, she asserts that her findings do not necessarily reflect the impact of the programs; however, they are still significant because they reflect how alumni make sense of the transformations they experienced as a result of the program. Similarly, in this study I sought to uncover alumni's understandings of their transformations through in-depth interviews and focus groups. Moreover, I conducted participant observations and analysed documents to triangulate self-reported findings where possible.

I engaged in participant observation on multiple occasions during my four weeks in Pakistan. This allowed me to capture participants' behaviours and draw from what they shared with others and me in informal conversations. Participant observation provided deeper context and richness to my understanding of participants' transformations, the challenges they faced, and the impact they had in their communities. Field notes captured these moments. Although participant observation complemented other methods of data collection, findings mostly relied on data from interviews and focus groups.

To assess meso-level impact, I conducted participant observation and interviews at meetings with staff of the different organizations in Pakistan. I also conducted content analysis of documents by examining alumni success stories from PUAN's website and the programs' websites. Additionally, alumni published articles in magazines, blogs, and newsletters that were also considered in this analysis.

3.3. Data analysis

The data gathered in this study was coded and analysed using thematic analysis (Creswell, 2009). Using pre-determined codes related to the two theories of change, I first examined if transformations in these four programs matched those found in other peace education programs. However, using pre-determined codes can predispose the researcher to focus on themes that might be less important for explaining the phenomenon (Robson, 2011). Therefore, to address this challenge and open up space for additional explanations of how transformations happen in peace education programs, I revisited the data to ascertain what other themes emerged. Thematic analysis was also conducted to examine challenges faced by participants and to assess their projects in their communities in Pakistan.

4. Findings

Numerous peace education participants returned home with the desire to facilitate transformations in the youth of their communities similar to the transformations they had experienced in their respective programs. Alumni attempted to replicate transformations they experienced in two ways. The first involved transforming project participants' perceptions towards "enemy" groups based on the building bridges theory of change. These enemy groups included Indians or Americans, groups that are from countries with which Pakistan has tense relations (Khan, 2011), or individuals from different religions or sects because of interreligious or sectarian tensions. For example, Hindus are generally marginalized in Pakistani society, including through curricular texts pitting Hindus and Muslims against each other (Halai and Durrani, 2018). Although not all Pakistanis have negative sentiments towards these various "enemy" groups, my research focuses on participants' reported transformations in how they viewed at least one of these groups. Building bridges projects were therefore exemplified in projects aimed at building positive connections with India or the United States, interfaith harmony projects, or articles alumni published trying to help

enemy groups understand each other. Alumni also tried to replicate transformations through promoting shifts in consciousness in support of positive community action. Shifts in consciousness projects refer to initiatives aimed at empowering youth and instilling confidence, leadership, and transformative optimism. Alumni modelled their projects on activities in these peace education programs that they believed had cultivated their transformations.

Section 4.1 illustrates the meso-level impact of the peace education programs examined in this article using descriptions of former participants' community projects. Section 4.2 describes how alumni tried to replicate their transformations with others in their communities. The findings section closes with Section 4.3, where I describe three factors that were particularly relevant for the success of these programs in creating meso-level impact.

4.1. Projects illustrating meso-level impact

Of the 59 interview and focus groups participants, roughly 81 per cent (48/59) were involved in projects benefitting their local communities. These were projects that they initiated, projects other alumni started or took place at their universities, or conferences and activities put on by PUAN, iEARN, or other organizations where they assisted.

Table 1 lists the different types of alumni projects and examples of each type. The projects are categorized according to their correspondence with building bridges theory or shifts in consciousness theory. This categorization highlights the types of transformations alumni experienced that likely led them to engage in such projects. The table includes projects of alumni who took part in my interviews and focus groups and other alumni whose projects were described on the PUAN, YES, or UGRAD websites. This is by no means a comprehensive list of projects that alumni engaged in. These projects are evidence that peace education programs in conflict contexts go beyond transforming how individuals in groups view one another to inspire meso-level peace-building activities.

4.2. Replicating transformations modelled in peace education

To make the argument that alumni replicate the transformations they experienced, I first include a subsection on transformations explained by building bridges theory and how these came about, followed by a subsection explaining how alumni tried to replicate them in others through their projects. Next I portray former participants' shifts in consciousness and the processes they believed stimulated these shifts. Again, I follow this section with the ways that alumni tried to replicate these types of transformations.

4.2.1. Transformations explained by building bridges theory

Many attitudes and beliefs that alumni had about opposing groups transformed because of relationships they built across national, religious, ethnic, and sectarian differences during the programs. Ninety-five per cent of participants explained that they had developed more open-minded attitudes and were more accepting of differences as a result of the program. Many also described how, because of these interactions, they began to view groups they had previously feared or had prejudice against, such as Americans or Indians, more positively.

Alumni also experienced four related transformations in their beliefs. First, 56 per cent of alumni recognized the humanity of enemy groups. Such humanization of the enemy other is a key goal of peace education programs in conflict contexts (Salomon, 2008). Many alumni (44 per cent) also acknowledged that their interactions with Americans convinced them that there was a difference between people and their governments. They were able to differentiate U.S. individuals from the country's policies, which some viewed negatively. Moreover, participants' combination of both negative and positive experiences with enemy groups helped 90 per cent of them to break their stereotypes of these groups. Furthermore, these experiences assisted alumni in

Table 1
Alumni Project Breakdown.

Theory of Change	Type of Project	Number	Examples
Building Bridges	Interfaith Harmony	9	Rajesh's dialogue with 200 youth from different religious and ethnic groups for peace (Shah, 2017); Raj's project increasing interfaith understanding through sports, art, music, and dialogue (Shah, 2016b)
	Building Bridges with India, the U.S. and Other Countries	5	Nida bringing groups of Pakistanis to India and Indians to Pakistan; Nasim having students send peace cards to elementary schools in the United States
	Publishing Articles	9	Sher Bano's column for Nicolas Kristof's <i>New York Times</i> blog to help break stereotypes about Pakistan (Bano, 2010)
Shifts in Consciousness	Peacebuilding (Not Involving Building Bridges)	7	Saad's "Peace is my Right" Youth Conference in Swat region (Shah, 2014a); Farmanullah's peacebuilding and conflict transformation trainings (Shah, 2014c)
	Structural Violence/Poverty	6	Mutawakkil's projects providing livestock for widows and school supplies for their children (Shah, 2014b)
	English Language, Career/Empowerment	15	Falak's program teaching over 100 students Sindhi, Urdu, and English and providing education on basic hygiene and community service in Jamnindo Marri, Sindh (YES Program, 2014b).
	Women's Empowerment	8	Tooba's multiple day leadership training for 100 girls in elementary, middle, and high schools (Shah, 2016a)
	Medical/Health	8	YES alumni medical camps serving 1200 underserved patients in Karachi (YES Program, 2013), Sarwan's seminar on women's health at a school in Sindh (PUAN, 2015)
	Disabilities	3	Sumaira's "Leadership Conference" for people with disabilities (PUAN, 2017a)
	Environmental Sustainability	7	Seven YES alumni facilitated a Recycling Workshop at a school in Karachi (YES Program, 2014a)
Short-Term Volunteering/Humanitarian Aid	13	Raising money for flood victims (YES Program, 2011); helping heat wave victims in Karachi (YES Program, 2015)	
	Total Projects	90	

recognizing out-group variability (22 per cent of alumni), which means that not all members of the enemy group are the same (Pettigrew et al., 2011). Not all participants joined the program with negative sentiments against Americans, Indians, or other religions or religious sects. Participants exhibited significant differences along these lines as a result of the region in Pakistan where they came from and the norms in their families and schools (see also Durrani et al., 2017). However, percentages described above reflect reported transformations towards these groups, suggesting that a majority of participants experienced at least an increased openness to other groups or a reduction in stereotypes.

According to 93 per cent of alumni, the relationships they built with people in these enemy groups were foundational for these transformations. Program structures that created open environments supporting positive interactions across group differences were essential for students to build these relationships. Thus, participants' experiences building relationships as a result of their encounters across lines of difference played an important role in transforming their attitudes and beliefs about these groups. These transformations then led alumni to pursue community projects that would replicate in others the transformations they had experienced.

4.2.2. Replicating transformations resulting from building bridges

Many alumni understood the connection between the relationships they built across lines of difference and the increase in open-mindedness, decrease in prejudice, breaking of stereotypes, and other transformations in beliefs that they experienced. As a result, they created opportunities for facilitating similar transformations with people in their communities. This is precisely why Nida (UGRAD/4.5 years out) accompanied groups of Pakistanis to India four times and brought Indians to Pakistan on multiple occasions. As she described, before the UGRAD program she had been socialized to detest Indian people. When she was assigned an Indian mentor during her time in the United States, she was shocked, asking, "How can a Pakistani and an Indian even talk?" She recognized the value of her positive contact with Indians for transforming her previous negative views, declaring: "When I met the Indian community in the U.S., my stereotypes changed." She later explained that bringing her Indian colleagues to Pakistan helped to create these same transformations in her Pakistani friends' perspectives:

There was this friend from India who came to Pakistan; I invited him to my University for interacting with my fellows. And my fellows were...their views changed about Indians and they were very happy meeting him.

Nida had seen first-hand the power that interactions across difference could create and wanted to replicate her transformations with others in her community. Nida's location in Islamabad, her parents trusting her and allowing her to travel, and her middle-class status certainly influenced her ability to complete these projects. However, she has still faced challenges. She described how she is regularly followed and questioned by Pakistani intelligence officers because of her Indian connections. Nida differs from young women in other regions in Pakistan who are more constrained by violence, who may have less freedom of movement, and who may be more beholden to conservative traditions. However, her case exemplifies how alumni became acquainted with an effective method for building bridges between enemy groups through their own personal experiences in peace education programs and developed creative ways to help youth in their communities to experience these same transformations.

4.2.3. Transformations explained by shifts in consciousness

Additionally, alumni experienced shifts in consciousness as a result of their attendance in peace education programs. Alumni described the following shifts: 68 per cent established a broader vision and purpose for their lives and their communities, 88 per cent became motivated to make these concrete improvements, and 76 per cent developed the confidence and 51 per cent the transformative optimism that they could be the ones to make these changes. Alumni believed that the combination of these shifts in consciousness led them to create positive change in their communities.

Participants had multiple experiences during peace education programs that were important for cultivating these shifts in consciousness. Significant processes for increasing participants' internal motivation were their experiences doing community service, having host families who took care of them without expecting anything in return (exemplifying a "culture of volunteerism" in the words of alumni), and learning how to take initiative. Alumni were also externally motivated for community engagement by program expectations and requirements and because they wanted to give back to their communities after they had been so fortunate.

Multiple experiences were also important for cultivating participants' confidence and led to their development of transformative optimism. Most significant to this article were participants' interactions with U.S. teachers. Participants felt particularly empowered by teachers because of the discussion-oriented classes where they were encouraged to think for themselves. This pedagogical approach was significant

because in Pakistan teachers predominantly instruct students using lecture-based, top-down educational practices (Mohammed and Harlech-Jones, 2008). Moreover, research on educational projects in Pakistan that diverge from typical lecture-oriented methods has also shown the importance of child-centred pedagogy for cultivating students' confidence (Jerrard, 2016). For a detailed description of participants' transformations resulting from building bridges and shifts in consciousness, the processes that helped to facilitate them, and the challenges alumni faced as a result of them, see Author (forthcoming).

4.2.4. Replicating shifts in consciousness

After experiencing shifts in their own consciousness, alumni became passionate about building youth's capacity in their communities by cultivating shifts in these young people's consciousness. One way that alumni did this was through organizing conferences to empower participants through developing leadership capacity modelled after the experiences of alumni in their respective peace education programs. Dawar (BFSI/5.5 years out) developed three such conferences upon returning to Pakistan, two of which took place in Peshawar. He describes how his BFSI experience guided him in planning these conferences:

After attending Benjamin Franklin, we had the privilege of hosting conferences in Pakistan the way they do. [...] Here [in Pakistan] they invite 250 people, and then they just make someone who has a name in public speaking deliver a lecture. That's not effective. [...] What was effective, what is effective, is making them in small groups and then interacting with them. Listening to them and then giving them small points to think upon. Here they didn't give you small points to think upon. They just directly give you answers. [...] That's not helpful. What's helpful is they give you questions that you yourself are made to think. [...] We tried to achieve this thing, what the Ben Franklin [program] had achieved with us. Basically, provoking our mind. And I think we did three conferences and we were quite successful in that. So to your question, as you said that how did [BFSI] help you, it helped me also in making the conference structure, the way conferences were held.

Dawar recognized specific processes that were essential in facilitating his own transformation and used these same processes to cultivate transformations in his participants. He explained that he focused on leadership because it was not feasible in Peshawar to address conflicts with India or the United States directly because of the political climate in the area.

4.3. Factors explaining alumni success at the meso-level

Beyond participants' individual transformations and their desire to replicate these transformations with others in their communities, three factors explain the success of alumni in their communities.

The first factor was the programs' focus on building bridges between participants and their explicit cultivation of shifts in consciousness. This was done through specific attention to the factors mentioned previously in this article that moved beyond relationship-building and resulted in shifts in consciousness, such as participants' community service activities and the programs' emphasis on leadership. By using both theories of change in their approach, programs examined in this study created the possibility for youth to transform how they viewed opposing groups and to conceptualize concrete ways they could work in their communities to help others experience these transformations as well. The combined application of these theories also allowed alumni to recognize other ways they could work for social change in their community beyond building bridges. As in Dawar's example in Section 4.2.4, he understood that empowering youth and increasing their leadership capacity could help them contribute to a more active and peaceful society. It was also not possible for him to focus on intergroup tensions, given the political environment of Peshawar. If BFSI had only emphasized mutual understanding between groups and not leadership, he may not have realized that engaging youth in discussions on

problems in society could empower them to challenge these problems. Thus, this emphasis on both shifts in consciousness and building bridges expanded the horizon of peace education program participants and gave them two pathways for replicating the transformations they experienced, one related to building bridges and the other related to shifts in consciousness.

The second factor was the programs' emphasis on youth completing projects once they returned to their communities. As described in Section 2 of this article, alumni were expected to engage in follow-on activities after the program portion in the United States. For example, BFSI required follow-on projects. When students applied for the program, they had to specify a project they might do upon their return to Pakistan and, in signing their application, promise to participate fully in the program, including completing their follow-on project. Moreover, YES program staff particularly emphasized, in the pre-departure orientation before participants left for the United States, that the "real" program would begin when participants returned to Pakistan. All four programs emphasized how students could use what they learned in their respective programs to benefit their local communities in Pakistan.

The third factor was PUAN's logistical and financial support for participants upon their return to Pakistan. All alumni are connected through PUAN and are able to receive funding of up to \$5000 to support approved projects. From 2013 until 2016, 150 projects received funding for \$5000 or less from the network (PUAN, 2017b). Moreover, UGRAD and YES alumni have access to additional funding sources associated with their particular programs. Additionally, iEARN Pakistan has developed a resource guide for YES alumni to use in developing and implementing their projects (Society for International Education, 2014). It describes the importance of community service, provides step-by-step instructions on how to create a project, offers strategies for grant proposals, contains many sample project proposals, gives guidelines for reporting procedures, and describes how to share success stories. An iEARN Pakistan staff member described the significance of their support structures for YES alumni:

Everybody changes for sure [during the program] but again, how they are supported when they are back, that is an important factor, because if they are not contacted, supported, then maybe in three to four to six months time this whole learning is vanished. [...] The actual program impact is not when they are in the U.S., that is fine, good for Americans, but for Pakistanis it is when they are back. [...] We use technology [to keep alumni connected.] We have Skype meetings; we have a very active Facebook group where they communicate. We have all sorts of SMS messages and everything to keep them connected. So if someone hasn't been participating for a long time we do check up and see what happened.

5. Significance of findings and policy implications

The examples above demonstrate that peace education programs can have exponential effects when they are designed to cultivate transformations in participants and to educate participants to inspire these same transformations in others. The programs examined in this article emphasized to participants the leadership role they could play in their communities and gave them tools and support to complete projects exemplifying this leadership ability. This emphasis led to community impact. Additional research highlights the importance of youth ownership and institutional support for community projects in Pakistan. Examining the impact of four peacebuilding projects in Karachi, Durrani et al. (2017) concluded that projects were able to mend ethnopolitical divides and increase youth agency in some cases and were most successful when they were steered by youth themselves and instituted as part of an official curriculum, giving youth legitimacy in the eyes of their parents and community members.

Although programs examined in the present article expected community impact, they did not foresee alumni modelling their projects

after the programs themselves and thereby trying to replicate their own transformations with their community members. Based on this knowledge, peace education programs should explain why they use certain pedagogical methods and processes to stimulate transformations in participants. Using such transparent teaching will create more intentionality in how programs prepare youth to build peace in their communities. With this approach, youth can also aspire to be more than leaders and reframe their identities from the beginning of the program as capable trainers and educators for peace.

However, programs must consider the specific regions where participants will return and the constraints they might face as a result of their gender, ethnicity, religion, or class. Durrani and her colleagues (2017) also found that some projects reified societal inequities and contributed to the marginalisation of particular groups. Moreover, in their study young women were not able to participate in some of these projects because of restrictions to their mobility. Therefore, the tension with peace education programs lies in being transparent enough that participants can effectively replicate transformations they experience, without being overly prescriptive in how these programs train and prepare youth for action in their communities, given the constraints they may face.

6. Conclusion

As this article demonstrates, many alumni recognized peace education processes that led to their transformations and attributed the structure of their community projects to the design of the program they had participated in. This example illustrates and explains the link between micro- and meso-level change by highlighting instances where participants experienced transformations in their attitudes and beliefs towards opposing groups and shifts in consciousness that then led to their community projects. These projects also highlighted meso-level impact in terms of the thousands of project beneficiaries. Therefore, peace education programs' impact went beyond transforming participants' attitudes and beliefs and contributed to peacebuilding through the efforts of alumni to replicate their transformations.

Three factors that played a large role in these programs' impact were the programs' intentional combination of facilitating building bridges and shifts in consciousness in participants, their specific focus on follow-on projects, and the financial and structural support provided by PUAN and other alumni networks for participants upon their return. Based on these findings, to scale individual change to larger community change, it may be essential for programs to emphasize the follow-on component by inspiring action for peace, supporting students in designing projects, and further facilitating the execution of projects once they return to their communities. Programs must also consider participants' local constraints when modelling processes for their projects.

Moreover, former participants' realization of the program elements that stimulated their own transformations has important policy implications. Some alumni modelled their projects after the peace education programs even though the program had not necessarily emphasized to participants how they were learning and why they were learning that way. Peace education programs should therefore be transparent in program delivery not only to maximize participants' gains from the program but also to increase their recognition of how particular pedagogical processes facilitate transformations.

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Declarations of interest

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