

Research Statement
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As a researcher trained in inquiry methodology, peace studies, and education policy studies, I take an interdisciplinary approach in all of my work. The research with which I have been involved over the past several years, as well as the research I plan on conducting in the future, centers on questions that push all of these fields toward more nuanced conceptualizations of participation, action, and power. Overall, I seek through my research to collaboratively catalyze social change, uncover and break down often hidden structures of inequity and injustice, and build peace, justice and empowerment both locally and globally.

One of the ways I have engaged in this inquiry-based critical peace building has been through cooperative research conducted with a peace education nonprofit organization in Kingston, Jamaica, and a group of young, males who live in an inner-city and have been directly affected by political violence in their neighborhood. I recently received a grant to work with this nonprofit organization to organize a “peace club” at the main public high school in these boys’ neighborhood. Through our collaboration we created a safe space for the youth to gather and explore the meanings of their everyday experiences with direct violence. These youth have become “peace ambassadors” at their school and within their community, urging their colleagues, community members, and family members to choose more peaceful resolutions to conflict. As a conclusion to this project, my community partner, the founder of this nonprofit organization, and I were asked to contribute to an edited volume, *Peace Education from the Grassroots*, to share the successes and challenges we experienced throughout our work together.

Second, I engage in participatory action research (PAR) approaches to peace building. I recently received the John H. Edwards Fellowship to complete my dissertation, which is based on a long-term PAR project conducted with a group of 50 undocumented Latino/a high school students in rural Idaho. One of the main findings of my dissertation is that PAR, through its focus on equity within the research process, foregrounds methodological questions about ethics and validity that allow all researchers to push ourselves and our research practices toward greater awareness of structures of inequity as well as potential for peace building and empowerment both within the research process itself and as a byproduct of research that is aware of its own potential for oppression. While teaching a course on introductory research methods for pre-service teachers, I worked with 60 pre-service special education teachers over a six month period on a PAR project that sought to “End the R Word” (“Retarded”) on our university campus. The project led to positive television and print media coverage, as well as one student’s receipt of a prestigious award for excellence in activist-oriented studies. The project culminated in a co-written scholarly article related to these questions of equity within the research process, asking the question, “Who can do research?”

My interdisciplinary scholarly efforts also focus on policy implications of the work of peace building through research. In particular, I conduct collaborative research that seeks to engage students, teachers, administrators and policymakers in joint liberatory explorations of oppressive and marginalizing notions of equity and justice and allow them to question the status quo. For example, during the aforementioned PAR project conducted with Latino/a high school students, our group created a video that included the findings of our study and presented it to the local school board and three other city-level service organizations. After showing the video our group engaged those decision-makers in an open dialogue about how racism looks in that community, and how it feels to the students in their everyday lives. While the dialogue may not

have catalyzed the change our group hoped for, it did allow for previously taboo subjects like racism to be spoken aloud in a diverse group setting. This, to me, was a success.

My primary goal for my future research is to maintain this strong commitment to social advocacy and peace building through critical, collaborative research and action. As of now, I continue my work in Jamaica and Uganda, and plan to form meaningful community partnerships and work for social change wherever I begin my career.