

The Network for Peacebuilding Evaluation Thursday Talks



“Befriending the Enemy: The Lasting Impacts of Youth Programs for Peace”



Eva G. Armour, Director of Global Strategy and Programs at Seeds of Peace, and Juliana Schroeder, Ph.D. candidate at the University of Chicago.



Part 1: Overview

About the Speakers:



Eva G. Armour first joined Seeds of Peace as a counselor at the International Camp in 2000. In 2001, she joined the full-time staff as part of the development team. From 2006 to 2007, Eva worked out of the Seeds of Peace Tel Aviv and Ramallah offices as the Director of Multinational Programs, orchestrating programs that brought together Seeds in the Middle East. After two years directing program development for Empower Peace, a nonprofit dedicated to bridging cultural and communication divides between youth worldwide, Eva returned to Seeds of Peace in 2009 and currently works out of Boston, overseeing the organization’s global programming and strategy.

She is a graduate of Tufts University, where she majored in Child Development and Communications, and Columbia University, where she received an MA in International Educational Development with a focus on International Humanitarian Issues in the Middle East and Africa.

Juliana Schroeder is a Ph.D. candidate in Psychology and Business at the University of Chicago. She received her B.A. from the University of Virginia in Economics and Psychology. Juliana also has an M.A. from the University of Chicago in Psychology and Statistics, and an M.B.A. from The University of Chicago Booth School of Business.

Juliana's research explores how people navigate their social worlds. Juliana's research has been published in the Journal of Experimental Psychology, Group Processes & Intergroup Relations, and the Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin. It has been featured by the New York Times, Newsweek, NBC, and the Today Show, and has been funded by the National Science Foundation. Juliana has also won the Dean's Award for Excellence in Teaching at the University of Chicago eight times.



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Presenter Remarks:

Juliana began the presentation by explaining that the study and research were ongoing, so some questions continue to evolve.

The Seeds of Peace organization brings together teenagers from conflict regions in the Middle East and South Asia for an annual 3-week summer camp held in Maine, USA. The camp serves as a neutral-setting for the peace building intervention. The study presented by Juliana examined whether contact between groups (Israelis and Palestinians) longitudinally predict attitude change toward the other side of the conflict? The study tests “Intergroup Contact Theory” among antagonistic groups, a theory which posits that even minimal contact between groups can reduce conflict, but has never been tested between antagonistic groups.

The key question of the longitudinal study was: Will any attitudinal changes created during camp remain after participants return to their respective countries within the conflict region? This question addresses the “Re-Entry Problem”: a criticism of “Intergroup Contact Theory” that says any effect of camp would disappear after leaving camp

To measure the effect of camp participants completed:

- Pre-Camp survey
- Post-Camp survey
- Follow-up survey (6-9 months after camp) (online)

The surveys compiled five years of data collection (2010-2014); the questions from surveys remained the same to compare answers over time.

The survey questions measures participants’ “friendship” with the outgroup and positive attitudes toward the outgroup. The responses were strengthened by participants providing lists networks and relationships across conflict divides, and included validated psychological measures such as –

“How do you feel about people from the other side of your conflict? Using likert Scales(1=Very negative; 7=Very positive)”

The surveys were, and will continue to be, conducted in English, but translators are on hand to clarify if necessary.

Results:

The answer to the question, *Does attending camp improve attitudes toward outgroup?* was a resounding, “Yes” in all 4 years from 2010 to 2013; the results were consistent and statistically significant each time

The answer to the question, *Does making contact with an outgroup member predict attitude change?* was also, “Yes” for the measured years from 2010 to 2012¹. Identifying a friend from the “other side” predicts more positive feelings towards the entire outgroup

¹ The surveys changed a bit in 2013, so they do not yet have the most recent comparisons for that data.

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The answer to the question, “*Does the attitude change fade after re-entry?*” was, “*Somewhat*” – but residual positivity remains.

The results of dramatic & consistent changes in outgroup attitudes from pre-camp to post-camp in support of Intergroup Contact Theory. Attitudes toward outgroup campers generalized to all members of the outgroup and outgroup friendships predicted attitude change at camp. Even having one close relationship predicts attitude change. Even through re-entry causes attitude erosion, some positivity still remains.

Follow Up:

- Network analysis
- Comparison groups:
 - Applicants & national samples (those who do not go)
- Interventions to promote friendship formation
- Spread of attitude change? From campers to siblings

Part 2: Question & Answer

Melanie Kawanu Chiu (Moderator): Are you seeing how attitude change leads to behavior change?

Juliana Schroeder (Speaker): We are looking at camper relationships via gift giving networks as a way to track networks. There is no current work on this from Chicago Booth, it's self reporting.

Eva Armour (Speaker): Juliana's work has been important for us to see what the pivot piece is for campers and alumni, how they can take the camp experience and move it forward in their lives.

Ned Lazurus (who is with us today) looked at 10 years of alumni and found that more than half of camp alumni remained active with Seeds of Peace and other peacebuilding activities through highschool. The engagement did fall off after age 21, but this is after their military service and remember that Ned's study was during the intifada, so it was a very pressured political time. We would love to learn more about how this carries over into alumni adult lives, in business or media or government or what have you.

Juliana: I'd like to add, we have asked whether the campers they intend to be involved in peacebuilding in the future.

Kim Kronenberg: I am wondering how you factor in the role of bias in this study (i.e., those who go to this camp may already lean towards relationship building with the other.)

Juliana: We look at entrance attitudes, and account for that in our analyses, which gives us some control over potential bias. We also compare them to nationally representative samples of attitudes, and while they are a bit more optimistic than the national samples on the prospects of peace, they do not have different views on politics and feelings of security.

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Eva: We do not want our programs to be preaching to the choir, we have over 94% of participants who have never interacted with their outgroup, and even those interactions only in negative situations (ex: checkpoints). A large number of our campers have direct (personal or loved ones) experience with violence as a result of the conflict.

Kerry Abbot: A problem of people-to-people projects is that they include people willing to discuss and not the rejectionists, who pose the problem. Has that affected participation in Seeds of Peace camp over the last few years? Also, Ned's numbers might indicate the lack of work opportunity for educated Palestinians, who tend to work for Western donor funded programs, which are linked to peacebuilding--not indigenous Pal efforts, but existing because of donor interest in the idea.

Eva: With respect to the selection process, yes people are happy to come to the US for a summer, but that can counter the bias of people who want to be part of peacebuilding, because even if they are against peace they do want to come to the US.

We encourage applications from all young people who have leadership potential. When the selection process was in the hands of the ministry many VIP and government children ended up at camp, but as we have strengthened our network with schools, there has been a focus on growing the diversity of campers – socioeconomically, politically, religiously.

Elham-Eid Aldridge: Were any of the Palestinians from Gaza or only from the West Bank? Did your research take into account what was going on politically at the time of the camp? How many follow up surveys were conducted?

Eva: We have had campers from Gaza, but it's not possible every year because of the difficulty of getting permits visas etc.

Juliana: We've been conducting this survey since 2010, and this past summer during the war the feeling was different, yet so far (the results are still being looked at) the results are the same if not stronger than past years. The results suggest that in times of political pressure the results may be even stronger.

Dr Michael McGill: What are ways that your program nurtures the ongoing cultivation of intimacy between participants? My question refers to post-camp efforts to sustain cross-group intimacy between camp participants.

Juliana: One of our primary goals has been to try to understand what it is at camp that will predict change in future attitudes. We've been finding that campers who form one close relationship and are able to hold on to that relationship (maybe online) are the ones who do not show attitude regression. So we are working on how to encourage and strengthen the maintenance of those relationships.

Eva: The results point to the value of and need to sustain those relationships. We have national and bi-national events and meetings through the highschool years of our campers. It has become more difficult logistically and in the current political climate.

Ned Lazarus: For ten years my research followed campers' attitudes and actions and found that re-entry and political pressures diminish, but do not negate, positive feelings. The most challenging time for maintaining positive feelings were ages 18-20 (during mandatory military service). Out of 800+ alums, 144 (20%) went to work for 40+ different peace building initiatives (including Seeds of Peace). There continued commitment to these

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organizations shows that the gains are viable, even in conflict contexts. So perhaps the effects of a similar program would be even stronger in less conflictual areas.

Eva: Ned is talking about explicit peacebuilding work. So what we are trying to see now is how peacebuilding can factor into alums work in more incremental ways.

[If you have any follow-up questions, please post them on the Thursday Talk Discussion Forum here.](#)