Peace Communication

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What is it?

Peace communication (PC) practice aims to foster behavioral and structural change to manage armed political conflicts. PC, an emerging communication subdiscipline, seeks to empirically determine the *efficacy* of PC practice and thus, assesses and evaluates the practice. Conflict management and/or media professionals who design PC practice create "interventions" or "communication campaigns" to mediate between peoples in conflict. PC interventions employ a range of communication channels: face-to-face interaction, theatre, radio, television, and the Internet to achieve their aims. Well-designed efforts provide prompts for individuals to change *peacebuilding, peacemaking,* and/or *post conflict resolution sustainment* supporting behaviors. Most PC efforts focus on changing intergroup attitudes to support peacebuilding behaviors of cross-group friendship formation. However, friendship formation does not necessarily alter political, economic, social or military structures, any of which may be the underlying source for conflict. By contrast, changing political beliefs, to support peacemaking and post conflict resolution sustainment behaviors of vote or protest change, conducive for both singing of and sustaining peace accords, may.

Who uses the concept?

The terms "peace communication" or "peace and conflict communication" have been loosely used without relationship to PC scholarly aims. While not necessarily using the term, a few scholars of communication, peace and conflict, and psychology conduct PC research.

Fit with intercultural dialogue?

PC practice aims to foster intergroup, especially ethnopolitical, intergroup change at the individual level. At that level, politicized social, not personal identity, constitutes the basis for conflict, and its management. PC pertains to evaluation of intercultural intergroup dialogue; and when also conceptualized as message, ritual, mediating artifact or so forth, to intercultural communication.

What work remains?

Only since the turn of this century did most scholars seek to evaluate PC practice. Thus, a great deal remains to be determined. The focus has been on estimating peacebuilding effects of interpersonal communication conceptualized as contact. Therefore, other PC models merit evaluation. Examples include a need to evaluate models conceptualizing technology as a factor of production that might reduce absolute or relative poverty -- thereby eliminating economic causes for conflict hindering peacemaking; or those using mediated contact, peace journalism, or reconciliation to mitigate political, military, or social conflict sources. Finally, *media impacts* on real world structures, not just *media effects* on behavioral outcomes, need to be determined.

Resource

Ellis, D., & Warshel, Y. (2010) The contributions of communication and media studies to peace education. In G. Salamon & E. Cairns (Eds.), *Handbook on peace education* (pp.135-154). New York: Psychology Press.