



# MERSHON CENTER for International Security Studies



- ABOUT US
- RESEARCH
- NEWS
- EVENTS
- GRANTS
- PEOPLE
- PUBLICATIONS
- CONTACT

You are here: [Home](#) ▶ [Research](#) ▶ [2014-2015](#) ▶ Training to Talk Peace: Experimental Analysis of Non-Violent Communication Workshops

2016-2017

2015-2016

2014-2015

2013-2014

2012-2013

2011-2012

2010-2011

2009-2010

2008-2009

2007-2008

2006-2007

## TRAINING TO TALK PEACE: EXPERIMENTAL ANALYSIS OF NON-VIOLENT COMMUNICATION WORKSHOPS



**Principal Investigators:** Christopher Gelpi, Chair of Peace Studies, and John Carlarne, Peace Studies Coordinator

Non-violence has been the cornerstone of social movements from Indian independence to American civil rights. Rooted in the work of Johan Galtung, founder of the field of peace studies and conflict resolution, non-violence strives to express needs and make change without provoking a hostile response.

From this tradition, the Center for Non-Violent Communication has developed an extensive and specific training curriculum to teach non-violence across the United States and around the world. It has been used in a variety of contexts, from school children to ethnic and religious conflicts.

Despite the importance of non-violent communication to conflict resolution, the effects of the curriculum have been little studied. In this project, Christopher Gelpi and John Carlarne set out to do that research using a novel 2-by-3 pre-test post-test experimental design that will examine the program's effects on identities, cosmopolitan beliefs, and communication techniques.

Gelpi and Carlarne will run the experiment in two separate groups: Ohio State students and diaspora communities in Columbus. The student group will allow them to pilot the project and act as a comparison group. The diaspora communities will act as a proxy for populations in their countries of origin.

Each group will be broken up into three test groups: one that receives the full non-violent communication curriculum, one that receives a placebo of unstructured discussion of peace and conflict, and one that receives no treatment.

Participants will take a pre-test to assess identity structure, interpersonal reactivity, and views on the use of coercive or punitive methods in a divisive political dispute. They will take the same test immediately after the experiment and again six weeks later.

The questionnaire will cover six key dependent variables:

- degree of reactive empathy
- identification with an in-group
- level of empathy with an out-group
- identification with cosmopolitan markers and values
- beliefs about the legitimacy of coercive or punitive tactics to resolve conflict
- language used when stating their position on a contentious political issue.

Gelpi and Carlarne will use the results of this study to apply for external grants funds for further research, submit articles to peer-reviewed journals, and disseminate throughout the peace-building community, which has expressed great interest in their research.



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[Research](#)  
[News](#)  
[Events](#)  
[Grants](#)  
[People](#)  
[Publications](#)  
[Contact](#)

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[News and Events](#)  
[Research](#)  
[Arts and Culture](#)  
[Alumni](#)

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1501 Neil Ave., Columbus, OH 43201

Phone: 614-292-1681 | Fax: 614-292-2407

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