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On Peace Capital: The Case of Academic Cultural Capital Inside the United Nations and its Universities*

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The United Nations (UN) is often questioned about its ongoing involvement in matters of peace and security, but its involvement in higher education for peace in the 21st century is rarely examined. This paper investigates the use of higher education as a peacebuilding tool within the UN apparatus. First, I describe the work in which UN universities are engaged. Second, I examine the academic cultural capital that UN officials possess that enable their admission into the UN. I investigate this across UN agencies generally and then in regard to faculty specifically at one United Nations university. Third, I share commentary from scholars I interviewed at this university, and from scholars in Ethiopia and Somaliland, to corroborate and challenge the results of the qualifications review, and to elaborate on the education that the UN promotes. Data was analyzed through a Bourdieusian cultural capital framework. The findings point toward social reproduction through academic peace capital in the UN and its university.

Keywords: United Nations Higher Education, Educational Peacebuilding, Peace and Conflict Studies, Academic Cultural Capital, Peace Capital, CV Analysis

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I. SOCIOLOGY OF PEACE

The United Nations (UN) is often questioned about its ongoing relevance and involvement in matters of contemporary peace and security, but its involvement in and provision of higher education for peace in the 21st century is rarely examined. Previous research into peace and higher education has largely focused on the production of protean normative theory for human rights and social justice, or theoretical conceptualizations pertaining to how educational practices relate to violence in schools, universities and society (cf. Bickmore 2017; Sellman, Cremin and McCluskey 2013; Snauwaert 2008; Page 2008; Smith 2005; Harber 2004; Harris and Morrison 2003). However, little research has focused on UN universities. In this paper, I share the results of a study into academic cultural capital in peace and conflict studies (PACS) higher education inside the UN. The overarching questions guiding the work include: What is the academic cultural capital that influences the PACS field, particularly in its intersections with the UN? Why does the UN promote the teaching of peace in its universities (as constructivist endeavor) and then function as a security organization at its core (indeed hiring primarily international relations agents)? To what extent might the premises of capital and pedagogy in the field be critiqued from a postcolonial and postmodern perspective?

To explore these questions, I reviewed global literature in PACS, examined Curriculum Vitae (CVs) of UN officials, and conducted a study with peace scholars who trained or worked at a United Nations university (hereafter referred to pseudonymously as the University of The United Nations). Specifically, I completed an analysis of more than 1,000 CVs of UN officials, and conducted in-depth interviews with 25 PACS scholars working at the University of The United Nations, as well as with four East African scholars trained in the university. Elsewhere I augmented this data with a review of the university's curriculum, participant observation of 20 courses, and in-depth interviews and surveys with 108 postgraduate students in the university (Kester 2017a, 2017b). In the current paper, I will detail the findings from the CV analysis and complement this with interview excerpts from PACS scholars working at the University of The United Nations, as well as two in-depth interviews with East African scholars. Combined, this data allowed me to ascertain forms of academic cultural capital (or "peace capital") that might have provided scholars with privileged access into a position with the UN, and specifically with the universities. The interviews provided me rich data to interpret the meaning scholars ascribe to a PACS education, and the challenges they face in the field. I used the theoretical concepts of field, capital, habitus and symbolic violence from Pierre Bourdieu for gaining insight into the CVs and the educational perceptions of the scholars.

In the sections that follow, I will first introduce the UN educational context,

outline the conceptual “thinking tools” of Bourdieu, explain the methodology through which I collected data, and then apply Bourdieu’s tools to an analysis of the CVs and interviews. In brief, the data point toward forms of peace capital, and structural and symbolic violence in a field that promotes global equity and nonviolence. In the discussion section, my findings will be compared to other secondary data that highlight related themes on exclusivity, inequality, and the reproduction of political and social privilege through secondary and higher education (cf. O’Rourke, Hogan and Donnelly 2015; Howard and Gaztambide-Fernandez 2010; Malinowski and Zorn 1973). Next, I outline the literature and context of the study before describing the theoretical framework and methods of research.

II. LITERATURE AND EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

The UN has been involved in international peace, security, development, and education projects since 1945, so one might consider it inevitable for this world body to establish universities to promote peace and security objectives (Coleman and Jones 2005; Muller and Roche 1995; Kester 2016). The universities of the UN, however, did not emerge until many years after the foundation of the UN organization (Salam 1973; Newland 1984; Brenes 1994; Borel et al. 2011). The first was the United Nations University (UNU) in 1969, and then the University for Peace (UPEACE) established in 1980 (UNGA 1973, 1980). These universities are in turn influenced by other bodies of the UN that are involved in the advancement of education, peace, human rights and development, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), and the United Nations System Staff College (UNSSC) (Willets 1996; Mundy 1998; Coleman and Jones 2005; Kennedy 2006; Page 2008). There has been little research conducted on the pedagogic implications of these institutions. Indeed, if the universities have been influential regarding the UN agenda, and regarding wider field of PACS education, this is not evident in the literature (Martin 2008).

For their part, the UN universities are involved in a wide array of preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping, peacemaking and peacebuilding through education (Galtung 1976; Lund 1996; Bickmore 2013; Convegne 2016). Originally, they were developed with different purposes: the UNU as a research think-tank and UPEACE as a postgraduate training center (UNGA 1973, 1980). Yet, today both offer postgraduate degrees to a global body of students. UNITAR and UNSSC offer in-person and e-learning courses for UN staff and international citizens interested in peacebuilding. Together, the general mission of these four UN institutions is to promote international cooperation, democracy and irenology through education (see Table 1).

TABLE 1. COMPARING UNU, UPEACE, UNITAR AND UNSSC APPROACHES

	UNU	UPEACE	UNITAR	UNSSC
View of the role of education in peacebuilding	Higher education as locus of transmission of UN values and policy on human security and sustainable development	Higher education as site for multicultural exchange and promotion of a culture of peace	Education as training to transmit UN values to staff and others with an interest in peacebuilding	Education as training to primarily transmit UN values to staff
Development strategy	Research-based with graduate degree teaching as afterthought	Graduate degree teaching is primary with research a secondary priority; though knowledge exchange is mainstreamed	Training for UN officials and others in peacebuilding methods is primary, and research secondary. Training occurs in-person and through e-learning with the possibility of obtaining a graduate degree	Non-degree training for UN officials to enhance inter-agency collaboration within the UN system
Approach to PACS education	Emphasizes human rights and environmental policy awareness	Emphasizes multicultural learning, values-exploration and conflict resolution skills-building	Emphasizes multilateralism, economic development, environmental sustainability, and research and technology	Emphasizes thematic areas of leadership and management, peace and security, and sustainable development

SOURCE: Adapted from Kester (2016, p. 69).

In the universities, *peacekeeping* is specifically present through the teaching of peacekeeping and peace enforcement methods of conflict management. *Peacemaking* is present through the use of restorative justice and mediation techniques to resolve disputes between students, staff and administration, and through model UN simulations (Convergne 2016; Borel et al. 2011; Jolly, Emmerij and Weiss 2009). *Peacebuilding* is present through the pedagogic employment of talking circles, community dialogue, participatory pedagogy, culture days, values exploration seminars, experiential simulations and nature walks (cf. Bickmore 2013). The university attempts (often failing admittedly, according to lecturers I interviewed) to pedagogically model the theories of conflict transformation taught in classes.

During my ethnographic fieldwork at the University of The United Nations, one scholar explained this during an interview. Drawing on literature in the field (Bickmore 2017; Toh 2004; Dibben 2004; Reardon and Cabezudo 2002), she claimed the pedagogy of the institution must reflect the values and social purposes of the education beyond the university, namely to achieve democratic participation, social justice and nonviolent action in society. For this female scholar, PACS education is about preparing active citizens for democratic participation and ethical living. Another middle-aged male scholar, however, problematized this over-reliance on political/pedagogic correspondence in his own style (and that of his peers) as reifying state-based orientations through mediation and negotiation simulations. I share his longer quotation later in the paper. Such an approach, he insisted, serves to underscore the continued dominance of liberal state-based peacebuilding discourses, despite some common oppositional rhetoric that places the field closer to grassroots peacebuilding (cf. Harris 2013; Richmond 2011). In this paper, then, I seek to problematize how the institution serves to reproduce power and inequality through privileged forms of academic cultural capital. I turn to Pierre Bourdieu for analytic insight.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Pierre Bourdieu had much to say about the role of symbolic power and pedagogy in education and the consequent role of learning in shaping society. Bourdieu (1989) suggested, for example, that, “to change the world, one has to change the ways of world-making, that is, the vision of the world and the practical operations by which groups are produced and reproduced” (23). Appropriate to this constructivist-structuralism ontology, where agents (e.g., educators, policy-makers, citizens) are definers of their world, constructivist-structuralism enters this research as a theoretical and methodological tool revealing the tenets of subjectivism and relational realist ontologies that permeate research into academics’ perspectives on meaning and practice, and the environments that might ultimately influence those perspectives (cf. Hagner and Rheinberger 2003; Johannesson 2006; Clandinin and Connelly 1996). To do this, Bourdieu developed a number of “thinking tools” that are useful in making sense of how agents move about the structures of their world. These include capital, field, habitus and symbolic violence.

Bourdieu developed the concepts of field and capital, for example, to explain the contextual conditions and objective resources enhancing or restricting how an agent moves about and impacts her/his domain of practice. The field refers to “a space of objective relations between positions defined by their rank in the distribution of competing powers or species of capital” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 113). A field could be a discipline, a bureaucracy or a global community of practice. Examples include politics, religion, and education, among others. On

capital, Bourdieu (1986) conceived multiple forms: social, cultural, economic and symbolic. Capital implies the capacity to influence the field through the possession and deployment of these resources. In this paper I focus specifically on Bourdieu's cultural capital with occasional references to economic and social capital. Concerning cultural capital, Bourdieu further differentiated between three forms: embodied, objectified and institutionalized.¹ When I reference cultural capital, I am primarily referring to Bourdieu's ideas on the institutionalized state of capital, i.e., academic cultural capital through educational qualifications (see Table 2).

TABLE 2. OPERATIONALIZING BOURDIEU (1986)

Concept	Meaning	Operationalization
Field (the game)	The domain in which agents practice (e.g., in the case of education: higher education; PACS; Ministry of Education).	Structures of PACS education (e.g., organizational charts); roles possessed in the field; definitions of field; boundaries.
Forms of capital:	The characteristics and capacities educational agents possess that provide them control over the field.	Observable via analysis of CVs, degrees, positions held, number of publications, quality of publishing venues.
Cultural	Cultural capital relates to knowledge, skills, education and possessions valued in a specific context, e.g., field of knowledge and institutional affiliation. Includes language used to signify "knowing" the subject.	Educational qualifications; institutional affiliations; academic publications; linguistic knowledge of key agents and concepts in the field.
Social	Social capital refers to personal relations.	Connection to well-regarded scholars and practitioners.
Symbolic	Symbolic capital is control over legitimization channels, e.g., holding leadership positions.	Leadership positions in universities, departments; adjunct work with other institutions; invitations to conferences.
Economic	Economic capital is wealth, public and personal.	Fellowships; research grants; travel stipends; personal travel.
Habitus	Dispositions, attitudes and behaviors of agents (time and place specific).	Attitudes toward academia (teaching, service, publication); Beliefs about capital and field; Educator perspectives on the purpose of PACS education.
Doxa	The practices and dispositions considered normal or taken-for-granted in the field.	Models and practices that are described by lecturers as standard or global frameworks. Core theories and institutions.
Symbolic Violence (ortho- vs. hetero-dox)	The dissonance between what is accepted as standard in the field and what is practiced locally, particularly where the standard is imposed upon local traditions / practices.	Expressions of disagreement with core institutions and orthodoxy of the field; Times and places where educators intentionally divorce the official discourse of PACS.

Bourdieu further theorized on the relationship between the possession of capital and the perceived norms in regard to the dispositions, attitudes and behaviors of agents occupying those related positions in the field. He argued that the habitus of the agent would be consistent with the amount of capital resources possessed by an agent in tandem with their position in a field of positions.

To illustrate Bourdieu's theory, consider that a multitude of educational agents share the same temporal and spatial structures of a university, but they occupy different social positions within that educational field. Educational agents, then, embody various positions according to the types and degrees of capital and habitus they possess (e.g., institutional affiliation, level of qualifications, number of publications, sartorial choices, etc.). Bourdieu especially sought to understand how agents influence and define their fields in light of the objective structures, or rules of the game, that are imposed upon them. For Bourdieu, if the rules of the field (i.e., doxa) are allowed to operate unexamined there is a danger of unchecked symbolic domination. He terms this symbolic violence.

Symbolic violence refers to the use of hegemony to impose order upon subordinates, or indeed upon the self. This includes the internalization of regulatory rules and patterns of behavior and thinking. Together with Galtung's notion of structural violence, Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence offers a conceptual entry-point into understanding how PACS scholars become implicated in the perpetuation of violence through their "good" work (Kester and Cremin 2017). This is an area of investigation particularly important in a field that is lauded for its efforts to prevent and suppress violence in society. In the next section, I overview the methods used for the study.

IV. METHODS

To examine the field and capital resources UN officials and academics possess that initially allowed them admission into the UN, and the University of The United Nations specifically, I analyzed academic and professional Curriculum Vitae (CVs) available publicly online, as well as other relevant digital materials such as lecturers' online profiles and publications. I followed the British Psychological Association (BPA)² (2013) ethical guidelines in respect to internet-mediated studies, and the British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2012) ethical guidelines in regard to in-person research. The CV review is an emerging method in social science research (Woolley and Turpin 2009; Lepori and Probst 2009; Dietz et al. 2000). The method is gaining greater recognition as a technique of academic field analysis (Fairclough 1995; Woolley and Turpin 2009; Lepori and Probst 2009; Dietz et al. 2000), and is frequently used within larger studies to complement interviews, surveys and observation data. Fairclough (1995), for example, used CV analysis in his

examination of the changing dynamic of higher education in the 1990s toward greater marketization. Additionally, Woolley and Turpin (2009) used CV analysis to examine the global migration of skilled researchers, what they refer to as “the mobility of scientific and technical human capital” (145).

For the CV review in this paper I collected more than 1,000 UN CVs from those publicly accessible online. CVs were collected through a search for open access CVs of UN officials, and of the participating university lecturers, through a Google search for “United Nations CVs,” “Curriculum Vitae of UN officials,” and “United Nations academic CVs,” among other variations of these keywords. Those documents not completed were omitted until I had reached 850 completed CVs, which is the point at which I had reached data saturation. At 850 CVs, there were no new degree subjects/themes that emerged in the analysis (Jansen 2010). CVs were deemed completed if the document confirmed UN and specific agency employment, and listed the degree subjects and levels studied under educational qualifications.

The 850 CVs were purposively selected to ensure representation across the UN organization. To avoid idiosyncrasies with hiring practices at any one particular agency, CVs were examined for those working in 15 different bodies with at least 50 CVs examined for each agency. This included the UN Headquarters in New York, United Nations Development Program (UNDP), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP), UN Women, UN-Habitat, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), the International Labor Organization (ILO), the World Health Organization (WHO), World Bank (WB), International Monetary Fund (IMF), UNESCO, UNITAR, UNU and UPEACE.

I also conducted in-depth in-person interviews with 25 PACS scholars at the University of The United Nations from January to June 2015, and with four PACS scholars in Ethiopia and Somaliland in April 2014. The participant scholars taught at the University of The United Nations, or in the case of the East African scholars had been trained at the university previously. All were university PACS professors at the time of the study. In the semi-structured interviews, I asked the scholars for their thoughts on the boundaries and debates that animate PACS education; the forms of capital active in the peace field; and the challenges and opportunities they perceived for the field in the 21st century. For the interview portion of the research, I designed it as an ethnographic and instrumental case study (Stake 1995; Ragin and Becker 2000; Yin 2003; White, Drew and Hay 2009; Zucker, 2009; Barfels and Delucchi 2003) around the conceptual instruments of Bourdieu. The purpose of an instrumental case study is the analysis of a distinct case for general understanding into a phenomenon (Stake 1995; Grandy 2010; Flyvbjerg 2011). In this case, the distinct case is the university lecturers and the broader phenomenon is the lecturers’ practices within the field of PACS higher education. Inasmuch as other lecturers and researchers find their own fields and practices reflected in the case study, there is potential value to contribute to other PACS higher education

contexts (Patton 2002; Williams 2000). Thus, reflecting on the challenges, successes and practices of PACS lecturers at the University of The United Nations may provide insights into practices at other popular peace institutes, and could illustrate schemata in play across the field (Bourdieu 1988).

For my analysis, I first typed the transcripts of the interviews. I then read and re-read the transcripts and CV data multiple times, seeking elements from Bourdieu's field-theory as well as other emergent themes, such as Whiteness, Western-centricity and neoliberalism. This allowed me to create a coding list (cf. Coffey and Atkinson 1996; Patton 2002). From this list I created categories for which I wrote reports to better understand the nuances of PACS education in practice, such as who expresses what and in which context. This led to my generation of several intersecting themes, two of which I detail in the discussion section of this paper. I now turn to the findings.

V. CURRICULUM VITAE FINDINGS

From the review of the 850 UN CVs, what became apparent is that the education of UN officials (including the UN lecturers) is broad and interdisciplinary, with two distinct trends emerging from the macro-analysis. First, for the higher education degree subjects listed on CVs, training in international relations, business, and development seemed to be the preference of those hired for the UN organization. The specific breakdown of degree subjects is as follows: political science and international relations (*in percentage of total*: 36), international business and management (17), development (17), human rights and law (13), economics (11), STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) (11), communications (9), environmental studies (7), sociology (7), English language and literature (6), peace studies (6), global and area studies (5), education (4), war studies (4), history (3), health and medicine (2), psychology (2), and philosophy (1). Figure 1 shows a list of the ten most common degree subjects (i.e., dominant forms of peace/cultural capital) among UN workers.

Second, it was clear that the training of peace workers comes from myriad institutions, with most universities likely to be unknown beyond their regional locales. However, there were seven Western universities that emerged dominant in the analysis. These institutions collectively were included within approximately 20-25% of the CVs. These seven include three US universities and four UK institutions: Harvard University (7%), Columbia University (4%), University of Cambridge (3%), University of Oxford (3%), New York University (NYU) (2%), London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) (2%), and the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London (2%). The universities of the United Nations also emerged but did not dominate the profiles; these universities are noted here due to the focus of the study, not as common institutions.

FIGURE 1. COMMON DEGREE SUBJECTS OF UN OFFICIALS
(IN PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL)³

I next examined the degree subjects and institutional affiliations among 62 University of The United Nations lecturers specifically (i.e., the total number of CVs for University of The United Nations lecturers available online). When the degree subjects for scholars within the University of The United Nations were disaggregated, I noticed a preference for peace and conflict (*in percentage*, 18), environmental studies (18), human rights and law (16), international relations (11), education (10), business (6), psychology (6), economics (5), sociology (5), and other subjects (5) (see Figure 2). The preference for PACS training and education studies in the university indicates a starkly different priority from the UN aggregate. Nonetheless, the popular UN-wide subjects of international relations, human rights and law, and business were again core subjects held by scholars at the university.

Furthermore, I looked into the institutional affiliations of the scholars at the University of The United Nations. Thirteen (of 62) had a degree from one of the seven elite universities mentioned above: Harvard (4), Cambridge (3), Columbia (2), LSE (2), NYU (1) and SOAS (1). I must reiterate that the majority of UN professionals in the broader organization and the university have degrees from regional universities, challenging Bourdieu's reproduction theory. Nonetheless, the prevalence of only seven universities within the CVs does indicate disproportionate representation of these institutions amongst lecturers/officials, i.e., both the UN officials at large and the lecturers in the University of The United Nations were cumulatively likely to have a degree from one of the seven elite universities.

FIGURE 2. COMMON DEGREE SUBJECTS FOR LECTURERS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF THE UNITED NATIONS (*IN PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL*)

This finding is also supported by interview excerpts from scholars and students at the University of The United Nations that indicate the replication of New York Headquarters inside the university, where this replication is perceived as Western-dominated and disadvantageous for students and scholars from the Global South (see Kester 2017b). The finding is further confirmed in secondary literature on the role of elite education as providing access into national governments and multilateral organizations (O'Rourke, Hogan, and Donnelly 2015; Howard and Gaztambide-Fernandez 2010; Weiss, Carayannis, Emmerij and Jolly 2005; Cookson and Persell 1985; Malinowski and Zorn 1973). The finding raises questions of structural violence and social privilege in a field that seeks to foster equality and fairness.

Through applying Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital to the CVs, it is evident that the field-wide and university-specific data correspond concerning the priority given to international relations, international business, and human rights degree subjects within the broader field of PACS; and that this training can come from any institution, although a few select universities appear to dominate. The possession of knowledge and institutional qualifications indicating expertise in these areas provides peace capital to the possessing academic/UN official. More importantly, though, the review of 850 CVs shows that an organization whose main goal is international peace and security almost completely lacks staff who are expressly trained in PACS. This is pretty astonishing.

One of the particular challenges here may be that many universities do not offer degrees exactly in PACS. In consequence, many scholars instead choose to

study related fields, such as global affairs, sustainable development, or security studies. Additionally, many generalist degrees in history, sociology or political science have portions of their subjects in relevant areas to peace studies. This must be acknowledged. Yet, although these intersectional fields of inquiry might address overlapping issues of peacebuilding, it must also be acknowledged that such programs typically apply fundamentally different epistemologies (cf. Smith 2000; Miall, Ramsbotham and Woodhouse 2011). The epistemological debates between these areas of social science inquiry have been thoroughly addressed elsewhere (Buzan 2009; Smith 2000; Powell 1994; Baldwin 1993), but I will return to this point in my discussion. I now turn to detail two exemplary stories of PACS scholars from Ethiopia and Somaliland, and then couple this data with that from faculty at the University of The United Nations.

VI. TWO CASES

In this section I share two cases from my interviews with scholars trained in the University of The United Nations that illustrate the application of the Bourdieusian techniques to the data. The stories chosen here were selected for diversity of responses from across gender, ethnic and national boundaries. Next, this is supported by quotes from faculty at the University of The United Nations. The stories and quotes reveal three general themes of peace capital in the UN peace field, which I take up in the discussion section. I begin here with the eldest, Mohamed.

1. Mohamed's Story

I met with Mohamed⁴ in his office on a blisteringly hot afternoon in Hargeisa, Somaliland. Mohamed is the Director of a conflict resolution organization and professor of environmental studies at a university in Hargeisa. Our conversation began with reminiscence of his childhood experiences and life course into PACS education.

Actually, during the war in 1988 – there was a civil war here in this town and this part of the country, Somaliland, that's the northern part of Somalia, back then between the Somali National Movement (SNM) and Siyad Barre's governmental forces. I was then in class eight and moving to secondary level at that time. So when the war broke out the whole family, my brothers, father and sisters moved to the Somali-Ethiopia border, and we ended up moving to Ethiopia and later on to Djibouti. Then from there I was advised to continue my education in other parts of the world, so I moved to Sudan to continue my secondary school... and then from there I moved to Nigeria to do my

undergraduate at the University of Maiduguri... in clinical human anatomy.

He continued to describe his professional trajectory:

So after my graduation there as a clinical anatomist I a little bit taught clinical medicine in Nigeria as a lecturer for one year... then in 2005 I decided to move back to Somaliland. I arrived in Hargeisa and came down to this university. One of my friends – who we were together in Sudan before I moved to Nigeria – was a lecturer here and he said the university recently started a Faculty of Medicine, and definitely they don't have this type of course here... I was there until the beginning of 2008, when I was appointed to become the Dean of Student Affairs.

Mohamed highlights, like the other PACS lecturers in Somaliland, the role of the war in his youth as contributing to his interest in peace work. He spoke bluntly about the role of social capital in assisting him with receiving his job in Somaliland, a point reiterated throughout other interviews as well. In the next quote, he highlights the part of cultural capital that eventually led to his work with the university's Peace Institute.

I think the advantage we have here, to attract leading groups in the country and various sectors perhaps, is maybe because of the qualifications we have attached to the UN. The name of the UN program actually is known everywhere we go here... Maybe it's not big in other parts of the world... But wherever we go, the four of us [University of The United Nations] graduates are recognized – they say “those guys who went to the UN.” It gives us legitimacy to teach and to lead the courses... the university and the UN in this context is really a prestigious one.

For Mohamed, his degree from the University of The United Nations provides him a competitive edge and legitimacy over graduates of other institutions practicing in PACS locally. He went on to explain, however, that many of the international models for peacebuilding – that he learned at the University of The United Nations and now teaches in his courses – may not be relevant, or are at least insufficient, to the needs of local practitioners. He explains:

The frameworks don't really carry over to Somaliland. There's no specific guideline. We just want to make it relevant, understand local values. For example, if you are doing mediations and negotiations in one particular environment, you look for those who are already practicing. It has its own local challenges, but basically the rule is how can you best contribute to what

is happening locally. [...] I have had so many discussions with the leading peacebuilders in this society, and they said, “we have no model.” There’s nothing I can teach my kids; but we have some elders who if they say “stop the war,” the war will stop... They aren’t following procedures. When they speak to the parliament others listen... [they] can end conflict, but [their] ways are not written.

In the above quotes Mohamed notes the role of war and violence in his youth, as well as his UN qualifications, as resources and experiences that influence and legitimize his peacebuilding work. These qualities relate to Bourdieu’s habitus and cultural capital as dispositions, attitudes and practices that provide power in the local field. One Ethiopian scholar shared a comparable narrative.

2. Aamina’s Story

I interviewed Aamina on a hot day in April 2014 in a Kaldi’s coffee shop in the heart of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Aamina lectures on gender and peacebuilding issues at a national university in Addis Ababa. She immediately spoke of her background and stories about how she came to the field, and why she continues to work in PACS.

Let me start with my undergraduate degree: I studied sociology for my undergraduate degree, and then I worked with non-profit organizations, mostly working with children – orphan support projects – and I also worked on child protection projects with abused children. So after working almost two years with these people, I thought I would want to focus more on women’s rights issues and on gender and peacebuilding, so I went to the University of The United Nations.

I asked Aamina about her earlier childhood experiences that might have influenced her choice to enter into PACS education.

Growing up in Ethiopia with poverty, inequality and injustice, especially with women and families, women’s rights issues, is what contributed to my work. It’s always men who are the breadwinners and benefit from the system, so I think growing up looking at those things, especially violence against women at home or in the schools, I started to get interested in studying and doing something about it, studying women’s rights issues especially.

She explained how this desire to study women’s rights issues led her to the study of sociology, and eventually into educational peacebuilding.

That's why, we don't have a gender studies department at university, I chose to study sociology. This would help me understand better the context. Maybe if we had had a gender studies undergraduate department I would have joined that... that's why I went to sociology.

From Aamina's story it is clear that an initial concern with gender inequality and witnessing cultural violence against women in society are some early life experiences that led her to the field of PACS education, and inculcated within her strong sense (or *habitus*) of righting social injustices. In the following excerpt, Aamina grapples with the challenge of navigating the local/global nexus of the field. I had asked her if PACS scholars in Ethiopia challenge the global UN discourse.

I think not so much... In a way this is also because the field is not yet developed in the country. And it's because if you start for instance when you are teaching you talk about those kinds of issues, challenging those things... It's very difficult, because people are just being introduced to these types of ideas... So to challenge them might be confusing. But when it comes to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, there are always discussions of culturally relative issues. Can human rights actually be universal? There are many debates that are always raised that human rights are a Western idea and to make them universal is debatable. In a way there is this challenge, these discussions, but not so much since it is a new field.

Aamina struggles here with a perennial challenge in the field, much as Mohamed also did: namely, to reconcile local and global norms. Together, Mohamed and Aamina highlighted early life experiences with violence that led them into PACS academia. In addition to relevant social science degrees (i.e., academic cultural capital), they also emphasized throughout their interviews the importance of embodied capacities of nonviolence, positive leadership, negotiation and mediation abilities, and participatory teaching as integral qualities of PACS lecturers (i.e., *habitus* and cultural capital), as well as the importance of social networks (i.e., social capital) for operating within the field.

VII. SUPPORT FOR THESE TWO CASES

These findings were later supported in my interviews with scholars teaching at the University of The United Nations. The scholars highlighted the role of social networks and elite degrees as providing capital in the field, and they raised concerns about the dominance of Western ideas in PACS education. For example, one White North American male scholar, Simon, claimed that the field of peace studies drawing on Western norms of human rights, democracy, statehood, and

individualism, “has become...neoliberal, depoliticized, colonized...” (as quoted in Kester 2017a, p. 12). Another younger White North American female scholar, Cindy, agreed: “The colonization of the field, it really is Westernized” (quoted in Kester 2017a, p. 12). This was a tense issue raised by scholars working in the university, and by those trained in the same institution as indicated in the quotes above by Mohamed and Aamina.

Furthermore, in another study (Kester 2017b) I detailed through ethnographic means how the use of “Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic violence points to the ways in which PACS educators might perpetuate cultural imperialism through their efforts to promote cultures of peace, justice and non-violence, if the theoretical and pedagogical assumptions of the field...remain unexamined” (p. 3). In that same paper, a younger White North American male scholar, Edward, shared this quote:

I don’t think it’s a 100% replication of Western society, but if you’re trying to find one dominant cultural paradigm behind the school it’s not Chinese, Iranian, Indigenous, etc. ... The force behind the ideas that are here are behind the Western experience: human rights, democracy, peace (as quoted in Kester 2017b, p. 9)

A middle-aged Latin American male scholar, Daniel, claimed the state-focus of the UN to be the major “obstacle”:

... the UN may be the biggest obstacle. When many people think of peacebuilding they focus too much on state-level negotiation, mediation, etc. Switching to the ground level can change the way peacebuilding at the community level happens... many universities want to be the guys at Camp David but I think if the [university] moves on from there they can really have an impact, e.g., on security and peacebuilding at the community level... (as quoted in Kester 2017a, p. 10).

Simon concurred, “[In the field] the state is not really questioned; it’s taken as necessary to work with top-down, bottom-up” (as quoted in Kester 2017a, p. 10). A common thread throughout these narratives about the field is the presence of certain norms, or forms of cultural capital, that provide currency for agents in the field, particularly elite Western degrees (especially in international relations) as cultural capital. This creates a sense of state- and Western-centricity in the field that must be addressed. I turn now to discuss these points.

VIII. DISCUSSION

There are two primary areas to discuss drawing from the data. Roughly these

relate to two levels of analysis in PACS education – at the level of the state and society. I begin with the state and its possible relationship to the choice of international relations priorities over peace studies in the UN CVs. Except for the University of The United Nations where I conducted my study, the CVs indicate that training in PACS does not seem to be a priority of the world body, even despite the creation of tertiary PACS education training institutes within the UN – and especially in light of the focus of the UN on issues of global peace, security and development. This is evidenced in that only 6% of the CVs included degrees with an explicit focus on peace studies, while the majority emanate from international relations and security studies. This indicates a possible leaning toward a state-centric model of international relations and security, and the dominance of realist political thought within the UN institution. The state-centric approach of international relations frequently emphasizes war studies and human security, and operates hand-in-hand with state technocratic and bureaucratic capacities to manage conflict through a deficit model of peace as the absence of violence (Convegne 2016; Cremin 2016; MacGinty 2012), i.e., a “security first” strategy to peacebuilding (Etzioni 2007; Buzan 2009; Richmond 2011). Buzan (2009), for example, writes concerning security studies in international relations, it “is essentially about the impact of military technology on relations between states” (p. 217).

The realist security first approach is in contrast with the common constructivist approach of PACS as promoting human rights fulfillment, nonviolent solutions to conflict, reconciliatory mechanisms to build inclusive communities, and efforts to promote critical human rights and social justice capacity-building in schools and universities (cf. Smith 2000; Fraser 2009; Alger 2014; Bajaj 2015; Zembylas, Charalambous, and Charalambous 2016). The constructivist approach is, in other words, less state-centered and more human-oriented. Admittedly, this is a crude dichotomy between international relations and peace studies. It is entirely possible to find programs on either side of this rigid divide that will resemble each other. Yet, the history of the two fields suggests that international relations education is indeed far more grounded in realism *vis-à-vis* Thomas Hobbes, Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz, while peace studies, in contrast, often draws its inspiration from more liberal and constructivist thinkers such as Immanuel Kant, Anatol Rapoport and Johan Galtung (cf. Smith 2000; Miall, Ramsbotham, and Woodhouse 2011). In turn, several peace scholars use the concepts of negative and positive peace to help explain the state-based approach of peacekeeping and peacemaking in contrast with notions of social justice and human rights-based peacebuilding (Galtung 1969, 1976; Reardon 1988; Reardon and Cabezudo 2002; Cremin 2016). In other words, the dominance of international relations degrees in the UN peace institution begs the question asked at the outset of this paper: Why does the UN promote the teaching of peace in its universities (as a constructivist endeavor) and then function as a security organization at its core (by hiring primarily international relations agents)? There is

a tension here between the supposed constructivist and utopian ideals of PACS and the realpolitik and state-oriented reality of the UN. Aamina briefly touched on this in her interview when she expressed the challenges she faces in PACS higher education when the field tends to overemphasize structural, state and institutional functions over human needs. This leads me to my second point.

Second, at the level of society, there is a continual concern over the seeming reproduction of Western values through the UN organization and its universities. For instance, from the CV review, the soft domination of Ivy League and Oxbridge institutions emerged to indicate the impact of Western thought on the global body. Indeed each of the elite universities identified is Western. This is particularly important for the peace field because such Western-centricity has led to the dominance of neorealist and neoliberal peacebuilding models based on faith in international law, market economics, representative democracy, militarization and technological advancement to underscore global peace and security efforts (Richmond 2011; Fontan 2012). Aamina raised this issue in her interview concerning the perceived Western-domination of human rights discourse. This issue is particularly problematic if there is an assumption that such Western values are prevalent because of inherent positive qualities rather than external political and educational priorities (cf. Posecznick 2013; Barfels and Delucchi 2003; Clegg 2016).

Thus, the field seems to have drawn its “theoretical and methodological apparatus from [Western]... cognate social sciences,” such as politics, anthropology, history and international relations. This matters precisely because if the theorists drawn upon are primarily Western, and if these theorists are shown to lack “an understanding of coloniality,” then the entire field that draws upon such Western theories is itself drawn into question (Takayama, Sriprakash and Connell 2017, p. S4).

A crucial inquiry, then, that emerges from this discussion is whether this postcolonial and postmodern critique is simply part of the historical progression of higher education, or something that will improve over time as graduates of other PACS programs are turned out. There are a number of intentional steps that could be taken – to foster equitable and critical higher education for peace – that transcend the challenges raised here. These include, among other strategies, confronting the colonial and modernist legacies of social, economic and political thought within the class and without (Takayama, Sriprakash and Connell 2017; Routley 2016). In addition, teaching Global Southern perspectives (De Lissovoy 2010; Connell 2007) that complement and/or challenge narratives from the industrialized world, and that especially disrupt “the danger of a single story” in PACS is a desideratum (Adichie 2009, n.p.; Smith 2000). Finally, Autesserre (2014) and Harris (2013) emphasize that peacebuilding initiatives must begin at the grassroots and be relevant to the lives and needs of those involved in and impacted by peacebuilding efforts. Thus, within educational peacebuilding, the

agents and institutions responsible for PACS education are instrumental toward reproducing and/or challenging the master narratives of external peace agendas.

IX. CONCLUSION

As indicated throughout this paper, a Bourdieusian analysis of CVs and interviews reveals a number of forms of peace capital prevalent in the field. These forms of capital may legitimize the work of peace scholars. They include the possession of higher education qualifications in general, and from elite Western universities in particular, as well as favoring degrees in the social sciences broadly. Further, peace capital seems to include previous UN work and affiliations with UN institutions and the UN universities. This was supported by a review of secondary sources (Weiss, Carayannis, Emmerij and Jolly 2005; Malinowski and Zorn 1973; O'Rourke, Hogan, and Donnelly 2015). The findings from the CV data were further illustrated through interviews with 25 PACS scholars working at the University of The United Nations, and four lecturers trained in the institution (two detailed in the findings section of this paper) in describing their peace capital and aspirations for the field as a medium through which to mitigate forms of violence in society (e.g., war, poverty, racism, gender-based violence). I have also initiated inquiry into how scholars might respond.

In conclusion, the findings of this study point toward social reproduction through peace capital inside the UN and its universities. These are results that raise skepticism and challenge orthodox assumptions of the UN and international peacebuilding education as contributing to global justice and social transformation. On the contrary, the study actually exposes the ways in which the academic cultural norms of the field reproduce social privilege and social inequality. This contrasts sharply with the transformation touted in other academic literature (cf. Felice, Karako, and Wisler 2015; Clarke-Habibi 2005). Finally, this exploration of CVs and the aspirations for emancipatory learning through the UN, and the meaning that scholars make of their educational peace endeavors, provides the foundation for further critical examination into what is apparently the opposite result: the social and cultural reproduction silently taking place inside the UN apparatus. It is my hope that the concept of peace capital discussed herein might illuminate the taken-for-granted forces at play in the field, and that others might utilize this conceptual tool for further investigation into the limits and possibilities for UN-based educational peacebuilding in the 21st century.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ Embodied cultural capital involves inherited dispositions and ways of thinking from socialization, including linguistic capital. Objectified cultural capital includes books, works of art and scientific instruments. Institutionalized cultural capital is institutional affiliation.
- ² The BPA is one of the few professional associations to have developed detailed guidelines for online research. Throughout the research design, data collection, and writing-up periods, I took seriously all issues of consent, confidentiality, harmful practices, data protection, and power differentials between the educator and student participants and myself.
- ³ Percentages total more than 100% due to UN officials holding degrees in multiple subjects. For example, a single official may hold an undergraduate degree in sociology, a Master's degree in international relations, and/or a Juris Doctorate.
- ⁴ All names used in this paper are pseudonyms to protect the identity of participants.