

CONFLICT ZONE, COMFORT ZONE

Ethics, Pedagogy, and Effecting Change
in Field-Based Courses

EDITED BY AGNIESZKA PACZYŃSKA AND SUSAN F. HIRSCH

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(top) Olive Tree Initiative student trip to the Middle East
Photo by Daniel Wehrenfennig

(bottom) Students walking the disputed property boundary
during GMU field-based course in Liberia
Photo by Agnieszka Paczyńska

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Introduction

The Benefits and Challenges of Field-Based Courses in Conflict Zones

AGNIESZKA PACZYŃSKA AND SUSAN F. HIRSCH

This edited volume showcases new approaches to field-based learning in the most difficult of places: conflict zones in the United States and abroad. Increasingly, and for good reason, postsecondary education incorporates experiential learning options, such as service learning, study-abroad, and other field-based courses. Whether in domestic or international contexts, such courses engage students more directly in comparison to classroom-based learning, as they offer the opportunity to apply theory to practice in real-life settings. Instructors appreciate the educational value of experiential courses yet acknowledge that certain requirements for teaching in field settings—for example, using innovative pedagogy and addressing ethical predicaments—pose challenges to even the most seasoned instructor.

For both instructors and students, the challenges deepen when “the field” for a field-based course is a site of active or recent conflict. The chapters in this volume illustrate how the challenges of field-based classes are magnified in conflict and postconflict contexts, where students can experience the complexity of conflict, and the dilemmas faced by those seeking to resolve it, in ways not possible in the classroom. Such conflict zones can be found in a variety of settings: in community meetings in Pittsburgh where working-class, long-term residents of German and Eastern European descent experience strained relationships with newly arrived Somali refugees; in West Virginia mining towns where tensions run high as residents debate

the effects of mountaintop mining on employment and the environment; in the streets of Jerusalem and Bil'in in the West Bank where Israelis and Palestinians contest over land, political power, and historical narratives; and in Tubmanburg, Liberia, where relatives fight over the demarcation of boundaries between their farms. Field-based courses in such settings allow students to encounter the dynamics of conflict in ways that are difficult, if not impossible, to replicate in the traditional classroom. By engaging students both intellectually and emotionally, they provide unique opportunities for linking theory to practice and also for self-reflection and thus give students a deeper understanding of the complexities of conflict and the challenges of working with people who are experiencing conflict.

By taking students out of their comfort zone, field-based courses have the potential to be learning experiences that some might call “transformative”—learning that changes a student’s outlook or aims as much as it adds to their knowledge base. What do we mean by “comfort zone”? We are all familiar with the glib use of the phrase to demarcate the experiences with which one feels comfortable as compared with those one finds disturbing. Asserting that some practice or experience is out of one’s comfort zone conveys a self-protective urge to keep unfamiliar experiences at bay or at least under control, and such assertions are increasingly common. Yet, at the same time, protecting the boundaries of one’s comfort is an agentic act that many people across the world lack the power and position to undertake. People living in conflict zones have daily experiences of the violation of their comfort to the extent that the notion of a comfort zone may have become nonexistent for them. For many students, the desire to disrupt their own comfort zones is an aspect of the decision to enroll in a field-based course. What they seek is a challenging experience. In this volume, we examine the link between transporting students out of their comfort zones and guiding them toward deep, meaningful learning. We do so mindful of the many ethical questions raised by choosing to teach and learn outside our comfort zones, even when we consent to have our comfort disrupted. As the chapters demonstrate, instructors, too, must leave the comfort zone of traditional pedagogy and of their own lifestyles to meet the challenges of field-based education, especially when it takes place in conflict zones. Does the learning achieved justify the risk of operating

outside one's comfort zone and thus encountering thorny logistical and ethical challenges? We argue that it does but that instructors and students need explicit, careful preparation to ensure that they can meet the challenges and, in some instances, turn them into learning opportunities.

The volume offers an analysis and critique of key issues in field-based learning in conflict zones along with detailed descriptions of this type of learning in action. Taken together, the chapters are intended to (1) emphasize the value of field-based courses for conflict studies and related fields, (2) highlight rich, case-based examples of field-based learning in and about conflict zones, (3) describe and analyze the challenges of such courses, especially when they take place in conflict zones, (4) identify best practices that will assist aspiring instructors in developing successful field-based courses for delivery in conflict zones, and (5) stimulate scholarly conversations about field-based learning in conflict zones, especially among instructors in the conflict studies and related fields to whom the book series is directed.

In the section that follows, we acknowledge the growth in experiential learning options in higher education and highlight our own efforts to help foster attention to experiential learning for the conflict field specifically. Our discussion considers the question of why faculty might undertake field-based courses in and about conflict zones and, consequently, what their needs might be. The next three sections then address the three inter-related themes that serve as the organizational framework for the volume: considering ethics, improving pedagogy, and effecting change. We end this introductory chapter by highlighting several best practices for field-based courses in conflict zones.

The Rising Interest in Field-Based Courses

In the last decade, US experts who focus on reforming higher education have embraced "high-impact" forms of learning and teaching. Often requiring labor-intensive instruction, these experiences can include inquiry- and project-based activities, service learning, and global learning (Kuh 2008; see also Brownell and Swaner 2010). One or two high-impact experiences can improve a student's likelihood of finishing a degree and doing so

successfully (Kuh 2008). Whether as part of a reform initiative or as a response to student demand, field-based courses are on the rise in American higher education, especially study-abroad options. The benefits associated with field-based courses provide a wide range of reasons for their proliferation. Increasing globalization has made study-abroad options more relevant to a student's future career, more affordable, and more logistically viable (Altbach and Knight 2007). Service learning is similarly viewed as contributing positively to future career prospects. Depending on where it is sited, service learning projects can help blur the town/gown lines that can threaten to isolate institutions of learning or can offer students an experience in a very different context. These types of experiential learning options—highly valued because students develop learning skills outside the classroom—become part of the “package” that students evaluate when they select a school and are thus developed in part to achieve an advantage in a competitive market (see Dwyer and Castel, this volume). We acknowledge that courses are prime selling points in the increasing tendency to commodify all aspects of student learning, yet they also offer some admirable opportunities to students who learn to think on their feet, to apply theoretical knowledge to real-life endeavors, and to wrestle with the ethical dilemmas of acting in a complex world.

The many varieties of field-based education are linked to the broader pedagogical approach called experiential learning, which also takes a very wide range of forms. Without getting into a discussion of how to define experiential learning, over which there is some contestation, we use the phrase broadly. Our definition captures classic approaches, such as internships and study abroad, at the same time as it recognizes classroom simulations and most exercises—in and out of class—that emphasize actively applying theory to practice. Educators have endorsed the value of experiential learning, especially in higher education and with adult learners.

Experiential learning has always been of interest in the conflict field, where the pedagogy has included simulations and role plays used to acquaint students with the dynamics of conflict resolution practice. A few years back, our experiences teaching in the conflict resolution program at George Mason University led us to the conclusion that experiential learning has special value for the conflict field. Many of our colleagues used

experiential activities in their classes, which, according to anecdotal reports, students greatly enjoyed. Field-based courses were also popular among both students and faculty. At the same time, we noticed some shortcomings, such as the dearth of materials to use in class. Students sometimes complained that they did the same simulation or experiential activity in more than one course. Also, pedagogical guidance for developing and implementing experiential activities was lacking. Finally, the limited attention to pedagogy meant that it was difficult to know whether any particular experiential activity or field-based course resulted in student learning. Given the extraordinary efforts needed to mount field-based courses and even simulations held in a classroom setting (not to mention the risks involved), we wanted to understand more fully how, whether, and why these kinds of educational experiences worked. Believing that quality experiential learning was not only possible but perhaps integral to understanding conflict, we endeavored to create the best examples.

In 2010, we were awarded a US Department of Education grant through the Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education for the Linking Theory to Practice project. Our grant focused on improving undergraduates' ability to apply theory to practice. Toward that end, we developed ten Experiential Learning Activities (ELAs) for use in a variety of classroom settings.¹ We also created a model for field-based courses called Service Learning Intensives (SLIs), which were run in Liberia, Colombia, and West Virginia. Research conducted on all these forms of experiential learning was a key initiative of the grant, given the limited scholarship on experiential pedagogy in the conflict field. Our research findings confirmed the speculation, based on anecdote, that student engagement increases when the ELAs are used in class. In addition, certain substantive knowledge also increases. The type of learning fostered through the ELAs helps students to comprehend difficult concepts and theories, such as global complexity, at the same time as it improves their understanding of their own role as budding practitioners (Romano, Hirsch, and Paczyńska 2016). Other exercises provide students with the opportunity to practice skills that they might need for conducting research, whether academic or toward informed conflict intervention. For instance, one exercise engages students in planning and running a focus group about conflict (Hirsch et

al. 2013). Two other exercises ask students to conduct a conflict assessment in a community and to design an intervention, drawing on the findings of that assessment (Paczyńska 2015). Our experiences related to experiential learning in the classroom convinced us of the value of expanding the conversation about experiential pedagogy, particularly for instructors teaching about conflict.

We also conducted research on the SLIs created through our project. Here too students' understanding of conflicts, their ability to apply theory to practice, and their capacity to use conflict resolution and research skills all improved through participation in the SLIs. Our assessment of the SLIs also revealed multiple challenges associated with field-based courses mounted in conflict zones with respect to managing logistics, securing local partners, and handling ethical questions. Attention to these concerns could sometimes result in reducing the focus on the content and delivery of the course itself. Moreover, heavy expectations are placed on these courses. Everyone involved—students, teachers, and administrators—believes that students should have a significant “transformative” experience through a field-based course, and course marketing often says as much. We wondered what “transformative learning” actually means in practice and found ourselves hesitant to use the term to describe what we were trying to achieve. Also, student perceptions of their own learning can vary depending on when they are measured. Appreciation of the depth of the learning might not come until months or years after the experience (see Lazarus 2011). During our work with instructors on the project, we focused concertedly on processes that could be used to deepen student learning, such as pre-trip preparation, reflection, and debriefing.

Our work on the Linking Practice to Theory project convinced us that field-based courses could have dramatic effects on students and that more could be learned about how to improve their experiences and the courses overall. At multiple conferences and several workshops, we brought together instructors of field-based courses in conflict zones to discuss how this might be done. These gatherings highlighted the multiple approaches taken by faculty and the wide range of results achieved. Our aim then, and now, is not to prescribe a particular approach to experiential learning generally or to field-based courses specifically but to bring together a variety

of well-considered examples from which we can learn. Our openness is evident in the lack of narrow definitions for many of the concepts. For instance, “experience” is used in multiple ways by our authors, including with skepticism. The same is true for “transformative learning” and “service learning.” Even the term “conflict zone” is questionable, as situations of systemic or structural violence might be called conflict zones by some scholars and practitioners but not by others. Rather than resolve what are long-standing, important debates over terminology, we welcome the range of approaches.

Although many themes run throughout the volume, the following sections of this introduction will highlight the key questions addressed by the authors of the chapters: What ethical challenges do these courses pose? How do we go about teaching these courses, and what is different about them in comparison to other types of study-abroad or service learning programs? What pedagogical approaches have been used, and how effective have they been? By taking students and instructors out of their comfort zones, do these courses produce significant changes in how students learn or how much they learn? How are students, instructors, and field communities affected by this form of education? And a final, big question: Do these courses result in constructive interventions into ongoing conflict?

Considering Ethics

We decided to begin the volume with chapters that focus primarily on ethics to highlight an aspect of field-based courses that tends to be given less attention than the subject matter of a course or the logistical challenges of teaching in a conflict zone. It is clear that these kinds of courses can be used to teach differently about how to confront ethical challenges. In the classroom setting it is possible to read about ethical dilemmas that emerge in practice and to discuss the various options that practitioners might face in addressing them; however, it is quite a different experience to see an ethical dilemma emerge in the context of a field-based course and to wrestle with how to address it. Examples of such dilemmas are described in the chapters on ethics. For instance, what should students do when faced with requests to help a community financially or to provide

a quick solution to a complex problem? When such questions arise, they open the possibility of learning by doing. They also provide an opportunity, reinforced through debriefings and assignments, for students to explore a wide range of ethical challenges that practitioners encounter. Students thus gain practice assessing and responding to ethical dilemmas in real time.

One of the conclusions that emerges from these chapters is that running field-based courses in conflict zones presents particular ethical challenges that are distinct from those encountered in other types of courses, including other courses mounted in the field. These challenges reflect the particular vulnerabilities and traumas that people in conflict settings experience. The imperative to “do no harm”—a bedrock of conflict resolution practice and social science ethics codes—underlies the design of most field-based courses. Nonetheless, interacting with residents of such settings can be as overwhelming as it can be profound and can pose dilemmas for students. Without a sense of how to frame the encounter, students might fall into identity traps such as “savior” or “helper” and thereby miss the opportunity to collaborate with residents as partners in strengthening conflict resolution processes. However, these kinds of courses raise a whole set of ethical issues that go well beyond the ethical dilemmas of practice.

Among the questions raised by these chapters are: How can we prepare students and instructors for the ethical challenges of such courses? What are some of the best practices? What happens when things go wrong? With respect to how we might prepare students to face ethical dilemmas, the literature on field-based courses, taken together with the literature on field-based research, suggests that students need to learn about the following ethical commitments related to practice prior to undertaking these kinds of courses. Ideally, students should be primed to

1. feel a moral responsibility for their interventions that foregrounds doing no harm;
2. recognize that they are poised to do harm by infringing the security, privacy, and well-being of people with whom they are working;
3. be mindful that their own good intentions cannot guard against negative consequences;

4. understand the frame, limits, and dynamics of their engagement with others, including their own positionality; and
5. prepare as fully as possible and remain reflective and flexible during the experience.

Presenting students with these aspirations during the preparatory phases prior to a field course, and even engaging them in activities that provide the opportunity for them to discuss expectations, might not ensure that students fully appreciate the range of ethical challenges they might face and the centrality of ethics to field-based courses in general. Examples from the chapters illustrate that serious ethical entailments that arise can be those that are often completely unanticipated. Yet other ethical challenges are more predictable, and, given the likelihood that they will emerge, trip preparation can target them directly.

Our concern over the difficulty of preparing students for ethical challenges led us to write a chapter on ethics, which opens the volume's first part. Early sections of the chapter describe several specific ethical concerns that have emerged in field-based courses, including situations where students can be led to overpromise to partners and strangers, to simplify complex situations, or to increase the vulnerability of our partners. More concerted preparation can help, and we argue that including classroom-based experiential learning across the conflict curriculum can improve students' capacity to respond to ethical challenges in the field.

How a field-based course is organized and advertised, who goes on it and with what intentions, and how the students understand the "real-world experience" that they can expect to have while in the field are treated as fundamental to the ethical concerns raised by field-based courses in the chapter by Leslie Dwyer and Alison Castel. Centered on the key theme of experience and critical of how this term has been used to endorse and promote field-based learning with little acknowledgment of the power dynamics involved, the authors highlight their efforts to develop more collaborative approaches to field-based learning in Indonesia and Colombia. Their aim is to confront directly the tendency to commodify experience for the benefit of the US students who often pursue such trips for their personal academic empowerment. The chapter highlights particular ethical

dilemmas encountered by the authors, even as they have sought to teach in ways that expose the power dynamics of field-based courses and that encourage students to reflect on their own assumptions and positioning.

Mindful of both the broader power dynamics that frame field-based courses and the many on-the-ground challenges that can emerge when students are in the field, some instructors include considerable attention to ethics as part of the course curriculum (see the chapters by Patricia A. Maulden and Lisa Elaine Shaw and by Gina M. Cerasani and rj nickels). In chapter 3, Pushpa Iyer describes her use of “practical ethics” to anchor how she and her students approach issues that arise during courses that she leads in Cambodia, Sierra Leone, Nepal, India, and the Philippines. Students study practical ethics, which also emphasizes the ethical entailments of their own privileged positioning, and they practice using this perspective to make decisions before and during the field component of the course. Notwithstanding her emphasis on ethics, Iyer makes the important point that it “is hard to be prepared for all possible ethical challenges.” Rather than viewing this uncertain ethical terrain as a negative feature of field-based courses, she asserts that transformative learning can emerge in precisely those spaces that are ethically challenging in unanticipated ways.

Even with preparation beforehand, a strong ethical frame, and repeated efforts to reflect, unexpected challenges can emerge in conflict and postconflict settings, and these challenges demand constructive and reflective responses. A later section of the introduction addresses this issue.

Improving Pedagogy

The chapters in part 2 introduce examples from the wide variety of pedagogical models for field-based courses mounted internationally and domestically. Field-based courses vary with respect to many factors, including the length of time students are in the field, the number and type of conflict and postconflict communities visited, the nature of the encounters with local residents, the knowledge and skills that they are expected to acquire or deploy, and the range of assignments used to assess their learning. Perhaps most importantly, such courses are characterized by pedagogy that emphasizes learning through engagement, most notably engagement with people

living or working in the field sites. In contrast to lecture/discussion pedagogy common in classroom settings, students in field-based courses generally learn through experiences that take many forms, such as meeting local residents and visiting organizations, volunteering and providing labor or another service, holding classes or trainings with local residents, and engaging in social activities in the local context. How they reflect on these experiences and what they ultimately learn from them depend as much on the instructor and the pedagogical models employed as they do on the motivation of the student. The authors of chapters in this part of the volume make the case that the intentional use of sophisticated pedagogical models can help ensure that students learn effectively in conflict and postconflict field settings. At the same time, the chapter authors describe many teaching techniques that could be adapted to other contexts and also identify barriers to learning.

The nature of the conflict itself is a key factor in shaping pedagogy. Not surprisingly, the approach to teaching and learning is different where a conflict is long-standing and intractable, as compared with situations where conflict is emergent or the subject of historical study. In designing a course, indeed an entire project called The Olive Tree Initiative, focused on the ongoing conflict in Israel/Palestine, Daniel R. Brunstetter and Daniel Wehrenfennig emphasized learning from multiple perspectives and avoided the pitfall of privileging one perspective or narrative over others. Thus, in the field students learn from many different people and are exposed to many different contexts and viewpoints. Preparation for the course includes significant attention to developing the skills needed to engage in dialogue and reflection. During the course students draw on these skills in their encounters with people in the conflict context and also when discussing the experience among themselves. As the authors point out, in The Olive Tree Initiative, learning the skills that will be needed during the field portion of the course happens prior to departure so that students have time to practice them before entering a conflict zone. The emphasis is on practicing particular skills related to conflict resolution, such as dialogue facilitation, debriefing and reflection, and culturally sensitive interviewing. Such preparation is a feature of many of the courses discussed throughout the volume.

As discussed in chapter 5, Jennifer M. Ramos's decision to take students to Northern Ireland, where there was "no war, no peace," also shaped

the pedagogy she employed. The course was focused on building research skills while learning about the history of the conflict, including the violence experienced in the past. The students were trained to conduct and analyze interviews with people who had lived through the Troubles. The relatively short field-based portion of the course was embedded within a broader semester-length class. With this model, Ramos solves two problems. First, the class meetings before and after ensure that the trip will result in deeper learning than might be expected from nine days of residence in a new context. Second, students who are unable to enroll in a study-abroad course that would require a semester of living abroad are able to participate in a field experience.

Looking across the chapters, the trips that take students away from campus vary widely in their length. Even when the time away is very short, all of the instructors have to consider how to prepare before the trip and what kind of follow-up is needed. Ramos highlights her own thinking about these aspects of field-based learning and a wide array of other issues, as she takes the reader through her decision process in setting up the course. Her discussion offers a blueprint for much of what needs to happen to mount a successful field-based course, such as gaining the buy-in of administrators, setting up logistics, defining learning goals, and connecting with partners, and could thus be very useful for anyone who has never planned a course away from campus, be it abroad or in the United States.

A frequent criticism of field-based learning—including internships and service learning—is that the experience is not well integrated into the broader curriculum. The concern is that what students are learning, as well as how they are learning it, differs so much from their other courses that it feels like a one-off occurrence. In designing two different domestic service learning experiences, Allyson M. Lowe and Sandi DiMola were intent on using the field experiences to augment what students of political science were learning about conflict. Their courses were carefully designed to involve students in deliberative democracy and community conflict resolution and to connect these experiences directly to theory and case studies on the topic. At the same time, the service aspect of the courses reflects the commitment of the universities to civic engagement and community service understood through both secular and religious lenses, depending

on the institution. In that sense, the learning experience was explicitly framed holistically as part of a student's university experience rather than a disconnected, extramural activity. It might be the case that the integration of field-based courses into the curriculum and the university's values is easier when they take place closer to home. However, the volume includes many pedagogical strategies for achieving the desired level of integration in courses mounted internationally.

Maulden and Shaw try to ensure student success by adapting well-known formal models of pedagogy for use in the field. Underlying this course as well as many other courses described in this volume is Kolb's approach to experiential learning, which emphasizes the dynamic and cyclical nature of learning and places particular importance on the interaction between action and reflection and between experience and abstract theoretical concepts (Kolb and Kolb 2005). Maulden and Shaw build out this model emphasizing the pre-trip field-experience preparation, which includes not only familiarizing students with the conflict context and community dynamics in Liberia and training in conflict theory, assessment, and resolution skills but also exploration and self-reflection of students' individual strengths, weaknesses, and expectations as well as uncertainties regarding the field-based course. They also place particular importance on the reciprocal nature of learning that students and faculty engage in with local partner organizations. Maulden and Shaw examine the pedagogical impact of encouraging students throughout the course to interrogate their positionality and power relations vis-à-vis those local partners. At the core of the model is the underlying assumption that prior knowledge and experience will be continuously challenged while students are in the field and that it is this very process of dealing with these challenges where learning takes place. As a result, turning an experience into deep learning puts reflection and debriefing at the center of course activities before, during, and after activities in the field. In their chapter and across the volume, a wide array of strategies to achieve the aims of the formal model emerge, such as daily debriefings, journaling and blogging, and self-reflection papers.

More broadly in the volume, multiple questions about pedagogy arise: What is the balance between innovative approaches and ones that work in other, nonconflict or non-field-based settings? How do particular contexts

determine or shape the pedagogy used? What can be learned from and with local residents, and how can they be involved more directly in the learning process, such that it becomes colearning? Throughout the volume, chapter authors also reflect on how they assess learning in field-based courses and whether measureable learning is the primary goal in all instances.

Effecting Change

The chapters in this part explore how field-based courses in conflict and postconflict zones can serve as sites for effecting change of several sorts. Students often use terms such as “transformative” and “life-changing” to describe the experience of a field-based course, which suggests that profound individual change can be the result of participation. Instructors might be pleased to receive such accolades at the same time as they wonder what students mean by these terms and whether other goals, such as individual learning or even broader social change, are being accomplished. Moreover, instructors themselves experience shifts in their own beliefs and understandings as a result of participating in a field-based course. In educational contexts change is often measured and thus made more concrete through evaluation and assessment. This part discusses those techniques, as they apply to participants’ engagement, learning, and roles, as well as the course as a whole. The authors are able to identify best practices in course delivery by measuring the extent of learning and other aims of the course experience. At the same time, the authors’ healthy skepticism prompts the question: Can all the change effected during a course be measured? In addition to directing attention to assessment and evaluation, the chapters in this part also focus on processes of reflection during and after fieldwork, debriefing, and assignments, as reflecting on the experience can help shape and deepen its significance. Through reflection, instructors can guide students in connecting their sense of transformation to individual development and also to broader processes of social change. As field-based courses come to play a more central role in the higher-education curriculum and their potential to effect change of various types grows, the imperative to appreciate the implications of such courses becomes more urgent. Thus, the chapters in this final part ask pointed questions about the enterprise

of field-based education in conflict and postconflict zones and offer some examples of the difference it can make in a highly conflictual world.

In chapter 8, Maryam Z. Deloffre explores how to effectively incorporate the development of applied, technical skills and training that will facilitate the transformation of students of conflict analysis and resolution into practitioners able to enter the job market following the completion of their studies. She does so by examining the experience of integrating a service learning component into a course on nongovernmental organization (NGO) management. Students complete various projects with the American Friends Service Committee, a Quaker organization committed to social justice and peace. The experience, Deloffre underscores, allows students to make connections between the theoretical concepts discussed during lectures and the programs and operations of an NGO. She guides students through this process by utilizing multiple forms of interaction, including Skype calls, site visits, and reflective journaling, with both structured prompts and opportunities for unstructured reflections by students. Deloffre incorporated assessment of the learning experience into the course evaluations and found that the service learning component of the course enriched students' understanding of NGO operations and enabled them to grow professionally, gain confidence in their ability to navigate through unfamiliar terrain, and improve their capacity to deal with change and ambiguity, as well as develop critical-thinking and leadership skills.

In the following chapter, Cerasani and nickels discuss the process of facilitating the development of students' practice skills and their capacity to make ethical decisions as practitioners through two forms of field-based education: a service learning course (in Charleston, West Virginia) and an academic project (in Prince William County, Virginia). These two forms of education tend to differ. Whereas service learning courses tend to be short (usually from one to four weeks), academic projects can take up to a year, thus giving students additional opportunity for deep immersion in a community as well as for design and implementation of interventions. Cerasani and nickels explore the role that instructors play in guiding students through this process, noting that, very often, they must be willing to find an uncomfortable balance between supporting students as they engage in practice and allowing them, on occasion, to fail as they learn and try out

new practices. Similar to other authors in this volume (Maulden, Shaw, and Iyer), they emphasize that the reflective-practice approach effectively facilitates this learning. Additionally, they point out that by encouraging practitioners to make explicit the assumptions underlying their work, to think about the values and priorities that underpin the theories they rely on, and to anticipate consequences of their intervention, reflective practice also provides students and instructors with a powerful ethical tool (Warfield 2002).

In chapter 10, Alexander Cromwell focuses on how transformative learning can be achieved in field-based courses. Specifically, he investigates two transformations that occur for students engaged in a field-based course in a context affected by conflict: learning to reflect critically on their roles as interveners in conflict and gaining motivation to engage in conflict resolution. As Cromwell argues, to facilitate such transformative learning, field-based courses should include three crucial elements: meaningful contact with local people, space and flexibility for interactions between students and local people, and, finally, reflective practice as a learning strategy. Cromwell brings to this discussion the perspective of someone who participated in field-based courses in conflict zones (Israel/Palestine, Syria, Serbia, and Croatia) as a student, and he explores how encountering people engaged in conflicts awakens powerful emotions that deepen the process of reflective practice, which in turn contributes to the transformative nature of the learning process. What is needed going forward is to more systematically examine the medium- and long-term effects of such programs to gauge whether the insights from transformational learning experiences persist and if so for how long and in what form.

In the volume's last chapter, Eric Hartman and Anthony C. Ogden take a historical perspective on global service learning, noting the growth of interest in these courses over the past half century. They ask whether such courses are founded on ethical principles or whether they rely simply on the good intentions of participants—that is, the desire to help or do good. The authors worry that without explicit attention to the ethics of engagement in global service learning, students can end up with an overblown sense of their ability to transform local communities. As a counterpoint to their discussion of ethically flawed approaches, particularly a service

learning project mounted in Ethiopia, they profile Fair Trade Learning, a type of global service learning built on strong ethical foundations that emphasizes reciprocal learning and mutual benefit between students and local partners. Fair Trade Learning foregrounds ethical socioeconomic transformation as a goal of service learning that depends on giving equal weight to engaging in service and undertaking serious intellectual work. Hartman and Ogden draw attention to the key role played by administrators in developing valuable and sustainable field-based courses and thus highlight the need to consider how field-based courses fit into the university context and the broader context of higher education in the United States.



The chapter by Hartman and Ogden invites us to think about the big picture of field-based learning in conflict zones. Why is it that we go on these trips? If the aim is to make some kind of difference, how can a course be organized in an optimal way ethically, pedagogically, and logistically? Effecting change of multiple sorts is an aim of all the courses discussed throughout the volume, and among the best practices that emerge are several that relate to this commitment to transformation. For one, although anyone interested in designing a field course should dare to dream big, he or she will need to manage expectations, particularly of students and partners whose varied interests in transformation might be difficult to meet. As a second best practice, frequent reflection on the experience is invaluable for tracking and assessing the changes achieved through learning, practice, and engagement with partners. Finally, instructors need to be mindful that an educational experience in a conflict zone always comes with some discomfort. Expect that you and your students will be taken out of your comfort zones, and treat it as an avenue toward constructive change.

Note

1. See “Experiential Learning Activities,” School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, <http://scar.gmu.edu/experientiallearningproject/11613>.