Conducting Care-full Research: Collaborative Research amidst Corona, a Coup, and Other Crises

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Conducting *Care-full* Research: Collaborative Research amidst Corona, a Coup, and Other Crises

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Abstract: Feminists have long called attention to often profoundly uneven power relations in international relations research, assumptions regarding who is able to be a "knowledge producer," and the risks of extractive research. In research "on" and with young people, these dilemmas are compounded by ageist suppositions about youth competencies. This paper reflects on efforts by the authors to design and undertake a youth-led, adult-supported research project on youth activism and peace processes in South Sudan, Afghanistan, and Myanmar through virtual interviews. It discusses how our approach to skills training, mentorship, and research design empowers youth researchers to engage in dialogue with youth peacebuilders to establish a more collaborative research agenda. Centering collaboration offers opportunities for more responsive engagement with communities traditionally marginalized within the research environment. The global pandemic has raised questions about research at a distance, the requirements of "participation," and the ethics of reciprocity with research participants as knowledge producers. In each case, challenges raised difficult questions about the ethics of pursuing research in these complex contexts. We offer the idea of *care-full* research that centers a feminist, reflexive approach, is collaborative in multiple ways, and generates new possibilities for knowledge creation amidst multiple crises and beyond.

Resumen: El feminismo lleva mucho tiempo llamando la atención sobre las relaciones de poder, a menudo profundamente desiguales, en el ámbito de la investigación de las relaciones internacionales, así como sobre las suposiciones en materia de quién puede ser un "productor de

conocimiento" y sobre los riesgos de la investigación extractiva. En las investigaciones que se llevan a cabo "sobre" los jóvenes y con los jóvenes, estos dilemas se ven agravados por las suposiciones edadistas existentes con relación a las competencias de los jóvenes. Este artículo reflexiona sobre los esfuerzos realizados por las autoras para diseñar y llevar a cabo un proyecto de investigación dirigido por jóvenes y apoyado por adultos sobre el activismo juvenil y los procesos de paz en Sudán del Sur, Afganistán y Myanmar a través de entrevistas virtuales. El artículo analiza cómo nuestro enfoque en materia de formación de habilidades, mentoría y diseño de la investigación empodera a los jóvenes investigadores para que entablen un diálogo con los jóvenes constructores de la paz con el fin de establecer una agenda de investigación más colaborativa. El hecho de centralizar esta colaboración ofrece oportunidades para poder lograr un compromiso más receptivo con aquellas comunidades tradicionalmente marginadas dentro del entorno de la investigación. La pandemia mundial ha planteado preguntas sobre la investigación a distancia, los requisitos en materia de "participación" y la ética de la reciprocidad con los participantes de la investigación como productores de conocimiento. En cada caso, los desafíos plantearon preguntas difíciles sobre la ética de la investigación en estos contextos complejos. Ofrecemos la idea de una investigación completa y cuidadosa que se centre en un enfoque feminista y reflexivo, que sea colaborativa de múltiples maneras y que genere nuevas posibilidades de creación de conocimiento en medio de múltiples crisis y más allá de estas.

Résumé: Depuis longtemps, les féministes attirent notre attention sur le profond déséquilibre qui caractérise souvent les relations de pouvoir dans la recherche en relations internationales, sur les hypothèses relatives à l'identité d'un ≪ producteur de connaissances ≫, et les risques de la recherche extractive. Dans la recherche ≪ sur ≫ et avec les jeunes, ces dilemmes se voient renforcés par des suppositions faisant preuve d'âgisme quant aux compétences de la jeunesse. Cet article présente une réflexion sur les efforts de l'auteur de conception et de conduite d'un projet de recherche dirigé par les jeunes, avec le soutien d'adultes, sur le militantisme de la jeunesse et les processus de paix au Soudan du Sud, en Afghanistan et en Birmanie par le biais d'entretiens virtuels. Il examine notre approche de la formation aux compétences, du mentorat et de la conception de recherches, ainsi que ses effets sur les jeunes chercheurs quand il s'agit d'engager le dialogue avec les jeunes acteurs de la consolidation de la paix afin d'établir un programme de recherche plus collaboratif. Une collaboration centrée donne la possibilité de faire preuve de davantage de réactivité dans les interactions avec les communautés traditionnellement marginalisées au sein de l'environnement de recherche. La pandémie mondiale a soulevé des questions quant à la recherche à distance, aux prérequis de la ≪ participation ≫ et à l'éthique de réciprocité des participants à la recherche en tant que producteurs de connaissances. Dans chaque cas, les difficultés ont soulevé des questions difficiles quant à l'éthique de la poursuite des recherches dans ces contextes complexes. Nous proposons l'idée d'une recherche ≪ très attentive ≫, centrée sur une approche réflexive féministe, collaborative à bien des égards et source de nouvelles possibilités de création de connaissances au milieu de crises multiples et au-delà.

Mots clés: pratique, éthique féministe, recherche participative, recherche menée par les jeunes, entretiens à distance, recherche sur la paix

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Introduction

Youth advocates have increasingly called for greater acknowledgement of young people's potential as knowledge producers within peace and security discourses. Usually, youth peacebuilders are perceived and positioned by adult peace practitioners and institutions as nothing more than recipients of peace. Similar dynamics exist in the research space, which is often dominated by research about young people, rather than considering the important interventions revealed when knowledge is produced with them. The formal codification of the ideals of participation and partnership within the three UN Security Council Resolutions on "Youth, Peace and Security" (UNSC 2015, 2018, 2020) has amplified and accelerated calls to reframe how we understand and represent youth's contributions to research (Altiok et al. 2020; Altiok 2021; LeClerc and Roushahbaz 2021; Berents and Mollica 2022; Ragandang 2022). The research practice we reflect on in this article was designed to reveal youth's capacity as decision-makers for peace, in South Sudan, Afghanistan, and Myanmar. It does this by centering youth peacebuilder's as active participants in knowledge production and the creation of an iterative, fluid research design (Spalding et al 2021).[1]

Discursive claims for substantive participation by young people require shifts in methodological approaches and research design away from practices that are solely extractive and toward those that empower youth to lead the research process. This article situates our youth-led, adult-supported research process, which aimed to investigate youth-leadership in peace processes in wider debates on feminist and participatory action research (see, for example, Harding and Norberg 2005; Delgado 2006; Durose et al. 2012; Carty and Mohanty 2015; Harmen 2018). In outlining our *care-filled* approach to research, we aim to speak to knowledge about best practice, which is grounded in post-positivist discussions regarding how investigative approaches can better challenge power hierarchies, overcome extractive research practices, and ensure traditionally unheard individuals are seen and taken seriously for their contributions to knowledge creation (Agarwal et al. 2023; Brigden and Mainwaring 2022; McLeod 2013). Amongst the key contributions of this paper is a recognition of how centering research participants' motivations for engaging in research adds value to the research process. To that end, we illustrate different principles that research teams may consider to enable an investigative research practice that fulfills participants participatory motivations as well as their own research agendas. We suggest, therefore, an approach to research that is *with* and *for* our participants instead of *about* them, two ideas that are often overlooked when developing research designs in International Relations (IR).

Research agendas that are not careful in their approach to valuing local voices can produce unresponsive and destructive research that entrenches inequality (Backe 2021). Therefore, attempts to acknowledge and overcome these conditions warrant further consideration and trial within international relations and peace studies. In response, we sought to pilot a co-production approach that also prioritizes capacity building with and for the youth researchers. Here, the aim is to mitigate against the often-exclusionary core claims of traditional epistemological approaches to knowledge. By embedding processes of mutual learning (and unlearning) into our

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[1]This project was part of the Vacation Research Experience Scheme (VRES) funded by the Faculty of Law at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT), and ethics approval was sought and gained for this project from the QUT Faculty of Law Human Research Ethics Review Board (QUT approval number: 2,000,000,865)

research design, we sought to produce an exploratory framework where claims for *necessary* and *sufficient* conditions are replaced with the pursuit of knowledge that is *responsive* and *care-full*.

We conceive of such an approach as *care-full*, and it is this that is outlined and discussed in this article. We define *care-full* research as an approach that acknowledges the fundamental relationality of research, one that is collaborative in multiple ways and generative of new questions and outputs derived within the research team and in dialogue with participants. We mean, literally, an approach that is filled with care at every step of the process and that is constantly evolving throughout the life of the project and beyond. We expand and develop this definition later in the article.

Taking this definition, the article makes two key arguments for the value of an approach we have identified as "care-full." First, greater attention to the expertise of participants, and their motivations for participating in our research creates opportunities to translate often unseen knowledges that can lead to more responsive research designs and outcomes in IR. Second, a mindfulness to creating collaborative research teams that are representative of the communities being investigated leads to more transparent and frank exchanges of knowledge, where the often invisiblized contributions of these marginalized groups are revealed. We contend that a *care-full* approach to research design is an important methodological evolution for those conducting participatory research, particularly in complex contexts. Further, we suggest that it has broad applications for those building investigative relationships with those traditionally invisibilized by IR research, including those with disabilities, refugees, and diaspora communities amongst others.

This approach is dependent on the nature of the context, on the kind of participants, and on the characteristics of the research team, and there is not a simple model to apply. However, adopting a care-full approach can be achieved by applying four key principles that emerged from our own practice and are substantiated by existing literature on participatory and response research. The four key principles are: creating communities; accountability; responsible reflexivity; and empowering expertise. Broadly, meaningful collaboration with individuals whose experiences are central to the research, in our case, youth, allows researchers to reconstitute how we understand the expertise of those whose voices are traditionally marginalized and undervalued in research. Centering feminist ethics in research design empowers researchers to pursue approaches that are not only mutually beneficial but also *care-full, and purposive* in building meaningful relationships ([Sevenhuijsen 2003](); [Poopuu and van de Berg 2021](); [Krystalli and Schulz 2022]()). In this way, our approach to research has evolved to include a more holistic understanding of the ethics of care that privileges relationality and conversational knowledge building. In practicing *care-full* research, we consider the collection of information, through interviewing or other strategies, as one stitch in a broader tapestry for relationship building that is essential for a collective research agenda. Inclusive and *care-full research* also offers opportunities for mutual growth, reflexivity, and knowledge sharing during informal interactions with participants and our research collaborators, in the design of research questions, the analysis of data, and when considering dissemination strategies.

As such, in developing our youth-led, adult-supported research agenda, we were motivated by a commitment to engage in research practices that value youth as knowledge producers rather than simply passive subjects. We were also mindful of the opportunities research provides to build networks of youth researchers and peacebuilders to share in knowledge creation. By nurturing capabilities for youth peers with diverse experiences and from diverse localities to engage in substantive dialogue, we construct an environment for new knowledge to surprise and critically challenge traditional notions of peace, and investigations *about* what produces peace. Our principles, therefore, maintain a commitment to reveal invisible

knowledges to inform new understandings of taken-for-granted phenomena in peace and conflict and IR.

In this article, we reflect on lessons learned during a research project on the background and methods of a project that took place between November 2020 and December 2021. We embarked on a process, supported by the international peacebuilding organization Search for Common Ground, to co-design and implement a research process that was youth-led and adult-supported to investigate youth inclusion in peace processes in three countries. We demonstrate the value of peer dialogue to the creation of substantive knowledge about young people's peace work. As evidenced throughout the article, empowering youth leadership requires attention to hearing and enacting their contributions and adjustments to the research design, its aims, and dissemination. By speaking to discourses of empowerment and prioritizing relationships of trust and common ground, we reveal, via the research process, displays of subjecthood, indicated via the presence of autonomous decision-making amongst youth researchers and peacebuilders (Beier 2015, 240).

This article proceeds in four parts. In the first section, we briefly outline the research design, with particular attention to the complexities of the peer-to-peer dialogue and the relationships of the team, and discuss the definitional complexities of the terms "youth" and "adult." In the second section, we elaborate on our definition of care-full research and outline the principles central to implementing *care-full* research: creating communities; accountability; responsible reflexivity; and empowering expertise. Third, we situate a care-full research approach within feminist and participatory approaches and methodological considerations, highlighting what is novel. In the fourth section, we turn to two key considerations that emerged from this work and the generative possibilities they offer: a consideration of the ethics of participatory research and reflections on the role of distance exacerbated by the pandemic. By way of conclusion, we consider what an inclusive, feminist, *care-full* research approach might offer others researching and writing in international relations.

Research Process and Design

Youth-Led, Adult-Supported Inquiry

Between November 2020 and December 2021, we designed and implemented an investigative process, supported by the International Peacebuilding CSO Search for Common Ground (Search), that was youth-led and adult-supported. The project examined youth inclusion in peace processes in three countries: Myanmar, South Sudan, and Afghanistan. Cases were chosen in consultation with our partner Search and the youth researchers. Multiple dialogues were held via Zoom with the research team, and Search team members, both at headquarters and at the country level. Through this collaborative discussion, it was determined that the cases spoke directly to the overarching research aims as they met three key criteria: Presence of a dynamic youth population,[2] the existence of a formal peace process, and known youth activism and leadership in both formal and informal peacebuilding efforts. These criteria speak directly to our overarching research question: How has youth leadership contributed to sustainable peace? The aim of the research was twofold: to contribute to an emerging evidence base that amplifies the peace work of young people within formal, but also informal, peace processes in a way that is mindful of how youth create knowledge; and to contribute to academic discussions on "inclusive" peace through the recognition of youth as stakeholders.

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[2]Youth as a percentage of the population in each country: Afghanistan: 66 percent, South Sudan: 73 percent, and Myanmar: 28 percent.

Three youth researchers based in Australia undertook a series of research training modules to build their capacity to develop and lead a series of interviews with youth peacebuilders. Online interviews and two focus groups were conducted between January and April 2021, with each youth researcher taking responsibility for the interview process in one country, supported by the adult researchers. Nineteen young women and fifteen young men, with an average age of 25 years and seven months, spoke with the youth researchers either over Zoom, Skype, or WhatsApp. To ensure the project captured a diverse array of identities and experiences, snowball sampling was used to seek participation from youth beyond the initial network provided by our partner, as we were mindful of not (re)producing an environment that perpetuates the same exclusions youth often experience during formal peace processes. Youth peacebuilders revealed and cautioned against many embedded barriers to participation with "culture," "social-economic opportunities," "racism," and "political relationships" amongst the most prominent (interviews 2021; Spalding et al. 2021, 14). By prioritizing a research design that facilitates collaborative spaces of knowledge creation through peer-to-peer dialogue, the youth-led, adult-supported process attempts to move beyond the structural conditions that produce these barriers, as well as "symbolic" and "tokenistic" forms of inclusion. It is the successes and challenges of this approach that are discussed throughout this article.

Each youth researcher was responsible for contacting youth peacebuilders to ask for a discussion, for building a rapport within the initial stages of the dialogue, and for conducting the interview drawing on questions they had collectively developed with support from the adult researchers. They were also supported to follow up with the youth peacebuilders, to develop the codes that would be used to analyze transcripts, to conduct the coding and analysis, and to contribute intellectually to outputs, including this article.

Creating an empowering environment where each youth researcher felt supported and confident in their capacity to modify the research design was essential to building our research community and enacting an ethics of care between the research team as much as with our research participants. As such, practices of mentorship, encouragement, and listening were central to the research design, alongside the more traditional practices of training youth researchers in interviewing, coding, and literature reviews.

The two adult researchers approached our interactions with the youth researchers and peacebuilders through a commitment to the feminist principles of care and community (Krystalli and Schulz 2022, 5; Held 2006, 42). Recognizing the link between these ideas puts into practice the widely acknowledged belief that care is "everything that *we* do to maintain, continue and repair "*our* world" so that *we* can live in it as well as possible" (Fisher and Tronto 1993, 103 emphases in original). For the youth researchers, the dedicated time to learn the country context; opportunities to contribute to and have conversations about the process of writing for policy and academic articles; shape the interview process; and the continual adoption of our ideas for analysis and publication, which were explicitly built-in to the research process, elevated the process beyond traditional academic mentorship. These strategies contributed significantly to us feeling valued and respected for our position as the youth. Utilizing strategies founded on conversation and collaboration enabled a research design that acknowledged the unique contributions of each participant. Youth researcher Payne explains that

> as someone who works more as a practitioner, I brought the experience of being in youth spaces and understanding the power struggle of young people. My contribution was more as a peer working to do my part in helping peers as opposed to simply furthering a research agenda.

As such, an approach to research that is care-full prioritizes strategies that eschew hierarchies based on traditional understandings of expertise and experience.

This research posed practical and ethical dilemmas that necessitated a re-framing of how the research was done. Global impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020–2021, insecurity and the safety of our participants, uncertain access to reliable internet connections, safe locations for participants to speak from, and the politics of research being undertaken at a distance between youth researchers in Australia and youth peacebuilders in conflict-affected contexts had the potential to exacerbate the extractive nature of the research. The period of the research also posed unforeseen challenges to the lives, work, and safety of the youth peacebuilders involved: in Myanmar, the February 2021 coup occurred the week interviews were meant to commence, and in Afghanistan, the Taliban takeover in August 2021 disrupted ongoing relationships with youth participants as many had to delete email and social media and flee or hide. Although not acute at the time of the research, rising insecurity and a fragile peace in South Sudan posed obstacles as well. These challenges and risks are unpacked and discussed further throughout the article.

What's in a Definition?: "Youth" and "Adult" Researchers

We identify ourselves as "adult researchers" and "youth researchers" in this project; the two adult researchers have positions at Australian universities, and the three youth researchers were at the time of the project enrolled in undergraduate and Masters level study, working through a summer research program, and then continuing as paid "research assistants."[3] The use of the terms "youth" and "adult" to distinguish between members of the research team is an uneasy compromise in terminology that we have made to enable ease of identification about who we are referring to. The terms both carry socialized connotations of hierarchy and experience, perpetuating, however unintentionally, "adultism"—the behaviors and attitudes that result from "the assumption that adults are better than young people" (Checkoway 1996, 13). Yet, potential alternative terms used by others, such as "junior" and "senior" researchers, are more explicitly hierarchical and were consciously avoided. All team members are over 18, making us all adults in a legal sense in our community, further complicating the idea of "youth" itself. While age-bound definitions are problematic, we note that the UNSC Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace, and Security, which framed this research project, defines youth as 18–29 (2015), and the "youth researchers" fall within this age category, while the two "adult researchers" do not.

As this project aimed to disrupt assumptions about where knowledge is produced and who holds expertise, we make explicit here that "youth" and "adult" are used non-hierarchically, to identify distinct social(ized) categories, and to emphasize the multiple sites of and reciprocal nature of the knowledge produced during this project. These distinctive classifications have relational and situational implications. Across the investigative landscape, unique contributions occur *because* youth peacebuilders and youth researchers are experiencing the creation of knowledge *as* young people (Lee-Koo 2014). As youth researcher-Spalding explains, my distinct identity as a "youth" researcher provided a sense of comfort between myself and the Afghan peacebuilders, as not only were we close in age, we were in similar academic or professional positions, and often experiencing similar life events, such as doing the same degree at university. This is not to ignore uneven positionalities and privileges. As youth researcher-Payne reflects, the approach was significant because it signaled an attempt to address hierarchies in research environments while still acknowledging and reflecting on how our positionality as young women from

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[3]We note that this is the institutional term for the payment category, and not one used within the team.

elite institutions in the global north impacts how young peacebuilders engage with us. When youth speak with and are heard by their peers, a deeper rapport is established (Restless Development n.d.) due to the elimination of perceived and actual hierarchies and the identification of shared experiences.

While situational differences existed between the youth peacebuilders and researchers and were front of mind during the conversations, the commonalities resulting from these distinct youth classifications created substantive ground for more open communication. Amongst the starkest similarities was a shared notion of how young people are left out of decision-making and not trusted by adults in political spaces. In the pursuit of a *care-filled* approach, the youth-led, adult-supported research process looked to intentionally center the distinctive youth experience. It also sought to explicitly recognize how similarities and differences enhance our understanding of youth's contributions to peace work and knowledge.

Common amongst our discussions were examples of how young people claim their identity *as* youth, to access and take ownership of public spaces underutilized and ignored by other members of society. While often these classifications provide marginalizing conditions within the research space, as we demonstrate throughout the paper, recognizing the distinctiveness between "youth" and "adult" also offers opportunities to develop a more inclusive research agenda with youth rather than for them.

What Does It Mean to Research in *Care-Full* Ways?

Defining Care-full Research

COVID-19 has brought conversations about care to the foreground globally, as the relational nature of life and work has been exposed. Feminist scholars have centered care in reflections on research in this time (Dunia et al. 2020; Anumol 2021; Backe 2021; Brigden and Mainwaring 2022; Krystalli and Schulz 2022), building on long-existing radical notions of care developed before the impacts of a global pandemic (amongst others: Tronto 1993; Sevenhuijsen 2003). This centering of care also both invites and requires an openness to the ongoing discussion and negotiation about the shape of the research and its constitutive relationships. This aligns with the evocative notion of "ethics in motion" offered by Poopuu and van de Berg, which requires "an openness to contextually negotiating and figuring out with our multiple companions in research" that involves "continuous work and (un)learning together with many others [which] goes into practicing research that is ethical" (2021, 253). As we lived through the pandemic ourselves, we turned to these scholars and others to help us think about what it means to do research amidst a crisis, and how our existing concerns around how to undertake ethical, reciprocal research with youth were magnified in this context. Out of these reflections and many varied discussions with youth peace advocates, youth researchers, adult civil society representatives, and academic colleagues, we suggest an approach that is *care-full.*

By *care-full* we mean, literally, one that considers the welfare of individuals (researchers and participants) as indistinguishable from the investigation itself, particularly when researching complex global problems. It is work that is constantly enacted throughout the life of the project and beyond. This meant considering the epistemological and methodological basis for our work. Amongst other questions, for us, this included: What are we missing in proceeding "as usual"? How can we know differently? Who holds expertise in ways that are often not recognized? How can we acknowledge and respect that expertise? How can we ensure a responsive and targeted, rather than institutionally derived "do no harm" approach, particularly in the middle of multiple crises? We define a *care-full approach* as one that is indicated by the generative nature of its interactions with research participants and

teams, which prioritizes the creation of knowledge communities, as a central yet non-traditional output of the research process. Thus, a *care-full* approach acknowledges the fundamental relationality of research, is collaborative in multiple ways, and generative of questions and outputs derived collaboratively within (the team) *and* without (the participants).

Principles of Care-full Research

Care-full research is derived from and privileges interactions between research teams and participants. As such, it is iterative rather than prescriptive in its investigative approach. In this way, this research speaks to emerging post-positivist discussions about research in IR that aim to create space for traditionally invisibilized voices through diverse approaches, including co-designed interviews, ethnography, and filmmaking (Agarwal et al. 2023; Brigden and Mainwaring 2021; McLeod 2013; Harman 2018). Like our *care-filled,* youth-led, adult-supported approach, these practice discourses look to create strategies that reveal the value of marginalized knowledge, situated within the everyday, to broad and diverse global audiences. These knowledges are integral to a comprehensive understanding of IR yet are often unseen due to the power structures inherent in research methods (Harding and Norberg 2005). To that end, we offer guiding principles for scholars looking to construct a *care-filled* research design, rather than steadfast rules. We provide an overview first, before illustrating how these principles were applied throughout the remainder of the article.

(1) Creating community: Extends the collaborative ontology central to feminist approaches as relationships with interviewees exceeded the research encounters and many continue today. Recent global events have compelled researchers to reorient their relationship to the field away from individualized priorities toward more interpersonal, collective notions of the aims we pursue when undertaking participatory research (see, amongst others, Poopuu and van de Berg 2021; Krystalli and Schulz 2022; Bliesemann de Guevara, Furnari, and Julian 2020). Shifting away from individualized priorities, such as traditional academic publications and solely theoretical contributions toward the production of knowledge that also has meaningful impact by supporting and furthering the work of research participants. It requires that we first ask whose agenda are we serving with our investigation and "what is seen-and made possible'' (Lederach 2023) for our research participants via our investigation.

(2) Accountability: Acknowledges and centers *who* the research is *for.* Shifting the focus of the research agenda to ensure the outcomes serve the interests and needs of participants is critical to a care-full design. This involved asking: what knowledge has the greatest utility for furthering the work of youth peacebuilders? And second, what outputs are most useful for demonstrating the impact of young people's contributions? Often, this process could be achieved by starting our interviews with the question: What would you like us to know and investigate with respect to youth leadership in peace, and could you provide examples? It also involved finishing our discussions with questions about how we might best distribute the findings of our work.

(3) Responsible reflexivity: Care-filled research is attuned to invisibilized voices and thus highly adaptive. It empowers youth participants and researchers to collaboratively choose the time, forum, length, and content of the discussion and breaks down traditional power structures as substantive contributions to the research design are shared across the research teams and participants. Previous youth-led research has illustrated that

this process is essential for more inclusive research findings, as it enables us to engage with the knowledge dividend of traditionally silenced voices (Restless Development n.d). However, it does also ensure that research teams, specifically the adult researchers, carry the burden of the research process.

(4) Empowering expertise: Mindful of the power structures that exist in traditional participatory research, a care-filled approach aims to disrupt these hierarchies and acknowledge the substantive contributions of participants and junior researchers. Efforts to empower expertise require a generative research design. Thus, authority for decision-making with respect to important research elements, including case studies, analytical coding processes, and dissemination strategies is shared and determined by consensus.

What makes the *care-filled* approach distinct is that it views these principles as existing in conversation with each other in ways that are constantly (re)invigorating the investigative process. We note that how these are taken up and implemented by others needs to be designed within individual research communities where the investigation is taking place.

Situating a Care-Full Research Approach

Feminist and Participatory Approaches

Feminist approaches to participatory research, which "challenge hierarchies of knowledge" provide a framework for conceptualizing the contributions of youth-led research to IR (Harman 2018, 793). Feminist approaches to IR, which emphasize co-design and the empirical translation of voice, pursue a "unifying commitment" where the methods used are diverse, and thus "derive knowledge from and speak to'' the everyday experience of women (Harman 2018, 793). Our care-filled principles are underpinned by a similar, yet extended unifying ethos, which enables youth to translate their unique expertise derived from their experiences as youth and to exercise leadership in the process of knowledge creation. Unique to a youth-led, adult-supported approach is the constant consideration of young people's positioning within the research process, which requires, we suggest, a "*care-full* attention"— an attention that originates with and is built through the above principles—to the relationships of power within research design, which can silence or speak for individuals. Epistemologically, this awareness of youth's situatedness within the field offers a way for researchers in IR to open space for collaborative knowledge generation. Broadly, these principles offer opportunities to engage with the expertise of other communities traditionally silenced by extractive research in IR, including persons with disabilities, indigenous communities, refugee, and diaspora populations.

Informed by emerging trends within our research community that look to center young people's voices in ways that value their substantive contributions to peacebuilding practices and to the scholarship about their peace work, researchers are increasingly pursuing inclusive research designs (Harding and Norberg 2005; Durose et al. 2012; Carty and Mohanty 2015). Advocates have noted that adopting a youthled "listening and learning" approach when developing research designs and conducting interviews has the potential to be less transactional, relying instead on an organic dialogue and information exchange between young people (Kelly et al. 2017, 5). While youth-led research remains a new and underutilized approach for IR, its epistemological and ontological contributions are acknowledged and highly valued within public health (Ozer 2016) and child development studies (London et al. 2003; Delgado 2006), amongst other disciplines. This work recognizes that

youth-led research provides critical insights concerning the interests of youth, as it centers as its primary motivation the critical imperative of revealing "what is important in the lives of youth at a particular point in time, and not what adults think should be important" (Delgado 2006, 78). As such, it takes seriously the capabilities of youth to frame the scope of investigative inquiry as knowledge creators.

Within the international peacebuilding space youth-led research is increasingly drawn upon to inform praxis. Networks and organizations such as Restless Development, Our Generation for Inclusive Peace (OGIP), Search for Common Ground, and the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) have been instrumental in working collaboratively with youth to develop guidance notes for the implementation of youth-led research (Kelly et al. 2017; Huits and White 2021; OGIP 2022; Restless Development n.d).

Care-filled research empowers when it yields a multi-dimensional research dividend. That is, a mindfulness of the motivations of youth peacebuilders for participating in the research. The importance of this care-filled dynamic was illustrated during the first of our South Sudan interviews. During this interview, the youth peacebuilder, who had extensive experience participating in research, noted that our questions, while "important" were "boring" and reflected "much of the same" (interview 2021). This exchange prompted us to significantly change course in how we approached our conversations. In doing so, we sought to create a more collaborative investigative space.

Youth-led, adult-supported research envisages and builds into its design youth as leaders and substantive contributors throughout all stages, including data collection, data analysis, and results sharing. Like forms of participatory action research (PAR), the "listening and learning" approach commits to the "co-production of knowledge," where the research process is iterative, responsive, and respectful of different ways of knowing and learning (Grant et al. 2008; Reason and Bradbury 2008). Co-produced knowledge is highly valued across the social sciences (see Durose et al. 2012), yet these approaches have failed to gain significant traction in international relations or peace studies (Harman 2018, 794) due to persistent adherence to rigid, hierarchical disciplinary boundaries and assumptions regarding the value of localized knowledge, its production, and dissemination.

Collaborative ontology offers important opportunities for the development of mutually constitutive research agendas that yield a multi-dimensional research dividend. Without considerations of care-fullness through collaboration and co-production, research dividends are produced that fulfill the researchers' agenda yet remain unresponsive to the needs of the community where the research is embedded (Eriksson Baaz and Utas 2019; Bliesemann de Guevara, Furnari, and Julian 2020). The reluctance to co-produce knowledge about the key concerns of the individuals at the center of these disciplines creates further silences and continues extractive and intrusive practices (Gallagher 2016). Within traditional approaches, despite best intentions, the choices we make can (re)produce power dynamics that cast our participants as passive objects rather than intellectual contributors (Enloe 2004; Wilson et al. 2018: 22).

A Methodological Approach Filled with Care

Previous feminist reflections on research methodology (amongst others: Shepherd 2016; Fujii 2017; Krystalli 2019) demonstrate that by ceding space to our participants, researchers can create a more responsive investigative landscape where knowledge generation is both iterative and empowering. For example, empowering participants to tell their stories, their way, through open questioning, such as "what would you like us to know about your peace work?" was essential in our research.

Recognition of the capacity of peer dialogue to open and produce non-hierarchical spaces for activism and knowledge production is a core contribution

of a care-filled approach. This was evident in Myanmar, as youth researcher Payne explains the timing of the Myanmar interviews (April–March 2021) provided participants with a forum to speak with immediacy about how their previous experiences of activism were being shaped by the evolving coup. The approach adopted provided youth peacebuilders with a welcoming and safe environment for sharing insights during a time when their voices were being especially silenced by the military. As one youth peacebuilder explained when asked if they wanted to continue their participation in our dialogues, "[Youth] need our stories to be heard; we [you and I] have a responsibility to share with the world what the young people in Myanmar are experiencing" (interview, 2021).

Similarly, in South Sudan, this care-filled approach was critical for revealing frank assessments about how intersections of age and gender, and the perceptions these, inform youth peacebuilders' capacity to transform knowledge. As one young woman shared:

> Community leaders have misconceptions about youth and when a young woman or girl is sent to facilitate dialogue they think that they are under foreign cultural influence or that they are "spoiled" by foreign cultures (interview 2021).

This young woman reflected that through perseverance with her advocacy in stories, she was able to build allies amongst local chiefs in the community that transformed the status quo. As youth researcher Odgers Jewell explains, these examples illustrate the value of care-filled research for telling neglected truths to powerful stakeholders often reluctant to listen.

Participants' contributions and amendments were also vital. Participants had agency over the direction of questioning, appropriate language for describing relevant phenomena, and the forums for dissemination, which facilitated more responsive relationships and ontology. In Myanmar, for example, the research was led by a youth researcher in Australia, Payne, in collaboration with a local youth researcher working with our partner organization on a related project. Prior to beginning interviews, meetings were held via Zoom to develop questions that would produce mutually beneficial responses for both the outcomes of the projects and local youth in Myanmar. One of the key shifts resulting from this involved an expansion of the language and questioning to prioritize the current activism youth were leading following the coup, not just their prior peacebuilding practices. These meetings were also an opportunity to build a *care-full* relationship with youth researchers on the ground who acted in dual roles as both research participants and co-facilitators. Thus, both the Australian and Myanmar researchers were empowered to lead during the interviews, helping to build a reciprocal peer dialogue.

For the adult researchers, our central aim was to create a *care-full* space where we could mentor and encourage, as well as listen and learn. Throughout the research, we had to unlearn our instinctive response—taught through academic training—of occupying a position of expertise. Instead, we looked to cede power and space for the knowledge and leadership from both the youth researchers and participants. Amongst other approaches discussed above, this involved an openness to questioning the "usual" way of doing things. Adult researcher Berents notes:

> I changed my approach from providing instructions for a task to starting by asking what the youth researcher(s) felt capable of doing and what they needed support with. Flipping this starting point strengthened our capacity to work as a team as it acknowledged the value of the existing knowledge that the youth researcher(s) brought.

Approaching mentorship as an enabling, collaborative endeavor, with the goal of strengthening existing skills and building capacity, taught us new things about our own research practice. While we acknowledge there were limits and inadequacies in our approach, and its enactment was imperfect (see below for discussion); the methodological approach we collectively developed offered a way of *care-fully* building shared research space.

For the youth researchers, the mentoring enabled us to have confidence in our own capacities and skills. While we believed in the importance of young people's opinions previously; we had not applied the sentiment to ourselves and the project itself allowed me to see myself as someone with an opinion worth listening to (youth researcher Spalding). The focus on building relationships took a lot of pressure off and provided space to reflect more than in other research (youth researcher Payne). As youth researchers, we were very aware of the power dynamics at play and felt that:

> Developing the care-full space helped us to approach these situations and do our best to create a safe environment where the youth [peacebuilders] could share what they felt comfortable with sharing and to ensure they also felt comfortable to withhold anything they didn't feel able to share (youth researcher Odgers-Jewell).

The care-full approach, through its emphasis on collaboration, enabled us (the youth researchers) more opportunities to invest in and reflect upon the research process, particularly our relationship with the youth we were interviewing. As such, it cultivated an attentiveness to reciprocity and mutually beneficial research dividends, and a motivation to take these approaches into future research and practice. These conscious strategies, which acknowledge the mutually constitutive nature of building peace, are underpinned by a feminist positionality that seeks to mitigate the marginalizing impact of structures and systems for research that can be extractive and exploitative.

Care-Full Research amidst Corona, Coups, and Other Crises

Having outlined and unpacked how the notion of care-full research emerged through our own practice, and in relation to existing approaches in feminist and youth studies literature, this final section turns to two key dimensions of our project: reframing ethical considerations and conducting research at a distance. These two dimensions were chosen to illustrate how a care-full approach was undertaken, but also how the challenges that arose were able to be managed because of our commitment to the four guiding principles of care-full research.

Reframing Ethical Considerations in Participatory Research

Methodological approaches that are *care-filled* offer opportunities to diversify the discourse and praxis surrounding the conditions necessary for conducting ethical participatory research. Traditionally, ethical considerations for participatory research often produce and exacerbate arbitrary hierarchical boundaries, which create *distance* between the researcher and the participant (Gallagher 2016). As researchers, we have an obligation not only to protect participants but also to ensure that the decisions we make are not dehumanizing or infantilizing. Practices such as remuneration for participation, as well as consultation on research objectives and dissemination can provide opportunities for less hierarchical participatory approaches.

By enabling a research environment where youth capture insights through dialogue with their peers, this "listening and learning" approach cedes power (Restless Development n.d). For the youth researchers, the peer dialogue process offered

opportunities to build impactful relationships that connected the scholarly and practice spaces. These relationships were multilayered with shared spaces being created and (re)produced both between the youth researchers and between the youth researchers and youth peacebuilders. As youth researcher Odgers-Jewell reflects, the process became more than just a research project, as working with peers who have volunteered in peace practices and research in similar ways to myself made me feel like this work would have "real world" impacts. Similarly, youth researcher Payne explains:

> I resonated with community-based/peer-to-peer activism because that's the only space I have had access to. While my positionality as a white person from the global north in a safe environment with access to opportunities is different, we shared many similar values and I was still able to connect with the peacebuilders' activism.

Prioritizing exchanges of shared experiences, interests, and values over traditional interview dialogues creates care-filled spaces where traditional power dynamics are altered producing more ethically inclusive research praxis.

Within peer-to-peer participatory research, relationships are conceived as expansive, multilayered, and collaborative. Through the centering of relationality, traditional power dynamics are challenged facilitating the emergence of a guiding "ethic of core or moral responsibility" (Ackerly and True 2008, 968; Robinson 2006). Applying this ethic requires a commitment to fluidity in the research design, which in turn enables youth researchers and peacebuilders opportunities to modify the research (Kelly et al. 2017). Resources and time must be devoted to amplifying youth's perspectives in the creation of research questions, the building of conceptual frameworks, and when conducting coding and analysis. Youth researchers took ownership of the research process in ways that ultimately prioritized the thoughts of the youth. Discussions between youth researcher Spalding and youth peacebuilders in Afghanistan dedicated time to conversations about shared interests, which, as Spalding reflects, allowed her to build relationships of trust. Similarly, youth researcher Spalding notes that being empowered to make decisions through the research process allowed me to feel confident and comfortable adapting the focus of conversations based on the individual relationship being built.

Empowering youth researchers to create peer-to-peer communities with those participating in the research (both as other researchers or interviewees) reflects a commitment to an ethic of care that is concerned with how *being human* informs and is informed by the investigative process (Robinson 2006, 223). In South Sudan, youth peacebuilders asked to participate in focus groups instead of the originally proposed interviews. As youth researcher Odgers-Jewell reflects, engaging conversationally with these young women as a group built more trust, as they opened up in the company of their peers, allowing me as a researcher to see holistically how they carried out their peacebuilding activities together. To that end, an enabling environment that nurtures dialogue and ownership amongst youth researchers and interviewees is essential to the ethical practice of this form of participatory research.

During our research, unavoidable questions of power, privilege, and difference in this research process involving researchers from the global North and participants from the global South, were not erased or sidelined but rather discussed in depth by the research team before commencing interviews, as well as between youth researchers and participants, resulting in the youth researchers feeling more equipped to navigate these dynamics and conversations with participants.

Ethical approaches that are *care-filled* acknowledge the potentially subconscious, extractive nature of participatory research and its silencing effect. In response, throughout our research, we prioritized the pursuit of tangible strategies for compensating participants, which valued their time and knowledge contributions. In the

context of this research project, which was funded through small seed grants that could not fund financial remuneration, it was critical for an ethical approach to substitute financial compensation with mutually agreed-upon remuneration strategies. For example, in South Sudan, consultancy work on interviewees' grant applications was undertaken by adult researcher Mollica. During this process, knowledge and advice were shared in mutually beneficial ways between the adult researcher, the youth researcher, and peacebuilders. This information exchange further emphasizes the importance of care-*filled* research practices, which empower new voices to participate in all stages of the research process. Reciprocity between research participants and youth researchers, who both occupy roles as knowledge producers, through the production of timely outputs and remuneration, is critical therefore, to achieving *care-full* ethical research.

The principle of "do-no-harm" necessitates self-reflection by the researcher regarding how their praxis aligns with the values and needs of participants. Specifically, it requires continual critical engagement with how harm is framed and, most importantly, by whom. By situating ourselves in relation to our research participants, we reveal and thus can disrupt the power dynamics and assumptions they produce (Tickner 2005, 6). As such, when pursuing knowledge online in complex environments through a youth-led approach, researchers have an obligation to take seriously the voices of young people who have first-hand knowledge of the actual risks. Taking young people's contributions seriously as contributors to knowledge, requires a recognition that they have the capacity to assess risk, and to determine what constitutes harm. Balancing the security of youth peacebuilders with their agency emerged as a key ethical consideration during our research. For example, in Myanmar following the coup in February 2021, we held discussions with youth activists to ensure that our interviewing and the direction of discussion were responsive to their needs and self-assessments of risk. Through these conversations, it was decided that we would continue but on a smaller scale and using strategies of care (discussed earlier) to mitigate security risks.

Collapsing peace processes, coups, and escalating public health emergencies are situational challenges that raise the ethical question: Should participatory research continue at this time, given these intersectional and unpredictable contexts? *Care-full* consideration needs to be undertaken, where we as researchers must pause and reflect on the types of research we are doing and our motivations. A feminist ethics of care compels the researcher to continually consider who the investigative process serves, and whether the research design can meet the desired objective. Ultimately, as the ethical considerations informing our youth-led approach demonstrate, answering these questions should not be the responsibility of the researchers alone. Decisions regarding the future of participatory research in complex contexts must occur via a fluid and non-hierarchical knowledge exchange between participants and researchers.

Conducting Research at a Distance

For feminist researchers, undertaking fieldwork, interacting, and gaining first-hand experience of the ways people navigate everyday aspects of political challenges, or the impacts of political conflict, is often a core element of our work. Conducting fieldwork with a feminist research ethic requires time, empathetic engagement, and material resources. These have always been difficult dynamics to navigate. However, global events since 2020 have abruptly and profoundly created new challenges as mobility has become constrained, the pandemic has exacerbated inequalities, and the necessity of care (for our participants in the research process and in their own daily lives, as well as for ourselves) has become pronounced (Bond et al. 2020; Dunia et al. 2020; Backe 2021; Mwambari et al. 2022).

These concerns were uppermost in our minds as we worked to plan and implement this project. As feminist scholars, commitment to notions of care, trust, and collaboration guided our decision-making process iteratively throughout the work. We repeatedly discussed whether we should be doing this work in the circumstances, both as the Australian-based research team and with the youth peacebuilders we were engaging with in each country. Even when it was clear that participants wanted to continue, the challenges of doing interviews remotely continued to present dilemmas for doing *care-full* work. Models of youth-led, adult-supported research (such as the approach of our CSO partner in this project [Kelly et al. 2017]) are designed to be conducted in person, and narratives persist, particularly in IR and peace and conflict studies, that work done remotely somehow innately *lacks* or is second-best to work conducted in person.

There were significant challenges, explored below; however, the practice of research-at-a-distance forced upon us by circumstance also provided opportunities. Conducting research remotely enabled the youth researchers to communicate back and forth with youth peacebuilders via email ahead of interviews, establishing rapport and familiarity before logging on in a more low-pressure exchange. When conducting research in virtual spaces, the relationships established via email are critical for the creation of an inclusive research environment. As youth researchers reflected, the virtual space created a flexible forum for informal conversational interactions with the youth peacebuilders. This process of email communication, too, is just as much part of the toolkit of virtual research as the online interview itself.

Virtual methods also meant we were not constrained to speaking to youth in specific physical locations. Illustratively, when undertaking the interviews with Afghan youth, youth researcher Spalding realized in the initial interviews she was speaking largely with youth based in Kabul, and from their conversations, the rural-urban divide was a significant factor. From this, she specifically sought snowball referrals to youth contacts beyond the capital to deepen the insights gained. Even if we had been physically in Kabul to do this project, travel to many of the places where those we spoke to were located would have been impossible, and more than this, quite possibly not considered by the research team on the ground. Additionally, while the particularly serious security concerns of using technology were of specific attention, undertaking virtual interviews enabled us to speak with youth who may otherwise have not been able to meet with us in person due to safety considerations. Youth could choose when and where to speak with us, enabling them to make judgments as experts of their own circumstances.

While there were real benefits of the remote nature of the research, it also undeniably presents significant challenges. At the heart of a youth-led, adult-supported approach is a commitment to building true dialogical exchanges and relationships, and these are often stymied by the artificial constraints of the virtual environment. The awareness that an interview is taking place, reiterated by the flashing "recording" in the corner of the screen, can disrupt the potential to slip into a rhythm where the formality of the interview slips away, and the dialogue becomes a more organic knowledge exchange.

The physical distance of the research also impacts temporalities of convenience for both the researcher and the interviewee. Researchers must be *care-full* in their approach to time differences, work schedules, and care obligations to minimize the burden of the dialogue on the participant. At times, we found we were missing the immediacy that is often valuable to this form of research. Changes to the spaces where this research is done require us to rethink our approach to research. We can no longer meet someone at a café for a casual conversation or sit in offices until participants have time to speak. The circumstances of the youth researchers also had to be considered. Time zones meant interviews sometimes had to be conducted out of hours, and use of university facilities was unavailable due to a pandemic-prompted

campus shutdown in Australia, which resulted in the research team working from home in often shared living arrangements. In these ways, the youth researchers also had to manage the circumstances we were in when speaking to participants, which required negotiating with siblings or housemates for quiet, for uninterrupted internet usage, and for private spaces to speak at home.

Reliable internet access is a common challenge in violence-affected contexts. The COVID-19 pandemic both emphasized and exacerbated the challenges of virtual access for many of our participants.[4] The multiple crises impacting our youth participants' lives also impacted their access to digital spaces. In Myanmar, the February 2021 coup resulted in internet services being profoundly disrupted or unavailable. We were often unable to contact the local youth researcher we were collaborating with, and participants indicated enthusiasm to participate and then were unreachable. In South Sudan, a combination of unreliable internet and expensive data costs led our youth researcher, Odgers-Jewell, to swap to using WhatsApp rather than Zoom to mitigate these issues, as WhatsApp is more reliable and uses significantly lower data. In Afghanistan, participants frequently spoke to us from workplaces before or after hours because it offered a more reliable internet connection than their homes, one participant sat in a hotel lobby for the same reason. For research conducted entirely virtually, we often faced significant challenges to ensure that those who wanted to participate could do so safely, effectively, and with confidence in the research process. Central in ensuring this was placing care for the participants before all else and applying the principles of care-full research.

Virtual research is not an unproblematic approach; it brings with it its own challenges, limitations, and cautions. In responding to the conditions of the global pandemic, we do not offer virtual research as a panacea, but we also challenge those who dismiss such approaches as inherently and irrevocably inferior to in-person research. Rather, this work demonstrated that it is possible to undertake research that enacts feminist principles, with participants who are in complex crisis situations, even at a distance, and through virtual spaces. At the center of this approach is a commitment to *care-full* research.

Conclusions: *Care-full* Research with Young People and beyond

By centering feminist ethics in research design, researchers can pursue approaches that are not only mutually beneficial, but also *care-full* in their capacity to build meaningful relationships with individuals and communities. Doing *care-full* research involves centering a reflexive approach that acknowledges uneven privilege and power but also the fundamental relationality of research; one that is collaborative in multiple ways, and generative of new possibilities. Such an approach, we found, is particularly helpful in undertaking research amidst multiple crises, via virtual methods, with participants who are systematically marginalized. Together, these intersecting factors required close attention to how the research was undertaken and what knowledge it generated.

In doing this work, we see two key interconnected benefits for engaging with research methodologies that center care and collaboration. First, research methodologies underpinned by principles of centering marginalized voices and inclusive processes help enable ease of participation for interviewees. Second, care facilitates an investigative process that values and sees research as collaborative. Das et al. (2001, 3) speak of "remaking a world" through the reimagining of spaces and the voices that exist and which are dominant within those spaces. An ethics of care and love (Krystalli and Schultz 2022, 3) is central to reframing the work of youth

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[4]It is worth noting that digital access is also unevenly distributed in Australia, not just "conflict-affected" contexts. The COVID-19 pandemic made already existing digital exclusions sharply visible in our domestic context, evidenced by school and tertiary education moving online (for example O'Shea, Koshy, and Drane 2021; Drane, Vernon, and O'Shea 2021).

peacebuilders as situated in opportunity and achievement, rather than challenge and failure. When centering youth voices through a shared dialogue with other youth, narratives of leadership and innovation become amplified over those that emphasize their marginalization and exclusion.

Care-full research recognizes the importance of shared knowledge to the development of nuanced understandings of power, agency, and structure within international relations. Yet, traditional models of research often fail to value the lessons we can learn from our participants, privileging "elite" or "authorial voice" in the application of theory and analysis (Krystalli 2019, 182). The experience of those often silenced by technocratic data collection enriches our understanding of the peace architecture. Thus, it is critical that our interactions with participants respect this vital role, their humanity, and the complexity of their experiences.

Reframing notions of participation also empowers youth agency and leadership in the production of knowledge. This starts from the premise that youth are competent knowers of their world and narrators of their experience, and that they offer valuable expertise as co-researchers, not just subjects of research. Approaches such as this also require practical commitments and an attention to methods and relationships. Developing youth-led, adult-supported research requires that attention be paid to skill development. Collaborative research also necessitates that adult researchers provide support and resources to ensure youth researchers are confident in sharing perspectives when developing research questions and leading the creation of conceptual frameworks for the research design, and conducting coding and analysis. Central to this approach, must be a commitment to supporting youth researchers to build peer-to-peer relationships of trust with interview participants. Such an approach extends ideas within the feminist research methodologies that look to create community with those participating in research (Fujii 2017; Bliessmann, Furnani, and Julian 2020).

Recent feminist thinking has pursued an evolutionary approach to research, which acknowledges the porousness between how we theorize investigation and the way we implement the techniques for doing and exploring (Harman 2018). By reframing how research is implemented through the development of stronger connections between thinking and doing research, feminist approaches challenge "the often unseen androcentric or masculine biases in the way that knowledge has traditionally been constructed" (Tickner 2005, 3). Research projects such as ours, which are underpinned by these critical feminist ideas, aim to disrupt the exclusionary status quo by reframing whose voices create knowledge in these contexts. A *care-full* approach allows spaces for mutual exploration; mindful reflection of the situatedness and positionality (Torre et al. 2017; Nagar 2014; Fujii 2017; Krystalli 2019; Bliessmann, Furnani, and Julian 2020, 182), and reciprocal learning by empowering first-hand storytelling and retelling, and democratizing information.

The process and findings of this project also expose important considerations for future virtual research designs. Discussions with youth peacebuilders were online due to COVID-19, yet as outlined, this produced barriers to inclusiveness and functionality. Due to the nature of funding for this project, it was not possible to provide financial remuneration to participants; this, we feel, is an absence we intend to address in future work. Remuneration for data costs and time respects the participants who are being asked to contribute their knowledge to the research endeavor. Conducting research at a distance offered unique opportunities, but also poses challenges in practical terms.

In conducting participatory research, there is a constant struggle for prominence of voice. This tensions exists both between the researcher and the subject; but also between participants, as structural and social conditions create sites of exploitation that are often informed by uneven power relationships; and assumptions about how knowledge is created, who has the capacity to produce knowledge, and the best way for knowledge to be *told* within public and private spaces. Disciplinary norms about

rigor and calcified notions of how research *should* be done, exacerbate these exclusions and oversights. These challenges are often further compounded when conducting research with and for young people, as ageist stereotypes about youth competencies and their positioning within their communities create conditions where their voices and experiences can go unheard or are misinterpreted (McEvoy-Levy 2006; Berents 2018). These concerns have been central to our rationale for why explicit articulation of an idea of *care-full research* is valuable. For us, it underpins our epistemological and methodological approach to our research as it informs the development of a process for investigation that is mutually beneficial. By this we mean, research approaches that not only meet our objectives as researchers and interested observers of young people's peace work; but also that support and further the aims of youth peacebuilders with whom we are building relationships. These reflections are not just relevant to research with youth, but to anyone seeking to develop research approaches are that less extractive and more ethical.

A *care-full* approach to research such as we have outlined here is not limited in benefits to research that pays attention to youth. Designing and implementing our youth-led, adult-supported research revealed that collaboration, when conceptualized as both an aim and approach, yields substantive revelations about the individuals and processes that are often rendered invisible within the peace and conflict field. The lessons here can and should be taken up by others working with populations who are marginalized by dominant disciplinary discourses and operations of power, including those with disabilities, refugees, and diaspora communities amongst others. Engaging in collaborative research, especially as we learned, amidst corona, a coup, and other crises, requires *care-full* attention to how our research relationships empower multiple, often-overlooked, voices in all stages of knowledge creation.

Acknowledgments

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