

# ICAR NEWS

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GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

## Narratives Matter at ICAR: Center for the Study of Narrative and Conflict Resolution

By Sara Cobb, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Conflict Analysis and Resolution, scobb@gmu.edu

**N**arratives matter. They are the architecture of consciousness; they both reflect and shape identity as well as govern interaction. Once institutionalized, dominant narratives anchor culture while marginalized counter-narratives struggle to gain traction. Conflict narratives consolidate patterns of exclusion and reciprocal delegitimation. Conflict transformation involves the evolution of these narratives toward narratives that complicate our understanding of history, challenge cultural assumptions, legitimize the marginalized and structure new solutions to



Dr. Greg Pirio is seen leading a media training workshop at the Radio Haq, an Islamic radio station in Nampula, Mozambique. Photo: S. Cobb.

wicked problems. From this perspective, conflict and its transformation involve attention to the politics of narrative as a struggle over meaning itself.

The Center for the Study of Narrative and Conflict Resolution (CNCR), directed by Sara Cobb, is a newly chartered center at the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution. It provides a hub for research, conversations on practice,

workshops and consultations, connecting the research on narrative and conflict to the practice of narrative intervention in conflicts. The Center will be physically located on the 6th floor of the Truland building on the George Mason, Arlington Campus. The mission of CNCR is: to advance the theory, practice and research on narrative processes in conflict dynamics; to anchor research on narrative processes in conflict dynamics within and across the faculty and students at ICAR and at Mason; and to create a “hub” for academics and practitioners around the world working on conflict resolution from a narrative lens. There are several faculty at ICAR that have expressed interest in the Center and its work on narrative: Susan Hirsch, Susan Allen Nan, Solon Simmons, Neta Oren, Dan Rothbart,

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Commentary

# GPP in the Great Lakes Region: MoU Enables Expansion of ICAR Genocide Prevention

By Ashad Sentongo, ICAR Ph.D. Candidate, [asentong@gmu.edu](mailto:asentong@gmu.edu)

**O**n February 23, 2011, ICAR and George Mason University (GMU) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to collaborate with the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) on Genocide Prevention in the region. The agreement with ICGLR was signed by GMU Provost Peter Stearns and ICAR Director Andrea Bartoli. Members of the ICAR Community are encouraged to participate and operationalize what the MoU offers in terms of research and practice, and to take advantage of such a regional focus to expand their expertise while contributing to the region and field of Conflict Analysis and Resolution. In the near future, more information will be made available through the office of the Program of Genocide Prevention at ICAR on how faculty, students and other members of the community can make this contribution and support the work of ICGLR in the region.

The memorandum highlights various areas of collaboration including: the development of joint initiatives for early and proper warning of genocide and mass atrocities, as well as strengthening resilience and peaceful coexistence in communities and states in the region; the implementation of appropriate mechanisms and capacity building programs for Members of the Genocide Prevention Committee to be able to engage state and non-state actors within member states in efforts to prevent genocide in the region; the conduct of research to generate and exchange information,



Andrea Bartoli and Peter Stearns sign the Memorandum of Understanding with ICGLR. Photo: ICAR.



Heads of State of the Great Lakes Region, at the December 2010 Lusaka summit, Zambia. Photo: A. Sentongo

create awareness among local and international actors, and to inform program design and implementation to prevent genocide and mass atrocities against humanity.

The ICGLR Committee on the Prevention of Genocide, War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity was endorsed on December 11-15, 2010, during a Special Presidential Summit held in Lusaka, Zambia. ICGLR organized the summit, which also addressed the illegal exploitation of natural resources in the region. Ashad Sentongo (ICAR PhD Candidate) represented ICAR's Genocide Prevention Program. The committee has 11 members representing 11 states of the region including Zambia, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya, Tanzania, Sudan, Angola, Congo Brazzaville, Democratic Republic of Congo and The Central African Republic.

ICAR's Genocide Prevention Program (GPP) works through state officials to engage governments on genocide prevention. GPP's collaboration with ICGLR to form a regional committee in the Great Lakes region is a significant milestone in the history of the genocide prevention field; particularly in a region where genocide and other mass atrocities have occurred, and instability continues at state and communal levels in many parts areas. The committee was established during a conference held in Kampala, Uganda September 22-23, 2010, and elected the Chairman Ambassador Balthazar Habonimana (Burundi), Vice-chairman Mrs Emily Chweya (Kenya) and the Rapporteur Mr. Lucien Yaliki (Central African Republic). ■

# CRDC Field Experience in Syria: Lessons in Human Regard and Civility

By Lori Stephensen, ICAR Ph.D. Student, lstephea@gmu.edu



CRDC Director Dr. Marc Gopin with First Lady Mrs Al-Assad and trip participants. Photo: CRDC.

In January, a team of eighteen students from six universities participated in ICAR's first CONF 713, Reflective Practice field experience through an eight day citizen diplomacy trip to Damascus, Syria. The team was led by CRDC Director Dr. Marc Gopin and supported on the ground by his Syrian counterpart Ms. Hind Kabawat.

With a rigorous syllabus and a packed itinerary, the team engaged shopkeepers, entrepreneurs, artists, academics, and high-ranking government officials, as well as the new US Ambassador to Syria, Robert Ford. However, the highlight of the trip was a meeting with Syria's First Lady, Asma Al-Assad.

In a two-hour conversation revolving primarily around youth and civil society Mrs. Al-Assad came across as gracious, intelligent, articulate, and engaging. Three important lessons emerged from the exchange that are salient, not only for the region, but for US society as well.

First, tolerance is a low standard for human relationships and this can be attested to by anyone who has ever been tolerated. According to Mrs. Al-Assad, while Muslims constitute the religious majority, they do not simply seek tolerance or even coexistence with Christians and Jews. In Mrs. Al-Assad's view Syrian Muslims hold a much deeper bond with members of the other Abrahamic faiths because each is an integral part of Syria's history and culture.

Using the body as a metaphor, Mrs. Al-Assad pointed to the absurdity of a "coexistence" orientation by asking if the right arm simply tolerates

the existence of the left leg or if it regards it as part of the whole. The hand, she explained, never expects the foot to change or deny its form or function. Rather, it is grateful for and relies upon its association.

Second, "The youth of the region need to have a legitimate role in civil society." To this Mrs. Assad added that any effort to support the region's youth must include engaging them directly, and respectfully eliciting their needs and creative ideas for their futures. The wisdom of this insight has proven to be almost prophetic when considering events in countries across the Middle East this month.

Third, "You are welcome here." This is a common phrase in Syria and Mrs. Assad expanded on it as she spoke of the plight of more than a million displaced Iraqis who fled to Syria as a consequence of military operations in their homeland. "They are not refugees," she insisted, explaining that while they are in Syria they are cared for as Syrians not as immigrants. "If they can return home one day we will celebrate with them, until then, Syria is their home."

Syrians maintain that one can trace the beginnings of civilization to Damascus. Certainly, these lessons, offered with eloquence against the vivid backdrop of a rich and hospitable cultural exchange, beg reflection on our own capacity for civility and human regard, personally, domestically, and on a global scale. ■



Ms Hind Kabawat, First Lady Mrs. Al-Assad, and Dr. Marc Gopin. Photo: CRDC.

initiatives

# Panel Discussion on USIP Report: Education and Practice in Peace and Conflict

By Gul Mescioglu Gur, ICAR Ph.D. Student, gmesciog@gmu.edu

EVENTS

On February 1, 2010, the ICAR Graduate Certificate Program and ICAR Student Association (ISA) hosted Nike Carstarphen a founding member of the Alliance for Conflict Transformation; Craig Zelizer, an Associate Director of the Conflict Resolution MA Program in the Department of Government at Georgetown University; and David J. Smith, National Education Outreach Officer at USIP, three of four authors of the special report of "Graduate Education and Professional Practice in International Peace and Conflict." This report came out of a collaborative effort between the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) and the Alliance for Conflict Transformation (ACT) to study the level of preparation of graduate students and professionals seeking careers in the international peace and conflict field.

The overall aim of the research was to explore the gap between academic programs and the needs of employers that hire individuals for international conflict work. In the introduction to the panel, Dr. Mara Schoeny, Director of the ICAR Certificate Program, stressed the importance of the report, for both educators and interveners in conflict. The report outlines potential methods of information sharing to maximize learning and awareness of opportunities to engage more practically in conflict. The panelists touched upon the tremendous growth of the Conflict Resolution field, which has generated important questions as to how to evaluate the quality of practical and academic programming.

## Upcoming ICAR Community Events

### Thursday, March 3, 2011

Book Launch: *Peacebuilding* by Dennis J.D. Sandole  
7.30pm, 555 Truland Building, Arlington Campus

### Friday, March 11, 2011

Discussion: Civil Society and Peacebuilding  
12.00pm, 555 Truland Building Arlington Campus

### Wednesday, March 30, 2011

Panel Discussion: Dialogue & Difference  
7.00 - 9.00pm, Room 163, Research 1, Fairfax Campus

<http://icar.gmu.edu/events-roster>



The report presents research developed with input from twenty-five faculty members, program administrators, and career development staff from thirteen academic programs at nine postgraduate institutions in the United States that focus on international conflict-related fields. The report's findings highlight an apparent gap between the academic achievement and field experience, in terms of a division between theory and practice. In addition, the report visits contradictions between generalists and specialists, conflict resolution mainstreaming and cross-sectoral development, and the inclusion of emerging "Best Practices" into academic programming related to international peace and conflict.

In terms of meeting the needs of employers' the report recommends that students seek overseas experience, build program management experience, develop cross-sectoral practical, and technical skills, and learn another language. Similarly, academic programs were encouraged to increase opportunities for international field experience and internships, increase opportunities to develop program management skills, and establish strong relationships between theory and practice.

During the discussion academics and graduate students shared their ideas about the report, concerns about the challenges in the job market, and made suggestions for other avenues of exploration relevant to the report. The event responded to a clear need to examine different perspectives on the relationship between graduate education and professional practice in international peace and conflict, a discussion that will hopefully continue in the future. ■

To view the report, visit:

<http://icar.gmu.edu/publication/10745>

To watch the discussion, visit:

<http://icar.gmu.edu/event/10808>

To read a response to the report by ICAR Ph.D. Michael English, visit:

<http://icar.gmu.edu/magazine-article/11326>

# Book Preview - Why They Die: Civilian Devastation in Violent Conflict

By Daniel Rothbart, Ph.D., Professor of Conflict Analysis and Resolution, drothbar@gmu.edu

After all the parades, the patriotic tributes, and the media portrayals that enshrine familiar virtues while maligning foreign vices, it is the weakest participants of armed conflict who bear its greatest burden. By any reasonable measure it is clear that civilians suffer most in large-scale violent conflicts. Violence against the innocent is not a secondary or passing consequence of war—it is deeply embedded in the character and evolution of today’s hostilities. In all too many armed conflicts raging across the globe, brutality to civilians caught up in the hostilities does not “just happen.” It is not merely occasional, nor is it circumstantial to some larger set of events.

In times of war, civilians tend to live strange lives. They can be uprooted from their homes, removed from their guardianship of their land, and treated like refugees in their own country. From the perspective of martial forces, warfare is not “theirs” to win or lose. Civilians are neither allies nor enemies, neither political leaders of the opposing forces nor their subordinates. From the perspective of international law, warfare is primarily an enterprise of combatants, for combatants, and with complicity of the combatants’ political institutions. And the exclusion of civilians from military decision making magnifies civilians’ powerlessness.

In this work we show that the identity politics surrounding two groups—enemy combatants and civilian noncombatants living in the enemy camp—play a major role in the aggression against civilians. A common source of civilian devastation in armed conflict is found in the relationship between the militant *Other* and the non-militant members of the enemy population from the perspective of the ingroup combatants, that is, the relationship between the enemy combatants and the non-militant civilians.

We seek to explain why they die by bringing a novel perspective to conflict analysis. We find dualistic models of conflict inadequate for our purposes, because such models fail to give primacy of place to the category of civilians. Probing beyond the binary framing of conflicts as existing solely between militant protagonist groups, we focus our analysis on the formative constructions of the two Others—militants and non-militants—from the perspective of the ingroup. In the chapters below, we adopt a “grounded” approach that gives primacy of place to four case studies of civilian devastation:

## Recent ICAR Articles, Op-Eds, Letters to the Editor, and Media Appearances

### Gaddafi's Family and Inner Circle not Helping

Ibrahim Sharqieh, ICAR Ph.D. Alumnus  
*Al-Jazeera*, 2/26/11

### 'The World is Flat' in Egypt

Ibrahim Sharqieh, ICAR Ph.D. Alumnus  
*Politico*, 2/23/11

### The March for Freedom in Libya

Ibrahim Sharqieh, ICAR Ph.D. Alumnus  
*The Brookings Institute Online*, 2/22/11

### The Domino Effect of Arab Unrest

Ibrahim Sharqieh, ICAR Ph.D. Alumnus  
*CNN International*, 2/22/11

### "Wave of Rage" Analysis of Middle Eastern Protests

Aziz Abu-Sarah, CRDC Director of Middle East Projects  
*Russia Today*, 2/21/11

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(a) structural violence against civilians in totalitarian regimes as illustrated by the deportation of Crimean Tatars in 1944 (Chapter 3); (b) the devastation of civilians in ethnic and religious conflicts, as illustrated by the Rwandan genocide in 1994 (Chapter 4); (c) and the killing of civilians in both the Second Lebanon War of 2006 (Chapter 5) and the Second Gulf War that began in 2002 (Chapter 6).

So, in times of war assumptions about who civilians are, what they do, and how they should be treated constitute a precondition of their endangerment, and represent the faceless form of domination that serves martial forces at the expense of civilians. We argue that each identity group engaged in conflict establishes a rationale for combat through its self-defined collective axiology. Collective axiology encapsulates a group’s sense of virtue and vice, right and wrong, and good and evil in relations with outsiders. ■

For more information please contact the authors: Dr. Daniel Rothbart, drothbar@gmu.edu, or Karina Korostelina, ckoroste@gmu.edu.

PRESS

# Dispatch From Malta: Introducing the ICAR - MEDAC Program

By Brian Farrell, ICAR M.S. Student, bfarrel2@gmu.edu

Imagine going to class in December when temperatures are in the mid-sixties to lower-seventies. Imagine earning two coveted Masters degrees in thirteen months while studying on the doorstep of global headlines. Imagine that the program's tuition equates to an out-of-state semester, and the cost of living is about the same as rural West Virginia. Plans for the weekend could point towards Rome, Valencia, Bologna, Paris, Cyprus or Morocco. The "too good to be true" adage does not apply here: this is the marriage of ICAR and the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies (MEDAC), hosted at the University of Malta.

Last June, after receiving an ICAR email regarding an opportunity to study in Malta, I knew that it was an ideal opportunity for academic rigor and personal enrichment. Following this insight, I then looked up where Malta can be found in an Atlas. Malta is an island found between the boot of Italy and the Libyan coast, which has conveniently placed us on the door step of current events. The demonstrations in Tunisia began while we studied Mediterranean regionalism under MEDAC director Prof. Stephen Calleya. Mubarak fell while German Chair Professor Monika Wohlfeld instructed security studies, and while Swiss Chair Professor Derek Lutterbeck lectured the natural resources in a conflict economy, Libyan pilots landed in Malta after refusing orders to bomb their own citizens.

Eleven students have completed the first semester of the newlywed ICAR/MEDAC program. Comprised of seven North Americans and four Maltese, the geographic demography of the inaugural cohort lacks the Arlington campus's billboard global representation. However, the professional and personal diversities form a cohort that fosters ideal chemistry for conflict resolution inquiry. Students have worked professionally in journalism, law, NGOs, the State Department, and the private sector. This exceptional cohort has deeply enriched me, and as per theory has formed our own in-group identity. We did not choose our family; admissions did.

The unique modular delivery of the program offers each course truncated to one or two weeks. The cohort meets four to five sessions per week for upwards of eight hours per day. ICAR and MEDAC faculty teach in a state-of-the-art classroom in a university over 400 years old. The faculty face the challenge

of acquainting themselves to students with established relationships and chemistry. Usually their integration to this group is achieved following a toasted pint at actor Oliver Reed's watering hole, and they become an integral part of the group dynamic.

Recently, we met MEDAC's diplomats for a grad school mixer. The inevitable question they asked: "What are you studying?" The elevator pitch for the program is very difficult. What exactly is it that we study? What do we do? We began the course with a perfunctory, heavy dosage of Galtung, Burton, Lederach et al.,. After applying theory-derived insights towards reflective practice through Prof. Cheldelin's guidance and Prof Korostelina's identity-based conflict, we have since studied MEDAC realism. The elevator pitch has become easier: "We're applied theory practitioner students who specialize in Mediterranean security."

Over the New Year's break, a colleague suggested a weeklong excursion to Morocco's cultural center, Fez. We took advantage of the opportunity to smell the pungent spices of Fez's Old Medina, to stare in the eyes of dead camel for sale in the souk, to taste authentic Moroccan cuisine, to hear the call to prayer, and share two hours of tea with a vendor with an infinite source of local legends and tales. I am greatly thankful for the marriage of ICAR and MEDAC. Having this opportunity has not been without consequence: we do not know you. My name is Brian, and my friends in the cohort are Andre, Suzan, Mike, Jessica, Kyoko, Ylenia, Natalie, Bardia, Stephen and Sue. We are pleased to meet you. ■



Brian Farrell, ICAR M.S. Student. Photo: ICAR.



The ICAR-MEDAC, 2010 - 2011, Cohort. Photo. B. Farrell

## Narratives Matter at ICAR

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Sara Cobb, ICAR Professor.  
Photo: GMU Creative Services.

Karyna Korostelina, Jamie Price, Rich Rubenstein, and Carlos Sluzki.

There is an emerging group of students that, meeting over the fall, have worked on the development of their narrative practice skills as well as discussing the ethics of the narrative practice; they have formed the Narrative Practice Working Group and are developing their mission statement as well as a set of related projects, all tied to narrative practice. Stay tuned for updates from this vibrant group that includes, so far, Ivon Alcime, Courtney Burkey, Grace Chau, Jessica Cooley, Cecily Hutton, Julie Minde, Haruka Namayama, Jeanine Neal, RJ Nickels, Harbey Penas, Paul Redmond, Julian Shepard, and Lori Stephensen. Additionally, there is a Working Paper Series under development at CNCR; Carlos Sluzki and Harbey Pena have agreed to function as editor/assistant editor. Should you have papers that address narrative dynamics in conflict processes, please do submit them to Carlos and Harbey. They are working to establish a review process and the papers published in this Working Paper Series will be posted on the CNCR website. Finally, a lecture series is under development; this series will provide an opportunity for faculty and students, from ICAR, Mason, and other universities to present works-in-progress.

CNCR is working on a variety of projects that convey narrative based theory, research and practice. The Narrative Compression Project (Sara Cobb, Neta Oren, Jessica Cooley and

Tres Thomas) is working to describe the realm of socio-politics as a “narrative field.” Which, ideally functions as a space in which diverse narratives can circulate, providing a foundation for healthy social and political debate and productive decision making processes. However, there are political contexts where some narratives are granted legitimacy while any alternatives are marginalized. In this case, the narrative field becomes a smaller space that limits a comprehensive deliberative process. We are referring to this process as *compression*; it allows little or no access for counter narratives to the field and enables the dominant narrative to become the sole inhabitant of the discursive space. When counter-narratives are somehow able to penetrate the dominant, its architecture changes and it evolves. However, all too often the dominant narrative is also able to co-opt within its framework the basic ideas of counter narratives that exist on the outside without incorporating the latter’s core values. As a result, dominant narratives are allowed to masquerade as inclusive discourses while actually operating as a mechanism of marginalization. We are calling the process by which this condition is *reversed narrative decompression*. For both studies of narrative compression and narrative decompression we will develop case studies; we are at present working on the Middle East conflict as a context for examining narrative compression. Later this spring, we plan to host a seminar at CNCR and invite those interested in this conflict or in narrative dynamics to participate and share ideas.

The Voices of Marginalized Youth Initiative (directed by Greg Pirio, a Research Faculty at ICAR, in collaboration with Sara Cobb) seeks to understand and engage the voices of marginalized youth in specific project sites in the US and abroad, where narratives that name the concerns and perspectives of youth are not heard by the wider society, or worse, are delegitimized. The absence of a legitimate

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## Recent ICAR Articles, Op-Eds, Letters to the Editor, and Media Appearances

### Saleh Falls

Ibrahim Sharqieh, ICAR Ph.D. Alumnus  
*The National Interest*, 2/21/11

### Egyptian Protests Bring Unity Between Arab Populations

Analysis by Aziz Abu-Sarah, CRDC Director of Middle East Projects  
*Russia Today*, 2/18/11

### Post-Mubarak Egypt: From successful protest to sustainable social transformation

By Samuel Rizk, ICAR Ph.D. Candidate  
*The Hill*, 2/14/11

### Egypt after 24 Hours of Military Rule

By Michael Shank, ICAR Ph.D. Candidate  
*CTV News*, 2/13/11

### Mubarak Steps Down: Egyptians Celebrate, Next Steps are Critical

By Michael Shank, ICAR Ph.D. Candidate  
*CTV News*, 2/13/11

### Egypt: Revolution or Bust

By Marc Gopin, ICAR Professor  
*Al-Jazeera*, 2/11/11

### Social Scientists See Bias Within

Featuring Solon Simmons, ICAR Professor  
*New York Times*, 2/07/11

### Producing Solutions By Appreciating the Interconnections

By Dennis Sandole, ICAR Professor  
*Financial Times*, 2/05/11

### Bush's True Legacy in Egypt

By Michael Shank, ICAR Ph.D. Candidate  
*The Hill*, 2/02/11

### Starting a Career Building Peace

David J. Smith, ICAR Ph.D. Alumnus  
*Career Convergence*, 2/01/11

### Post-Conflict Kyrgyzstan: "Is There 'Room' for Reconciliation?"

Kimairis Toogood Luehrs, ICAR Ph.D. Student  
*Career Convergence*, 2/01/11

<http://icar.gmu.edu/media>

## Narratives Matter at ICAR

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voice has dire consequences both for the youth themselves, who are confined within narrow and disadvantaged social horizons, and for the wider society, which is deprived the opportunity to know them and to respond more constructively to their needs and desires. This initiative seeks to give voice to voiceless marginalized youth, as a means both of self-empowerment and of building new, more inclusive communities that are capable of generating greater caring and improved policy and other forms of responsiveness to youth. More specifically, the project involves engaging marginalized youth in the development of audio and video programs for TV, radio and the new media that enables them to tell the stories that matter to them from their communities, educating the public about their specific issues as well as their cultural and social perspectives within which those issues arise. Dr. Pirio is seeking funding to support this project; CNCR will play an important role in the evaluation of this project, helping to design the framework for documenting and assessing the “voices” that emerge from this project.

The Narrative Problem-Solving Project, directed by Sara Cobb, is embedded in a National Science Foundation (NSF) project that aims to generate an effective method for enabling “the convinced” and the “unconvinced” within the climate change conflict to engage each other, altering their patterns of reciprocal delegitimation. Ed Maibach is the Principal Investigator of this NSF project and is also the Director on the Center for Climate Change Communication at Mason; Sara Cobb is the co-PI. In this project Dr. Cobb will be running problem-solving workshops, designed from a narrative perspective,

with groups of TV weathercasters who are in the “cross-hairs” of the conflict over climate change. These workshops provide an opportunity to develop a prototype of a narrative approach to problem-solving and will provide a case study of how this approach works. Meanwhile, the Narrative Practice Working Group at ICAR will be contributing to the conceptual development of the model and using it in simulations. This Narrative Problem-Solving Project will yield a model that will be offered as a workshop at Point of View, in the Spring 2011.

The Genocide Rescuers Project, directed by Jessica Cooley, MS student at ICAR, is a research project on the nature of the narratives that are told by rescuers in the Rwandan genocide. She is working to understand what makes these narratives different from perpetrator narratives, specifically in relation to how they position themselves, drawing on positioning theory. Working with a local NGO in Rwanda, drawing on the findings from her research, she is developing a manual for helping others adopt the narrative positioning processes that are characteristic of the rescuers. She hopes this research, and the development of models for experiential learning, will contribute to genocide prevention.

As these and other projects develop, descriptions will be posted on the website where events will also be listed. For any faculty or students who wish to join the Narrative Practice working group, the meetings are on Tuesday from 5pm-7pm, Truland 530. We look forward to your involvement and connection! ■



## Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution

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