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PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES

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SOME GUIDELINES FOR CONCEPTUALIZING SUCCESS IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION EVALUATION

Marc Howard Ross

Abstract

The immediate job of project evaluation is to decide what worked and what didn't. However, the more challenging task is making sense of why success or failure occurred and in so doing to propose appropriate future action. Effective evaluation of conflict resolution initiatives is complicated since interventions involve multiple goals and cross-level connections where indirect effects are often not seen in the short-run. This paper argues that there is no single best instrument or method for evaluating the extent to which conflict resolution practice has been successful. However, this does not mean that evaluation should be ignored. Instead projects need to develop methods that are good enough to be applied in contextually appropriate ways. To assist in this process, this article offers six guidelines for deciding when, how, and the extent to which specific conflict resolution interventions are effective. Good evaluation requires a self-conscious effort to articulate the most significant goals of different groups of participants and to track goal evolution in the course of a project using multiple, operational criteria. It should address the question of transfer, the ways in which direct work with only a small number of project participants, is expected to have more extensive, indirect effects on the course of the wider conflict. If it is done well, good evaluation helps practitioners define future activities and helps interveners and funders to imagine good-enough conflict management asking not whether they have fully resolved a complicated conflict but whether they have improved conditions sufficiently so that the parties in the conflict are more likely to develop the capacity to manage it constructively in the future.¹

Introduction

The immediate job of project evaluation is to decide what worked and what did not. However, the more challenging task is making sense of why success or failure occurred, and in so doing to propose appropriate future

¹ Earlier versions of this paper were presented to the USIP Symposium on Best Practices in Conflict Resolution Training, Washington, D. C. June 2000 and at the Annual Meeting of the International Society for Political Psychology, Cuernavaca Mexico July 2001.

action. Both success and failure can teach us a good deal about what constitutes effective conflict resolution, but only when we are able to comprehend their significance and draw lessons from them. To do this we must see conflict resolution practice as derived from working hypotheses about human behavior, specific conflicts, and plausible ways to modify them. From this perspective, evaluation must consider evidence from two different sources of failure (a) those arising from the specific training and intervention methods and/or (b) those resulting from an incorrect hypotheses about the conflict itself.

Effective evaluation of conflict resolution initiatives is complicated for several reasons. Most conflict resolution practice involves multiple goals, diverse participants, shifting time frames, and seeks change in behaviors, perceptions, and/or institutional practices. There is uncertainty about the relationship between the direct effects of a project on those who participate in it and its more indirect impact on the wider context in which the project is embedded—the problem of transfer (Kelman 1995). The deceptively simple question then of how to decide when conflict resolution is effective is often not one that can be answered easily.

Any evaluation has to begin with that project's specific goals while, at the same time, recognizing that project funders, implementers and participants may not all have the same goals or motivations for participating in a project. Central to goal articulation is making explicit the presumed linkages between a project's goals, its specific activities, and how these can impact the larger conflict. Many projects, for example, emphasize that success in conflict resolution should produce an improvement in the relationship between opposing communities and build a capacity for disputing parties to manage future problems. But there is a great deal of variation in how practitioners try to accomplish these goals—some do this through capacity building, others through sustained dialogue to reframe intergroup perceptions, and others emphasize the articulation and achievement of joint goals. Consequently, it is important to understand success in terms of multiple (often continuous) criteria—what Rothman calls “pieces of peace” (Ross 2000b; Rothman 1992). This means that there is no single best instrument or method for evaluating conflict resolution practice. As a result my objective here is not to say how to do program evaluation nor is it to evaluate any specific project. Rather it is to encourage approaches that support different forms of “good enough conflict management” (Ross 2000b). Good enough conflict management improves the relationship between parties in a conflict and is a developmental, transformative process that works to build institutions and practices that allow the parties to deal with tensions and differences more constructively than they had in the past.

The discussion of evaluation in conflict resolution here has three parts. The first section discusses theories of practice, project goals, and the roles each plays in evaluation. The next section draws on research Jay Rothman and I conducted in the 1990's on the theory and practice of non-governmental conflict resolution interventions. It discusses difficulties

employing traditional evaluation methods in conflict resolution work, and argues that just because evaluation is difficult and imperfect doesn't mean it should be avoided. There is no one best way to evaluate all projects, but when results using a variety of methods and indicators converge, we can be more confident (Campbell and Fiske 1959). The final section offers six guidelines to designing evaluation to decide when, how, and the extent to which, specific conflict resolution projects are effective. They emphasize that good evaluation requires a self-conscious effort to articulate the most significant goals for different groups of participants and to track goal evolution in the course of a project using multiple, operational criteria. In addition, evaluation should address the question of transfer, the ways in which direct work with only a small number of project participants, is expected to have more extensive, indirect effects on the course of the wider conflict. If it is done well, good evaluation helps practitioners define future activities and helps interveners and funders to imagine good-enough conflict management asking not whether they have fully resolved a complicated conflict but whether they have improved conditions sufficiently so that the parties in the conflict have developed the capacity to manage it constructively in the future.

Theories of Practice and Project Goals

Theories of practice. All practice is grounded in beliefs about the nature of social, political, and psychological reality. These often implicit worldviews guide practitioners and provide keys to understanding how they expect to produce their intended effects. Making these core beliefs explicit permits us to better understand the working assumptions underlying specific projects interveners design, to articulate the theory of intervention consistent with these assumptions, and to revise practice if, and when, the core assumptions on which the project is based are found to be imprecise or unwarranted.² It is especially useful to make explicit practitioner's assumptions about the roots of the conflict in which he or she is working to understand how these assumptions affect the design of an intervention, and the criteria used to evaluate the project's success.

Theories of practice are particularly important if we are to understand how practitioners approach a conflict and what they believe would happen to the wider conflict if their programmatic goals were achieved. In a recent comparison of six theories of ethnic conflict³ resolution, I found a great deal

² The terms worldview or schema describe the core assumptions about how the world one lives in works, about the motives of different social actors, and about the consequences of action on others. All social actors possess such theories, and the ones of particular interest here are the assumptions conflict resolution practitioners make about the nature of identity based conflict, what can be done to manage it constructively, and judgments about what constitutes success and failure in conflict resolution.

³ There are many who prefer the term identity based conflict, communal conflict or ethnopolitical conflict rather than ethnic conflict since most of these conflict are not about

of variation in how practitioners thought about conflict and what they tried to do to mitigate it (Ross 2000a). I found a wide range of assumptions about the presumed causes of conflict, great variation in specific strategies of conflict resolution, and quite varied criteria of success even among practitioners working on the same conflict. Figure 1 (reprinted from Ross, 2000b) presents six different approaches to practice in ethnic conflict resolution: community relations, principled negotiation, human needs, identity, intercultural miscommunication and conflict transformation. There are few direct disagreements between the approaches, but each one has a very different emphasis in how they define conflict, what concrete steps they take to address it, what are its indicators of success, and how they presume cross-level transfer will occur. Understanding the diversity of theories of practice is important to consider the wide range of goals in conflict resolution projects.

FIGURE 1: MAJOR THEORIES OF PRACTICE OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION
(Reprinted from Ross, 2000b)

	Causes and/or nature of ethnic conflict	Goals	Effects on participants in interventions	Mechanism for achieving effects	Transfer: Impact on the wider conflict
Community Relations	On-going polarization, distrust, and hostility between groups exacerbate existing conflict	Improving communication and understanding; promoting tolerance acceptance of diversity; encouraging structures which safeguard rights of all	Build community self esteem through successful local institutions and projects making decisions on issues important in daily life	Self-esteem, efficacy and reinforcement from prior successes through local institution building	Increased community capability and self-esteem facilitates cooperative problem solving on matters of mutual interest

ethnicity per se. While I think there is much of merit in this claim, I use ethnic conflict here to be consistent with my earlier usage in the larger project.

SOME GUIDELINES FOR CONCEPTUALIZING SUCCESS IN
CONFLICT RESOLUTION EVALUATION

Principled negotiation	Incompatible positions and zero sum view of conflict	Positive sum agreements between the parties—i.e. ones which provide for mutual gain	Build analytic ability to identify mutual interests and devise solutions which offer mutual gain	Separate people from the problems; focus on interests not positions; generate possibilities for mutual gain; use objective standards to judge outcomes	Spread of skills to others; increased sense that agreements are possible; benefits to communities from prior agreements
Human needs	Unmet or frustrated basic needs	Shared recognition of core needs and exploration of ways to meet them through joint action	Discovery of shared goals and objectives; recognition of common needs; greater sense of choices and options	Problem solving workshops led by skilled third parties who encourage analytic dialogue	Transfer of new perspectives from influentials and near influences changes the idea of what is possible for the wider community
Identity	Threatened identity rooted in unresolved past loss and suffering	Changed relations through mutual recognition; development of a sense that agreement is possible; lowering fears to allow exploring options	Overcomes barriers to dialogue by focusing on deep identity issues involved in past losses so the parties learn what possible agreements can offer	Mourning past losses and suffering; track 2 and other channels which focus on identity threats and fears; symbolic and ritual action to affirm group identity	New understanding of the conflict through changes in discourse and symbolic actions which feed new understandings into the policy process
Intercultural miscommunication	Incompatibilities between different cultural communication styles	Effective intergroup communication; weakening negative stereotypes	Builds awareness of other cultures; develops new metaphors; information exchange to overcome cultural barriers to effective communication	Increased awareness of communication barriers; use of third party 'translators'; deconstruction of historical accounts	Improved communication makes it easier to reach agreements and increased public support for cooperation

Conflict transformation	Real problems of inequality and injustice expressed through socially and culturally constructed meanings	Changing relationships and moral growth which produces justice, forgiveness and reconciliation	Transforms relationships to produce self-reliant persons; empowerment and recognition	Elicitive training which develops culturally relevant models of conflict resolution; mediation aimed at empowerment and recognition	Empowerment leads to transformation of relationships in the larger society built on culturally appropriate models
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Understanding goals. Over the past decade, there has been widespread attention paid to the various ways to prevent or end destructive ethnic conflicts and civil wars. Governments and international organizations have considered and adopted options such as the development of early warning systems, preventative diplomacy, training special negotiation and mediation teams, and the development of multinational rapid reactions teams to intervene in ethnic conflicts that escalate out of control. Non-governmental organizations engage in less expensive, faster, more flexible, more focused, more limited and far less politically complicated interventions than governmental and/or international efforts. Sometimes non-governmental entities try to address very specific concerns through the provision of particular services or the creation of institutional structures valued by all sides. At other times they work to create a context in which the parties can explore options while getting to know those on the other side without committing themselves publicly to political risks.

Most governmental efforts focus on achieving a formal settlement (which in some cases may be no more than a separation of the warring parties) or in implementing an agreement once one is reached. Non-governmental groups rarely seek to broker a peace or implement a formal accord. They are far more likely to focus on creating the preconditions that might move the parties to the table where more formal negotiations can take place, encourage acceptance and implementation of an existing agreement, and alter relations among disputants. This is not surprising for non-governmental organizations do not possess the resources or political clout to broker an agreement or implement one that has been reached. Rather non-governmental projects are widely viewed as possessing important capabilities that can complement those of governments and intergovernmental organizations. These initiatives exist in dozens of settings and in some there are literally dozens of projects in place. Their rapid development raises the question of how we decide when, why, and in what ways these efforts are successful. We are left with the question of what constitutes success and failure for most of these initiatives, and how do they or their funders evaluate them.

In thinking about conflict resolution goals, it is analytically useful to distinguish between *internal* criteria of a project's success and *external* criteria which are those linking a project's activities to the conflict as a whole.⁴ For example, an intervention that brings Israeli and Palestinian schoolchildren together might define success in terms of internal criteria such as the extent to which they learn about each other's traditions, develop a more nuanced appreciation of the other side's values, and treat members of the other group differently than they had in the past. External criteria of success would measure how such an intervention moves the Israeli-Palestinian conflict towards a viable settlement or changes daily life in their community. Such criteria would be derived from a theory of linkage that hypothesizes how changes in individual (and small group) beliefs and behaviors, such as those of the school children in this hypothetical project, can eventually affect the kinds of larger political agreements political leaders make.⁵

Rothman and Ross found that among the projects they studied, while interventions are not always able to fully articulate their objectives, for the most part they do a far better job in spelling out internal than external ones (Ross and Rothman 1999). What this means is that their theories of practice are more explicit about how their actions should affect the people with whom they work than about how they are likely to affect the course of the wider conflict in which the intervention occurs. The problem, however, is that while the rhetoric of project designs generally encourages broad claims about how a project will make a difference in the wider society, the connection between a project's daily activities and this rhetoric are not well articulated. Furthermore, this imprecision sometimes leads to disappointment with conflict resolution efforts when it is subsequently found that project activities fail to transform a society as promised. This was certainly the case with Doob's interactive conflict resolution workshops (Fisher 1997).

Another major finding was that rarely are intervener's initial goals the same ones that emerge as projects develop over time. This was particularly clear when we they got practitioners to articulate specific project goals and not just general "all purpose" objectives, such as making peace. This should not be surprising for a number of reasons. First of all, conflicts themselves change and so do the goals of intervention efforts. Second, organizations evolve as they learn what they are good at and what they are not, as sources of funding shift, and as personnel develop particular skills and concerns. Third, conflict resolution practitioners develop new insights and methods that lead to changes in how, what, and why they do what they

⁴ I find it useful to consider this distinction as parallel to the one between internal and external validity (Campbell and Stanley, 1963). Internal criteria of success are those over which a project exercises a good deal of control while external criteria of success are refer to the wider impact of an intervention.

⁵ Kelman (1995) provides a good discussion of this issue in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

do. All this means that an intervention's goals are likely to evolve over time. At the same time however, too few projects could articulate *specific operational* objectives, and as a result know when or how to alter their behavior in response to changing conditions or feedback.⁶

Rothman and Ross found that practice is often opportunistic (in the good sense), taking advantage of unanticipated possibilities. Effective projects are, no doubt, responsive their environment, which means they can make mid-stream course changes. Flexible and proactive program design in response to emerging trends can be very useful but hard to anticipate, and difficult to evaluate using traditional evaluation procedures. So while being opportunistic may be good policy, it is also tough on evaluation.

Limits to Traditional Evaluation Tools

Traditional evaluation grows out of experimental and quasi-experimental traditions (Campbell and Cook 1979; Campbell and Stanley 1963; Pawson and Tilley 1997; Rossi, et al. 1999).⁷ Many of the procedures these require are hard, if not impossible, to apply in conflict resolution work carried on in the context of sometimes-bitter conflicts. Where typically there are often more independent variables than cases, no random assignment of subjects to treatment groups, difficulty in gaining pre and post test measures, changing contexts in which interventions are implemented, shifting goals, uncertainty about what constitutes success, problems of instrumentation, selection bias, reactivity, too few resources, and poor designs. In addition, there can be additional issues of confidentiality and data collection that further limit evaluation work. Often at best qualitative, not quantitative, data are all that is available to judge whether a program or activity was successful (Robson 2000; Shaw 1999). So why don't we just pack it in? The most important reason is because despite the fact that evaluation cannot be perfect doesn't mean that what can be not be useful (Pawson and Tilley 1997). On the contrary, I argue that good evaluation in conflict resolution requires making the best judgments possible in tough circumstances.⁸

Conflict resolution projects are generally small-scale initiatives with 10-20 participants and activities that are not easy to replicate in standard formats. As a result, when significant effects are found, one can legitimately

⁶ Rothman and Ross asked a number of project directors about parts of their initiatives that had not been successful. Interestingly those projects which stuck us as more successful—and certainly more interesting—had no trouble giving us precise answers to this question while projects which were less defined (sometimes because they were more recent in origin) frequently could not provide much detail and tried to evade it.

⁷ There is a huge literature on evaluation that is not the main focus of this paper. For example, see Rossi et al, 1999 and Pawson and Tilley, 1997 for a good review of the field.

⁸ Don Campbell once told me that he was appalled that many people understood his work on quasi-experimental designs as saying that good research was not possible outside the laboratory. He meant it to empower researchers to improve field research on important questions.

ask the extent to which they can be attributed to the content of the intervention as opposed to the personal characteristics of the intervener(s). Another methodological problem is that interventions are rarely isolated changes in a social or political environment. It is not realistic to think we can be very precise about the degree to which any single intervention is responsible for diminished political violence or any move towards settlement that might emerge.⁹ All this makes it difficult to attribute subsequent changes in a conflict to a single intervention although many interveners clearly believe their work made a significant contribution. In short, when there are independent variables and possible interaction effects it is hard to be very certain about when a project has a clear impact and when observed effects reflect the sentiments of a well-intentioned intervener.

Internal versus External Criteria of Success

The distinction between internal vs. external criteria of success raised above is central to the issue of evaluation. While all projects seek to have an impact on the people and groups with which they work, the cross-level transfer that produces changes in the larger conflict in which it is located are critical to long-term success (Kelman 1995; Maoz forthcoming). Here I say more about internal and external criteria of success raising questions of how transfer works in conflict resolution interventions.

Internal criteria. Internal criteria of success indicate the extent to which a project achieved its immediate goals. Specific context-based criteria are needed if these are to be adequately assessed. Effective projects not only are attentive to how and when they are meeting their goals, but they are also characterized by the existence of multiple and sophisticated indicators of success. Multiple indicators of success and failure are necessary because exclusive reliance on one indicator will fail to measure the multi-dimensional nature of most interventions. Shifts in interests and interpretations are often subtle and are rarely tapped effectively with a single measure. Sophisticated notions about success are also worth developing (Maoz, forthcoming). For example, attention to changes in people's stories, modification of affect, shifts in the events are emphasized in narratives, and the use of new language and metaphors tells a great deal about how an intervention affects participants—although these are difficult to measure. Behavioral change measures are particularly good indicators of an intervention's effect—or its absence. While most interventions are ultimately interested in changes in behavior, Rothman and Ross (1999) found that few projects develop explicit measures of changes of the parties' interests even though such measures could provide useful indicators of an intervention's effects.

⁹ This leads to the hypothesis that perhaps single projects cannot be fully evaluated by themselves but must be understood in terms of what else is taking place in a region, the need for a division of labor and specialization among projects, and a consideration of what projects accomplish themselves but also what they accomplish in working with others. How to do this is not intuitively obvious.

While articulating clear internal criteria of success is important, Rothman and Ross (1999) found that evaluation is sometimes transformed from a mechanism of self-correction to a self-serving one. An obvious example of this involves asking participants in a workshop or training session to evaluate the intervention through a questionnaire. Many of the questions are worded in such a way as to favor a positive response, a problem which is compounded in situations where people are paid to participate and believe that their future remuneration is tied to their answers. Pre- and post-workshop data can be valuable, but only if there is some integrity to the process.¹⁰ Similarly, one should be critical of measures of success which simply count the number of participants in workshops or the number of cases processed without providing attitudinal or behavioral outcomes of an intervention.

External Criteria

The question of external criteria of success links the specific effects of an intervention to the wider conflict in which it occurs. While projects generally have a good sense of internal criteria, Rothman and Ross (1999) found that there was far less explicit articulation of the link between these goals and the impact they expect their achievement to have on the wider societal conflict.¹¹ While no small intervention can be expected to end a long-term intransigent conflict itself, one can ask practitioners to hypothesize what specific impact a project, or a group of projects, should be expected to have on the larger conflict. Yet Ross and Rothman found that few practitioners could articulate explicit hypotheses about spillover and multiplier effects. I suggest that spelling out these hypotheses is often less difficult than interveners believe and could lead to significant learnings about what does and does not work in conflict resolution.

Here Kelman's work stands out (Kelman, 1987; Kelman, 1995). Since Kelman began problem-solving workshops in the Middle East in the early 1970's, he has been clear on who he sought to participate in his workshops—unofficial near-influentials; what he wanted them to acquire—a clearer sense of the other side's thinking; and how he believed they would have an impact on Israeli and Palestinian societies—injecting new ideas into

¹⁰ Rarely do projects collect data after a significant passage of time to see if the effects found in a workshop are still present a year or two later.

¹¹ Knox (1993) is a real exception here. He was interested in the impact of the effect of adoption of community relations programs by local councils in Northern Ireland. Using comparative survey data, he found that over a four-year period the program had an impact on attitudes concerning fair employment, prejudice, and tolerance. Perhaps the effects were confounded with the independent variable in that councils adopting the program may have been located in areas more predisposed to attitude change. Nonetheless, he makes the case that even if this took place, putting these programs in place still had an independent impact on attitudes. To me, the key point is the seriousness of the effort to measure a program's wider impact.

public discourse including the notions that there were people on the other side to talk to and things to talk about with them (Kelman, 1987, 1995; Fisher, 1997: Chapter 3). At the same time, I am not aware of any systematic effort to assess the extent to which his hypotheses about the dynamics of transfer are correct. In part this is because Kelman has long felt that issues of confidentiality needed to take precedence over collection of data that could be used in evaluation. In addition, even if Kelman had been determined to measure transfer, the task would have been daunting. It would not have been easy to say, for example, that when public discourse did shift in Israel and Palestine, it was because of the interactive conflict resolution workshops and not one or more of the dozens of other initiatives going on at the time, or changes in international and regional politics.

Good, measurable, external criteria of success are especially difficult to develop in situations since often the objectives include preventing undesirable events from taking place. For example, a project may try to halt the spread of intergroup violence and may take deliberate steps to limit tit-for-tat reprisals between groups or seek to ease relations between the police and local communities. Since the goal is to prevent undesirable events, such as retaliatory violence, how are we to decide the extent to which the intervention is the reason why such an event fails to occur? Only if there is an explicit statement of expectations (counter-factuals) against which outcomes are evaluated is this possible.

Faced with significant barriers to traditional evaluation, conflict resolution practitioners need to follow Campbell's advice and find ways to make important decisions about what works and what doesn't as best they can. Sound theory and incomplete knowledge must be the guide. In the spirit of improving our capacity to make better decisions I offer three different tests which might help evaluate a project's effects. While none of them is infallible, agreement across them might be sufficient (if not fully adequate) to decide what was successful in an intervention.

Face validity. Is it plausible that the activities of a project are likely to have contributed to an outcome (or a non-outcome)? For example, Kelman (1995) suggests why it is likely that problem-solving workshops and various Track 2 efforts significantly contributed to the 1993 Oslo Accord and subsequent Israeli-Palestinian agreement. He argues that these interventions over 20 years significantly altered the frames of reference of both political elites and the mass public as well as showing key figures on both sides both that there was someone on the other side with whom they could talk. While Kelman doesn't assert his workshops were more important than the end of the cold war and the PLO's weakened political position following the Gulf War, he builds a plausible case that conflict resolution mattered, and this claim has face validity for many familiar with the Oslo process.

Consistency with theory. A second test is whether an outcome is consistent (or clashes) with one or more accepted social science theories. This test can be particularly useful in raising questions about well-

intentioned but naive interventions.¹² For example, claiming significant impact as a result of short-term interventions, such as training sessions, flies in the face of what is widely accepted about the need for social support for attitude and behavior change, the sometimes negative effects of intergroup contact, and the problems people in emotionally charged situations have in transferring learnings across social settings or individuals.¹³ Similarly, methodological considerations, such as those Campbell and Stanley (1963) raise ought to make us cautious about claims of the impact of particular micro-level events on macro-outcomes. Unfortunately, issues of selection bias, reactivity, and instrumentation, can lead wishful thinking that leads interveners to believe that their impact is greater than it really is. Faced with this kind of question, the best thing to do is to gather multiple, independent measures that point in a common direction as well as parallel results across workshops and contexts.

Consensus among disputants. Face validity generally refers to reactions from implementers and outside observers. Another useful test of a project's impact could come from the members of the disputing communities themselves. Two different kinds of evidence might be sought. One would try to collect local perceptions about why particular outcomes had or had not come about. For example, at the time of the cease fires in Northern Ireland in 1994 there were many conflict resolution specialists (and other observers) who warned that there were likely to be continuing violent incidents similar to those had taken place in South Africa and Israel-Palestine following initial agreements because, the wisdom went, the paramilitary groups could not control all their members. Yet since 1994 there has been only one major violent incident and all parties in the region denounced this one.¹⁴ Why? Is it because the paramilitaries do have more control over their followers than is assumed or is it because there was sufficient buy-in to the political

¹² Theory, of course, is not always clear about what to expect. For example, should attitude or behavioral change come first? how might changes in one affect the other? However, theory is especially useful in rejecting what seem to be overly optimistic claims projects make in either a burst of enthusiasm or as part of their appeal to funders.

¹³ Boltjes (1999) reports on one project that got large funding although there was little theoretical reason to think it could have worked. The Conflict Management Group sought to transform the culture of the former Soviet Union from a culture of hierarchy into a culture of negotiations. Considering that the specific project activities involved working with a relatively small elite, groups for very limited amounts of time such sweeping goals are clearly inconsistent with virtually any plausible theory of social or political change to which either project should have had access. We simply have no good theories that would allow us to expect that intense workshops, even (and sometimes especially) with highly influential political figures, are hardly likely to lead to sweeping culture change (especially in a country as large and complex as Russia).

¹⁴ There have been many smaller scale incidents especially in neighborhoods in Belfast as well as internecine violence particularly involving Protestant paramilitaries. In addition there have been regular confrontations, sometime involving violence, around parades in Portadown and a few other areas.

agreements to limit the violence? Was it the widespread public support for ending the violence? Learning what people think is at work can be useful—particularly if the answers are consistent with the first two tests. Second, one might try to get the reactions of a more focused sample of community leaders, political and security officials to see to what extent they find specific interventions effective in their eyes. While political perspectives may color such reactions, they might also help us learn about what makes certain projects effective. Finally, when a project conducts multiple workshops over time, the reflections of returning participants might provide particularly good evidence of how the project has been effective to date.

What “Good Enough” Evaluation Looks Like

The previous pages offer an approach to thinking about evaluation in conflict resolution. The emphasis is on doing the best possible job in complicated situations. Good enough evaluation improves conflict resolution in three ways. First, at the level of specific projects, it provides rapid and effective feedback so that ineffective activities are dropped and ones that are working are enhanced. Rothman has developed a formal set of procedures, Action Evaluation, which tries to make such changes and adjustments during the course of an intervention (Ross, 2001; Rothman, 1998). It involves all stakeholders in reflection on goals, the extent to which they have been achieved, and their redefinition over time. Second, for communities in which interventions are taking place, evaluation can provide tangible evidence of desired change that may be crucial in a political climate where interventions (by insiders or outsiders) are viewed skeptically. Third, sound and effective evaluation can help funders feel more confident about what they are getting for the money they spend. When funders better appreciate what evaluation can and cannot provide, they may be more likely to continue to be engaged in the field. This process is one which includes educating agencies and foundations about not only what works and what doesn't, but what is realistic to achieve, the importance of partial successes, and the long term nature of transforming most bitter, intransigent conflicts.

The spirit of the argument here is not to offer a simple evaluation checklist that can be used across situations. Rather, I propose six guidelines that follow from the perspective offered here to help decide whether and how conflict resolution projects (or parts of them) are effective or not.

(1) *Good evaluation requires a self-conscious effort to articulate the most significant goals of disputants and interveners and to track goal evolution over time.* In many long-term conflicts the demands of groups in conflict appear to be like a shifting target. When initial demands are met, newer ones arise. In part this is because the conflict itself evolves, and in part because settling one set of issues brings others to the fore. For example, in Northern Ireland when the British reimposition of direct rule in the region significantly diminished the most blatant public sector anti-Catholic discrimination—a primary goal of the late 1960's Civil Rights Movement, a

new set of demands came to the fore having to do with the constitutional arrangements of the north. The 1998 Good Friday Agreement provided a constitutional arrangement and questions including Loyal Order parades, police restructuring and decommissioning of weapons became focal points of the conflict. Finally, it is wrong to assume that the goals of the parties locked in conflict are clear to themselves and to their opponents. This is not always the case.

Goals of conflict resolution initiatives evolve in response to both disputants needs and changing conditions. The challenges of pre-settlement and post-settlement periods are, for example, often very different and quite different goals are appropriate in each. Rothman and I felt that projects we intuitively sensed were vibrant and effective often develop new and/or changing goals over time. Although there was no explicit time dimension in our analysis, we contend that evolved objectives, when clearly articulated in an operational manner, regularly evaluated, and revised can serve as powerful tools for program development. Rothman then made this central to his concept of Action Evaluation (1998). More attention to goals—and the articulation of operational indicators of their success or failure—will mean more realistic and careful planning of projects, but also more self-conscious linkage between goals and the specific activities in which a project engages.

Goals do not always change, but the ways that participants talk about their own and those on the other side can shift in important ways. To understand this dynamic, evaluation can look at how discourse changes, the degree to which each side is able to employ the others' language and metaphors, changes in adverbs and adjectives indicate decrease negative affect, the number and intensity of blame statements, and the degree of sustained back-and-forth dialogue as opposed to one-sided pronouncements.

(2) *Good evaluation spells out operational criteria of success linked to specific project activities, and seeks good evidence to determine the degree to which they have been met.* This is often harder than it sounds. Many practitioners bristle at being pinned down in terms of specific operational goals. They contend that goal setting often cannot be done up front. Surely this is correct at one level. However, at some point vague goals such as “increasing understanding between two communities,” or “providing conflict resolution training to 2000 people” without saying what they will do with it is not good enough. Good evaluation requires spelling out criteria so a project knows when goals have not been achieved as well as when they have. When goals are too vague, it is easy for interveners to avoid deciding that something they are doing is or is not effective or that their theory is inadequate. Just because clear goals are enunciated, does not mean they won't shift over time. In addition, we need to better understand the disputing parties' changing goals, and changing priorities of conflict resolution initiatives. When and how do they evolve, converge, diverge and what are the problems for practice these produce?

Interventions vary greatly in the time frame they adopt. For example, programs aimed at changing attitudes through school curricula can only

expect to have an impact over a relatively long period of time. Other interventions, such as the development of a mediation center in a local community, can realistically expect to have a faster impact. Longer-term goals are often more problematic to funders pushing project directors to show results relatively quickly. However, as Lederach (1997) argues, there is little theory that leads us to expect rapid transformation in conflicts. Rather an important task is communicating what is achievable in a given time frame and resisting the temptation to promise what there is no reason to believe can be delivered.

(3) Good evaluation leads to the development of multiple criteria of success, and helps projects understand partial successes and failures. Specific goals often help both disputants and interveners to appreciate the many dimensions to a complex conflict and the ways in which there can be partial, but not insignificant, movement towards goal achievement. In Northern Ireland, if one only saw success in terms of a signed political agreement, for years conflict resolution would have been seen as a failure. However, other measures of success such as the level of effective power sharing between Protestants and Catholics in local councils would have given a different answer.

While it is not always pleasing to politicians to announce partial successes, they need to understand the significance of the idea of pieces of peace. Existing theories of conflict resolution are partial and contingent, not general ones. They rarely compete with each other directly. Rather, each partial theory (Figure 1) is likely to be appropriate in some contexts and certain stages of a conflict. Gaining a better appreciation of the connections between theories, contexts, and stages is needed for good evaluation. Too many peacemakers have, at present, too little guidance from social science theory and evidence to be able to answer questions about how to proceed very easily either in general or in a particular case.

(4) *Good evaluation addresses the question of transfer, the ways in which direct work with only a small number of project participants is expected to have more extensive, indirect effects on the course of the wider conflict.* The transfer problem is perhaps the thorniest issue for the field. The funding process encourages projects to make large claims about their impact when, in fact, more modest ones are warranted. As noted, Lederach (1997) argues deep change is a long-term process, and yet many funders want to show short-term effects. Just consider the decrease in interest in central and Eastern and Central Europe today as opposed to fifteen years ago to see how fickle funders can be. Perhaps if some opportunistic activists had not promised almost instant change, and had a keener appreciation of the dynamics of transfer, there would have been fewer, but more sustained, interventions.

Another dimension of the question of transfer concerns what is the impact of a project after the short run funding ends. What is left? A common answer Rothman and I found is that good projects “need to leave something behind” meaning either functioning institutions that local groups would run

or particular skills (or even perspectives) which would continue to be valuable in the society. While this answer is not foolish, this mantra can be self-serving unless either (a) there is clearly a local expression of need for the institutions and skills, and (b) there is a clear commitment that the institutions are sufficiently valued locally and therefore will be maintained and that the skill training provided will benefit more than just those individuals who received it.

(5) Good evaluation helps practitioners define future and stage appropriate, activities that variously build on what has been successful and/or modifies activities in light of what has not. Different stages of conflict require different kinds of interventions so generalizations across stages may be inappropriate. Elsewhere I hypothesize that in severe conflicts addressing hostile interpretations needs to precede efforts to bridge competing interests (Ross 1993: Chapter 8). Another important stage-linked consideration is when it is more appropriate to work separately with disputing groups and when they should be brought together. In Northern Ireland, for example, community relations efforts for years have emphasized the importance of “single tradition” work so that when people from the different sides get together interactions can be constructive. Another stage related consideration calls for examining the needs of disputants in pre-settlement and post-settlement conflicts and emphasizing the different skills and resource required to be effective in each. By identifying specific tasks associated with particular stages, we may better spell out the contingent nature of success (Fisher, 1997).

(6) Good evaluation helps disputants, interveners and funders to imagine good-enough conflict management (Ross, 2000a). It does this not by asking whether they have fully resolved a complicated conflict but whether they have improved conditions sufficiently so that the parties in the conflict are likely to develop the capacity to manage conflict constructively in the future. Successful management of ethnic conflicts is helped by the development of models and examples of constructive dispute management. Such models can serve two purposes. One is to help develop specific techniques that can be applied to a wide range of conflicts. In recent years there has developed a small cottage industry of scholars and practitioners teaching particular methods of conflict management in a wide range of settings rather than accepting the idea that conflicts need to be either left alone to ripen or can only be stopped by a strong third party. This effort needs to be greatly expanded and refined in a theoretically informed way to be relevant to conflicts in a range of cultural settings.

A second purpose is more overtly political, aimed at changing the widely held beliefs that large-scale intractable conflicts such as those between ethnic groups are unresolvable. The success of the alternative dispute resolution movement and teaching conflict management approaches has been greatest in universities and in industrial settings. In these contexts, conflicts are often moderate to low in intensity, both the interpersonal and economic

rewards of new conflict management methods have been seen quickly.¹⁵ It may indeed be the case that there are very few examples of more severe conflict management with peace and justice. Or it may be how we think about such situations that particularly limit our ability to identify cases. The greatest conceptual danger comes from the *post hoc* nature of many social science analyses. Cases where some kind of accommodation is achieved become easy to dismiss as not relevant to the problem. Why? The fact that some kind of conflict management was achieved is used as evidence that the conflict couldn't have been so severe in the first place. Perhaps, but I doubt it. Good evaluation of conflict resolution initiatives would help see if this hunch is right or not.

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¹⁵ One question worth considering is the extent to which there is a kind of Hawthorne effect here in that in many large organization perhaps it was the fact of change and innovation which was as important for the changes as the specific ones which were made.

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**METAPHORS FOR ONE ANOTHER:
*RACISM IN THE UNITED STATES AND
 SECTARIANISM IN NORTHERN IRELAND***

John Alderdice and Michael A. Cowan

Abstract

This article explores the possibility that an analysis of racism in the United States and sectarianism in Northern Ireland inspired by literary, psychotherapeutic, religious and philosophical conceptions of metaphor might yield new insight into the two situations by attending carefully to similarities and differences between them. Following brief summaries of the current state of racism in the U.S. and sectarianism in Northern Ireland, the article offers two perspectives from the field of psychotherapy that seem particularly germane to both situations. Then we turn to the political philosophy of Hannah Arendt for a reflection on the unpredictability and irreversibility of human action, and what can be done within the limits of those conditions. Finally, we find in contemporary broad-based community organizing in the tradition of Saul Alinsky our closing metaphor: interracial and interfaith citizens organizations as crucibles that enable citizens and people of faith to imagine a way forward in societies struggling with racist and sectarian histories.

Introduction

In the same way that even tranquillised force relationships destroyed real communication in the U.S. South, so that blacks developed the habit of saying what they thought whites wanted to hear, tranquillised force relationships in the North of Ireland erected another kind of barrier A precondition of friendly relationships was the systematic avoidance of any topic of conversation that might touch politics or religion and the concealment of everything that in fact divided them.... All the benign tendencies to be good neighbors, to treat others as you would be treated yourself; all the small or large gestures of intercommunal goodwill that may or may not have been made were inarticulate because the fundamental source of division was too dangerous to talk about. (*Wright, 1987*)

Integration is genuine intergroup, interpersonal doing. (*King, 1963*)

The U.S. has been legally desegregated for nearly forty years, while Northern Ireland continues the long struggle to dismantle a segregated society. But segregation in America today is in certain important respects more extensive than during its legal period, and there is much evidence that Northern Ireland is now more polarized than at any other time in living memory. Social and historical parallels between the two situations are strong. In both countries, a political and economic system was designed and maintained to advance one group's interests at the expense of another's (Wright, 1987, pp. 164-216). In both countries, painful social transformations sparked and inspired by the U.S. Civil Rights movement have been underway for approximately half a century in a concerted if uneven attempt to redress their respective histories of institutionalized racism and sectarianism. Given these parallels, do the two societies have any practical lessons for each other as they strive to overcome the profound divisions at the heart of their respective histories? We offer the following thesis: Racism in the United States and sectarianism in Northern Ireland can serve as metaphors for each other, revealing complex patterns of similarity and difference, and suggesting a way forward in both fractured societies. During the past two years we have tested this thesis in public conversations on both sides of the Atlantic in the belief that reflection along this line may yield practical implications for constructive social change in the United States and Northern Ireland.

It is important at the outset to identify something of the experiences and interests that the authors bring to this essay. For one of us, engagement with political life has been through electoral politics and leadership in the official apparatus of the state; for the other, political involvement has been through community organizing within the domain of civil society, a form of political engagement that those involved proudly insist on calling, "non-partisan, non-electoral politics." Given those differing political histories, one question that interests us is what constitutes healthy relationship between the electoral and civil-society dimensions of politics in a pluralistic world. In the United States, for example, the most efficacious current forms of democratic participation involve building relationships of public, mutual accountability between elected officials and non-partisan, civil-society organizations (Greider, 1992). Broad-based (interfaith and interracial) community organizations can sometimes give politicians the constituency or "political cover" they need to make and keep public commitments towards which they may be personally inclined but would otherwise hesitate to undertake. In other instances, the public clout of such organizations is sufficient to create

the political will in office holders and candidates to adopt aspects of a community-generated agenda that they might not otherwise have considered. In Northern Ireland, on the other hand, events of the last forty years make it plain that political violence in a contested state threatens non-violent political organizing. Absent a stable civic order, the “ordinary” political actions of free assembly and speech, including non-violent forms of political action, become riskier activities.

Both authors come to our respective political engagements from “careers of origin” as psychotherapists, and teachers of psychotherapists. So a second question that engages our attention is the relevance of the wisdom of that world to politics. It is clear to us that part of the challenge of pursuing that question is avoiding the trap of psychologizing the difficult and very real social facts of competing group interests, unequal constellations of power, and varying shades of historically thick, malevolent perceptions of the “other.” That said, we share a keen interest in how a psychotherapeutic view might inform everyday, on-the-ground efforts of politicians and citizens to resolve inter-ethnic and inter-religious differences through an inclusive, non-violent public politics that is based on building bridges within civic relationships around common interests on local ground. That contribution must be one that keeps the hard realities of power and group interests at the center, rather than imagining some kind of psychotherapeutically informed transcending of the messy real world of conflicting interests. Our conversation has been about how insights about some irreducible elements of the human condition, gleaned from that most private context of psychotherapy, may have relevance in very public ones like peace negotiations.

Three interplaying senses of metaphor guide the following reflections. In one sense our reference to metaphor is *literary*. In literary studies, the form called “metaphor” has a technical meaning: something is like (and not like) something else. Metaphors don’t suggest identities, but rather intricate and often surprising patterns of similarity/difference (Ricoeur, 1977). The second sense of metaphor here is *psychotherapeutic*. Metaphors often “get through” to patients, allowing them to derive meaning from a story or image that would not have been available to them through straightforward literal explanation (Rosen, 1982). In a related vein, there is no doubt that part of the transformative power of group psychotherapy is the reiterative process wherein group members’ lives become metaphorical sources of information for each other (Yalom, 1970). Indeed, how often do all of us see relevant things in others’ lives that may initially or chronically elude direct self-scrutiny? The final sense of metaphor relevant to this essay is *religious* or

theological (McFague, 1982; Tracy, 1981). All speech about ultimate realities like God's will, human destiny, or good and evil, is metaphorical, poetry "mutely appealing for an imaginative leap" by those who encounter it (Whitehead, 1978). Racism and sectarianism are metaphors for the divisions within humanity that wreak havoc on the world's peace and limit the development of all people. When we address them, we address the spiritual condition of humankind, recalling the ancient hope for a world in which differences do not serve as a basis of oppression, in which "there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no male and female" (Galatians 3:28).

Racism in the United States Today

The U.S. is caught in a double impasse on race today. On the one hand, we have the "new racial conservatives," whom sociologists suggest may constitute a majority of American adults, and who sincerely believe that racism is primarily a thing of the past.

White Americans ... are unduly sanguine about the state of black America. According to a recent survey, while a majority of whites think blacks are worse off than they are, 38 percent think blacks' economic status is about the same as their own. Fifty percent of whites think America has achieved racial equality in access to health care and 44 percent think African Americans have jobs that are about the same as whites.

In contrast,

African Americans are deeply disillusioned about the future. At the turn of the millennium, 71 percent of African Americans believed racial equality would not be achieved in their lifetime or would not be achieved at all. Seventy three percent of African Americans believe they are economically worse off than whites (Dawson, 2001).

On the other hand we have those who believe that racism is alive and well but transmuted into a subtler form called "laissez faire" or "soft" racism. The definition of racism in the U.S. has changed dramatically in the past and is changing again today from "the evident superiority of white ways," to "prejudice based on skin color," to "prejudice plus power," to "the defense of group prerogatives" (with or without prejudice) (Wellman, 1993).

So the first racial impasse in America is between those who believe that race is no longer a significant social issue and those convinced that it is. Within the group of those who believe that racism remains a major problem in the U.S., there is another impasse between pragmatists convinced that we must get on with building interracial partnerships to act for the common good in concrete ways, and anti-racists who believe passionately that unless people are explicitly confronted with how racism works, historically, psychologically and institutionally in some form of deliberate anti-racist education, racism will subvert efforts at interracial work for the common good. Proponents of the two approaches tend toward antagonism with each other, which divides the energy and limits the effectiveness of those who agree that racism's effects continue to be a major problem in the U.S.

And here we believe the racial facts of the U.S. converge with the realities of sectarianism in Northern Ireland. In keeping with our opening quotation from Frank Wright describing cross community communication in Northern Ireland, it must be said that everyday interaction between blacks and whites in the U.S. today is likewise typically characterized by polite avoidance of everything that in fact divides us. This avoidance profoundly limits inter-group communication in both societies because both sides are aware that explosive matters are lying just below the surface of their interactions, and neither wishes to trigger off a vicious cycle of anger, recrimination and defensiveness. The problem with this understandable strategy, of course, is that what cannot be confronted directly and honestly can never be resolved. This accounts at least in part for why interracial and cross-community dialogue in our two societies is stuck today.

So how do we escape the historical inertia that keeps us trapped in such false and collusive civility? Unless a seasoned and tested ability to engage one another across lines of race and sect in direct conversation and joint decision-making about our common life, including when necessary the dangerous subjects of race and politics, gradually becomes integral to the public cultures of the United States and Northern Ireland, the divisions within our respective societies, of which race and religion are only the most potent instances, will continue to cripple and may eventually destroy the capacity to increase the peace of our common life. This possibility becomes ever more real as ethnic segregation in America and sectarian polarization in Northern Ireland increase.

Sectarianism in Northern Ireland Today

The 1990's like the 1690's, the 1790's and the 1890's brought pressure for political change in Ireland. Unfortunately, the nature of the change taking place is not yet fully clear. Is there indeed, real change? It is possible to have change on the surface and continuity in the depths. We may be forewarned by Sir Winston Churchill's oft quoted comment about the dreary steeples re-emerging from the deluge of the First World War, the integrity of their quarrel one of the few unmodified features of the old world order. We may also be cautioned by our experience in recent generations of the difficulties faced by those in Northern Ireland who have sought to create a stable, peaceful, just and prosperous community where everyone feels at home in their own place.

Those of an optimistic frame of mind will maintain that we are going through the difficult and prolonged birth pangs of a new order in Ireland, and will assert that a qualitatively different and better society is undoubtedly coming into being. They will point to the increasing pluralism and prosperity of the Republic of Ireland, and will identify as conclusive evidence of a "new order" the Peace Process with its extended cease-fires and the overwhelming adoption of the Good Friday Agreement by the people of Ireland in referendums, North and South.

In a thought provoking book entitled *'Northern Ireland: The Choice'*, Professors Tom Hadden and Kevin Boyle (1994) analyzed whether the problems of the North would be likely to result in separation or sharing. They pointed out that almost all attempts to address the problem in the last generation had aimed to facilitate the development of a single shared community, with institutions in which all could participate. In this model of sharing, the present divisions are deemed to have resulted from the exclusion of sections of the community from effective participation. The rights that should have been available to all had not been guaranteed to some, especially in the Roman Catholic nationalist section of the community. If all could be involved, and everyone believed their rights were guaranteed, then a shared community could grow out of the divisions of the past.

The other option Hadden and Boyle described was a much less optimistic one. They suggested that the demographic evidence pointed to an increasing separation between Protestant unionists and Roman Catholic nationalists, and speculated that this might be reflected in attitudes to such an extent that the future might only be found in separate development with joint, rather than shared institutions. In this vision of the future, there would not be

a growing area of shared space populated by an increasing centre ground of people who identified more with the community as a whole than with either cultural/political background. Instead the community would become increasingly bipolar, with each managing their own space, and co-operating only on those matters that require a joint regional approach. This pattern of increasing separation, we should observe, would resemble the increasing residential segregation of America since the Civil Rights movement, dubbed “American apartheid” by sociologists Massey and Denton (1993).

If these authors were right in their assessment of the growing evidence, the implications are substantial. The future would not see a pluralist society. It might be qualitatively different from the past in terms of the protection of Roman Catholic nationalists, and the struggle for control would be converted into a solely political affair rather than a clash of politically motivated terrorist campaigns. This would of course be an enormous achievement in itself. Politics is not about everyone agreeing with each other, it is about different views struggling together in a civilised manner, and the separation model could potentially achieve this too. It would be less likely however to achieve a settlement of the ancient feud between Northern Ireland’s two communities, which would continue, albeit in a more civilised form. It would also fail to achieve a quantum development in political thinking and cooperation in a pluralist society. This would be regrettable because liberal democracy is much in need of a next step and a new form of inclusive society that protected not only large groups but also individuals and smaller groups would be such a step. Such a new development would be a harbinger of hope, an event of great significance.

The evidence of Hadden and Boyle could, of course, however persuasive, be simply an expression of the unresolved problem. The polarisation caused by the continuing struggle is an obvious source of pressure towards separation. This could also be the explanation for the strikingly partisan results of the elections to the peace negotiations in 1996, because the communities could be expected to mount their most doughty defenders to protect their interests at the negotiating table. The first opportunity to assess the mood of the community in the changed context of an Agreement that could potentially be a settlement of the old quarrel came after the heady outcome of the Referendum in May of 1998, when elections were held for the new Assembly in June of that year. The results were very clear. The Peace Process had led to an increasing polarisation. Hadden and Boyle’s model of separation rather than sharing had won out.

There are many ways that one can explain this outcome. One of the most obvious is that it reflects the Agreement itself, which puts a substantial

weighting on community identification of the elected members when voting on contentious issues. What can scarcely be doubted is that for any foreseeable future the change which we are seeing in Northern Ireland is not towards structuring society on a new set of pluralist principles, but rather a radical strengthening of pre-existing group identities, albeit with a new set of political institutions for co-operation between the two main sections of the community. This analysis may not be taken to be an entirely negative one. As anyone inhabiting Northern Ireland since 1969 knows only too well, ending the terrorist campaigns would be a real achievement. Such an outcome may not yet be guaranteed, but there is at least more reason to hope than was the case ten years ago.

It may be that in coming out of the deeply polarised atmosphere of a long-standing conflict, such as we have in Northern Ireland, or in Cyprus, the Balkans, and the Middle East, it is not possible to get an agreement without mutual vetoes for the main protagonists. Such mutual vetoes have the almost inevitable effect of institutionalising the divisions, but it is arguable that this is better than what went before. The change that we are seeing in Northern Ireland however is, at least in the short term, not towards a resolution of the conflict, a settlement of the ancient feud. Rather it is a movement towards that struggle being conducted in a different way, a change to a new phase of the struggle. To use an Irishism, we are not so much changing to something different as changing to something that is more of the same.

A hypothesis under test in conflict resolution in different parts of the world in recent times has been the notion that long-standing conflicts can be resolved without winners or losers, and that honourable compromise could make the "win/lose" framework of victory or defeat an anachronism in international affairs (Fisher and Ury, 1981). The outcome in Northern Ireland to date tends to suggest that on the evidence available a more modest outcome is the best that can yet be achieved. There may be change to be managed, but it may be less fundamental than many had hoped. A non-violent politics characterized by separation, not sharing, much like the situation obtaining between blacks and whites in America, is what the peacemakers of Northern Ireland seem to have achieved.

If this analysis of the nature of the change bears any weight, the first conflict-management issue facing Northern Ireland may be the different expectations of the "new dispensation." One suspects that for nationalists and more especially republicans, there is not only an opportunity to right past wrongs, but also a new context in which to work towards the ultimate aim of the unification and full independence of Ireland. For those unionists who supported the Agreement in the understanding that it was an historic

settlement, the dawning realisation that it is *not* an end of the matter has led to an angry retrenchment, which endangers the institutions themselves. Managing the change or lack of it will require the divergent expectations of the Agreement to be held together.

The second challenge will be found in managing the high expectations and heady experiences of recent years. Ordinary people, who have been led to expect that everyone will be an economic winner, will have to accommodate themselves to the reality that a politically non-violent society is not a perfect society. Normality means that Northern Ireland suffers the same difficulties as other ordinary communities with increasing drug abuse, less public expenditure, and the transience of traditional industries, including such staples as agriculture and heavy engineering (especially ship-building and aircraft manufacture). In themselves these transitions are manageable, though not everyone will find them pleasant.

A third area where the difficulty will be substantial is that of ensuring that those who do not wish to identify with either main grouping have their rights and interests protected. In legal terms the incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights will give an element of remedy and protection to individuals, but it is not easy to see how this will be able to be maintained in the more political realm. In this context one suspects that fairness will largely be interpreted almost exclusively in the allocations between the two main communal sections.

In the long run the most difficult issue to manage however will be the more traditional one. If David Trimble's Unionist interpretation of the Agreement is correct, republicans are likely to find the degree of change unacceptably minimalist. Facing such a situation without a return to violence in the medium term will require much greater sophistication than we have yet seen. If Gerry Adams' Nationalist reading has it right, in the long run the Agreement will not so much be a settlement as an instrument of peaceful transition. In that case the structure of the conflict may not have changed fundamentally, but it will have arrived at an outcome, and that change will require politics of a high order if it is not to have seriously untoward consequences.

The way forward on race in the United States and sectarianism in Northern Ireland is through the dilemmas described in the two preceding sections, and talk alone will not move us ahead. Rather, we must search with others across the lines of race and religion for better solutions to community problems based on common interests. In political terms this is "the art of compromise," the hard work of arriving at wise agreements in our own particular circumstances, agreements which are characterized by integrity

and mutual respect. In religious language it is the effort to “seek the shalom of the city” (Jeremiah 29:7) to attune our common life to what the great biblical traditions hold to be God’s intentions for history.

Racism and Sectarianism: Two Insights From Psychotherapy

Sectarian divisions in Northern Ireland and racial divisions in America are no new thing. They are built up layer on layer over hundreds, and in the case of Ireland, perhaps more than a thousand years. In both societies, formerly oppressed immigrants became brutal oppressors of the native peoples whom they confronted in the areas they colonized. These spiraling layers of oppression in the two societies came together when waves of Presbyterian immigrants, whose ancestors had fled to the North of Ireland to escape religious persecution in the lowlands of Scotland in the early 1600’s, moved on to North America in the next century still in pursuit of religious freedom, only to become leaders in the systematic appropriation of lands inhabited for centuries by native Americans and the decimation of their inhabitants (Leyburn, 1962; Dickson, 1976; Fitzgerald & Ickringill, 2001). Outside observers of conflict-ridden societies often sigh with despair at the extent to which, in the words of a keen observer of the American South, “The past is not dead, it’s not even past.” But psychoanalysis has taught us the remarkable extent to which this is in fact the case in all individual and communal lives, particularly in the development of character and in the context of breakdown. If violent conflict is the communal equivalent of individual breakdown, then sectarianism and racism are perhaps the societal equivalent of character disorder. The outsider may see with some clarity the ways in which prejudice in an individual or group is both self-fulfilling and counterproductive—provoking a repetition of the very persecutory experiences against which it protests. Subjectively, however, such prejudice is psychologically consistent, offering perhaps the only “reasonable” explanation of the unfairness of life. The suggestion that any responsibility for the maintenance of persecutory relationships may lie with the one who feels wronged seems like a heaping of even more injustice on the wrongs of the past, another instance of blaming the victim.

Psychoanalysis has also taught us about the salience and intensity of emotions. Our capacities to think and act can be much more profoundly affected by emotion than most people imagine, unless they have had the opportunity to observe it as therapists do. Similarly, even thoughtful and well-disposed people from more stable societies find it almost impossible to appreciate that when people react in a destructive and often self-damaging

way in ethnic or sectarian violence, they are not merely playing games that can be set to the side when they choose. Such communities are in thrall to enormously powerful feelings, ancient affective momentums that can overwhelm their members' capacity to think clearly and act constructively. Perhaps the most significant source of feelings that generate actual violence are rooted in experiences of disrespect and humiliation. Human beings have an ineradicable desire to be treated with respect (Gilligan, 1996). Where individuals and communities are despised and humiliated, a bitter sense of injustice is stored up and an almost unquenchable desire develops for vengeance and the righting of the wrong. The sense that the very existence of a community and all that it holds dear has been threatened provokes deep fears and creates a capacity for responses at least as violent as those that it has experienced. In Northern Ireland both communities have bitter experiences to share of disrespect and the threat of annihilation, just as all African Americans have personal stories to tell of racial humiliation. These experiences of the past generate emotions that are not only a reaction to that past but also anxiously mould the future so as to ensure a repetition. Righting past wrongs can easily be translated into repeating past wrongs with "the boot on the other foot."

This much is clear to us: Community healing and peace-making require the same patience, persistence, understanding and respect that is at the heart of all authentic psychotherapeutic work. As in psychotherapy the desired outcome is to avoid repetition by the creation of new and positive relations.

Toward Inclusive Politics: Forgiveness and Promises

Political philosopher Hannah Arendt (1958) observed that human beings can never know how the effects of our actions will spread through the web of relationships over time; this is the *unpredictability* of human action. She further noted that we cannot call back those effects once our actions have launched them; this is the *irreversibility* of human action. The first-century authors of the anti-Semitic passages in the gospels of Matthew and John could not have imagined the systematic extermination of Jews in the heart of Christian Europe in the middle of the 20th century, but the history of effects through which their texts came to be used as justification for that holocaust proved irreversible. The English merchants who financed the African slave trade and the tribal chiefs who colluded with them could not have imagined the devastation of African people that they were initiating, nor the great national blood-lettings at Chancellorsville, Chickamauga, and

Gettysburg by which the demonic institution of slavery would be terminated in America three centuries later. The leaders of the Civil Rights marches in Northern Ireland in the late 1960's, and those with whom they clashed at Burntollet, Derry and Belfast, could not have predicted the 3,000 deaths that would follow in the balance of the century, nor imagined the particular horrors of Enniskillen and Omagh. Once the trains of events leading to those tragedies had been set in motion, their effects could not be called back.

Given the unpredictability and irreversibility of human action in history, what grounds have we for hope? Arendt believed that the fragility of relationships could be redeemed only by two fundamental acts of which human beings are capable and for which we are responsible. The first is seeking forgiveness when we come to realize that our well being has come partly as a consequence of the unjust suffering of others. Through forgiveness the effects of past actions may be, not reversed, but transformed. The second is making promises or giving undertakings to one another, commitments to which we agree to be held accountable. The mutual accountability that joint promises make possible does not make the future predictable, but can imbue it with a measure of constancy. Reconciliation accomplished and promises kept are all that sustain the fragile web of relationships amidst the unpredictability and irreversibility of human action. It is often said that what is needed to resolve a conflict is "more trust," but in fact trust is the outcome of a successful process of conflict resolution rather than a pre-requisite for it.

Let us take Arendt's analysis one step farther than she did: Whatever the particular historical circumstances lying behind chronic conflict between two groups, making and keeping promises to each other for which they voluntarily agree to be held publicly accountable as they seek change now on a cross-community basis is more important than gestures of reconciliation for past wrongs, no matter how well intended. They may even render them superfluous. President Clinton's dramatic public apology to African Americans for white America's racist history, the first by an American president, may have touched the hearts of many of its recipients, but the education and employment opportunities that his campaigns promised and his policies intended were an effort to change the actual life chances of African Americans and their children. Reconciliation without making and keeping new promises is an empty, and some may even think duplicitous, gesture. Groups that have been oppressed want deeds, not words.

Those who have felt the pain of breaking or broken commitments understand in their bones the significance of promise and forgiveness. For powerful contemporary instances of this truth we need look no further than

the state of relationships between blacks and whites in America and Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland. The most powerful way forward from America's racial impasse and Northern Ireland's sectarian dilemma is also the most practical; it involves the work of cross-community collectives for the common good. Thus far in the U.S. these have been on the civil-society rather than the electoral side, but who knows what the future holds in that regard? Paradoxically, the development of the political Peace Process in Northern Ireland and the achievement of the Good Friday Agreement resulted in a polarization of opinion and a weakening of the electoral fortunes not only of the main non-sectarian political party, but also of other moderating forces in the broad center. It is not even certain whether the current Peace Process can survive these threats and pressures. This raises genuine questions about the limits on what can be achieved in creating genuinely integrated civil societies within our current practices of formal electoral politics.

At this juncture in our respective histories there is no prospect for genuinely integrated or even mutually tolerant communal futures in Northern Ireland and the U.S. unless explicit, honest and respectful cross-community public conversations about the common good in the practical order can be deliberately initiated and sustained within a web of lasting relationships grounded in shared action motivated by mutual interests. The healing of the devastations associated with sectarianism and racism is imaginable only if we are able to engage one another in dialogue across the now paralyzing boundaries of cultural separation, endure the necessary tension of such engagements, and develop powerful inter-group instrumentalities for acting in good faith to bring about the transformations of our common life which such exchanges will demand of us. "Dialogues" about racism and sectarianism that are not wedded to the creation of cross-community collectives with the power to act collaboratively to change things in their communities in concrete and practical ways are of limited value.

**Moving Beyond Racial and Sectarian Impasses:
Building Crucibles of Mutual Accountability and Reconciliation in
Pluralistic Societies**

What is the practical lesson here for two societies struggling to overcome the profound social divisions at the heart of their respective histories? Just as working psychotherapeutically requires the creation of a process in which violent and aggressive thoughts and feelings can be expressed and explored in a contained space, rather than acted out, helping

communities split and in turmoil requires a robust process with continuity, communication and setting of boundaries like those of a therapeutic relationship. Transformative conversation across racial and sectarian barriers requires a context, a place in the real world within which it can happen.

In Northern Ireland an entirely new political context was created in which such joint activity could take place. The Westminster and Capitol Hill models of democracy both require that elections result in a “winner-takes-all” outcome in Government. Whatever the numbers of votes cast, the winner takes full control of the Executive as Prime Minister (based on the number of seats in the House of Commons at Westminster) or President (based on the vote of the Electoral College in the U.S.). By contrast the Good Friday Agreement created a new form of proportionate Government in which the number of votes cast not only produced a precisely proportionate number of seats in the Assembly, and in the membership and Chairmanship of Committees in that Assembly, but also more radically a proportionate number of Ministerial seats in Government. Further to this the Head of Government was split between a First and Deputy First Minister, who had to be elected on a single slate, with a majority of votes from both unionists and nationalists, and these officials could subsequently act only by agreement. They could also only remain in office jointly, the resignation or death of one, resulting in the automatic loss of office for the other. These mechanisms have produced a robust process of partnership which does not assume or require collegiality in advance but whose purpose is to allow for its development out of the practical experience of working together.

Turning to the non-partisan, non-elected context, powerful instances of such a partnership framework are to be found in broad-based community organizations (Chambers, 2003) such as those affiliated with the Industrial Areas Foundation Network (U.S.), founded by community organizing pioneer Saul Alinsky, and their sister organizations in the Citizens Organizing Foundation (U.K.). In these organizations citizens and people of faith join together through their congregations, schools and civic associations across the lines of race, creed, and class to develop a practical agenda for the well being of their diverse communities based on mutual interests and respect for differences. Then they build the base of power to make that agenda felt within the arena of public decision-making. In more than sixty communities throughout the United States, as well in the six member organizations of the Citizens Organizing Foundation in the United Kingdom, cross-community organizations have been making palpable differences in education, law enforcement, job training, economic development, home ownership, medical care and a variety of other critical issues of public life

for the past thirty years. In these organizations, which are deliberately organized across the lines of race, religion and class, people come to know and often to trust each other in ways that are possible only by acting together on matters of common concern.

The significance of such cross-community organizing for the common good rests not only on the political astuteness and pragmatic effectiveness of the organizations it produces, but on their potential as crucibles for the construction of inclusive civic cultures in a pluralistic world. A crucible is a vessel that will not melt when the ingredients it holds are heated to the point where they are transformed. Given the destructive histories of racism and sectarianism, public work done across the lines of race and sect will inevitably generate moments of emotional heat including grief, anger, shame, mistrust and anxiety. Those wishing to bridge racial and sectarian divides need containers that will not melt when such intense emotions arise, that can hold participants in relationship while public work is done jointly and communities and selves are transformed. By deliberately and patiently building sustainable relationships across the usual barriers of race, creed and class, broad-based cross-community organizations become such crucibles. It is in learning to act together for the common good within carefully cultivated public relationships such as these, that citizens of Northern Ireland and the U.S. today have our best opportunity to create the conditions required for reconciling the devastating histories of sectarianism and racism that continue to burden our societies. Whether those involved will prove able to stand the heat of our respective crucibles remains to be seen, and that will not finally be simply a matter of individual courage and patience, but also of the availability of well organized public relationships.

The practice of broad-based, cross-community organizing also suggests a way of dealing with the tension described above between pragmatist and antiracist advocates of social change. The forte of the pragmatists is organizing for change—bringing people together across typical lines of division to take concrete steps that they agree will make a local community a better place for all. Because they focus on what unites people, not what divides them, the pragmatists have not developed ways of encouraging their members to reflect together on differences of race, religion or class as they engage in practical work for change; indeed, they discourage such conversation. This means that an opportunity, albeit a risky one, to deepen relationships by more intentionally creating the relational crucibles described above is lost. By contrast, the strong suit of anti-racists is consciousness-raising education. Because they believe that people who have not explicitly confronted the history and dynamics of racism cannot be

effective change agents where race is involved, they excel in making people aware of how racism concretely structures society by providing opportunities for some at the expense of others. One limitation of this approach is that an analysis of how racism works does not automatically suggest concrete ways to apply it in action. Sometimes anti-racist educators have little to say on the subject of how to organize for change, and often what they do have to offer on that subject are techniques of organizing *against* the status quo, not *for* something new. In doing so, they promote a form of “community organizing” which IAF and other broad-based organizing networks outgrew long ago. A second limitation of this approach is that insisting that anyone who wants to be part of the solution must pass through the gateway of anti-racist education alienates potential allies. The tension between these two positions is not over whether racism and sectarianism exist and are significant problems. Rather it is a dispute about tactics.

But perhaps the most limiting aspect of the anti-racist approach is the way it further divides communities along racial lines by viewing whites (including this generation of whites) as entirely responsible for the creation and maintenance of the problem and bearing the full onus for bringing about change. In Ireland there are some in the nationalist tradition who would identify with such a “black and white” view of orange and green. Here another insight from the realm of psychotherapy may advance our understanding. Psychotherapists are keenly aware that a patient in difficulties may remain so even if the external causes of their problems are removed. More importantly in therapy the patient’s own resistance to change may render all therapeutic efforts nugatory.

In psychotherapy we are familiar with a number of concepts which aid our understanding of why removing the cause of a disorder does not lead automatically to its cure. The psychoanalytic notion of “the Resistance” describes the experience of the therapist that the presentation of a correct, timely and potentially transforming interpretation may not be welcomed, accepted or used by the patient. This resistance to betterment may be part of the difficulty in effecting any change to established patterns. It may come from what some behaviorists see as “secondary gain” in which benefits may accrue from a symptom. It may even result in the paradoxical outcome which we know as the “negative therapeutic reaction” whereby improved emotional understanding leads to a worsening of the patient’s condition. In all of these circumstances and other types of resistance to betterment the appropriate response is not to try to force the patient to accept change, or to blame the patient for not wanting to get better, but to explore with some honesty and empathy the patient’s resistance. It should not be assumed that

the opportunity to change for the better is any more easily embraced or embarked upon in communal life than in individual experience. This notion of resistance in political progress is generally and mistakenly assumed to lie only with whites in the field of American racism and with unionists in respect of political progress in Northern Ireland, but our experience of psychotherapy and our close political observation and involvement leads us to believe that exploration of the political analogues of resistance on all sides is an urgent necessity. Such awareness will not lead to immediate resolution of either problem, but it could help prevent us making things worse out of the best intentions.

Change is difficult. One suspects that the anti-racism stance intensifies out of frustration when its prescriptions fail to result in a more equal society. For adherents of this position the temptation may then be to “double the dose of the treatment,” but in the medical world we know that this is more likely to poison the patient than to effect a cure. For their part, if pragmatists who are seeking change for the better are chronically at cross purposes with good faith actors in the anti-racist camp they may become the unwitting agents of conservatism. Whether the concern is racism or sectarianism (or sexism, or class struggle or nationalism), pragmatists and antis in all arenas would both be materially strengthened in their effectiveness by learning from each other and from academic disciplines including psychotherapy. When the split over tactics is bridged pragmatists will become wiser about barriers to issue-oriented cross-community organizing, and antis will learn how to move beyond consciousness-raising to organize for lasting change. This mutual learning will also make both more effective in reaching out to the growing majority of people who believe that isms are a thing of the past.

Risking engagement in public conversation and action for the common good across racial and sectarian lines both in civil-society organizing and electoral politics is the challenge that we face. Here the words of Dr. Martin Luther King cited in our opening reverberate, encouraging us forward: “Integration is genuine intergroup, interpersonal doing.” (King, 1963). Establishing communication with others across tribal lines is a necessary but not sufficient response to Dr. King’s mandate. We must do something of mutual benefit together. Returning to the importance of forgiveness, Frank Wright, the political sociologist quoted in our opening, observed that “most of us perhaps owe more to violence done on our behalf than we realize” (Wright, 1987). This is a difficult notion to swallow, but if one considers the historic fate of native and African Americans and of Catholics and indeed Protestants in Northern Ireland, its aptness seems

evident. Physical, psychological or systemic violence historically done to others in public life—in the arena of politics, economics and culture—must be publicly rectified. As we have already noted this may have less to do with words of regret or remorse and more with making and keeping new promises in the pluralistic political, economic and cultural arenas of our time. Attempting to ignore racism and sectarianism means allowing the redemptive possibility of a culturally diverse public life to sink beneath the weight of unredeemed history in the United States and Northern Ireland. In a world where history is both unpredictable and irreversible, and where group differences will not go away, those who believe that our children and grandchildren can have personal lives worth living apart from a public life characterized by inclusion, equity and respect for differences are mistaken. So too are those who believe that change for the better is a simple, rational process.

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Toward the Civil Society

Finding Harmony between Havel's Vision and Learning-Organization Theory

Patsy Palmer

Abstract

This theoretical paper derives inspiration from former Czech President Vaclav Havel and lessons from "learning organizations" to guide government executives in helping develop shared meaning among constituents, interest groups and public employees. Such shared meaning is seen as a framework for policy decisions and implementation. American civil society, like learning organizations, is understood as broadly interdependent and continuously changing, with conflict both latent and overt. Leadership is defined in contrast to management and administration; government leadership is compared and contrasted with learning-organization leadership. Strengths, weaknesses and political costs of various approaches are considered. It is argued that successful public-sector leaders must adapt a "learning" style with commitment to dialogue and the openness that characterizes synchronicity and presence.

Toward the Civil Society

In late 1989, as Communist regimes were falling across Central and Eastern Europe, much of the world became aware of Vaclav Havel, the dissident playwright who seemed to symbolize the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia. Havel recast politics into poetry, with words (1988, p. 243) like "[M]an has grasped the world in a way that has caused him. . . to lose it; he has subdued it by destroying it."

Remarkably, this former prisoner--an intellectual who had been denied schooling beyond age 15--seemed to bear no grudges toward the people who had shaped his life so cruelly. His focus was on the future, not the past; on transformation and transcendence, not revenge. Even as he moved from outcast to President, first of Czechoslovakia and then of the

Czech Republic, Havel's vision never wavered. His essays, books and speeches continued to hold out the hope of a "civil society," one which "will no longer suppress, humiliate, and deny the free human being, but will serve all the dimensions of that being" (1992, p. 121).

Havel stepped down from the presidency last year, but continues to speak and write with an authority that is independent of an official position.

Inspiring as Havel's imagery has been to people around the world, and especially to those interested in renewing civic culture, it is noticeably lacking in practical advice. This may ensure its moral imperishability, but one must look elsewhere for more detailed guidelines for moving toward the civil society.

Such guidance can be found abundantly in "learning organizations," a term used by Peter Senge of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and others to mean organizations "capable of thriving in a world of interdependence and change" (Kofman and Senge, 1993, p. 5).

These businesses and the theories behind them are based on a deep belief in human potential and a commitment for the workplace to trust, nourish and realize that potential. As the name implies, the learning organization is creative, a place in process, which sees learning "not as a confession of ignorance but as the only way to live" (Handy, 1995, p. 55). Many industry leaders as well as scholars say learning organizations have the best chance of any businesses to adapt and flourish in uncertain times.

The parallels with Havel's philosophy are striking; each has a transformational vision of people in society. And learning-organization literature offers a blueprint for working toward the civil society, of attaining what Havel (1991, p. 72) calls "a society which is really alive."

This paper draws on Havel's writings and learning-organization literature (as well as on related organizations, public administration and conflict theory) to explore the visions common to civil society and learning organizations. I have integrated Havel's work from disparate sources, and what I present as his voice is my own interpretation; the comparison between his ideas and learning-organization theory is also my own. It shows that they perceive the environment of change and conflict similarly, and that they view new kinds of leadership and renewed forms of shared meaning as key to accomplishing their goals.

Civil Society and the Learning Organization

I dream of. . . a human republic that serves the individual and that therefore holds the hope that

the individual will serve it in turn. (Havel, January 1, 1990)

At the heart of a learning organization is a shift of mind -- from seeing ourselves as separate from the world to connected to the world. Senge (1990, p. 12)

Havel's vision of a civil society meshes neatly with Senge's prescription for a learning organization: a moral community where individuals realize their own destiny through relationships with other individuals.

Even the language that learning-organization theorists use often seems Havelian, as in this passage: "[R]edefining organizations as communities. . . means seeing organizations as centers of meaning and larger purpose to which people can commit themselves as free citizens in a democratic society" (Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Ross and Smith, 1994, p. 507).

It seems to echo sentiments Havel (1991, p. 267) expressed in his dissident days: "We must not be ashamed that we are capable of love, friendship, solidarity, sympathy, and tolerance, but just the opposite: we must set these fundamental dimensions of our humanity free. . . as the only genuine starting point of meaningful human community."

The human communities of civil society and the learning organization have five basic characteristics in common:

They value the possibilities in each individual. Learning organizations believe that each employee -- regardless of her place on the corporate ladder -- is both capable and a valuable source of ideas. And Havel's civil society would "trust its citizens and enable them to share in a substantial way in exercising the responsibility for the condition of society" (1995, June 2).

They believe in unity in diversity, what Havel (1995, 13 March) calls "a solidarity of free human beings" and organization theorists call "a participatory organization" (Peters, 1994). Within such "communities of commitment" (Kofman and Senge, 1993), tolerance, coexistence and solidarity are possible at one time. "[A] truly multicultural civilization. . . will allow everyone to be themselves while denying no one the opportunities it offers" (Havel, 1995, March 29).

Continuous communication, learning and invention are critical to building and sustaining such groups. They are "organizations of consent, not control" (Handy, 1995, p. 55). The atmosphere in learning organizations

is a “dynamic equilibrium between holding on and letting go” (Kofman and Senge, 1993, p. 17), while true civil society means freedom “from the straitjacket of ideological interpretations” (Havel, 1992, p. 128). In this way, people build the state or the organization for themselves; it is not something distant and imposed.

The purpose of such communities is ultimately moral. This is not a narrow morality of personal behavior, but “a way of going about things, and it demands the courage to breathe moral and spiritual motivation into everything. . .” (Havel, 1992, p. 20). The former political prisoner understandably calls for a state that is “humane, moral, intellectual and spiritual” (Havel, 1992, p. 18); but the learning organization also is seen as “a culture based on transcendent human values of love, wonder, humility, and compassion” (Kofman and Senge, p. 16).

The two states never will be “finished.” They are “open system[s] and thus. . . capable of improvement” (Havel, 1995, March 29). In learning organizations, “there is no ‘there,’ no ultimate destination, only a lifelong journey” (Senge, 1990, p. xv). They measure their success in the “ability to repeatedly become” (Rolls, 1995, p. 103). And in a civil society, the ideal of democracy can be approached “as one would a horizon. . . but it can never be fully attained” (Havel, 1990, February 21). Political and economic life alike “ought to be founded on the varied and versatile cooperation of. . . dynamically appearing and disappearing organizations” (Havel, 1991, p. 211). It is the ideals -- not the forms -- that should persist.

Change, Conflict and Crisis

[O]ne age is succeeding another. . . everything is possible.
(Havel, July 4, 1994)

The environment in which corporate organizations must now operate have one characteristic in common: turbulence. (Edwin C. Nevis *et al*, 1996, p. 3)

Neither the civil society nor the learning organization exists in a vacuum. They both must cope with an uncertain and fast-paced world of change, conflict and crisis.

It is a world where even “playwrights, who have to cram a whole human life or an entire historical era into a two-hour [sic] play, can scarcely understand this rapidity. . .” (Havel, 1990, February 21). Change pulls us

closer together at the same time it pushes us further apart. “The sense of inter-relatedness is what makes us feel whole, feel good about being alive,” according to Elise Boulding (1988, pp. 34-35). “It is also what cramps and oppresses us, because we can’t grasp it all.” The result is often deep, long-lasting and cross-cutting problems which -- unless well-managed -- may lead to a loss of trust in business and government.

This section looks at the similar views Havel and learning-organization theorists bring to change and conflict.

Change

Both Havel and learning-organization theorists understand that change is relentless in modern life. They share five perspectives on change:

Change is faster and more ubiquitous than ever. As Nevis noted, change is so fast-paced and unpredictable that it often reaches the level of turbulence, in business and society alike. Such change is characteristic of the “postmodern world, where everything is possible and almost nothing is certain” (Havel, 1994, July 4).

Change cannot be stopped. “There is no way back,” Havel (1995, June 8) told a Harvard graduation. “Only a dreamer can believe that the solution lies in curtailing the progress of civilization. . . .” And learning organization theorists caution that people can neither halt change nor preserve even the most desirable organization indefinitely.

Relentless change makes the old ways of understanding the world obsolete. On the political front, “none of the familiar. . . speedometers are [sic] adequate” (Havel, 1990, February 21). And while businesses must change their ideas and actions -- perhaps dramatically -- to become learning organizations, they have no assurance of what change will bring.

This modern state of change produces fear, nostalgia and uncertainty. “It is as if something were crumbling, decaying, and exhausting itself, while something else, still indistinct, were arising from the rubble,” according to Havel:

[W]e do not know exactly what to do with ourselves, where to turn. The world of our experiences seems chaotic, disconnected, confusing. There appear to be no integrating forces, no unified meaning, no true inner understanding of phenomena in our experience of the world. Experts can explain anything in the objective world to us, yet we understand our own lives less and less. (1994, July 4)

Even in former Communist countries, Havel (1990, July 26) says, there is sometimes nostalgia for the certainty of the old regime; and in the West, there is a “nagging sense” that we have lost our ability to solve problems. On one hand, people must feel safe to work successfully in a changing environment; on the other hand, change itself can make people feel unsafe, even hopeless.

But change also produces new possibilities for achieving the truly civil society or learning organization. To learning organization theorists, change should be understood as opportunity, something that may strengthen institutions. (1) Havel sees it as a chance to escape the “antiquated straitjacket of the bipolar view of the world” (1990, February 21) and create a “new model of coexistence” (1994, July 4).

Conflict and Crisis

Here, Havel and learning-organization scholars share a core belief: *Conflict often is the result of change; and change is often the result of conflict.* This is especially true in times of abrupt social change: Many of today’s crises -- in business and government -- are byproducts of our own actions, even our successes. According to Havel (1993, April 22), this is because “[t]he human mind and human habits cannot be transformed overnight.” In a situation where one thing has collapsed and something new does not yet exist, many people feel hollow and frustrated.” He attributes many contemporary problems and conflicts to the most pervasive and unsettling change of modern times: globalization.

Beyond this common understanding, Havel (2) devotes himself to the spiritual side of conflict, while learning-organization proponents draw heavily on conflict-management theory. The ideas are complementary: the heart and the head of conflict theory.

Havel believes a crisis of the human spirit is part of much conflict. In his view (1995, March 29), people feel separated from both one another and from something absolute -- an “ultimate horizon.” Thus, life loses meaning and values become relative. And “the stronger one’s sensation of being ‘outside the world,’ the more powerful may be his longing to ‘conquer’ it. . . .” (Havel, 1988, p. 288). This may take place metaphorically, in actual physical aggression or in “the herdlike nature of the consumer life. . . [A]ll of these are ways in which human identity sinks into a deeper and more complete state of crisis” (Havel, 1988, p. 295).

Havel believes that institutions and cultures, too, are undergoing a spiritual crisis. The sudden advent of a global civilization has brought

people face to face with each other and their differences. Globalization often pressures cultures to integrate and standardize; thus, many conflicts “can be explained as struggles of different cultural identities. . . for what they appear to be losing” (Havel, 1995, March 29). Finally, the proximity modern technology brings can exacerbate conflict; Havel (1994, September 29) has compared this “to life in a prison cell, in which the inmates get on each other’s nerves far more than if they saw each other only occasionally.”

Learning organizations understand conflict as inevitable, and not necessarily bad. “Interactionists” believe organizational conflict is natural, a neutral phenomenon that can have beneficial or harmful results. Some scholars, however, distinguish between “cognitive” and “affective” (emotional) conflict, seeing the first as potentially useful and the second as always damaging.

Learning organizations understand conflict as beneficial if properly handled and dangerous if ignored. When well-managed, they say, conflict can effect better outcomes; the more points of view that emerge, the more good options an organization has to choose among. But left alone or badly handled, conflict can explode. And efforts to invigorate positive conflict run the risk of stimulating negative conflict; unfortunately, it is sometimes hard to tell where the danger point is.

Learning-organization theorists believe successful handling of conflict requires a new style of management. Conflict management means “both resolving conflict and stimulating it” (Faerman, 1996, p. 641). And good leaders will not squelch opposing perspectives, but help them to emerge.

Leadership and Shared Meaning

[It] is a wrongheaded notion which assumes that the citizen is a fool and that political success depends on playing to this folly. (Havel, June 8, 1995)

Leaders. . . must be the chief missionary, ever traveling, ever talking, ever listening. . . one long teach-in. (Handy, 1994, p. 122)

Good leaders with a new leadership style are at the forefront of learning organizations and civil societies. They are people who see their task not so much as problem-solving but as creating whole new ways of doing business, people whose authority comes less from a role than from a way of

interacting with others, people who spend more of their time communicating than “doing.” I will use the phrase “authentic leaders” to describe such individuals.

Essentially, such authentic leaders are people who help move their organizations toward shared meaning. Shared meaning grounds a civil society or a learning organization and gives it the capacity for growth and flexibility, for taking on hard problems. In many ways, the meaning that groups reach is less important than the journey they take in search of meaning.

This section explores the ways that civil societies and learning organizations understand leadership, shared meaning and the relationship between the two.

Leadership

Leaders bear a special responsibility for the learning organization and the civil society. In Havel’s words (1995, June 8): “The world is in the hands of us all. And yet some have a greater influence on its fate than others.” I have identified eight ways in which he and organization theorists see the role of leaders similarly:

Authentic leaders inspire their organizations or their societies to reach high. “[P]olitics can be not simply the art of the possible,” Havel (1990, January 1) told his nation two months after Communism fell, “but [also] the art of the impossible, that is, the art of improving ourselves and the world.” And learning-organization proponents often quote

Common Cause founder John Gardner, who says leaders “can conceive and articulate goals that lift people out of their petty preoccupations, carry them above the conflicts that tear a society apart, and unite them in pursuit of objectives worthy of their best efforts” (Bennis, 1989, p. 13).

Authentic leaders may exist anywhere within -- or outside of -- the power structure. Conversely, people with official power may fail at leadership, even if they fulfill the technical requirements of their jobs. Bureaucrats frequently rouse particular scorn, from organizational scholars and social critics alike. (3) When official power breaks down, informal leaders often emerge. Thus, Havel (1990, p. 123) began writing his “Open Letters” to Communist leaders because, “I had stopped waiting for the world to improve and exercised my right to intervene in that world or at least to express my opinion about it.”

Authentic leaders are more interested in serving than in power. Effective leaders “may live in the center but they must not be the center”

(Handy, 1994, p. 121). Learning-organization literature refers to them as stewards, servants and “designers, not captains” (Nevis *et al*, 1996, p. 271). And Havel (1992, p. 6) says that “genuine politics. . . is simply a matter of serving those around us: serving the community, and serving those who will come after us.” In one address, he called this “morality in practice” (1995, June 8).

Authentic leaders follow their own inner visions, and give voice to those visions, but they also are rigorous self-critics. The actions of a “post-modern politician,” Havel (1992, October 27) says, “cannot derive from impersonal analysis; they must come out of a personal point of view, which cannot be based on a sense of superiority but must spring from humility.” Such leaders communicate their vision so compellingly that it can take root throughout the organization; but they also are able to let others modify that vision or suggest one of their own. Thus, the best leaders blend “self-confidence with reasonable doubt, a skepticism that starts the questioning that turns the wheel” (Handy, 1995, p. 49). Havel (1991, May 28) calls for political leaders to be vigilant in defying the “treacherous, delusive, and ambiguous. . . temptation of power.”

Authentic leaders help awaken the best in people, often by sharing power. “What is needed is the unleader, the person who builds capacity in others” (Carnevale, 1995, p. 56). Such leaders believe in people: Just as politicians choose “whether they rely on the good in each citizen or on the bad” (Havel, 1992, p. 4), business leaders are most effective when they trust their followers and unleash them to do their best. This is both moral and pragmatic: In contemporary organizations, much power is decentralized and people “will only follow leaders who take them where they want to go” (O’Toole, 1995, p. 124).

Heroic and charismatic leaders are not always in the best interest of a group. (4) Charisma and individualism at the top do not necessarily produce strength throughout an organization; people may learn to wait passively for someone “in charge” to act. Havel (1992, October 27) compared life in Communist times to the Samuel Beckett play *Waiting for Godot*: “Because [people] did not carry hope within them, they expected it to arrive as some kind of salvation from without. . . . a meaningless form of self-deception and therefore a waste of time.” Furthermore, the heroic leader often is effective *only* in emergencies: Many such leaders “deal in visions and crises, and little in between. . . [U]nder their leadership, an organization caroms from crisis to crisis” (Senge, 1990, p. 355). This does not produce a resilient organization: “[I]f problems were the only triggers of learning,

problem-ridden organizations would be the best innovators” (Hedberg, 1981, p. 17).

Authentic leaders -- in civil society or the learning organization -- are transformational. Burns (1978, p. 4) coined the term “transforming leader” to mean someone who “seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person of the follower. The result. . . is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents.” Such leaders do not control followers, but inspire them with a vision that includes their own finest dreams. Workers or citizens then transcend narrow self-interest and become concerned with the good of the organization or the community. In this way, the individual “finds its primary, most natural, and most universal expression” (Havel, 1992, p. 31).

Ultimately, authentic leadership is spread throughout a learning organization or civil society. Our most critical problems “will require an integrated assault,” according to Donald F. Kettl (1994, p. 21). “These structures should naturally arise from below as a consequence of authentic social self-organization,” Havel (1991, p. 211) says. They will develop “leadership of and for the whole” (Tucker, 1995, p. 129), and blur distinctions between leaders and followers. Such enterprises will have a radically human dimension; “people [will] be able to work in them as people, as beings with a soul and a sense of responsibility, not as robots” (Havel, 1990, p. 15). Thus, “something [will be] born that might be called the ‘independent spiritual, social, and political life of society’” (Havel, 1991, p. 176).

Shared Meaning

When such unity occurs, often it is because of shared meaning, “the glue or cement that holds people and societies together” (Bohm, 1996, p. 6). Havel and learning-organization experts alike believe the world urgently needs to renew such understandings. “If the future of mankind is not to be jeopardized by conflicting spheres of civilization and culture, we have no alternative but to shift the ray of our attention from that which separates us to that which unites us,” Havel (1995, October 24) told the United Nations. And when Bennis said “a nation. . . can’t progress without a common vision” (1989, p. 20), he might have said the same thing for the private sector.

Here are the five key points that Havel and learning-organization materials both emphasize about shared meaning;

In many ways, shared meaning is in crisis. One clue if shared meaning exists is whether a group acts as a system or is fractious.

Fragmentation might reflect a disparity between “espoused theories” and “theories-in-use,” or between individual and broader interests. Havel (1990, February 21) told Congress that “[i]nterests of all kinds: personal, selfish, state, national, group and. . . company interests still considerably outweigh genuinely common and global interests.

But shared meaning is possible. People have intimations of it. “[A]ny genuine meaningful point of departure in an individual’s life usually has an element of universality. . . [I]t is not something partial, accessible only to a restricted community. . . . One the contrary, it must be potentially accessible to everyone. . .” (Havel, 1991, p. 194). Groups may experience it as “social covenants” (Emery and Purser, 1996). But when shared meaning loses its vitality and becomes inadequate, stagnant or stifling, it is no longer useful and the covenant must be changed.

Shared meaning is born, shaped and kept alive through open and honest communication. “Conversation is what the team learning discipline is all about,” Senge told an interviewer (Galagan, October 1991, p. 38). It may begin with transformational leaders, but genuine shared vision must come from the whole. To be effective, such communication may “raise the undiscussable” (Schwarz, 1994, p. 81) or work to replace espoused theories with theories in use. In any case, “[g]ood communication is an ethical question” (O’Toole, 1995, p. 44). At its best, it can be a form of what Havel calls “living in truth.”

True shared meaning is not sheerly rational or technical. This is a favorite theme of Havel’s prison letters (1988), which argue that, when we persist in an overly rational worldview, we risk becoming alienated from our communities. “Knowledge and convictions. . . do not come from detached observation alone, but from lively involvement and inner experience as well. . . [S]hared meaning is possible only when people “can speak from the heart about what really matters to them and be heard” (Senge *et al*, 1994, p. 299).

Shared meaning cannot be imposed, from above or by the group. It is neither the “ideological straitjacket” that Havel (1992, p. 128) recalls from Communist days, nor the conformist “groupthink.” Shared meaning is what groups -- working together -- discover to be right for them at a particular time.

Rethinking “Technique”

*Will we be a genuinely civic, genuinely open society
that will enable all people to influence its affairs
on multiple levels and in a host of ways. . . [o]r*

will our social system slowly, imperceptibly and irreversibly become so self-contained that ultimately the most crucial matters will always be decided by the same, closely-knit brotherhood. . . ? (Havel, January 1, 2002)

Failures in fundamental change efforts are the norm rather than the exception. Why? (Senge, 2002, p. 4)

Neither the learning organization nor the civil society is merely an ideal. They may never be fully realized, but both Havel and learning-organization proponents call for businesses and societies to move toward their visions with all deliberate speed.

How does a group, an organization or a society make concrete steps toward shared meaning? Havel expresses few ideas here. (5) Learning-organization literature, on the other hand, is full of ideas for transforming businesses; ideas that have been frequently tested, and attested for, by corporations; ideas that resonate with Havel's basic notions of what makes a society civil.

An earlier version of this paper, presented at the 1997 Academy of Management meeting (Palmer, 1997), sought concrete techniques to help government move toward the civil society. So-called "hot groups" and search conferences were identified as practical tools well suited to a world of conflict and change. Scenario planning also has been tried successfully by both public and private sectors. (6)

Success stories in such activities have much in common. They flourish amid environments of change and conflict; they emerge because of leadership that dared to be authentic; they rely on teamwork; and they succeed by building shared meaning across history and boundaries. But encouraging examples are not commonplace. Often, even success stories celebrate only limited-time processes and short-term results.

Senge the practitioner has identified nine shortcomings of change efforts that are echoed in Havel's writings:

Change efforts fail because organizations and societies fail to invest the necessary time. "[It] takes months and years, not hours," Senge (2002, p. 4) says. "It takes deep commitment; it takes a willingness and a possibility to practice, to try out new approaches repeatedly, and to learn from experience. That's the way we learn anything that's significant." In his last New Year's address as President, Havel (2003, January 1) urged his countrymen not to consider the work of democratization complete: "[O]ur

work is not over. We must remind ourselves over and over that democracy is not just a certain institutional structure, but also a spirit, a human capacity, a purpose, and an ideal. The structure exists to serve these.”

They fail because priorities are given too little attention. Senge (1996, p. 5) reports that he “often find[s] a huge disconnect between what executives say is important and what they spend their time doing.” Havel is relentless on a similar theme, returning to it months after leaving office: “Humanity’s ability to brave the dangers that confront it today hinges. . . on the degree to which we accept responsibility for ourselves and the world” (2004),

Attempts at change fail because we focus on external circumstances rather than internal conditions. “The real territory of change is always ‘in here,’” according to Senge (2002, p. 5). “Now, the consequences must be ‘out there’ if we’re really interested in institutional change. But we can’t get there from just focusing on ‘out there.’” Havel put it this way: “[E]veryone ought to be able to judge his or her own capacity and act accordingly, expecting that one’s strength will grow with the new tasks one sets oneself or that it will run out. . . There is no more relying on fairy tales and fairy-tale heroes” (2002, September 20).

Change efforts fail because we minimize issues or hide behind their complexity. “Most of the time, people in positions of authority trivialize complex issues,” Senge (2002, p. 6) has said, charging this is especially true of public sector leaders. Havel (2004) says that blaming complexity or blaming somehow-inevitable forces is “simply a red herring that turns them into substitute culprits whose indictment relieves us of taking responsibility for our own lives[.]” In either case, the result is inaction, almost paralysis.

They fail because we overemphasize competition. “There is nothing intrinsically wrong with competition,” Senge (undated) says, but it has become “our only model for change and learning.” This blocks us from seeing situations in their entirety; interferes with our abilities to cooperate and collaborate; and keeps our focus on short-term results. Havel (2002, April 4) warns that competition leads to feelings of superiority, defensiveness, even imperialism. Paradoxically, cooperation is possible only when “individual entities succeed in defining themselves -- which requires, among other things, an understanding of where they begin and end. Many conflicts have been caused by insecure self-identification. . .” (Havel, 2002, May 19).

Attempts at change fail because we misunderstand teamwork. Teams have become a preferred way of doing business, in government and industry. The highly regarded Robert K. Greenleaf (1991, p. 67) claimed that “[I]f a

group is confronted by the right questions long enough, they will see through to the essence and find the right way.” Ideally, teams combine experience with innovation; by blending representatives from different parts of an organization or society, they are thought to produce more broadly credible results that can be implemented more readily. Teamwork is at the heart of hot groups, search conferences and scenario planning. But Senge (1996,1998, p. 7) has begun to doubt the general effectiveness of team theory: “Many. . . are essentially individualistic in nature.” He finds greater creativity, flexibility and responsiveness in the alignment of jazz ensembles or basketball teams. And Havel (2002, April 9) has a ready warning against losing oneself in a team: “[M]any of those who were unable to come to terms with their own responsibility. . . have wanted to merge into a pack and hide under the banner of collectivism.”

They fail because we often put the wrong kind of people into leadership roles. Senge (undated, p. 7) claims that “[t]he learning capabilities of teams tend to deteriorate steadily the higher you go up the corporate ladder. . . Why? The precondition for building a team is that people perceive themselves as needing one another. And a lot of senior executives don’t perceive this. . . .” The ever self-reflective Havel (2002, September 20) said that a dozen years in office had left him “a good deal less sure of myself, a good deal more humble. . . . [T]he very same spiritual and intellectual unease that once compelled me to stand up against the totalitarian regime and go to jail for it is now causing me to have such deep doubts about the value of my own work.” Such humility is exactly what Senge (2002, p.10) sees as the foundation for true change: “Only if we are in that shadow of doubt will we have a chance of actually hearing what *another* says that doesn’t match what *we* say. Only if we are in the shadow of doubt do we have a chance to learn.” Thus, he says, we need leaders who clarify rather than exhort.

And change efforts fail because we treat organizations as though they are static, and then continue to recreate them, problems and all. Institutions are living systems and should continually renew themselves, according to Senge (2004). As long as our understanding of them is outdated, we will continue “changing only in reaction to outside forces, yet the well-spring of real learning is aspiration, imagination, and experimentation” (Senge, undated, p. 3). Havel (2002, April 9) reflects this caution for the public sector: “[H]ow important it is that law should not be some kind of an end in itself. . . and then followed in a blind, or even callous, fashion. . . . It is the purpose of law. . . that should be sacred.”

Perhaps most critically: *Change efforts fail because businesses and governments think the goal is problem-solving, when it should be creativity.* “The problem solver tries to make something go away. A creator tries to bring something new into being,” according to Senge (undated) -- a sentiment echoing Havel’s notion that “politics can be not only the art of the possible. . . it can even be the art of the impossible.”

The dilemmas that confront an increasingly globalized 21st Century (7) often lead us to seek quick, apparent answers. “[W]e live in truly bizarre times,” Senge (2001, p. 6) counsels. “We have this hubris, this sense that anything we want to make happen, we can make happen. . . . [W]e simultaneously live with an extraordinary experience of powerlessness.” According to Havel (2002, September 20), this places the world “at perhaps the most important crossroads of history.” We may have no choice in taking the new road, Senge (2004, p. 9) says: Our institutions, their leadership and the thinking that underpins them “are falling apart.”

Faith and Hope

Hope is definitely not the same thing as optimism. It is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out. . . It is also hope, above all, which gives us the strength to live and continually try new things. . . (Havel, 1990, pp. 181-182)

Most people want to share in a task that is bigger than themselves. They want a purpose in life beyond themselves, one which is real versus a thing of rhetoric. (Handy, 1995, p. 54)

At the same time that the world we have known is eroding, visions of a civil society and a learning organization are grounded in powerful emotion that can only be called hope. Havel and learning-organization proponents like Senge share four common understandings which inform those visions and give them a tremendous staying power, a power that only hope can sustain.

Their hope is rooted in a belief that human beings have the potential to change. A learning organization is a group of people “continually enhancing their capacity to create what they want to create” (Galagan,

October 1991, p. 42). But new forms of organization are possible only with “radical changes in human thinking and behavior, and in social consciousness,” Havel told the Council of Europe (1990, May 10). Though he warned that transformation will not be easy, his remarks indicate he believes people are capable of deep change: “[W]e must not be afraid of dreaming the seemingly impossible if we want the seemingly impossible to become a reality.”

Their hope is founded on a conviction that humans feel responsibility for themselves and toward one another. Society must nurture this sense of responsibility, Havel (1990, p. 199) says, rather than giving people “the feeling that these heroes will take things for them. . . [E]ach of us must find real, fundamental hope within himself. You can’t delegate that to anyone else.” In fact, people want to exercise their responsibility: Robert Bellah and his colleagues found support for institutions declining in part because “they do not challenge us to use all of our capacities so we have a sense of enjoyable achievement and of contributing to the welfare of others” (1992, p. 49).

They understand the importance of dreams to keep hope alive. Havel (1990, May 10) calls this “dreaming as a matter of principle,” and says it “is never pointless to think about alternatives that may at the moment seem improbably, impossible, or simply fantastic.” Such musings also are the stuff of the visions that power learning organizations.

And their hope understands it must be patient. Transformation is “a change process that unfolds over many years,” say the authors of the aptly named *Intentional Revolutions* (Nevis *et al.*, 1996, pp. 132-133). To Havel:

[h]ope, in this deep and powerful sense, is not the same as joy that things are going well, or willingness to invest in enterprises that are obviously headed for early success, but, rather, an ability to work for something because it is good, not just because it stands a chance to succeed. (1990, p. 181)

Such is the hope -- the faith -- that fuels the vision of a civil society or a learning organization.

Putting Dreams to Work

[T]he moral order derives from the transcendental

order; the civic order derives from the moral order; and only then does the civic order give rise to the political order. (Havel, 2002, September 19)

[W]e're at the beginning of something, not the end.
(Senge, in The Drucker Foundation, 2001, p. 40)

The most impressive contribution that Havel, Senge and some other learning-organization proponents have made to the effort of transforming the world may be their unworldliness. References to metaphysics, the unseen, transcendence and religion -- even love -- recur throughout their writing.

While emphasizing self-reflection, they embrace a world of blurred boundaries. “[H]ome has no distinct and explicit borders, nor does it have any absolute beginning or absolute end,” Havel (2002, October 28) said in an address on one Czech National Day. “Home consists of multiple layers and its perception always depends primarily on our point of view or on the scale that we apply.” Senge (2004, p. 12) calls for a shift of awareness so “the normal boundaries between self and world dissolve.”

The shift is “from seeing a world made up of things to seeing a world that’s open and primarily made up of relationships.” It requires surrender from doing into being. (Senge, 1996, 1998, pp. 10-12).

Such surrender requires “flexibility, patience, and acute awareness,” according to Joseph Jaworski (1996, 1998, p. 88). When we achieve this, we lose ourselves into something that psychologist Carl Jung called “synchronicity. . . a meaningful coincidence of two or more events, where something other than the probability of chance is involved.” Jaworski describes the experience of a life in synchronicity:

The people who come to you are the very people you need in relation to your commitment. Doors open, a sense of flow develops, and you find you are acting in a coherent field of people who may not even be aware of one another. You are not acting individually any longer, but out of the unfolding generative order. This is the unbroken wholeness of the implicate order out of which seemingly discrete events take place. At this point, your life becomes a series of predictable miracles.
(Jaworski, 1996, 1998, p. 185)

A related experience is that of “presence,” something described in a new book of that name (Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski and Flowers, 2004) that was released as this article was heading to press. Those authors say:

We’ve come to believe that the core capacity needed for accessing the field of the future is presence. We first thought of presence as being fully conscious and aware in the present moment. Then we began to experience presence as deep listening, of being open beyond one’s preconceptions and historical ways of making sense. We came to see the importance of letting go of old identities and the need to control. . . Ultimately, we came to see all of these aspects of presence as leading to a state of ‘letting come,’ of consciously participating in a larger field for change. (Senge *et al*, 2004, p. 11)

The visions of Havel, Jaworski and Senge call us to understand that “[a] deeper level of reality exists beyond anything we can articulate” (Senge, 1996, 1998, p. 10). At the same time, we may approach that reality, that synchronicity, that presence through the practice of dialogue.

Dialogue

[T]his joint participation in an unusual journey, this collective uncertainty about where a journey is leading, this delight in discovering it together and finding the courage and the ability to negotiate and enjoy the new vistas together -- it is all this that creates a remarkable and rare sense of community. . .
(Havel, 1988, p. 253)

Dialogue is not intended for “practical” purposes. It functions solely for the development of deep shared meaning. Yet this exercise has a profound potential for moving us toward the civil society.

Dialogue is “a way of exploring the roots of the many crises that face humanity today. . . a continuing adventure that can open the way to significant and creative change” (Bohm, Factor and Garrett, 1991) and the path to “a participatory consciousness” (Bohm, 1996, p. 26).

Of all learning-organization activities, dialogue is perhaps the most Havelian. (8) While playwrights may be expected to have a keen interest in theatrical dialogue, Havel (1988, p. 253) also has written extensively about dialogue as a civic practice: “communal participation in the ‘order of the spirit’.”

His ideas are strikingly similar to those of David Bohm, the late physicist who mixed a quantum view of the world -- in which relationships are everything and parts, as opposed to wholes, exist only in the human mind -- with the ancient tradition of discussions in a circle, to produce the modern system known as dialogue.

Both Havel and Bohm believe that humans realized themselves only in deep connection with others. “[I]t is only through a ‘you’. . . , only through a ‘we,’ that the ‘I’ can genuinely become itself,” Havel (1988, p. 370) has written. And Bohm called dialogue “a sort of collective dance of the mind that. . . has immense power and reveals coherent purpose” (Bohm *et al*, 1991).

Both men are concerned with the experience of separation so common to human beings. Havel (1988, p. 351) expresses this in lofty fashion: “[O]ne’s separated being. . . precisely because of its separation, aspires toward the integrity of Being.” Bohm made his case more plainly, arguing that human behavior and thought are collective, though people mistakenly believe them to be fragmented. This error causes us to see ourselves as separate -- even isolated -- individuals, rather than as part of an unbroken whole of society.

Havel and Bohm also both see breakdowns in thought and language as the primary reason for such alienation. Havel (1991, p. 13) warns that “the more we know only what is apparent about reality, the less we know about reality in fact.” Bohm agrees that thought and its medium, language, are incoherent and riddled with errors. Four that he considers most dangerous are outlined below, with comparison to Havel’s kindred but less systematic observations about language and thought.

Thought is full of tacit assumptions. In larger society, such assumptions constitute the culture. “Until thought is understood -- better yet, more than understood, *perceived* -- it will actually control us; but it will create the impression that it is our servant, that it is just doing what we want it to do” (Bohm, 1992, p. 5). Similarly, Havel warned about “conventionalized, pseudo-ideological thinking that has become so dangerously domesticated” (1991, p. 111)

Thought and language cannot capture the full essence of any thing they attempt to understand or describe. “[T]he thing is always more than

what we mean and is never exhausted by our concepts” (Bohm and Peat, 1987, p. 8). Thus, according to Havel (1988, p. 258), effectiveness requires “penetrating to ever higher levels of articulation.”

Thought presents itself as external, objective reality when, instead, it is brought forth subjectively. “Thought creates the world and then says, ‘I didn’t do it,’” Bohm said (Kofman and Senge, p. 12). In this way, opinions seem factual. And to Havel (1991, p. 136), “individuals confirm the system, fulfill the system, make the system, *are* the system.”

Because we confuse thought (which is really memory or learned response) with thinking, most of us never learn the act of thinking. So Havel (1991, p. 11) has blamed “ritualized” and “degraded” language for splitting thought from reality “and thus cripp[ing] its capacity to intervene in that reality effectively,” and Bohm used an environmental metaphor:

If collective thinking is an ongoing stream,
‘thoughts’ are like leaves floating on the surface
that wash up on the banks. We gather in the
leaves, which we experience as ‘thoughts.’ We
misperceive the thoughts as our own, because we fail
to see the stream of collective thinking from
which they arise. (Senge, 1990, p. 242)

To correct defective thought and human separation, Bohm (Senge, 1990, p. 242) called for dialogue, saying it helps people begin to see “the stream that flows between the banks.” He and several of his disciples developed a variety of guidelines for conducting the process. (9) They seem consistent with Havel’s views, though he is silent on discrete processes.

One important condition is that -- initially -- there should be a facilitator. The facilitator’s role is key as people learn to “suspend their assumptions” (that is, to put them forward for observation, reflection and understanding by everyone in the group) and “listen generatively,” for meaning, not just words. But because dialogue emphasizes the equality of participants, the group should be moving toward eventual collective leadership.

Guidelines for group size vary. Bohm said that fewer than 20 people is too small for the necessary confrontation and more than 40 too large for the necessary intimacy. His ideal seems to be the number of people who can participate fully in a single circle (Bohm, 1996). In the circle, participants should “speak to the center, not to each other” (Isaacs and Smith, 1994, p. 380). (10)

Because early attempts at dialogue can be frustrating, it is suggested that the group meet at least three times before deciding whether to disband. When dialogue works, it will be unmistakable, according to Joseph Jaworski (1996,1998, p. 112): “When it’s present, you know it. You can’t fake dialogue. Yet when you focus on it too hard and try to capture the process, you change it, and it collapses and vanishes.”

Weekly meetings of 90-120 minutes are recommended. Dialogue will have its own timetable, as Bohm said of one meeting that “went on, until it finally seemed to stop for no reason at all and the group dispersed” (Jaworski, 1996, 1998, p. 109).

While there is disagreement over whether dialogue is suited for business or government, the key seems to be in Bohm’s caution (1996, p. 42) that “[t]here is no place in the dialogue for authority and hierarchy.” Nor is there a place for an agenda. “[We] are not going to decide what to do about anything. This is crucial. Otherwise we are not free” (Bohm, 1996, p. 17). “Our purpose is really to communicate coherently in truth, if you want to call that a purpose.”

The group should not, probably even can not, begin with larger issues. Yet practitioners say topics ultimately can include class, race, politics, economics, current affairs and religion. Whatever the topic, dialogue is not likely to be linear, “contradictions live happily side by side” (DeMare, Piper and Thompson, 1991, p. 146); and it often is frustrating because, as people learn to suspend assumptions, anger and fear are likely to arise. But dialogue can become exciting, as it develops what Havel (1988, p. 256) calls “an electrifying atmosphere of community.”

If people persist in dialogue, they are likely to find a sense of shared purpose emerging. The experience of dialogue somehow teaches people how to work together by seeing themselves as a collective whole. In Bohm’s words:

People can begin to move into coordinated patterns of action, without the artificial, tedious process of decision making. They can start to act in an aligned way. They do not need to work out an action plan for what everyone should do. . . Each member of the team simply knows what he or she is ‘supposed’ to do (or, rather, what’s best to do), because they all fit into a larger whole. (Isaacs, 1994, p. 358)

The understanding of wholeness represents “a deep shift in consciousness away from the notion that the parts are primary,” Jaworski (1996,1998, p. 116) says. “[T]he whole already already exists; it’s just that we’re locked into a frame of reference that keeps us from perceiving it. In dialogue, the whole shows up and is manifested by individuals as they take action.”

That larger whole may be a new kind of citizenship, what Bohm (1996, p. 320 has called “impersonal fellowship” and some practitioners term *koinonia* (a term from ancient Greek usage, meaning communion or fellowship). “It is citizenship in the making,” *koinonia* theorists say. “[G]iven time and opportunity for dialogue to develop, without goal or task or personal leadership, a culture does in due course evolve which is democratically highly responsible” (De Mare *et al*, 1991, pp. 92 and 175).

Havel (1988, pp. 370-371), too, sees dialogue unleashing a deep sense of responsibility among people. This does not emerge from “new ideas, projects, programs and organizations,” but “only in a renaissance of elementary human relationships.” In this way, dialogue -- with its creation of deep shared meaning -- lies at the heart of his hopes for a civil society.

Conclusion

Skeptics may argue that these are soft and unproven approach to governing, and that it is a risky thing to mix dreams. But using learning-organization lessons in pursuit of Havel’s vision offers a powerful new orientation for public-sector leaders today.

It may not be the only method a government executive employs; certainly such leaders (like corporate executives) also must spend a great amount of time in transactional activities. And it may be harder for a government executive, with a fully public constituency and public mandates to consider, than it is for a business leader to move single-mindedly toward a learning model.

Yet government leaders also have certain advantages over their private-sector counterparts in the development of shared meaning. The public expects government not just to deliver goods and services, but to try for something more, something uplifting, that will improve individual and community life. Campaigns as well as governance give candidates and citizens a chance to go beyond spin-doctoring to weave a common vision of how members of society should live together. And government leaders can tap into a rich tradition of evocative public rhetoric that is unlike anything available to corporate executives.

The current crisis in confidence adds one more reason why government executives should move in this direction. Voters -- and non-voters -- often say they don't feel heard and understood by politicians or bureaucrats; at the same time, many of our most pressing societal problems are not addressed because politicians say they can't muster public backing.

Breakdowns in policy and process seem so disturbing not merely because today's world seems such a high-stakes gamble, but because they are at odds with a basic underpinning of American government: what political scientists James G. March and Johan P. Olsen (1995, p. 251) have called "democratic governance as faith." We live within a social compact and have been schooled with civics lessons that often make us, like Havel, believers in the civil society.

Government executives can tap these deep emotions by freeing their own Havelian sentiments and balancing them with techniques from learning organizations. For practical and political reasons, perhaps governments should not follow a learning model exclusively. But elected and appointed executives alike can incorporate learning-organization practices to give their own priority programs a creative edge, broader support and staying power. And they can begin, without fanfare, dialogues -- perhaps starting with their own leadership circles -- to go beyond the issues of the moment to the concerns and faith that sustain us as a democratic society.

Endnotes

1. Among them, Bellah *et al*, 1992; Morgan, 1986; and Useem and Kochan, 1992.
2. For purposes of this paper, "conflict" is not generally understood to include armed conflict. Havel has spoken out about terrorism, totalitarianism, nationalism and various armed conflicts; he also vigorously pursued Czech membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), but those issues will not be addressed here. And while the world conditions that produce armed conflict may be ameliorated by applications described in this paper, Havel (2002, September 20) does not rule out the use of military power by enlightened countries: "Evil must be confronted in its womb and, if there is no other way to do it, then it has to be dealt with by the use of force." Obviously, this is a technique that goes beyond any of regular learning organizations.
3. Several scholars separate managers and leaders with the distinction between doing things right and doing the right thing. "[The] problem in many public organizations is that they are overmanaged and underled" (Carnevale, 1995, p. 57). The implication is not that management is unnecessary. Bennis (1989, p. 103) says a CEO must combine "administrative and imaginative gifts." Bryson and Crosby (1992, p. 43) argue that "leaders must be good managers or at least associate themselves with good managers." And Havel, no fan of "the apparatchik" (1991, p. 257) says "a politician must also be a good executive officer, surrounding himself with efficient people and delegating responsibility" (1992, April 23).
4. In his landmark work *Leadership*, Burns (1978,244) uses the term "heroic leadership" to mean: "belief in leaders because of their personage alone. . . ; faith in the

leaders' capacity to overcome obstacles and crises; readiness to grant to leaders the powers to handle crises; mass support for such leaders. . . . [I]t is a *type of relationship* between leader and led. A crucial aspect of this relationship is the absence of conflict. . . . Heroic leadership provides the *symbolic* solution of internal and external conflict.

5. In a number of speeches, however, Havel is most concrete about necessary action when he argues strongly for multinational organizations like European union or a stronger United Nations, to underpin individual civil societies.

6. This paper will not examine these approaches, but readers may find more information about hot groups in Leavitt and Lipman-Blumen, 1995 and in Kearney, 1987; about search conferences in Weisbord, 1992 and in Emery and Purser, 1996; and about scenario planning in Kleiner, 1995 and in Jaworski, 1996 and 1998.

7. Havel and Senge both have identified similar problems in the global society: environmental destruction; the gulf between rich and poor; materialism; nationalism, terrorism, fanaticism; the undermining of family and cultural ties. They each helped established a think tank to address them. Havel was a co-founder of the annual Forum series, and Senge is a founder of the Society for Organizational Learning.

8. This may be because dialogue is the least "practical" and the most abstract and philosophical.

9. However, "[n]o firm rules can be laid down. . . because [dialogue's] essence is learning" (Bohm *et al*, 1991).

10. One author suggests: "In dialogue, speak from the heart and the moment and from your own experience; listen from the community, the collective. Listen without thinking about responding. Listen for information, not confirmation (Brown, 1995, p. 158).

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Network Thinking in Peace and Conflict Studies

Alvin W. Wolfe

Abstract

Developments in mathematics and social theory and in techniques of communication and computation have brought network analysis to a state where it can be practically applied over a broad spectrum. Surprisingly, this mode of analysis has not been adopted by practitioners and scholars of peace and conflict studies to the extent that it ought to be. Examples of types of analysis that could have important applications are given, using network concepts such as centrality, structural equivalence, and regular equivalence.

Although the Millennium did not bring the predicted interruption of global electronic networks that might have resulted in widespread chaos, the year 2001 brought to the attention of the public – Americans especially, but the rest of the world as well – a festering international conflict that is expressed more through complex networks of ideologically driven persons all over the world than through actions of nation-states vis-à-vis one another. It is a kind of international conflict that is *inter-national* only in its scope and span.

The structure of the movement often referred to as the *al Qaeda* network is not necessarily unique. Nor is that structure so new as it is often portrayed. Anthropologists have seen it before and called it to our attention.

In the 1960s and 1970s, anthropologists Virginia Hine and Luther Gerlach studied the kinds of organizations that were developing in the intensification of efforts by the powerless in nations around the world to organize themselves to effect structural change. When people organize *themselves* to change some aspect of society in popular movements such as the ecology movement and the black power movement -- two of the movements that they studied – a non-bureaucratic form of organizational structure seemed to emerge as very effective (Gerlach and Hine, 1974). Such organizations are not limited by state or national borders.

In a summarizing paper entitled “The Basic paradigm of a future sociocultural system,” Virginia Hine wrote: “We called the type of structure we were observing a ‘segmented polycephalous network’” While her title

referred to a *future sociocultural system*, she recognized that the structural model itself was not new, for she wrote, “The most penetrating insight into the true nature of this emergent supranational level of social organization has come from anthropologist Alvin Wolfe who began to catch the outlines of it during his study of the mining industry in South Africa”(1977, p.21). My description of the network of the mining industry was published fourteen years earlier (Wolfe, 1963) and then put in a theoretical context later (Wolfe, 1977).

Anthropologists have been studying decentralized, “acephalous,” social systems for many decades, and in the culturally relativistic perspective of anthropology, their worth is obvious. Radcliffe-Brown marveled at the aboriginal Australian system that made it relatively easy for a person from a great distance to find his appropriate place among people who would be strangers if they did not share an ideology that cut across territorial barriers in many ways to give each person recognizable status. Anthropologists, more than economists and political scientists, were ready to see this “new” kind of organization as it evolved in our own “modern” systems.

After observing how the mining industry dominated the southern half of Africa during the 1960s when the Winds of Change were expected to bring freedom from colonial control, I wrote:

I found the mineral extraction industry of southern Africa to be organized in an intricate system based more on overlapping membership of a variety of groups than on a bureaucratic centralization of administrative power. The network binds groups that are different both structurally and functionally, some business corporations, some states, some families, in a modern supranational structure that is more than just international. ...The several hundred mining companies operating in southern Africa are integrated through a series of relationships that focus on some of the larger among them. ...Then, in a variety of ways these corporations are linked to governments (Wolfe, 1963, pp. 153-54).

I saw how states (territorially bounded, bureaucratically organized corporations) were weakened relative to companies that were able to operate above the level at which states ordinarily have sovereignty, and I illustrated my reports on the process with data from the nonferrous metals industries that operated in what are now Zaire, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Angola, but were largely controlled from Belgium, Great Britain, the Republic of South

Africa, and the United States, controlled *from* them, not *by* those nation-states (Wolfe, 1977).

Those observations were for me not only illustrative of ways of managing potential conflict among companies and states at a very high level of organization but also of even more general processes by which new social phenomena are generated. Previously existing units and subunits, in the course of adjustment and adaptation to changing circumstances, change their relations with one another and are, sometimes, newly integrated in a novel manner such that new units or subunits are generated.

In a 1967 chapter, "Alternatives to War," Margaret Mead wrote, "One of the principal contributions of anthropology should be to distill from our available treasure house of small and unusual social models -- many of them outside the single narrow and steadily converging mainstream of 'civilization' -- new combinations and new forms that will release us from our historically limited imaginations" (Mead, 1967:225). I was pleased to see her cite my analysis of that supranational system as identifying an emerging form of acephalous control, against which rebellion and revolt are very nearly impossible (Mead, 1967:225).

In the forty-some years since that early recognition of the importance of network models to the understanding of the processes of globalization and the evolution of new supranational structures, network analysts in many disciplines – especially sociology and organizational sciences – have made great progress in developing methods and theory for studying large and complex networks (Burt and Minor, 1983; Freeman, White, and Romney, 1989; Marsden and Lin, 1982; Mizuchi and Schwartz, 1987; Wasserman and Faust, 1994; Wasserman and Galaskiewicz, 1994; Wolfe, 1978). Unfortunately, practitioners and scholars of peace and conflict resolution have not picked up these wonderfully enlightening concepts and mathematical and computational methods to the extent that they should have.

The networks or matrices that are the basis of the evolving supranational system are not beyond our understanding. In a 1996 book, *Anthropological Contributions to Conflict Resolution*, Wolfe and Yang argued that network analyses should play an important role in our understanding of not only this newly developing global system but of conflict situations of smaller scale as well.

Now, eight years later, we dare to hope that network analysis might help develop methods to resolve some of the inherent conflicts that are causing so much anguish globally. Radical fundamentalist Muslim movements fit precisely the model that Virginia Hine (1977) had called a Segmented Polycephalous (Idea) Network (SP[I]N). Globalization of

outsourcing through networks of multinational corporations could well be seen as that kind of movement as well, the motivating “Idea” being an almost absolute faith in the Market.

In 1996, I wrote:

Increased public awareness of network concepts creates a demand for their application to the solution of human problems, and network studies have now developed to the point where network scholars can respond to that demand. Network analysis helps us to understand social processes in complex systems and it can help us specifically to locate potential conflicts, provide early warning of barriers to communication and of developing bottlenecks in resource allocation (Wolfe, 1996, pp 7-8).

Network analysis begins by conceptualizing all social situations in terms of nodes and their connections, persons and relationships, groups and relationships. From this perspective, all systems are networks, but networks have varying characteristics, and that variation is all-important.

Bruce Kapferer's (1969) analysis of a dispute that arose among workers in a mining operation in Zambia, is an early example of the application of a network model to conflicts and disputes. He found that the way an initial dispute between two persons is defined and the way it develops are much influenced by the multiplex ties the original disputants have with others and the ties of those others with one another.

Kapferer's data were reanalyzed by Patrick Doreian (1974, 1981) who showed first how certain tools of matrix algebra made it possible to demonstrate how the connectivity properties of the network were important for understanding the social mobilization that took place (Doreian, 1974), and later showed how a then-new kind of analysis (Q-analysis) could go beyond direct connectivity to identify structural conditions that either permit or prohibit "traffic" which quite strictly affects the mobilization of support by disputants (Doreian, 1981).

Another early simple but elegant example of the application of a network model to understanding conflict is Wayne Zachary's study, "An Information Flow Model of Conflict and Fission in Small Groups" (1977). Zachary found he could have predicted quite precisely which side of a developing dispute some forty members of a network would fall on simply by knowing a little about their previous relationships with one another.

It has been shown that several distinct forms of centrality in networks can have quite different consequences. These different kinds of centrality are highly relevant to problems of conflict and resolution, for they relate directly to power and autonomy. One distinction is between closeness centrality and betweenness centrality. Not only can any given network or system be characterized as exhibiting specified degrees of closeness or betweenness, but also the analyst can specify an index of closeness centrality and an index of betweenness centrality for each individual node in a network that to the casual observer appears without any regularity.

While the several indices of centrality are highly intercorrelated, their distinctiveness may be crucial for understanding or manipulating the network. For individual nodes, high closeness centrality implies autonomy, independence from control by others. Betweenness centrality, on the other hand, implies power, potential for control of others (Freeman, 1978; Freeman, Roeder, and Mulholland, 1979). With such implications, it is clear that these formal network characteristics, which can apply to all kinds of organizations, are crucial to management, administration, and the resolution of conflict. It should be well worth the added analytical effort to be able to specify indices of dependence, autonomy, and power among persons, offices, or organizations within any system, from that of a small group to one at a supranational or global level.

Network analysis now permits us to measure the degree to which clustering is exhibited in any system of relationships. We can also identify sets of nodes that, whether they are themselves connected or not, have equivalent positions in a complex network. Such equivalence analysis and its several measures are useful in finding “structural holes” in a network, with implications for strategic action by participants. Ronald Burt develops these ideas with special focus on competitive advantage in several publications (Burt, 1982, 1992, 2001).

Even beyond that, analysis of the patterns of relationships among persons or corporations or other nodes in a large complex network can tell us the degree to which that network has a hierarchical structure even if this is not at all apparent to the participants or to outside observers. David Smith and Douglas White applied a type of analysis called “regular equivalence” to the complex set of trade relationships among nations to discover the structure of the “world-economy” and the positions of particular countries in it. Their findings “generally conform to the theoretical expectations of the world-system perspective” in that there seems to be a hierarchy from “core” countries that have very widespread relations with many others down to peripheral countries whose involvement in international trade is much more

restricted (Smith and White, 1992). Analyses of such global networks, especially if they can take into account multinational corporations as well as nations, can be improved to the point where they may be very useful in helping us to understand and resolve conflicts that arise between the “haves” and the “have-nots.”

I have myself used that technique to find the structure of a network of six hundred agencies and organizations, mixed public and private, that serve children and families in a multi-county area. My interpretation of the results is that there are three distinct clusters that appear to represent three different levels of integration. Figure 1, in which each node represents a set of “equivalent” organizations, shows that the network takes on the shape of roughly concentric circles around the “core” if you will (Wolfe, 2004).

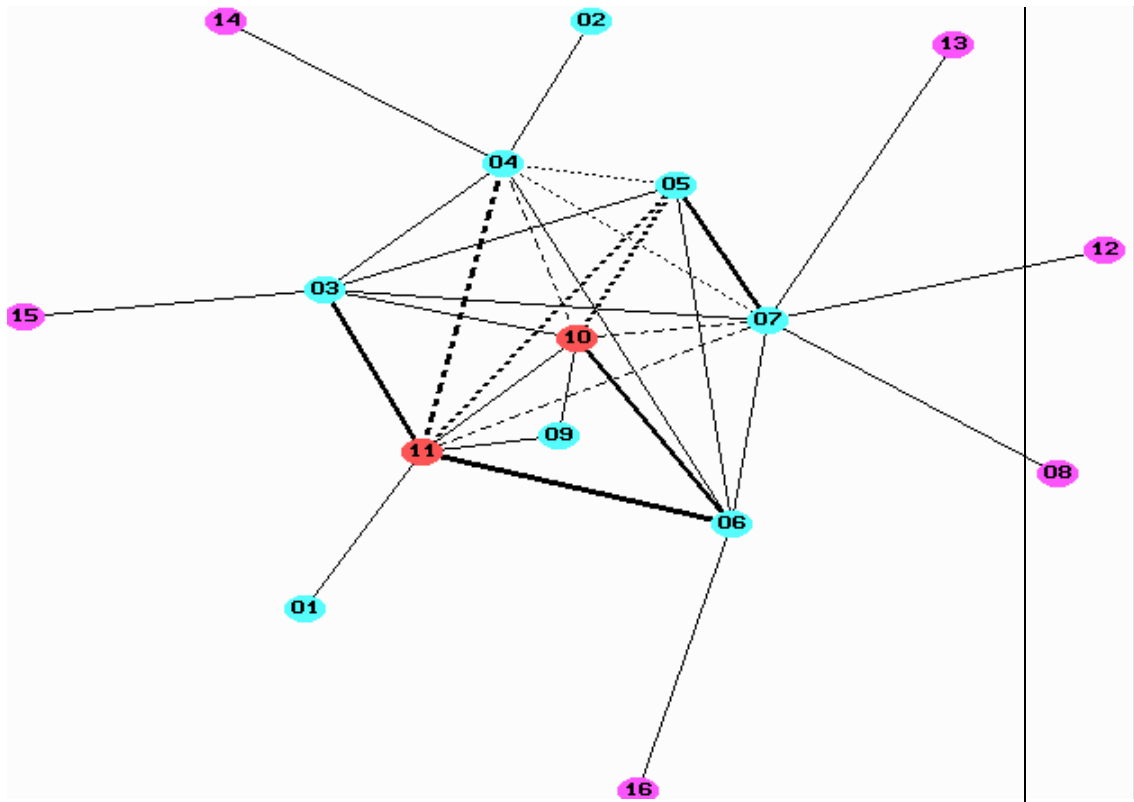


Figure 1. Network of the Clusters of 600 Agencies in the Tampa Bay Area.

I do not know of any other kind of analysis that can so effectively determine so much about complex social systems. What could be more important for a program of conflict prevention or a program of conflict

resolution than to know the degrees to which particular portions of a total system are, or are becoming, relatively isolated from the rest?

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TRANSFORMING CONFLICT: A GROUP RELATIONS PERSPECTIVE

Tracy Wallach

Abstract

This article offers a group relations perspective of conflict and conflict transformation and explores how conflict manifests on the individual, interpersonal, group, and inter-group levels. Conflict and aggression are defined as normal aspects of the human condition. Current theories and practices in the field of conflict transformation tend to be more rationally based. The author uses concepts from psychoanalytic theory, such as defense mechanisms; and concepts from open systems theory, such as task, role, boundaries, and authority, to argue that in order to transform conflict, it is essential to understand the non-rational and often unconscious emotional elements that operate in groups and systems.

The only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance.

Franklin D. Roosevelt, First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1933

Fear is, I believe, a most effective tool in destroying the soul of an individual—and the soul of a people.

Anwar el-Sadat, “The Second Revolution,” In Search of Identity (1977)

Introduction

Conflict and aggression are normal aspects and reflections of the human condition. Conflict is neither positive nor negative in and of itself. Rather, it is an outgrowth of the diversity that characterizes our thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and our social systems and structures. Differences and conflict stir up feelings of discomfort, irritation, and anxiety. Because conflict stirs up these difficult feelings, it is often viewed as a problem to be fixed or gotten rid of, rather than an expression of a polarity/paradox that is inherent in group life (Berg and Smith, 1987). The ability to sit with

difference, and the conflict it arouses, offers opportunities for reflection, growth, innovation and transformation. Transformation is not possible without first bringing to light the difference and conflict that exist within any living human system.

Current theory and practice in conflict resolution tend to be rationally based. A number of authors (Fisher and Ury, 1991; Susskind and Cruikshank, 1987; Bazerman and Neale, 1982; Carpenter and Kennedy, 1988) posit that it is possible to reach win/win agreements if one can create a rational process where the right people are involved, the necessary data is available to fully analyze the conflict/problem, there is a structure, and particular procedures and rules are followed. And, indeed, providing a structure, with procedures and ground rules, can provide a psychological container in which problem solving can occur and agreements can be made. Kelman (1999) demonstrated this in his work when conducting problem-solving workshops with Israelis and Palestinians over the past 30 years. Rational processes are very important in working with conflict. It is also important to be able to connect the rational and conscious process with the extremely powerful (and often unconscious) feelings of anxiety, fear, anger, etc. that are stirred up in conflict situations and that further fuel conflicts. There are some practitioners who do work with conflict on its emotional levels (see for example Duek, 2001; Volkan, 1991; Montville, 1991; and Mindell, 1995). Montville (1991) contends that revealing the “critical psychological tasks” is “the essential business of the pre-negotiation stage of any true resolution of a conflict, before formal negotiations focus on the essentials of political institution building” (p. 540). Besod Siach, an Israeli association specifically works at the unconscious and emotional level in its work facilitating dialogue between conflict groups in Israel (Duek, 2001).

Emotions that are unspoken or unspeakable do not disappear, but are likely to surface in ways that are insidious or even dangerous. To work with conflict effectively, it must be dealt with on both the rational *and* emotional levels. At the very least, conflict resolution practitioners must be able to recognize and work with emotional and non-rational processes as they arise, even if they are using a rationally based model. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us as peace builders and teachers of conflict transformation to learn how to explore, reflect upon and understand those feelings within ourselves, rather than ridding ourselves of those feelings, and to create learning environments where others may learn to reflect upon and manage those feelings.

My approach to thinking about conflict stems from psychoanalytic and open systems theories and the work of Wilfred Bion. These theories have

been further explored and developed at the Tavistock Institute in London, the AK Rice Institute in the US, and other group relations organizations around the world. For over 50 years, these organizations have been weaving theory and practice by sponsoring group relations conferences. In the context of the temporary organization of the conference system, it is possible to study authority, leadership and group dynamics experientially, as they unfold in the here and now¹⁶. In this article, I summarize some of the concepts of group relations theory that are relevant to the work of conflict transformation.

The theories presented here are not new, although the application to peace building derived from these theories is new. Clinicians have previously attempted to apply psychological concepts to the understanding of political processes and of conflict (see, for example, Ettin, Fidler, and Cohen, 1995). By introducing concepts from group relations theory to the field of peace building, I hope to shed light on how we take up our roles as educators and practitioners and how we might use ourselves to help people move through conflict in a transformative way.

Levels of Conflict

Conflict occurs on many levels (Deutsch, 1973): within oneself (intra-psychic conflict), between two people (interpersonal conflict), between sub-groups within a group (intra-group conflict), between groups (inter-group conflict), organizations, ethnic or religious groups or nations. At all of these levels, conflict may be either overt and conscious, or covert and unconscious. What happens on one level invariably affects and reflects what happens at the other levels. Individuals are defined by the group contexts in which they live (family, social groups, communities, nations), while at the same time, these larger groups and systems (family, social groups, communities, nations) are created by the individuals that make them up (Rice, 1965; Miller and Rice, 1967).

A conflict at one level may find its expression on the other levels. Unconscious internal conflicts may get projected on to the other person, group, or nation. Collective narratives and myths of larger groups and nations also find their expression on the individual level. For that reason, awareness of one's own ideas, feelings, assumptions, beliefs, and values, is necessary in order to work in the field of conflict transformation.

In this article, the dynamics of conflict on all of these levels will be explored, as well as how conflict dynamics on one level impact those on the

¹⁶ A full description of the conference experience can be found in Rice (1963), Banet and Hayden (1977); Hayden and Molenkamp (2003); and Miller (1989).

other levels. The nature of this medium forces me to present these concepts in a linear fashion, though I understand conflict to be dynamic, systemic and circular.

Intra-psychic Conflict

Psychoanalytic theory offers a language that helps us think about conflict on an intra-psychic level. Our personalities are defined by our upbringing, our family and cultural background, as well as by our genetics. Our national, ethnic or religious cultures, as well as our gender, age, and life experiences, contribute to our particular ways of managing our emotions. Experiencing and expressing particular emotions may be more acceptable in some cultures than in others. We are often not conscious of our individual and culturally conditioned ways of managing emotions, until, that is, we come in contact with a difference.

Defense Mechanisms

We all find that certain emotions are difficult to bear. Psychoanalytic theory posits that we protect ourselves from these difficult or intolerable feelings in various ways, known as *defense mechanisms*¹⁷. Defense mechanisms offer a way to manage internal conflict and the anxiety it arouses. Just as countries develop various kinds of defenses and weaponry to protect themselves from perceived enemies, so, too, do individuals try to protect themselves from perceived dangers. Below a few of the defense mechanisms that are particularly relevant in the area of conflict transformation are described.

Splitting is a defensive process in which we gain relief from internal conflicts by dividing emotions into either “all good” or “all bad” parts. We split our emotions due to our difficulty in holding two paradoxical experiences at the same time. Containing both the good and the bad parts of ourselves and seeing others as containing both good and bad aspects presents an intolerable conflict. We split in order to protect ourselves from the anxiety that the conflict arouses.

Projection is a defense in which an individual disowns, and, then locates in someone else the disowned intolerable feelings s/he is experiencing. Whether the feelings are objectively good or bad, the individual experiences them as intolerable. Projection is often seen in

¹⁷ Defense mechanisms and how they manifest on the individual and group level have been written about extensively in the psychoanalytic and group relations literature (see, for example, S. Freud, 1926; A. Freud, 1966; Klein, 1959; Bion, 1961; Ogden, 1965; Obholzer, 1994).

conjunction with splitting, with the split-off aspects of the self being projected onto another party because of the induced anxiety of holding onto the feelings oneself. Through splitting and projective processes, an internal conflict is externalized and located outside the self (e.g., *we* are good, *they* are evil; *we* are rational, *they are emotional*; *we* are victims, *they* are perpetrators; *we* are peace loving, *they* are aggressive; *we* are heroes, *they* are cowards, etc.).

Child psychoanalyst Melanie Klein (1959) viewed splitting and projection as rooted in infancy as a result of early frustration of the infant's needs. The infant hates the source of its frustration. Because the anxiety generated by the infant's hate towards the person on whom s/he is dependent is intolerable, the infant splits the image of the caretaker into good and bad parts. Children's fairy tales and fables are filled with characters that exemplify the splitting of emotions. Rarely are characters in these stories portrayed as complex beings with both good and bad elements. So, the image of mother is split into the good fairy godmother (or the long deceased good mother) and the wicked stepmother; the sister is either beautiful and good or wicked and jealous. Bruno Bettelheim (1976) explores how fairy tales offer children the opportunity to work through difficult emotions.

Working with Intra-psycho Conflict

In psychoanalytically informed theory and practice, intra-psycho conflict is brought into the consulting room in the form of transference, in which the patient transfers to the therapist emotions that s/he had towards authority figures in childhood. Healing occurs when unconscious conflicts, as expressed through the transference, can be contained, made conscious, and put into words. This process helps the patient to make meaning of his or her experience (Freud, S., 1915; Foulkes, 1965; Lazar, 2002); and occurs in the context of a therapeutic "holding environment" (Winnicott, 1960; Ogden, 1982).

Interpersonal Conflict

In analytic terms, intra-psycho conflict may be transformed into inter-personal conflict through the process of *projective identification*. Unlike projection and splitting, which are one party defenses, projective identification is a collusive process between two or more parties. In this process, once the projector has re-located his intolerable feelings in another, the recipient of the projection identifies with and owns the projected feelings. The target of the projection thus changes in response to the projected feeling

or impulse. The projector can manipulate or train an individual or group to act according to his projections by himself behaving *as if* those projections are true. The “projector” needs to stay in contact with the recipient in order to maintain a connection to the disowned, projected feelings (Horwitz, 1983).

A typical example of projective identification in interpersonal conflict is offered in the following illustration of a couple relationship:

Person A is emotional and attracted to Person B for B’s ability to think and act rationally. B is attracted to A’s ability to connect with emotions. Over time, A disowns, that is, splits off and projects onto B, and allows B to carry more and more of the rationality that A finds uncomfortable (since B has a valence or tendency for that) while B disowns and allows A to carry more and more of the emotionality that B finds uncomfortable (since A has a valence for that). As a result, A becomes less adept at thinking rationally, and B becomes less adept at managing emotions. A becomes distressed with B over B’s inability to express feelings, while B becomes irritated with A for A’s inability to think rationally. The couple becomes polarized.

The above example shows how an initial difference, over time, leads to polarization in a couple relationship. Similar dynamics may play out in other kinds of two party relationships, such as business partnerships, parent/child relationships, and friendships. While the above example demonstrates a particular split, emotionality/rationality, not uncommon in couples, the split may also occur around other emotions and characteristics, such as, strength/vulnerability, victim/perpetrator, kind/critical, happy/sad, optimistic/pessimistic, laziness/ambition, etc., depending on the valences of the individuals involved, and the context in which they live. The valence for a particular emotion is based upon the individual’s own psychological makeup or personality. Identifying characteristics, such as nationality, race, age, gender, socioeconomic status may also determine the valence or tendency an individual may have for particular emotions. For example, in many cultures women are generally perceived as holding, and are expected to hold, the emotional elements in a relationship.

Working with Interpersonal Conflict

Splitting and projective identification are unconscious processes. Couples that have become polarized through continual projective identification are often not aware of the aspects of themselves that they have offloaded onto the other. Healing a conflict in an interpersonal relationship requires recognition of the particular valences of each party. It also requires each party to recognize and own the split off aspects of themselves that they

have projected onto the other. That is, they have to re-internalize the conflict that has been externalized. This presents a dilemma, and is a source of resistance for working through an interpersonal conflict, since the individual must then face the conflict that has been previously managed through the process of splitting. In the therapeutic dyad, the therapist serves as a container for the patient's projections, and can then "return to the patient a modified version of an unconscious defensive aspect of the patient that has been externalized by means of projective identification" (Ogden, 1982, p. 87). By interpreting the defense in a digestible way, the patient can then re-internalize and integrate that which has been projected. Splitting and projective processes also contribute to conflict within groups and larger systems. These will be discussed in greater detail below, following a brief introduction to some basic concepts of group relations theory.

Conflict within Groups: Group Relations Theory

Structural Sources of Conflict in Groups

Groups tend to join together based on similarities and in order to pursue a common task. Often, differences, in skill, viewpoint, or values, are also necessary to achieve a group's primary task. The *primary task* of any group is that which it must do in order to survive. To accomplish a group's task, members must differentiate, by taking on different roles in service of the larger group task. Boundaries are formed or created around a group and its subsystems, task, and roles to define what is in and what is out of the group. Leadership is assigned to those most able to help a group achieve its primary task (Miller and Rice, 1967; Miller, 1989; Zagier Roberts, 1994).

The concepts of task, role, boundary, leadership, and authority help us to understand the overt and covert dynamics of groups and systems. When they are agreed upon and in alignment with each other, groups and systems may function relatively well. Conflict can arise when there is disagreement, or when task, role, boundaries, and authority are not in alignment. When a group is in the throes of a conflict, it is often useful to first look at the group structure. What is its primary task? What roles do members take up? Are they clear to everyone? Are they agreed upon? Do group members interpret the primary task and their roles in the same way? How are boundaries managed? How is authority taken up? How are members authorized to do the work of the group?

Psychological Sources of Conflict

We all belong to many kinds of groups—some of which we consciously choose to join, such as a work group or organization, professional groups or societies, or particular task groups. Other groups offer no choice about membership—the family we are born into, our particular ethnic, racial, gender, or age group. Group membership stirs up conflicting feelings. We long to be a part of something bigger than ourselves, while at the same time, we want to hold on to our individual identity (Bion, 1961; McCollom, 1990). Conflict may signify the normal ambivalences of individual and collective life and may also signify a particular challenge that needs to be faced in the life of a group at a particular time (Smith and Berg, 1987; Heifetz, 1994).

Just as individuals utilize defense mechanisms, such as splitting and projective identification, so do groups, organizations, communities and nations, mobilize social defenses to protect themselves against unbearable feelings and unconscious anxieties (Menzies, 1997). Groups may also avoid anxiety and other difficult feelings and decisions by substituting routines or rituals for direct engagement with the painful problem.

Wilfred Bion (1961), a British psychoanalyst at the Center for Applied Social Research in London's Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, explored the relationship between the individual and the group. He believed that individual members enter groups with their own rational and non-rational aims and needs, and employ psychosocial defenses such as splitting, projection, and projective identification in order to tolerate the powerful tensions of group life. The group serves as a container for the various projections of individual group members and also takes on a life of its own as a consequence of these processes. As a result, individual group members act not only on their own behalf, but also on behalf of the larger group or system. These processes make up the unconscious of the group-as-a-whole. The group-as-a-whole becomes an entity much greater than its individual members, with a character of its own.

In groups, conflict may manifest between individuals in the group, between subgroups, between the group as a whole and an individual, or between the group as a whole and a particular subgroup. A group that is anxious about facing a conflict directly may unconsciously find covert ways of containing or managing the conflict. For example, groups may use particular members or subgroups to carry or hold a difficult emotion, thought, or point of view on behalf of the group as a whole. That is, an individual group member, or a sub-group, may be compelled, through the processes of projective identification in a group, to take up a role to meet the

unconscious needs of the group. The group as a whole can view itself as OK, as long as it can view “the problem” as located in one individual or subgroup.

For example, a group with conflicts around dependency issues may find an “identified patient” in the group who it can take care of. By loading the dependency into one person, the group frees itself of the anxiety caused by the intolerable dependency, while at the same time maintaining the connection with those feelings in the person of the identified patient. Conversely, a group with anxieties about its own competence may project all of its competence into one member or the leader and then rely on that leader to take care of the group¹⁸.

The example of Judith and Holofernes in Apocrypha has been cited in the group relations literature as an example of the dangers of extreme dependency upon a leader. Judith cut off the head of the Assyrian leader, Holofernes, and then displayed it to his army. Without their leader, or “head,” the army acted as if they had “all lost their own heads” (Obholzer, 1994), and were quickly defeated by the Israelites.

A group that struggles with its own aggression may find a member (or sub-group) onto whom it may project its own aggressive tendencies (or other characteristic that contradicts the group’s perception of itself). The group locates the intolerable characteristic in one individual and can then scapegoat that individual for owning the characteristic¹⁹. How a group may use an individual member or subgroup to express a conflicted aspect of itself is described in the example below.

In December 2002, the US Senate was engaged in a debate over the future of Trent Lott who was Senate Majority Leader. In a party honoring Senator Strom Thurmond on his 100th birthday, Senator Lott referred to Thurmond’s 1948 presidential campaign and stated that the country “would have been better off had he won (Hulse, 2002).” Thurmond had run that campaign on a policy of segregation. Lott was immediately attacked for his comments by both the left and the right wings of both parties. The Senators who spoke up most stridently against Lott and pressured him to resign, had questionable records in regard to their own stands on civil rights (Gettleman, 2002). The group focused on a particular scapegoat, as a method of avoidance of its own racism, and a way to escape really grappling with the issue. While Senator Lott may have volunteered for the role of scapegoat, he was not the only Senator who had made public racist comments or voted against civil rights legislation. Focusing on one person as “the racist” or “the

¹⁸ Bion (1959) referred to this dynamic as basic assumption dependency.

¹⁹ Bion (1959) referred to this dynamic as basic assumption fight/flight.

problem” served to distract the rest of the Senate from dealing with the anxiety about race and racism in the US, engaging in a deeper discussion about the issue, or taking any meaningful action. The Senator resigned his leadership role after six weeks of controversy (Hulse, 2002), and the Senate ceased further discussion of racism in the country.

The above example illustrates how a group may use one of its members, through the processes of splitting and projective identification, to manage anxiety around a particular problem or conflict. By locating the intolerable feeling or point of view (in this case, racism) in one person, the rest of the group members may divest themselves of responsibility, and thus can continue to deny their own contribution to the problem. By scapegoating a particular individual, the group maintains a connection with the split off aspects of itself, without having to actually take ownership of those parts, or to feel the anxiety that that would involve. “The deviancy is informing the group about aspects of its nature of which it would prefer to remain ignorant.” (Smith and Berg, 1987, p. 91) Scapegoating allows a group to manage its anxiety about conflict or a particular challenge it might be facing. Ultimately, it also interferes with a group’s ability to effectively face that challenge or conflict, or to adapt to its environment. Real change or transformation can thus be avoided. Heifetz (1994) maintains that the role of the leader is to help the group face its adaptive challenges. If the group succeeds in extruding the scapegoat from the group, it is likely that the problem or conflict that the scapegoat represented will surface elsewhere in the system.

Groups can exert enormous pressure, both overt and covert, on an individual member or subgroup to take up a particular role on behalf of the group. Demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and physical characteristics, may serve as the basis for which certain members are ascribed particular roles (Horowitz, 1983; Berg and Smith, 1987; Reed and Noumair, 2000). For example, women may be asked to take on caretaking roles on behalf of the larger group, or to give voice to emotions in the group, based on cultural expectations. Members of a particular ethnic group in a society may hold certain characteristics, such as aggression or sexuality, deemed intolerable by another ethnic group.

A group may also offer up a pair who gives voice to the conflict existing in the group at a particular time. That is, the group may designate two of its members to fight with each other, while the remainder of the group observes passively. Thus, rather than the group as a whole engaging in a dialogue to reflect on the conflict, it may instead be located in two

individuals who give voice to the conflict on behalf of the larger system²⁰. Pairs of members may also be asked to hold a sense of hope for the group. Sometimes they may hold a sense of hope for the group. This may still be problematic, as the group-as-a-whole continues to avoid dealing with reality. This is illustrated in the example below.

In a training program for conflict transformation, with participants from conflict areas around the world, conflict was virtually unspeakable. Pairs of participants from opposing sides of particular conflicts (Israel/Palestine; Bosnia/Serbia; Greek and Turkish Cypriots, etc.) were engaged by the course director and the group to serve as emblems of hope. At the same time, conflict and dialogue within the whole group was discouraged. The course was structured in such a way as to bar real engagement and dialogue. Theatre style seating, minimal time allowed to work in small groups, and avoidance of the feelings generated in the room of 60 participants all contributed to a sense of emotional and intellectual constriction. Conflict went underground in the group and re-surfaced in the form of repeated lateness to sessions, and several complaints of sexual harassment. Participants who spoke up or complained about the course structure, were labeled as “troublemakers” by the course director, and were effectively silenced.

Groups that are invested in maintaining a particular view of themselves (identity) and of other groups can exert similar pressure to behave according to group norms/expectations as a way of keeping members “in line.” Speaking against predominating group norms may carry the risk of being scapegoated.

Working with Conflict Within Groups

Working with a group in conflict involves viewing the conflicting individuals and subgroups as part of a larger system. What is the meaning of the conflict for the larger system? What is the adaptive challenge that the group needs to face? What is the conversation that the group needs to have as a system? What is being avoided in the group-as-a-whole that is being located in particular individuals or sub-groups in the system? In other words, what are the fears, needs, and emotions that are being projected into the conflicting parties? As with inter-personal conflict, transforming conflict on the group level also involves taking back and re-owning those projections.

²⁰ Bion (1959) referred to this dynamic as basic assumption pairing. Basic assumption functioning is also discussed in Rioch (1970), Miller (1989), Lawrence, Bain, and Gould (1996), Banet and Hayden (1977); and Hayden and Molenkamp (2003).

The role of consultant or leader or peace-builder is to create a containing environment where such emotions can be explored and understood (Winnicott, 1960; Ogden, 1982; Lazar, 2002). In addition to observing the group process, the consultant can use his or her own emotional experience as data in understanding the underlying dynamics in the group²¹. Do the consultant's (leader/peace-builder) emotions mirror the emotional experience of the group, or a particular sub-group? What do these emotions suggest about how the group is "using" the consultant, and/or how the group may use particular members to manage its internal conflicts? Would sharing this data with the group help the group face its adaptive challenges?

Inter-group Conflict

The dynamics that emerge within any particular group are also influenced by the larger system and environment within which the group is embedded. In an organization, the process of a particular group within it tends to reflect the larger organizational culture, the assumptions, values, and beliefs associated with the particular business or profession, which is, in turn, influenced by the culture of the larger community and nation. Also, by virtue of their outside group memberships, group members import conflicts and ways of looking at conflict from the larger environment (Berg and Smith, 1987). The group then serves as a microcosm of the larger environment. Individual members of the group can then export conflicts, or, new ways of looking at them back into their outside groups.

Splitting and Projective Identification in an inter-group context

Groups may attempt to avoid or deny their own internal conflicts by finding an external group or enemy onto whom it can project its unacceptable, split-off parts. This is the root of stereotyping, sexism, racism and other "isms". The less personal contact we have with other groups or individuals who represent different group identities, the more they may serve as a blank screen onto which we project our own images, ideas, desires, longings, anxieties, and prejudices. The external groups may have a valence for the characteristic that is being projected, and may also be compelled to take on those characteristics by virtue of the behavior of the projecting group. The more we treat a group as if they have a particular characteristic, the more we actually encourage, or even create that behavior. For example, in an exercise I use to train students to understand group and inter-group

²¹ The idea that emotions may be viewed and used as "intelligence" is explored in Armstrong, 2000.

dynamics, I ask one group to treat a second group “stereotypically,” that is, as if the subgroup were, aggressive, potentially dangerous, and not terribly smart. Within minutes, the stereotyped group begins to behave aggressively--precisely in the way they are “trained” to act by the other group’s behavior.

In the international political arena we can see many examples of splitting and projective processes. In many countries, various leaders over time have invoked an external enemy in order to mobilize public sentiment and to distract attention from internal group conflicts. For example, in the 1980’s in the US, Ronald Reagan referred to the former Soviet Union as the “Evil Empire” and gained support for his SDI initiative (Heifetz, 1994). Right-leaning politicians in Israel focus on Palestinian terrorism and thereby distract attention from serious conflict within the Israeli Jewish community. Political leaders in Arab nations in the Middle East target Israel as the problem while ignoring problems and conflicts within their own countries. In the former Yugoslavia, leaders mobilized anxiety and hatred toward “other” ethnic groups (that had previously enjoyed good relations) rather than help the country as a whole face the adaptive challenges of the breakup of the Soviet Bloc. Most recently, using phrases such as “axis of evil,” or “evil doers,” to describe Saddam Hussein’s regime in Iraq, and by implicitly linking Iraq to the attacks on the World Trade Center (BBC News, 1/29/03, *State of the Union Address*; BBC News/Europe 2/2/02),

George W. Bush was remarkably successful in mobilizing support for the war on Iraq in the anxious environment of post 9/11 USA. From the perspective of projective identification, as discussed earlier, it might also be argued that his persistent verbal attacks on the Iraqi leader further encouraged Hussein’s intransigence. Evidence of splitting can also be found in the current Bush administration’s attitudes towards dissent—those in the US who disagreed with his policies towards Iraq were labeled as “unpatriotic”, while the president stated to European allies, “if you’re not with us, you’re against us (BBCNews/Europe 11/6/01).” In his analysis of the current Bush administration’s policies toward Iraq, Lazar (2002) contends that the war in Iraq serves to deflect attention from internal conflicts stemming from the economic downturn, such as the national debt, unemployment, the widening gap between rich and poor, and the health care crisis. He goes on to emphasize the importance of the leader in performing a “containing function” if he or she is to help followers to function successfully:

If anxieties, irrationalities, aggressions, envy and rivalry, disruptive unconscious fantasies and ideas, etc. are not adequately contained, they threaten to paralyze the group or to blow it up.... If this is the

case, then the group will be forced to fall back on functioning in a basic assumption mode in order to prevent such threats and disturbances from destroying the group altogether. The price paid for this is the loss of task orientation and with it, the capacity to do work. When, however, the work group leader is capable of offering the group enough containment, these disturbing factors can be "digested", can be better metabolized into the group's dynamic life, and it can then "feed" on this experience, can grow on it, learn from it, and thereby improve its capacity to devote itself to the task at hand and to achieve good results. (p. 7)

The concept of containment is particularly relevant in the work of peace building, discussed below.

The Work of Peace-building

Peace building involves working with conflict at all levels: intra-psychic, interpersonal, group, and inter-group. It is intensive work, which evokes powerful anxieties and emotions. Thus, peace building must begin internally, on the intra-psychic level, with self-knowledge. Understanding one's own emotional valences can help the peace builder understand how one may use *and* be used by the group with which one is working. Knowledge of the emotional dynamics of any conflict, and comfort with the ways that individuals and groups may defend themselves against anxiety, will greatly aid the peace builder to design appropriate conflict resolution processes. The ability to accept, contain, and work with strong emotions enables the peace builder to intervene when these processes appear to be stuck. It is through this process of containment and working through emotions that conflict can be transformed.

There is much anxiety inherent in the work of peace building. It is not unusual for those engaged in the field of peace building and conflict transformation to have experienced great conflict—in their families, communities, and nations. Thus they seek better, less violent ways of dealing with conflict. Aside from the anxieties that come from past experience of conflict and war, many peace-builders face current and ongoing threats (physical, economic, spiritual) to themselves and their families as they attempt to engage the other in efforts to resolve conflict. It is a powerful motivator, but there are consequences. Peace builders must be able to contain their own anxieties and emotions, so as not to project them onto the groups with whom they work. Peace builders sit on the boundary—between their

own identity group and that of the other. Being on the boundary subjects them to particular pressures, from both sides. They must be attuned to the anxieties and motivations of their own constituency (which may itself be in conflict) as well as those of their potential allies and enemies on the other side. They may face sanction from their own group if they violate group norms in attempting to reach out to the other. Anwar Sadat and Yitzhak Rabin were assassinated by members of their own constituencies for their attempts to make peace with the other without adequately addressing the profound anxieties in their own groups (Heifetz and Linsky, 2002).

When facilitating groups in conflict, peace builders may be recipients of unconscious dynamics and projections from the group, even if they have designed an essentially rational, problem-solving intervention. Peace builders must be able to accept, contain and work with the feelings directed at them. Since it is emotionally powerful work, it is often desirable to work with a co-facilitator or with a team of facilitators, depending on the size of the group in conflict. It is not unusual for peace building partners or teams to find themselves in conflict as a result of the group's splitting and projective processes. That is, individual members of the peace building team, based on their personal valences and on their identifying characteristics, will hold different parts of the group's conflict. They need to be able to step back and reflect, both rationally and emotionally, upon the meaning of their experience in the group. Since their emotions will mirror those of the group, their experience offers data that is diagnostic of the group's functioning.

Similarly, organizations involved in peace building and conflict transformation that are located in countries where a conflict is ongoing may mirror internally, through the process of importation (Berg and Smith, 1987), the conflict that is being waged on the outside. Similar defensive structures and assumptions may operate within the organization as operate within the groups in conflict. If the organization is to be effective in pursuing its primary task, the capacity to reflect, to think, and to dialogue about the parallel organizational experiences are paramount. Exploration of the internal processes and conflicts of a group or organization can lead to greater understanding of the larger context and conflict in which the group is embedded. Members of the organization, Besod Siach, mentioned earlier in this article, are themselves players in the larger conflict. Representing the political left and right, secular and religious, Jewish and Arab, Ashkenazi and Mizrahi elements of Israeli society, staff members must continually stay in dialogue amongst themselves, even as they consult to groups in conflict (Duek, 2001).

The role of peace builder is to create a safe container in which people can tolerate the level of anxiety necessary to get through to the other side. Containment is essential in order to enhance everyone's capacity to know their own worldview, its underlying assumptions, and to appreciate the others' worldview. This is accomplished by building the initial structure in which the process unfolds. A safe container or "holding environment" is created through clarity of task and roles, and appropriate management of the group's boundaries. Offering information about the purpose of the intervention, describing the roles that various participants are expected to take up (including the facilitator), and developing mutually agreed upon ground rules or guidelines for behavior are ways that the peace builder can manage the group's boundaries and contain anxiety. On a psychological level, peace builders may contain the group's anxiety by demonstrating their own comfort with strong emotions. Looking at the dynamics of the group or organization as a whole and understanding that group members take up roles on behalf of the larger system, helps the facilitator to refrain from engaging in or colluding with a group's scapegoating behavior. The ability to contain and interpret group defenses in a way that can be digested makes it possible for a group to re-internalize and integrate what was projected outward. When differences are integrated in a group, healing and growth become possible.

In order to get to transformation it is crucial to be able to live with uncertainties, paradoxes, and anxieties of conflict. We leave our assumptions unexamined at our own peril. We are subject to the same unconscious and irrational processes that we see in groups in conflict. Unconscious processes fuel conflicts on the overt level, such as those arising from scarce resources or different values, and thus may prevent problem solving and compromise. It is only by sitting with the uncertainties and anxieties of conflict that it is possible to create something new. The fog can't lift until we recognize the ways in which we deal with the unease of difference.

Summary

There are many methodologies and strategies for working with and negotiating conflict. The focus in this article has been on the emotional and non-rational elements of conflict that can interfere with these rationally based strategies. We have explored conflict as it manifests on various levels, and how unconscious processes such as splitting, projection and projective identification can fuel inter-personal, group, and inter-group conflict. Splitting and projective phenomena can be seen on an inter-personal level in couple relationships; on an inter-group level between groups within an

organization; between ethnic groups or communities; and on an international level. The characteristics felt to be unbearable, or unacceptable in one context are those that are projected onto the other individual and group.

By focusing on the evil or unacceptable characteristic that exists “out there,” outside of one’s self, group, or country, individuals and groups are “protected” from looking at the evil “they” perpetrate, and the anxiety that might be felt in acknowledging it, or doing something differently about it. We create enemies who will carry for us those characteristics that are unacceptable: evil, imperialism, fundamentalism, irrationality, vulnerability, etc., *as if* those characteristics do not exist within our own nation, community or self.

It is difficult to take back, to re-own, these painful characteristics of one’s self, community, and nation that we have lodged in others. It must be made bearable. Learning to own individual and collective projections, fears, needs and insecurities is the first step in the process of peace building.

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Editor's Reflections: Academic Indigenization

Honggang Yang

The movement for academic indigenization has been growing swiftly in the social science fields over recent decades. From a historical, sociological perspective, for example, Lee (2000) recognizes that Western social sciences were implanted in East Asian countries like many other developing societies where there were abundant cultural traditions and indigenous frameworks of understanding human interrelations. As early as the 19th Century, several Chinese intellectuals had called for “Eastern Way and Western Technology” or “Chinese Body and Western Utility” in their search for solutions to “saving the nation” from feudal corruptions and imperialist invaders. These thinkers and reformers were trying to better the fit between Western theory and China reality.

In contemporary political economic contexts, the painstaking research and reflection attempts have become a profound journey to respond to both colonial histories and neo-colonial influences. In psychology, there long exists an ardent tension between the tendencies: globalization and indigenization, as a meta-theoretical thesis holds that the generation of psychological knowledge is culture dependent (Ho, Peng, Lai, and Chan, 2001). Ho (1995) conducts a comparative examination on the culturally embedded relational conceptions, i.e. selfhood and identity, in four Asian cultural traditions: Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. The four cultural values are inherent frameworks for developing indigenous models in the region.

Do peace and conflict researchers have a responsibility to further indigenous models in the field? The answer is a resounding YES, as peace and conflict studies are an interdisciplinary field of inquiry and practice across cultures and societies over time. Peace researchers are often trained in different disciplines, applying different approaches to their committed fields in a given cultural context. The fundamental conceptions of “peace building” and “conflict resolution” are as much culturally defined and political-economically shaped as those of human identity and social role.

Over the years, I have worked closely with colleagues and students from overseas, who shared moving stories of their intellectual journeys. Being an anthropologist from another culture, I feel very passionate about meeting the academic indigenization challenges. I believe that peace and conflict studies should not only continue to examine the cultural and cross-

cultural issues, but also ought to utilize relevant experiences from our sister disciplines and respective professions such as anthropology, psychology, sociology, political science and economics, history, and so forth, to foster more comparative research and indigenous models.

In this connection, I would like to share a story of Professor Fei Xiaotong, a Chinese social anthropologist, his persistent efforts in Sinicizing the disciplines.

Dr. Fei was one of my professors at Nankai University in China where I studied social psychology and sociology before coming to the U.S. Fei studied social anthropology with Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942), a Polish functionalist anthropologist at the London School of Economics, in the 1930s. He wrote a classic piece in anthropology "Peasant Life in China" (1939) based on his fieldwork in Southern China. Fei has long realized a pressing need to make the academic discipline indigenous in China, a vast ancient country where anthropology as a body of systemic literature was introduced from abroad.

Notably, various national versions of anthropology have been developing for decades. Even within the West, there is American anthropology, British anthropology, and French anthropology, to name a few. In Chinese, "anthropology" literally means a study of humankind. As broadly connoted, it is vaguely intertwined with sociology, especially ethnology (i.e. the field studies of ethnicity and ethnic group relations). Anthropology as a discipline in contemporary China has had an interrupted history (Yang, 1991). After being banned for its "bourgeois roots" from the west in the 1950s, sociocultural anthropology was partially merged with the studies of minority nationalities. It regained an academic status in the late 1970s. This academic status was restored to meet the demands of rapid modernization.

Malinowski repeatedly told Fei to value his advantages of being a Chinese studying Chinese society (Fei, 1981). Chinese society exhibits enormous regional variation and ethnic variety, but China has been a peasant society for centuries. This societal nature and cultural context is crucial to understanding and reforming China. Fei has been playing an important role in the course of the discipline's re-establishment, sinification, and growth. As he proposed in the early 1980s, Chinese social scientists were engaged, for example, in projects on small towns (i.e. rural urbanization and industrialization), marriage and family, ethnic groups, and underdeveloped areas in China. Small towns in the rural areas presented demanding issues in agriculture under the reform of China (Fei, 1986). Family, a cornerstone in Chinese society, has been transforming with the increasing appearance of

nuclear families. China has 55 minority nationalities whose socioeconomic development has been a significant component in the modernization.

To avoid unnecessary political ramifications, Fei dismissed “isms,” and instead, calls on social scientists to go to the field, to understand concrete things, and study theories from practical reasons. He promoted social investigations adaptive to the local community systems. Material and technological considerations are more emphasized than ideological ones, methodological deliberations rather than theoretical ones, as the government acknowledges of research skills and techniques as “classless” belongings. More attention is given to a Chinese point of view for solving Chinese social issues, since there is a wide belief that Western innovations should not be copied without adaptation to Chinese soil. During a 1988 interview, Fei said:

“The main purpose, the sole aim of my life, has in fact been to understand China, the Chinese people. It’s a thread that began in 1930. Ever since that time I have been driven to understand China in order to solve Chinese problems..... Revealed in Chinese social organization, and behind it, is the Chinese mind, the Chinese way of thinking, the Chinese way of behavior..... I am aware of the necessity of introducing Western things, but there is always the danger that we will excessively disturb the system’s balance. Western innovations are never precisely appropriate; we need to Sinicize them.” (Pasternak, 1988)

There is a growing need and appreciation for social scientists to study their own cultures and societies. Hsu (1983), who was also Malinowski’s student, critically analyzed the role that Malinowski played in his own seminal fieldwork, indicating some common limitations encountered by Western anthropologists. Hsu insightfully found that Malinowski never seemed to relate to his natives as human beings who might be his equals or trusted colleagues, much less as intimate friends or affectionate partners in pursuit of common goals (Hsu, 1983). The real difference here lies, intentionally or unintentionally, between treating the studied solely as research subjects or taking them as the people to be served for their welfare.

In this close connection, the journal of Peace and Conflict Studies (PCS) will continue to encourage and invite native researchers from different continents and countries to share with the field their perspectives and approaches to peace and conflict resolution. PCS also invites international scholars, educators, and practitioners to reflect on research of peace, conflict,

and other social complexities from the natives' own point of view. In 1995, 1998, and 2002, for example, PCS published "Indigenosity as a New Global Norm" (Nelson), "Facilitation and Mediation in South Africa" (Van der Merwe), and "Environmental Work and Peace Work: The Palestinian-Israeli Case" (Chaitin, Obeidi, Adwan, and Bar-On).

To encourage a greater academic indigenization, we must introduce, translate, and study more traditional frameworks of reference, and at the same time recognize biases from the West and from the East. For those communities and societies that are rich in oral traditions and grassroots narratives, the field must try to co-create with our native colleagues appropriate ways and sensible means to presenting and preserving their totalities. By contrast and comparison, academic indigenization will lead to a greater advancement of the field in both local and global contexts.

As social science history has shown, peace research development is shaped by political economic contexts and historical conditions as well. The indigenization movement is not an isolated endeavor. It has many intellectual ancestors and relatives, for example, multiculturalism in the U.S. (Ho, Peng, Lai, and Chan, 2001). Others include feminist and environmentalist perspectives. The call for indigenization is a call for creativity and originality (Lee, 2000). Indigenization is not an end in itself; rather, it is a necessary step toward achieving a thoughtful synthesis of unity and diversity (Ho, Peng, Lai, and Chan, 2001). It is a crucial acknowledgement that there must be prosperity in the growth of indigenous models before the birth and maturity of a valid, meaningful, global version of peace and conflict studies can come to fruition.

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S. Y. Bowland (Director) is a conflict resolution practitioner, mediator, consultant and trainer. Her areas of specialty include the art of negotiation, peacemaking, conflict resolution, diversity and leadership. She is a registered neutral with the Supreme Court of Georgia as a mediator and arbitrator. She has been engaged in research on the topic of peacemaking and conflict resolution in the African American community, among women, and in diversity matters. Ms. Bowland has worked at institutions of higher and professional education, including: Morehouse School of Medicine's Family Practice Development Program, Tuskegee University's School of Business, Colgate University, Columbia College's Master of Arts in Conflict Resolution, Syracuse University's Summer Conflict Resolution program, Vanderbilt University, and William & Mary. She has co-chaired the board of the National Conference on Peacemaking and Conflict Resolution, and the NCPCR conference for the 1997 Pittsburgh, PA conference.

Beth Roy (Chair of the Advisory Board) is a long-time mediator in the San Francisco Bay area. She holds a doctorate in sociology from the University of California at Berkeley. Her published work includes *Some Trouble with Cows: Making Sense of Social Conflict* (an oral history of Hindu-Muslim clashes in South Asia, published by University of California Press) and *Bitters in the Honey: Tales of Hope and Disappointment Across Divides of Race and Time* (an exploration of race relations today based on stories by ordinary people involved in the desegregation of schools in Little Rock in the 1950s, published by University of Arkansas Press). Her current project focuses on the police killing of Amadou Diallo in New York. She is a past chair of the Board of the Network of Communities for Peacemaking and Conflict Resolution (NCPCR), a founder of the Practitioners Research and Scholarship Institute (PRASI), and an instructor in the Sociology Department and the Peace and Conflict Studies program at UC Berkeley.

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