Coercive Power

By Máire A. Dugan

In most treatments of power, this chapter would form the entire discussion. Coercion and force are often used as synonyms of power, and all too often are seen as the only type of power.

Hans Morgenthau offers a definition that is representative of the literature:

Power may comprise anything that establishes and maintains the control of man over man. Thus power covers all social relationships, which serve that end, from physical violence to the most subtle psychological ties by which one mind controls another. Power covers the domination of man by man, both when it is disciplined by moral ends and controlled by constitutional safeguards, as in Western democracies, and when it is that untamed and barbaric force which finds its laws in nothing but its own strength and its sole justification in its aggrandizement.[1]

Power tends to be defined as force, regardless of whether the one wielding power is the initiator or the responder. No less an authority than John Locke, the 17th century enlightenment philosopher whose treatises on government provided inspiration for the U.S. Constitution, defined coercive power as the only appropriate response to the illegitimate use of coercive power: "In all states and conditions, the true remedy of force without authority is to oppose force to it."[2]

The equation of force with power is not limited to theorists. Kriesberg points out that parties in social conflict, "cognizant of inequalities in resources and what that means for domination and resistance...often think of one side imposing its will on another."[3]

Even those wishing to resolve conflict are affected by this way of conceptualizing power. For example, Ury, Brett, and Goldberg define power as "the ability to coerce someone to do something he would not otherwise do."[4] While they acknowledge that they have defined the concept "somewhat narrowly," such a narrow definition cannot help but affect the way in which we design resolution and peace building processes. At the same time, it is important to understand coercive power and to develop processes accordingly when it is operative, as it usually is in intractable conflict.

Robert L. Kahn provides an additional reason to be concerned about coercive power in conflict:

To say that A has the power to change B's behavior necessarily implies that A exerts some force in opposition to some or all of the previously existing forces [including B's own needs and values] on B. This is conflict....The exercise of [coercive] power, thus, necessarily creates
Nor is the impact of power limited to the initiation of conflict. As Terrell A. Northrup points out, "[t]he distribution of power between or among parties has a significant impact on the course and conduct of a conflict....[When parties] differ greatly in relative power...settlements may be imposed by the high-power group."[6]

**Forms of Coercive Power**

Coercion can take many forms. I may prevent you from doing something you wish to do, by withholding some resources or by physically constraining you. For example, the modern state imprisons those who do not act in accordance with its legal mandates. In other cases, I may push you into a behavior in which you would otherwise not engage. For example, parents may use a variety of strategies for getting a resistant child to go to school, including physically taking the child to the school building. As another example, the majority of nations of the world joined in a boycott of Iraqi oil, in the hope of forcing the Iraqi government to honor the peace agreement that ended the 1991 Gulf War.

While not all of these forms are typically categorized as _violent_, coercion is usually associated with physical violence. As C. Wright Mills says, "All politics is a struggle for power; the ultimate kind of power is violence."[7] Violence can produce changes in the target. The slave who is whipped may return to work, at least make the attempt to show compliance while the overseer is watching, and try to avoid additional lashes. A prisoner who is tortured may divulge sought-after information in order to end the torture. The warring enemy may sign a truce, because it no longer has resources to continue the fighting.

Coercive power is most effective, however, when the threat of violence or other punishment is sufficient in itself to get the target to accede to the demand.

**The Use of Threat**

Louis Kriesberg offers a succinct definition that captures the essence of coercive power: "Coercion involves trying to make the other side yield by reason of _fear_ or actual force."[8] When he refers to fear, he is referring to threat; we feel threatened when we think that force will be applied if we do not accede to the other's demands.

Threat of force can sometimes be as effective as force itself. "Jim Crow" institutions in the U.S., enforced through violence, law, habit, and casual acquiescence on the part of white Southerners, were effective for decades in maintaining white control over blacks. The effects of threats on the behavior of individuals in an oppressive social system are tellingly expressed by Richard Wright in _Black Boy_.[9]

The things that influenced my conduct as a Negro did not have to happen to me directly; I needed but to hear of them to feel their full effects in the deepest layers of my consciousness. Indeed the white brutality that I had not seen was a more effective control of my behavior than
that which I knew.

Nor was this impact accidental. "Lynching was an instrument of social discipline intended to impress not only the immediate victim but all who saw or heard about the event."[10]

In many cases, implicit or stated threat is sufficient to affect the behavior of the target. At one extreme no physical force is used, or it is used selectively (e.g., lynching). The tools needed to implement the threat severely and systematically, must be available, however, or the threat will not be credible. Further, if the target does not comply, the demander must follow through on the threat or risk losing credibility when making future demands.

Threats thus affect target and demander alike. An effective threat generates fear in the target, and pushes the target toward behavior in which she or he otherwise would not engage. For the threatener, the threat is a constraint on her or his own future action. The less the threatener wishes to engage in the threatened action or the more it would cost, the more likely the threatener is to be fearful of noncompliance. If on the other hand, the threatener is looking forward to implementing the consequences ("Go ahead, make my day!"), the threatener is constrained by having offered the opponent the opportunity to avoid the punishment.

For the nation-state, the military is the primary institution of coercive power and the threat thereof. The extent of its power is a function of four dimensions:

1. Numbers: of men, weapons, equipment, and resources;
2. Technology: the effectiveness and sophistication of weapons and equipment;
3. Organizational: the coherence, discipline, training, and morale of the troops and the effectiveness of command and control relationships; and
4. Societal: the ability and willingness of the society to apply military force effectively.[11]

In 2001, the nations of the world spent $839 billion (U.S. dollars) on military expenditures, representing 26 percent of the world's Gross Domestic Product and a full $137 for every man, woman, and child on the planet.[12] This represents enormous numbers of armaments and personnel, which are unequally distributed among the world's nations.

Sometimes, one's superior military might is sufficient to encourage others to not incur one's wrath. Sometimes, no matter the extent of military strength, even threats and ultimata are insufficient to bring about the desired change in behavior. Witness the 2003 war against Iraq. All would agree that the United States and its allies held greater military power than Iraq. Nonetheless, Iraq did not capitulate to clearly stated demands, and President Bush directed a military attack.

A decision not to capitulate can be based on several factors:

- the target may underestimate one or more dimensions of the demander's military might. In the case of Iraq in 2003, the greatest potential for underestimation lay in the societal dimension. The United States had not previously initiated a preemptive war, most of the world's nations were opposed to doing so, and strong arguments could be made that such an attack was a violation of international law. Hussein might have therefore guessed that while the U.S. might
threaten attack, it would not follow through with the threat due to social pressure.

- a threatened nation may lay greater emphasis on the strength of its own military powers, than the pundits in the demander's circle. Saddam Hussein seems to have believed that his troops' loyalty would make them much harder to defeat than the Bush administration believed.
- a leader may be more concerned with his own reputation than the well-being of his nation. Saddam Hussein long seemed more concerned about his own position of power than the well being of his people.

Aside from assessing the relative strength of the coercive force of the opponent and oneself, a state that threatens attack as a consequence of noncompliance is well advised to consider other factors.

- How much destruction is the opponent willing to endure?
- Will defeating the adversary bring about a peaceful or more stable situation, one that is more to the liking of the threatener?
- Is the opponent rational?

In terms of the first question, Hussein knew that the new war would cause more destruction than the previous Gulf War, but there was no reason to presume he was unwilling to bear this (or at least have his nation bear it). As for the second, Bush and his advisors seemed to think that defeating Hussein and removing him from power would stabilize the region; it remains to be seen whether this is true. Judging from other cases, most recently Afghanistan, however, it is difficult for an external force to bring peace and stability to a conquered nation. This should not be surprising, given that peace and stability are a function of integrative (power of love, respect, and sense of community) and to some extent, exchange power (the power of negotiation and reciprocity). Coercive power may overwhelm competing coercive power; it cannot build integrative power, and it destroys or diverts the bases of exchange power.

From the above discussion, it should be apparent that threat systems depend on assumptions that rational calculations are valid. This is one of the many limits of coercive power.

**Advantages of Coercive Force**

Coercive force is particularly useful in situations of imminent danger. The parent watching a child run toward a busy intersection does not caress, cajole, or offer a reward. The most likely response is a physical one, born of the parent's physical advantage: to block the child from entering the intersection, or to physically remove the child from it. The parent is also likely to render some form of punishment, whether physical or verbal, such as withdrawal of a privilege. In any case, the parent does not negotiate with the child about the pluses and minuses of playing in traffic. He or she has made a decision and is willing to enforce it. The police officer confronting a robbery in progress, or the head of state facing an imminent invasion, is in a similar, if larger and more complex, situation.

Coercion may also be useful when dispute involves something of great value to the threatener, both in the initial and ongoing maneuvers. For example, European countries relied on extensive and often brutal coercive power to establish their rule over Africa and other regions, particularly
Asia. After conquest, exchange and even integrative forms of power were utilized. But, as the colonies began to assert their demands for self-determination, the colonizers almost always resorted to coercive power whatever the cost, as the decades-long struggle for Indian independence showed.

An additional advantage of coercive power is its function in assuring internal cohesion.[13] Convincing one's potential followers that they share a common enemy is perhaps the quickest route to uniting them behind a leader. If, however, the leader has no coercive power with which to threaten the enemy and protect his or her followers, the followers are likely to unite behind another leader. Therefore, it is clearly to the leader's advantage to have coercive capability. Morton Deutsch extended this notion even further by looking at specific advantages it provides for leaders, in dealing with their own followers. Of the former U.S.S.R., he wrote:

ample evidence suggests that a hostile, competitive orientation to the outside world fosters internal cohesiveness and permits Soviet leaders to justify and exert repressive controls to inhibit internal dissidence and challenge to their leadership.[14]

Limits of Coercive Power

Although coercive might is impressive, it is inherently useless in some situations. Karl Deutsch points to the "autonomous probability" of a behavior that a threat is meant to inhibit. "Even the most intense and credible threats may not stop people from sneezing; nor might they stop social revolutions...Related factors are those of the need and the motivation for the behaviors that the threat is intended to prevent."[15]

Deutsch's last point deserves further discussion. You may be unable to force me not to sneeze, because I have no control over my sneezing. You may not be able to stop me from defying your repressive power, because my need for self-determination is greater than my fear of you. In the first case, I simply cannot control that which you are demanding I control. In the second case, I choose not to.

From the point of view of human needs theory, even the long-term outcome of the second case may be preordained:

Authority maintained by coercion is ultimately untenable. If human needs theorists are correct, people have needs which must be satisfied and which cannot be suppressed. These needs include identity, both individual and collective; security, for themselves and their loved ones; and recognition, of themselves and their communities.[16]

To be effective, coercive power rests on the target's acquiescence. If I am willing to die rather than capitulate, your most sophisticated weapons and techniques are meaningless. Jimmy Cliff captures the sentiment and puts it to a reggae beat: "I'd rather be a free man in my grave/Than living as a puppet or a slave."[17]

I learned this lesson early through an Irish revolutionary song. The patriot hero is threatened:
"Turn informer or we'll kill you,
Kevin Barry answered no.
Another martyr for old Ireland
Another murder for the Crown
Whose brutal laws may kill the Irish
But cannot keep our spirits down."

Mistakenly, I heard the word "kill" as "crush" and sang it that way on first rendition. My parents quickly corrected me; I had missed the point.

Songs and other folkways spread the word, both of specific atrocities and of the need to band together and withstand the onslaught of the hated foe. Often, the population targeted by coercive power creates more internal integrative power in response than they had before. The British exhibited this lesson during the Second World War. Hitler hoped he could break the will of the British by attacking civilian targets; instead, he created an entire island of warriors.

**Costs of the Use of Coercive Power**

The cost of coercive power, in the extreme, is succinctly stated by Boulding: "It is ironic that the more threat power [Boulding's term for coercive power] and the power of destruction are exercised, the less the chance that the exercisers will survive."[18]

More broadly speaking, coercive power invariably involves a negative-sum game, that is, a situation in which either both parties lose or in which the winner's gain is less than the opponent's loss. At least two factors affect the final sum. First, there is the cost of the threat itself, which is that of making a threat credible. To use Dwight Eisenhower's oft-quoted statement, "Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed."[19] Boulding estimated that the cost of deterrence in the 30 years after World War II amounted to the equivalent of two full years of the world's productive capacity.[20] When we expend funds to purchase firepower that will bend another to our will, we may not be spending such funds on other necessary things. So, even when our opponent capitulates in the face of our greater power, we have still incurred a cost. Rational calculation would demand that we compare the value of what our opponent gives us with what it has cost us to get it.

Second, when coercive power is used, our cost includes both the cost of creating and maintaining the threat, and the cost of implementing it. Some of our soldiers will be killed or injured; some of our equipment will be damaged. Our bombs and bullets will damage or destroy their targets, be those animate or inanimate. After the campaign is over, there will be a cost attached to rebuilding. In earlier times, this was not the concern of the winners; they could leave, taking battlefield loot with them, or stay, continuing to demand tribute from the captured land. In any case, the spoils belonged to the victor. In an interdependent world, winners tend to be less able to leave the mess for the vanquished to clean up.

**The Backlash Effect**
A final cost of coercive force is the threat of backlash. People do not like to be forced to do things against their will; they like even less (quite an understatement) to be forced to do so through violence. So even after a conflict is over, if the victims of aggression do not feel that justice has been done, they are likely to try to build up their power to "get even" at the first available opportunity. For this reason the victor must maintain a high level of credible threat, just to maintain the status quo, and not be attacked themselves.


Sources of Additional, In-depth Information on this Topic

Additional Explanations of the Underlying Concepts:

Online (Web) Sources

Schmalberger, Thomas. "The Study of Threats in International Relations." Click here for more info.

This chapter in its effort to better understand threats as related to international conflict, examines threats as behavior, threat as perception, and threats as social constructs.


Available at: http://www.beyondintractability.org/booksummary/10062/.

This page is a summary of Kenneth E. Boulding's book, Three Faces of Power. Boulding examines the nature of power and reveals that there are three types: destructive, economic, and integrative. Boulding examines each type of power both from a personal and an organizational perspective. He closes this work by considering the role of power in biological and social evolution.

Offline (Print) Sources

Opotow, Susan. "Aggression and Violence." In The Handbook of Conflict Resolution: Theory and
The author sets out by outlining various forms of aggression and violence and their common causes. She emphasizes the role that social context, particularly morals and norms, plays in triggering aggression. In the final section, the author suggests that education programs must be developed to train people to minimize violence and manage aggression when it occurs.

This book examines the ways in which nations can and do use violence, war, and threats to manipulate their adversaries.

Boulding examines the nature of power. His analysis reveals three types of power: destructive, economic, and integrative. Boulding examines each type of power both from a personal and an organizational perspective. He closes this work by considering the role of power in biological and social evolution. Click here for more info.

Examples Illustrating this Topic:

Online (Web) Sources
*Eyewitness Accounts: Genocide in Bangladesh*. Bosnia and East Timor Pages.
An eyewitness tells how coercive power was used against Bangladeshi who were seeking sovereignty from Pakistan.

Audiovisual Materials on this Topic:

Offline (Print) Sources
This film epitomizes both sides of the civil rights debate that took place in the US during the 1950s and 1960s. Southern hate groups are shown using tactics of fear and coercion to stop the progression of civil rights, while a group of black female workers are shown fighting for economic justice at the poultry plant where they work. Click here for more info.

This film explores how grassroots organizing resulted in the massive mill workers strike of 1934 which resulted in the blacklisting, and murder of cotton mill workers. Click here for more info.
Revenge and the Backlash Effect

By
Guy Burgess
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Michelle Maiese
Understanding Backlash and Revenge

Parties in conflict, especially parties with considerable power, tend to assume that they can prevail quickly and easily by using threats and/or force. They assume that the opposing party will simply submit and the problem will be resolved. Unfortunately, the use of force is seldom this simple. Most people hate to be forced to do things against their will, so the threatened party will usually resist if they can. If the party that initiates the force does not first consider the likely response of their opponent, they can easily be faced with defeat instead of victory.

Even if the target group submits to the threat or use of force, they are likely to become resentful, and will work to build up their power so they can resist or challenge their opponents at a later time. This is what we refer to as the "backlash effect," the tendency of the victim group to lash out against the threatening party once it has gained the power and means to do so.

The level of resentment and resulting backlash are likely to increase dramatically when the force used is seen as illegitimate or immoral---as is often the case if it is seen as unwarranted, excessive, or unnecessary. If, for example, the police were to threaten innocent drivers with reckless driving charges as a means of extracting bribes, this would widely be seen as illegitimate. The likely result would be widespread resentment and hostility toward the police and government in general. Similarly, because the use of military force for conquest is widely seen as illegitimate, it is likely to produce an intense backlash effect.

**Why is Backlash Dangerous?**

This resentment to force and the resulting backlash may serve to escalate conflict and lead to violent behavior on the part of those who feel they have been wronged. In many cases, the response to coercive force is far more intense than the initial provocation. If this sort of cycle continues, conflict is likely to become increasingly destructive, especially if both sides have military force at their disposal.

However, problems also arise in cases where one of the parties currently lacks the means to fight back. While the threatened party may do what is required of them over the short term, they are likely to initiate an intense search for effective resistance strategies. In some cases they may pretend that they are submitting to the demands of the party who is threatening them, while in reality they are doing as they wish and plotting for future revenge. Even after a conflict seems to be over, if the victims of aggression do not feel that justice has been done, they are likely to try to build up their power to "get even" at a later time. This is one of many reasons why apparently "resolved" conflicts tend to re-ignite. Once the original "losers" gain enough power, they may seek revenge against the earlier "victors."

**Reducing the Backlash Effect**

The key to reducing the backlash effect is to only use force when it is broadly viewed as legitimate, which means when it is based upon moral principles in which all parties believe. In other words, force must be more than an excuse for pursuing purely selfish objectives. (This
topic is discussed extensively on the section on integrative systems.) Rather it must be used to obtain ends that are deemed widely legitimate, which cannot be obtained in any other way.

In general, it is more desirable for force to be administered locally by forcing parties with similar cultural traditions, which are acting on behalf of the larger community. For example, community policing policies seek police officers who are members of the community that they patrol and not outsiders. (This is not an absolute rule; there may be cases in which external intervention is the best available option.) When force is used beyond the local level, it generally works better if it is reserved for situations in which most, if not all, parties would recognize that its use is legitimate—for example to enforce the maintenance of international laws or treaties.

Force is also more likely to be viewed as legitimate if it is only used as a last resort against parties who have violated widely accepted rules of behavior. For example, use of force against military forces involved in unacceptable behavior is more widely seen as more legitimate than the use of force used against innocent civilians. This is one reason why military forces often try to avoid attacking civilian targets. (There are, unfortunately also cases in which war is waged against civilians intentionally—a pattern that has become increasingly frequent in recent years.)

The legitimacy of using force is also increased (and hence the backlash effect decreased) when the parties use the least destructive type of force possible. For example, an attempt to work within existing laws should precede efforts to change those laws by political or other means. Similarly, diplomatic solutions should be pursued before military solutions. Legitimizing the use of force also requires that the parties publicly explain and justify their actions. Without such justifications, it is easy for misunderstandings to arise, which threaten legitimacy.

Since force is often used in illegitimate ways, one important key to increasing the constructiveness of conflict processes is to develop increasingly effective, but legitimate, strategies for opposing illegitimate uses of force. Although force used in self-defense is generally considered legitimate, it still tends to escalate conflicts further and prolong their duration. Consideration should therefore be given to developing stronger and better nonviolent ways of countering force—among these are utilizing external intervention, civilian defense, and/or nonviolent sanctions instead of automatically using force to oppose all other force.

The Backlash Coefficient

A useful calculation is "the backlash coefficient (B.C.)." This is the estimate of the number of new enemies one creates as a proportion of the number of old enemies one vanquishes or otherwise eliminates in any use of military force.
New Enemies Created

B.C. = _______________________

Old Enemies Eliminated

So, for example, the 2004 U.S. Bush administration appears to assume that the backlash coefficient that would result from its war in Iraq is far less than one: that many more "enemies" are being captured or killed (the denominator) than are being created (the numerator). Therefore the B.C. is less than one. Many opponents of that war believe the opposite: they believe that the U.S. policy in Iraq is creating far more enemies than it is eliminating, therefore diminishing U.S. security, rather than enhancing it. One's estimate of the backlash coefficient is a key determinant of one's support for military action. At the same time it helps determine one's faith in the ability of military force to solve international political and military problems.

Sources of Additional, In-depth Information on this Topic

Additional Explanations of the Underlying Concepts:

Online (Web) Sources
Buncombe, Andrew. "American Beheaded as Torture Backlash Grows." , 1900
Available at: Click here for more info.

In May of 2004, a group linked to al-Qa'ida released a video showing five of its members beheading an American businessman in Iraq, in what it said was revenge for the prisoners at Abu Ghraib jail by US troops.

This report details a massacre by the Nigerian army where they killed over 200 unarmed civilians and destroyed property.


"As we come up for air from the relentless radio and television coverage that keeps us connected to the events of September 11th -- events that we are morally obligated to monitor -- we find ourselves inconsolably filled with conflicting emotions and thoughts that at once attract and repel each other."
The authors


This is a summary of David Brubaker's article, Reconciliation in Rwanda: The Art of the Possible. Brubaker discusses the conflict in Rwanda which started with the killing of the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi when their plane was shot down on April 6, 1994. Hutus blamed Tutsi rebels for this action. Nearly 500,000 Tutsis were killed in "an orgy of revenge" which started the Civil War.

**Offline (Print) Sources**


Judah, Tim. *Kosovo: War and Revenge*. Yale University Press, April 1, 2000. This work reveals rare information on the Kosovo conflict, including intimate frontline accounts from those who fought in it. Click here for more info.


This is a summary of David Brubaker's article, Reconciliation in Rwanda: The Art of the Possible. Brubaker discusses the conflict in Rwanda which started with the killing of the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi when their plane was shot down on April 6, 1994. Hutus blamed Tutsi rebels for this action. Nearly 500,000 Tutsis were killed in "an orgy of revenge" which started the Civil War.

**Audiovisual Materials on this Topic:**

**Offline (Print) Sources**

*Democracy in Crisis.* Directed and/or Produced by: Datta, Manjira. First Run Icarus Films. 1991. This film explains the group dynamics behind the backlash that is occurring in India regarding the lower castes increased political standings. Click here for more info.

*My Beloved Country.* Directed and/or Produced by: Vredeveld, Saskia. First Run Icarus Films. 1991. This film takes a look from within at Afrikaner extremists after the fall of apartheid. Click here for more info.

*Resurgence: The Movement for Equality vs. the Ku Klux Klan.* Directed and/or Produced by: Yates, Pamela, Tom Sigel and Peter Kinoy. First Run Icarus Films. 1981. This film examines the prejudice that drove Southern U.S. hate groups to backlash against civil rights advancements. Click here for more info.
Nonviolence and Nonviolent Direct Action

By Máire A. Dugan

If asked for an example of nonviolent action, one is likely to mention Gandhi, or Martin Luther King, Jr., and maybe Rosa Parks. Strong and courageous people whose effective movements resulted, respectively, in Indian independence from decades of British rule, and the initial steps toward freeing African-Americans from decades of discrimination.

Such well-known cases notwithstanding, most of us tend to think of nonviolence as ineffectual, the weapon of the weak. We stand with Mao in presuming that "power grows out of the barrel of a gun."

The source of the problem lies partly in the way the words are structured -- defining the concepts in terms of what they are not. Nonviolence and nonviolent action, by their appearance, simply mean "not violence" and "not violent action." It is a short mental jump to presume that they are everything violent and violent action are not. And, since the latter are associated with force, power, and strength, the former must be the absence of these attributes.

The situation is further complicated by a confusion of like-sounding terms -- nonviolence (as a philosophy or lifestyle) and nonviolent action. Before discussing the potential contribution of nonviolent action to the constructive termination of intractable conflict, it seems helpful to clarify our central terms and their relationship to one another.
Nonviolence as Philosophy and Lifestyle

Pacifism is a philosophy which, in its absolutist form, proposes that "all forms of violence, war, and/or killing are unconditionally wrong. The proposed ideal is that social intercourse should be completely nonviolent and peaceful..."[1] In conditional pacifism, nonviolence is still the ideal, but violence may be justified under certain, typically extreme, circumstances. Self-defense in the face of attack may be justified, but one should nonetheless do what one can to minimize the harm inflicted on the perpetrator.

While pacifism may simply be part of a broader humanist philosophy, it is most often associated with a large number of religious traditions. The Christian peace denominations such as the Quakers and the Mennonites have a rejection of violence as a core component, as do a number of non-Christian traditions such as the Jains. The Great Peace of the Iroquois is based on values of caring, citizenship, co-existence, fairness, integrity, reasoning, and respect.[2] Additionally, there are significant pacifist traditions in more mainstream religions such as Judaism, Islam, and Catholicism.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to describe the pacifist traditions of the world's religions individually, let alone in detail. But they share a key central value -- that life is precious and that it is not the right of any person to take the life of another. Some extend this mandate beyond human life to all animal life forms. This results in a range of behavior from vegetarianism to soft-spokenness, from withdrawal from society to active involvement against war and the death penalty.

The focus of religious nonviolence is not necessarily directed at the broader society. The main concern is often with one's own spiritual wellbeing. This may simply require one to avoid engaging in violent behavior oneself, maybe even at the extreme of not defending oneself from attack. On the other hand, many pacifist traditions encourage believers to work to end war and other forms of violence.

Indeed, the directive to "Love thine enemy" is often married to a hope of affecting the opponent. "If through love for your enemy you can create in him respect or admiration for you, this provides the best possible means by which your new idea or suggestion to him will become an auto-suggestion within him, and it will also help nourish that auto-suggestion."[3] For Gregg, the goal of nonviolence is to convert the enemy.

The opponent, caught off guard by one's refusal to initiate violence or even to reciprocate violence, may come to question his/her own behavior or stance. Gregg calls this "moral jiu jitsu." While it may seem fanciful to think that one's commitment to nonviolence can have this impact, many case studies have shown that this is sometimes the case, particularly when the commitment...
is constant over time.

One such case concerns Vykom in Travancore Province, India.[4] Under India's caste system, Brahmins (the upper caste) and Untouchables (the lowest caste) were kept apart in a variety of ways. In this case, Untouchables were not allowed to walk on a road that passed in front of a Brahmin temple, but had to walk a lengthier route to their own homes. At its outset, Hindu reformers walked with Untouchables down the road and stood in front of the temple. Protestors were beaten, arrested, and jailed. The Maharajah ordered the police to prevent reformers and Untouchables from entering the road. They shifted their tactics to standing prayerfully in front of police, seeking entry, but not attempting to disobey the directive. Participants stood on the road in shifts of several hours each, weathering the monsoon season during which the water level reached their shoulders. After 16 months, centuries of segregation came to an end as the Brahmins announced simply, "We cannot any longer resist the prayers that have been made to us and we are ready to receive the Untouchables."

A less-cited case, which demonstrates moral jiu jitsu on a personal level, involved a young man named Eddie Dickerson. Dickerson joined a group of other young men in attacking a group of CORE (Congress on Racial Equality) protestors who were attempting to integrate lunch counters in a nearby town on Maryland's Eastern Shore. Returning home after the beating, he found himself haunted by the nonviolent response of those whom he had beaten. He left his friends and walked several miles to the church at which the CORE volunteers were staying to pose the question, "Why didn't you hit back?"

Their behavior and their answers to his question caused him to begin to question both his violent behavior and even segregation itself. His family kicked him out of the house, but he continued his exploration, ending up working for CORE himself. "I don't have any doubts no more. I feel pretty strong that everyone -- no matter what color skin he has -- should have equal opportunities. God meant it that way. And it don't make sense to beat them up so they'll believe it. It has to be done by nonviolence if it's going to work..."[5]

In some faith traditions, nonviolent action becomes a moral imperative in the face of rampant social injustice. Brazilian liberation theologian Leonardo Boff discusses the need to resist that form of violence, which he labels "originating violence."

- Originating violence has its roots in the elite institutions of power, in a social structure that protects the interests of the dominant groups, and in the extreme right, which will not tolerate any social change out of fear of losing its privileged status. As a result many countries of the Third World are in the grips of state terrorism.[6]

Such structural violence demands a response; it is morally imperative to strike against it. Rather than retaliatory violence or even revolutionary violence, however, Boff suggests nonviolent action. Through it, we avoid becoming accomplices of injustice by refusing the status quo; yet retain our own human dignity by refraining from violence. He propounds a mistica underlying nonviolent struggle:

- The mistica of active nonviolence implies changing ourselves as well as working to change the world. We must live the truth. We must be just, our integrity transparent. We must be
It is not enough simply to confront external violence. We must also dig out the roots of violence in our own hearts, in our personal agendas, and in our life projects. In both a personal and a political sense we must seek to live today in miniature what we are seeking for tomorrow.[7]

**Gandhian Nonviolent Action**

Gandhian nonviolence is based on religious principles drawn from a diversity of scriptures, particularly the *Bhagavad Gita*, the Bible, and the Koran. Gandhi looked toward higher authority for absolute truth. His central concept, *Satyagraha*, translated both as "truth seeking" and "soul force," presupposed that the activist could learn from the opponent and vice versa. Truth could neither be achieved nor disseminated by force. Therefore, the concept of *ahimsa* was also key to the *satyagrahi* (the person engaged in truth seeking). While *ahimsa* is typically translated "nonviolence," it is not encumbered in the original transcript by the negative construction and connotation of the English word.

The Indian independence movement lasted over a period of almost three decades, and involved thousands of Indians from all walks of life. Despite its size and duration, it remained almost uniformly nonviolent. Even when law enforcement agents resorted to violence, even when protestors were beaten and/or imprisoned, they themselves eschewed violence.

According to Paul Wehr, Gandhi was able to keep the Indian independence movement from lurching out of control (and possibly becoming violent) through a number of strategies:

- A "step-wise"[8] process. Gandhian campaigns began with negotiation and arbitration, during which he worked not only on the issues in dispute, but also on developing a cooperative relationship with the British officials involved. If the conflict was not resolved at this state, the satyagrahis prepared for nonviolent action including "agitation, ultimatum, economic boycott and strikes, noncooperation, civil disobedience, usurpation of governmental functions and the creation of parallel government."[9]
- Commitment to nonviolence. Each participant in a Gandhian campaign had to make a personal and absolute commitment to nonviolence. According to Wehr, "[i]t was primarily because of this personalized self-control that such a massive movement developed with surprisingly little violence."[10]
- Controlling the dynamics of escalation. Gandhi avoided common precipitators of escalation. For example, he tied each campaign to a single issue and thus avoided proliferation of issues or parties. He put an emphasis on developing personal relationships with opponents, and thus refrained from the tendency to move from confrontation to antagonism. By announcing all intended moves, he minimized the possibility of information becoming distorted.

Looking at the Indian independence movement from the vantage of the 21st century, it may not seem to be as significant an achievement as it was at the time. Colonial governance is an anachronism in our time, scorned for its non-recognition of peoples' rights to self-governance. Things were must different in the early 20th century, however. Half of the world's peoples lived in territories controlled by other powers. In the 1940s, Britain took great pride in its empire, the result of almost three centuries of conquest, acquisition, and effective colonial administration.
**King's Nonviolent Action**

It is not surprising that, like Gandhi's, Martin Luther King Jr.'s decision to utilize nonviolence was based on religious principles. In fact, King discovered the use of nonviolent action as a political tool through learning about Gandhi's success in India.

King's approach was specifically Christian in orientation, drawing on his own status as a minister and the centrality of the Church in the lives of the Montgomery, Alabama, African-Americans who were the first protestors he led. His speeches utilized the inspirational crescendo structure of African-American sermonizing and he typically used biblical themes in them. This provided a deeper source of unity than the specific issue at hand and his able lieutenants were drawn from the rolls of black preachers.

Like Gandhi's, King's methods were also "step-wise." The King Center lists six:

- Step One. Information gathering
- Step Two. Education
- Step Three. Personal commitment
- Step Four. Negotiations
- Step Five. Direct action

As with Gandhi, the process is step-wise, creating opportunities for resolution without confrontation and ensuring that both proponents and adversaries have sufficiently accurate information to make decisions both about the issue and the process.

**Nonviolent Action as a Political Strategy**

While faith- or philosophy-based nonviolence often leads to political change, one can also look at nonviolence from a purely strategic vantage point. This is the view of Gene Sharp, the preeminent cataloguer of nonviolent action. As described above, moral jiu jitsu operates by generating questions within the adversary who comes to a change of heart in the course of this process. Sharp, on the other hand, refers to "political jiu jitsu."

By combining nonviolent discipline with solidarity and persistence in struggle, the nonviolent actionists cause the violence of the opponent's repression to be exposed in the worst possible light.[12]

According to Sharp, non-violent action acts in three ways to change opponents' behavior:

- Conversion
- Accommodation
- Coercion
Conversion involves a change of heart in the opponent to the point where the goals of the protestors are now her/his own. At the other extreme, in coercion, the opponent has had no change of heart or mind, but acquiesces to the demands of the protestors because s/he feels there is no choice. In between is accommodation, probably the most frequent mechanism through which nonviolent action is effective.

In the mechanism of accommodation the opponent resolves to grant the demands of the nonviolent actionists without having changed his mind fundamentally about the issues involved. Some other factor has come to be considered more important than the issue at stake in the conflict, and the opponent is therefore willing to yield on the issue rather than to risk or to experience some other condition or result regarded as still more unsatisfactory.[13]

A Gandhian approach suggests that conversion is the appropriate goal of nonviolence. Not all nonviolent action proponents, however, adhere to this standard. On the other extreme there are those whose only concern is achieving the desired goal and the most effective and/or expeditious way of getting there. In between are those who prefer conversion where possible, but not at the cost of significantly prolonging the struggle or participants' suffering.

Sharp defines three major categories of nonviolent action:

- **Protest** and **Persuasion**. These are actions that highlight the issue in contention and/or a desired strategy for responding to the situation. Specific methods include petitions, leafleting, picketing, vigils, marches, and teach-ins.
- **Noncooperation**. Protestors may refuse to participate in the behavior to which they object socially, economically, and/or politically. Specific methods include sanctuary, boycotts, strikes, and civil disobedience.
- **Nonviolent intervention**. This category includes techniques in which protestors actively interfere with the activity to which they are objecting. Specific methods include sit-ins, fasts, overloading of facilities, and parallel government.

In general, the level of disruption and confrontation increases as one moves from protest and persuasion to intervention. If the protestors' goal is to convert, "protest and persuasion" is likely to be the most appropriate category from which to choose. If the protestors wish to force their opponents to change their behavior, they will probably need to include nonviolent intervention methods in their overall strategy. Those who are seeking accommodation might best mix protest and persuasion tactics with noncooperation if the former are not having the desired impact.

When arranging nonviolent action, it is particularly important to consider the audience. A rally may serve to inspire the already committed (sometimes it is important to "speak to the choir"), but is not likely to change minds; a boycott of a service provided by someone who has not been educated about the issues in question is likely to produce an unnecessary level of resentment. George Lakey and Martin Oppenheimer offer a particularly helpful way of looking at this issue. They point out that any person or group can be categorized according to where she, he or it stands in regard to the issues:

- Active proponents
- Active supporters
• Passive supporters
• Neutral
• Passive opponents
• Active supporters of the opposition
• Active opponents[14]

They then make the point that one's aim in any action should be to move the target population up one notch.

Whatever criteria are chosen to assess possible tactics before embarking on them, nonviolent actionists would do well to imitate their military counterparts at least in the following categories: careful planning and discipline of participants. With that, nonviolence may be just as likely to be successful in a conflict as violence, and it is much less likely to cause much increased hostility, escalation, and backlash.


[7] Ibid., p. ix

[8] Wehr, p. 57

[9] Wehr, p. 58

[10] Wehr, p. 59


[13] Ibid., p. 733


**Sources of Additional, In-depth Information on this Topic**

**Additional Explanations of the Underlying Concepts:**

**Online (Web) Sources**

Available at: [http://www.san.beck.org/NAH1-Nonviolence.html](http://www.san.beck.org/NAH1-Nonviolence.html).
Site of 'Nonviolent Action Handbook' by Sanderson Beck. A well-indexed discussion of a wide range of topics on the practice and history of nonviolent action by a long-time American activist. Includes links to sites on Gandhi and the writings of Howard Richards, another scholar on nonviolence.

Moseley, Alex. *Pacifism, Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
Available at: [http://www.utm.edu/research/iep/p/pacifism.htm](http://www.utm.edu/research/iep/p/pacifism.htm).
Definition of Pacifism according to the Internet Encyclopedia on Philosophy.

Peace Pledge Union of Britain.
Available at: [http://www.ppu.org.uk/](http://www.ppu.org.uk/).
The website of the Peace Pledge Union of Britain. The site offers a wealth of information including a chronological history of 20th century pacifism and peace action; selected articles from the PPU's quarterly, Peace Matters; writings of and about PPU founder Dick Sheppard, Martin Luther King, Jr., and others; and facts on armed conflict, war, and disarmament by continent.

Available at: [http://www.fragnmentsweb.org/TXT2/p&srevtx.html](http://www.fragnmentsweb.org/TXT2/p&srevtx.html).

This is a review of *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* by Gene Sharp. In part one, Power and Struggle, Sharp discusses the nature of political power, why people obey rulers, the limitations of using violence, and how change can be brought about through the use of strategic nonviolence. He also offers reasons why historians have largely ignored the technique of nonviolent struggle.

**Offline (Print) Sources**

"A "how to" guide which offers comprehensive, understandable instruction in the politics and tactics of people-based organizing. It includes a profusion of illustrations and examples of successful grassroots
tactics."

The Dynamics of Nonviolent Action explores the nature and processes of nonviolent action. [Click here for more info.](#)

Exploring Nonviolent Alternatives examines potential for techniques of nonviolent resistance to replace reliance on violence as the means of final resort in conflict. [Click here for more info.](#)

The Methods of Nonviolent Action describes nearly two-hundred specific methods of nonviolent action. [Click here for more info.](#)


Part One of the Politics of Nonviolent Action, Power and Struggle, explores the nature of power and the possibility of controlling or challenging power through nonviolent means. [Click here for more info.](#)

The Dynamics of Nonviolent Action explores the nature and processes of nonviolent action. This book will be of interest to those who seek a better understanding of the mechanism and operation of nonviolent resistance. [Click here for more info.](#)

"The American Quaker Richard B. Gregg, the early western interpreter of Gandhi. Gregg's popular tract was first published in 1935.(18) Gregg was a lawyer, industrial relations mediator and publicist, who had spent some years in India. His book was based primarily on the thought and experience of Gandhi, to whom it is dedicated. It alluded but only thinly to earlier successful nonviolent actions.(19)"

**Examples Illustrating this Topic:**

*Online (Web) Sources*
Birmingham Civil Rights Institute of Birmingham, Alabama.
Available at: [http://www.bcri.org/index.html](http://www.bcri.org/index.html).
The Birmingham Civil Rights Institute is more than a museum. It is a center for education and discussion.
about civil and human rights issues. The Institute's projects and services promote research, provide information, and encourage discussion on human rights in America and around the world.

**International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR).**

Available at: [http://www.ifor.org/](http://www.ifor.org/).

"The International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR) is an international, spiritually-based movement composed of people who, from the basis of a belief in the power of love and truth to create justice and restore community, commit themselves to active nonviolence as a way of life and as a means of transformation-personal, social, economic and political." - IFOR

**National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, TN.**

Available at: [http://www.civilrightsmuseum.org](http://www.civilrightsmuseum.org).

The website of the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, Tennessee, which describes key events in the civil rights movement

"National Interreligious Service Board for Conscientious Objectors: "Who is a Conscientious Objector?"."

, 1900

Available at: [http://www.scn.org/ip/sdmcc/co.htm](http://www.scn.org/ip/sdmcc/co.htm).

Site explains how the Selective Service classifies people as conscientious objectors.

**Offline (Print) Sources**


This introduction by the Brazilian priest Leonardo Boff, a leading proponent of Liberation Theology, this volume illustrates in human terms diverse social movements inspired or supported by the radical Catholic church. See also Boff's 1997 work on the destruction of the Amazon and the oppression of Brazil's indigenous population, Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor.


"A well-integrated mixture of theoretical analysis and case studies (from Asia, Africa, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East), the book examines nonviolent direct action, political action, economic sanctions and social movements as alternative remedies in the struggle for justice."


Making Europe Unconquerable argues that civilian based nonviolent deterrence and defense is a viable alternative to conventional military approaches to national security. [Click here for more info.](http://www.scn.org/ip/sdmcc/co.htm)

Nonviolent Direct Action; American Cases: Social-Psychological Analyses. Washington: Corpus Books,
January 1, 1968.
This book is about non-violence and direct action in America. It provides social-psychological analyses of several cases.

The articles are diverse in focus ranging from labor to land distribution to human rights. Each case is preceded by a short discussion by the editors which maintains context and continuity as do the several testimonies which help the reader understand nonviolent action from a Latin American, Catholic cultural viewpoint. The forward is by Brazilian liberation theologian Leonardo Boff; the final testimony is written by Nobel Peace Laureate Adolfo Perez Esquivel.

A popular visual history of the use of nonviolence in 20th Century U.S. social change movements. Includes an introductory chapter on the roots of American nonviolent action, including pacifism in the U.S., abolitionism, women's suffrage and labor. Ten case studies of nonviolent action in Central and South America. The articles are diverse in focus ranging from labor to land distribution to human rights. Each case is preceded by a short discussion by the editors which maintains context and continuity as do the several testimonies which help the reader understand nonviolent action from a Latin American, Catholic cultural viewpoint. The forward is by Brazilian liberation theologian Leonardo Boff; the final testimony is written by Nobel Peace Laureate Adolfo Perez Esquivel.

Audiovisual Materials on this Topic:

**Online (Web) Sources**

*Mahatma Gandhi Research and Media Service.*
Available at: [http://www.gandhiserve.org/](http://www.gandhiserve.org/).
The website of Mahatma Gandhi Research and Media Service, a service of GandhiServe Foundation of Berlin, Germany. Provides access to hundreds of visual materials (photographs, cartoons, drawings, etc.) on Gandhi and events and people associated with his life and work. Also provides an impressive set of links to writings by and about Gandhi, most of which are presented in full and available for downloading.

**Offline (Print) Sources**

*No More Hiroshima!* Directed and/or Produced by: Duckworth, Martin. First Run Icarus Films. 1984.
This film follows two Hiroshima survivors in their quest to promote peace. [Click here for more info.](#)

This film takes an in depth look at non-violent grassroots social movements that have taken place around the world. [Click here for more info.](#)

This documentary illuminates how black and white women during South African apartheid, united in nonviolent protest against the unjust and inequitable policies of the country. Click here for more info.

This film documents a number of non-violent processes that have been used in the southern part of the United States to address issues of civil and social justice. Click here for more info.

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**Exchange Power**

By
Máire A. Dugan
Introduction

On the surface, exchange power is a quite simple concept. I want you to do something which I value. To convince you to do it, I offer you something, which you value. Beyond this, its operation in social life is both time-honored and complex.

More broadly speaking, exchange power can be economic power. Economic power "derives from being able to buy compliance. It is based on the simple principle of material rewards and deprivations. The human organizations of production and exchange determine access to resources and goods that are both needed and desired for subsistence and social life."[1]

In order to be able to give you something which you value, I have to have it first. So, it is not only the exchange itself which is important, but also the processes which precede it. Most obviously, these include extraction and production. Beyond this, accumulation and storage as well as the negotiation of the terms of the trade can all be subsumed under exchange power. It is largely this range of aspects which make exchange power more complicated than it might appear at first blush.

Another complication of exchange power is that it is a base for both shared power (power with) and power over. In the first case, it leads to integrative power, in the second, to coercive power. Blau points out this paradox, noting that exchange "gives rise to both social bonds between peers and differentiation of status."[2] If the values to the parties of the goods, services, or appreciations exchanged are relatively equal, the parties have a peer relationship. If, on the other hand, the items exchanged are of unequal value, the "principle of least interest" becomes operative: "the person who has the greater power in a relationship with another person is the one who gets the least out of the exchanges taken as a whole."[3]

A final complication of exchange power is that the goods and services exchanged may not always have a clear use. Human beings are the only animals to set store by discovering, acquiring, and displaying materials comparatively rare in nature, frequently to be obtained from distant sources and commonly useless for the purposes of daily life. By designating such materials as in varying degrees precious they have created symbols of excellence, a quality which stems from aesthetic awareness but the striving for which lies at the very root of the civilizations created by man.[4]

The Operation of Exchange in Society

Exchange is a very basic aspect of society. Each of us engages in exchange every day, whether in purchasing our groceries at the store in exchange for the money we give the clerk, or in working in return for our pay (which, of course, we then use at the grocery store, among other places).

There are some small societies for which exchange is THE principle of social cohesion, where almost all power rests in exchange. The Wola of New Guinea is such a people.

Any relationship in Wola society demands some co-operation in exchange activities, if not the
direct exchange of wealth, at times during its existence, and these serve an important socializing purpose and promote interaction between people in this fractious society where the value placed upon the individual threatens the existence of an ordered social life.[5]

Wealth and the capacity to exchange wealth to one's advantage are the sole determinants of stature within Wola society. Coercive power is constrained by the emphasis on exchange, and no amount of wealth gives a person the power to enforce his will on others. In fact, wealth and stature adds little to a member's capacity to influence his fellows. Further, integrative power has very little play in Wola society. While settlements are relatively permanent, the bonds between members of a settlement involve little intergroup responsibility and the group action is negotiated on a case-by-case basis, with self-interest being the primary criterion for each member. The complex set of norms surrounding exchange is the only glue that holds the society together. For example, reparation payments following a violent death are not simply compensation for the deceased's kin; they are a statement by the party responsible for the death that it was unintentional and that they do not wish it to terminate their social relations. The other exchanges, both small and large, of Wola society serve similar sociological purposes.[6]

While the Wola are unusual in that virtually all power has its source in exchange, they are not unique in the primacy of economic power. The ancient Phoenicians based an entire empire on trade; they serve as "an example of a trading group whose actions decisively altered the lives of the producing groups whose needs originally created their power."[7] Both our alphabet and money systems owe much to their influence.[8] In his study of several early societies (in what is now modern Denmark, Hawaii, and Peru), Timothy Earle concludes that "[T]he effective use of political power depends on its control, and control rests firmly on the nature of the political economy."[9] Marx and his disciples attribute extraordinary primacy to economic power: the means of production are seen as the organizing base of all society.

Marxism notwithstanding, in a complex society, exchange and productivity, while important sources of power, do not have the primacy they do among the Wola. Unfortunately, some of the major thinkers on exchange theory, like Homans, tend to exaggerate its import, reducing all forms of social behavior to exchange. Some everyday language seems to support this. We may refer to an "exchange of gunfire" on the coercive end, or an "exchange of greetings" on the integrative side. To reduce such situations to their exchange characteristics tells, however, only a partial story.

The gunslinger may in fact be the target of a barrage from his opponent as well as the initiator of his own attack on the same opponent. Neither one's focus, however, is on the exchange; both are trying to render the foe incapable of returning the onslaught. The case of the greeting is a bit more complicated. While I greet you because I am glad to see you, rather than because I am looking for a greeting in return, I am likely to be disappointed if your response is cool or nonexistent. Such a response may well discourage me from greeting you warmly on our next meeting at which, in fact, I may not be glad to see you.

Peter Blau differentiates between social and strictly economic change. He identifies the degree of specificity about an acceptable response as the basic difference between the two. "In social exchange, one party supplies benefits to another, and although there is a general expectation of
reciprocation, the exact nature of the return is left unspecified."[10] In our discussion of the three faces of power, the line between integrative and exchange power blurs. Social exchange, as Blau describes it, is included in the discussion on integrative power. For this discussion of exchange power, we are interested in exchanges, social or economic, in which the expected response is relatively clear.

Much of exchange is grounded in normative expectations regarding the need to give back in return for something of value given. In all cultures, people tend to return favors.[11] Cialdini refers to this as the "law of reciprocity." While neither the time nor the substance may be specified contractually, norms suggest relatively clear parameters for acceptable responses. The penalty for not honoring this norm often takes the form of a termination or at least diminishment of the exchange relationship. Further, behavior out of keeping with broadly accepted norms is often the subject of conversation within the community in which it takes place. The person(s) guilty of the infraction may be endangering not one exchange relationship, but many.

**Advantages of Exchange Power**

Exchange power can be used as a mechanism to initiate, cement, or restore relationships. It is the last that is most impressive and probably of greatest use in intractable conflict.

Civil wars are particularly devastating in their impact on societies, with great costs in both human lives and property. In the long run, even more devastating is the cost at the level of social infrastructure. The fabric of society has been rent. We can see this illustrated in the Civil War in the United States. In terms of loss of life and financial expenditure and destruction, the Civil War ranks second only to World War II in terms of cost. These are absolute figures; if more relative figures are used, such as the percentage of combatants killed, the ranking increases to first.[12] The actual costs are not, however, limited to this. The war's legacy includes long-term societal divisions, as evidenced in current political conflict in the states of the former Confederacy regarding its flags[13] and their use by hate and New-Confederacy groups.[14]

In a more recent civil war, however, Paul Wehr and Sharon Erickson Nepstad credit exchange power with undergirding moves toward conciliation. The civil war in Nicaragua was a particularly complicated one in that it was a dual conflict. The Sandanistas were not only at war with the Contras, but involved in an additional violent conflict with the Indian and Creole people of the Atlantic Coast.

By 1988, the Contras were essentially defeated, a fact increasingly clear as the U.S. government withdrew its support. Pure threat had been costly and ineffective for both groups.

As the element of exchange increased and extreme threats were moderated and reconciliation first appeared, the altered strategy mix encouraged the emergence of peace and justice....

It is in the exchange process that threat reduction and conciliation enhancement are actively pursued. As opponents communicate, clarify positions and interests, and trade concessions, threat is reduced. Mere civility may give way to genuine mutual respect.[15]
As parties trade items of value, they can begin to learn to trust each other's promises. This is obviously a careful dance in the ashes of social violence. But, with careful tending, what Wehr and Nepstad are suggesting is that it can form the foundation for, and lead to the restoration of, integrative power.

Limits of Exchange Power

In general, exchange power is not operative unless I have something to offer which my colleague values and vice versa. Expressed differently, "a high capacity to perform a particular kind of action is not a basis for power unless other people find that action rewarding... To use the language of economics, there must be some demand for the reward."[17]

In the midst of an escalated conflict, we are dealing with parties who do not value each other. They are unlikely to value what the other has to offer unless it is only from the adversary that they can obtain it. Even when this is the case, additional problems may arise. When items required by the other side in a trade are considered non-negotiable items by significant elements on one's own side, much advance work needs to be done with partisans on one's own side to reframe the item in contention. Otherwise, an agreement may be made to give it away, but the resentment and ill will the planned or actual swap generates may cause the peace process to fail, or may render an agreement unenforceable or non-durable after the negotiation.

Conclusion

Exchange power, while not the primary form of power, is a potent tool for both negotiators and interveners. When adversaries have control over resources of value to their counterparts, trades of such resources can not only serve as the basis of agreements; they can also provide the foundation for improved relations in the future.


[6] (Ibid.)


**Sources of Additional, In-depth Information on this Topic**

**Additional Explanations of the Underlying Concepts:**

*Online (Web) Sources*


Available at: [http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/problem/tradprob.htm](http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/problem/tradprob.htm).

Gives a brief overview of problems related to trading, or exchange, power.

Available at: http://www.beyondintractability.org/booksummary/10062/.

This page is a summary of Kenneth E. Boulding’s book, Three Faces of Power. Boulding examines the nature of power and reveals that there are three types: destructive, economic, and integrative. Boulding examines each type of power both from a personal and an organizational perspective. He closes this work by considering the role of power in biological and social evolution.

**Offline (Print) Sources**

Boulding examines the nature of power. His analysis reveals three types of power: destructive, economic, and integrative. Boulding examines each type of power both from a personal and an organizational perspective. He closes this work by considering the role of power in biological and social evolution. [Click here for more info.](#)

**Examples Illustrating this Topic:**

**Offline (Print) Sources**


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**Integrative Power**

**By**

Máire A. Dugan

In August 1945, the world witnessed the impact of a startlingly destructive new weapon. The mushroom clouds over Hiroshima and Nagasaki represented so significant an advance in the technology of weaponry that they heralded the dawning of a new era -- the Atomic Age. Its advent was a product of humankind's unleashing of a physical power more potent than any previously used. We had harnessed the power of the atom.

"In life, the issue is not control, but dynamic connectedness." -- Erich Jantsch

It was clear that the peoples and nations of the world had witnessed a turning point, one that made the world different from what it had been. History and physics books alike had to be rewritten. And many of us still struggle to understand the physics behind this destruction -- the power within the nucleus of the atom.

Invoking the most destructive days in human history may seem a strange way to introduce a
chapter on cooperative and integrative power. But the forces that hold together the atom are to physical life what integrative power is to social life. Integrative power is the binding force in society, and like the atom's nuclear forces, its effects are virtually invisible when things are going well. Like nuclear forces, it represents tremendous power, a foundation upon which other forms build. Though it is as important to society as nuclear forces are in the atom, integrative power receives scant attention in either theoretical or practical literature.

Theorists and Practitioners on Integrative Power

Some theorists have recognized the importance of integrative power. Kenneth Boulding[1] is pre-eminent among them, having identified integrative power as the most potent in comparison to the other main forms, coercive power and exchange power. Integrative power, Boulding argued, is the most basic form in that the other two cannot exist without some measure of integration, whereas integration may exist with neither force nor trade going on. Without the "esprit de corps effect," the most well-equipped army is a mere rabble; without an agreed-upon set of rules and expectations, production and trade cannot proceed.

Karl Deutsch defines "the essence of politics [as] the dependable coordination of human efforts and expectations for the attainment of the goals of the society."[2] In this regard, he sees communication both as a primary function of any organization, including government, and as the source of the capacity (power) of the organization to maintain itself.

Hannah Arendt's definition of power underscores its root cooperative nature: "power corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert."[3] Applied to government, its source is not arms or riches, but the support of the governed: "It is the people's support that lends power to the institutions of a country, and this support is but the continuation of the consent that brought the laws into existence to begin with."

Some practitioners and activists also recognize the value of integrative power, as did the American Black Power movement of the 1960s. While the movement is often associated with calls for coercive power on the part of the aggrieved, its key representatives nonetheless saw the need for integrative power at its base:

The adoption of the concept of Black Power ... is a call for black people in this country to unite, to recognize their heritage, to build a sense of community. It is a call for black people to begin to define their own goals, to lead their own organizations and to support those organizations. ... It does not mean merely putting black faces into office. ... The power must be that of a community and emanate from there.[4]

Integrative power, or what Boulding called "the hug," thus represents the most varied, complex, and basic form of power. Yet, while persuasion, integration, and cooperation are all studied to one degree or another, they receive little scholarly attention as sources of power. To discuss the importance of integrative power in situations of intractable conflict therefore requires extrapolation from sources that do not necessarily equate these concepts with power. The task is easiest with persuasion, since it is treated as a form of power in fields such as marketing and has an extensive literature of its own. The persuasive form of integrative power is therefore treated in
It is up to this essay, then, to discuss integrative power more broadly and to illustrate its relationship to intractable conflict.

**A Working Definition**

Though theorists such as Boulding, Deutsch, and Arendt discuss integrative power and its importance, not one of them clearly defines it. Arendt comes closest, having caught the essence of the form in her focus on cooperation, but we are still left to ask what is inducing the cooperation of which she speaks. Boulding tries to deal with this question, giving the most attention to love as the source of integrative power. He suggests that if the word love seems too strong, the word respect can be substituted. Rather than saying, "You do something for me because you love me," one can say, "You do something for me because you respect me."

Love seems incongruent with most of what we know about large group behavior, and respect or even loyalty does not seem in itself sufficiently strong or intense to explain that form of power on which all others rest. I suggest that its base is something more primordial -- the human need to belong.

Abraham Maslow identifies belonging and love as just above physiological and safety needs, in his hierarchy of needs. In other words, once our survival is ensured our next most pressing agenda as human beings is to belong, to love and be loved. Mary E. Clark points out that "the most fundamental aspect of our biological origins is our social nature. Indeed, there is no doubt that our ancestors were social before they were human, and consequently the greatest human need that we all have is for social bonding." Clark goes on to stress that such bonding must be meaningful:

(\textit{H})uman beings require more than simple familiarity in order to feel "comfortable" with one another and accepted in a deeply meaningful social group. They require a sense of \textit{shared} social goals. ... The historically remembered past extends through the brief present into an indefinite future. Perhaps one of the greatest human needs of all is this sense of temporal continuity between an unexperienced yet culturally present past and a never to be experienced yet personally significant future.

Our need for belonging thus cannot be satisfied simply by being in the presence of other people. We must share past experiences and have common visions of the future. Our relationship must have continuity over time, and a depth of connectedness. On this basis, we build a shared social fabric.

Integrative power is thus defined as the capacity to obtain what we need and want, in concert with others. This is the richest form of power because it is rooted in the most basic element of human nature. It also has the richest potential. Because human organizations are dynamic and organic, the whole can be greater than the sum of the parts. Integrative power thus transforms in a way that always adds to what existed before the change.
Costs of Disintegration

When integration crumbles, the costs are enormous. In a very real sense, severe conflict may be seen as a loss of integrative power. This is very evident in family conflicts, which, when all integration is lost, disintegrate in the form of divorce, or children running away (physically or psychologically). Integration has been lost in a number of U.S. churches, which have broken apart over disagreements over church doctrine.

Even entire societies can disintegrate, as is evidenced by the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s. The many ethnicities within the country initially lived and worked together in apparent harmony, but they gradually became less integrated, and were instead held together by defining each other as enemies. Here we have "disintegrative power." Disintegrative power involves a "severe pathology of the integrative system...where a negative identity (where people derive their identify from what they are not -- not what they are) leads into a pathological situation of internal violence."[8] In general, "(b)oth personal and political violence are closely related to some kind of breakdown or deficiency in the integrative system."[9] While we tend to think that this cannot happen in the U.S., the cleavages in this society seem to be increasingly deepening. While we may be a long way from total disintegration, the possibility of that should be kept in mind as one fans the flames of difference.

Mechanisms for Building/Rebuilding Integrative Power

Where integrative power does not exist or has been damaged or destroyed, the key question thus becomes how to create it. Specific approaches to rebuilding integrative power are discussed in other essays. Botcharova[10] emphasizes Track Two diplomacy and facilitated dialogues. My nested model[11] suggests working primarily at the level of the subsystem, reforming organizations and institutions to serve as oases of peace within a fragmented society, and as models of what society could be like.

For purposes of connecting the conflict-resolution literature in general with strategies for recreating integration in intractable conflict situations, I suggest looking at those processes that relate to three general phases: Understanding, Conciliation/Reconciliation, and Cooperative Work.

Understanding

For people to act effectively, they must understand each other's motivations, interests, and needs. In serious conflict, there is little base for mutual understanding. This is why there is such an emphasis on talking, in the field of conflict resolution. I cannot know if I am willing to be responsive to your concerns, if I do not know what they are. If I am in the midst of conflict with you, whatever recent communication we have had is likely to have taken the form of stating our own individual positions or mutual recriminations. We have probably been withholding information from each other rather than sharing our individual interests and needs.

Communication offers a path to increasing our understanding. The emphasis on communication in conflict resolution, however, focuses on talking about the conflict, and developing joint
strategies for dealing with it. What I am suggesting here is different: that we need forums simply for getting to know each other better.

In the midst of conflict, this is no small task. We are each likely to feel endangered on each other's territory. Facilitated discussions often provide only surface knowledge. One mechanism that has been used in the past is human exchanges, of children, of students, of travelers, of businesspeople. Kenneth Boulding[12] goes so far as to suggest the exchange of generals and spies. Morton Deutsch spoke of the potential role of leadership exchange in improving relations between the United States and Soviet Union during the Cold War:

Obviously encouraging more and more of their leaders to visit the United States and to talk informally with congressmen, administration officials, businessmen, and others, may enable them to realize that many of our most influential citizens do, in fact, perceive our orientation as defensive and determined by their hostile, threatening orientation (as opposed to the U.S. orientation being based on a desire to harm the Soviets).[13]

**Conciliation/Reconciliation**

A second step involves seeking forgiveness. Reconciliation is the term most often used in the literature, but conciliation may be a more appropriate word. Reconciliation implies that the relationship has been a good one at an early time period. In the case of intractable conflict, this may have been so long in the past, that it is not part of the operative memory of key parties. Here, Elise Boulding's idea of the 100 Year Present[14] may be useful. She points out that people are a product of both their pasts and their futures, of what they've learned from parents and grandparents, and what they hope for children and grandchildren. To go beyond this time frame asks us to take into consideration a much broader time frame than most of us are equipped to do (although some Native American groups call upon themselves for much more: hearing the wisdom of all ancestors, and considering the needs of descendants down to the Seventh Generation). The more deeply we are involved in a conflict, the less likely we are to be able to take such a broad viewpoint. The rule of thumb I suggest is that we work on conciliation rather than reconciliation, if a good relationship with the adversary was not part of one's grandparents' experience.

This may seem a purely semantic point, but it is not. The parties in conflict, and those intending to resolve it, must be mindful that they are talking about creating something new, rather than building on something that previously existed. Apologies and efforts at atonement are appropriate strategies for conciliation. This too has great challenges. Even more than individuals, social groups tend to be fearful of making apologies, let alone atoning, for past wrongs.

Additionally, the form that apology and atonement take vary widely. Sometimes, a sincere apology is sufficient. At other times, apology rings hollow to the aggrieved; credible strategies for behavioral change or recompense for past wrongs are required. It is not possible to reach back into the past and undo the harm done, so actions that will lead to forgiveness are not obvious. To increase the likelihood that the promised behavioral change or atonement action will be acceptable, it is important to listen to what the other party feels would be appropriate. Sometimes both parties feel aggrieved; in this case, it is important for each side to take into
consideration that it has more control over its own actions and responses than over those of the other, and that therefore one should not delay beginning until the other acts.

Cooperative Action

In the 1950s and 1960s, social psychologists, led by Muzafer and Carolyn Sharif, conducted a series of experiments in which high levels of conflict were artificially created between groups of boys attending summer camp.[15] The Sharifs and their colleagues then tested a variety of strategies to reduce the hostility among the boys. The strategy that worked most effectively was the introduction of what the researchers called superordinate or transcendent goals. They created crises in the camp, which they were able to define as requiring the joint efforts of boys from opposing sides in order to solve. By the time the boys had completed a series of joint tasks and celebrated their achievements, the pre-existing tension had completely dissipated. One particularly impressive indicator of this was that boys were just as likely to name members of the "other side" as friends, as they were members of their own group. At the height of the conflict, virtually no one named a member of the other group among his friends.

This, of course, was not a deep intractable conflict; it was therefore much more open to resolution than the many deep and long-term divisions that we experience in our society and our world. The Sharifs had the advantage of being able to manipulate the situation in ways that real-world conflict parties and interveners do not. Nonetheless, the benefit of working together on joint goals stands out as the strongest possible strategy for knitting torn social fabrics. It makes sense. If cooperation is the basis of integrative power, as Arendt posits, then cooperating on specific projects is a reasonable way of producing a spirit of cooperation. Aside from the opportunity to increase mutual understanding and respect, joint ventures produce outcomes that can be of benefit to all involved. As Morton Deutsch notes, "(I)t is, of course, these very gains from cooperation which will create a web of interdependence that gives each side a positive interest in the other's well-being."[16]

Cooperative work must include the involvement of all levels of society. While acknowledging the importance of the work of political leaders in fashioning new agreements and redefining power relationships in Northern Ireland, Geraldine Smyth stresses that "any new political and judicial arrangements must be embedded in their acceptance by local communities, and that the political strategies will succeed only if some counterbalancing weight and vitality is allowed to the role of groups and movements in civil society.[17]

A Case for Hopefulness

The tasks briefly outlined above underscore the overwhelming nature of any attempt to create integrative power. It may be helpful to remind ourselves that there are historical examples of successful intentional efforts to build integrative power.

In 1945, much of Europe stood in shambles as the nations of that continent surveyed how to move forward. France and Germany had been bitter enemies for decades, and with the pain inflicted on each other by yet another war, long-term peace in Europe seemed a remote possibility. Yet a few decades later, the European Union was a reality.
This did not happen by chance, but rather through a series of moves, carefully thought out as steps toward the desired vision. All of the steps recommended earlier in this essay were taken. Meetings were held, in areas where people of French and German heritage lived near each other. There were opportunities for gaining understanding as well as for apology. A stage not mentioned above was very important, that of envisioning what a united Europe would look like and developing a plan for getting there.[18] The plan rested on cooperative action, the first step of which was the European Coal and Steel Community.

Hallstein identifies four essential characteristics of the Community, the first three being that "it was supranational, that it was practical and that it was partial," and the fourth, that "it shares with all aspects and phases of the movement for European unity: that is, its evolutionary nature."[19] In other words, the European Coal and Steel Community was something on which European nations could cooperate for mutual aid and benefit, and it was also part of a larger plan to build on the integration that it itself would achieve.

**Conclusion**

The establishment of the European Union generates hopefulness about the possibilities of generating positive outcomes for current intractable conflicts. But this will not be done solely with coercive power or negotiation (exchange power). Most important of all is the regeneration of integrative power. That is by far the key ingredient in conflict transformation.

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[18] Dugan, 2000


Sources of Additional, In-depth Information on this Topic

Additional Explanations of the Underlying Concepts:

*Online (Web) Sources*

Available at: [http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/problem/integrat.htm](http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/problem/integrat.htm).
Provides a brief description of integrative power and significant problems related to it.

Hutcheon, Pat Duffy. *Hannah Arendt on the Concept of Power*.
Available at: [Click here for more info](http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/problem/integrat.htm).
The author highlights the importance of Arendt's work, and focuses on her contribution to the "clarification of key concepts, most particularly, her insights into the nature of power in human relations."

Available at: [http://www.beyondintractability.org/booksummary/10062/](http://www.beyondintractability.org/booksummary/10062/).
This page is a summary of Kenneth E. Boulding's book, Three Faces of Power. Boulding examines the nature of power and reveals that there are three types: destructive, economic, and integrative. Boulding
examines each type of power both from a personal and an organizational perspective. He closes this work by considering the role of power in biological and social evolution.

**Offline (Print) Sources**


This work explores the nature of violence and its relationship to conflict, power, and politics.

Boulding examines the nature of power. His analysis reveals three types of power: destructive, economic, and integrative. Boulding examines each type of power both from a personal and an organizational perspective. He closes this work by considering the role of power in biological and social evolution. [Click here for more info.]

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**Persuasion**

By Máire A. Dugan

Faced with an adversary who is doing something we do not like, or who is not doing something we wish to have done, persuasion can be an invaluable tool. Though "power" is generally considered to be coercion or force, persuasion can be powerful too, as is evidenced by the common saying, "the power of persuasion."

Social-interest theorists tend to define persuasion as a form of social influence:

Influence investigates the causes of human change -- whether that change is a behavior, an attitude, or a belief. Inducing a change in behavior is called compliance. Inducing a change in attitude is called persuasion. Inducing a change in belief is called either education or propaganda -- depending on your perspective.[1]

Rhodes is using the term "influence" in a way similar to my use of the word "power," "the capacity to bring about change." From his viewpoint, it is important to identify what is being
changed, i.e., behavior, attitude, or belief. In this series of essays (Theories of Change, Understanding Power, Coercive Power, Exchange Power, Integrative Power, and Persuasion), the important distinction is on the "how" of the change.

Sometimes, social-influence scholars include under the term "persuasion" the concept of *inducements*, which tend to better fit my definition of exchange power or even coercive power, rather than persuasive power. At other times, efforts focused on behavioral change may be left out. In those cases, the writer is concerned only with efforts to change attitudes, not with efforts to change behaviors. Some of the most useful research on persuasion can be found in the social-influence literature, but the key term may be used somewhat differently in that literature from the way in which it is used here.

Here I use "persuasion" to mean the form of power that relies exclusively on symbols (such as words) to influence another to change. That change may affect beliefs, attitudes, or behaviors, but we are particularly interested here in changes in behavior brought about because beliefs or attitudes have been modified.

**Principles of Persuasion**

Social-influence scholars have developed a variety of ways of categorizing the mechanisms through which people persuade others to change their behavior. Robert B. Cialdini's *Influence: Science and Practice* is one such resource. In the book, Cialdini presents a number of principles of persuasion, citing and discussing a range of research and anecdotes. While most of his examples are drawn from the marketing field, the principles themselves apply much more broadly. They offer insight into ways in which we persuade people to do things. For example:

- In all cultures, people tend to return favors. Cialdini refers to this as the "law of reciprocity," and, for the most part, this form of influence belongs in the essay on exchange power. One of Cialdini's examples, however, deserves mention here. He recounts the story of a German soldier who was very adept at crossing battle lines during World War I, and returning back to his superiors with an Allied soldier for questioning. On one such trip, the soldier he accosted was in the middle of eating a meal and offered his would-be captor a piece of bread. "So affected was the German by this gift that he could not complete his mission. He turned from his benefactor and recrossed no-man's-land empty-handed to face the wrath of his superiors."[2]

- People tend to behave in ways that they feel they are expected to behave. The wise negotiator can use this to her or his advantage. Cialdini notes Anwar Sadat's mastery of this technique:

Before international negotiations began, Sadat would assure his bargaining opponents that they and the citizens of their country were widely known for their cooperativeness and fairness. With this kind of flattery, he not only created positive feelings, he also connected his opponents' identities to a course of action that served his goals.[3]

- Social proof, as manifested in the behavior of others, is likely to have an immediate and telling effect on the behavior of observers. Examples of the "monkey see, monkey do" principle abound, whether one is talking about action (e.g., copycat crimes) or inaction (e.g., the failure of 38 onlookers who had many chances to go help Kitty Genovese when she was mugged and killed
People are more likely to be influenced by those they like than those they do not. Several factors are associated with liking: physical attractiveness, similarity, praise, familiarity (particularly through mutual and successful cooperation in the past), and association with positive things. This suggests that it is problematic for deep-rooted enemies to persuade each other. Two sides in a protracted conflict have likely emphasized their differences, cast aspersions on each other, avoided contact when possible, and been associated with causing pain and suffering to each other's group for years, decades, or even centuries. They are missing all the factors that lead to liking except, perhaps, physical attractiveness. This may be one of many reasons that third-party intervention is often more profitable than direct negotiation between sworn adversaries.

People are more likely to respond to the directives of a recognized authority figure, or to be influenced by the testimony of one with authority, than by someone who is not perceived to have authority. Advertisers use this tendency on a regular basis, arranging for well-known and respected people to endorse their products. For example, on the world stage, Jimmy Carter lends his good name to election-monitoring efforts of contested elections, and Desmond Tutu speaks against human-rights violations on behalf of oppressed groups. Such personages can also be particularly effective mediators, as Oscar Arias proved in Central America.

Finally, scarcity can be a compelling factor in getting someone to do something that she or he otherwise would not do. It is easy to see this in sales pitches in the form of "last chance" or "one of a kind" strategies. "According to the scarcity principle, people assign more value to opportunities when they are less available."[4] As with the "norm of reciprocity," we are probably most likely to see this principle in operation when exchange power is at the fore.

**Strategies of Persuasion**

While each of these principles is supported by both systematic and anecdotal evidence, it is not always clear how one might utilize the principles in a particular relationship or encounter. Louis Kriesberg[5] suggests five ways in which one party might influence another in moving toward resolution of a dispute:

1. **Party A** may ask **Party B** to look at the situation from **Party A**'s point of view, to take on the role of **Party A**. This may serve not only to help **Party B** understand that **Party A**'s intentions are, for example, defensive rather than aggressive, but it may lay a foundation for a more harmonious relationship between the two parties.

2. "**A second kind of argument points out complementary interests that would be enhanced by yielding what is sought.**"[6] **Party B** may benefit in a different way from the right or privilege that **Party A** seeks. One argument in pleas of the oppressed is that oppression hurts the oppressor as well as the oppressed. An enslaver, for example, is assured the grudging compliance of the slave, but at a cost of constant monitoring and loss of his or her own humanity. Freeing slaves affords a society the benefit of willing labor as well as a more humane environment for everyone.

3. "**A third kind of persuasive argument tries to turn a divisive issue into a problem that is shared and needs a mutually satisfactory solution.**"[7] In the conflict-resolution literature, this is an example of what is called "reframing." Reframing allows the adversary to see the issue differently and to retreat from a previously stated singular position to a new, shared one; it may also serve as a face-saving mechanism. The more publicly I have committed myself to a position,
the more embarrassing it is for me to back away from it. If, however, the issue is reframed, it is the situation rather than my stance that has changed.

4. The interlocking nature of conflicts is the basis for the fourth type of influence. While Parties A and B may be locked in conflict over one set of issues, they may also share an antagonist against whom they can work together. This antagonist need not be another party; it may be a shared issue. If the concern is shared and its importance is higher than those issues which separate the parties, it becomes a superordinate or transcendent goal.[8] In his several experiments on superordinate goals, Sharif found them a particularly compelling way to reduce hostility.

5. Persuasion may also occur through "appeals to common values and norms ... The appeal is made to abstract principles, shared identifications or previously neglected values."[9]

In the case of intractable conflicts, these strategies often work best when a third-party intervener is involved. Party B may be reluctant, or even unable, to accept the reframing done by Party A. Party A, after all, has a self-interest in Party B's reassessing the situation. A third party is more likely to be trusted not to act out of self-interest, and her or his attempts to reframe are therefore likely to be more credible than Party A's attempts to communicate exactly the same ideas.

It should be noted that each of these forms of persuasion can lead to a warming and strengthening of a relationship between current or former adversaries, as well as to a cementing of an already good relationship. In the optimal case, in resolving a subsequent disagreement, Party A will not need to rely so much on persuasion as on the existing collaboration. Effective persuasion may thus lay the base for other forms of integrative power (i.e., the power of relationships).

**Types of Appeals**

Kriesberg refers to appeals to common values and norms. Such appeals are often referred to as appeals to conscience. Appeals may also be made to the other's emotions or to data and logic.

**Appeals to Conscience**

In an appeal to conscience, the speaker is relying on shared values, but pointing out that current behavior is not in accord with these values. While none of us act in accord with our values at all times and in all places, "we nonetheless feel uncomfortable when made aware of inconsistencies. When these inconsistencies become obvious, we feel a strain to change."[10] For the speaker to have the higher ground, however, it is crucial that she or he is seen as acting in accord with these values.

**Appeals to Data and Logic**

Appeals to data and logic typically rely on new information or on the reorganization of existing information. The landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision Brown v. Board of Education, which de-segregated American schools, provides a good case in point. Court decisions are usually justified in terms of case precedent. To overturn Plessy v. Ferguson and do away with the principle of "separate but equal" in public education, however, the Court relied largely on the
Whatever may have been the extent of psychological knowledge at the time of Plessy v. Ferguson, [our] finding is amply supported by modern authority.[11]

The modern authorities to whom the Court was referring included noted psychologist Kenneth B. Clark and sociologist Gunnar Myrdal, both of whom had researched the impact of racial segregation. Clark had used dolls to determine that black children's self-esteem was damaged by segregation.[12] Myrdal's monumental *American Dilemma* documented the persistence of the discrepancy between the American creed and treatment of African Americans in all areas of life.[13] The Court not only based its decision on such data, but avowedly chose to utilize these data as opposed to other legal arguments.

Thurgood Marshall and the other NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) attorneys (the plaintiffs) were not the only ones using persuasive power effectively in the case. The Supreme Court justices did too, in an effort to convince each other. Some of the justices were inclined to vote to maintain the separate but equal policy. In fact, had the vote been taken after initial arguments, it is highly likely that Brown v. Board would have been just one more in a long line of failed attempts to overturn segregation. However, Justice Frankfurter convinced his colleagues to delay the decision and call for rehearing the case. Then, newly appointed Chief Justice Earl Warren used his adroit negotiation skills and succeeded in getting a unanimous decision in favor of the plaintiffs.[14]

**Emotional Appeals**

Aristotle identifies an effective *emotional appeal*, "excit(ing) the required state of emotion in your hearer," as an integral aspect of the final stage in an argument.[15] At the outset of *Rhetoric*, however, he points out that "the arousing of prejudice, pity, anger, and similar emotions has nothing to do with the essential facts, but is merely a personal appeal to the man who is judging the case." Later, he states more strongly: "It is not right to pervert the judge by moving him to anger or envy or pity -- one might as well warp a carpenter's rule before using it."[16] This identifies the dilemma of emotional appeals. A strong argument needs facts at its base, and even the strongest may not "move" the other to change behavior without an appropriate emotional appeal.

**Example: Martin Luther King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"**

Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," while primarily an appeal to conscience, is masterful in its combination of types of appeals. It weaves them together for greatest impact, and utilizes many of the principles of influence identified above.

King opens the letter "MY DEAR FELLOW CLERGYMEN." He thus establishes kinship with his audience from the outset with the word "fellow"; later on he deepens the connection, calling them "my Christian and Jewish brothers." He provides data to counter perceptions of himself as an "outside agitator," providing information on his "organizational ties" and claiming his insider role as an American citizen. Maintaining his connection with the clergy while moving to an
appeal to conscience, he connects his journey to Birmingham to the role of Biblical prophets. Prophecy was a ministry with which his addressees were not only familiar, but which they preached from their own pulpits:

Just as the prophets of the eighth century B.C. left their villages and carried their "thus saith the Lord" far beyond the boundaries of their home towns, and just as the Apostle Paul left his village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to the far corners of the Greco-Roman world, so am I compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my own home town.[17]

Much of the letter provides information. King presents his reasons for being in Birmingham and lays out the horrible impacts of prejudice in what was "probably the most thoroughly segregated city in the United States." He also provides a brief explanation of the principles of nonviolent action. King points out that he and the other protestors had followed the rubric of seeking solution prior to protest. He provides information on how the organizers undertook the first three stages -- collection of facts, negotiation, and self-purification -- before embarking on direct action.

King's appeals to emotion, particularly guilt, stand out in the letter. The entirety of the letter is written in calm tones, expressing disappointment rather than anger. King conveys his recurrent hope that the white churches will see the injustice of racism and rally to the cause of the civil-rights movement. He acknowledges those who have done so, but the reader can almost see the tears behind his cataloguing of the many times and ways in which those hopes have been dashed. The penultimate paragraph is a particularly well-stated summary of his guilt-provoking stance:

If I have said anything in this letter that overstates the truth and indicates an unreasonable impatience, I beg you to forgive me. If I have said anything that understates the truth and indicates my having a patience that allows me to settle for anything less than brotherhood, I beg God to forgive me.[18]

While most of the letter is calm and reflective in tone, begging reconsideration rather than fostering defensiveness, its most-often-quoted sentences are a rousing call to the struggle for justice:

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."[19]

I have chosen to draw my references to the "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" from a current peace-studies reader rather than from its original source or from King's collected writings and speeches. Doing so underscores something else about the persuasive power of carefully expressed appeals. Although the letter was written to eight clergymen who had questioned his presence in Birmingham and the tactics his followers were using, it was broadcast well beyond the original addressees in both space and time. Whatever the impact it had on them, it has stirred countless others to action and served as an inspiration to those involved in nonviolent struggles for justice.
Example: Morton Deutsch

To extend our discussion of effective appeals, we examine Morton Deutsch's strategy for persuading the United States and the Soviets to change their hostile orientation during the Cold War. Though now ended, the Cold War was at the time (early 1960s) a conflict that not only seemed to be intractable, but which threatened the survival of everyone on the planet, regardless of whether they were citizens or allies of one of the principals or not. Drawing on his experience as a psychotherapist, he suggested "four critical tasks" in persuading an enemy to change its hostile stance:

First of all, there must be some motivation to change -- the gains (the adversaries) derive from a hostile orientation must not be so great as to outweigh the anxieties and difficulties of the present situation.

Second, they must be made aware that the experiences anxieties and difficulties are causally connected with their competitive, hostile orientation.

Third, the current environment must not provide substantial justification and support for the continued maintenance of the defensive, hostile orientation appropriate in the past: new experiences, convincingly different from their past experiences, must indicate a genuine interest in their well-being.

Fourth, they must perceive that they will gain rather than suffer, have less anxiety rather than more, if they adopt a new orientation.[20]

Deutsch's third task suggests that, in order to persuade an enemy, a party must be willing to reassess its own behavior and make changes. Without real behavioral changes on the part of the persuader, persuasive efforts are likely to fall flat. Words alone, no matter how impassioned or logically cogent, are likely to be insufficient.

Limitations of Persuasion

Persuasion is a cost-effective way of approaching many conflicts. It does not require weapons or high-tech (and high-cost) research. When it works, therefore, it is a great boon. The protagonist has gotten his counterpart to change her or his behavior in a desired direction at little cost. But, persuasion is not likely to be effective in getting others to do one's will in all conflicts.

Carol S. Lilly's provocative *Power and Persuasion: Ideology and Rhetoric in Communist Yugoslavia: 1944-1953* is a testament to the limits of persuasion. In her careful study, she documents how the Communist Party chose persuasion over coercion because they believed that coercion "could help realize the party's political and economic policies but it could not effect the long-term cultural transformation of society."[21] In looking at the variety of persuasive techniques used by the party in its crucial foundational phase, Lilly concludes that:

[Per]suasive efforts are effective only or mainly when they seek to build upon already existing values and beliefs and are much less so when they try to change people's values or create new
ones for them. In other words, party rhetoric could confirm and sometimes manipulate the existing culture, but was generally unable to transform it.[22]

Keeping in mind that primary means of persuasion such as newspapers, radio, television, educational curricula, and the arts were largely under the control of the Party, the implications of these findings suggest even greater limitations for those who do not enjoy such resources. This particular failure takes on additional significance when one looks at the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia in the recent past.

In seeking to paper over Yugoslavia's national question, the Communist regime refused fully to confront the atrocities committed during the war, treating them only as additional signs of the prewar bourgeois government's moral and political bankruptcy.[23]

The bloodbath that erupted after the fall of Communism may have been even worse than what might have transpired had these inter-group conflicts been played out, even violently, in the immediate post-war period.

In addressing intractable conflicts, persuasion can be a key ingredient in landmark events, such as Brown v. Board of Education. By itself, however, it cannot achieve the level of community building necessary for transformation. For this, a fuller and deeper array of integrative approaches (suggested in fact by Deutsch's list) needs to be employed. In winning the hearts and minds of the targeted group, techniques that target minds only are likely to be inadequate for the task.


[8] Sharif, 1966 **??this is not complete


[16] Aristotle, Part I


[22] Lilly, p. 8.

Sources of Additional, In-depth Information on this Topic

Additional Explanations of the Underlying Concepts:

*Online (Web) Sources*

Rhoads, Kelton. *An Introduction to Social Influence.*
Available at: [http://www.workingpsychology.com/intro.html](http://www.workingpsychology.com/intro.html).
This site offers an array of introductory information on the topic of social influence, the modern, scientific study of persuasion, compliance, propaganda, "brainwashing," and the ethics that surround these issues.

*Offline (Print) Sources*

This book is about the psychology of compliance and attempts to reveal the factors that cause people to agree to others' requests. Based on psychological principles, the author identifies six compliance techniques that tend to guide human behavior: reciprocation, consistency, social proof, liking, authority, and scarcity.


This chapter focuses on the aspects of persuasion and attitude change in negotiation, bargaining, and conflict resolution.

If you're searching for a comprehensive text in persuasion theory and research, you can find no better resource than Persuasion. Written in an accessible style that assumes no special technical background in research methods, this volume offers a comprehensive and critical treatment of theory and research in persuasion. This new edition has the same clear, straightforward presentation and the same broad coverage as the first edition, and has been thoroughly revised to reflect developments in persuasion studies. It includes new discussions of functional attitude approaches and of the theory of planned behavior, and updated treatments of familiar topics such as cognitive dissonance theory (e.g., recent research on hypocrisy induction), the elaboration likelihood model (e.g., the development of unimodel alternatives), and resistance to persuasion (e.g., studies of refusal-skill training programs). -- Amazon.com


**Examples Illustrating this Topic:**

**Online (Web) Sources**

Available at: [http://www.public.iastate.edu/~honey/Rhetoric/](http://www.public.iastate.edu/~honey/Rhetoric/).
This page offers access to an online version of Aristotle's "Rhetoric". These hypertext pages are based on the 1954 translation of noted classical scholar W. Rhys Roberts.

Available at: [http://www.oycf.org/Perspectives/4_022900/black_white.htm](http://www.oycf.org/Perspectives/4_022900/black_white.htm).
This essay discusses the implications of the movement against segregation in the United States.

Available at: [http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/frequentdocs/birmingham.pdf](http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/frequentdocs/birmingham.pdf).
This famous letter written by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. while he was incarcerated in the Birmingham city jail, addresses how unjust laws have been used to oppress and exploit African-Americans.

**The Brown Decision.**
This page presents a chapter of "The New Color Line: How Quotas and Privileges Destroy Democracy", which has been reprinted on the web. The chapter discusses the significance of the historic case of Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka.

**Offline (Print) Sources**

This work is an investigation of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia's evolving--and ultimately failed--attempts to transform social and cultural values, mores, and behavior by means of persuasion in the first nine years of its rule. When the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) took power after the Second World War, it had a vision for a new and better society in which all humans would live together in peace and prosperity and in which their mutual exploitation would be eliminated. That vision required changes not only in the country's political and economic structure, but in its citizens' values, morals, goals, aesthetics, and social behavior. Lilly's study describes the CPY's struggle to realize that social and cultural transformation by means of oral, written, and visual persuasion in the first nine years after the war.
Power Inequities

By Máire A. Dugan

Inequity is the virtually inevitable result of two powerful forces: prejudice on the level of the individual, and political imbalance on the social level. One can argue whether power imbalance and other social differences cause prejudice or the other way around. (In fact, while most of us are comforted by the notion of single variable answers to debates like this, the reality is more complex; each does enhance the other and which is the cause often reduces to a chicken and egg debate.) What is unarguable is that when prejudice produces discriminatory behavior and power imbalances reify individual behaviors into structural differences in access and treatment, gross social, political, and economic inequities result.

In common parlance, inequity and inequality may often be used interchangeably. Here, I presume a distinction: the term "inequality" being descriptive and the term "inequity" being normative. Inequality refers to a distribution of some good within in which some obtain more than others. Inequity goes beyond this: the distribution is not only unequal; it is unfair and unjust.

A simple example may help to clarify the distinction. Not long ago, there was a major ice storm that hit numerous communities in South Carolina. Hundreds of thousands of people lost electric power. Many more did not. In the aftermath of the storm, people had unequal access to electrical power. The situation was not, however, inequitable. The inequality was the result of the path of the storm, a situation over which no one had control. If a power company chose, however, to restore power using a criterion of wealth or political influence or race, or some other dimension that had nothing to do with need for electricity, the response would have been inequitable. Such inequities can be structural rather than based on a single decision. Imagine a community in which power companies chose to spend extra money to bury the cables connecting White customers to the power grid, but to leave those connecting Black residents above ground. When an ice storm hits, Whites, protected from the vagaries of nature, would continue to have power. Black residents, on the other hand, would experience power outages, depending on where the storm hits. In this case, the initial situation would be structurally inequitable, regardless of how responsive the power company was to consumer complaints once the outages occurred.

Inequalities resulting from natural occurrences are, as in this situation, not of concern in this discussion, however much damage they may bring. Beyond this, the storm was a singular event. We were without power for two to five days, a great inconvenience. Once the damage was repaired, however, all of the users were once again on an equal footing. Those who had retained
power no longer have an advantage over those who lost electricity.

When sources of inequity are built into the social system, however, resulting differences are neither trivial nor discrete. Such inequities persist over time and space. Often, they are blamed on the discriminated-against. Blacks were defined as less than human in much European thinking that was then used to justify colonization and the slave trade. Such thinking was imported to the New World and became a rationalization for slavery, rape, Jim Crow laws, and a variety of other atrocities. Such thinking persists in the form of allegedly scientific evidence that blacks are intellectually inferior. Sometimes, such arguments rest on analyses of behavior rather than innate capacity. The "dominant ideology" presumes that "since opportunity is there for those who seize it, individuals with inferior outcomes have brought their fate on themselves, especially by neglecting to exert the proper effort."[1]

As with any other self-serving explanation, these can be regarded with suspicion and many have been disproven. On the surface of it, blaming structural inequities on those with least power to influence the structure is counterintuitive. More powerful explanations are in order.

Sources of Inequity

Social inequity is virtually ubiquitous, existing in all human societies with sufficient economic surplus that social and economic roles can be differentiated and accorded differential status. Why is this the case? Some would point to psychological explanations such as authoritarian personalities. Others would point to the human need to belong and refer to social identity groups. Social identity theory suggests that people are more likely to accord positive social value to their own identity groups and that the resulting tension between identity groups is the source of much intractable conflict. Such theories do offer a window of understanding into social inequity.

In fact, social identity theory is broadly used by scholars in discussions of intractable conflict, much of which is classified as identity conflict. I will not focus on social identity theory. First, it is amply covered elsewhere. Second, social identity theories tend to explain in-group favoritism, a likely source of inequity, better than out-group denigration, which is not only related to inequity, but also brutality and oppression.

A fuller understanding, however, is offered by the Social Dominance Theory, whose main purpose is to explain differential status among groups. Jim Sidaneus and Felicia Pratto[2] discuss three forms of social dominance: differentiation based on age, on gender, and on "arbitrary set" membership. Social dominance theory rests on three assumptions:

1. While age-and gender-based hierarchies will tend to exist within all social systems, arbitrary-set systems of social hierarchy will invariably emerge within social systems producing sustainable economic surplus.
2. Most forms of group conflict and oppression (e.g., racism, ethnocentrism, sexism, nationalism,
classism, regionalism) can be regarded as different manifestations of the same basic human predisposition to form group-based social hierarchies.

3. Human social systems are subject to the counterbalancing influences of hierarchy-enhancing (HE) forces, producing and maintaining ever higher levels of group-based social inequality, and hierarchy-attenuating (HA) forces, producing greater levels of group-based social equality.[3]

While it is true that adults, particularly those in middle age, control young people, each individual (if s/he lives long enough) tends to pass through the various stages in the age hierarchy within her/his own life. Thus, this is not a fixed situation, and I will not focus on this form of hierarchy in the remainder of the article.

Gender hierarchies, on the other hand, are fixed. One's position is determined at birth and, with the exception of the possibility of a sex-change operation, remains the same throughout the life cycle. Gender hierarchy can also be called patriarchy since, in all known societies, it takes the form of men possessing greater social and economic power than women.

It is arbitrary-set hierarchy that will form the focus of much of the rest of this article. There are several reasons for this. First, it is the most inclusive. Second, it interacts with the other hierarchies, particularly the gender hierarchy, to institutionalize inequity. Third, and most importantly, it is the form of hierarchy most associated with extremes of injustice in their most brutal and oppressive forms. It is, thus, most associated with the range of conditions attendant to intractable conflict.

An arbitrary-set hierarchy is one that revolves around human differences that are themselves creations of the human mind (like race).

The arbitrary-set system is filled with socially constructed and highly salient groups based on characteristics such as clan, ethnicity, estate, nation, race, caste, social class, religious sect, regional grouping, or any other socially relevant group distinction that the human imagination is capable of constructing. In such systems, one group is materially and/or politically dominant over the other.[4]

Sidaneus and Pratto list a number of particularly brutal 20th century conflicts emanating from arbitrary-set hierarchies:

- The Holocaust
- Massacres of the Kurds by Turkey in 1924, Iran in 1929 and Iraq in 1988
- Massacres of East Timorese in the late 1990s
- Stalin's slaughter of the Kulaks in 1929
- The Khmer Rouge terror of the late 1970s
- Ethnic cleansing of Moslems in the former Yugoslavia in the late 1990s
- Widespread killing of Kasaian in Zaire
- Massacres of Tutsis and Hutus in Rwanda in the late 1990s

Sidanius and Pratto argue that group-based hierarchies are driven and maintained by three
processes:

1. aggregated individual discrimination,
2. aggregated institutional discrimination, and
3. behavioral asymmetry.

Aggregated individual discrimination refers to "the simple, daily, and sometimes quite inconspicuous individual acts of discrimination by one individual against another."[5] If a manager passes over an able colleague for a promotion because he is uncomfortable with having a woman in a leadership position, that individual is damaged. By itself, however, the incident is unlikely to have deleterious social effects. When thousands of such acts are operating in the same direction, to the disadvantage of women or other individuals as members of a group, however, the impact is broader: "they contribute to the clear and salient differences in the power between social groups."[6]

Aggregated institutional discrimination can be identified "by whether institutional decisions result in the disproportionate allocation of positive and negative social value across the social status hierarchy, all other factors being equal."[7] In its more extreme forms, institutional discrimination takes the form of different types of terror. Official terror "is the public and legally sanctioned violence and threat of violence perpetrated by organs of the state and disproportionately directed toward members of subordinate groups." Slavery is an example of official terror. More recent examples would include the greater use of the death penalty when the convicted perpetrator is a member of an ethnic minority, apartheid in South Africa, and acts of collective punishment against Palestinian communities by the Israeli government. In semi-official terror, the perpetrators are governmental officials but the act is not officially sanctioned by the state. The rampant use of death squads in Latin America is one example. Finally, in the case of unofficial terror, the perpetrator is not a state agent, but simply a member of a dominant group. Oftentimes, the act is not investigated or punished by the authorities, as in the case of lynchings of blacks by whites in the Jim Crow American South.

Behavioral asymmetry refers to the fact that dominant and subordinate group members tend to act differently in a wide variety of situations. The notion of "keeping in one's place" is a popularized term for this phenomenon. An important consequence of the difference in behavioral repertoires is that "subordinates actively participate in and contribute to their own subordination." While Sidanius and Pratto do not suggest that subordinates do not, in many cases, resist their oppression and oppressors, they do suggest that it its subordinates' high level of both passive and active cooperation with their own oppression that provides systems of group-based social hierarchy with their remarkable degrees of resiliency, robustness and stability.[8]

**Forms of Inequity**

Three primary types of inequity currently characterize the global system: those of power, wealth, and knowledge.[9] The West wields its influence in international relations "to run the world in
political and economic values.[10] Economic inequality has now reached "grotesque proportions" according to the Human Development Report issued by the United Nations in 1999. Amazingly, the gap between the rich and poor continues to grow: "While thirty years ago, the gap between the richest one-fifth of the world's population and the rest stood at 30-to-1, by 1990 it had widened to 60-to-1 and today stands at 74-to-1."[11] Gaps in knowledge are also growing and help to keep Western hegemony in place. "[R]oughly four-fifths of the world's total scientific and technological output is generated in Western societies, with a concomitant concentration of scientists and technological experts in the same part of the world,"[12] "expertocracy is compounded by the near-monopoly wielded by Western (or Western-trained) elites -- an aspect that links expert knowledge with the broader issue of cultural hegemony or supremacy."[13] These disparities are mirrored in individual nation-states.

Inequity seems to act like a social cancer, extending its tentacles into virtually every area of social life, negatively impacting both the discriminated-against group, and its individual members, in an impressively wide variety of ways. Documentation of a few examples only hints at the scope.

Gross differences in income and wealth are strong indicators of inequity. Both globally, and in individual nations, income disparity not only exists, but is on the rise. In the United States, for example, "between 1973 and 2000 the average real income of the bottom 90 percent of American taxpayers actually fell by 7 percent. Meanwhile the income of the top 1 percent rose by 148 percent, the income of the top 0.1 percent rose by 343 percent and the income of the top 0.01 percent rose 599 percent."[14] For many, large inequities in income distribution translate into hunger and homelessness. "Food insecurity is the direct result of the prevailing socio-economic inequity characterized by the breaking and loss of cultural diversity and traditional forms of food production, massive poverty and unequal access to land and food."[15]

The likely connection between poverty and ill health is no surprise. What may be a surprise, however, is that global income inequity is positively associated with poor health. Researchers at Harvard School of Public Health compared national Gini Indices from countries around the world. (a Gini Index is a measure of inequality; it is a calculation of the difference between egalitarian and actual distribution of any good, in this case, income). "Controlling for the individual effects of age, sex, race, marital status, education, income, health insurance coverage, and employment status, we found a significant effect of state income inequality on poor self-rated health. For every 0.05 increase in the Gini coefficient, the odds ratio (OR) of reporting poor health increased by 1.39.[16]

A particularly devastating form of inequity, in terms of its impact on the members of the discriminated-against group, occurs in the realm of criminal justice systems:

Compared to members of the dominant group, subordinate-group members are more likely to be stopped, questioned, and searched by the police than are members of dominant arbitrary-sets, everything else being equal. Once arrested, subordinates are more likely to be beaten by the police while in custody and more likely to be held in custody awaiting trial rather than released on bail. Once tried, they are more likely to be found guilty, less likely to be sentenced to alternatives to prison (e.g., community service), more likely to be sentenced to longer prison
terms, less likely to be granted parole, and when convicted of capital offenses, they are more likely to be executed -- especially for capital offenses against dominants.[17]

Discrimination can lead to unexpected and pernicious forms of inequity. The Harvard Civil Rights project, for example, has documented higher rates of classification of U.S. students as needing special education among Blacks, Latinos, and Native Americans as compared to whites. The problem is compounded by significantly inferior services provided to these students. While one might be attempted to attribute at least the former differences simply to deleterious impacts of poverty, this does not prove to be the case. Rather,

[t]he research suggests that the observed racial, ethnic, and gender disparities are the result of many complex and interacting factors including: unconscious racial bias on the part of school authorities; large resource inequalities (such as the lack of high quality teachers) that run along lines of race and class; unjustifiable reliance on IQ and other evaluation tools; educators' inappropriate responses to the pressures of high-stakes testing; and power differentials between minority parents and school officials. [18]
http://www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/research/specialed/IDEA_paper02.php

Impacts of Inequity

Social inequity has profound implications for understanding and resolving social conflict.

The unjust suffering attendant to inequity in all of its manifestations is obvious. People who are oppressed and targets of discrimination have their life chances curtailed and, in some cases, cut off. But they are not the only ones who are hurt. Whole communities and nations are hurt economically through loss of productivity and misallocation of resources. The World Bank has found that the more equal the distribution of assets such as land, the more economic growth occurs in the society.[19] The global annual loss of productive, disability-free life caused by malnutrition is a hard-to-imagine 46 million years.[20]

Of obvious concern to the study of intractable conflict, the world is a more violence-ridden and dangerous place because of inequity. Ted Robert Gurr, for example, found positive correlations between both economic and political deprivation and the magnitude of conspiracy (organized political violence involving a small number of participants, e.g., political assassinations and small-scale terrorism), the magnitude of internal war (organized political violence on a large scale such as guerilla wars and large-scale revolts), the magnitude of turmoil (spontaneous mass strife such as riots and localized rebellions), and the total magnitude of strife.[21] After reviewing a number of studies on the relationship between socioeconomic inequality and political protest, Ekkert Zimmerman concluded that overall they "suggest a linear positive relationship between socioeconomic inequality and political violence."[22] Barbara Harff reports that she and her colleagues in the State Failure Project tested several variables and identified both discrimination ("ruling elite represents only some ethnics") and exclusionary ideology ("elite committed to an exclusionary ideology") as indicators of genocide and politicide.[23]

In fact, many theorists hypothesize the connection between variables congruent with inequity and political instability and violence. Ted Robert Gurr, for example, contends that "the potential
for collective violence varies strongly with the intensity and scope of relative deprivation among members of a collectivity."[24] Relative deprivation occurs when the actual value a group receives, or expects to receive, is less than that which it feels it deserves. Here, the term value can refer to anything which is valued, whether it be economic prosperity, political influence, or social status. Relative deprivation is much more likely to occur in inequitable situations, since if goods are relatively evenly distributed, deprivation is likely a result of everyone being worse off, which would tend to reduce expectations.

**Undoing Inequity**

If Sidanius and Pratto are correct in their assumption that social dominance based on arbitrary-set hierarchies exists in all societies in which there is economic surplus (i.e., all societies except for hunter-gatherer societies), the situation may appear hopeless. Inequity, like the poor according to the Bible, will always be with us.

But even if there is a pervasive orientation toward social hierarchy, a substantial difference in degree may approximate a difference in kind. One suggestion of this comes from the work on the connection between income inequality and health. Subramanian and his colleagues have found no relationship between the two in more egalitarian societies such as Japan, New Zealand, Sweden, and Denmark. Finding such a relationship in less egalitarian societies such as Chile and the United States, they discuss the possibility of a threshold above which inequity is related to poor health and below which it is not. Perhaps this is also true of other consequences of inequity.

Seeking greater equity is a large and important task and deserves the attention both of those who benefit from the system as it currently exists and those who suffer because of it. Their tasks, however, are different.

"For any oppressed group, the primary task is to overcome the moral authority of the sources of their suffering and to create a politically effective identity."[25] Moore discusses the need "to reverse the kinds of solidarity among the oppressed that aids the oppressor." This dovetails well with Sidaneus and Pratto's identification of behavioral asymmetry as a hierarchy-enhancing agent. A more popular take on the concern is captured in the focus on "internalized racism" or internalized oppression" in efforts to undo racism in the United States. The flip side -- efforts to make members of the dominant group more aware of "white privilege" and how to overcome it -- is also beginning to receive substantial attention.

Those already in decision making positions might benefit from the following caution:

[A]ttempting to benefit the underclass by piecemeal social legislation is likely to be both ineffective and dangerous, so long as structural conditions remain that effectively isolate the underclass from power and decision making. This implies that the underclass cannot be dealt with as mere victims but must actively participate in their own empowerment.[26]
It may be an overly utopian dream to seek a society in which there is no inequity, this does not mean, however, that much greater levels of egalitarianism can not be achieved. In particular, we can certainly make substantial headway in reversing current trends toward increased inequity.


[6] Sidaneus and Pratto, p. 41

[7] Sidaneus and Pratto, p. 41

[8] Sidaneus and Pratto, p. 44


2003, v. 32, i. 6, pp. 1022-1029.


[18] [http://www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/research/specialed/IDEA_paper02.php](http://www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/research/specialed/IDEA_paper02.php)


[24] **Gurr, p. 24**


Sources of Additional, In-depth Information on this Topic

Additional Explanations of the Underlying Concepts:

Online (Web) Sources

This paper argues that the overarching, global culture of domination provides the framework for oppression and exploitation, including that of women by men and of Southern Hemisphere countries by the West. The asymmetry of power resulting from colonialism has injected into cultural difference an explosive charge which makes its handling extremely difficult. Unless the practice of conflict transformation gives due emphasis to questions of power and justice, it will continue to be regarded with suspicion outside the West and fail to be truly transformative.

This essay explains what constitutes social power and discusses various forms and aspects of social power, in relation to democracy and freedom. The analysis is intended to provide a framework of ideas within which people concerned with societal power imbalances can create solutions consistent with democratic institutions and ideals.

Available at: http://www.beyondintractability.org/booksummary/10413/.
This summary of Negotiating at an Uneven Table, by Phyllis Beck Kritek, gives a good overview of the book, which is about negotiating conflicts in situations where some participants are at a disadvantage which others do not acknowledge. The book offers strategies for the disadvantaged participants, and methods of recognizing uneven negotiation situations for all participants. (This summary refers to the first edition of the book.)

Available at: http://www.kent.ac.uk/politics/research/kentpapers/paco1.html.
This paper examines how negotiations between asymmetrical parties are characterized by the difference of power, resources and capabilities of the different parties. The author concludes that power is not only dependent upon the resources and capabilities that the parties have, but also on the will they have to use those resources in a complex situation.

This study investigates the effects of two situational factors, conflict and power differentials, on social identity and intergroup discrimination. The authors hypothesize high-conflict or high power differentials raise the strength of social identity and therefore result in greater intergroup discrimination. Result showed that intergroup power differentials had a direct effect on intergroup discrimination, not mediated by social identity strength.

*Offline (Print) Sources*


This article discusses the role of gender and ethnicity on power in society. The authors, "argue that gender-based power is not comparable to ethnic-based power, in part because the forms and degree of institutional discrimination experienced by men and women of subordinate ethnic groups are not similar to one another, and in part because stereotypes and categorization processes pertaining to gender are not comparable across ethnic groups." -Abstract


Negotiating at an Uneven Table is about negotiating conflict in situations where some participants are at a disadvantage which others do not acknowledge. It offers strategies for the disadvantaged participants, and methods of recognizing uneven negotiation situations for all participants. [Click here for more info.](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=320286)


Baldwin's article places power in a dependent, and thus unequal, but two-way environment.


Part One of the Politics of Nonviolent Action, Power and Struggle, explores the nature of power and the possibility of controlling or challenging power through nonviolent means. [Click here for more info.](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=320286)


Written for undergraduates, this introductory text provides historical background and conceptual frameworks designed to help students think about minority group relations in an educated, sociological way. "The conceptual focus is on power, inequality, and group conflict, and the analysis is generally in the tradition of conflict theory" (xv). [Click here for more info.](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=320286)

This volume focuses on two key questions: Why do people from one social group oppress and discriminate against people from other groups? And why is this oppression so difficult to eliminate? The authors attempt to answer these questions using social dominance theory as their conceptual framework. In a nutshell, social dominance theory argues that the major forms of intergroup conflict (racism, classism, etc.) are all derived from the basic human predisposition to form and maintain hierarchial and group-based systems of social organization.


Bannester's "manipulative power" is inherently a function of unequal power relations.

**Examples Illustrating this Topic:**

**Offline (Print) Sources**


This work discusses the massive inequality between elite classes of corporation-owners and the poor in the southern Appalachian region of the U.S. (eastern Kentucky, Tennesee, and Alabama). The book discusses historical and theoretical aspects of the power differential in this region.

**Audiovisual Materials on this Topic:**

**Offline (Print) Sources**

*The Uprising of '34.* Directed and/or Produced by: Stoney, George dir., Judith Helfand and Susanne Rostock. First Run Icarus Films. 1995.

This film explores how grassroots organizing resulted in the massive mill workers strike of 1934 which resulted in the blacklisting, and murder of cotton mill workers. [Click here for more info.](#)
One View of "Empowerment"

"Empowerment" has been a common topic among mainstream mediators in the United States since 1994, when Baruch Bush and Joseph Folger's *The Promise of Mediation* was published. They discuss empowerment in the context of what they call a transformative approach to mediation. Focusing on interpersonal conflicts, they distinguish between this approach and a narrower "problem-solving" approach. In a transformative approach, mediators do not focus exclusively on assisting parties to reach a mutually acceptable agreement. Rather:

[T]ransformative mediators concentrate on empowering parties to define issues and decide settlement terms for themselves and on helping parties to better understand one another's perspective...[T]ransformative mediation helps parties recognize and exploit the opportunities for moral growth inherently presented by conflict. It aims at changing the parties themselves for the better, as human beings.[1]

By Bush and Folger's definition, "empowerment means the restoration to individuals of a sense of their own value and strength and their own capacity to handle life's problems."[2] In their treatment, empowerment does not include 'power balancing' or redistribution of power within the mediation process itself in order to protect weaker parties."[3] Further, it does not mean "controlling or influencing the mediation process so as to produce outcomes that redistribute resources or power outside the process from stronger to weaker parties."[4]

Bush and Folger identify two ways in which transformative mediators work to empower parties in a mediation:

1. They adopt a "micro" focus. They presume that, during the mediation process, there will be many opportunities for each party to make decisions through which they will feel a new sense of control over the conflict, or at least over their behavior in the conflict. Transformative mediators listen carefully to the statements made by each party, looking for such transformative opportunities.

This approach contrasts with a "macro" focus, more common in the problem-solving approach, "in which mediators try to reach global assessments about the definition of the parties' problem and view all the parties' contributions in terms of inputs into this global problem-assessment effort."[5]

2. Transformative mediators put a priority on encouraging and supporting parties in careful deliberation about the range of choices they may have available to them.

The parties' goals and choices are treated as central at all levels of decision making. Mediators consciously try to avoid shaping issues, proposals, or terms for settlement, or even pushing for...
the achievement of settlement at all. Instead, they encourage parties to define problems and find solutions for themselves, and they endorse and support the parties' own efforts to do so.[6]

The responsibilities of the transformative mediator do not include advocating, advising, or counseling in order to increase the strength of either party.

Although Bush and Folger's concept of empowerment and transformative mediation is useful, intractable conflicts call for a broader and deeper definition of empowerment. Often, it is not a question of "restoring" a sense of value and strength; oppressed and disenfranchised people may never have had this sense. Second, Bush and Folger focus on the interpersonal only. The interpersonal can be important in intractable conflicts, but it is never the only consideration. A more systemic consideration is needed. Finally, Bush and Folger limit their discussion to mediation, where we must here consider a broader array of intervention roles.

A Broader View of Empowerment

"Empowerment" has many meanings and uses, as reflected in these examples:

- Wingspan Youth Development Services defines empowerment as character education and leadership development. The organization's theme is described by a quotation from Eleanor Roosevelt: "We must do that which we think we can not."[7]
- The focus of African-American Community Empowerment, Inc. of Morris County, N.J., is reflected in its motto: "People helping people to attain personal growth through community empowerment."[8]
- The Midlands Intertribal Empowerment Group defines its purpose as preserving and supporting Native American culture in South Carolina.
- The Government of India has a Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, and the city of Los Angeles, Calif., has a Department of Neighborhood Empowerment.
- The Internet hosts a wide variety of self-improvement Web sites focused on personal empowerment.

Most of these definitions are more individual-oriented than is appropriate when focusing on intractable social conflict. In this essay, I use the word "empowerment" differently; here, "empowerment" refers to processes through which disenfranchised social groups work to change their social surroundings, change detrimental policies and structures, and work to fulfill their needs.

Interestingly, the word "empowerment" can be disempowering, when it is understood to mean the giving of power by the powerful to the powerless. That is not how the term is used here. The appropriate role of the person or group with power is to share, not to convey or impose. If I give or even lend you my power, you are beholden to me for it. If, on the other hand, I help you build your own power base, the power is yours, not mine. I may do this as a mentor, a researcher, a facilitator, or an ally, since leadership and spokesperson roles need to remain with the group that is in the process of empowering itself. The group must make and own its decisions, so that group members can develop and experience their own power.
Empowerment Strategies

The strategies for empowering disenfranchised and oppressed people can be grouped into three general approaches: education, organization, and networking.

Education

The primer on education for empowerment is Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Its underlying tenet is that the disempowered already know a great deal about the sources of their oppression and what must be done to overcome it. What they do not have is an organized approach to translating this knowledge into action. The appropriate educational approach is therefore one that elicits participants' knowledge and responses. Freire calls this educational method "problem-posing."

The problem-posing educator constantly re-forms his reflections in the reflection of the students. The students--no longer docile listeners--are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher. The teacher presents the material to the students for their consideration, and re-considers her earlier considerations as the students express their own.

Participants empower themselves by taking responsibility for their own learning (actively engaging as teachers as well as students), by increasing their understanding of the communities in which they live, and by understanding how they as individuals are affected by current and potential policies and structures. Equipped with this greater understanding and with new confidence in themselves, participants can develop policies and structures that better meet their needs, and strategies for bringing those policies into being.

Freire's approach is aligned with "transformative" learning theory, which has developed over the past 20 years:

Transformative learning involves participation in constructive discourse to use the experience of others to assess reasons justifying...[our] assumptions, and making an action decision based on the resulting insight...Transformation theory's focus is on how we learn to negotiate and act on our own purposes, values, feelings and meanings rather than on those we have uncritically assimilated from others--to gain greater control over our lives as socially responsible, clear-thinking decision makers.

To bring about the deep change required to resolve intractable conflict, educators must be willing to challenge deeply held assumptions. It is important to assess not only the weaknesses of the other and the strengths of one's own group, but also the strengths of the other and one's own weaknesses. This assessment can be a wrenching process, for both the educator and the students.

Transformative learning, especially when it involves subjective reframing, is often an intensely threatening emotional experience in which we have to become aware of both the assumptions
undergirding our ideas and those supporting our emotional responses to the need to change.[12]

Therefore, education that is intended to address inequities in the system should be not only interactive and dialogical (meaning involving a dialogue between "teacher(s) and student(s)"), but also nurturing. The educational effort must also go beyond traditional education in its content and methods, to support learners in dealing with the emotional upheaval they are likely to experience.

**Organization**

As a community organizer, one of my first lessons was that poor people have no voice because they have no organization. An organization gives people a way of expressing their group needs in a way that cannot be ignored. This is the message that Saul Alinsky presented so powerfully in his books, and even more through the organizations he helped to establish, which are still active today.

While many groups come together around specific issues, and organize to confront those issues, Alinsky and others advocated a different approach: first, the building of an organization and, only then, focusing on specific issues.

"Building a strong, lasting and staffed organization alters the relations of power. Once such an organization exists, people on the "other side" must always consider the organization when making decisions."[13]

In Alinsky-style organizing, power is built up in a step-by-step approach, which includes both recruitment and achievement. Small groups are organized first, for example on a block-by-block or small neighborhood-by-small-neighborhood basis. Once the small groups have met and worked successfully together on issues, they are brought together into a larger community-wide organization. The larger group thus has an infrastructure as well as experience.

The groups begin with small, "winnable" issues. The newly organized group is rarely ready to take on City Hall--yet. Taking on a task too big is likely to be ineffective and lead to the demoralization of the group, encouraging a "See, I told you so" response, as members move back to resignation to intolerable or unjust conditions. The organizers must put a strong emphasis on helping the group choose "winnable issues" with which to begin.

**Networking**

Members of disenfranchised groups can realize and extend power through networking with others, both inside and outside their own social groups.

For example, Naomi Wolf describes the effectiveness of "power groups"[14] of women who meet each month (she prefers not to use the term "networking"). Although the group members may differ in a variety of ways, they often share a major interest such as religious affiliation or profession. The structure that Wolf identifies revolves around a gathering at which members share a meal and talk to each other informally. At a certain point in the meeting, each announces
to the group what she is doing and what resources or contacts or information she has access to. She also tells the group what resources, contacts, or information she needs.[15]

Supplied with a list of names and phone numbers, "anyone can contact anyone else to make a request, propose a project, exchange information, or suggest a deal."[16] In Wolf's group, these contacts have resulted in a wide range of new ventures by the women involved, from obtaining new jobs or freelance work to putting on a benefit. Members are asked to share such news with the group, since this news "bolsters everyone's sense of effectiveness, and gives women practice in recounting their own triumphs and sharing in other women's triumphs."[17]

Another example of a group using structured networking as an empowerment tool is the Columbia Luncheon Club of Columbia, S.C., which has been holding monthly meetings for 40 years. When the American South was still segregated, the Club provided the only place for blacks and whites to gather socially in the state capital. There are now numerous such venues in Columbia, but the Club has been so successful that it continues. Harrison Reardon, Club President during 2002-2003, thinks that its impact can be attributed to its underlying precept: good will. The only requirement for club membership is a commitment to act with good will toward others, regardless of race, gender, or creed.

The Columbia Luncheon Club meetings are less structured than those of Wolf's power group. Members register for the monthly luncheon and are assigned to tables, ensuring that, over time, each member will have an opportunity to network with each other member. There is no agenda; table conversations typically begin with introductions that include the paid or volunteer work of the participants, and may build on this information or turn to recent events in the community. These conversations often lead to subsequent meetings between members who have noted some overlap in their interests.

As with Wolf's power groups, Columbia Luncheon Club members have "found jobs, apartments, and freelance work; traded services ... [and] sought investors."[18] Beyond this, the Luncheon Club has played a role in easing the community into a racially diverse sharing of political and economic power.

**Empowerment and the Resolution of Intractable Conflicts**

The above empowerment strategies can be used in efforts to resolve intractable conflicts. The essay on peacemaking processes presents a model, derived from the work of Adam Curle, that is helpful in determining how to use these strategies.

Educational efforts, in Curle's model, include strategies that increase awareness of the nature and sources of the conflict, and of ways of resolving the conflict that meet the needs of the initially less powerful groups. The discussion above provides guidelines for the type of education most likely to be both empowering and informative for disenfranchised groups.

It is also important to educate adversaries and potential allies. While many who benefit from the status quo will not be willing to give up their privilege in order to create a more equitable social system, some will be willing to do so if they fully understand their part in the system. As the
costs of the conflict increase, other privileged individuals may reach a point at which they feel that the costs of privilege outweigh its benefits. Throughout the course of conflict, efforts should be made to educate these potential allies.

Organization also has a clear role in Curle's model. For educational efforts to reach a broad range of the population, organization is necessary. In addition, confrontational strategies (such as marches, strikes, or publicity campaigns) geared to overcome the existing imbalance among the parties are crucial. Without a well-organized campaign, small victories may be won, but the overall climate and structure are likely to withstand challenges if the campaign is not sufficiently organized to sustain itself for the long haul. Alinsky and others emphasized this need for ongoing, vital organizations that give voice to the needs and perspectives of the poor and disenfranchised.

The place of networking in Curle's model is less obvious, but nonetheless important. The change-oriented organization is likely to increase its effectiveness significantly through developing strong connections with a variety of other groups:

- In the education phase, these connections can be useful in broadening the research and knowledge base of the campaign, as well as in incorporating new educational methods and resources.
- During the confrontation stage, networking makes the inclusion of support groups and allies easier to arrange.
- At the bargaining and conciliation stage, good networking makes trust building less problematic with both third parties and adversaries, since relationships already exist with both.

Finally, what is the appropriate role for those who intervene in empowerment efforts? Curle's model suggests that mediation may not be appropriate until power imbalances have first been addressed. Third parties can provide technical assistance, and can work as allies; Alinsky-style organizing offers a good model.

It is not appropriate for outsiders to take on leadership roles, since the result may actually be disempowering, as mentioned above. One of the key elements of this work is leadership development. While the organizer may be an "expert," her role requires her to stay in the background. In meeting with members prior to the initial group meeting, the organizer may help determine who might be most effective as a group leader. From the outset, small-group meetings are led by people from the community itself. The organizer then acts as a coach and de-briefer, rather than a leader.


[16] Ibid

[17] Ibid, 299.

[18] Ibid, 300.

Sources of Additional, In-depth Information on this Topic

Additional Explanations of the Underlying Concepts:

*Online (Web) Sources*


This essay discusses, at length, the origins and diverse uses of the concept of empowerment, and it
misuses. An emphasis is placed on the concept in relation to women's rights and feminism.

Fetternan, David. "Empowerment Evaluation in Theory." , 1900

A description of the theoretical underpinnings and overall approaches of empowering evaluation. The theory calls for a change in how social programs are evaluated from harsh criticism to ways that foster improvement and self-determination.

Available at: http://www.gmu.edu/academic/pcs/BlackAvruch61PCS.html.

Reflecting on Jim Laue's work raises an important question for cultural anthropologists: Is a culturally informed conflict resolution compatible with an ethically informed conflict resolution? Or does the specter of cultural relativism require that one or the other be dropped? In this essay the authors take up three of Laue's related concerns; prenegotiation, empowerment, and social justice, and discuss each in relation to cultural relativism. The authors attempt to show how, a methodological cultural relativism can enhance the first, an epistemological cultural relativism handicaps the second, and a normative cultural relativism, properly understood and deployed, need present no threat to the third.

Burgess, Heidi and Guy M. Burgess. "Advocacy Advisors and The Neutrality/Empowerment Problem." , 1900
Available at: http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/example/burg7466.htm.

One of the most difficult challenges facing the conflict resolution and peacemaking fields is the justice problem. This problem arises because the ultimate objective of our efforts is wise and just decision-making—not merely the resolution of conflicts for the sake of resolution. If the power distribution between contending parties is nearly equal, then conflict resolution processes are generally just. However, in cases where power is inequitably distributed, neutral intervention often simply sugar-coats the domination of one group by another, leading to an unjust result.

Available at: http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/transform/tmall.htm.
This page offers a detailed summary of the concept of transformative mediation as it is presented in Bush and Folger's book, The Promise of Mediation. The page discusses the two key concepts of recognition and empowerment, compares transformative to problem-solving mediation, and offers suggestions for finding a transformative mediator.

Hedeen, Timothy and Patrick G. Coy. "Community Mediation and the Court System: The Ties that
Bind." 1900
Available at: http://www.mediate.com/articles/cohed2.cfm.

This article examines the pros and cons of affiliating community mediation programs with the justice system

Available at: http://www.interweb-tech.com/nsmnet/docs/herrick.htm.
This paper critically examines current empowerment theory and its relationship to social change. It also sets forth ideas for social transformation via a new conception and practice of empowerment, drawing on new social movement theories.

Offline (Print) Sources
The author draws on the work of Partners for Democratic Change in the emerging democracies of Eastern and Central Europe. Shonholtz explores the "intersection between the historical and cultural suppression of conflict and the democratic need for the expression and resolution of conflict." (p. 360) Click here for more info.

The author investigates and critiques current concepts of empowerment, and current mediation practices designed to empower parties. She then suggests a narrative understanding of empowerment, and describes several mediation practices which follow from the narrative approach. Click here for more info.

This book advocates for women to see themselves in a new light. One that empowers them, not only to desire, but also to gain, power, equality, and economic security.


The author argues that while empowerment is the core concept of transformational ideologies, it remains a fuzzy concept. Participation in community mediation is generally thought to be empowering, so he begins his analysis of empowerment by examining the community mediation movement. Click here for more info.

Freire, Paolo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* New York: Continuum, September 2000. This work offers a general critique of education, arguing that the American model is not neutral as it claims to be. Instead, he argued that any curriculum that ignores issues of racism, sexism and the like actually serves to oppress and support the status quo. Based on this premise, Freire argues that collective action and power is the way toward social change and he lays out specific methods on how to achieve this. This is an updated edition of this classic book on its 20th anniversary.

Sharp, Gene. *Power and Struggle: Politics of Nonviolent Action, Part I.* Boston: Porter Sargent Pub., May 1974. Part One of the Politics of Nonviolent Action, Power and Struggle, explores the nature of power and the possibility of controlling or challenging power through nonviolent means. [Click here for more info.](#)

Bush, Robert A. Baruch and Joseph P. Folger. *The Promise of Mediation: Responding to Conflict Through Empowerment and Recognition.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, September 1, 1994. This book is the seminal work on the subject of transformative mediation. In exploring the transformative potential of mediation, the authors contrast their perspective on the practice of mediation with the more traditional problem-solving approach. They believe empowerment and recognition among participants, should be the primary goals of the mediation process. It is argued that these effects are more valuable in the long-term than the immediate settlement of a dispute. [Click here for more info.](#)

**Examples Illustrating this Topic:**

*Online (Web) Sources*

Canan, Penelope. *When Are Nimby's the Desirable Result of Community Empowerment?*. Available at: [Click here for more info.](#)

This paper is an edited transcript of a talk given by Penelope Canan for the Intractable Conflict/Constructive Confrontation Project on April 10, 1993. It contends NIMBYs (Not In My Back Yards), LULUs (Locally Unwanted Land Uses) and NOPEs (Not On the Planet Earths) are really citizen reactions to having been essentially left out of the initial decision-making calculus.

*India's Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.*

Available at: [http://www.socialjustice.nic.in/](http://www.socialjustice.nic.in/).

The Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment is entrusted with the welfare, social justice & empowerment of disadvantaged and marginalised section of the society viz, Scheduled Caste, Minorities, Backward Classes, Persons with Disabilities, Aged Persons, Street Children and victims of
Drug Abuse etc. Basic objective of the policies, programmes, law and institution of the Indian welfare system is to bring the target groups into the main stream of development by making them self-reliant.

Los Angeles Department of Neighborhood Empowerment.  
Available at: http://www.lacity.org/done/.  
The Mission of the Los Angeles Department of Neighborhood Empowerment is to promote public participation in government and make government more responsive to local needs by creating, nurturing, and supporting a citywide system of grass-roots, independent, and participatory neighborhood councils.

Available at: http://www.powwows.com/mieg/.  
The purpose of the Midlands Intertribal Empowerment Group is to preserve and support Native American culture in South Carolina. To that end we encourage our membership to learn about Native American heritage, furnish assistance to Native American charitable interest, promote public education opportunities and awareness for Native American viewpoints, and provide primary organizational sponsorship for the annual Midlands Intertribal Powwow.

The Democratic Promise: Saul Alinsky and His Legacy.  
Available at: http://www.itvs.org/democraticpromise/index.html.  
This page discusses the content of a documentary entitled, The Democratic Promise: Saul Alinsky and His Legacy. Alinky is renowned as the person who inspired the community organizing movement. The site describes Alinky's life and legacy, details the story presented in the documentary, and offers a good list of print and organizational resources.

Youth Empowerment Services.  
Available at: http://www.wingspanyes.org/.  
Wingspan's vision is to create a youth character development organization that will unite youth, parents, school systems and communities for the common goal of character development and youth leadership.

Offline (Print) Sources  
This chapter serves to illustrate the practice of transformative mediation by examining a particular landlord-tenant dispute. Specifically, the case captures the range of opportunities for empowerment that can arise in a mediation session. Click here for more info.

"Inviting Fortuitous Events in Mediation: The Role of Empowerment and Recognition." 13:4, 1996. The author has come to realize that the sorts of "fortuitous events" that she seeks in her own mediation
practice are just what Folger and Bush have described as transformative events. [Click here for more info.]

### Audiovisual Materials on this Topic:

**Offline (Print) Sources**


This film looks at the grass roots activities that are being done in an effort to improve four of America's poorest communities: the Assiniboine/Sioux Indian Reservation in Montana; the Black Belt area of Alabama; the Appalachian Mountain region of Tennessee; and the South Bronx section of New York. [Click here for more info.]


This film shows how an educational system helped to empower the people of Zimbabwe and thus promote a democratic civil society. [Click here for more info.]

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**Voice**

By

Michelle Maiese
What is voice?

"Voice" refers to the ability to engage in meaningful conversation, to make a difference through what one says, and to have a say in key decisions. According to John Paul Lederach, voice centers on inclusive conversations that are grounded in "mutuality, understanding and accessibility". [1]

When parties have a voice, their viewpoints, thoughts, and feelings receive a "fair hearing" and are readily recognized by others. [2] They possess the capacity to make an impact, both on their own personal situation as well as the broader struggle, through their actions and words. This need to be heard and recognized is connected to people's sense of justice and their desire for validation.

This capacity to "have a say" may amount to having a seat at the negotiating table (or being adequately represented by someone who does), an opportunity to hold office, a chance to vote, or an opportunity to provide input into important decisions. At the local level, gaining a voice may mean serving as a representative on planning boards and committees within one's community.

Those whose voices are most often silenced include women, minority groups, indigenous peoples, and the poor.

Why is Voice Important?

Costs of Denying Voice:

In societies where there is protracted, violent conflict, the public sphere is typically divided along social, economic, and political lines and certain groups are excluded from opportunities to participate in political processes. When control of the state is captured by a small group of elites, many individuals' capacity for political influence is often undermined. In short, because members of the public cannot engage effectively in political dialogue or have input into decision-making, they lack a genuine voice.

If parties to a conflict are excluded from negotiations or other decision-making processes, or their voices are overlooked and ignored, they are likely to become dissatisfied with that process. This exacerbates public mistrust, undermines the legitimacy of any agreements reached, and may well hamper implementation of those agreements. Parties left out of the negotiations may challenge the decision in court (if one is available), or simply refuse to comply with the agreement. They may even oppose the agreement violently, acting as "spoilers." In addition, if the terms of peace are simply imposed on the population, this may perpetuate traditional power structures rather than bringing about social change.

Benefits of Granting Voice:
For those who are marginalized, excluded, and/or disenfranchised, voice is a source of empowerment. Having a voice is closely linked to notions of self-determination and autonomy and the ability to have a say in important decisions. The capacity to influence important decisions restores one's sense that one is capable of handling life's problems and is able to transform detrimental social policies, structures, and surroundings. [3] When all those most affected by the conflict have a voice in open and inclusive decision-making, this fosters conflict transformation and the consolidation of peace. Peacemaking and peacebuilding processes that are informed by diverse points of view may contribute to a more lasting and stable peace.

Representation as Voice:

Of course, it is impossible for hundreds or thousands of people to be directly involved in negotiations or key decisions. Being adequately represented in the decision-making process is typically sufficient to give parties a sense of voice. This requires that representatives keep their constituencies well informed about the negotiation process, collect dissenting views, and attempt to ensure that these diverse views are addressed during negotiations. [4] When this is done carefully, large groups of people can feel that they were involved and had a say in negotiations. As a result, they are more likely to support and facilitate the implementation of any decisions that have been made.

As a cautionary note, it is important to point out that some institutions have opened spaces for participation as a way to silence their critics. Although these efforts appear at first to give diverse individuals a chance to make themselves heard, in fact there may be little opportunity for parties to have a real influence on policy and decision-making processes. [5] Whether granting parties a seat at the negotiating table or allowing them to provide input truly give parties a voice depends on the nature of the participation involved. If participation is only for the purposes of consultation, without a clear idea of what will be done with the opinions and information gathered, parties' views may carry little weight. Simply participating is often not enough for marginalized parties to transform existing power relations. There must be genuine opportunities to influence the agenda and decision-making.

Increasing Parties' Voice

There are a variety of ways that marginalized and/or less powerful individuals can gain influence over important decisions.

First, people sometimes gain a greater voice in policy decisions through coalition formation and organization. An organization or coalition gives people a way of expressing their group needs in a way that alters power relations and may be harder to ignore. Forming coalitions is one of the central ways that disempowered parties can have a say in key decisions and advance their interests. Environmental groups in the United States, for example, have often formed coalitions to gain a political voice and influence policy making. Unions have used collective bargaining as a way to gain leverage in labor policies and contracts. Similarly, networking among civil society groups, NGOs, and community organizations may help citizens and communities to build their
power base and influence important decisions.

In the context of peacemaking, negotiators can meet with their constituency groups throughout the negotiation process to report on progress made, determine felt needs, and ascertain community support for potential provisions of an agreement. Efforts can and should be made to reach out to all constituency groups: the powerful and traditionally disempowered, the politically active constituents and the "bystanders." Possible ways to do this include consultation meetings at the community level and the placement of collection boxes in public spaces where people can contribute written suggestions. Some other mechanisms that seek to mobilize broad public engagement are national peace conferences, civil society assemblies, and referendums. [9]

In national conferences, for example, a broad cross-section of the population can help to formulate proposals and make decisions about constitutional changes or the content of peace agreements. In the long-term, establishing civil society assemblies and civic forums helps to enable ongoing public participation.

Third, it is crucial that there be wide public involvement in the peacebuilding process. In many instances, the viewpoints of local actors are marginalized during peacemaking processes. The design of agreements and implementation of solutions are simply imposed from the outside by external actors. One way to encourage public participation and grant local actors a greater voice in shaping peacebuilding processes is through grassroots process design. [10] This approach looks to people living in local settings to provide insight about how to identify and manage problems and formulate their own goals for the future. It emphasizes the importance of granting local actors a voice in the decision-making bodies that decide what course development will take. As active participants, people at the grassroots level gain ownership of peacebuilding processes and become "stakeholders" in the measures meant to assist them. In its most advanced form, grassroots process design aims to promote structures that increase the level of community participation in planning, managing, and supervising peacebuilding processes. This includes active engagement in needs assessment, project design and project evaluation. Two common community mobilization strategies that give local people a voice in the design and implementation of peacebuilding processes are community leaders' workshops and participatory planning. To a large extent, grassroots process design is rooted in an "elicitive" approach to conflict. This approach seeks to empower under-represented individuals to voice their cultural traditions and thereby provide external actors with in-depth local knowledge about the history and root causes of the conflict and the different actors involved. [11]

Fourth, it is important to note that voice is linked to the principles of democracy and the establishment of democratic institutions. Various methods of inclusive governance and nation building can give diverse members of the population a chance to be heard. These include democratic processes of constitution making, elections, and political autonomy for local governments and councils. Increasing meaningful public participation, particularly among those from marginalized groups, is a powerful way to ensure that parties have input into important decisions. Genuine participation requires social inclusion and freedom of speech and assembly, both of which are grounded in a strong civil society and civic education.

One way to foster public participation is through a democratic constitution making process that
allows citizens to play a role in setting the agenda, electing a constitutional convention, and ratifying constitutional text. [12] In many instances, constitution making is confined exclusively to "negotiations among elites who draft texts behind closed doors." [13] Such processes make it difficult for new participants and ordinary citizens to have an equal voice in the democratic process. Allowing citizens to have a say in the writing of the constitution is important, in part, because it sets a precedent for an open and inclusive government over the long term. Ensuring that all those with views and grievances to express have an effective voice is also a significant means of conflict transformation. In general, it is important that representatives of civil society and non-combatant groups have some say in the design and implementation of peacemaking and peacebuilding agendas.

Fifth, there are various communication processes that seek to address the issue of voice. In dialogue processes, for example, participants sit in a circle so that they can communicate directly. It is crucial that all participants be heard and that they speak openly and listen attentively so that each participant can have an equal voice in the conversation. Dialogue "seeks to produce recognition of the opponents' legitimate interests, respect for their beliefs and experiences, and increase the understanding of both sides' underlying beliefs and values." [14] Respectful conversations help to ensure that people feel that their views have been adequately represented and considered and that their ideas have been recognized. It gives parties a chance to voice their feelings about each other and their conflict.

Listening plays a key role in fostering parties' sense of voice. By listening closely to what others say, parties recognize one another and acknowledge one another's interests and needs. Through genuine listening, parties can validate each other's experience and create a sense that everyone's thoughts and feelings have been heard.

The central goals of transformative mediation are empowerment and recognition. Processes are meant to provide a forum where parties can talk about their problem with a neutral third party, present and clarify their concerns, and discuss how they want these concerns to be addressed. As they freely express their emotions and thoughts about past events, parties begin to see and understand one another's point of view. In some instances, being heard and recognized by the other side is all that is needed to reach mutual satisfaction. Success is not measured in terms of the settlement reached, but rather in terms of the degree to which mediation fosters parties' empowerment and transformation.

References


Sources of Additional, In-depth Information on this Topic

Additional Explanations of the Underlying Concepts:

**Online (Web) Sources**

*Citizen Participation in Social Policy.*
Available at: [http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/particip/research/socpol.html](http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/particip/research/socpol.html).
This webpage provides information on how to provide opportunities to have voices of marginalized groups of people heard. It has several links to articles that discuss ways to increase public participation.

This report examines procedural aspects of writing constitutions in post-conflict situations. The author raises questions about whether the process of writing a new constitution should be democratic. The paper attempts to present some guidelines for how to develop a participatory constitution making process.

This report presents the results of a 2001 conference, co-sponsored by ActionAid-USA, the Asia Foundation, the Participation Group at the Institute of Development Studies and Just Associates. The conference involved activists from around the world and was focused on exploring an expanded view of advocacy and citizen participation. Participants recognized that advocacy and civic participation involve a complex interaction of power and resistance. The conference was focused on ways activists can help one another organize, raise consciousness and foster political empowerment for social transformation.

Available at: [http://www.beyondintractability.org/articlesummary/10445/](http://www.beyondintractability.org/articlesummary/10445/).
This page is a summary from a selection from Moral Conflict, entitled Public Dialogue Consortium by W. Barnett Pearce and Stephen W. Littlejohn. Pearce and Littlejohn discuss the Public Dialogue Consortium (PDC) which is made up communications teachers and practitioners who seek to institutionalize improved forms of public dialogue. Through ongoing Kaleidoscope sessions the PDC offers a forum where opponents on intractable issues can discuss their views.

**Offline (Print) Sources**

This chapter describes three types of regional organizations and focuses on the benefits of each in regard to various conflicts and within the context of the United Nations.

Capacity Building

By
Michelle Maiese
What is Capacity Building?
The terms "capacity building" and "capacity development" are used in numerous contexts to describe a wide array of activities. In the most general terms, capacity consists of a party's ability to solve its problems and achieve its objectives. [1] Capacity building aims to strengthen parties' ability to work together for their mutual benefit by providing them with the skills and tools they need to define problems and issues and formulate solutions. [2]

Of course, at some basic level, building capacity for effective governance and conflict management rests on the availability of fundamental human needs: food, clean drinking water, health care, basic education, and economic opportunities within a society. [3] Societies also need to have some sort of basic infrastructure in place that includes roads, electricity, hospitals, schools, and rule of law. If no such infrastructure is in place, it is unlikely that institutions, governments, and organizations will be very effective at solving the problems that society faces.

However, capacity building goes well beyond the provision of basic needs. It is matter of development at all levels of society and includes institutional development, community development, and economic development. Some of the central assets that individuals, organizations, communities, and governments need in order to achieve their full potential include knowledge and technical skills, institutional and organizational capacity, and the ability to prevent, manage, and resolve conflicts. This essay focuses on how to build three broad types of capacity: political capacity, conflict resolution capacity, and the ability of individuals, communities, institutions, and organizations to implement sustainable development strategies.

Political Capacity

Building political capacity is grounded in efforts to support people's ability to participate in decisions affecting their family and community. [4] The goal of many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and development organizations, for example, is to create empowered individuals and active citizens who will take responsibility for their own welfare and that of their families. This means funding social programs to foster human development and organizing training sessions to develop people's knowledge and skills.

One central component of the capacity building of individuals at the local level is popular education. Popular education also helps to strengthen local citizens' awareness of their rights and responsibilities and to keep them informed about recent legislation. Literacy, in particular, helps to build awareness, raise political consciousness, and give people the information they need to think critically and become independent. [5] When individuals have the ability to read, write, and access information, they can make better decisions and articulate their demands for social...
Indeed, many theorists have noted that democracy requires an educated citizenry. If individuals and groups are to participate constructively in democratic political processes, they need sufficient knowledge to vote and take part in political debates. Additional skills that enable individuals to participate effectively in public life include discussion and communication skills, problem-solving and decision-making skills, and the ability to negotiate and work as part of a team. If members of local communities are to advance social change, they also need to learn skills of advocacy and effective policy influence. [6]

School, neighborhood, and other local councils can be organized to enable people to practice these skills and learn about how the existing system of governance functions. People also can become more involved in their communities and increase their political literacy through community service. [7] In addition, there are citizen education efforts and discussion groups designed to increase citizens’ awareness about politics, raise understanding of multiparty systems, and increase voter turnout. Training workshops are sometimes organized to educate people about civil and political rights, voting procedures, and the representative process. [8] Equipped with this knowledge, individuals are more likely to participate in elections, make contact with elected representatives, and attempt to articulate their voices politically. Likewise, voter education programs can help to develop a more informed citizenry who can articulate grassroots needs and interests and hold elected representatives more accountable. [9] Donors and international staff members of NGOs can help to build political skills among local people by implementing these sorts of civic education programs.

In general, people need to be exposed to practices of governance and learn about how to get involved in the life of their communities, regions, and nations. If individuals are able to develop an understanding of their own living conditions and social environment, this awareness may lead them to initiate structural change and take an active role in their communities. However, the capacity to analyze political and social problems and organize for social change does not come automatically. Individuals need access to skills training, technological knowledge, and problem solving techniques. In addition, they should have the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes at the village level so that they may gain a sense of self-confidence and self-reliance. [10]

Many theorists believe that local community members should play a role in political peace processes and in planning and development projects. Participatory planning processes allow individuals to play an increased role in consultation, management, and policy formulation. [11] Such cooperative processes bring citizens into the planning and development of public policy and thereby raises awareness of how institutions function and what sorts of demands they are required to address. They also allow individuals to interact with local government, national ministries, and NGO leaders so that they develop skills and decision-making capacity. Through collaborative participation in dialogues and policy making, community members learn important skills that strengthen both their political capacity as well as their ability to manage and resolve conflicts.

For example, the Nicaraguan Community Movement is a cross-section of community members
who are involved in participatory research to identify the problems and needs of their community and devise a development agenda. [12] Citizens gather in workshops or village meetings to discuss local problems and identify actions that local government and public institutions can take. As result of their increased involvement, community members learned about their rights and duties as citizens as well as how to approach local councils and make demands. At the same time, community leaders learned about public participation, consensus building, and negotiation.

Another way to build political awareness is through radio and local theater. Panchayat Waves, for example, is a popular radio program that aims to raise awareness about local governance in the villages of Karnataka, India. [13] Radio broadcasts examine different aspects of governance, explore democratic processes and the role of public forums, and discuss the rights of women. The program exposes people to the constitution and allows those from traditionally excluded groups (women, in particular) to have access to information about local governance. The hope is that knowing how the system works will give the electorate the capacity to make demands of their representatives.

It is important to note that in addition to building the political capacity of ordinary citizens, it is crucial to teach leaders of community-based organizations and NGOs about skills of advocacy and effective policy influence. It is also important to strengthen the capacity of newly elected officials and government staff, who sometimes have little or no previous leadership experience in formal politics. Training and leadership development programs, village-to-village peer education, and other support methods can be used build the political capacity of these government representatives. [14]

**Conflict Resolution Capacity**

In addition, it is important to develop communities' capacity to manage conflicts and disputes. This requires that citizens, politicians, and professionals learn dispute management skills, adapt them to their particular context, and apply them within their societies. One method to develop dispute management capacity is the development of graduate and post-graduate curricula in conflict resolution and dispute management. Peace education curricula provide instruction on conflict resolution, cooperation, global awareness, and social and ecological responsibility. [15]

Note that such education need not be done solely at the graduate level, but can also be incorporated into popular education. Once people have the skills of reading and writing, conflict resolution education teaches the skills of collaboration and consensus building. Both citizenship education and peace education initiatives emphasize skills relating to empathy, active listening, negotiation, and the ability to construct and present reasoned arguments. [16] Parties also learn to think critically, argue cogently, and develop cooperative dispute resolution skills.

Another way to build conflict resolution capacity is to implement training programs for professionals in civil society, government ministries, parliaments, and universities. [17] Training civil society actors to build their capacity to transform conflict can take place at two levels: in

"There are numerous sorts of capacities: intellectual, organizational, social, political, cultural, material, practical, or financial." - Available Here
http://www.capacity.org/
Web_Capacity/Web/UK_Content/
Navigation.nfs/index2?ReadForm
international peacekeeping** and peacebuilding, and at the interpersonal and community level, where people can learn and apply the skills of interpersonal negotiation and mediation. Civil society actors involved in national and international level peace efforts often receive training on the processes of international peacekeeping and peacebuilding. Likewise, community-level mediators and facilitators often receive training in mediation and dialogue. [18]

It is also important to build institutional capacity to respond to and resolve violent conflict, promote tolerance, and build peace. Both nations and communities need to strengthen their ability to regulate disputes constructively and non-violently, promote dialogue, and build consensus. This means strengthening governments' capacities to anticipate conflict, address crisis situations, defuse violent conflicts, and develop conflict resolution tools and mechanisms. Officials of governments and civil society organizations should be provided with training in conflict analysis, early response, and conflict transformation. In addition, institutional and human resources to manage disputes and prevent conflict, as well as mechanisms to support reconciliation and co-existence, need to be developed. [19] This includes the development of third party intervention services at both the local and national level.

Such measures are important part of preventing conflict within and among states, maintaining peace and security, and strengthening governance. Indeed, in cases where the domestic capacity to manage and resolve conflicts peacefully does not exist, nations are more susceptible to violent conflict. Recognizing this fact, many international organizations and aid agencies have begun to incorporate training in consensus-building and conflict resolution into their technical assistance programs. They have also begun to design programs and structures to resolve community conflicts and build local capacity in conflict resolution. [20]

For example, the Organization of American States has developed programs to enhance the capacity of both government institutions and civil society organizations to utilize dialogue processes and resolve conflicts peacefully. In order to strengthen this culture of peace, the organization has also provided training courses in conflict analysis, negotiation, mediation, consensus-building, and dialogue facilitation. Training seminars are also offered on human rights, participatory decision-making, and alternative dispute resolution methods. Those who attend these courses include community leaders, NGO representatives, police officers, labor officials, and university teachers. [21] These programs help not only to prevent conflict, but also to strengthen democratic decision-making processes within states. The overall goal is to strengthen the capacity of the government and public sector to manage and resolve local, national, and international conflicts.

Likewise, the Institute for Resource and Security Studies (IRSS) sponsors a program on international conflict management and works with other organizations to develop new policies that promote peace, social reconstruction, and cooperation in conflict-torn communities. One of these field projects is the Health Bridges for Peace project, which works to engage health care professionals in conflict management and community reconstruction programs. [22]
Development

Some theorists regard capacity building as an important part of development work. They describe it as a matter of strengthening the ability of individuals, groups, institutions, and organizations to identify and solve development problems over time. [23] This means helping local people and institutions to realize their own development objectives and address issues of human survival and welfare. Governments, aid donors, and NGOs commonly contribute to capacity development by investing in people, institutions, and practices that will help societies to deal with their development needs in an effective manner. [24] To some extent, sustainable development also depends on nations' capacity to implement effective conflict resolution processes.

Building capacity involves skills transfer, training, human resource management, organizational development, and the strengthening of communities and social networks. It is important to train individuals to serve in national or international technical assistance programs; and also to train policy makers and practitioners to implement sustainable development strategies. [25] Those from civil society who should receive training and improve their skills include government workers, community leaders, members of women's groups, and other civil society actors. In order to build capacity within the legal system, jurors and employees within the court system should receive rigorous instruction from international legal mentors who are prepared and able to train and lead by example. [26]

National programs are sometimes implemented to develop the capacities of institutions to address people's needs. Through the process of institutional capacity building, individuals and organizations attempt to strengthen their abilities to mobilize the resources necessary to overcome that nation's economic and social problems. The goal is to bring about a better standard of living within that society by instituting institutional reform, altering accepted rules of behavior, and developing new policies. [27] This typically requires the strengthening the core institutions of government, the private sector, and civic organizations to build their capacity for economic and social transition.

Another way to build the capacities of poorer nations is to support the growth of academic and scientific communities in developing countries and link up these communities with international academic networks. [28] For example, the United Nations University sponsors various capacity development activities. First, it holds specialized advanced training programs for postgraduate scholars and young professionals from developing countries. Second, there is project-based capacity development, in which individuals have a chance to participate directly in the design and implementation of policy projects. The hope is that individuals will develop knowledge and skills that will help them to advance development projects in their home countries.

Indeed, many theorists believe that there is a need for more local ownership of national development. It is important that local people do not become dependent on donors but instead play a key role in policy formation and the drafting of legislation. Thus, one of donors' central goals should be to build capacity for genuine community based self-determination. When local
development initiatives involve widespread participation, this helps to build a strong civil society a responsible government. It also generates "experience, ownership, skill and pride in the population" and paves the way for trusting relationships. [29]


http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/particip/research/localgov.html

http://www.brad.ac.uk/acad/confres/assets/ccr9.pdf

ibid.


ibid., 245.


http://www.capacity.org/Web_Capacity/Web/UK_Content/Navigation.nsf/index2?ReadForm


http://www.unu.edu/capacitybuilding/principles-guidelines.pdf
Sources of Additional, In-depth Information on this Topic

Additional Explanations of the Underlying Concepts:

**Online (Web) Sources**


This article defines Capacity Development, its approaches, the history and the issues within it.

Available at: [http://www.brad.ac.uk/acad/confres/assets/ccr9.pdf](http://www.brad.ac.uk/acad/confres/assets/ccr9.pdf).

Beginning in 2002 citizenship education will be compulsory for school children in England and Wales. This paper will evaluate the relationship between peace education in the citizen curriculum and the apparent expectations of citizenship education by the British Government.

Partners for Democratic Change. "Constructive Responses to Conflict in Emerging Democracies: Distinguishing Between Conflicts and Disputes." , 1900
Available at: [http://www.partnersglobal.org/resources/article8.html](http://www.partnersglobal.org/resources/article8.html).

This article talks about how to look at new democracies, then distinguish disputes and conflicts that are occurring.

Wauchope, George. "Developing Effective Mechanisms in Civil Society for Conflict Transformation." , 1900
Available at: [http://thewitness.org/agw/wauchope.110801.html](http://thewitness.org/agw/wauchope.110801.html).

The article focuses on the relationship between state and civil society.

*International Education and Conflict: Empowering Individuals, Transforming Societies, and Making Waves - An Interview with Jane Benbow from CARE.*
Available at: [Click here for more info](http://www.pcug.org.au/~wildwood/01junetngopaper.htm#capacity).
Gaventa, John and Camilo Valderrama. "Participation, Citizenship, and Local Governance." , 1900 Available at: Click here for more info.

"This paper explores literature related to the dynamics and methods of strengthening community-based participation in the context of programmes for democratic decentralisation. It specifically examines the merging of two distinct traditions of participation, social/project and political, and looks at the linking of development with the state, and a concept of governance that is accountable to civil society." - Logo Link


This article gives an overview of capacity and the different approaches that can be taken. Definitions are provided at the end.

Examples Illustrating this Topic:

*Online (Web) Sources*


This article gives some of the history behind conflicts in Chechnya and Ingushetia and examines how capacity building has affected the political and social environment.


This essay discusses, at length, the origins and diverse uses of the concept of empowerment, and it misuses. An emphasis is placed on the concept in relation to women's rights and feminism.

*Audiovisual Materials on this Topic:*

*Offline (Print) Sources*


This film explains how local coalitions were built between grassroots organizations and formal groups, in an effort to increase the amount of influence they could exert on Southern businesses to desegregate the South. Click here for more info.
Networking

By
Michelle Maiese
What is Networking?

Networking is a matter of creating useful linkages, both within and among communities, organizations, and societies, in order to mobilize resources and achieve various goals. [1] One author describes it as the “art of building alliances.” [2]

Networking occurs at a variety of levels. At the level of neighborhoods and communities, it is a matter of creating reciprocal relationships with other members of society. In many instances, parties meet informally to share a meal or hold a casual meeting. They often share resources, contacts, and information with one another. As a result of these conversations and newly found connections, individuals often find jobs and freelance work, locate apartments, trade services, and develop cooperative strategies.

Some common examples of networking activities include attending trade or professional association meetings, volunteering for community work, visiting with other members of one’s social clubs or religious groups, posting messages on mailing lists, and talking to other people in one’s community. [3] Networking contacts are often found through friends, extended family, alumni associations, former bosses, and members of the various clubs, religious groups, or other organizations to which one belongs. [4]

Many professionals have increasingly relied on Internet chat rooms, networking websites, and online forums to discuss recent developments in their occupation or field and ask questions of each other. Those looking for employment typically find that networking is one of the most effective ways to find a job. In many villages in less developed parts of the world, establishing social contacts is important for individuals who need to locate money and resources or seek information about where seasonal workers are needed. [5] Networking also allows individuals in many countries to form groups so that they may qualify for loans from banks. Networking is also an important component of community organizing. This requires that diverse members of the population build relationships, share resources, and work together in an organized way for social change. Networking can occur among members of a single organization or social group, among people from many different communities and identity groups, and among organizations. [6] It is a matter of forging connections with other individuals or groups who face similar problems and issues and want to work together toward solutions. These social connections allow individuals, groups, and organizations to find allies, access tools, share practical wisdom, and build collaborative strategies. Networking thus helps those working for social change to share resources and information, devise an agenda, and engage in collective action within their society. [7] For example, local activists and those working in the field of peacemaking will find it useful to make contact with other grassroots organizers to coordinate efforts, learn what has already been done on the issue, and discuss what has and has not worked. Likewise, it is important for organizations to make contacts with other agencies, groups, and individuals that might support their work in direct or indirect ways.

It is not just "what you know," but also "who you know" that can be a source of strength. What is the extent to which community members, especially leaders, know persons (and their agencies or organizations) who can provide useful resources that will strengthen the community as a whole?
Like *coalition building*, networking is grounded in the notion that people who pool their resources have a greater ability to advance their *interests*. Connections formed through networking can be useful in broadening the research and knowledge base of social campaigns and generating new resources and backing for their efforts. Establishing alliances also makes it easier for organizations to gain help from support groups and allies who support their goals. Insofar as those who coordinate their activities and share resources have a greater chance of success, networking often *empowers* groups and helps to give people a real *voice* in decisions that affect them. Through networking, individuals also may develop relationships with third party neutrals as well as adversaries, which ultimately may make it easier for them to come to some sort of agreement in current or future disputes.

**Networking at the National and International Levels**

In addition to the networking that takes place among individuals at the local level, there are national networks that bring together local organizations, religious groups, community groups, trade unions, and hospitals. The types of networking that commonly take place at the national level are civic engagement and multi-stakeholder participation. Civic engagement is a matter of interaction between *civil society* organizations and governments so that they can build constructive relationships and bring about social, economic, and political change. Likewise, rapid advances in media, telecommunications, and computer technology have facilitated wide sharing of information among multiple civil society stakeholders. The Horn of Africa NGO Network for Development (HANND) is a network of indigenous civil society actors and NGOs in the Horn of Africa, which began networking among themselves in 1997. In March 2000, at a regional meeting in Djibouti, the participants in HANND decided to establish themselves as a legal and formal regional network. This network allows for communication among civil society leaders and allows participants to share useful information about conflict prevention, food security, and capacity development. [From: [http://www.hannd.net/](http://www.hannd.net/)]

**Why is Networking Important?**

Networking is important for a variety of reasons, many of which already have been mentioned above. At both the individual and collective level, networking is a strategy of *empowerment*. As a result of networking, organizations and individuals are able to apply political pressure at the local and global level in support of their goals. Networking aids in organizing and mobilization, empowers civil society groups, and enables poor and powerless individuals to have a stronger *voice* in the processes of decision-making. [17] This is because having a strong set of social connections helps parties organize lobbying and advocacy activities at the national, regional, and international level in order to bring about needed social changes. This typically involves challenging adverse laws, restructuring power relations, and bringing about policy changes. Through such joint efforts, parties are often more capable of influencing the future of their communities.

In addition, people from diverse backgrounds who have faced a variety of struggles come
together to advance their common objectives. This facilitates interaction between people in different parts of the world and allows them to recognize both their differences and their commonality. As a result of networking with others both inside and outside their social groups, disenfranchised members of society can realize and extend their power.

Networking among multiple stakeholders allows for the sharing of information and knowledge that is important for poverty reduction and economic development. As a result of new advances in media, telecommunications, and computing, there is potential to share this information with a broader audience of development stakeholders. [21] Good networking also helps to build trusting relationships among parties and allows for the sharing of resources so that groups can bring about important social, economic, and political changes.

**Networking Abilities**

The preceding discussion suggests that networking is an important part of collective action at the local, national, and international levels. It serves to empower individuals, communities, and organizations so that they may achieve their goals. It seems clear, then, that the ability to network effectively is an important skill for people to possess. What sorts of capacities are needed for effective networking?

Strong networkers need to be able to develop rapport with a wide variety of people. Typically they have the respect and trust of their fellow citizens so that others listen to them. They demonstrate sincere concern and curiosity and actively seek out information and knowledge. [23] In addition, they have developed an understanding of how groups and institutions relate to each other and are aware of how different sectors of the community function within the social system. They are outgoing and friendly and stay in contact with other people in the network on an ongoing basis. A good networker should be skilled at calling people “to assembly,” have strong listening skills, and be adept at organizing activities. [24]

In addition, they will be proficient at some of the activities that are central to networking. These include collective lobbying, information sharing, coordinated advocacy, and the initiation of innovative educational and media projects. Good communication skills and knowledge about mass media are also helpful.


[18] van tongeren, 517.


[23] http://www.islandcounty.net/health/convene.htm#Networking


Sources of Additional, In-depth Information on this Topic

Additional Explanations of the Underlying Concepts:

Offline (Print) Sources

With so many entities (governments, NGOS, IGOs) involved in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, coordinating those efforts can be a challenge. Van Tongeren discusses that this coordination is not only desirable, but also attainable. The chapter discusses how, particularly in Europe, networks have been established that lay the foundation for an effective system of collaboration.

Coalition Building

By
Brad Spangler
What is Coalition Building?

A coalition is a temporary alliance or partnering of groups in order to achieve a common purpose or to engage in joint activity.[1] Coalition building is the process by which parties (individuals, organizations, or nations) come together to form a coalition. Forming coalitions with other groups of similar values, interests, and goals allows members to combine their resources and become more powerful than when they each acted alone.[2]

Why is Coalition Building Important?

The "ability to build coalitions is a basic skill for those who wish to attain and maintain power and influence."[3] Through coalitions, weaker parties to a conflict can increase their power. Coalition building is the "primary mechanism through which disempowered parties can develop their power base and thereby better defend their interests."[4] Coalitions may be built around any issue and at any scale of society, from neighborhood issues to international conflict.

The formation of a coalition can shift the balance of power in a conflict situation and alter the future course of the conflict. People who pool their resources and work together are generally more powerful and more able to advance their interests, than those who do not. Coalition members may be able to resist certain threats or even begin to make counter threats. Generally, low-power groups are much more successful in defending their interests against the dominant group if they work together as a coalition. This is certainly more effective than fighting among themselves and/or fighting the dominant group alone.[5]

Environmental groups in the United States have long understood the power of coalitions. Rather than taking on powerful industries on their own, leading environmental groups have often formed coalitions to challenge big business in the ballot box, at the legislature, and in the courts. They have succeeded in getting environmental candidates elected, and strong environmental protection laws passed. Without having many environmental groups working together, industry would have had a much stronger hand in the fight over environmental protection in the U.S.

How Do You Build a Successful Coalition?

Building a successful coalition involves a series of steps. The early steps center on the recognition of compatible interests. Sometimes this happens naturally. Other times potential coalition members must be persuaded that forming a coalition would be to their benefit. To do this one needs to demonstrate

1. that your goals are similar and compatible,
2. that working together will enhance both groups' abilities to reach their goals, and
3. that the benefits of coalescing will be greater than the costs.

This third point can be demonstrated in either of two ways: incentives can be offered to make the benefits of joining the coalition high, or sanctions can be threatened, making the costs of not joining even higher. For example, the United States offered a variety of financial aid and
political benefits to countries that joined its coalition against Iraq in 2003; it also threatened negative repercussions for those who failed to join, and much worse for those who sided with Saddam Hussein. Another method that can make joining the coalition appealing is to eliminate alternatives to the coalition. Once most of one's allies or associates have joined a coalition, it is awkward...perhaps dangerous not to join oneself. Although people and organizations often prefer non-action to making a risky decision, if they find themselves choosing between getting on board a growing coalition or being left behind, getting on board is often more attractive.[6]

Lastly, coalition builders may use precedence as a means of social influence. For example, in making decisions, people (or countries) generally want to remain consistent with prior commitments. That means that nations can pressure their allies to act with them in new endeavors. Failing to do so, it can be argued, would hurt their "long-standing alliance." This strategy is not always successful, especially if the self-interest of the other group seems to be harmed by the proposed action. (France, for instance, was not willing to join the U.S. coalition against Iraq in 2003, despite a long-term alliance between France and the U.S.)

**What are the Benefits of Coalitions?**

The benefits of coalition building go beyond increased power in relation to the opposition. Coalition building may also strengthen the members internally, enabling them to be more effective in other arenas. Some other key advantages to coalition building include[7]:

- A coalition of organizations can win on more fronts than a single organization working alone and increase the potential for success.
- A coalition can bring more expertise and resources to bear on complex issues, where the technical or personnel resources of any one organization would not be sufficient.
- A coalition can develop new leaders. As experienced group leaders step forward to lead the coalition, openings are created for new leaders in the individual groups. The new, emerging leadership strengthens the groups and the coalition.
- A coalition will increase the impact of each organization's effort. Involvement in a coalition means there are more people who have a better understanding of your issues and more people advocating for your side.
- A coalition will increase available resources. Not only will physical and financial resources be increased, but each group will gain access to the contacts, connections, and relationships established by other groups.
- A coalition may raise its members' public profiles by broadening the range of groups involved in a conflict. The activities of a coalition are likely to receive more media attention than those of any individual organization.
- A coalition can build a lasting base for change. Once groups unite, each group's vision of change broadens and it becomes more difficult for opposition groups to disregard the coalition's efforts as dismissible or as special interests.
- A successful coalition is made up of people who have never worked together before. Coming from diverse backgrounds and different viewpoints, they have to figure out how to respect each other's differences and get something big accomplished. They have to figure out how each group and its representatives can make their different but valuable contributions to the overall strategy for change (See consensus building). This helps avoid duplication of efforts and improve
communication among key players.

Disadvantages of Working in Coalition[8]

- Member groups can get distracted from other work. If that happens, non-coalition efforts may become less effective and the organization may be weakened overall.
- A coalition may only be as strong as its weakest link. Each member organization will have different levels of resources and experience as well as different internal problems. Organizations that provide a lot of resources and leadership may get frustrated with other members' shortcomings.
- To keep a coalition together, it is often necessary to cater to one side more than another, especially when negotiating tactics. If a member prefers high-profile confrontational tactics, they might dislike subdued tactics, thinking they are not exciting enough to mobilize support. At the same time, the low profile, conciliatory members might be alarmed by the confrontation advocates, fearing they will escalate the conflict and make eventual victory more difficult to obtain.
- The democratic principle of one group-one vote may not always be acceptable to members with a lot of power and resources. The coalition must carefully define the relationships between powerful and less-powerful groups.
- Individual organizations may not get credit for their contributions to a coalition. Members that contribute a lot may think they did not receive enough credit.

The Bottom Line

Deciding whether to join a coalition is both a rational and an emotional decision. Rationally, one must consider whether one's effectiveness and one's ability to attain one's own goals would be enhanced or harmed by participation in a coalition. Emotionally, one must consider whether one likes the other people or groups, and whether cooperating with them would be easy, or more trouble than it is worth. Usually when two people, groups, or organizations' goals are compatible, forming a coalition is to both groups' benefit. But organizational styles, cultures, and relationships must be considered as well before any choices are made.


[8] Ibid.

**Sources of Additional, In-depth Information on this Topic**

**Additional Explanations of the Underlying Concepts:**

**Online (Web) Sources**

**Forsythe, Janice. A Guide to Coalition Building. Cypress Consulting.**
Available at: http://www.cypresscon.com/coalition.html.
This guide offers clear descriptions of what coalitions are, their advantages and disadvantages, and how to go about building them.

"Coalition Building."
Available at: http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/problem/coalition.htm.

People can build their power base and their ability to pursue (or resist) force-based strategies by building coalitions with people with complementary interests. Members of these coalitions promise to help each other advance their interests and defend themselves from external force-based strategies. This site offers a condensed explanation of what coalition building is and what it entails.

Available at: http://www.glsen.org/binary-data/GLSEN_ATTACHMENT/file/92-1.pdf.**

This is a short field guide on how to start a coalition. The guide explains what a coalition is, what they can be useful for, as well as outlining the basic steps necessary to build an effective coalition.

**Offline (Print) Sources**


This page of the Dictionary of Conflict Resolution provides a definition of coalition building.
This chapter of Negotiation examines the ways in which multiparty negotiations tend to play out. One aspect of the chapter focuses on how parties ally into coalitions in order to achieve their own individual objectives. That section includes several different definitions of coalition, a look at various types of coalitions, research findings on the dynamics of coalition formation and successful coalitions, as well as practical advice on how to form coalitions. Click here for more info.

Examples Illustrating this Topic:

Online (Web) Sources
A long history of oppression, exploitation and injustice have led to a life of poverty, conflict and violence for the Chorti people of Copan, Honduras. Population pressures and environmental degradation, have only amplified the prospect of a grim future for most of Copan's people. In 1997, following the assassination of indigenous leader C?ndido Amador, the Chortis marched on Tegucigalpa where they conducted a hunger strike to publicize their cause. In response to national and international pressure, the Honduran president intervened and decreed the use of public resources for the allocation of several thousand hectares of land to the Chortis. However, this was only a first step toward effective social change and progress in Copan. Community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) efforts initially focused on strengthening the position of the Chortis. After less than 1 year, as a result of participatory processes, disputes have been diffused, and the Chortis are better organized and equipped to advocate their interests in local and national forums. Although there is much room for improvement, this case demonstrates the potential value of CBNRM projects.

"Collective Security--Summary." International Online Training Program on Intractable Conflict,  
Available at: http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/treatment/collsec.htm.  
This page discusses the international coalition building strategy of collective security. Collective security involves building a coalition of nations that agree not to attack each other and to help one another defend their nations against attack, if such a situation occurs. NATO is one of the prime examples of a collective security agreement.

Available at: http://www.twq.com/02spring/dibb.pdf.  
This paper discusses the future of international coalitions, considering major changes in the international political scene after the September 11th, 2001 terrorist attacks on the U.S. The author examines the NATO-based international coalition to fight terrorism and questions whether it will hold
The National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI).
Available at: http://www.ncri.org.
The National Coalition Building Institute, NCBI, offers a unique prejudice reduction methodology, based on years of development, which has been taught to thousands of leaders worldwide. NCBI-trained leaders work together in multicultural teams and empower others to eliminate the harmful effects of institutionalized discrimination, enabling groups from diverse backgrounds to work together toward shared goals.

Grant-Thomas, Andrew and Jennifer Morrison Taw. "U.S. Support for Regional Complex Contingency Operations: Lessons from ECOMOG." Studies in Conflict and Terrorism,
Available at: Click here for more info.

This paper examines the intervention in Liberia (1990-1997) by the Economic Community of West Africa's Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) for insights into the potential for effective regional, coalitional, peace operations. The factors that determined the coalition's political and military viability are examined, and broader implications are drawn for future regional coalitions.

Offline (Print) Sources
This chapter of Breakthrough International Negotiation outlines key strategies for building effective coalitions. The principles laid out in the chapter may be applied in any situation, from international conflict to local-level organizing. The primary example used to support the theoretical argument here, is the process employed in building the international coalition that forced Iraqi forces to retreat from Kuwait in the first Persian Gulf war. Click here for more info.

"Incorporating a new, coalitional theory of political and social movements, the authors explore the successes and failures of the freeze campaign in its attempts to influence legislation, treaties, and public opinion about nuclear weapons."

Audiovisual Materials on this Topic:

Offline (Print) Sources
This documentary illuminates how black and white women during South African apartheid, united in nonviolent protest against the unjust and inequitable policies of the country. Click here for more info.
Teaching Materials on this Topic:

*Offline (Print) Sources*


This book describes the tools necessary to effectively foster the creation of healthy communities. The work offers conceptual frameworks as well as real-world examples and practice exercises for understanding and learning the keys to coalition building.

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**Activism**

By Heidi Burgess

Disputants can be categorized as inactive or active. Active disputants (more commonly called "activists" or "advocates") are people with a cause who are actively pursuing that cause through nonviolent, or even sometimes violent "direct action." Though activists can work alone, most successful ones work by organizing bigger and bigger groups of people and organizations---harnessing "people power" to make their interests known and eventually provided. Activists work through established channels: using politics and the legal system for example, and they act outside established channels---staging strikes or boycotts, marching in the streets, organizing
letter-writing campaigns, or even violent revolutions.

**Political Activism**

Political activism differs in character greatly from one country to another, as what is seen as legitimate political activity differs greatly from one regime to another. In the United States and other democratic regimes, political activism is a standard part of our democratic process. In other less democratic societies, political activism is possible, but it is much more dangerous. It can cause one to be ostracized, harassed, or even killed as was so tragically illustrated in 1989 in Tiennamen Square. [1]

Even in democratic societies, political activity that opposes the government or its policies can be subject to scrutiny or harassment. This was evident in the U.S. during the Nixon administration when anti-Vietnam war protesters were carefully watched and sometimes infiltrated and/or arrested. Some observers assert that the same thing is going on in the George W. Bush administration, as part of its "war on terror," and the internal intelligence activities authorized by the Patriot Act.

Despite its risks, political activism is still common in much of the world and has seen notable successes. Most of the civil rights victories in the U.S. came as the result of political activism, first on the part of African Americans, later on the part of Blacks and Whites working together for social justice. The Vietnam War also was brought to an end through determined political activism, despite opposition from the government and many pro-war American citizens. In a "personal reflection," Notre Dame peace studies student Taras Mazyar describes the 2004-2005 "Orange Revolution" in the Ukraine through which opposition candidate Viktor Yushchenko eventually was declared the victor of the disputed presidential election as a result of massive nonviolent "people power." These cases, as well as hundreds of others demonstrate that political activism of "ordinary people" can have very extraordinary effects.

**Legal Activism**

Other activists work through the legal system. This has been the route of choice of many environmental activists, for example, The Sierra Club and the Natural Resources Defense Council. They file lawsuits against polluters, developers, and the government whenever they believe that environmental laws are not being upheld. They have been especially successful in stopping development projects using the National Environmental Policy Act and the Endangered Species Act as tools to implement a broad environmental agenda. They also lobby through the political system to try to prevent those acts and others from being "watered down," and they support the passage of new legislation designed to protect the environment further.

**Community Organizing**

Community organizing is a standard technique of activists who want to increase their power and effectiveness. Championed by ?60s activist and writer Saul Alinsky, community organizing focuses on bringing people together to work as a unified whole which can challenge the otherwise superior power of the elite. Alinsky focused on building the organization first, acting
second. Thus, he got people together, formed organizations, staffed them, and trained them before he started taking on "the establishment" in political, legal, or social ways. This organizing generally starts at the community level (hence the name)—often working first block-by-block, and then getting larger and larger until whole communities (meaning geographical communities) and/or interest-based groups (for example, parents of students in a particular high school or school district) would work together to achieve a particular goal. [2]

**Nonviolent Direct Action**

In addition to acting through established venues, activists also engage in protest activities: demonstrations, marches, strikes, work slowdowns, etc. For example, in contrast to Environmental Defense and the Natural Resources Defense Council which generally use negotiation and/or lawsuits to pursue their goals, other people use direct action: lying down in front of bulldozers, chaining themselves to trees, or "living" in trees in an attempt to block development or logging, while simultaneously gaining attention and public support for their anti-development or anti-logging position. Others go so far as "eco-sabotage:" putting heavy metal spikes in trees which shatter when chainsaws hit them, making cutting the trees a possibly deadly undertaking. [3] While not nearly as threatening, the environmental organization Greenpeace has become especially well-known for its sympathy-inducing tactics of sending out small boats to challenge such diverse practices as nuclear testing and environmentally-damaging commercial fishing. A recent operation focused not on whales and dolphins, as they have in the past, but a little fish, the menhaden. This campaign is described on the Greenpeace website:

Omega Protein [a large fishing company] has been fishing for trouble in the waters of the Chesapeake Bay, and today, they found it. We're [Greenpeace] causing a lot of trouble to save a little fish called menhaden. Factory fishing giant Omega has been vacuuming up massive quantities of this tiny fish, and it has had a devastating impact on ecosystems up and down the East Coast. That's because the menhaden is a critical part of the food chain that stretches all the way up to the majestic whale.

But this important little fish is disappearing, and there are no regulations limiting the number of these fish Omega can vacuum from the Chesapeake Bay. That's why we've decided to take matters into our own hands. We're calling for a moratorium on industrial fishing -- and we're setting our own limits -- by herding the fish away from Omega's factory ships [4]

The phrase "we've decided to take matters into our own hands" is a good example of nonviolent, yet forceful activism.

**Activism and Conflict Resolution**

Since activists are clearly partisan and most conflict resolvers claim to be neutral (although whether or not they are really neutral is a matter of considerable debate), some people see little overlap between activism and conflict resolution. Others, however, believe they are pursuing the same goal: social justice.
Some *mediators*, for example, believe they can-- and actually do-- engage in mediation and pursue social justice simultaneously. Most often these are mediators who see mediation as a way of *empowering* either one or both parties, enabling them to sit at the table with "the establishment" as equals. By providing training, "coaching," or "capacity building" to the lower-power party, mediators can help them *negotiate* more effectively and thereby more effectively advocate for their own interests.

U.S. Department of Justice Community Relations Service mediators, for example, do this routinely. They explain to the "establishment" parties---the school administrators or the police, for example--that it will be a lot easier for them to work with "the other side" if the other side has had some negotiation training and understands how to frame their interests in a way to which the police or educators can effectively respond.

For example, former mediator Nancy Ferrell described coaching she gave minority students who were having a conflict with their university administration. She said to them:

Certainly you have some rage, certainly you have some interest in sharing that feeling that you have. But what is it going to get you? You need to be very clear about what your concerns are and they need to be definable. They need to be stated in a way that they can be resolved. Saying you're angry at the administration because they're not responding to you, doesn't tell the administration anything and there's nothing they can do to respond to that.

So, Ferrell, went on to explain,

I coached them in being prepared to sit at the table. ... If you put somebody there and they're not read, ...then you haven't done them any favors. My coaching there would be getting them ready to come to the table and feel confident. The student had as much power at that table as the vice president of student affairs. There was no power and no rank. And that was part of my process, my responsibility. And everybody had to agree to that, the tenured faculty included. They had no more influence on the group than a student did. [5]

Oftentimes, CRS mediators were actually former activists themselves, but they decided that they could do more for their "cause" acting as a mediator than they could being a traditional activist. For example, long-time CRS mediator Efrain Martinez explains:

I was working part time at the post office, but working full time as a volunteer community activist in the Chicago 18th street area. We felt at the time it would kind of shake up the system. We hoped when it settled we would be a little better off. Then in 1972, one of my colleagues in Chicago, who was with CRS already, asked me to help him. I was kind of reluctant to join the Justice Department. I didn't trust them. But six months later that I finally said, "Okay." Once I got to know the agency, I felt that I could still do the same things and I could fulfill the same goals, but from a different perspective. And I would probably have more impact.
As an example, right after I had signed up, we had a community organization that had been trying to get more employment for Hispanics in the post office. It was very difficult. My old friends called me because they were going to picket the post office downtown because they couldn't get a meeting with the postmaster. I said, "Okay, I'll see what I can do."

I went to the post office, called the postmaster, and said that I wanted to set up a meeting. Then I went to the picket line and some of my old colleagues were there. One of them said, "Hey Martinez, pick up a sign and get on the right side. You're kind of a traitor now." Or something like that.

I said, "Look, I could join you, but all I would be is one more sign carrier, whereas now I can set up a meeting with the postmaster. You've been trying to get a meeting for months, I'll be able to get you that meeting." So I did. I got a meeting. They talked and things worked out. So I was doing the same thing but now from a different perspective.

Groups up to then were not part of the decision making process. They were not included. I remember once I was responding to a beating of a Mexican guy in Texas, back in the early 80's. We set up meetings with the mayor and the police chief before there was going to be a big march through downtown to the cemetery. The mayor asked one of the local leaders, "Why do you have to have this rally? You're going to give the city a bad name, with all the media out here." The guy answered, "We didn't give the city a bad name. It's your police officers who gave the city a bad name." The mayor asked, "Why don't you work through the system?" The guy said, "Well, let us in." If he wanted them to work through the system, then he had to let them into the system. That's where I guess a lot of minorities see themselves as not being part of the system. For whatever reason.

But they need to be in where decisions are being made. In essence, a lot of our work is pretty much like that leveling the playing field. Bringing them to the table where they can discuss matters on a level plain. Through us, they can get to do that. Once they're there, they take up matters themselves. [6]

Respected mediator and author Bernard Mayer advocates in his book Beyond Neutrality that conflict resolvers would be much more respected and better utilized if they acted as advocates as often as they act as neutrals. [7] By understanding conflict dynamics and conflict systems as well as they do, mediators are uniquely positioned to be able to offer effective negotiation training and coaching to activists who do not know how to champion their cause effectively. Most people in difficult conflicts, Mayer explains, do not want to compromise. They want to win. To the extent that mediators can help them win (while perhaps allowing the other side to win some of what they want as well), the better off everyone is going to be.

Community organizing is also discussed in the essay on empowerment.


Greenpeace. "A Big Fight for a Small Fish." August 10, 2005. Posted on the Greenpeace Website:

http://www.greenpeace.org/usa/news/a-big-fight-for-a-small-fish


Sources of Additional, In-depth Information on this Topic

Additional Explanations of the Underlying Concepts:

Online (Web) Sources
Activism, Collective Action, Social Movements, Utopianism. University of Amsterdam, Sociology Department.
Available at: http://www2.fmg.uva.nl/sociosite/topics/activism.html.
This site provides a long list of links to a variety of resources focused on social movements. Each link includes a brief description of the organization, article, or website it leads to.

Burgess, Heidi and Guy M. Burgess. "Advocacy Advisors and The Neutrality/Empowerment Problem." , 1900
Available at: http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/example/burg7466.htm.

One of the most difficult challenges facing the conflict resolution and peacemaking fields is the justice problem. This problem arises because the ultimate objective of our efforts is wise and just decision-making—not merely the resolution of conflicts for the sake of resolution. If the power distribution between contending parties is nearly equal, then conflict resolution processes are generally just. However, in cases where power is inequitably distributed, neutral intervention often simply sugar-coats
the domination of one group by another, leading to an unjust result.

Available at: [Click here for more info.](http://www.nfg.org/cotb/07whatisco.htm)  
This paper is an edited transcript of a talk given by Edelle Corrine for the Intractable Conflict/Constructive Confrontation Project on November 6, 1993. It addresses the question of who are activists, and why people become activists.

Available at: [http://www.nfg.org/cotb/07whatisco.htm](http://www.nfg.org/cotb/07whatisco.htm)  
This is a description of the philosphy, values, goals, strategies of Community Organizing (CO).

This report presents the results of a 2001 conference, co-sponsored by ActionAid-USA, the Asia Foundation, the Participation Group at the Institute of Development Studies and Just Associates. The conference involved activists from around the world and was focused on exploring an expanded view of advocacy and citizen participation. Participants recognized that advocacy and civic participation involve a complex interaction of power and resistance. The conference was focused on ways activists can help one another organize, raise consciousness and foster political empowerment for social transformation.

*The Democratic Promise: Saul Alinsky and His Legacy.*  
Available at: [http://www.itvs.org/democraticpromise/index.html](http://www.itvs.org/democraticpromise/index.html)  
This page discusses the content of a documentary entitled, The Democratic Promise: Saul Alinsky and His Legacy. Alinky is renowned as the person who inspired the community organizing movement. The site describes Alinky's life and legacy, details the story presented in the documentary, and offers a good list of print and organizational resources.

*Offline (Print) Sources*  
"Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink examine a type of pressure group that has been largely ignored by political analysts: networks of activists that coalesce and operate across national frontiers. Their targets may be international organizations or the policies of particular states. Historical examples of such transborder alliances include anti-slavery and woman suffrage campaigns. In the past two decades, transnational activism has had a significant impact in human rights, especially in Latin America, and advocacy networks have strongly influenced environmental politics as well. The authors also examine the emergence of an international campaign around violence against women." -Amazon.com
This is a short article explaining how nonprofits can effectively use direct media. The author focuses on developing a media strategy.


This book takes the reader through the steps of arbitration and provides checklists to help practitioners choose the appropriate arbitration forum and panel. It looks at preliminary pre-arbitration considerations, pre-hearing advocacy, preparing for the arbitration hearing, and post-hearing advocacy.

The best and worst practices that an attorney can undertake when moving through the arbitration process are outlined in this article. Best practices include selecting the right neutral for the case, being familiar with the arbitration clause, rules, statutes, and case law, learning the limits on arbitral power, and resolving all questions before discovery disputes arise. A worst practice is to "deposit a discovery dispute on the arbitrator's desk without providing any guidance about what the clause or rules prescribe". Further best practices include considering the appropriate reaction to a demand that alleges unarbitrable claims and to be realistic in estimating the amount of time it will take to arbitrate the case.


The author discusses various misconceptions that attorneys have with respect to their role in mediation. The author argues that an attorney should pursue five goals in mediation: "1) demonstrate the advocate's knowledge—the other side is more concerned if the opposing advocate has keen knowledge of the case; 2) demonstrate the advocate's skill—even though each side's participants disagree with the opposing advocate's presentation, they will probably evaluate the adversary's skill; 3) highlight the strengths of the party whom the advocate supports and the opposing party's weaknesses—the opponent will try to disregard those arguments but may lose confidence in otherwise entrenched perceptions; 4) avoid exaggeration which encourages the opponent to dismiss all the advocate's arguments because some are easily refuted; and 5) reassure the opposing party that mutual compromise is important."

This client-focused book examines the lawyer's role in ADR from a perspective of the "lawyer as architect of dispute resolution processes." The book is a combination of practice and theory, and has appendices with thorough mediation checklists, forms, rules, and a short list of organizations throughout the country offering ADR services. The book derived from a continuing education course and focuses on teaching points chronologically throughout the mediation process.

This book is intended to be a source of information for lawyers who want to learn more about the mediation process and their role in mediation. The book answers the most common questions lawyers have about mediation: what is mediation, when should I refer a client to mediation, how do I help my clients select a mediator, what is my role if my clients participate in mediation, what happens in mediation, and how do I handle ethical dilemmas if I am faced with conflicting roles or obligations. The level of information provided stretches from very basic mediation in assisted negotiation to quite sophisticated mediation.

Mediation Advocacy is intended to be a source of information for lawyers who want to learn more about the mediation process and their role in mediation. The book answers the most common questions lawyers have about mediation: what is mediation, when should I refer a client to mediation, what happens in mediation, and how do I handle ethical dilemmas if I am faced with conflicting roles or obligations. The level of information provided stretches from very basic mediation is assisted negotiation to quite sophisticated. (Abstract taken from James Barsky book review.)

This article focuses on the ways in which an attorney can be an effective advocate in mediation. The advocate must change from a litigator's adversarial mindset to an advocate's mindset of cooperative negotiation. The advocate must prepare in a different manner than he or she would for an adversarial negotiation or trial and it is important for the mediator to believe that the advocate is accepting of the process and seeks resolution through mediation. The author believes that the advocate plays an important role in identifying the interests of the parties as well as finding and evaluating options.


This book focuses on community organization, social groups, community life and democracy.

"First published in 1971, Rules For Radicals is Saul Alinsky's impassioned counsel to young radicals on how to effect constructive social change and know "the difference between being a realistic radical and being a rhetorical one." Written in the midst of radical political developments whose direction Alinsky was one of the first to question, this volume exhibits his style at its best. Like Thomas Paine before him, Alinsky was able to combine, both in his person and his writing, the intensity of political engagement with an absolute insistence on rational political discourse and adherence to the American democratic tradition." -Amazon.com

This chapter provides a good overview of the variety of roles that third-party intervenors can play in resolving conflicts. The author offers important definitions and background on the scope of the field of conflict intervention and also provides analysis of the various third-party intermediary roles.

This collection has articles that examine: the phenomenon of transnational social movements; the mobilization of transnational Resources in national conflicts; how to generate constituencies for multilateral policy.

**Examples Illustrating this Topic:**

*Online (Web) Sources*


"This article explores the impact of the activity of international solidarity and human rights organizations on the political involvement of the Roma in Central and Eastern Europe. It will conclude that the increase of an international advocacy network focusing on the plight of the Roma has offered new opportunities to domestic Romani organizations for pressuring governments to change state behavior or to introduce new policy. In some cases, governments have even appointed Romani personalities from well-known advocacy organizations to advisory positions."
Social Movements

By
Eric Brahm
Overview

Social movements have become a prominent part of politics around the world. Although they may have better chances for success in democratic systems, globalization provides opportunities for groups living under dictatorships to still put pressure on their government.[1] The democratization of communication media has both facilitated individuals finding compatriots with similar interests, as well as allowing movements to spread their message and generate pressure for action. The Internet, in particular, has become a powerful mobilizing tool.[2] Groups utilizing online direct action use such tactics as cyberpetitions, virtual protests, virtual sit-ins, virtual blockades, gripe sites, email bombs, web hacks, and computer viruses. Movements often use the same tactics as they use offline, like petitions, not due to their effectiveness, but because they are familiar.[3]

Scholars have also been interested in examining what factors make movements more successful.[4] “Success” is difficult to define as movement activists often have no consensus on this themselves. Looking at 53 American groups that challenged the status quo between 1800 and 1945, Gamson’s The Strategy of Social Protest found that groups were more successful if they were single-issue oriented, used selective incentives, used violence and/or disruptive tactics, and their organization was more bureaucratized, centralized, and unfactionalized. In addition, he finds that exogenous political crises can have significant effects, for good or ill. Recent studies have also turned to consider how the broader environment affects the prospects for social movement success.[5]

Some social movement scholars have decried the discipline’s obsession with being scientific at the expense of producing research that is of use to social movement activists. They are interested in “insight into the practices and experiences of organizers, into how collective and personal commitment can be sustained, into relationships between day to day activism and ‘long-range vision’, into problems of intra-movement contention, organizational rigidity and democracy, etc.”[6] Movement activists are interested in insights from the academic community, but often do not find anything useful.[7]

Much attention has focused on framing and social movements.[8] In particular, many have looked at how social movements can effectively frame issues to bring about change.[9] Injustice frames have been particularly common.[10] In some movements, such as religious, self-help, or identity-based movements, the injustice dimension may be less significant.[11] “Only a handful of collective action frames have been identified as being sufficiently broad in interpretive scope, inclusivity, flexibility, and cultural resonance to function as master frames,”[12] namely rights frames,[13] choice frames,[14] injustice frames,[15] environmental justice frames,[16] culturally pluralist frames,[17] sexual terrorism frames,[18] oppositional frames,[19] hegemonic frames,[20] and a “return to Democracy” frame.[21] The movement literature has also examined how movement activists utilize “boundary framing”[22] or “adversarial framing.”[23] Research also suggests that social movements’ identification of problems and causes restricts the range of solutions and strategies deemed possible by the group.[24] Social movements appear to have little influence over the media organizations which cover themselves or their assertions.[25]
The growing attention to framing has been accompanied by a number of critiques, some focusing on specific conceptual issues with movement framing[26] and others concerning the theoretical relationship between framing and other perspectives.[27] In addition, “[a]lthough the literature is replete with references to and descriptions of counterframing tactics[28] and framing contests,[29] these studies fail to shed much light on the factors that tend to shape the outcomes of such contests, other than stating or implying the tautology that those who won employed the most resonant frames. One thing we do know, however, is that these framing contests occur within complex, multi-organizational—and sometimes multi-institutional—arenas,[30] that movement actors often take this fact into account,[31] and that social movement framing activity and the extent of its resonance are affected by the cultural and political environment, including the framings/counterframings of institutional elites.[32][33]

Scholars have also paid relatively little attention to diffusion issues.[34] Finally, although different framing processes appear to be significant for movements’ attaining their goals,[35] systematic analysis of the actual contribution of framing processes has been rare.[36]


Sources of Additional, In-depth Information on this Topic

Additional Explanations of the Underlying Concepts:

**Online (Web) Sources**


Available at: [Click here for more info.](#)

"In this paper, Constanza Tabbush reviews the current literature on the role of civil society at UN conferences, discusses the key concepts involved, assesses the scope of the literature on civil society engagement, and identifies some of the gaps that might usefully be addressed by further analysis." - abstract

Ghimire, K. B. "The Contemporary Global Social Movements: Emergent Proposals, Connectivity and Development Implications.," November 10, 2005

Available at: [Click here for more info.](#)

"This paper explores the complexities and potential for change inherent in a new wave of global movements concerned with contemporary patterns of development and globalization." - abstract

Pianta, Mario. "UN World Summits and Civil Society: The State of the Art.," November 10, 2005

Available at: [Click here for more info.](#)

"In this state-of-the-art paper, the author investigates the link between UN world summits and civil society and contends that the summits have provided challenges and opportunities for the emergence of global identities and initiatives within civil society, and have stimulated a wide range of developments within national civil societies." - abstract

**Offline (Print) Sources**


"This short paper examines the way in which the electronic repertoire of contention for online social
movements is being built, and the means by which it will continue to evolve." - abstract

Schulz, Markus. "Collective Action Across Borders: Opportunity Structures, Network Capacities, and Communicative Praxis in the Age of Advanced Globalization." Sociological Perspectives 41:3, 1998. "This paper analyzes the dynamics of the Zapatista uprising with research tools inspired by recent social movement theory. It finds that the insurgent indigenous peasants of Chiapas rose up in arms under conditions of relative economic and political deprivation at a particularly opportune moment after developing a project of insurgency and acquiring significant organizational strength." - from abstract

Strang, David and Sarah A. Soule. "Diffusion in Organizations and Social Movements: From Hybrid Corn to Poison Pills." Annual Review of Sociology 24, 1998. "Our review focuses on characteristic lines of argument, emphasizing the structural and cultural logic of diffusion processes. We argue for closer theoretical attention to why practices diffuse at different rates and via different pathways in different settings." - from abstract

Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment.

Flacks, R. "Knowledge for What? Thoughts on the State of Social Movement Studies." In Rethinking Social Movements: Structure, Culture, and Emotion. Lanham, MD: Rowmand & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004. "He notes the growth of contemporary social movement theory as evidenced by 'the plethora of research compilations, annuals, journals, and advanced textbooks dealing with social movements.' But in the face of this abundance, he asks: 'What is all this analysis for? In what way does the validation, elaboration, and refinement of concepts provide useable knowledge for those seeking social change?'" - from article

Bevington, Douglas and Chris Dixon. "Movement‐relevant Theory: Rethinking Social Movement Scholarship and Activism." Social Movement Studies 4:3, December 2005. "In this paper, we explore this growing convergence of movement‐relevant scholarship, identifying the academic work being used by movement participants as well as the analysis taking place within the movements themselves, with a particular focus on the global justice movement." - abstract

Shemtov, Ronit. "Social Networks and Sustained Activism in Local NIMBY Campaigns." Sociological Forum 18:2, . "This paper compares six NIMBY (not-in-my-backyard) movement organizations to explain why some of these social movement organizations expanded their goals while others did not." - from abstract

Humm, Andy. "The Activists Who Shaped a Century." Social Policy 30:2, 1999. "This article introduces a 1999 issue of the periodical, Social Policy, which focused on several social activists in the U.S. during the 20th century. Social activism has never had a more successful century, reaping radical reforms that emerged in earlier times. Rebellion against domination and subjugation has
always been part of human history, but liberation from colonialism and disenfranchisement exploded in the 20th century."

"Early studies have dealt with the effectiveness of disruptive and violent actions and with the role of several organizational variables for movement success. More recently, scholars have begun to analyze movement outcomes in their political context by looking at the role of public opinion, allies, and state structures. A comparative perspective promises to be a fruitful avenue of research in this regard."
Just like all the other broad topics discussed so far, culture is inexorably intertwined with conflict on all levels. If one defines "culture" broadly to not only mean ethnic differences, but worldview differences between (for example) men and women; children and adults; labor and management; lawyers and nonlawyers; nurses, doctors, and patients; fundamentalist Christians, Jews, Muslims, and Buddhists; it becomes clear that cultural differences are all around us. These essays discuss how these differences can lead to disputes and conflicts — and, as always, how these conflicts can be constructively addressed.

**Culture and Conflict**

People from different cultures often have such radically different worldviews that what seems like common sense to one side is anything but sensible to the other. Different cultures and worldviews can lead to completely different understandings (or "frames") of a conflict, making resolution a challenge.

**Cultural and Worldview Frames**

Conflict is inextricably bound up with who we see ourselves to be and what meaning we make of the world. Many conflicts occur when people feel their identities or worldviews are threatened.

**Cross-Cultural Communication**

Even with all the good will in the world, miscommunication is likely to happen, especially when there are significant cultural differences between communicators. As Edward T. Hall writes, successful cross-cultural communication requires "reorganizing [our] thinking...and few people are willing to risk such a radical move."

**Communication Tools for Understanding Cultural Differences**

A continuation and elaboration of the previous essay, this essay describes various things that are important to know and address if one is to be successful at cross-cultural communication.

**Mediation and Multiculturalism**

In this essay, the author discusses his experiences with multicultural mediation and suggests ways that mediators can avoid misunderstandings.

**Unit VI Assignment:**

Go to: [http://www.mediate.org/pg33.cfm](http://www.mediate.org/pg33.cfm). This is a list of movies put together by our friends at CDR associates. Scroll down to the section on Gender/Class/Intercultural/Racial Differences and Conflict. Choose one of these movies, rent it, watch it, and write 2-4 pages about how culture affects the conflict(s) in the movie and how these issues are dealt with.

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**Culture and Conflict**

By [Michelle LeBaron](http://www.mediate.org/pg33.cfm)
Culture is an essential part of conflict and conflict resolution. Cultures are like underground rivers that run through our lives and relationships, giving us messages that shape our perceptions, attributions, judgments, and ideas of self and other. Though cultures are powerful, they are often unconscious, influencing conflict and attempts to resolve conflict in imperceptible ways.

Cultures are more than language, dress, and food customs. Cultural groups may share race, ethnicity, or nationality, but they also arise from cleavages of generation, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, ability and disability, political and religious affiliation, language, and gender -- to name only a few.

Two things are essential to remember about cultures: they are always changing, and they relate to the symbolic dimension of life. The symbolic dimension is the place where we are constantly making meaning and enacting our identities. Cultural messages from the groups we belong to give us information about what is meaningful or important, and who we are in the world and in relation to others -- our identities.

Cultural messages, simply, are what everyone in a group knows that outsiders do not know. They are the water fish swim in, unaware of its effect on their vision. They are a series of lenses that shape what we see and don't see, how we perceive and interpret, and where we draw boundaries. In shaping our values, cultures contain starting points and currencies[1]. Starting points are those places it is natural to begin, whether with individual or group concerns, with the big picture or particularities. Currencies are those things we care about that influence and shape our interactions with others.

How Cultures Work

Though largely below the surface, cultures are a shifting, dynamic set of starting points that orient us in particular ways and away from other directions. Each of us belongs to multiple cultures that give us messages about what is normal, appropriate, and expected. When others do not meet our expectations, it is often a cue that our cultural expectations are different. We may mistake differences between others and us for evidence of bad faith or lack of common sense on the part of others, not realizing that common sense is also cultural. What is common to one group may seem strange, counterintuitive, or wrong to another.

Cultural messages shape our understandings of relationships, and of how to deal with the conflict and harmony that are always present whenever two or more people come together. Writing about or working across cultures is complicated, but not impossible. Here are some complications in working with cultural dimensions of conflict, and the implications that flow from them:

Culture is multi-layered -- what you see on the surface may mask differences below the surface.
Therefore, cultural generalizations are not the whole story, and there is no substitute for building relationships and sharing experiences, coming to know others more deeply over time.

Culture is constantly in flux -- as conditions change, cultural groups adapt in dynamic and sometimes unpredictable ways.

Therefore, no comprehensive description can ever be formulated about a particular group. Any attempt to understand a group must take the dimensions of time, context, and individual differences into account.

Culture is elastic -- knowing the cultural norms of a given group does not predict the behavior of a member of that group, who may not conform to norms for individual or contextual reasons.

Therefore, taxonomies (e.g. "Italians think this way," or "Buddhists prefer that") have limited use, and can lead to error if not checked with experience.

Culture is largely below the surface, influencing identities and meaning-making, or who we believe ourselves to be and what we care about -- it is not easy to access these symbolic levels since they are largely outside our awareness.

Therefore, it is important to use many ways of learning about the cultural dimensions of those involved in a conflict, especially indirect ways, including stories, metaphors, and rituals.

Cultural influences and identities become important depending on context. When an aspect of cultural identity is threatened or misunderstood, it may become relatively more important than other cultural identities and this fixed, narrow identity may become the focus of stereotyping, negative projection, and conflict. This is a very common situation in intractable conflicts.

Therefore, it is useful for people in conflict to have interactive experiences that help them see each other as broadly as possible, experiences that foster the recognition of shared identities as well as those that are different.

Since culture is so closely related to our identities (who we think we are), and the ways we make meaning (what is important to us and how), it is always a factor in conflict. Cultural awareness leads us to apply the Platinum Rule in place of the Golden Rule. Rather than the maxim "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," the Platinum Rule advises: "Do unto others as they would have you do unto them."

**Culture and Conflict: Connections**

Cultures are embedded in every conflict because conflicts arise in human relationships. Cultures affect the ways we name, frame, blame, and attempt to tame conflicts. Whether a conflict exists at all is a cultural question. In an interview conducted in Canada, an elderly Chinese man indicated he had experienced no conflict at all for the previous 40 years.[2] Among the possible reasons for his denial was a cultural preference to see the world through lenses of harmony rather
conflicts and analyzing them into smaller component parts is a distinctly Western approach that may obscure other aspects of relationships.

Culture is always a factor in conflict, whether it plays a central role or influences it subtly and gently. For any conflict that touches us where it matters, where we make meaning and hold our identities, there is always a cultural component. Intractable conflicts like the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or the India-Pakistan conflict over Kashmir are not just about territorial, boundary, and sovereignty issues -- they are also about acknowledgement, representation, and legitimization of different identities and ways of living, being, and making meaning.

Conflicts between teenagers and parents are shaped by generational culture, and conflicts between spouses or partners are influenced by gender culture. In organizations, conflicts arising from different disciplinary cultures escalate tensions between co-workers, creating strained or inaccurate communication and stressed relationships. Culture permeates conflict no matter what - sometimes pushing forth with intensity, other times quietly snaking along, hardly announcing its presence until surprised people nearly stumble on it.

Culture is inextricable from conflict, though it does not cause it. When differences surface in families, organizations, or communities, culture is always present, shaping perceptions, attitudes, behaviors, and outcomes.

When the cultural groups we belong to are a large majority in our community or nation, we are less likely to be aware of the content of the messages they send us. Cultures shared by dominant groups often seem to be "natural," "normal" -- "the way things are done." We only notice the effect of cultures that are different from our own, attending to behaviors that we label exotic or strange.

Though culture is intertwined with conflict, some approaches to conflict resolution minimize cultural issues and influences. Since culture is like an iceberg -- largely submerged -- it is important to include it in our analyses and interventions. Icebergs unacknowledged can be dangerous, and it is impossible to make choices about them if we don't know their size or place. Acknowledging culture and bringing cultural fluency to conflicts can help all kinds of people make more intentional, adaptive choices.

Culture and Conflict: How to Respond

Given culture's important role in conflicts, what should be done to keep it in mind and include it in response plans? Cultures may act like temperamental children: complicated, elusive, and difficult to predict. Unless we develop comfort with culture as an integral part of conflict, we may find ourselves tangled in its net of complexity, limited by our own cultural lenses. Cultural fluency is a key tool for disentangling and managing multilayered, cultural conflicts.

*Cultural fluency* means familiarity with cultures: their natures, how they work, and ways they intertwine with our relationships in times of conflict and harmony. Cultural fluency means awareness of several dimensions of culture, including
Communication, Ways of naming, framing, and taming conflict, Approaches to meaning making, Identities and roles.

Each of these is described in more detail below.

Communication refers to different starting points about how to relate to and with others. There are many variations on these starting points, and they are outlined in detail in the topic Communication, Culture, and Conflict. Some of the major variations relate to the division between high- and low-context communications, a classification devised by Edward T. Hall.[3]

In high-context communication, most of a message is conveyed by the context surrounding it, rather than being named explicitly in words. The physical setting, the way things are said, and shared understandings are relied upon to give communication meaning. Interactions feature formalized and stylized rituals, telegraphing ideas without spelling them out. Nonverbal cues and signals are essential to comprehension of the message. The context is trusted to communicate in the absence of verbal expressions, or sometimes in addition to them. High-context communication may help save face because it is less direct than low-context communication, but it may increase the possibilities of miscommunication because much of the intended message is unstated.

Low-context communication emphasizes directness rather than relying on the context to communicate. From this starting point, verbal communication is specific and literal, and less is conveyed in implied, indirect signals. Low-context communicators tend to "say what they mean and mean what they say." Low-context communication may help prevent misunderstandings, but it can also escalate conflict because it is more confrontational than high-context communication.

As people communicate, they move along a continuum between high- and low-context. Depending on the kind of relationship, the context, and the purpose of communication, they may be more or less explicit and direct. In close relationships, communication shorthand is often used, which makes communication opaque to outsiders but perfectly clear to the parties. With strangers, the same people may choose low-context communication.

Low- and high-context communication refers not only to individual communication strategies, but may be used to understand cultural groups. Generally, Western cultures tend to gravitate toward low-context starting points, while Eastern and Southern cultures tend to high-context communication. Within these huge categories, there are important differences and many variations. Where high-context communication tends to be featured, it is useful to pay specific attention to nonverbal cues and the behavior of others who may know more of the unstated rules governing the communication. Where low-context communication is the norm, directness is likely to be expected in return.

There are many other ways that communication varies across cultures. High- and low-context communication and several other dimensions are explored in Communication, Culture, and Conflict.
Ways of naming, framing, and taming conflict vary across cultural boundaries. As the example of the elderly Chinese interviewee illustrates, not everyone agrees on what constitutes a conflict. For those accustomed to subdued, calm discussion, an emotional exchange among family members may seem a threatening conflict. The family members themselves may look at their exchange as a normal and desirable airing of differing views. Intractable conflicts are also subject to different interpretations. Is an event a skirmish, a provocation, an escalation, or a mere trifle, hardly worth noticing? The answer depends on perspective, context, and how identity relates to the situation.

Just as there is no consensus across cultures or situations on what constitutes a conflict or how events in the interaction should be framed, so there are many different ways of thinking about how to tame it. Should those involved meet face to face, sharing their perspectives and stories with or without the help of an outside mediator? Or should a trusted friend talk with each of those involved and try to help smooth the waters? Should a third party be known to the parties or a stranger to those involved?

John Paul Lederach, in his book *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation Across Cultures*, identifies two third-party roles that exist in U.S. and Somali settings, respectively -- the formal mediator and the traditional elder.[4] The formal mediator is generally not known to those involved, and he or she tries to act without favoritism or investment in any particular outcome. Traditional elders are revered for their local knowledge and relationships, and are relied upon for direction and advice, as well as for their skills in helping parties communicate with each other. The roles of insider partial (someone known to the parties who is familiar with the history of the situation and the webs of relationships) and outsider neutral (someone unknown to the parties who has no stake in the outcome or continuing relationship with the parties) appear in a range of cultural contexts. Generally, insider partials tend to be preferred in traditional, high-context settings, while outside neutrals are more common in low-context settings.

These are just some of the ways that taming conflict varies across cultures. Third parties may use different strategies with quite different goals, depending on their cultural sense of what is needed. In multicultural contexts, parties' expectations of how conflict should be addressed may vary, further escalating an existing conflict.

Approaches to meaning-making also vary across cultures. Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars suggest that people have a range of starting points for making sense of their lives, including:

- universalist (favoring rules, laws, and generalizations) and particularist (favoring exceptions, relations, and contextual evaluation)
- specificity (preferring explicit definitions, breaking down wholes into component parts, and measurable results) and diffuseness (focusing on patterns, the big picture, and process over outcome)
- inner direction (sees virtue in individuals who strive to realize their conscious purpose) and outer direction (where virtue is outside each of us in natural rhythms, nature, beauty, and relationships)
- synchronous time (cyclical and spiraling) and sequential time (linear and unidirectional).[5]
When we don't understand that others may have quite different starting points, conflict is more likely to occur and to escalate. Even though the starting points themselves are neutral, negative motives are easily attributed to someone who begins from a different end of the continuum.[6]

For example, when First Nations people sit down with government representatives to negotiate land claims in Canada or Australia, different ideas of time may make it difficult to establish rapport and make progress. First Nations people tend to see time as stretching forward and back, binding them in relationship with seven generations in both directions. Their actions and choices in the present are thus relevant to history and to their progeny. Government negotiators acculturated to Western European ideas of time may find the telling of historical tales and the consideration of projections generations into the future tedious and irrelevant unless they understand the variations in the way time is understood by First Nations people.

Of course, this example draws on generalizations that may or may not apply in a particular situation. There are many different Aboriginal peoples in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the United States, and elsewhere. Each has a distinct culture, and these cultures have different relationships to time, different ideas about negotiation, and unique identities. Government negotiators may also have a range of ethno cultural identities, and may not fit the stereotype of the woman or man in a hurry, with a measured, pressured orientation toward time.

Examples can also be drawn from the other three dimensions identified by Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars. When an intractable conflict has been ongoing for years or even generations, should there be recourse to international standards and interveners, or local rules and practices? Those favoring a universalist starting point are more likely to prefer international intervention and the setting of international standards. Particularists will be more comfortable with a tailor-made, home-grown approach than with the imposition of general rules that may or may not fit their needs and context.

Specificity and diffuseness also lead to conflict and conflict escalation in many instances. People, who speak in specifics, looking for practical solutions to challenges that can be implemented and measured, may find those who focus on process, feelings, and the big picture obstructionist and frustrating. On the other hand, those whose starting points are diffuse are more apt to catch the flaw in the sum that is not easy to detect by looking at the component parts, and to see the context into which specific ideas must fit.

Inner-directed people tend to feel confident that they can affect change, believing that they are "the masters of their fate, the captains of their souls."[7] They focus more on product than process. Imagine their frustration when faced with outer-directed people, whose attention goes to nurturing relationships, living in harmony with nature, going with the flow, and paying attention to processes rather than products. As with each of the above sets of starting points, neither is right or wrong; they are simply different. A focus on process is helpful, but not if it completely fails to ignore outcomes. A focus on outcomes is useful, but it is also important to monitor the tone and direction of the process. Cultural fluency means being aware of different sets of starting points, and having a way to speak in both dialects, helping translate between them when they are making conflict worse.
These continua are not absolute, nor do they explain human relations broadly. They are clues to what might be happening when people are in conflict over long periods of time. We are meaning-making creatures, *telling stories* and creating understandings that preserve our sense of self and relate to our purpose. As we come to realize this, we can look into the process of meaning making for those in a conflict and find ways to help them make their meaning-making processes and conclusions more apparent to each other.

This can be done by storytelling and by the creation of shared stories, stories that are co-constructed to make room for multiple points of view within them. Often, people in conflict tell stories that sound as though both cannot be true. Narrative conflict-resolution approaches help them leave their concern with truth and being right on the sideline for a time, turning their attention instead to stories in which they can both see themselves.

Another way to explore meaning making is through metaphors. Metaphors are compact, tightly packaged word pictures that convey a great deal of information in shorthand form. For example, in exploring how a conflict began, one side may talk about its origins being buried in the mists of time before there were boundaries and roads and written laws. The other may see it as the offspring of a vexatious lawsuit begun in 1946. Neither is wrong -- the issue may well have deep roots, and the lawsuit was surely a part of the evolution of the conflict. As the two sides talk about their metaphors, the more diffuse starting point wrapped up in the mists of time meets the more specific one, attached to a particular legal action. As the two talk, they deepen their understanding of each other in context, and learn more about their respective roles and identities.

*Identities* and roles refer to conceptions of the self. Am I an individual unit, autonomous, a free agent, ultimately responsible for myself? Or am I first and foremost a member of a group, weighing choices and actions by how the group will perceive them and be affected by them? Those who see themselves as separate individuals likely come from societies anthropologists call individualist. Those for whom group allegiance is primary usually come from settings anthropologists call collectivist, or communitarian.

In collectivist settings, the following values tend to be privileged:

- cooperation
- filial piety (respect for and deference toward elders)
- participation in shared progress
- reputation of the group
- interdependence

In individualist settings, the following values tend to be privileged:

- competition
- independence
- individual achievement
- personal growth and fulfillment
- self-reliance
When individualist and communitarian starting points influence those on either side of a conflict, escalation may result. Individualists may see no problem with "no holds barred" confrontation, while communitarian counterparts shrink from bringing dishonor or face-loss to their group by behaving in unseemly ways. Individualists may expect to make agreements with communitarians, and may feel betrayed when the latter indicate that they have to take their understandings back to a larger public or group before they can come to closure. In the end, one should remember that, as with other patterns described, most people are not purely individualist or communitarian. Rather, people tend to have individualist or communitarian starting points, depending on one's upbringing, experience, and the context of the situation.

**Conclusion**

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to conflict resolution, since culture is always a factor. Cultural fluency is therefore a core competency for those who intervene in conflicts or simply want to function more effectively in their own lives and situations. Cultural fluency involves recognizing and acting respectfully from the knowledge that communication, ways of naming, framing, and taming conflict, approaches to meaning-making, and identities and roles vary across cultures.

[1] See also the essays on Cultural and Worldview Frames and Communication Tools for Understanding Cultural Differences.


[6] There is also the set of essays on framing which is closely related to the idea of meaning making.

[7] Ibid., 244.
Sources of Additional, In-depth Information on this Topic

Additional Explanations of the Underlying Concepts:

*Online (Web) Sources*

**Hansen, Silke. Confronting Group Differences and Commonalities in a Diverse Society.**
Available at: [Click here for more info.](#)

This paper is an edited transcript of a talk given by Silke Hansen for the Intractable Conflict/Constructive Confrontation Project on November 6, 1993. It addresses issues involved in mediating multi-ethnic community conflicts. Hansen suggests that diverse groups typically have things in common that can be used to hold the larger community together and limit destructive confrontations.

Available at: [http://www.mediate.com/articles/Wright.cfm](http://www.mediate.com/articles/Wright.cfm).

This article discusses how differences in perspectives may impede an agreement if the participants' views diverge on such fundamental issues as individual autonomy and group interdependence. When issues based on individual rights or strong group identification arise in a mediation, a mediator's awareness of individualist and collectivist paradigms can help surmount such cultural barriers to an agreement. Familiarity with the paradigms may be helpful because mediation models in the United States are based upon individualist cultural assumptions that group-oriented, or collectivist, participants in a mediation may not share.

**Bolton-Brownlee, Ann. "Issues in Multicultural Counseling." , 1900**
Available at: [http://www.ericdigests.org/pre-925/issues.htm](http://www.ericdigests.org/pre-925/issues.htm).

"Traditionally, the United States has been defined as a melting pot in which various cultures are assimilated and blended as immigrants mold their beliefs and behavior to the dominant white culture. The melting pot image has given way to a more pluralistic ideal in which immigrants maintain their cultural identity while learning to function in the society. Not only are immigrants still flocking to America from Cuba, Haiti, Vietnam, Guatemala, El Salvador, and other countries (LaFromboise, 1985), but minorities already living in the United States have asserted their right to have equal access to counseling (Arcinega and Newlou, 1981). This diversity creates three major difficulties for multicultural counseling: the counselor's own culture, attitudes, and theoretical perspective; the client's culture; and the multiplicity of variables comprising an individual's identity (Pedersen, 1986)."

**Moore, Christopher W. and Peter Woodrow. "Mapping Cultures: Strategies for Effective Intercultural Negotiations." Track Two, Vol.8, No.1 , April 1, 1998**
Available at: [http://www.mediate.com/articles/cdr1.cfm](http://www.mediate.com/articles/cdr1.cfm).
This article gives the reader an understanding of cultural differences and explains how to incorporate these differences into positive negotiation practices.

Available at: http://ccrweb.ccr.uct.ac.za/archive/two/1/p3.html.

This article's author maintains that "we need to explore critically and at a much deeper level both the content and approach to conflict resolution training and its relationship to culture. I believe this is more readily accomplished if we move beyond the rhetoric of dispute resolution training, and what it purports to do, to a critical examination of training as a project, a socially constructed, educational phenomenon comprised of purpose, process, and content and inherently encompassing culture and ideology."

Available at: http://www.beyondintractability.org/booksummary/10067/.

This summary of Peace, Culture, and Society, edited by Elise Boulding, Clovis Brigagao, and Kevin Clements, gives a good overview of the book. The book is made up of a collection of research papers investigating the social and cultural bases for peace, with strong emphasis on the need for transnational dialogue on peace issues. This collection is published in cooperation with the International Peace Research Association (IPRA), and grew out of the Association's 1988 conference in Brazil.

Available at: http://www.beyondintractability.org/booksummary/10296/.

This page is a summary of Robert Janosik's article, Rethinking the Culture-Negotiation Link. Janosik argues that the term "culture" is understood differently by different authors. These different notions of culture yield different understandings of the culture-negotiation link. Having surveyed the literature Janosik finds four distinct approaches to understanding the impact of culture on negotiation.

Delaney, Bob. "Techniques For Resolving Cross-Cultural Disputes." 1900
Available at: http://www.mediate.com/articles/delaney1.cfm.

The goal of this article is to outline techniques for maximizing the outcome of disputes that may involve people of different cultures.

Conflict Research Consortium Staff. The Image: Knowledge in Life and Society--Book Summary.
Available at: http://www.beyondintractability.org/booksummary/10065/.
This is a summary of Kenneth Boulding's The Image. The book presents a new unifying concept through which a better understanding of individual behavior and social dynamics may be had. He proposes, in effect, a new theory of knowledge: knowledge as image.

This is a summary of The Management of Conflict, by Marc Howard Ross, which examines the role of cultural interpretations and structural interests in conflict and conflict management. It also presents a theoretical framework for constructive conflict management. (This summary refers to the first edition of the book.)

"This article explores (1) the cultural nature of the Palestinian conflict; (2) the "intractability" of cultural conflicts; (3) conflict management models: reconciliation/"end-of-conflict" versus "conflict transformation" and their relation to cultural conflict; (4) the serious consequences of the wrong matching of models and conflicts, such as using the reconciliation model in cultural conflict; (5) the changing role of the media in international relations, and their contribution to the "crisis expectations" that came to fruition in September 2000, with the eruption of the Intifada; (6) the possibility of the media contributing to peace processes; and (7) implications of the media adoption of the conflict transformation model." -Article Abstract

This article surveys several definitions of culture, arguing that the most useful approach is to define culture broadly and to recognize its significance to most or all conflicts. Some of the ways that culture affects conflicts will be outlined, accompanied by examples. These include: culture as a lens that both facilitates and blocks effective communication; culture and world view differences as the subject of conflicts; and conflicts related to identity and recognition as facets of cultural differences.

Offline (Print) Sources
The author's experience with cross-cultural mediation training has raised questions about the relation between culture and conflict, and about the purpose and practice of mediation training. Click here for more info.

This book examines the many faces of culture and the effect it has on people especially as related to meaning, values, actions and identities.

This work presents strategies for bridging the gap between culture and conflict. Becoming skillful at this
task is increasingly important to people in all realms of society as the world becomes more integrated. The work illustrates many of the proposed principles through stories.

LeBaron, Michelle. Bridging Troubled Waters: Conflict Resolution from the Heart. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, August 2, 2002. This work examines the humanistic side of conflict resolution practice. It represents an effort at broadening the scope of conventional approaches to conflict resolution. The aim of the book is to suggest innovative strategies and tools for bridging cultural differences and different ways of knowing between conflicting parties.


Lebaron, Michelle. Conflict and Culture: A Literature Review and Bibliography, Revised Edition. Victoria, British Columbia: University of Victoria: Institute for Dispute Resolution, 2001. "Connecting the goals of multiculturalism policy in Canada with those of the field of conflict resolution, this annotated bibliography brings together literature from the social sciences, education, and law relevant to conflict resolution and culture. This work is a review of the literature covering research, theory and practice in procedural justice, acculturation, intercultural communication, conflict resolution and culture." –From University of Victoria Institute for Dispute Resolution

Black, Peter W. and Kevin Avruch. "Conflict Resolution in Intercultural Settings." In Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice. Edited by Sandole, Dennis J.D. and Hugo van der Merwe, eds. Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press, 1993. This chapter looks at cultural differences that some scholars ignore in their attempts to develop universally applicable models of conflict resolution. The authors view culture as a fundamental feature of human consciousness that is constitutive of human reality. Click here for more info.

Prentice, Deborah A. and Dale T. Miller, eds. Cultural Divides: Understanding and Overcoming Group Conflict. Russell Sage Foundation, June 1, 1999. This work examines America's increasingly diverse society and attempts to answer questions regarding the limits of pluralism in the United States. The work investigates questions surrounding Americans' capacity for tolerance and to live in harmony despite a growing level of cultural difference between groups. This book features research about the origins and nature of group conflict and examines the effects of culture on social life from a social-psychological perspective. Click here for more info.

Cultural Variation in Conflict Resolution : Alternatives to Violence. Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc, November 1, 1996. This book focuses on finding alternatives to violence in cross-cultural conflicts by using an
interdisciplinary approach to examine how conflicts are perceived and handled among a variety of different cultural settings.

Kimmel, Paul R. "Culture and Conflict." In The Handbook of Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice. Edited by Deutsch, Morton and Peter T. Coleman, eds. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2000. This article describes how our social meanings and realities are constructed within the context of our particular culture, and suggests that differing systems of meaning among various cultures may lead to moral conflict and miscommunication. However, we can learn to become more aware of differing cultural values through education, training programs, and overall increased cultural awareness.


Rogers, Everett and Thomas Steinfeldt. Intercultural Communication. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1999. This book describes the skills that are needed for competent intercultural communication, and explains how to acquire them.

Novinger, Tracy. Intercultural Communication: A Practical Guide. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, March 2001. This essay examines the role culture plays in communication, and discusses how cultural differences impacts communication, both spoken and unspoken.


Faure, Guy Oliver. "Negotiation Concepts Across Cultures: Implementing Nonverbal Tools." Negotiation Journal 9:4, October 1, 1993. This article outlines a project that emphasizes non-verbal communication as a means for negotiators to express themselves more clearly when dealing with multicultural audiences. It explains how giving abstract concepts a visual expression such as through art, can help bring a clearer understanding of the idea.


Lederach, John Paul. Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation Across Cultures. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, August 1, 1996. In this book the author draws on his personal experiences in order to examine the practice of teaching
conflict resolution. Lederach seeks to address the problem of universalized techniques that are falsely assumed to work across different cultural contexts. Instead, Lederach explores the purpose of dispute resolution training and its relationship with culture. The aim is to work toward the development of training methods that will prepare mediators to practice in any culture. Click here for more info.

The author investigates the impact of organizational culture on public-policy disputes. He argues that differences in culture between policy-making organizations and stakeholder groups complicate policy conflicts and awareness of this cultural element is necessary for a more adequate understanding of policy conflict. Click here for more info.

In The Image Kenneth Boulding presents a new unifying concept through which a better understanding of individual behavior and social dynamics may be had. He proposes, in effect, a new theory of knowledge: knowledge as image. Click here for more info.

"The Management of Conflict examines the role of cultural interpretations and structural interests in conflict and conflict management. It also presents a theoretical framework for constructive conflict management. Click here for more info.

Examples Illustrating this Topic:

Online (Web) Sources

Crossing the Great Divide: Journey from No-Man’s Land to a Common Home. 2003.
Available at: http://www.aworldofpossibilities.com/details.cfm?id=139.

An interview with Amin Amin, Krzysztof Czyzewski, Theo Roncken, and Lake Sagaris. Four stories of individuals who grew up in one culture but now live in another and who consciously work to reconcile ethnic tensions either in their homelands or their homes. This is a border-crossing journey in the company of those building bridges rather than walls.

Offline (Print) Sources

This second publication of the Multiculturalism and Dispute Resolution Project chronicles and analyzes the results of field research in Vancouver during 1992. This research explored attitudes toward conflict
and conflict resolution as well as traditional and transitional ways of addressing conflicts used by immigrants to British Columbia. A multicultural team of researchers gathered in-depth information about community needs and preferences and about the ways traditional methods of resolving conflict influence dispute resolution choices of both recent and established immigrants in British Columbia. The research reveals a close connection between how respondents from the five communities perceive and experience conflicts, and problems related to settling in a new country.


"Culture and Negotiation offers a unique contribution by focusing on the distinctive impact of culture, both in creating unexpected opportunities for dispute settlement and in imposing obstacles to agreement."

**Audiovisual Materials on this Topic:**

_Offline (Print) Sources_


This film illustrates how cultural differences can be overcome as it follows a Nepalese anthropologist as he goes to the Netherlands to study the aged. _Click here for more info._

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**Cultural and Worldview Frames**
To understand conflicts and even many disputes, it is essential to understand that they have different levels. Different authors have described these levels in a number of ways. Chris Moore, in *The Mediation Process*,[1] refers to substantive, psychological, and procedural levels of conflict. By this, he means that people are concerned with the issues that need to be resolved (the 'what' of the conflict); the psychological aspects of the conflict (including power, status, emotions, and other relational parts of the conflictual interaction); and the procedural parts of the conflict (how it is addressed and with what assistance). Stone, Patton, and Heen in *Difficult Conversations* suggest that three conversations are needed in any conflict: the what conversation, the feeling conversation, and the identity conversation.[2] Schirch, in her 1999 dissertation, suggests that there are three levels to conflict: material/analytical, social/relational, and symbolic/perceptual.[3] In *Bridging Troubled Waters*,[4] I identify three levels of conflict: material, communicative, and symbolic, emphasizing that each level relates to the others.

What these approaches have in common is an acknowledgement that conflict is about more than appears on the surface. It is involved with identity and meaning -- who we see ourselves to be, and how we make and find meaning in our interactions with others, ideas, and the world. Conflicts usually involves some threat -- perceived or real -- to our identity or cherished meanings, or both. It may also be about material goods or resources, and it may be exacerbated by ineffective communication. But because conflict is bound up with meanings and identities, it cannot be resolved by improving communication or finding better ways to deal with resources alone.

Identity and meaning are part of every human life in all world cultures. Meaning is generated from our sense of identity and from the information we receive. Our cultures give us messages about desirable identities (who we are, who we seek to be, and how we related to others) and sources of meaning (what matters and why). Since our cultures give us different ideas about identity and meaning, our way of pursuing our goals and working out differences can create or escalate conflict.

Our cultures exist within larger structures called "worldviews." In her new book *In Search of Human Nature*,[5] Mary Clark defines worldviews as "beliefs and assumptions by which an individual makes sense of experiences that are hidden deep within the language and traditions of the surrounding society."[6] These worldviews are the shared values and assumptions on which rest the customs, norms, and institutions of any particular society. Clark tells us that these worldviews are tacitly communicated by "origin myths, narrative stories, linguistic metaphors, and cautionary tales", and that they "set the ground rules for shared cultural meaning."[7]

What is the significance of worldviews and different value structures for those interested in conflict and conflict resolution? Here are some of the reasons they are important:

- If we make fundamentally different meaning of the world, then all of our attempts to improve...
communication or expand the pie of our material resources will fail because we may not be addressing our deeper differences that continue to fuel conflicts.

- When worldviews are not in our awareness nor acknowledged, stronger parties in conflict may advertently or inadvertently try to impose their worldviews on others. Far more profound than trying to impose a particular solution to a conflict or a way of communicating, the imposition of a worldview can be destructive to a whole way of life. For example, when Europeans first came to North America, they labeled First Nations and Native American ways of life as "backward" and "primitive." With this evaluative ranking, they justified imposing new ways of life on the indigenous peoples in North America. The painful and destructive legacy of this perspective continues today.

- Since worldviews contain and shape cultures (shared starting points and currencies or values), working effectively across cultures requires some understanding of the soil from which cultures come -- the seedbed called worldviews.

- Worldviews can be resources for understanding and analyzing conflicts when fundamental differences divide groups of people. By looking at the stories, rituals, myths, and metaphors used by a group, we can learn efficiently and deeply about group members' identities (who they see themselves to be) and meanings (what matters to them and how they make meaning). When we do this with each side to a conflict, places of connection and divergence may become clearer, leading to a better understanding of the conflict in context.

- Worldviews, with their embedded meanings, can be the seedbed from which new shared meanings emerge. These shared meanings may arise as people co-create new stories, design new rituals, and find inclusive metaphors to contain their meanings.

The balance of this essay will illustrate the above points, in turn.

**If we make fundamentally different meaning of the world, then all of our attempts to improve communication or expand the pie of our material resources will fail because we may not be addressing our deeper differences that continue to fuel conflicts:**

In intractable conflicts, the usual problem-solving approaches do not work. Intractable conflicts tend to have complex issues, histories of problematic communication, and worldview differences that are largely unacknowledged. Here is an example from a problem-solving process to create a set of understandings about a sensitive wilderness area. The process brought representatives of local business, local communities, government, scientists, recreation outfitters and guides, and conservation groups together with a facilitator. They worked to develop over a hundred consensus recommendations about the area. On the surface, the process was a success.

Yet, significant levels of disagreement still existed in the community. While this was to be expected, there was no way to surface or discuss some of these differences because they related not only to different views about what should or should not be done in the valley, but to different worldviews -- different ways of seeing the valley and people's relationships to it. Analysis of the problem-solving process showed that participants had worked according to a dominant understanding of the valley, reflected in the metaphors that were frequently used. Scientists, government representatives, recreation outfitters and guides, and local business leaders all referred to the valley as a precious resource to be shared, preserved and used. Sometimes the metaphors of farming or ranching were implied, as representatives spoke of managing, returning areas to wilderness, and protecting wildlife corridors. At other times, the metaphor of banking
and trusts was invoked as participants spoke of investing in the future of the valley, discharging a trust as stewards of capital that should not be spent, but grown and protected.

As diverse as these metaphors are, they have some things in common. To some extent, they contemplate use and active management. Resources are to be exploited and preserved for future profit. Implicit in this metaphor is the assumption of human status, wisdom and entitlement to regulate the natural ecosystem. Farms or ranches exist to produce products to market, and require careful attention and cultivation. If the product in this case is tourism, it has to be marketed just as soybeans or rice are sold on world markets. Banks and trusts manage investments, seek high yields, and divide balance sheets into various accounts and commodities. So, the economic effects of any decisions on local business and residents were important considerations at the table.

What was missing from these metaphors? The metaphor of the conservationist of the trees in the valley as the 'hair of mother earth' was unspoken. It was unspoken because the discussions during the problem-solving process fit a particular, dominant worldview, and excluded the one favored by a member of the group who had a minority perspective. In this process, attempts to expand the pie of options or improve communication through getting people to paraphrase, restate, or listen actively did not reach the deeper level of difference -- the worldview level.

**When worldviews are not in our awareness nor acknowledged, stronger parties in conflict may inadvertently or inadvertently try to impose their worldviews on others. Far more profound than trying to impose a particular solution to a conflict or a way of communicating, the imposition of a worldview can be destructive to a whole way of life:**

In the example given above, the dominant worldview related to the "normality" of developing and using the wilderness area. With this assumption widely shared in the group, an alternative assumption that would lead to either limited access or no use did not find credence. It was not just a question of the person holding the divergent worldview needing to be more assertive in the problem-solving process. Rather, it was a question of what was considered 'reasonable' and 'rational' within the process. The process as it was constructed did not make room for radically different perspectives. From this, we can see that conflict resolution processes themselves are influenced by worldviews. When these worldviews are not articulated or recognized, they can act to implicitly screen out differing worldviews to the detriment of those who want to arrive at durable outcomes that reflect a wide range of views.

To test this example, consider your response to someone who puts forward an idea that seems outrageous or outside the bounds of what is reasonable or possible. Such suggestions most likely arise out of a different worldview from that shared by most people in the room. Aren't those who offer such challenges to the dominant worldview most often dismissed, made subjects of humor or puzzled head shaking, and seldom invited to elaborate? If those present suspended their disbelief and inquired further, they might find some important nuggets in the "far-out" suggestion that could be helpful, even important, in their final decision-making.

Since worldviews contain and shape cultures (a series of shared starting points and currencies or values), working effectively across cultures requires some understanding of the soil from which
cultures come -- the seedbed called worldviews:

Worldviews shape, or help determine, values. Values change across cultures, since they have to do with what we consider most important, and the ways we see our relationships, the world, and ourselves. Some of the values that vary across cultures include:

- Power -- social status, prestige, control over others and resources
- Achievement -- success through competence according to social standards
- Hedonism -- pleasure of sensuous gratification for self
- Stimulation -- excitement, novelty, change in life
- Self-direction -- independent thought and action - choice, creativity, exploring goals
- Universalism -- understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of people and nature
- Benevolence -- preservation and enhancement of the welfare of members of in-groups
- Tradition -- respect, commitment, and acceptance of ideas from a person's culture and religion
- Conformity -- restraint of actions, inclinations, and impulses likely to upset or harm others
- Security -- safety, harmony, and stability of society, relationships, and self.[8]

In any given conflict, a combination of these values will play out. Because people relate to these values differently when they hold different worldviews, misunderstandings and negative judgments about "the other side" may follow. As people become aware of the existence of different worldviews, they may stop expecting "the other" to make sense of the way they perceive the world, and realize instead that "the other" makes sense of the problem from their own worldview. In other words, the other side's "outrageous or nonsensical ideas actually become reasonable and sensible when seen from their point of view."

An example of the value of recognizing the existence of divergent worldviews comes from the dialogues between advocates on either side of the abortion conflict in Canada and the United States. Though, to my knowledge, no systemic study has been conducted investigating value and worldview differences between pro-life and pro-choice advocates, my evaluation of dialogue processes reveals some interesting observations. (While there is no uniform position agreed by all pro-life or pro-choice advocates, I will generalize here for the purposes of illustration.)

Both pro-life and pro-choice advocates value benevolence, universalism, and security, but their worldviews lead to them to value these things differently. Pro-life advocates, for example, may see all life as sacred from the moment of conception, and suggest that no human being should second-guess God or the Universe in its life-creating and life-ending capacity. Their idea of benevolence thus extends to the unborn fetus as well as to the other people involved in an unwanted or unplanned pregnancy. Pro-choice advocates are no less benevolent, but are apt to focus their efforts to improve and enhance welfare on those already born. Their worldview may place more credence in science, or involve a different notion of when human life begins (for example, at the point the fetus is viable outside the womb or at the point of quickening when a woman first discerns life within).

Part of the reason that the abortion debate has become so heated and volatile is that it is bound up with social and legal rules. Both sides would like their views to be universal, at least within the countries of Canada or the United States. Many pro-life advocates argue against public funding
for, or provision of, abortion services. Many pro-choice advocates argue for public funding and universal availability of these services. As these two directions for universal application of norms, standards, and public services have clashed, the intractable conflict between the two sides has escalated. The value of security also plays out in the pro-life, pro-choice conflict. Pro-life advocates are concerned about the security of unborn children and the families into which they are born. Pro-choice advocates focus on the security of those involved with unwanted and unplanned pregnancies. While both are concerned with security, they differ in some important ways on what security means.

Dialogues convened by the Network for Life and Choice helped pro-life and pro-choice advocates become aware of their differing worldviews, and made the process of uncovering shared aspects of values possible.

**Worldviews can be resources for understanding and analyzing conflicts when fundamental differences divide groups of people.** By looking at the stories, rituals, myths, and metaphors used by a group, we can learn efficiently and deeply about group members' identities (who they see themselves to be) and meanings (what matters to them and how they make meaning). When we do this with each party to a conflict, places of connection and divergence may become clearer, leading to a better understanding of the conflict in context:

How did pro-choice and pro-life advocates come to see each other's worldviews, thus building a base of respect for each other that was broad enough to support dialogue and discover shared values? In the dialogues conducted by The Network for Life and Choice, facilitators asked participants to do two things that helped reveal their worldviews. They were asked to share personal stories of how they came to their views and to tell each other about their heroes and heroines. In doing so, they revealed things about their identity, what they found meaningful, their ideas about the nature of life, relationships, and "right living." Listening to these stories, the dialogue participants found it harder to sustain negative images of the other, recognizing instead commonalities that had previously been closed to them. From this base of empathy, they were able to explore shared values with more ease, while not losing sight of the aspects of values they did not share. Similarly, sharing heroes helped participants glimpse what was precious to others, and revealed aspects of values they shared.[9]

**Worldviews, with their embedded meanings, can be the seedbed from which new shared meanings emerge. These shared meanings may arise as people co-create new stories, design new rituals, and find inclusive metaphors to contain their meanings:**

Through dialogue, advocates from pro-life and pro-choice perspectives came to see that they shared some values. Both sides agreed about some aspects of security, for example that action to alleviate female and child poverty is desirable and necessary. Similarly, both pro-life and pro-choice advocates agreed on benevolence in the form of adoption services for those who desire them, and on ways to limit behavior outside clinics that might hurt or intimidate. They also agreed that some things should be universal: dignity and respect for all, for example, including the right to advocate for a point of view without fear of violence or reprisal.

One of the ways that they came to see these shared aspects of values was through the dialogic
process of creating new stories and new identities. Participants in ongoing pro-choice/pro-life
dialogue groups reported no diminishment of their ardor as advocates, but they did report that
they assumed additional identities as participants in common ground. These new identities led
them to humanize each other even as they pursued their social and legal agendas about the issue
of abortion and ways of dealing with unwanted, unplanned pregnancies.

Summary

Worldviews are those systems or structures within which our values, beliefs, and assumptions
lie. They influence how we see ourselves and others (identities) and how we make meaning of
our lives and relationships. Since resolving conflict necessarily involves some kind of change, it
is essential to understand the operation of worldviews. When people are asked to change their
identity or things they find meaningful, they will resist, sometimes even when the alternative is
death. Worldviews keep our lives coherent, giving them a sense of meaning, purpose, and
connection. Conflict resolution processes need to help people look into each other's worldviews
without trying to change them. As illustrated by the abortion dialogue example, it is possible to
uncover shared values, or shared aspects of values, without fundamentally changing worldviews.
Developing approaches to uncover shared values is an important area for future development in
conflict analysis and resolution.


[2] Stone, Douglas F., Patton, Bruce, and Heen, Sheila. Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss

20.

[4] LeBaron, Michelle. Bridging Troubled Waters: Conflict Resolution from the Heart. San


[6] Ibid., p. 5.

[7] Ibid.


[9] LeBaron, Michelle and Nike Carstarphen. Negotiating Intractable Conflict: The Common
Sources of Additional, In-depth Information on this Topic

Additional Explanations of the Underlying Concepts:

**Online (Web) Sources**


This site offers a multifaceted discussion of the concept of culture, looking at the notion of cultural differences, and components and characteristics of cultural patterns.

**Offline (Print) Sources**


This work presents strategies for bridging the gap between culture and conflict. Becoming skillful at this task is increasingly important to people in all realms of society as the world becomes more integrated. The work illustrates many of the proposed principles through stories.


This work examines the humanistic side of conflict resolution practice. It represents an effort at broadening the scope of conventional approaches to conflict resolution. The aim of the book is to suggest innovative strategies and tools for bridging cultural differences and different ways of knowing between conflicting parties.


In this work Clark argues that our cultural frame dramatically impacts what we perceive to be human nature. She proposes a theory of conflict resolution centered in a recognition that human needs for connection, autonomy and meaning must be addressed.


This essay explores cultural frames, focusing on religion and identity. It posits that there is an inherent human connection between these two factors, and that this connection is most apparent in intergroup conflict, which frequently divides along religious lines.

This section explains how culture impacts the mediation process.

**Examples Illustrating this Topic:**

**Online (Web) Sources**

*Fridman, Orli. "Between Victim and Victorizer: A Realm of Confusion."*, 1900

This article describes the authors experiences at an international camp sponsored by the Kolping organization in Germany where every year thirteen Jewish and Arab students are brought together. The historical Jewish-German and Jewish-Arab connections are discussed, and competing cultural narratives are examined.

Available at: [http://www.beyondintractability.org/articlesummary/10355/](http://www.beyondintractability.org/articlesummary/10355/).

Of Nets, Nails, and Problems: The Folk Language of Conflict Resolution in a Central American Setting, by John Paul Lederach, looks at the "conflict-talk" of people in Central America, particularly in Costa Rica. It analyzes the language that they use in describing conflict and folk knowledge about ways of resolving it. This study aims at understanding how people in Central America view conflicts and deal with them. The author calls it "ethnoconflictology". In particular, the article is based on the author's one year participation in a training seminar in social empowerment in the town of Puntarenas in Costa Rica.

*Challenges of Native Americans in Rural America*. 2003.
Available at: [http://www.aworldofpossibilities.com/details.cfm?id=75](http://www.aworldofpossibilities.com/details.cfm?id=75).

Rebecca Adamson, founder of the First Nations Development Institute, addresses challenges facing Native peoples in rural America, reminds us of Native values and insights, and discusses the sense of place shared by Native Americans and rural Americans in general.

*Crossing the Great Divide: Journey from No-Man’s Land to a Common Home*. 2003.

An interview with Amin Amin, Krzysztof Czyzewski, Theo Roncken, and Lake Sagaris. Four stories of individuals who grew up in one culture but now live in another and who consciously work to reconcile ethnic tensions either in their homelands or their homes. This is a border-crossing journey in the company of those building bridges rather than walls.

*Zariski, Archie. "Disputing Culture: Australian Lawyers and ADR."*, 1900
Available at: [http://www.mediate.com/articles/zariski72.cfm](http://www.mediate.com/articles/zariski72.cfm).
In this paper I attempt to identify the legal mindsets that may inhibit civil justice reform in Australia and to review and analyze the evidence for any change in them that may be occurring. I will use the concept of culture as a framework for analysis and will first explore the many uses to which this concept has been put, as applied to society generally and then law particularly. Then I will apply the concept to help analyze the available information on how lawyers think of themselves and their role in society and how common patterns of thinking may be changing.

Gagnon, V. P. "Ethnic Conflict as Demobilizer: The Case of Serbia." , May 10, 1996
Available at: http://www.ciaonet.org/wps/gav01/.

In this paper the author tests the hypothesis of ethnic outbidding and the related assertions that violent conflict along ethnic cleavages is just a further step along the road of ethnic mobilization. That appeals to ethnic identity and naturally leads to violence between "ethnic groups."

Available at: http://www.beyondintractability.org/articlesummary/10357/.

This page is a summary of John Paul Lederach's article, Who Mediates in Developing Countries. Lederach describes the Central American model of mediation, which is different from the one used in North America. The main difference is that the mediator is not a neutral, outside party but a party known and trusted by the opponents.

**Offline (Print) Sources**
This article describes a dialogue process used in several North American cities to stress common concerns of all parties in the conflict over abortion. After spending a day in small and large group interactions, participants report increased empathy and trust toward advocates for different positions. Click here for more info.

**Audiovisual Materials on this Topic:**

**Offline (Print) Sources**
In this film, former WWII German soldiers relate their experiences, each framing them in their own way. Some soldiers feel guilt and shame about events that took place, while others do not. Click here for more info.

*Oskar and Jack*. Directed and/or Produced by: Sandig, Frauke. First Run Icarus Films. 1996.
This film looks at identity and culture through the eyes of identical twins who were separated shortly
after birth and raised in different environments - one as an Orthodox Jew, the other as a Nazi. [Click here for more info.]

**Skin Deep: Building Diverse Campus Communities** . Directed and/or Produced by: Reid, Frances. California Newsreel. 1995.
In this film, a diverse group of US college students talk about cultural identity in terms of stereotyping and in terms of their own racial and ethnic prejudices. [Click here for more info.]

**The Last Colonials**. Directed and/or Produced by: Michel, Thierry. First Run Icarus Films. 1995.
This film focuses on a number of former white colonials who remained in Zaire after its independence. It illustrates how these individuals' cultural heritage continues to influence their perception of who they think they are, the just and rightful owners of the country. [Click here for more info.]

This film explores the lives of two Beirut women who belong to Hezbollah. [Click here for more info.]

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**Cross-Cultural Communication**

By
All communication is cultural -- it draws on ways we have learned to speak and give nonverbal messages. We do not always communicate the same way from day to day, since factors like context, individual personality, and mood interact with the variety of cultural influences we have internalized that influence our choices. Communication is interactive, so an important influence on its effectiveness is our relationship with others. Do they hear and understand what we are trying to say? Are they listening well? Are we listening well in response? Do their responses show that they understand the words and the meanings behind the words we have chosen? Is the mood positive and receptive? Is there trust between them and us? Are there differences that relate to ineffective communication, divergent goals or interests, or fundamentally different ways of seeing the world? The answers to these questions will give us some clues about the effectiveness of our communication and the ease with which we may be able to move through conflict.

The challenge is that even with all the good will in the world, miscommunication is likely to happen, especially when there are significant cultural differences between communicators. Miscommunication may lead to conflict, or aggravate conflict that already exists. We make -- whether it is clear to us or not -- quite different meaning of the world, our places in it, and our relationships with others. In this module, cross-cultural communication will be outlined and demonstrated by examples of ideas, attitudes, and behaviors involving four variables:

- Time and Space
- Fate and Personal Responsibility
- Face and Face-Saving
- Nonverbal Communication

As our familiarity with these different starting points increases, we are cultivating cultural fluency -- awareness of the ways cultures operate in communication and conflict, and the ability to respond effectively to these differences. Although these differences are perhaps most stark when we travel in other countries, the U.S. is sufficiently multi-cultural that they apply here as well.

**Time and Space[1]**

Time is one of the most central differences that separate cultures and cultural ways of doing things. In the West, time tends to be seen as quantitative, measured in units that reflect the march of progress. It is logical, sequential, and present-focused, moving with incremental certainty toward a future the ego cannot touch and a past that is not a part of now. Novinger calls the
economic endeavors that the expression "time is money" is frequently heard.[2] This approach to time is called monochronic -- it is an approach that favors linear structure and focus on one event or interaction at a time. Robert's Rules of Order, observed in many Western meetings, enforce a monochronic idea of time.

In the East, time feels like it has unlimited continuity, an unraveling rather than a strict boundary. Birth and death are not such absolute ends since the universe continues and humans, though changing form, continue as part of it. People may attend to many things happening at once in this approach to time, called polychronous. This may mean many conversations in a moment (such as a meeting in which people speak simultaneously, "talking over" each other as they discuss their subjects), or many times and peoples during one process (such as a ceremony in which those family members who have died are felt to be present as well as those yet to be born into the family).

A good place to look to understand the Eastern idea of time is India. There, time is seen as moving endlessly through various cycles, becoming and vanishing. Time stretches far beyond the human ego or lifetime. There is a certain timeless quality to time, an aesthetic almost too intricate and vast for the human mind to comprehend. Consider this description of an aeon, the unit of time which elapses between the origin and destruction of a world system: "Suppose there is a mountain, of very hard rock, much bigger than the Himalayas; and suppose that a man, with a piece of the very finest cloth of Benares, once every century should touch that mountain ever so slightly -- then the time it would take him to wear away the entire mountain would be about the time of an Aeon."[3]

Differences over time can play out in painful and dramatic ways in negotiation or conflict-resolution processes. An example of differences over time comes from a negotiation process related to a land claim that took place in Canada. First Nations people met with representatives from local, regional, and national governments to introduce themselves and begin their work. During this first meeting, First Nations people took time to tell the stories of their people and their relationships to the land over the past seven generations. They spoke of the spirit of the land, the kinds of things their people have traditionally done on the land, and their sacred connection to it. They spoke in circular ways, weaving themes, feelings, ideas, and experiences together as they remembered seven generations into the past and projected seven generations forward.

When it was the government representatives' chance to speak, they projected flow charts showing internal processes for decision-making and spoke in present-focused ways about their intentions for entering the negotiation process. The flow charts were linear and spare in their lack of narrative, arising from the bureaucratic culture from which the government representatives came. Two different conceptions of time: in one, time stretches, loops forward and back, past and future are both present in this time. In the other, time begins with the present moment and extends into the horizon in which the matters at hand will be decided.

Neither side felt satisfied with this first meeting. No one addressed the differences in how time was seen and held directly, but everyone was aware that they were not "on the same page." Each side felt some frustration with the other. Their notions of time were embedded in their
understandings of the world, and these understandings informed their common sense about how to proceed in negotiations. Because neither side was completely aware of these different notions of time, it was difficult for the negotiations to proceed, and difficult for each side to trust the other. Their different ideas of time made communication challenging.

This meeting took place in the early 1990s. Of course, in this modern age of high-speed communication, no group is completely disconnected from another. Each group -- government and First Nations representatives -- has had some exposure to the other's ideas of time, space, and ideas about appropriate approaches to negotiation. Each has found ways to adapt. How this adaptation takes place, and whether it takes place without one side feeling they are forced to give in to the other, has a significant impact on the course of the negotiations.

It is also true that cultural approaches to time or communication are not always applied in good faith, but may serve a variety of motives. Asserting power, superiority, advantage, or control over the course of the negotiations may be a motive wrapped up in certain cultural behaviors (for example, the government representatives' detailed emphasis on ratification procedures may have conveyed an implicit message of control, or the First Nations' attention to the past may have emphasized the advantages of being aware of history). Culture and cultural beliefs may be used as a tactic by negotiators; for this reason, it is important that parties be involved in collaborative-process design when addressing intractable conflicts. As people from different cultural backgrounds work together to design a process to address the issues that divide them, they can ask questions about cultural preferences about time and space and how these may affect a negotiation or conflict-resolution process, and thus inoculate against the use of culture as a tactic or an instrument to advance power.

Any one example will show us only a glimpse of approaches to time as a confounding variable across cultures. In fact, ideas of time have a great deal of complexity buried within them. Western concepts of time as a straight line emanating from no one in particular obscure the idea that there are purposive forces at work in time, a common idea in indigenous and Eastern ways of thought. From an Eastern or indigenous perspective, Spirit operates within space and time, so time is alive with purpose and specific meanings may be discerned from events. A party to a negotiation who subscribes to this idea of time may also have ideas about fate, destiny, and the importance of uncovering "right relationship" and "right action." If time is a circle, an unraveling ball of twine, a spiral, an unfolding of stories already written, or a play in which much of the set is invisible, then relationships and meanings can be uncovered to inform current actions. Time, in this polychronic perspective, is connected to other peoples as well as periods of history.

This is why a polychronic perspective is often associated with a communitarian starting point. The focus on the collective, or group, stretching forward and back, animates the polychronic view of time. In more monochronic settings, an individualist way of life is more easily accommodated. Individualists can more easily extract moments in time, and individuals themselves, from the networks around them. If time is a straight line stretching forward and not back, then fate or destiny may be less compelling. (For more on this, see the essay on Communication Tools for Understanding Cultural Difference.)

Fate and Personal Responsibility
Another important variable affecting communication across cultures is fate and personal responsibility. This refers to the degree to which we feel ourselves the masters of our lives, versus the degree to which we see ourselves as subject to things outside our control. Another way to look at this is to ask how much we see ourselves able to change and maneuver, to choose the course of our lives and relationships. Some have drawn a parallel between the emphasis on personal responsibility in North American settings and the landscape itself.[4] The North American landscape is vast, with large spaces of unpopulated territory. The frontier mentality of "conquering" the wilderness, and the expansiveness of the land stretching huge distances, may relate to generally high levels of confidence in the ability to shape and choose our destinies.

In this expansive landscape, many children grow up with an epic sense of life, where ideas are big, and hope springs eternal. When they experience setbacks, they are encouraged to redouble their efforts, to "try, try again." Action, efficacy, and achievement are emphasized and expected. Free will is enshrined in laws and enforced by courts.

Now consider places in the world with much smaller territory, whose history reflects repeated conquest and harsh struggles: Northern Ireland, Mexico, Israel, Palestine. In these places, there is more emphasis on destiny's role in human life. In Mexico, there is a legacy of poverty, invasion, and territorial mutilation. Mexicans are more likely to see struggles as inevitable or unavoidable. Their fatalistic attitude is expressed in their way of responding to failure or accident by saying "ni modo" ("no way" or "tough luck"), meaning that the setback was destined.

This variable is important to understanding cultural conflict. If someone invested in free will crosses paths with someone more fatalistic in orientation, miscommunication is likely. The first person may expect action and accountability. Failing to see it, they may conclude that the second is lazy, obstructionist, or dishonest. The second person will expect respect for the natural order of things. Failing to see it, they may conclude that the first is coercive or irreverent, inflated in his ideas of what can be accomplished or changed.

**Face and Face-Saving**

Another important cultural variable relates to face and face-saving. Face is important across cultures, yet the dynamics of face and face-saving play out differently. Face is defined in many different ways in the cross-cultural communication literature. Novinger says it is "the value or standing a person has in the eyes of others...and that it relate[s] to pride or self-respect."[5] Others have defined it as "the negotiated public image, mutually granted each other by participants in [communication]."[6] In this broader definition, face includes ideas of status, power, courtesy, insider and outsider relations, humor, and respect. In many cultures, maintaining face is of great importance, though ideas of how to do this vary.

The starting points of individualism and communitarianism are closely related to face. If I see myself as a self-determining individual, then face has to do with preserving my image with others and myself. I can and should exert control in situations to achieve this goal. I may do this by taking a competitive stance in negotiations or confronting someone who I perceive to have wronged me. I may be comfortable in a mediation where the other party and I meet face to face.
and frankly discuss our differences.

If I see my primary identification as a group member, then considerations about face involve my group. Direct confrontation or problem-solving with others may reflect poorly on my group, or disturb overall community harmony. I may prefer to avoid criticism of others, even when the disappointment I have concealed may come out in other, more damaging ways later. When there is conflict that cannot be avoided, I may prefer a third party who acts as a shuttle between me and the other people involved in the conflict. Since no direct confrontation takes place, face is preserved and potential damage to the relationships or networks of relationships is minimized.

**Nonverbal Communication**

Nonverbal communication is hugely important in any interaction with others; its importance is multiplied across cultures. This is because we tend to look for nonverbal cues when verbal messages are unclear or ambiguous, as they are more likely to be across cultures (especially when different languages are being used). Since nonverbal behavior arises from our cultural common sense -- our ideas about what is appropriate, normal, and effective as communication in relationships -- we use different systems of understanding gestures, posture, silence, spacial relations, emotional expression, touch, physical appearance, and other nonverbal cues. Cultures also attribute different degrees of importance to verbal and nonverbal behavior.

Low-context cultures like the United States and Canada tend to give relatively less emphasis to nonverbal communication. This does not mean that nonverbal communication does not happen, or that it is unimportant, but that people in these settings tend to place less importance on it than on the literal meanings of words themselves. In high-context settings such as Japan or Colombia, understanding the nonverbal components of communication is relatively more important to receiving the intended meaning of the communication as a whole.

Some elements of nonverbal communication are consistent across cultures. For example, research has shown that the emotions of enjoyment, anger, fear, sadness, disgust, and surprise are expressed in similar ways by people around the world.[7] Differences surface with respect to which emotions are acceptable to display in various cultural settings, and by whom. For instance, it may be more social acceptable in some settings in the United States for women to show fear, but not anger, and for men to display anger, but not fear.[8] At the same time, interpretation of facial expressions across cultures is difficult. In China and Japan, for example, a facial expression that would be recognized around the world as conveying happiness may actually express anger or mask sadness, both of which are unacceptable to show overtly.[9]

These differences of interpretation may lead to conflict, or escalate existing conflict. Suppose a Japanese person is explaining her absence from negotiations due to a death in her family. She may do so with a smile, based on her cultural belief that it is not appropriate to inflict the pain of grief on others. For a Westerner who understands smiles to mean friendliness and happiness, this smile may seem incongruous and even cold, under the circumstances. Even though some facial expressions may be similar across cultures, their interpretations remain culture-specific. It is important to understand something about cultural starting-points and values in order to interpret emotions expressed in cross-cultural interactions.
Another variable across cultures has to do with proxemics, or ways of relating to space. Crossing cultures, we encounter very different ideas about polite space for conversations and negotiations. North Americans tend to prefer a large amount of space, perhaps because they are surrounded by it in their homes and countryside. Europeans tend to stand more closely with each other when talking, and are accustomed to smaller personal spaces. In a comparison of North American and French children on a beach, a researcher noticed that the French children tended to stay in a relatively small space near their parents, while U.S. children ranged up and down a large area of the beach.[10]

The difficulty with space preferences is not that they exist, but the judgments that get attached to them. If someone is accustomed to standing or sitting very close when they are talking with another, they may see the other's attempt to create more space as evidence of coldness, condescension, or a lack of interest. Those who are accustomed to more personal space may view attempts to get closer as pushy, disrespectful, or aggressive. Neither is correct -- they are simply different.[11]

Also related to space is the degree of comfort we feel moving furniture or other objects. It is said that a German executive working in the United States became so upset with visitors to his office moving the guest chair to suit themselves that he had it bolted to the floor.[12] Contrast this with U.S. and Canadian mediators and conflict-resolution trainers, whose first step in preparing for a meeting is not infrequently a complete rearrangement of the furniture.

Finally, line-waiting behavior and behavior in group settings like grocery stores or government offices is culturally-influenced. Novinger reports that the English and U.S. Americans are serious about standing in lines, in accordance with their beliefs in democracy and the principle of "first come, first served."[13] The French, on the other hand, have a practice of resquillage, or line jumping, that irritates many British and U.S. Americans. In another example, immigrants from Armenia report that it is difficult to adjust to a system of waiting in line, when their home context permitted one member of a family to save spots for several others.

These examples of differences related to nonverbal communication are only the tip of the iceberg. Careful observation, ongoing study from a variety of sources, and cultivating relationships across cultures will all help develop the cultural fluency to work effectively with nonverbal communication differences.

**Summary**

Each of the variables discussed in this module -- time and space, personal responsibility and fate, face and face-saving, and nonverbal communication -- are much more complex than it is possible to convey. Each of them influences the course of communications, and can be responsible for conflict or the escalation of conflict when it leads to miscommunication or misinterpretation. A culturally-fluent approach to conflict means working over time to understand these and other ways communication varies across cultures, and applying these understandings in order to enhance relationships across differences.


[5] Novinger, p. 31


[7] Ibid., p. 78.

[8] Ibid.


[10] Ibid., p. 67.


[12] Ibid., p. 68.

[13] Ibid.
Communication Tools for Understanding Cultural Differences

By
Michelle LeBaron
Cultural Diversity

Montaigne said, "The most universal quality is diversity."[1] Given that diversity abounds, the project of understanding each other is both daunting and important. It is a journey never finished, because the process and the endpoints change constantly. The journey is bound up with communication and conflict, since misunderstandings and miscommunication can cause and escalate conflict. Effective communication is often the key to making progress in a conflict.

Progress through conflict is possible, and the route is twofold. First, self-knowledge and self-awareness are needed. Without these, our seemingly normal approaches to meaning-making and communication will never be clear enough that we can see them for what they are: a set of lenses that shape what we see, hear, say, understand, and interpret. Second, cultural fluency is needed, meaning familiarity with culture and the ability to act on that familiarity.[2] Cultural fluency means understanding what culture is, how it works, and the ways culture and communication are intertwined with conflicts. While cultural misunderstandings are perhaps more likely when one is traveling abroad, the U.S. is sufficiently multi-cultural that cultural misunderstanding frequently happen at home as well.

Thus understanding the cultural impacts on communication needs to happen frequently, and while it seems simple, it actually requires significant, continuous effort. As Edward T. Hall writes in the introduction to his book, The Dance of Life,[3] for us to understand each other may mean, "reorganizing [our] thinking...and few people are willing to risk such a radical move." Communication theorists, anthropologists, and others have given us tools to develop awareness of our own lenses, and to facilitate the reorganization of thinking necessary to truly understand others whose starting points may differ from our own. Two of these tools are explored here.

Communication Tools for Understanding Culture

The tools we will examine here relate to communication and ways of seeing the self in relation to others. They are:

- High-context and low-context communication, and
- Individualist and communitarian conceptions of self and other.

Since all of these tools are used in the service of understanding culture, a working definition of culture is useful. Donal Carbaugh defines culture as "a system of expressive practices fraught with feelings, a system of symbols, premises, rules, forms, and the domains and dimensions of mutual meanings associated with these."[4] He also suggests culture is "a learned set of shared interpretations about beliefs, values, and norms, which affect the behaviors of a relatively large group of people."[5] In each of these definitions, culture is linked to communication and a wide range of human experience including feelings, identity, and meaning-making. Communication is the vehicle by which meanings are conveyed, identity is composed and reinforced, and feelings are expressed. As we communicate using
different cultural habits and meaning systems, both conflict and harmony are possible outcomes of any interaction.

There is no comprehensive way to understand culture and its relationships to communication and conflict. The two tools outlined here give windows into how different groups of people make sense of their worlds. They are neither reliable guides to every member of a particular group nor are they fixed in nature, since culture is constantly evolving and changing as people within groups and the contexts around them change. These two sets of tools are the most frequently used classifications of cultures used by anthropologists and communication scholars. We begin with one of the most familiar sets of tools: high-context and low-context communication.

**High-context and Low-context Communication** refers to the degree to which speakers rely on factors other than explicit speech to convey their messages. This tool, developed by Edward T. Hall,[6] suggests that communication varies according to its degree of field dependence, and that it can be classified into two general categories -- high-context and low-context. Field dependence refers to the degree to which things outside the communication itself affect the meaning. For example, a request for a child to "shut the door" relies comparatively little on context, while a comment containing meaning other than what is on the surface relies largely on context for its meaning to be received. A high-context message of disagreement might be telegraphed to a spouse or a co-worker by the words chosen or the way they are spoken, even if no disagreement is explicitly voiced.

Hall says that every human being is confronted by far more sensory stimuli than can possibly be attended to. Cultures help by screening messages, shaping perceptions and interpretations according to a series of selective filters. In high-context settings, the screens are designed to let in implied meanings arising from the physical setting, relational cues, or shared understandings. In low-context settings, the screens direct attention more to the literal meanings of words and less to the context surrounding the words.

All of us engage in both high-context and low-context communication. There are times we "say what we mean, and mean what we say," leaving little to be "read in" to the explicit message. This is low-context communication. At other times, we may infer, imply, insinuate, or deliver with nonverbal cues messages that we want to have conveyed but do not speak. This is high-context communication. Most of the time, we are somewhere nearer the middle of the continuum, relying to some extent on context, but also on the literal meaning of words.

To understand this distinction between high-context and low-context communication, ask yourself these questions:

- Do I tend to "let my words speak for themselves," or prefer to be less direct, relying on what is implied by my communication? (low-context communication)
- Do I prefer indirect messages from others, and am I attuned to a whole range of verbal and nonverbal cues to help me understand the meaning of what is said? (high-context communication)

As will quickly become clear, most people can and do function at both ends of the high-context,
low-context continuum. There are times when direct, clear communication is most appropriate, and times when it is preferable to communicate in layers of meaning to save face, spare feelings, or allow for diffuse interpretations. Most people rely on a whole range of verbal and nonverbal cues to understand the meaning of what is said. Even in the most direct, low-context setting, meanings will be conveyed that are not explicitly spoken.

The novelist Amy Tan describes the different starting points of English and Chinese this way: "I try to explain to my English-speaking friends that Chinese language is more strategic in manner, whereas English tends to be more direct; an American business executive may say, 'Let's make a deal,' and the Chinese manager may reply, 'Is your son interested in learning about your widget business?' Each to his or her own purpose, each with his or her own linguistic path."[7]

As people communicate, they move along a continuum between high context and low context. Depending on the kind of relationship, the situation, and the purpose of communication, they may be more or less explicit and direct. In close relationships, communication short-hand is often used, which makes communication opaque to outsiders but perfectly clear to the parties. With strangers, the same people may choose low-context communication.

Low- and high-context communication refers not only to individual communication strategies, but may be used to understand cultural groups. Generally, Western cultures tend to gravitate toward low-context starting points, while Eastern and Southern cultures tend to use high-context communication. Within these huge categories, there are important differences and many variations. Where high-context communication tends to be featured, it is useful to pay specific attention to nonverbal cues and the behavior of others who may know more of the unstated rules governing the communication. Where low-context communication is the norm, directness is likely to be expected in return.

It is less important to classify any communication as high or low context than it is to understand whether nonverbal or verbal cues are the most prominent. Without this understanding, those who tend to use high-context starting points may be looking for shades of meaning that are not present, and those who prefer low-context communication may miss important nuances of meaning.

The choice of high-context and low-context as labels has led to unfortunate misunderstandings, since there is an implied ranking in the adjectives. In fact, neither is better or worse than the other. They are simply different. Each has possible pitfalls for cross-cultural communicators. Generally, low-context communicators interacting with high-context communicators should be mindful that

- nonverbal messages and gestures may be as important as what is said;
- status and identity may be communicated nonverbally and require appropriate acknowledgement;
- face-saving and tact may be important, and need to be balanced with the desire to communicate fully and frankly;
- building a good relationship can contribute to effectiveness over time; and
- indirect routes and creative thinking are important alternatives to problem-solving when blocks are encountered.
High-context communicators interacting with low-context communicators should be mindful that

- things can be taken at face value rather than as representative of layers of meaning;
- roles and functions may be decoupled from status and identity;
- efficiency and effectiveness may be served by a sustained focus on tasks;
- direct questions and observations are not necessarily meant to offend, but to clarify and advance shared goals; and
- indirect cues may not be enough to get the other's attention.[8]

As communicators factor awareness of high-context and low-context communication into their relations, conflict may be lessened and even prevented.

**Individualism and Communitarianism** is the second dimension important to conflict and conflict resolution. In communitarian settings (sometimes called collectivist settings), children are taught that they are part of a circle of relations. This identity as a member of a group comes first, summed up in the South African idea of ubuntu: "I am because we are." In communitarian settings, members are rewarded for allegiance to group norms and values, interdependence, and cooperation. Wherever they go, their identity as a member of their group goes out in front. Identity is not isolated from others, but is determined with others according to group needs and views. When conflict arises, behavior and responses tend to be jointly chosen.

Individualist patterns involve ideas of the self as independent, self-directed, and autonomous. Many Western conflict-resolution approaches presuppose exactly this kind of person: someone able to make proposals, concessions, and maximize gains in their own self-interest. Children raised in this milieu are rewarded for initiative, personal achievement, and individual leadership. They may be just as close to their families as a child raised in a communitarian setting, but they draw the boundaries differently: in case of a conflict, they may feel more free to choose their individual preference. Duty, honor, and deference to authority are less prominent for those with individualist starting points than communitarian ones.

Individual and communitarian identities are two quite different ways of being in the world. They connect at some point, of course, since all groups are made up of individuals and all individuals find themselves in relationship with various groups. But the starting points are different. To discern the basic difference, ask yourself which is most in the foreground of your life, the welfare, development, security, prosperity, and well-being of yourself and others as individuals, or the shared heritage, ecological resources, traditional stories, and group accomplishments of your people? Generally, those who start with individualism as their beginning tend to be most comfortable with independence, personal achievement, and a competitive conflict style. Those who start with a communal orientation are more focused on social connections, service, and a cooperative conflict style.

French anthropologist Raymonde Carroll, who is married to a North American, suggests that North Americans tend to see individual identities as existing outside all networks. This does not mean that social networks do not exist, or that they are unimportant, but that it is notionally possible to see the self apart from these. In the North American view, there is a sense that the self creates its own identity, as in the expression, a "self-made person." This view explains why it is unnecessary for North Americans to hide things about their past, such as humble origins. It also
explains why the alcoholic brother of a president of the United States is seen as having no connection to the president's standing or ability. In a communitarian setting, identity is defined much more by the person's social network, and cannot be so easily separated.

One way to discern communitarian or individualist starting points is to listen to forms of greeting and address. Thomas Morning Owl, a member of the Confederated Umatilla Tribes in Oregon, reports that his response to the question 'Shinnamwa?' (Who are you?) would not be his name, but a description of his father, mother, and tribe, and the place they came from. Morning Owl reflects that individual identities are subsumed into the collective in his culture: "Who preceded you, is who you are."[9]

Members of communitarian cultures place less importance than individualists on relationships with outsiders, such as strangers or casual acquaintances. Boundaries around relationships tend to be less porous in communitarian contexts like Japan, where attention is focused on maintaining harmony and cohesion with the group. In the individualist setting of the United States, by contrast, "friendly" behavior is directed to members of in-groups and strangers alike. This difference can lead to misunderstandings across cultures, since the U.S. American behavior of friendliness to strangers may be seen as inappropriately familiar by those from communitarian settings, while U.S. Americans may find social networks in communitarian settings very difficult to penetrate.

No matter which starting point seems natural, it is important to keep the entire continuum in mind when trying to understand and address conflict. From each vantage point, it is useful to remember some things:

From an individualist starting point,

- achievement involves individual goal-setting and action;
- I am ultimately accountable to myself and must make decisions I can live with;
- while I consult with others about choices, I am autonomous: a discrete circle; and
- I believe in equality and consider everyone able to make their own personal choices.

From a communitarian starting point,

- maintaining group harmony and cohesion is important, and my decisions should not disrupt that;
- choices are made in consultation with family and authority figures and their input is weighted as heavily, or even more heavily, than mine. I am an overlapping circle amidst other overlapping circles;
- my decisions reflect on my group and I am accountable to them as a member; and
- I notice hierarchy and accept direction from those of higher status than myself.

With these differences in mind, it is important for individualists to recognize the web of relations encompassing the communitarian party to a conflict, and to act in recognition of those. Similarly, it is helpful for those from communitarian settings to remember that individualists value autonomy and initiative, and to act in ways that respect these preferences.
Combining Starting Points: High-Context/Low-Context and Individualism/Communitarianism

As with any set of starting points, neither of these starting points exists in isolation. High-context communication often corresponds with communitarian settings, just as low-context communication often occurs in individualist settings. This is not always true, but it is worth exploring because it is frequently the case. Where communitarianism is the preferred starting point, individual expression may be less important than group will. Indirect communication that draws heavily on nonverbal cues may be preferable in such a setting, because it allows for multiple meanings, saves face, leaves room for group input into decisions, and displays interdependence. In individualist settings, low-context communication may be preferable because it is direct, expresses individual desires and initiatives, displays independence, and clarifies the meaning intended by the speaker.

Nobel Peace Laureate Jimmy Carter understood the importance of high-context communication with his counterparts from Israel and Egypt in the historic Camp David peace negotiations. In one example, Carter reports that Prime Minister Begin was about to leave the negotiations after several days, discouraged at having reached an impasse. Carter met Begin at his accommodations and presented him with pictures of the three heads of state, inscribed with the names of each of Begin's grandchildren. Prime Minister Begin repeated the names of his grandchildren out loud as he paused to look at the pictures, seeming to reflect on the importance of the peace negotiations to the grandchildren's futures.

Carter knew instinctively that no direct, low-context appeal would work to bring Prime Minister Begin back to the negotiating table. Perhaps low-context requests were already tried without success. Instead, Carter relied on a high-context reference to legacy, future generations, and the relations that Begin cared about. He invoked the communities each leader served by reminding Begin of his grandchildren. Through Carter's masterful, high-context appeal, negotiations resumed and peace was achieved between neighbors who had been in intractable conflict for many years.[10]
This example shows the importance of these two interrelated starting points, individualism/communitarianism and low/high context. While there are many exceptions to cultural patterns and all of us use different starting points depending on the context, noticing the intersections of ways of making meaning is often a useful window into conflict dynamics.


[2] This is closely related to the concept of framing.


**Sources of Additional, In-depth Information on this Topic**

**Additional Explanations of the Underlying Concepts:**

**Online (Web) Sources**


Available at: http://www.beyondintractability.org/articlesummary/10261/.

This is a summary of William Gudykunst's and Young Yun Kim's article, Communicating With Strangers: An Approach to Intercultural Communication. Gudykunst and Kim begin by observing that "we
communicate the way we do because we are raised in a particular culture and learn its language, rules, and norms." Different cultures (and subcultures) may have different rules and norms. The authors argue that understanding the other's culture facilitates cross-cultural communication.

Available at: Click here for more info.
This paper is an edited transcript of a talk given by Garnett Tatum for the Intractable Conflict/Constructive Confrontation Project on March 15, 1993. It talks about law as a formal means, and not necessarily the most effective means, of dealing with racial, ethnic and gender conflicts.

Available at: http://www.mediate.com/articles/Wright.cfm.

This article discusses how differences in perspectives may impede an agreement if the participants' views diverge on such fundamental issues as individual autonomy and group interdependence. When issues based on individual rights or strong group identification arise in a mediation, a mediator's awareness of individualist and collectivist paradigms can help surmount such cultural barriers to an agreement. Familiarity with the paradigms may be helpful because mediation models in the United States are based upon individualist cultural assumptions that group-oriented, or collectivist, participants in a mediation may not share.

Available at: http://faculty.biu.ac.il/~steing/conflict/mollov.html.

This article addresses critical questions concerning international relations and conflict resolution such as: Is peace made by nations or people? Is peace simply a function of the effective balancing of interests between states and political entities or is there a critical human interaction which operates in parallel to, formal national or security interests?

"Intercultural Theory." ,
Available at: http://eco.ittralee.ie/personal/theories_III.php.

This site offers a multifaceted discussion of the concept of culture, looking at the notion of cultural differences, and components and characteristics of cultural patterns.

Moore, Christopher W. and Peter Woodrow. "Mapping Cultures: Strategies for Effective Intercultural Negotiations." Track Two, Vol.8, No.1 , April 1, 1998
Available at: http://www.mediate.com/articles/cdr1.cfm.

This article gives the reader an understanding of cultural differences and explains how to incorporate
these differences into positive negotiation practices.


This is a summary of Kenneth Boulding's *The Image*. The book presents a new unifying concept through which a better understanding of individual behavior and social dynamics may be had. He proposes, in effect, a new theory of knowledge: knowledge as image.

*Offline (Print) Sources*

**Hall, Edward T. *Beyond Culture.* New York: Doubleday, January 1, 1976.**

This book examines the many faces of culture and the effect it has on people especially as related to meaning, values, actions and identities.


This work presents strategies for bridging the gap between culture and conflict. Becoming skillful at this task is increasingly important to people in all realms of society as the world becomes more integrated. The work illustrates many of the proposed principles through stories.


This book discusses cultural differences that exist with respect to communication styles. The book focuses on practical considerations for why we should attempt to understand people.

**Boulding, Kenneth E. *The Image: Knowledge in Life and Society.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, June 1, 1956.**

In *The Image* Kenneth Boulding presents a new unifying concept through which a better understanding of individual behavior and social dynamics may be had. He proposes, in effect, a new theory of knowledge: knowledge as image. Click here for more info.


This essay examines the role culture plays in communication, and discusses how cultural differences impacts communication, both spoken and unspoken.


From the Publisher First published in 1983, this book studies how people are tied together and yet isolated by hidden threads of rhythm and walls of time. Time is treated as a language, organizer, and message system revealing people’s feelings about each other and reflecting differences between cultures.
Examples Illustrating this Topic:

**Online (Web) Sources**
Ochi, Rose. "Conflict Resolution Assistance in Indian Country." , 1900
Available at: [Click here for more info](#).

This article explains how the Community Relations Service (CRS), provides mediation and conflict resolution services to Tribal governments, law enforcement, and communities on and off the reservation, when community tensions arise over racial or ethnic issues. CRS assists Tribal Governments in resolving disputes by dialogue and joint problem-solving.

**Offline (Print) Sources**
A case study in independant fact-finding its advantages over standard fact-finding, especially in contrast to performing an impact study. Includes a discussion of how independant groups can successfully interact accross cultural barriers.

In this section, President Carter explains the methods and tools he employed to bridge cultural differences, in order to create an atmosphere that was conducive to good communications.

Teaching Materials on this Topic:

**Online (Web) Sources**
Rothstein-Fisch, Carrie, Elise Trumbull and Patricia M. Greenfield. "Bridging Cultures in Our Schools: New Approaches That Work." , 1900
Available at: [http://www.wested.org/online_pubs/bridging/welcome.shtml](http://www.wested.org/online_pubs/bridging/welcome.shtml).

This article presents a framework that teachers can use to bridge cultural differences in and outside the classroom.
Mediation and Multiculturalism: Domestic and International Challenges

By Mark Davidheiser
Discovering Culture

My interest in this topic stems from events that occurred roughly a decade ago when I was volunteering in the Victim -- Offender Reconciliation Program of a Community Mediation Center. At the time the belief that conflict resolution transcended culture was remarkably prevalent. As was usual at the time, I had been trained in a particular process model without any provision for, or discussion of, cultural issues. There was a proper way to mediate, I was taught, and this entailed following a unilinear staged model with specific ground rules.

In one of the cases I was assigned to, my co-mediator and the two disputants were African-Americans. My partner was considerably senior to me in both age and experience and naturally took control of the session. Over the course of the mediation, he broke many of the rules that I had been taught were integral to the process. This caused me great consternation; however, I noticed that the two disputants responded well to his approach, and I did not intervene.

Upon further reflection, I realized that what occurred might have been, in fact, related to cultural differences. Reading Thomas Kochman's Black and White Styles in Conflict greatly reinforced that conclusion.[1] Kochman did not specifically apply his findings to the mediation process. However, there were many parallels between Kochman's description of the discursive preferences of White Americans and the conventions of court-annex mediation programs. In addition, the areas where my co-mediator diverged from what I had been taught was the correct approach dovetailed with Kochman's presentation of the Black conflict style.

In my experience mediators are required to be impartial facilitators who help create an opportunity for productive communication and problem solving. They are expected to allow the disputants to shape the content of the discussions, but they control the process as expressed in the reading of ground rules at the session beginning, for example. Among other things, the ground rules stipulate that in mediations people must take turns speaking and do not interrupt one another. Mediators are expected to keep the disputants focused on "the issues" and to prevent them from personalizing the discourse. The goal is a discussion and not a debate. The mediators are facilitators who channel the communication and keep the discourse focused on reasoned problem-solving, by, for example, preventing the disputants from speaking directly to each other and starting to argue or become emotional.

As Kochman underlines, many White Americans idealize a dispassionate and logical mode of debating and problem-solving. In mediation this is expressed in maxims such as "separate the people from the problem" and the use of caucuses to cool down emotions.[2] Black Americans, Kochman argues, tend toward a much more affective and emotive style of communication -- a style that is largely proscribed by the ground rules.

Consider, for example, the rule that each disputant should be able to speak, without interruption, until satisfied. The mediator directing the communication corresponds with the White belief that turn-taking should be authorized from an outside authority rather than shaped by the ideas, passion, and messages that come up during the discussion. Some African-Americans are accustomed to a different mode of communication in which there is a rapid and direct exchange
of information and may be at a disadvantage when they are not permitted to communicate in that fashion; "Blacks call this constraining mode of behavior fronting, and they generally regard negatively situations in which it is necessary to front... All blacks consider fronting to be a strain."[4]

The emphasis on uncovering all the relevant information in a dispute can also lead to misunderstanding. Some mediators are taught to probe for information and ask questions to make sure that no underlying issues or important details are left unmentioned in order that an agreement that addressed all facets of the dispute can be formulated. According to Kochman, Blacks are particularly sensitive to probing questions, due in part to the history of structural violence in America. This is especially true when the interlocutor is someone associated with the power structure (a category that can easily be extended to mediators in court-annex programs).

The issue of mediator neutrality, a central tenet of North American mediation, is another potential problem. Because many African-Americans approach communication by taking stances on issues, they may have problems believing in the impartiality of mediators. As Kochman puts it, "Because blacks admit they deal from a point of view, they are disinclined to believe whites who claim not to have a point of view."[5]

Sociolinguistics has illustrated how languages emanate from different social systems (see, for example, Bonvillian 1993). Scholars such as William Labov and Evelyn Dandy have shown how African American modalities of communication constitute a viable sociolinguistic system that is governed by rules.[6] By applying Kochman's work to mediation we see that widespread themes in the structuring of institutionalized mediation impose a modality of communication that emanates from the milieu of American middle and upper class Whites.

The disarticulation with norms, values, and behavioral patterns of other populations may lessen the effectiveness of mediation as a tool for conflict mitigation. It also raises ethical questions (especially when mediation is linked to the legal system) and concerns of cultural imperialism when Western techniques are exported overseas. The implications of these issues are relevant both at home and abroad.[7] The following section provides a critical overview of how practitioners have tried to deal with cultural diversity with reference to the Gambian findings about cultural perspectives.

**Searching for Multiculturalism in Mediation**

The issue of multiculturalism in mediation has come under much greater scrutiny since my training in 1994 and various proposals have been put forth to address it. These include adjusting the communication framework to make it amenable to other communication styles, following checklists of cross-cultural mediation techniques, matching ethnicities, and elicitive praxis. These efforts have been helpful, but they are themselves rooted in culturally specific cosmologies and do not fully engage the complexity of culture or the profundity of its effects.

Kochman's work and that of communication specialists have contributed to a strong focus on differing communication styles as the crux of societal variation. There have been numerous studies of the negotiating and communicating styles of different groups.[8] One common
response to multiculturalism in mediation has been to attempt to adjust the way that communications are structured to make the process more accessible to non-Western populations. For instance, scholars have noted that members of high-context cultures are often uncomfortable with direct confrontation and would prefer mediations with more caucusing rather than direct negotiations.[9] In this view, the general principles of mediation are applicable cross-culturally (see, for example, Myers and Filner 1997). Mediators should be sensitive to different styles of communication and values and should follow certain rules when dealing with different cultures, but the fundaments of the process can remain in place.

However, cognitive structures influence mediation in a profound way that goes far beyond shared preferences for interaction or behavioral standards. In a two-year study of mediation among rural villagers in The Gambia, I found stark contrasts to popular American beliefs regarding disputing and peacemaking. Widely held precepts encapsulated in mainstream ADR, such as the need for a win-win agreement that satisfies the essential interests of both parties, did not resonate in The Gambia. Many Gambians did not conceptualize conflict as a matter of incompatible goals or specific issues existing between two or discrete individuals. In the U.S. mediation is often considered facilitated negotiation, but Gambians frequently focused more on reconciliation than on bargaining or working out the issues. The deep incongruities between these views of conflict and corresponding methods of peacemaking makes adjusting mainstream mediation to accommodate other negotiation styles insufficient.[10]

What many analysts have recommended is that mediation be done by multicultural teams. That is, for example, the proposal of Howard Gadlin, a scholar who critiqued Kochman's conclusions as overly broad.[11] Due to budgetary and other constraints, most programs rely on teams of two mediators. Those concerned with cultural sensitivity often strive to match disputants with a mediator of similar ethnic background. However, several studies have critiqued matching. Viswanathan and Ptak analyzed the matching policy of a mediation program in Canada and found it wanting.[12] They explicate, for instance, how, among other problems, the policy could be divisive if the disputants assumed that the mediators were representing the party with whom they were ethnically similar. They also cite a case where a Chinese woman specifically requested not to be matched with a Chinese mediator. In a study of 257 mediations at Community Justice Centers in Australia, Fisher and Long found lower rates of agreement in those cases where disputants had been matched with mediators of similar backgrounds than when no attempt at matching was made. [13]

The Gambian data also underline the potential limitations of matching an African disputant to an African mediator. The study populations (divided by ethnicity, gender, religious identity, and age-group) encompassed a range of views of proper behavior and conflict and the variation occurred both within and across the various sampled groups. The contrast in peacemaking preferences between two ethno-linguistic groups -- the Mandinka and the Manjago -- was particularly striking. The Manjago, for instance, strongly felt that direct discussions and statements of blame were necessary for conflict cessation, while the Mandinka tended to be fairly confrontation averse and avoided assigning blame when that would contravene shared norms or hamper resolution efforts. The level of difference between members of these groups also correlated strongly with their gender identity. The preceding is but one of many examples that illustrate that cultural differentiation is deep, extensive, and central in conflict
Disputing and peacemaking cut to the core of shared values and norms, essential components of culture. Although societal differences do not automatically preclude productive conflict resolution, cultural patterning does loom large. In an area so intimately tied to cognitive patterning effective multiculturalism is especially needed, particularly when one places disputing in a historical context and considers the continued rise in potential conflict costs that we have observed in recent times.

Matching mediation participants based on their ethnic identities can potentially be useful, as my aforementioned experience implies. However, it is limited by an overly broad treatment of cultural differences -- one that is unfortunately the rule rather than the exception. Much of the work on intercultural mediation has built upon the work of Geert Hofstede (1991) and attempted to measure various dimensions of culture -- e.g. collectivism and individualism, time orientation, uncertainty avoidance etc. This very popular paradigm typically contrasts the orientations of members of particular nations in attempting to formulate a strategy for dealing with cultural pluralism (e.g. Goldstein 1999; Ting-Toomey et al. 1991; Triandis 1989).

This approach is hampered by several considerations. Most essentially, the shifting and multifarious nature of cultural perspectives raises doubts about such a "cookbook" methodology (cf. Avruch 1998). Can culture really be boiled down to a set number (the range is most often between 2 and 10 dimensions) of specific factors? Additionally, supposing the existence of a shared culture based on ethnic or other group identities is highly questionable.[14] "Culture" is constituted within the cognitive frameworks of individuals where many factors (individual experience, socio-economic status, occupation, gender, religion, etc.) can come into play.[15]

The many studies that deal with the culture and conflict styles of specific nations are particularly problematic. I found significant variance among Gambians, for example, and I am willing to assert that the members of most nations are likely similarly diverse. Broad treatments of multiculturalism will inevitably lead to disconnects and contradictions. For example, Leeds' summary of the research on dimensions of culture includes the following finding: "Both Arabs and Latin Americans appreciate a communicative style involving flair, feeling, rhetoric and emotional commitment whereas a controlled, neutral or unexpressive style is more acceptable generally within African and Asian milieus."[16] This strongly contravenes the findings from my study as most Gambians preferred a highly expressive style congruent with Leeds' description of Arab and Latin American modalities.

Thinking in terms of macro-, meso-, and micro-level components of culture has been helpful in my work. When I viewed the Gambian data as a group and compared them to my experience with American mediation there were obvious differences. In some cases Gambians' orientations resembled the Black American modalities outlined by Kochman. For example, the differentiation between more expressive and more impersonal (valorized as "rational") styles of expression and negotiation was applicable. The common distinctions (often presented as dichotomies between Western and non-Western, high and low context, traditional and modern, and so forth) between collectivist and individualist societies do, therefore, have some heuristic value.
However, variance was also present between various groups, with certain populations exhibiting a stronger tendency to employ such affective styles than others. Stratifying the empirical data according to a) ethnicity, b) gender, c) religious identity, and d) age revealed significant patterning in the mediation behavior of various populations. Peacemaking modalities thus varied across and within populations and even at the micro-level.

Considerable intra-group variation also occurred, thereby highlighting the role of individual experience and personality in the behavior of peacemakers. Examining observed and interview data of individual mediators uncovered trends related to these two factors and a variety of related ones such as family dynamics. In my dissertation I compare culture to a djinn -- ephemeral beings in the Muslim belief system that are located between the temporal and the metaphysical realms -- for while culture can cut to the core of peacemaking, it is also complicated, ethereal, and ever-changing.

Given the multiplicity of culture, crafting a sophisticated, yet cost-effective, method of measuring disputants' cultural perspectives and providing them with a suitable mediator appears daunting. In addition, matching is another approach that, I believe, is too superficial. The presence of a "cultural interpreter" is not adequate when the salience of core elements of mediation such as negotiation, reconciliation, and problem solving are culture specific.

Another type of technique could be described as awareness building. Some versions seek to move beyond the realm of merely raising awareness about other cultural styles in order to build internal awareness of one's own cultural orientations. For example, Dana notes that the popular technique of presenting information about cultural differences in conflict resolution modules may allow trainees to learn about other modalities, but it does not give them the tools to address them.[17] He proposes "self mediation" as a remedy. Gadlin's recent work (2003, cited in LeBaron 2003) provides another example. He uses a list of questions to raise the awareness of the mediator of their own preconceptions that inform their praxis. Such awareness is undoubtedly useful, but leaves open the question of how mediators can optimize their practice when dealing with diverse disputants.

More far-reaching attempts to address cultural pluralism have also been proposed. In elicitive approaches disputants are (ideally) given a voice in not only the content of discussions and agreements, but also over the process itself. For our discussion here we will discuss the increasingly well-known transformative model.

The transformative framework is usually associated with three names, Robert Baruch Bush and his partner Joseph Folger and John Paul Lederach. There are some differences between their visions, but they share many common elements. Transformatve mediation developed, in part, as a response to critiques of mediation and represents an ambitious effort to counteract problems of power disparities and cross-cultural applicability. Ground rules are eliminated or minimized and, rather than aiming for settlement, the goal is the empowerment of the disputants. Transformative mediators do not rely on a unilinear staged model, instead the disputants are allowed to participate in the shaping of the process.
This last component is, I think, the greatest strength of this approach. Elicitation also sidesteps the conventional orientation toward problem solving -- an orientation that is far from devoid of cultural baggage. The emphasis on disputant participation is also inspiring (although that may be due in part to its correlation with Western notions of self-hood and self-determination).

The conceptualization of empowerment is specifically Western, particularly in terms of the targeted social unit and the belief in self-determination. Indeed, in Bush and Folger's formulation the goal is to empower individuals by enhancing their capacities to make decisions. This reflects a liberal trend of thought traceable to the Enlightenment, one that has been central to Western cosmology, in which the main social unit is individual and the belief in self-determination is crucial.

The elicitive approach also raises concerns about power imbalances influencing mediation. The more determinative power one assigns to disputants, the greater the danger of coercion becomes, and the results can be inequitable indeed. The ways that disputants can be disempowered and coerced in mediation are subtle indeed (see Maxwell 2001), and even conscientious practitioners may be unable to provide a truly level playing field.

In addition, there is the question of how to manage situation in which the disputants disagree on how the process should proceed. How does one negotiate how to negotiate? The possibility exists that more powerful parties will be able to control the process while weaker parties or those who are too meek to militate for their rights will be marginalized.

Finally, there is the problem of practicality. If one is to develop a variety of process models based on cultural orientations, then one faces great hurdles in terms of implementation. For example, in Hawaii there are numerous social and ethnic groups and a well-established system of mediation. If they were to utilize the ethno-conflict method, would they need to elicit various conflict styles from these different populations and then train mediators in all of them? We know that cultures are neither monolithic nor static, does elicitation need to occur in every mediation in order to satisfactorily integrate continually changing cultural perspectives into the process? What would that mean for training?

Scholars have used multiple labels to distinguish between two primary trends in North American mediation. In terms of this discussion, the process vs. content distinction is particularly heuristic. Transformative approaches fall into the process category, meaning that the process of the nature of the mediation event itself can be modified according to the preferences of the participants. Narrative styles are elaborations of the historically more widespread model of facilitation -- i.e. the content approach. Such mediators make great efforts to draw out the perspectives and stories of the disputants and often strive to allow them to determine the actual makeup of the discussion.

I firmly believe that the process or elicitive paradigm has great potential. To reiterate our previous example, culture influences not only what people choose to negotiate about (content), but also how they view negotiation and whether they in fact want to negotiate at all (process). Although the current formulations of the process model do contain cultural preconceptions, they
represent a substantial move in the right direction. Our accumulated knowledge of culture suggests that an open and integrative praxis is essential to mediation becoming a truly multicultural field.

To date, no satisfactory method has been found for consistently dealing with multiculturalism in mediation. Broad generalizations and simplistic conceptualizations of culture may work in some cases, but may be counter-productive in others (e.g. if the Chinese woman had been too shy to speak against matching and had been unable to speak freely in the mediation as a result). We face a difficult paradox. On the one hand, cultural differences can call into question basic assumptions (e.g. beliefs about human nature, society, the environment, etc.) that inform our practice. On the other hand, "culture" is so dynamic and multidimensional that one can hardly grasp it. Translating theoretically sophisticated conceptualizations of culture into practice remains a challenge faced by scholar-practitioners and those interested in creating truly multicultural modalities of mediation.

It is worth summarizing what all this signifies for the applied realm. One of the main strengths of the elicitive school is that it promotes a flexible practice. In light of the integral (yet heterogeneous and dynamic) role of culture in conflict, an inclusive approach is essential to a successful and sustainable practice. It is true that a complete absence of guidelines for training and practice would carry many risks. However, when one recognizes the influence of culture on basic assumptions that are expressed in conflict resolution strategies, then it becomes clear that there is a direct correlation between the level of structuring in mediation and the degree to which models of practice are culturally particular.

We have reached a point where cultural variation in mediation is no longer a fringe topic, but has become widely accepted. However, in the U.S., we are simultaneously experiencing strong pressures for standardization through certification requirements and legislation such as the Mediator Reform Act. The danger therefore exists that the shared values of a particular strata of society may be further reinforced as the accepted and even mandated procedure. There may be endeavors to institutionalize multicultural strategies such as matching, but as we have seen these fall short of our goal. It is worth returning once more to Kochman's words from over 20 years ago:

Clearly, the notion that American society is 'culturally pluralistic' is an impotent one if it merely acknowledges that people of different groups have different cultural patterns and perspectives. A culturally pluralistic society must find ways to incorporate these differences into the system, so that they can also influence the formation of social policy, social intervention, and the social interpretation of behavior and events (Kochman 1981:62).

**Conclusion**

Returning to Kochman's thesis in the context of mediation in the 21st century highlights the substantial work that remains to be done over twenty years after the publication of his book. It is heartening to see that most scholars and practitioners are now willing to accept that societal variance has at least some significance. However, applying empirical data, such as those from The Gambia, to Kochman underlines the extent of the challenge facing us. Gadlin's critique was
certainly relevant -- generalizing about conflict styles is problematic. However, the African data also emphasize the centrality of socio-cultural perspectives in conflict and its management.

The belief in the universality of ADR has proven to have an enduring impact and cannot yet be dismissed. However, and perhaps more significantly, there is also a marked need for the continued enhancement of even that practice which explicitly aims for multicultural sensitivity. That does represent a formidable task, and I would like to qualify the above critiques by stressing that these methodologies do represent laudable steps toward addressing a formidable challenge. Years of study have failed to resolve the culture question, raising provocative questions. Is culture so dynamic and diffuse that it limits the efficacy of the common approach of striving to develop "cultural competence" in specific groups or populations?[18] The aforementioned anthropological advances in cultural analysis can be interpreted to suggest that, on some level, all mediations are "intercultural." Perhaps training designed to prepare practitioners for working with a specific group or groups is self-limiting. I suspect that the most fruitful direction may be to focus our energies on exploring how to craft an adaptive practice that still minimizes the risks that accompany a lack of structure.

As globalization and transnational migration continue, dramatic change is becoming the norm. To remain relevant and appropriate, conflict resolution processes will need to be dynamic and cannot continue relying on set notions of the cultural perspectives of a given group or groups. Given the immense capacities for destruction that we have developed and the frightening increase in inter-societal polarization, there is every reason to strive for a more culturally sophisticated practice in order to maximize the promise of our field. That is one of the greatest tasks facing those of us dedicated to contributing to a better future through productive engagements with conflict. Our success, I believe, will be directly related to the amount of "mindfulness" we can muster and the degree of flexibility, multiplicity, and inclusiveness that we can incorporate.


Sources of Additional, In-depth Information on this Topic

Additional Explanations of the Underlying Concepts:

**Offline (Print) Sources**


Picard, Cheryl. "Common Language, Different Meaning: What Mediators Mean When They Talk About Their Work." *Negotiation Journal* 18:3, 2002. This article explores the different meanings that mediators themselves use in response to questions about what mediation is. The findings were based on a study that used questionnaire answers of 88 mediation trainers who worked in Canada. Most of the respondents identified themselves as a "facilitator", but they did not all attribute the same meaning to being a facilitator. Some identified it with management of process, others with enhancing communication, and still others thought it had to do with resolving a dispute. Gender was a factor in this definition as women tended to identify their role as facilitating communication while men identified their role with facilitating process and reaching a
certain outcome. Further, individuals who had been working as a mediator the longest identified with the process model over the communication model. This research leads the author to advocate being explicit about the assumptions and goals of mediation practice, because even mediators have different definitions of what being a mediator entails.


"This article reviews various consensual methods of conflict resolution--mediation, negotiation, and facilitation--and indigenous culture techniques capable of becoming culturally appropriate for disputes across cultures. Model of addressing multicultural disputes such as community boards, ethnic conciliation commissions, educational campaigns in sovereignty movements, and cross-cultural mediation are discussed from a Hawaii practitioner's perspective. Peacemaking techniques from Samoan, Hawaiian, Laotian, Filipino, Japanese, Chinese, and Native American cultures are highlighted. The Pacific model for mediation, negotiation, and facilitation of cross-cultural conflict is introduced; this model was developed in relation to cultures of the Pacific Basin, especially those cultures present in Hawaii."

**Myers, Selma and Barbara Filner.** *Conflict Resolution Across Cultures: From Talking it Out to Third Party Mediation.* Amherst, MA: Amherst Educational Publishing, 1997.


The author argues that racism permeates U.S. culture and brings great complexity to individual disputes. Therefore race should be considered a factor in all disputes that involve individuals of different racial/ethnic backgrounds including disputes where race is not explicitly a part of the conflict.


Goldstein, Susan B. Cultural Issues in Mediation: A Literature Review.

The author discusses the importance of culture as a "tool" in the resolution of conflict. The attached review is one of several on that web page.

This article discusses the role culture plays in all mediations, and identifies the importance of acknowledging value orientations rather than relying upon cultural stereotypes.


This major edited volume presents a broad look at the process of international mediation and the significant amount of complexity the process presents. The essays and case studies in this volume were written by experienced international mediators and include a combination of straightforward analysis and engaging narratives.


Observation of over 40 different mediators in 175 mediation sessions in 3 programs suggests that in order to do the job which they are charged with accomplishing—bringing mediation cases to settlement—mediators develop a repertoire of strategies employing a variety of sources of power.


This work discusses negotiation tactics in international diplomatic situations, focusing on obstacles to communication. The work concentrates on the effect of cultural differences between negotiating parties on the efficiency and effectiveness of diplomacy.


Description from The Reader's Catalog: "Geertz's accessible 1973 book popularized the idea of reading cultures as "texts," thus bringing anthropology into closer touch with literary theory and helping to promote a new humility among postcolonial Western anthropologists." From the Publisher: "Classic essays by one of the most original and stimulating anthropologists of his generation on what culture is, what role it plays in social life, and how it ought to be properly studied." - Barnes and Noble.com


This article argues that mediators need to develop and sustain cultural competency. The authors state that initial development of this sensitivity may be fostered by mediators becoming much more reflective about their own professional cultures and their identities.

**Examples Illustrating this Topic:**

**Offline (Print) Sources**


Andrea Williams discusses cultural dimension in conflict and its resolution in application to local government entities. The demography and cultural attitudes of the U.S. population are changing. Current statistical research shows that one out of four Americans is of Hispanic origins or a person of color. They would constitute the majority of the American population by the middle of the 21st century. The "melting pot" concept never became the reality. Currently, many groups prefer to maintain their traditions and beliefs and resist assimilation into Eurocentric or Anglo culture. Those demographic and perceptual changes create the necessity for governmental agencies to develop better understanding
of cultural differences and conflicts promoted by them.
Unit VII
Escalation and De-Escalation Strategies

"Escalation," Guy Burgess says, "is the most powerful force in the universe." He means in the social universe of course — it can't beat gravity or nuclear forces which hold molecules together — but it can lead to the severing of nuclear bonds in the form of nuclear war! These essays discuss the danger — and also the possible benefits (in some circumstances) — of escalation and what can be done to ensure that it is only used safely and wisely under controlled conditions.

Destructive Escalation
This introductory essay discusses escalation, explaining what it is, why and how it occurs, and why it is so dangerous.

Polarization
Polarization is closely linked to escalation. Often as escalation occurs, more and more people get involved, and they take strong positions on one side or the other. "Polarization" thus refers to the process in which people move toward extreme positions (the "poles"), leaving fewer and fewer people "in the middle."

Constructive Escalation
Despite the dangers of escalation, disputants often intentionally escalate conflicts. Parties generally do this when they feel their needs are being ignored. This essay examines the risks and benefits of tactical escalation and offers suggestions on how the risks can be minimized.

Limiting Escalation / De-escalation
This is the first of several "solution" essays. This introductory essay describes ways to prevent escalation in the first place, and strategies for de-escalating disputes and conflicts if prevention didn't work.

Cooling-Off Periods
Escalation can sometimes be slowed or stopped by calling for a short-term "cooling-off" period, during which time all the parties stop engaging and step back to look at the situation and consider how they might be able to proceed more constructively.

Escalation-Limiting Language
This is language which can avoid escalation in the first place, or diminish it once it has occurred.

Preventing Interpersonal Violence
This essay examines what can be done to prevent violence at the interpersonal, small group, and community level (as opposed to the international level). The prevention of family violence, gang violence, and violence in schools are examples of topics considered in this essay.

Unit VII Assignment:
Choose either the dispute or conflict you discussed in Unit II or III, or the movie you discussed in Unit VI. How was escalation evident in this situation or movie? How was it dealt with? (If none of these situations exhibited escalation, choose another conflict that does and use that one for this 2-4 page assignment.)
Destructive Escalation

By
Michelle Maiese
What is Conflict Escalation?

Escalation refers to an increase in the intensity of a conflict and in the severity of tactics used in pursuing it. It is driven by changes within each of the parties, new patterns of interaction between them, and the involvement of new parties in the struggle.[1] When conflicts escalate, more people tend to become involved. Parties begin to make bigger and stronger threats and impose harsher negative sanctions. Violence may start; or, if violence has already occurred, it may become more severe and/or widespread as the number of participants involved in the conflict increases.[2]

Conflict theorists Dean Pruitt and Jeffrey Rubin list five changes that occur as a conflict escalates. First, parties move from light tactics to heavy tactics. Light tactics include such things as persuasive arguments, promises, and efforts to please the other side, while heavy tactics include threats, power plays, and even violence. Second, the conflict grows in size. The numbers of issues in contention expands, and parties devote more resources to the struggle. Third, issues move from specific to general, and the relationship between the parties deteriorates. Parties develop grandiose positions, and often perceive the other side as "evil." Fourth, the number of parties grows from one to many, as more and more people and groups are drawn into the conflict. Fifth, the goal of the parties changes from "doing well" to winning, and finally, to hurting the other.

Under certain circumstances, escalation is the rational thing to do. If a party has overwhelming power over its opponent, it makes sense to use this power to overcome the opponent's resistance.[3] Parties might also intentionally escalate the conflict in order to pressure the other side, involve third parties, or rally more people to their cause. In many cases, this sort of tactical escalation can have positive effects and help move parties toward a mutually beneficial relationship.[4]

However, a great deal of conflict escalation is inadvertent, and occurs without the parties having fully considered the implications of their actions. Sometimes this is a result of perceived crises and time pressures that compel the parties to act before they have considered alternative courses of action or have a full understanding of the situation. The use of force and threats, if regarded as too extreme, can ultimately backfire and provoke retaliation.[5] It is in these cases that conflicts have the potential to spiral out of control and have terribly damaging effects. Destructively-waged conflicts typically involve great losses for one or more of the contending parties, and tend to persist for a long time.[6] To avoid these negative consequences, a better understanding of the dynamics of escalation is needed.

Conditions that Encourage Escalation

Some conflict escalation is driven by incompatible goals. Many note that destructive social and interpersonal conflicts always begin with the emergence of contentious goals of two adversaries. If the parties do not see a possibility of finding a mutually beneficial solution, and one believes that it has the power to substantially alter the aspirations of the other, it may try to bully the other
issue threats or otherwise attempt to coerce the opposing side into giving them what they want.[8] Each side typically believes that the other is driven by power and will increase its coercive behavior unless it is prevented from doing so by greater coercion.[9] But if one party is harmed or threatened by another, it is more likely to respond with hostility. The greater the number of issues in contention and the more intense the sense of grievance, the more fuel there is to encourage escalation.[10]

In many instances, the parties view each other as having relatively high aspirations or regard the issues under dispute as ones that cannot be compromised. For example, matters regarded by adversaries as being integral to their personal or collective identities are more prone to conflict escalation. When faced with groups that exhibit radically different attitudes, values, and behaviors, parties may feel criticized, demeaned, or threatened.[11] Threats to identity tend to arouse feelings of anger and fear, which can in turn fuel conflict escalation. Similarly, moral conflicts often lead to conflict escalation because the opponent is viewed as wrong in principle and not merely on the wrong side of some specific issue.[12] Disputes involving ideological or moral issues tend to attract more parties and to be resistant to compromise.

Past grievances, feelings of injustice, and a high level of frustration may also provoke escalation. Hostility-driven escalation is typically caused by grievances or a sense of injustice, and may ultimately be rooted in events of the distant past. One party feels that it has been treated unfairly by its opponent, and angrily blames its opponent for the suffering it has endured.[13] Deprivation, inequitable treatment, and pain and suffering thereby lead to a desire to punish or injure the other.[14] If there are no "norms of redress" in place, the aggrieved party may feel compelled to strike back in response to this perceived provocation.[15] However, their feelings of anger and frustration may lead them to overreact. And if their actions are seen as overly severe and exceed the normative expectations of the other side, these actions may provoke outrage and simply intensify the struggle.[16]

Indeed, hostility-driven conflicts tend to escalate for trivial reasons, and also become unnecessarily violent.[17] Once victims have made exaggerated assessments of the severity of the harm they have suffered, they are likely to seek revenge. Their hostile actions often simply lead to further injustice, which grants victim status to the original wrongdoer.[18] This not only generates new conflict issues, but also provokes fresh feelings of anger and injustice. Both parties may come to view revenge as an end in itself.[19]

**Three Process Models**

Various frameworks can be used to better understand the dynamics of conflict escalation. Pruitt, Rubin, and Kim discuss three broad models of escalation: the aggressor-defender model, the conflict spiral model and the structural change model.[20] Taken together, these three accounts of what occurs during escalation can help to make sense of a wide variety of conflicts.

**Aggressor-Defender Model**
In the "aggressor-defender" model, the "aggressor" is viewed as having a goal that places it in conflict with the "defender." The "aggressor" begins with mild tactics and moves on to heavier tactics if these don't work. The defender reacts, escalating its efforts in response to the aggressor's escalatory actions.[21] While this model reflects some cases of escalation, it suggests that escalation moves simply in one direction, with the defender always reacting to the action of the aggressor. In many cases, escalation is better understood as a circular process, in which each side reacts to the other's behavior.

**Conflict Spiral Model**

According to the conflict spiral model, escalation results from a vicious circle of action and reaction. Because each reaction is more severe and intense than the action that precedes it, each retaliatory or defensive action in the spiral provides a new issue or grievance.[22] These dynamics explain the movement from lighter tactics to heavier tactics, as well as the expansion of issues in conflict. As the spiral rises, each party's list of grievances grows longer, producing a growing sense of crisis.

Conflict spirals can be either retaliatory or defensive. In a retaliatory spiral, each party punishes the other for actions it finds hurtful. Retaliation may be in response to events of the distant past, or to the opponent's most recent atrocious acts.[23] These events lead one party to blame the other for harm suffered, and to desire punishment. Central to this desire for retaliation are feelings of anger and the perceived need to "teach the other a lesson." In addition, it is common for one party to miscalculate the likely reaction of the other, and inadvertently commit acts that result in further escalation.[24] For example, one side may try to intimidate its opponent, and instead provoke a harsh counteraction.

In a defensive spiral, on the other hand, each party reacts so as to protect itself from a threat it finds in the other's self-protective actions.[25] While retaliatory spirals are typically driven by blame and anger, defensive spirals are driven by fear. Though one side may simply wish to protect itself, its actions may be perceived as threatening by its opponent. One example of this sort of spiral is the arms race. (This is called the security dilemma and is discussed in the essay on security.)
**Structural Change Model**

Finally, according to the structural change model, the experience of conflict and the tactics used to pursue it produce residues that affect and change the parties and communities involved.[26] As a fight escalates, the means of waging it become more and more removed from the substantive issues that first gave rise to conflict.[27] The psychology of the adversaries and the relationship between them undergo fundamental changes. These enduring structural changes encourage further contentious behavior and fuel escalation. Thus, the structural change model has the unique ability to explain why escalation tends to persist and recur.[28]

**Psychological Dynamics**

Escalation is both a cause and a result of significant psychological changes among the parties involved. In addition to anger and fear discussed above, negative attitudes, perceptions, and stereotypes of the opponent can drive escalation, as well as being caused by it (another spiral). Parties have a tendency to blame the other side for any harms suffered, and want at least restitution, if not retaliation. They may also form ideas about the dispositions, basic traits, and motives of the other side. For example, each side may believe that the other is fundamentally selfish, unfriendly, and hostile to its welfare.[29] As a result, actors often come to regard revenge and punishing the other side as an end in itself. Discussions about substantive issues and grievances give way to personal attacks upon the other.

Another psychological process that drives escalation is the sacrifice trap, also commonly known as entrapment. In some conflicts, a party may expend seemingly unjustified amounts of time, energy, and resources because they cannot admit they were wrong in what they did. So they continue or even increase their commitment to a failing course of action in order to justify their previous investments.[30] As time passes, the cost of continuing increases, but so do the prospects of reaching one's goal.[31] In addition, because they do not regard total withdrawal as an option, they come to regard total commitment as the only choice. Combatants thereby become trapped into an escalatory path of ever-increasing commitment.

Another psychological process that contributes to negative attitudes is selective perception. Once parties have expectations about the other side, they tend to notice the behavior that fits these expectations. But this tendency to make observations that fit their preconceptions simply makes those preconceptions stronger.[32] As a result, the actions of distrusted parties are seen as threatening, even when their actions are ambiguous. There is a tendency to misinterpret their behavior, and to give them little benefit of the doubt.[33] This may give rise to fear and defensive escalation. Even when an adversary makes some conciliatory actions, this conduct is likely to go unnoticed, or to be discounted as deceptive.[34] Not surprisingly, selective
perceptions often get in the way of effective negotiation and problem-solving processes.

This process of selective perception is further enforced by attributional distortion. Once one party has formed preconceptions about the other, any information that supports this hypothesis will be attributed to the opposing side's basic disposition. Any observations that do not fit their expectations, such as friendly behavior, will be attributed to situational causes or regarded as a fluke.[35] As a result, there is almost nothing that the opponent can do to dispel the party's negative expectations. These negative evaluations allow parties to rationalize their own hostile behavior, which simply intensifies the conflict.

Selective perception is likewise reinforced by self-fulfilling prophecies. One party's negative views about the other may lead that party to behave in hostile ways towards its opponent. This typically evokes a hostile response from the opponent, and in effect prods the opponent to behave in ways that fulfill the party's initial expectations.[36] In this way, parties' worst suspicions of each other lead them to act in ways that confirm their negative views.

**Changes in Relations**

After conflict has begun, the relations between the adversaries change in certain fundamental ways. In light of the psychological changes discussed above, their interaction becomes contentious, the number of issues in contention expands, and the parties become polarized.[37] The adversaries become increasingly isolated from each other, and their harsh actions tend to reinforce each other's negative stereotypes.

Development of hostile goals increases the divergence of interests among parties. As one side imposes negative sanctions upon another, any harm suffered engenders new issues of contention. New issues come to the fore as a result of each side's desire to defeat the other. The number of issues in conflict is likely to expand, and deep conflicts over values may surface.[38] Legitimate distrust develops among the adversaries, and what might otherwise be relatively minor issues take on great symbolic significance.

In many cases, groups are bifurcated into "us" versus "them," and differences between the "in-group" and the "out-group" are emphasized. Psychological or physical barriers may be put up to reduce interaction.[39] Group members define themselves by their joint opposition to a common enemy, which increases group solidarity and polarization.

In addition, people have a tendency to stop interacting with those that they do not like or respect. Once communication has been interrupted, it becomes very difficult to resolve the substantive issues that first gave rise to the conflict. This absence of communication may lead to the embellishment or distortion of facts, and damaging rumors may provide more fuel for escalation.[40]

As a result of escalation, formerly neutral or moderate parties are pulled toward one side or the other, and communities become severely polarized. Third parties who would otherwise urge moderation and attempt to mediate the controversy disappear and are forced to take sides.[41] Such polarization further reduces the opportunities for communication and contributes to the
general deterioration of the relationship between the adversaries.

Parties may also begin to deindividuate persons from the opposing side. Through deindividuation, persons come to be seen as members of a category or group rather than as individuals.[42] This state of mind makes it easier for parties to take more severe measures against their opponents and to view them as less than fully human. In some cases, parties humiliate their enemies to make them appear less than human, and thus further justify their degradation.[43]

This process of dehumanization makes any moral norms against harming other human beings seem irrelevant. Those excluded from moral norms can be viewed simply as inferior or as evil, perverted, or criminal.[44] Harsh and violent action not only becomes psychologically plausible, but also may seem necessary.[45] There is a disengagement of morals, and restraints against harming or exploiting certain “kinds” of people are reduced. This can lead to severe violence, human rights violations, and sometimes even genocide.

Such severe violence and hatred produces negative attitudes and perceptions that tend to persist even after the substantive issues of the conflict are settled. These "residues" then encourage the development of further conflict and the use of severe tactics when conflict arises again in the future.[46]

**Group Dynamics**

Internal changes that groups undergo during escalation include not only the social-psychological changes discussed above, but also changes at the group or collective level. Dynamics at the individual level are often accentuated by collective discussion and tend to become group norms. Collective goals of defeating the enemy develop, as well as increased group cohesiveness.[47] Once people realize that others share their views and hear new arguments favoring them, their own perceptions are validated and reinforced. Group discussion can in this way cause individual members to become more extreme in their hostile attitudes. The number of moderates in the group thus begins to diminish as more and more people come to hold extreme views.[48]

The development of group solidarity, or cohesiveness, can likewise contribute to escalation. Many note that groups with little internal diversity tend to escalate conflicts rapidly.[49] This is in part because cohesiveness encourages conformity to group norms and strengthens negative perceptions among group members.[50] With group cohesiveness also comes heightened commitment to the goal and a stronger conviction that it is attainable. Individuals typically become more invested in the conflict, and look to other members of the group to justify their violence and reinforce their beliefs. Without a diversity of views, no one questions the advisability of extreme actions. This may also contribute to an effect whereby groups become convinced that glorious victory is assured and attempt to mobilize the community for conflict.

As conflict escalates, new, more militant leadership often develops. Leaders who fear that they will be replaced by challengers will not want to be seen as weak or submissive. As a result, they will often refuse to admit that any past actions were mistaken and are likely to grow in militancy and become more "hardline."[51] Furthermore, conflicts that already involve contentious activity
are likely to fall into the hands of militants who have strong negative attitudes and tend to use extreme tactics.[52] In many instances, these leaders seek to ritualize the conflict and exhibit a complete lack of interest in resolution.[53] All of this contributes to conflict escalation.

In addition, new and more militant subgroups sometimes develop, as well as committees or departments to deal with the struggle. Radical spokespersons and extremists emerge, and participation widens to include those who are willing to use more intense means.[54] These newly aroused actors will tend to form less moderate "struggle groups" that grow rapidly in size and form goals to defeat their opponent. This social endorsement of aggression can increase the likelihood that severe tactics will be used.

These competitive goals and aggressive actions tend to outlive the reasonable purposes for which they were intended.[55] Norms of contentious interaction develop, and any individuals who challenge these norms tend to be ostracized by other group members. Those who doubt the legitimacy of certain tactics may stay quiet out of fear of being labeled traitors. Or, any "dissident murmurs" will simply be drowned out by the majority.[56] Leaders are likely to foster such homogeneity by portraying the enemy as a grave threat and instituting policies that build support for the struggle.

Militant subgroups may also endure as a result of vested interests. Group membership and participation in the struggle can give individuals status, wealth and even a sense that life is meaningful.[57] Members may not wish to surrender these benefits, and therefore work hard to ensure that their group lives on. Similarly, leaders who have gained their positions because of their militancy and military men who gained status as generals and admirals have a vested interest in the perpetuation of conflict. Such individuals have incentives to resist conflict resolution and make sure that the war effort continues.

Finally, the involvement of other parties may increase a group's capacity to escalate conflict. Outside parties may see an opportunity to gain some benefit or weaken an old enemy if they join the conflict.[58] In other cases, parties will join a struggle out of obligation to their friends or allies.

These changes among individuals, groups, and communities result from prior escalation and contribute to further escalation. Once these transformations have taken place, escalation tends to persist and recur, and there is lasting damage to the relationships between the parties. In order to limit the destructive effects of escalation, parties must find a way to limit or reverse this process. Strategies to limit escalation or de-escalate conflict are needed and are discussed at length in the essays on those topics.


[17] Bartos and Wehr, 102.


[23] Bartos and Wehr, 100.
[33] Rubin, Pruitt, and Kim, 86.
[34] Kriesberg, 153.
[38] Kriesberg, 158.
[43] Kriesberg, 158.
[45] Kriesberg, 158.
[50] Rubin, Pruitt, and Kim, 94.
[54] Kriesberg, 155.
[58] Kriesberg, 159.

Sources of Additional, In-depth Information on this Topic

Additional Explanations of the Underlying Concepts:

Online (Web) Sources
Available at: http://www.beyondintractability.org/booksummary/10075/.

This summary describes Joel Brockner and Jeffrey Rubin's book, Entrapment in Escalating Conflicts. This work will be of interest to those who seek a better social-psychological understanding of the factors and processes which produce entrapment, and promote conflict escalation.

This article attempts to answer the question: Why are some multi-ethnic states susceptible to violent escalation, state breakdown and collapse while others are not? In doing so, the authors use a framework consisting of five analytical components. First, they assess basic structural determinants of violence. The second section examines interactions between ethnic groups as a source of violent behavior. Third, is an evaluation of the role of international factors. Fourth, and finally, the conclusion reviews the factors that contribute most significantly to the violent escalation of ethnic conflict.

**General Information on Escalation.**
Available at: [http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/problem/escalation.htm](http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/problem/escalation.htm).
This web page presents some general information on conflict escalation and outlines its dynamics and negative effects. It suggests that escalation alone is sufficiently powerful to transform what should be a tractable dispute into one that is virtually impossible to resolve.

Available at: [http://www.beyondintractability.org/booksummary/10477/](http://www.beyondintractability.org/booksummary/10477/).

This is a summary of the book Social Conflict, by Dean G. Pruitt and Sung Hee Kim. In the work, the authors describe how people engage in social conflicts. The authors describe the sources of conflict, identify five basic conflict strategies, and explore processes of conflict escalation and resolution. (This summary refers to the first edition of the book.)

**Jameson, Jessica K. “The Escalation and De-escalation of Intractable Conflict.” Communicating War and Terror,**
Available at: [Click here for more info.](#)

This article examines Terrell Northrup's theory of conflict escalation, and raises important questions that must be asked if we want to gain insights into the events of September 11th.

**Wehr, Paul. “Uncontrolled Escalation and Runaway Responses.”, 1999**
Available at: [http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/example/wehr7494.htm](http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/example/wehr7494.htm).

Paul Wehr in his article Uncontrolled Escalation and Runaway Responses, states that a primary characteristic of emerging conflict is escalation. Conflict parties begin to treat one another with more and more suspicion, distance, hostility, fear. The aggressive actions each takes toward the other are returned in kind but increased in intensity. Thus, in each round of exchanges, the parties become more belligerent, more hostile, less cooperative.

**Offline (Print) Sources**
This books discusses how conflict can be waged constructively at each stage of its course--from
emergence, escalation, de-escalation, termination, and finally, to resolution. Kriesberg also explores the bases of social conflict, types of inducements, conflict strategies, and the contributions of intermediaries. Click here for more info.


Russett, Bruce and D. Kinsella. "Conflict Emergence and Escalation in Interactive International Dyads." Journal of Politics 64:4, November 2002. This highly academic paper addresses theoretical concerns regarding whether the conditions affecting initial expressions of hostility are similar to the conditions that spur militarized conflicts. By examining dyadic interactions between 1951 and 1992, the authors apply their findings regarding conflict cauasion to theoretical models of the conflict process.

Pruitt, Dean G., Jeffrey Z. Rubin and Sung Hee Kim. "Conflict Escalation." In Social Conflict: Escalation, Stalemate, and Settlement, 2nd Edition. New York: McGraw Hill College Division, January 1, 1994. Pages: 68-116. In chapters five through eight, the authors explore various models that can be used to better understand conflict escalation and discuss the different types of transformation that occur in both individuals and groups as a result of escalation. They discuss the various conditions that can contribute to escalation or stability, and maintain that escalation is both antecedent and consequent of significant structural and psychological changes within communities. These changes affect both individuals and groups, and often lead to community polarization and the deterioration of relationships. Click here for more info.

Borisoff, Deborah and David A. Victor. Conflict Management: A Communication Skills Approach. Allyn and Bacon, October 14, 1997. Conflict Management presents a communication skills approach toward managing conflicts. It analyses the role communication plays in exacerbating conflicts, and offers communication strategies which promote productive conflict management. Click here for more info.

Brockner, Joel and Jeffrey Z. Rubin. Entrapment in Escalating Conflicts. New York: Springer-Verlag, 1985. This work is a social-psychological investigation into the phenomena of entrapment. The authors attempt to synthesize findings from a number of studies into a general account of entrapment. Entrapment in Escalating Conflicts will be of interest to those who seek a better theoretical understanding of the factors and processes which produce entrapment, and promote conflict escalation. This work is divided into eleven chapters, with subject and author indices. Click here for more info.

In chapter one, Kriesberg explores the various stages of conflict and suggests that the dynamics of escalation often contribute to a conflict's destructiveness. He also presents a simplified conflict cycle in which conflicts typically emerge, escalate, de-escalate, and then eventually get resolved. In chapter six, the author discusses the escalation stage of conflict in more detail and out lines the processes, conditions, and policies that often generate destructive struggles. Click here for more info.

In chapter 7, the authors discuss unilateral escalation, reciprocated escalation, and hostility-driven escalation. They argue that three forces drive a party's escalatory actions: its own interests, acts of its opponent, and its hostility. Various psychological processes, including cognitive dissonance, selective perception, and entrapment, act as positive feedbacks that increase conflict solidarity and contribute to escalation.

Revenge is the attempt to inflict harm in return for harm, which typically leads conflict on an escalatory path. One party's acts of vengeance tend to provoke the other party's counter-revenge, causing a reciprocal chain of harsh behavior. But although vengeance is typically destructive in this way, it is not always irrational. In many cases, it arises out of a genuine sense of injustice. Parties must strive to deal with their vengeful feelings in productive ways.

The Social Psychology of Inter-group and International Conflict Resolution explores the "causation, escalation, de-escalation, and resolution" of inter-group conflicts from the perspective of social-psychology. Click here for more info.

This book explores the social-psychological processes that motivate parties to commit themselves to intense and destructive social conflicts.

Examples Illustrating this Topic:

Online (Web) Sources
Campbell, Kurt M and Derek J. Mitchell. "Crisis in the Taiwan Strait?." Foreign Affairs Magazine, July 2001
Available at: Click here for more info.

This article examines the growing tension between Taiwan and China. It further explores the United States' role in preventing or controlling violence between the two.
The purpose of this paper is to seek to explain how the beginning of the Cambodian conflict under Prince Norodom Sihanouk set the stage for some of the worst mass violence the world ever witnessed -- that of the Khmer Rouge (KR) era. Throughout the course of this paper critical questions will be addressed, in hopes of gaining an understanding of how intractable conflicts begin and sustain themselves over long periods of time.

Available at: Click here for more info.

Scroll down the page to this article that provides historical background on the situation of conflict in post-colonial Sri Lanka. The article focuses on the origins and rise of Tamil nationalism and the escalation of armed conflict in the country since the 1970's.

Sahadevan, P. "Lost Opportunities and Changing Demands: Explaining the Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka." , 1900
Available at: http://www.kent.ac.uk/politics/research/kentpapers/Sahadevan.html.

This paper outlines the colonial history of the Sri Lanka (formerly, Ceylon) conflict and analyzes its changing dynamics and characteristics. In particular, it shows how the mismanagement of conflict can lead to its escalation and contribute to a protracted stalemate.


Abstract: Prior research demonstrates that partisans to a conflict tend to have an exaggerated sense of the extremism of their opponents' opinions regarding the issues under dispute. In this study, we examine an ongoing conflict between the Nez Perce Tribe and local non-Tribal governments that operate within the boundaries of the Nez Perce Reservation.

Available at: Click here for more info.

This page chronicles the escalation of violence in Uganda, beginning with the Uganda People's Democratic Movement/Army becoming the first armed opposition to President Yoweri Museveni and his government. As the UPDMA fights the governmental military, Acholiland, in the northern part of the
country, is decimated. By the end of 1986, the first steps toward peace had been made. Various peace talks are covered, and the specific terms of the 1988 Peace Accord are laid out. However, just a short while later the fighting had resumed. Today, the fighting continues, despite all the peace attempts. The author suggests dialogue and reconciliation as alternatives to continued military action.


This article sets the stage to learn about conflict escalation by playing a game. The game is called The Dollar Auction, and the lesson is: "Beware of entrapment in conflict escalation as it will cause you to prolong conflict unnecessarily."

Audiovisual Materials on this Topic:

Offline (Print) Sources
This film focuses on the Igorots, indigenous Filipino farmers, who moved from nonviolent to violent action in their pursuit to stop development activities that threatened their way of life. Click here for more info.

The Forbidden Land. Directed and/or Produced by: Lacourse, Daniele and Yvan Patry. First Run Icarus Films. 1990.
The first part of this film describes how the civil war in Ethiopian escalated to the point were its costs out weighed any benefits that might have been gained. The latter part of this film focuses on the newly independent country of Eritrea, formerly part of Ethiopia, which is implementing a number of new projects in education, health care, agriculture, and human rights to structurally deal with previous social injustices. Click here for more info.

This documentary film explains how the Vietnam protest movement emerged in the US and subsequently escalated into a domestic conflict that embroiled all members of this nation. Click here for more info.
Polarization

By
Michelle Maiese
Tova Norlen

What is Polarization?

Polarization is the process that causes neutral parties to take sides in a conflict. It also causes individuals on either side of the conflict to take increasingly extreme positions that are more and more opposed to each other. As parties move toward these opposite "poles," they define themselves in terms of their opposition to a common enemy. Trust and respect diminish, and "distorted perceptions and simplified stereotypes emerge."[1] Parties assume more rigid positions and may refuse to negotiate.

"When people divide on an issue, unless they find a resolution, they tend to push each other further out toward the opposite ends of the spectrum. Each end represents a value that is legitimate, but that also must be balanced against another value. Polarization is one way the system preserves balance, but it is an unstable and conflictual balance." -- Andrew Bard Schmookler, available online at: http://www.cop.com/info/abs-essa.html

The study of polarization first came to be identified with those realist writers who wrote about the structure of the international system, the impact of military alliances on war and peace, and the balance of power. Writers such as Vasquez, Choucri North, Wallace and Bueno de Mesquita wrote about the effect of polarization on the incidence, severity, and magnitude of great wars and arms races.[2] Polarization also became the main element in the study of the security dilemma, a situation in which parties feel threatened by an "enemy," so they increase their arms, which causes the other side to feel threatened, therefore increasing their own arms. The dilemma is thus that attempts to bring more security actually bring less. Increased pre-emptive militarization combines with fear, misperceptions, and negative stereotypes to encourage polarization. While polarization can occur in any type of conflict, it has it most damaging effects in large-scale inter-group, public policy, and international conflicts.
Causes of Polarization

Polarization is caused by a number of related psychological, sociological, and political processes. It is closely tied up with escalation in a bi-directional relationship. In other words, escalation causes polarization and vice versa.

As conflict escalates, the emergence of enemy images and stereotypes damages the relationship between adversaries. Important lines of communication and interaction that are normal to peaceful relationships are cut off, and trust diminishes. As parties begin to attribute their grievances to the other side, they often reduce the number of non-conflictual relations and interactions that they have with that party. Adversaries tend to become increasingly isolated from each other, and any inter-group communication is channeled through more antagonistic lenses. Because parties have fewer ties to individuals from the other group, they may feel freer to employ more severe actions against that group.[3] Group isolation and polarization is further aggravated by the tendency of partisans to try to win bystanders to their side, forcing people to take sides. As more people are drawn into the conflict, that conflict intensifies.

Conversely, escalation seems to increase polarization. Formerly neutral parties are pulled to one side or the other and fewer community members can retain their moderate positions. In part, this is because those involved in the conflict demand that neutral non-participants decide whether they are "with us or against us."[4] Those who would normally urge moderation and attempt to mediate the conflict are recruited by participants in the controversy, and forced to take sides. It is difficult for community members to remain neutral when people are fighting, damaging each other's property, and injuring each other. In such situations, there is a tendency to cast blame and to side with one party or the other.

Radical positions are further reinforced by group homogeneity and cohesiveness. Kriesberg notes that adversaries with little internal diversity are more prone to escalation.[5] They are more prone to polarization as well. This is because homogeneity makes it less likely that a group will consider alternatives to the severe tactics being advocated or employed by extremists. As parties assume more radical positions, group members tend to reinforce each other's negative stereotypes and enemy images.[6] Any moderate positions go unheard or their proponents ostracized -- or worse -- as they are seen as traitors to the cause. As this process continues, parties are often further segregated, and their relationship with outsiders becomes increasingly hostile and competitive.[7]

While some scholars of intergroup conflict regard polarization and escalation as inevitable in interethnic relationships, others see it as the result of social mobilization or manipulation by political elites. Leadership whose legitimacy is threatened, either by the leaders' own actions or
by an immediate crisis, can use identity as a 'rallying cry' by calling for mobilization and collective action along nationalistic or ethnic lines.[8] In order to foster homogeneity and build support for their cause, such leaders may portray the adversary as a grave threat to the vital interests and identity of "their people."[9] This furthers both polarization and escalation simultaneously.

**Addressing Polarization**

Polarization is so much a part of the process of escalation that it is difficult to ascertain if one is the cause of the other. Ikle writes that as soon as two adversaries have initiated violence, their stakes and expectations change, making it impossible to return to a peacetime relationship without first repairing the damage.[10] Escalation has multiple dimensions; it could be a shift or change in the pattern of the violence, but Ikle notes that it also usually prolongs the war by default.

Parties engaged in conflict typically focus on their differences, which can result in pushing the parties toward polar opposite positions. Strategies that encourage parties to consider their common interests can help to mitigate such effects. Planning and pursuing joint projects, for example, can help parties to focus on commonalities rather than contentious issues. Because fear and distrust often play a central in producing polarization, trust building strategies are also beneficial. The establishment of personal relationships between adversaries can help to improve their communication, increase their level of mutual understanding, and make them less likely to view each other as evil enemies. Better understanding of a party's true motives can help to reduce anger and hostility and eliminate actions that unwittingly threaten or annoy one's opponent.[11]

If possible, third-party mediators or consultants should help parties to better understand the dynamics of their conflict and to address their negative perceptions and attitudes. This sort of transformative mediation can enhance trust and help parties to refrain from taking hostile actions.[12] If parties can move toward productive negotiation, they have taken the first step towards reconciliation.


Sources of Additional, In-depth Information on this Topic

Additional Explanations of the Underlying Concepts:

Online (Web) Sources
Available at: Click here for more info.

This case study describes the nature of violent conflicts in the Northern districts of Kenya. It describes the causes and consequences attached to the conflicts, the actors involved and preventative measures that can be used to transform and prevent these violent episodes.

Galtung, Johan. "Conflict, War and Peace: A Bird's Eye View."
Available at: http://www.transcend.org/topbasic.htm.

Johan Galtung discusses the many variations and sub-types of violence and war and presents conflict resolution approaches that offer the potential for avoiding or mitigating violence and war. He also addresses the issue of polarization and explains how conflicts escalate.
Available at: Click here for more info.

This article begins by briefly describing some common patterns of polarization regarding controversial public issues. Next, the author describes the general approach and also the specific steps that the Public Conversations Project has developed to reverse polarization patterns through dialogue. Lastly, two cases are referenced to show how private dialogue can enhance public participation in resolving public policy issues.

Polarity Management Associates.
Available at: http://www.polaritymanagement.com/.
Polarity Management offers training and resources that can help organizations and businesses turn polarized situations into creative synergy.

Polarization.
Available at: http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/problem/polariz.htm.
In an effort to build their power base, parties often seek alliances with other interest groups, which agree to help each other as they pursue their separate objectives. In order to remain competitive, interest groups tend to form as many alliances as possible. Over time, this process tends to divide communities into two large and opposing alliances--a process called "polarization."

Available at: http://www.polarizationandconflict.org.
The author suggests that many countries display a distribution of income that is becoming increasingly polarized. There are growing signs of social clustering and polarization, conditions that seem to favor the rise of social unrest. The aim of this project is to promote and coordinate research about the links between polarization and conflict.

Offline (Print) Sources
The authors see polarization as the second of four stages of conflict escalation. During the first stage the conflict is not particularly escalated. Perceptions of the opponent are relatively accurate (not stereotyped) and the parties still have a good relationship. However, conflicts often escalate to a second stage, which they call polarization. Enemy images are formed, even to the point where the enemy is considered less than human, and hence not worthy of respect or what might have previously been considered "fair" treatment. The third stage is segregation, which is actually a second level of polarization, characterized by competition and hostility. The last stage is destruction, in which parties form goals to destroy the other.

In chapter six, Kriesberg discusses the polarization of relations that typically accompanies conflict escalation. As their interaction becomes more contentious, the adversaries tend to cut off communication and become increasingly isolated from each other. They are less constrained by crosscutting ties and feel more justified in taking severe action. Negative stereotypes and dehumanization often result from this process of polarization.


This work examines America's increasingly diverse society and attempts to answer questions regarding the limits of pluralism in the United States. The work investigates questions surrounding Americans' capacity for tolerance and to live in harmony despite a growing level of cultural difference between groups. This book features research about the origins and nature of group conflict and examines the effects of culture on social life from a social-psychological perspective. A key question is whether social polarization along racial and ethnic lines is inevitable. Click here for more info.


This journal article discusses the effect of ethnic division on civil war and the role of political systems in preventing these conflicts. It stresses the importance of religious polarization to explain the incidence of ethnic civil war.


In an effort to establish or defend group identity, groups identify their distinctive attributes as virtues and regard the attributes of the opposing side as vices. This need for group identity often polarizes groups with conflicting interests and goals, and gives rise to damaging stereotypes and enemy images. Click here for more info.


In chapters six and seven, the authors discuss community polarization and argue that it acts as both a cause and effect of conflict escalation. When two groups enter into heavy conflict, it will be difficult for other community members to remain neutral. They will be forced to take sides, and thus intensify the conflict. Group polarization is also linked to psychological changes that lead parties' tactics to become more severe. Click here for more info.

**Examples Illustrating this Topic:**

*Online (Web) Sources*
Available at: Click here for more info.

Scroll down the page and click on "Ideological Shifts, Economic Imperatives: Mozambican Peace Process & South African States." This article discusses how the political polarization of South African States in the 1970's and 80's delayed the negotiation of a settlement for Mozambique's war, with the subsequent region-wide shift in favor of more liberal politics in the late 1980's and 1990's leading to resolution. Much of the article focuses on regional economic relations and instability. The transition to majority rule in South Africa is identified as the solidifying change in the region that allowed for the resolution of the Mozambican conflict.

Available at: Click here for more info.

This article describes the ongoing tensions between Serbia and Montenegro, which were spawned by bad relations between the leaders of the nations.

Ahmar, Moonis. "Pakistan: The Sindhi-Mohajir Conflict.", 2002
Available at: Click here for more info.

This article outlines the dynamics of ethnic polarization in the Sindh region of Pakistan, which has been populated by people of varying ethnic and religious backgrounds over time.

Audiovisual Materials on this Topic:

* Offline (Print) Sources*

*One Island, Two Irelands*. Directed and/or Produced by: Meurice, Jean-Michel. First Run Icarus Films. 1998.
This film uses archival materials dating from 1916, to tell the history of Ireland's civil war. Click here for more info.

*Philippines: The Price of Power*. Directed and/or Produced by: Chester, Jeffrey and Charles Drucker. First Run Icarus Films. 1986.
This film focuses on the Igorots, indigenous Filipino farmers, who moved from nonviolent to violent action in their pursuit to stop development activities that threatened their way of life. Click here for more info.

This film speculates how polarization between American anti-communist and Russian communist forces influenced the overthrow of Indonesian's President Sukarno. Click here for more info.
Constructive Escalation

By
Louis Kriesberg

When at least two persons or groups believe that they have incompatible goals, they are in conflict. Frequently, one or both sides will try to coerce the other to accede to its wishes. The conflict then may 
escalate destructively. If neither side can impose its will, the conflict can become intractable.

The focus in this module is on methods of conflict escalation that do not tend to result in intractable conflicts. First, alternative escalation tactics are discussed; then, factors and processes affecting the use of different tactics are examined; and finally, the consequences of different escalation tactics are assessed.

Basic Inducements

Many non-coercive as well as coercive methods can be used for one side to get its adversary to change sufficiently so that the conflict is either resolved or acceptably managed. As with other social interactions, three basic kinds of inducements are combined in various ways to escalate conflicts strategically.[1] These inducements are coercion, reward, and persuasion.

Coercion

Coercion, or negative sanctions, is frequently used as an inducement in conflict. Coercion refers to actions, including symbolic ones, that injure or threaten injury to the adversary. The actions are intended to intimidate and deter the adversary from acting coercively themselves, and/or to force the opponent to yield to one's demands. The cessation of coercion is conditional on the opponent's compliance with these demands.

Rewards

Rewards, or positive sanctions, are also used to win compliance.[2] An extensive body of theory and research indicates that rewards are more effective than punishments in interpersonal contexts: for example, child rearing and education.

Persuasion

Persuasive inducements are efforts to influence an opponent by communicating arguments, information, or appeals that alter their perception of the conflict. If effective, the tactic of persuasion involves the recipient becoming convinced of the other's goal and voluntarily
accepting it.

**Strategy Combinations**

Though analytically distinct, these three tactics are not isolated in practice. They are variously combined in different strategies and tactics, which are employed simultaneously or in various sequences, constituting campaigns in an extended conflict. (For example, those waging the civil rights struggle in the southern United States during the 1950s and '60s used many different tactics and strategies combined in a series of campaigns over several years.)

Some tactics are highly coercive, involving high degrees of violence, but with a small amount of reward or persuasion added in. Violent coercion includes acts of terrorism, sabotage, assassination, military attacks, and police suppression. Coercion can also be nonviolent: withholding purchases or services, as in boycotts or strikes.[3] Often, nonviolent tactics incorporate significant persuasive inducements, as occurs in acts of civil disobedience, which call attention to rules that are deemed unjust. Although not thinking about it in any sophisticated way, kids use this form of coercion all the time, when they sit down and refuse to do what a parent wants them to do. Finally, some tactics promise future benefits while threats are limited. For instance, confidence-building measures and cooperative projects can be undertaken which, if completed, provide benefits to both sides.

**Shapers of Tactics and Strategies**

Four factors affect the escalation tactics and strategies that are devised and used in a conflict:

1. the disputants' goals in the conflict,
2. their internal characteristics,
3. the relations between them, and
4. their social environment.

Understanding these helps in choosing the appropriate tactics.

Partisans often point to their goals in a conflict as the reasons for selecting the methods they adopt. They generally seek a close fit between means and ends, sometimes arguing that the means should embody the ends sought and that, therefore, the means become the ends. Thus, if a nonviolent, cooperative, and egalitarian relationship with another person or group is desired, they may reason that using nonviolent methods would be more likely to succeed than violent ones. Goals that deny what is vital to the other side are likely to require extremely coercive means and resistance as long as possible -- a formula for an intractable conflict. Recognizing the consequences of resorting to harsh methods may result in an appropriate modification of goals.

An adversary's internal characteristics -- his or her past behavior and experiences and cultural traditions -- also affect the methods chosen, sometimes leading an adversary to select methods that are ineffective or even counterproductive. For example, if a party lacks the skills to negotiate effectively, choosing negotiation as a tactic may not be the wisest choice.
Significantly, perceptions of the opposing side also affect the choice of tactics in a conflict. The opponent may seem open to persuasion, vulnerable to threats, easily bought off, or capable of ruthless retaliation. By manipulating the other side's perception of oneself, one can influence which tactics they will use.

Finally, the social context of a conflict also affects escalation tactics. For example, tactics used in one arena become models for their use in other arenas. In addition, the prevailing norms of proper behavior may constrain conduct, since violating them weakens support for the perpetrators. Thus, the widespread condemnation of child or spousal abuse hopefully limits its use (though not as much as one would hope).

Persuasive elements are important to coercive actions in that they help contain conflicts and limit destructive tendencies. Nonviolent actions are often effective in this regard because the actions are overt, often accompanied by statements and slogans that recognize adversaries' common humanity, proclaiming shared values of fairness, justice, and human rights.

Conclusions

The analysis presented in this module suggests several considerations that should guide the choice of tactics and strategies in escalating a conflict effectively while avoiding intractability:

1. Each party in the conflict should initially select "methods of struggle" that make legitimate claims on the other party. The adversary should be responsive to the claims made through such channels; that need not mean yielding to the claims, but it does mean entering a process of focused interaction.
2. The tactics used should reflect consideration of the differences within the opposing side (assuming it is a group, not an individual) and not drive all individuals in the adversary camp together in resistance.
3. The tactics and strategies should be embedded in a broad strategy to win over many members of the other side for an accommodation that is mutually acceptable.
4. The methods should convey recognition of the humanity of the other side and the possibility of reaching an accommodation that satisfies the adversary's vital concerns.
5. If coercive methods are employed, they should be carefully calibrated and consistent with shared normative standards.
6. Finally, no particular strategy or tactic can constructively escalate a conflict for everyone in every circumstance. Each conflict is unique and must be thought about from a fresh perspective, even as past experiences are surveyed and alternatives, along with their likely consequences, are considered.


Sources of Additional, In-depth Information on this Topic

Additional Explanations of the Underlying Concepts:

**Online (Web) Sources**

*Escalation Training.*
Available at: [http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/treatment/escltrng.htm](http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/treatment/escltrng.htm).

Parties often do not understand the threats posed by escalation, so they fail to take simple steps which can significantly reduce this threat. They also escalate conflicts intentionally, without recognizing the problems this can cause. By simply understanding the costs—as well as the benefits—of escalation, disputants can make better decisions about when and how to escalate a conflict, and when de-escalation is a better approach.

*Tactical Escalation.*
Available at: [http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/problem/tactescl.htm](http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/problem/tactescl.htm).

As conflicts escalate, public interest and willingness to take sides generally increases. This can lead to substantial increases in the level of support enjoyed by some or all of the parties. Knowing this, disputants often deliberately escalate conflicts in order to build support. While this approach can be effective, it usually generates support for the other side as well. The result is often an intensification of the conflict with little change in the relative power of the parties.

**Offline (Print) Sources**


This volume discusses the catalysts and phases of conflict as well as the processes of conflict resolution. It identifies the complexities of constructive conflicts and outlines case studies of intractable conflict moving towards resolution.

This article explores the—wrongheaded—tendency for scholars and practitioners to focus on negative as opposed to positive sanctions and the potential value of strategically structuring incentives to shape social behavior.

**Examples Illustrating this Topic:**

*Offline (Print) Sources*

This encyclopedia of nonviolent has in-depth references about the peaceful struggles that have taken place in the past century.

This book looks at the Zapatista movement in Mexico, and illustrates how it is an example of new "netwar" conflict; a conflict in which technology is used to coordinate group action.

**Audiovisual Materials on this Topic:**

*Offline (Print) Sources*
Focusing on United States civil, environment, and women's rights movements, this film documents how a number of different tactics have been used to escalate tensions between opposing sides of an issue.
[Click here for more info.](#)
Limiting Escalation / De-escalation

By
Michelle Maiese

As conflict escalates, adversaries begin to make greater threats and impose harsher negative sanctions. In some cases, these conflicts spiral completely out of control. Given the highly destructive role that escalation plays, it is important to develop strategies to avoid, limit and reverse this process. De-escalation involves changes within each of the adversaries, as well as new forms of interaction between them. In highly escalated conflicts, de-escalation may not occur until the parties have reached a prolonged stalemate in which both sides are being harmed by continuing the confrontation. Once the parties realize this, they are more likely to be willing to negotiate a settlement. Once initiated, de-escalation tends to proceed slowly and requires much effort. Many small steps must be taken before more significant de-escalation strategies can be initiated. This essay will outline various methods intended to limit escalation and promote de-escalation.

Slowing Escalation

One way to avoid the dangers associated with escalation is to limit the extent to which a conflict becomes more intense and severe. Relationships that do not escalate easily are said to be high in stability. Various factors contribute to stability and make some conflicts resistant to escalation.

- First, conflict-limiting norms and institutions can limit the severity of conflict.\[3\] These norms and institutions typically prohibit the use of harsh tactics and point to problem solving as the appropriate way to respond to conflict. Such expectations act as "ceilings on normal behavior as do rules of any competition."\[4\]
- Forums and third-party institutions (mediation and arbitration, for example) help people resolve conflict peacefully rather than appealing to violence.\[5\]
- In addition, the fear of escalation can be important in limiting the extent to which conflict escalates out of control. Indeed, conflict is less likely to spiral when people are aware of the

Additional insights into limiting escalation/de-escalation
http://crinfo.beyondintractability.org/audio/10714
potential for such spirals and concerned about the consequences of escalation.[6] At the start of conflict, parties should set limits on how far they will go. They can agree to "cut losses" if the struggle escalates too far, or avoid entering struggles in which entrapment seems likely.[7]

- In addition, both sides may make efforts to ensure that conflict does not escalate inadvertently. For example, they can use active listening to make sure they don't escalate a dispute that is based on a simple misunderstanding. They may also utilize escalation-limiting language to ensure that any statements made about their grievances are not unnecessarily provocative.

- The establishment of social bonds tends to discourage the use of harsh tactics and reduce the likelihood of escalation. Such bonds include positive attitudes, respect, friendship, kinships, perceived similarity and common group membership.[8] These bonds can counteract any antagonism that arises over the course of conflict. The recognition that one's opponent is a member of a group to which one also belongs produces positive sentiments. And many note that an effective way to combat polarization is to forge sentimental bonds between two groups by making them feel they are a part of the same larger group. Common membership in crosscutting groups produces "bonds of perceived similarity and common group identity between these individuals."[9] In the most general sense, this is a matter of recognizing the common humanity of one's opponents and including them in one's moral scope. This process of humanization makes it much more difficult to justify the use of heavy tactics or aggression, and is therefore a powerful tool in limiting escalation.

De-escalation

But what can be done when conflict has already reached a significantly high level of intensity? In these cases, parties must turn to de-escalation strategies to counteract the escalation process and move toward a reconciliation.

Conflict de-escalation refers to a decrease in the severity of the coercive means used and in the number of parties engaged in the struggle.[10] One or more dimensions of the conflict become less intense and the conflict begins to lessen in size. De-escalation can be directed away from intense animosity or toward increased cooperation.[11]

The shift from escalation to de-escalation is not a single event, but rather a process that advances in a broad step-by-step fashion and is produced by pressures that build over time.[12] This process includes trying to get adversaries to the negotiating table, forming agreements about peripheral issues, and moving toward resolution of the basic issues.[13] All of this is typically accompanied by a reduction in hostility and mistrust between the adversaries.

Fortunately, people in an escalated conflict can only do so much damage to each other, and for only so long.[14] In particularly destructive and protracted conflicts, de-escalation typically occurs after parties have reached a hurting stalemate. At this point, neither party can escalate the conflict further, but neither side can win.[15] Contentious tactics have failed, resources have been exhausted, and both sides have incurred high costs.[16] At this point, the adversaries are likely to realize that things must change and they begin to develop a new way of thinking about their conflict.[17] Once they realize that their current strategy cannot triumph (at least not with acceptable costs), they are likely to begin to pursue a more conciliatory approach. If they refuse to end the stalemate by yielding or withdrawing, they must work together to find a mutually acceptable way out.[18]
At this point, one side typically makes an important conciliatory gesture. Hostility decreases, the tendency to retaliate lessens, and the level of coerciveness declines.[19] Eventually adversaries may begin to confer benefits on each other and reward each other for cooperating.[20] All of these factors initiate the process of de-escalation.

**Conditions that Encourage De-escalation**

Some of the same processes that contribute to escalation also contribute, in different circumstances, to de-escalation. The processes of de-escalation occur within each adversary, in the relations between adversaries, and among parties in the social environment.[21] To a large extent, all of these de-escalation processes occur as a result of various changes in conflict conditions. These changed conditions produce a new context in which de-escalation policies are more likely to succeed.

**Social-psychological and Organizational Changes**

The process of de-escalation that takes place within each adversary includes various social-psychological changes and organizational developments. These processes help people to recognize their own responsibility for the conflict and to reframe the conflict so that a mutually beneficial solution seems possible.[22]

Social-psychological processes that can contribute to de-escalation include cognitive dissonance, entrapment, relationship building, and empathy. Cognitive dissonance theory suggests that once people have made conciliatory moves towards an adversary, they tend to justify their actions. In an attempt to make their values consistent with their actual conduct, parties may devalue previously-sought goals.[23] If the actions are reciprocated and turn out to be beneficial, de-escalation becomes even more likely.

Like cognitive dissonance, entrapment often fosters escalation but can be controlled to help avoid escalation. Indeed, certain aspects of entrapment can contribute directly to de-escalation. Once adversaries have initiated conciliatory actions, entrapments may help to keep them on course. This is because de-escalatory actions have costs and involve an investment on the part of the adversaries. Parties may therefore find themselves yielding more than they had anticipated in order to behave consistently with past actions. To abandon de-escalation after investing so much would be to admit that their previous actions had been mistaken.[24]

Sympathy and empathy also contribute to de-escalation and help to sustain it. A person sympathizing with another is emotionally moved by that person's feelings. Empathy, on the other hand, stresses taking the role of the other, accurately perceiving the other's feelings and thoughts, and experiencing those feelings and thoughts "as if" they were one's own.[25] Those who sympathize or empathize with their adversaries are far less likely to inflict devastating harm on them. In addition, such feelings help to produce and support further de-escalatory policies.

Several organizational developments within one or more of the parties can also fuel de-escalation. First, the emergence of groups interested in cooperating with the adversary may lend legitimacy to dissent from hard-line policies. Constituencies for de-escalation often arise when
parties' confidence in the justness and morality of their cause begins to wane.\[26\]

Also, as the costs of continuing the struggle grow, parties may become doubtful about the value of the goals sought and develop a general sense that the means being used are not achieving what is intended. The evident failure of past coercive strategies may lead them to consider an alternate approach.\[29\]

In conflicts between groups, if the majority regards the severe tactics used by one faction as unacceptable, this extreme faction may lose its support and legitimacy.\[30\] Alternative leadership that supports de-escalation and opposes hard-line policies may emerge, leading to changes in policy that create new opportunities for de-escalation. If more moderate representatives are involved in decision-making, there is likely to be more free discussion and a genuine consideration of alternatives.\[31\]

A depletion of resources can further contribute to de-escalation. Adversaries have limited amounts of manpower and strategic materials that they can invest in waging conflict. As these limited resources begin to diminish, a party's ability to engage in coercive action decreases.\[32\]

This depletion of resources may eventually hinder aggressive action. Furthermore, parties may decide that accommodation is better than continuing the struggle and risking total destruction.

Once de-escalation has begun, various organizational developments can make it difficult to turn back. Leaders who have undertaken the first de-escalatory steps do not want to appear as if they've made a mistake. If large, public steps have been taken to de-escalate conflict, this new course may seem irreversible.\[33\]

### Interactions Between Adversaries

The second broad class of de-escalation processes pertains to the interaction between adversaries. Just as the destructive ways in which adversaries interact can foster conflict escalation, other modes of interaction can contribute to de-escalation. Parties' willingness to participate in de-escalation negotiations often results from their recognition that they are interdependent and that their goals can be integrated.\[34\]

To begin the process of de-escalation, each side must first recognize and respect the other's rights and legitimate interests. Parties can work to reduce inaccurate perceptions, stereotypes and enemy images through training in workshops, personal therapy and reflection.\[35\] Changes in relationships can be fostered through reciprocity, issue containment and developing positive ties between adversaries.

- **First**, reciprocity in interaction can help conflicts to mutually de-escalate.
  - If each side reacts at an equivalent level to the other, both sides can avoid acting in ways they think may provoke or invite harsher actions from the other side.\[36\]
  - In addition, learning from experiences with the adversary can help parties to estimate how the other side will react. This reduces the likelihood of unintentional conflict escalation.
  - Finally, adversaries who develop shared norms of interaction may be constrained in the
degree to which they escalate conflict.

- Second, issue containment can help conflict from becoming all-encompassing. This can occur in a variety of ways.
  - In some cases, an adversary may intentionally concentrate all of its energy on a specific goal.
  - Also, parties who fail to attain their grand goals may find settling for what they can get to be the best option.
  - Once the matters in contention can be broken down into sub-issues, some of these issues may appear easier to settle and trade-offs among them may seem possible.[37]
  - Finally, inflammatory issues may be contained by the development of shared goals. For example, adversaries who believe that continued escalation poses the risk of mutual destruction may decide to work together to avoid such a result.

- Lastly, as members from each side develop ties and establish communication, they may facilitate de-escalation. These individuals serve as "quasi-mediators," conveying important information to the opposing sides and helping both groups to find a way to de-escalate conflict. They may also develop bonds with each other and form shared expectations about how future confrontations will be handled.[39]

### Third Party Roles

The final broad class of de-escalation processes concerns the roles played by outside parties and the ways in which they relate to the adversaries to foster de-escalation. Third parties can be official or unofficial--friends, co-workers, neighbors, or family members often act as unofficial mediators or arbitrators. Parents, for example, frequently arbitrate sibling disputes; friends mediate for other friends; bosses mediate or arbitrate for employees. Professional mediators also can be hired to mediate family, workplace or community conflicts.

### Educational Institutions and the Media

Finally, social education and the media play a significant role in the de-escalation of community and inter-group conflicts. Currently, education is highly ethnocentric and influenced by propaganda and inflammatory media. However, schools, communities and the media also have the potential to promote cooperation and foster pro-social behavior. For example, schools can design activities to increase children's ability to identify others' emotional responses and to take the perspective of another. Such empathy training fosters cooperation and mutual understanding. Education about nonviolent modes of conflict resolution is also crucial. More and more schools are instituting peer mediation and/or conflict resolution education as part of the core curriculum. Often children who have been trained to be peer mediators take their skills home and teach them to their parents, siblings, and friends--thereby spreading basic conflict resolution skills and attitudes beyond the confines of the school.

The media, including radio and television, also plays an important role in conflict escalation AND de-escalation. Although the media tends to focus on violence and fear, it doesn't have to. Rather, the media has great potential to show nonviolent ways to reduce tensions and to resolve conflict--to present positive role models, instead of just negative ones.
De-escalation Strategies

There are many policies and strategies that various parties can pursue in order to de-escalate conflicts. In selecting an approach, an analysis of the current situation should be made. No single kind of de-escalating effort will work for every conflict in every situation. Instead, a wide range of alternative policies should be reviewed to ascertain which policies are likely to attain particular goals under various circumstances.[44] Which policies of de-escalation will prove to be most effective will depend in large part on the level of escalation that has been reached.

While conflict that has reached only a low level of escalation is usually the easiest and least costly to resolve, the will to do so is often low.[45] Because the seriousness of these conflicts typically goes unrecognized, disputants and intermediaries often do not act.

To avoid further escalation, parties should use non-provocative methods, such as negotiation or protest as opposed to threats or other coercive tactics. They should keep the issues in contention narrowly focused and isolated from other issues, and limit participation of other people. One way of doing this is to reduce or counter inflammatory rumors and establish rumor control mechanisms. For example, in periods of rioting or other racial disturbances, the Community Relations Service, an arm of the U.S. Department of Justice, sometimes establishes rumor control centers to provide accurate information about what is going on. On call all of the time, they provide a phone number citizens can call to seek verification of stories they have heard.[46]

Intermediaries can attempt to limit conflict escalation by providing mediation, information gathering and consultation services. Peer mediators do this on the playground at school; ombudspersons do this in the workplace environment. [47] Long-term de-escalation policies include the development of crosscutting group ties, institutionalized conflict resolution procedures (such as dispute resolution systems), and the creation of shared identities. They also involve efforts aimed at improving the social, economic, and cultural way of life of the disadvantaged and marginalized members of society.

Such measures not only limit inadvertent escalation, but also aid in de-escalation. Gradual Reduction in Tension (GRIT), a term coined by Charles Osgood, refers to those strategies whereby mutual tension and fear can be interrupted and the de-escalation process begun through conciliatory moves. One of the parties announces and initiates a series of small cooperative moves, and invites the other side to reciprocate. These moves are continued whether or not there is immediate reciprocity.[48] If the opponent does respond positively, the first party can make a second concession, which sets a "peace spiral" in motion.

If the first initiative is ignored, on the other hand, it can be followed by a second or even a third
attempt. These concessions should be designed to build trust and indicate a willingness to cooperate, but should not be terribly costly. These disarming moves help to break down parties' negative perceptions of each other and allow a step-by-step process of conflict de-escalation to begin. Although developed with international conflicts in mind, the same strategies apply for long-running, intense interpersonal conflicts. Escalated conflicts between parents and teens can be treated in the same way. A parent can loosen up controls on their wayward teen a bit, as a conciliator move, hoping that the gesture will be returned by more respect for the family rules. Eventually trust can be rebuilt between parent and child, even when it had become badly deteriorated before.

**The Importance of Timing**

Timing is a critical factor in de-escalation efforts. William Zartman coined the term "ripeness," to indicate when a conflict was ready for de-escalation and resolution. Parties may try to de-escalate when the time is wrong or fail to try when the time is right. If de-escalation is attempted at the wrong time, it is likely to fail. Once made and rejected, a de-escalation proposal might become tainted. While it may have succeeded had it been implemented at a more suitable time, it becomes less credible once rejected. In addition, failed attempts to de-escalate conflict may contribute to parties' view of the conflict as intractable.[57] Any other de-escalation efforts may come to be regarded as hopeless.

In addition, parties may fail to initiate de-escalation policies when the time is ripe. A chance to reach a beneficial outcome has been lost, and it is possible that conditions may not be right for that settlement again.[58] Furthermore, if parties have only limited time to reach an agreement, the failure to take full advantage of an opportunity may lead to a lengthy delay. This allows the conflict to persist and possibly escalate. Hostilities may become institutionalized, making de-escalation more difficult in the future.

Finally, parties can initiate de-escalation when the time is right, and yet still fail to achieve the full range of desired results. That has many reasons, which can be summarized by saying that intractable conflicts are entrenched, complex, and somewhat unpredictable. What will work to de-escalate one may not work for another. Yet disputants themselves as well as the parties must be willing to risk de-escalation at some point, or else the conflict, with all its destructive results, will go on indefinitely.


[6] Ibid., 68.


[9] Ibid., 78.


[18] Pruitt and Rubin, op. cit. 131.


[22] Ibid., 182.

[23] Ibid., 183.

[24] Ibid., 183.
[25] Ibid., 184.
[26] Ibid., 192.
[27] Bartos and Wehr, op. cit. 119.
[28] Ibid., 114.
[30] Ibid., 185.
[31] Ibid., 186.
[32] Ibid., 119.
[33] Ibid., 86.
[34] Pruitt and Rubin, op. cit. 156.


[51] Pruitt and Rubin, 135.


[56] Hamburg, 38.


Sources of Additional, In-depth Information on this Topic

Additional Explanations of the Underlying Concepts:

*Online (Web) Sources*


Available at: http://www.beyondintractability.org/booksummary/10593/.

This page offers a summary of the book, Beyond the Hotline, by William Ury. Ury examines ways to prevent or control international crises. Although Ury was particularly concerned with ways to avoid a nuclear crisis between the Cold War superpowers, his suggestions remain relevant today.

*De-escalation.*

Available at: http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/treatment/de-esc.htm.

This page outlines various strategies for reducing the intensity of a conflict and provides links to online essays and examples of de-escalation.

This is a summary of International Conflict Resolution, by Louis Kriesberg. The book presents an analysis of international conflict de-escalation and negotiation by investigating Arab-Israeli and U.S.-USSR de-escalation efforts.


De-escalation is much more difficult to implement than is escalation. One strategy for starting a de-escalation spiral is what Charles Osgood called GRIT—graduated reciprocal reductions in tension. This involves one side making a small conciliatory gesture, which they hope is matched by a conciliatory response. If it is not, a second or third small gesture can be made to indicate one's interest and willingness to de-escalate the conflict. Once the opponent reciprocates, another slightly more important conciliatory step can be taken, and if that is matched, the pattern can be continued, resulting in a cycle of conciliation in place of the former cycle of escalation.

Jameson, Jessica K. "The Escalation and De-escalation of Intractable Conflict." Communicating War and Terror, Available at: Click here for more info.

This piece explores how to de-escalate conflicts that have reached the final stage of intractability. It outlines three broad levels of change and de-escalation.

*Offline (Print) Sources*

Ury examines ways to prevent or control international crises and increase communication between conflicting parties. Although Ury was particularly concerned with ways to avoid a nuclear crisis during the Cold War, his suggestions remain relevant today. Click here for more info.


This books discusses how conflict can be waged constructively at each stage of its course—from emergence, escalation, de-escalation, termination, and finally, to resolution. Kriesberg also explores the bases of social conflict, types of inducements, conflict strategies, and the contributions of intermediaries. Click here for more info.

This chapter examines the processes of de-escalation. It discusses some changing conditions that can contribute to de-escalation and suggests policies by which this process can be sustained and forwarded.

Chapter 7 describes the processes of de-escalation that occur within each adversary, in the relations between them, and in the larger social environment. The author outlines various social-psychological and organizational developments that foster de-escalation and describes numerous strategies to bring about changes in the ways adversaries interact. While some strategies will work from a low level of escalation, other strategies are most effective for conflicts that have reached a markedly high level of escalation. Click here for more info.

In chapter 7, the authors suggest that conflicts tend to de-escalate after they have been in a state of equilibrium for a long time. They describe various conditions that contribute to de-escalation, including a decrease in conflict solidarity and the depletion of resources. These factors decrease a party’s ability to engage in coercive action and encourage them to conciliatory gestures to de-escalation.

This book presents an analysis of international conflict de-escalation and negotiation by investigating Arab-Israeli and U.S.-USSR de-escalation efforts. Click here for more info.

This introduction discusses the concepts of de-escalation and timing and outlines various de-escalation efforts that attempt to move parties toward formal negotiations and agreements. The author also outlines various conditions that are conducive to de-escalation, including aspects of adversary relations, domestic circumstances, and international context. Finally, he describes many of the different de-escalation strategies that are available to both outside actors and the parties themselves.

The chapter reviews factors that contribute to intractability at each stage of a conflict. In addition, it discusses steps that may be taken to reduce the sense of intractability.

This article distinguishes between three types of groups that engage in wars: states, insurgenets, and
peoples. The author suggests that wars fought between different combinations of these three groups follow different patterns of de-escalation. He also raises questions regarding the dynamics of de-escalation processes, the roles of different participants, and various types of de-escalation strategies.

This piece considers whether positive or negative inducements are more effective exercises of power to produce de-escalation. The authors present various cases studies and discuss them in light of the foregoing question. They maintain that the initial decision to de-escalate is usually brought about by failed escalation rather than constraints imposed by one's adversary. And while threats can motivate parties to move toward agreement, the provision of incentives is ultimately more conducive to long-term de-escalation.

This work examines the characteristics of preventive diplomacy, focusing on the fact that negotiation lies at the heart of the pursuit. The work reviews how preventive negotiation has been practiced by looking at specific issues to which the practice has been applied. Eleven different authors contribute essays on topics including "boundary problems, territorial claims, ethnic conflict, divided states, state disintegration, cooperative disputes, trade wars, transboundary environmental disputes, global natural disasters, global security conflicts, and labor disputes. The editor’s conclusion draws out general themes about the nature of preventive diplomacy." -Amazon.com

This work explores the dynamics of conflict escalation, focusing on tactical considerations of conflict strategies and their potential outcomes. Click here for more info.

This chapter explains why stalemates occur and describes how parties move from stalemate to de-escalation. Stalemates emerge for a variety of reasons, including exhaustion of resources unwillingness to incur continued costs. One way for parties to move out of stalemate and into de-escalation is through problem-solving. In this chapter, the authors stress the role that increased communication and the development of superordinate goals can play in moving adversaries toward problem-solving and de-escalation. Click here for more info.

There is a question as to whether de-escalation is simply escalation in reverse, or a different sort of
process altogether. The author distinguishes between positive and negative modes of de-escalation and suggests that de-escalation thresholds are likely to be very different from those involved in escalation. This chapter explains why de-escalation is not simply a reversal of the escalation process and outlines some distinctive features of de-escalation.


Full de-escalation from war to peaceful cooperation involves a series of successive redefinisions of the adversaries' relationship. First, each party realizes that it can impose terrible burdens on the other and that the other also knows this. Second, the adversaries realize that they can both benefit from mutual self-restraint. Finally, the former antagonists begin to see themselves as partners in producing a commonly desired state of affairs and are concerned for one another's well-being. The author describes various conditions that make such transformation possible.

Examples Illustrating this Topic:

**Online (Web) Sources**


This article profiles the intractable conflict between Shia and Sunni Muslims in Pakistan, and the steps the Musharraf administration has taken to de-escalate it and prevent further polarization.

Lakicevic, Dragan, Maria Teresa Mauro and Zoran Lutovac. "Serbia: A New Beginning Taking Shape." , 2002

Available at: Click here for more info.

This article examines security challenges in ethnically heterogeneous regions of Serbia in the difficult aftermath of the Milosevic era. The article discusses how the international community and NGOs are working to ease ethnic tensions in the region.

**Offline (Print) Sources**


In this book, author Mari Fitzduff discusses the various conflict resolution processes that helped bring de-escalation to the conflict in North Ireland. This work provides an outline of the conflict itself as well as outlining conflict initiatives in the fields of equality, diversity, security work, and political and community dialogue. While emphasizing the complexity of resolving a conflict such as that in Northern Ireland, the nature of the resolution processes employed highlights the importance of addressing social-psychological aspects of the conflict. Click here for more info.
This book presents an analysis of international conflict de-escalation and negotiation by investigating Arab-Israeli and U.S.-USSR de-escalation efforts. [Click here for more info.](#)

"This article introduces an evolutionary framework for the de-escalation of protracted conflicts. Key variables are political shocks, expectancy revision, policy entrepreneurship, third-party pressure, and reciprocity. The model is tested in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian case, 1979-98." --Sage Publications [Click here for more info.](#)

George argues that three factors contributed to Kennedy's success in preventing escalation. First, he limited his demands to removal of the Soviet missiles from Cuba. Further demands would have only provoked greater Soviet resistance. Second, Kennedy began with a blockade, which did not involve the immediate use of force and bought him time to attempt to persuade the Soviets. Finally, both Khrushchov and Kennedy followed important operational principles of crisis management.

**Audiovisual Materials on this Topic:**

*Offline (Print) Sources*

This film chronicles the conflict in Northern Ireland from 1968 to 1998. It shows the actions that were taken to de-escalate the conflict after years of prolonged violence. [Click here for more info.](#)

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**Cooling-Off Periods**

By Heidi Burgess
Definition

Cooling-off periods are used in highly emotional confrontations in which one or more of the parties has become intensely angry as the result of some real or imagined provocation or threat. They consist of a formal waiting period, often imposed by law or by an external authority (such as a mediator or a political leader) before disputing parties are allowed to continue to prosecute a conflict.

Use of this technique grew out of the realization that people who are angry and who may have suffered physical or emotional injuries are likely to make decisions that they will later regret. Professional intermediaries also recognize the problem. They know that in angry and emotional situations, the chances of reaching a settlement or even making significant progress are almost non-existent. Decisions made under these circumstances are likely to make the situation worse, rather than better.

Bill Ury refers to cooling-off periods as, "going to the balcony." Parties can "go to the balcony" to create enough time and space to distance themselves from their knee-jerk impulses to strike back, give in or break off the negotiation. It gives them the chance to regain control over their emotions.[1]

How Cooling-Off Periods Are Used

In principle, the solution is very simple: agree to a mutual pause in the confrontation (or a recess in the negotiations) so that everyone has a chance to think about what has happened and carefully develop their response strategy. This does not mean that the parties are being asked to forget the events that made them so angry -- they are merely being given time to think carefully about how best to approach the situation.

Anyone involved in a heated conflict can call for a "cooling-off" period (or they can just walk away and take one without asking for permission from the other side). Often, they are imposed before an impending strike, giving management and labor more time to try to work out an agreement before the crippling strike occurs.

Usually what happens is a third party (or the two parties themselves) call for a cooling-off period. During this cooling-off period, the parties are expected to return to business as usual. There can also be an understanding that the terms of the eventual settlement will be applied retroactively to the cooling-off period, so the parties will not lose gains if they wait to pursue the conflict. This approach can be applied in labor conflicts, public policy negotiations, family conflicts, and even civil wars. When mediators see discussions becoming too heated or intense, they may call for a "caucus" with each party separately, which is, in essence, a cooling-off period which allows both sides to think about what they and the other side said and did and consider other ways of approaching the problem that might work more effectively. Crisis management techniques designed to slow down the pace of the conflict can also be helpful in fulfilling cooling-off functions.

**Sources of Additional, In-depth Information on this Topic**

**Additional Explanations of the Underlying Concepts:**

*Online (Web) Sources*

*De-escalation.*

**Available at:** [http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/treatment/de-esc.htm](http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/treatment/de-esc.htm).

This page outlines various strategies for reducing the intensity of a conflict and provides links to online essays and examples of de-escalation.

**Examples Illustrating this Topic:**

*Online (Web) Sources*

"Andy Griffith: TV Land Mediator." , 1900


The author uses a television show scenario to exemplify Bill Ury's "going to the balcony" concept. "Going to the balcony" refers to cooling off and not letting one's emotions allow them to act in an irrational manner.

"Frequently Asked Questions: Mediation." , 1900

**Available at:** [http://www.nmb.gov/mediation/faq-mediation.html](http://www.nmb.gov/mediation/faq-mediation.html).

This site answers over two dozen frequently asked questions about the mediation of agreements within the airline and railroad industries under the Railway Labor Act (RLA).

*Negotiation Cartoons. The Foundation on Prevention & Early Resolution of Conflict.*

**Available at:** [http://www.conflictresolution.org/cartoon/negotiation.htm](http://www.conflictresolution.org/cartoon/negotiation.htm).

This site has links to several cartoons about negotiation.


**Available at:** [http://www.mideastweb.org/mitchell_report.htm](http://www.mideastweb.org/mitchell_report.htm).

This site has the full-text of the Mitchell Report of the Sharm el-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee. It lists the steps to be taken to end Palestinian/Israeli violence and to resume negotiations, plus it examines the roots of the current violence from both the Palestinian and Israeli perspective.
What Did You Do To Diminish Tension Between the Parties?. CRInfo.
Available at: http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/civil_rights/topics/1400.html.
During the past 35 years, Community Relations Service (CRS) mediators and conciliators have responded to thousands of volatile civil rights disputes, including virtually every major racial and ethnic conflict that occurred in the USA during this time period. This site shares how seventeen CRS mediators helped to relieve tension between the parties involved in these conflicts.