
In Practice

A Special Section

Intractable Conflict from the Bottom Up

*Guest Editors: Sandra Cheldelin, Melanie Greenberg,
Christopher Honeyman, and Maria R. Volpe*

The three articles in this special section — by David M. Malone, Harold H. Saunders, and Robert A. Baruch Bush — constitute the epilogue to a complex experiment, a conference which sought to ask some deceptively simple questions across disciplinary lines: *What don't we know about conflict and its resolution? What do we need to know? How would we find out?*

We organized the 2002 Hewlett Theory Centers' conference, held in New York City in the spring of 2002, to draw on the wisdom of some of the field's leading practitioners, and to challenge scholars to create new theories, responsive to new needs. The whys and wherefores of the particular construct we chose were outlined in the October, 2002 special issue of *Negotiation Journal*. But it is worth pointing out that in all, more than 40 highly experienced scholars and practitioners have now contributed published work that emanated from the 2002 Hewlett meeting. That includes a total of eighteen articles in *Negotiation Journal* as well as a number of significant articles published as the conference *Proceedings*, on “mirrored” web sites of the City University of New York's Dispute Resolution Consortium and the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University.²

A hallmark of all these writings is the degree to which they “cross-fertilize” among different aspects of the conflict resolution field. From the beginning, our plan was to create discussions that would encourage the participants to think across the “amorphous boundaries”³ between the specialized and demanding domains within which our colleagues must work

day to day. We believe these essayists have taken up that challenge, even without the “casting against type” which led us to ask law professor Robert Baruch Bush, for example, to consider contributing to the “international” stream of discussion rather than one of the “domestic” streams with which he is so often identified.

A conventional approach to the subject matter would lead to the predictable recommendation that the three articles which are included in this section be read in conjunction with such obviously related articles as those by Jan Eliasson, Gillian Sorensen and David Hamburg, printed in the October 2002 issue of *Negotiation Journal*. But as readers who pick up that issue will see, the articles have been grouped differently, to encourage broader consideration of some underlying themes which emerged in the writings. We hope that readers, in turn, will collaborate in this experiment, by sampling articles from the full series (including the Web-based *Proceedings* papers) that might at first seem unrelated, but may well address some of their everyday professional preoccupations, upon taking a broader view. We strongly believe that conflict resolution will truly *become* a field only when its contributing disciplines and specialties have developed systems, structures, and habits that engage in such cross-fertilization as a matter of course.

Asking people to make such forays into broader definitions of their work would, of course, probably be fruitless if the essays they were encouraged to read turned out to be a chore, or a “snore.” We would therefore like to thank those who contributed to this series for the lucidity, as well as the deep understanding of their work, which they brought to the task.

NOTES

1. The theory centers constitute a complex structure for intellectual inquiry. Beginning in 1982 with the Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law School, there are now eighteen such centers, interdisciplinary programs at a number of leading colleges and universities around the United States. For a list, see <http://www.crinfo.org/documents/hwlt-thry-ctrs.cfm>

2. These web sites are as follows:

<http://johnjay.jjay.cuny.edu/dispute/conf.htm>

<http://www.gmu.edu/departments/ICAR/hewlett>

3. See Honeyman, C., B. McAdoo, B., and N. Welsh, "Here there be monsters: At the edge of the map of conflict resolution," in *The Conflict Resolution Practitioner* (Monograph, 2000, Office of Dispute Resolution, Georgia Supreme Court; republished electronically at: www.convenor.com/madison/monsters.htm)

Sandra Cheldelin is Associate Professor of Conflict Resolution at the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (ICAR) at George Mason University, Fairfax, Va. Email: scheldel@gmu.edu

Melanie Greenberg was Program Director of the Conflict Resolution Program at the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation from October 2000 to October 2002. She currently serves as an adviser to the program. She can be reached c/o The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, 2121 Sand Hill Road, Menlo Park, Calif. 94025. Email: mgreenberg@hewlett.org

Christopher Honeyman is director of "Broad Field" and directed its predecessor "Theory to Practice," major Hewlett Foundation-funded efforts to improve cross-fertilization among the many disciplines which constitute conflict resolution. He is president of Convenor, a conflict resolution consulting firm based in Madison, Wis. and Washington, D.C. Email: honeyman@convenor.com

Maria R. Volpe is Professor of Sociology at John Jay College of Criminal Justice of the City University of New York and Convenor of the CUNY Dispute Resolution Consortium, 899 Tenth Ave., Room 520, New York, N.Y. 10019. Email: mvolpe@jjay.cuny.edu