The Problem-Solving Workshop in Conflict Resolution

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The idea that face-to-face communication among parties in conflict, in a context other than diplomatic negotiations, may contribute to conflict management and resolution is certainly not new. The American Friends Service Committee, in particular, has pioneered in such endeavors. In the last few years we have seen some exciting new experiments in this type of international communication, based on concepts and techniques from the behavioral sciences. Notable among these are the exercises in "controlled communication" of John Burton and his associates at the Centre for the Analysis of Conflict at University College, London, and the Fermuda Workshop, organized by Leonard Doob and his associates at Yale University. Both approaches are designed to bring together representatives of nations or national (ethnic) communities involved in an active conflict, for face-to-face communication in a relatively isolated setting, free from governmental and diplomatic protocol. Discussions, following a relatively unstructured agenda, take place under the guidance of social scientists who are knowledgeable both about group process and about conflict theory. The talks are designed to produce changes in the participants' perceptions and attitudes and thus to facilitate creative problem-solving.

This chapter summarizes the Burton and Doob approaches and then compares, evaluates, and attempts to integrate them. The ge-
necic term "problem-solving workshop" is used to refer to both approaches, since it emphasizes the fact that these approaches utilize "workshop" techniques, but that their orientation is toward problem-solving rather than sensitivity training or personal growth as such.

The workshop approach (and psychological analysis more generally) is often greeted with skepticism; indeed, I share some of that skepticism myself. Before turning to the work of Burton and Doob, therefore, let me make some assumptions that I bring to this analysis—and with which, I believe, Burton and Doob generally concur.

(1) I do not assume that most international conflicts are simply products of misunderstanding and misperception that can be cleared up through improved communication. Real conflicts of interest or competing definitions of national interest are often at the center of such disputes. In some cases, improved understanding may demonstrate more clearly that the goals of the conflicting parties are indeed incompatible. Communication may still be useful, in that it may reveal more precisely to each party the costs of pursuing various alternative policies are likely to be. Nevertheless, more accurate perception would clearly not alter the realities of the underlying conflict.

Moreover, even where there is misperception, face-to-face communication can directly affect only the perceptions and attitudes of the participating individuals. International conflicts, however, usually involve not only individual misperceptions, but also institutionalized ones—that is, misperceptions that are built into and perpetuated through the decision-making apparatus. Vested interests and organizational commitments become attached to a given perception of a conflict situation at various levels in the decision-making bureaucracy, making it difficult for changed perceptions to penetrate.

Clearly, then, problem-solving workshops are not meant as panaceas or as total solutions. They are merely inputs into a more complex resolution process. They are not alternatives to diplomatic and political negotiations, but supplementary or preparatory to them. Burton argues that his procedures of controlled communication are potentially significant and central inputs into conflict resolution; yet

he too speaks of these procedures as preparing the ground for negotiation and as establishing the preconditions of agreement—not as substituting for negotiation.

(2) The problem-solving workshops discussed here are not to be equated with T-groups or sensitivity training as usually defined. They do use some of the techniques and approaches derived from T-group experience. The Ferrosda Workshop utilized fairly standard T-groups during its first phase, although its organizers are inclined to view this decision as a mistake. In any event, the main task of these workshops is not to increase personal sensitivity, or even interpersonal trust and understanding of the other side: nor is there any assumption that international conflict can be redlined and resolved at an interpersonal level. Workshops are designed to promote trust and openness in communication. However, these are seen not as ends in themselves, but as means toward the development of an atmosphere in which creative problem-solving becomes possible. Unlike the standard T-group, the problem-solving workshop is oriented toward carrying out a concrete task and achieving a usable product.

THE BURTON EXERCISES IN CONTROLLED COMMUNICATION

John Burton's book 1 and other papers on controlled communication draw on experiences gained in two workshops, one involving an international conflict and the other an intercommunal conflict. I was on the panel of sociologists in the second exercise, and I base any impressions of the approach on that experience. It differed in several ways from the first exercise and from further ones that Burton and his associates are currently planning—both because of different circumstances and because the technique itself is still evolving—but it illustrates Burton's general orientation.

The exercise dealt with the conflict between the Greek and Turkish communities in Cyprus. It was held in the fall of 1966, in a university setting in London. It lasted two weeks. The participants included two representatives of the Greek community and two of the Turkish community. They were selected by the top decision-makers in their respective communities, but they participated essentially as private citizens rather than as official representatives. The exercise was presented to them basically as an academic project, which would meet

1 Burton, Controlled Communication.


the interests of the sponsoring organization in the analysis of conflict, and the interests of the participants in the resolution process. It is critical, therefore, that the process be designed in a way that is truly participatory and that respects the autonomy of each participant. The facilitator must be committed to fostering an environment in which all participants feel heard and understood. This is achieved through active listening and summarizing, as well as by encouraging participants to express their thoughts and feelings in a respectful and non-judgmental manner.

The facilitator also plays a crucial role in managing the dynamics of the group. This involves creating a safe space for participants to express their concerns and fears, and facilitating productive discussions. This is particularly important when the conflict involves emotional or sensitive issues. The facilitator must be skilled in managing group dynamics and in helping participants to express their feelings in a constructive manner.

In conclusion, the facilitator is a critical component of the process of conflict resolution. They must be skilled in facilitating participatory processes, managing group dynamics, and fostering a safe and respectful environment. By doing so, they can help to create a space in which participants can work towards a mutually acceptable solution to the conflict.
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The workshop lasted two weeks, with a workshop break in the middle. It was divided into two phases: the first phase was the introduction of the method and the second phase was the application of the method to the problem.

In the first phase, the participants were divided into two groups: Group A and Group B. Each group was given a problem to solve. The problem was to design a new product in the electronics industry.

In the second phase, the participants were divided into four subgroups: Group A1, Group A2, Group B1, and Group B2. Each subgroup was given a different aspect of the problem to solve. The subgroup was to design the product's function, design the product's appearance, design the product's performance, and design the product's manufacturing process, respectively.

The final step of the workshop was the presentation of the solutions. Each subgroup presented their solutions to the other groups. The solutions were then discussed and evaluated by the entire group.

The workshop was successful in that it provided the participants with a new perspective on problem-solving. The participants were able to see the problem from different angles and were able to come up with innovative solutions.

The workshop also provided the participants with the opportunity to build teamwork and communication skills. The participants were able to work together effectively and were able to communicate their ideas effectively.
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The two approaches compared

In comparing the two approaches — and, particularly, in using the differences between them — we keep in mind that neither one can necessarily reflect the accomplishments of the workshop, nor do we view them as inexorably linked or necessarily tied together. Instead, we see them as alternative methods of communicating and expressing the work of the workshop.

Despite the differences, both approaches can be fruitful. In fact, the two approaches are not mutually exclusive. Instead, they complement each other. The problem-solving workshop approach can be used to identify and analyze problems, while the workshop approach can be used to develop solutions. Together, these two approaches can create a powerful tool for problem-solving.

The workshop approach is particularly useful when dealing with complex problems. It allows participants to brainstorm ideas, explore new possibilities, and come to a consensus on the best course of action. On the other hand, the problem-solving workshop approach is ideal for situations where a more structured approach is needed. It can be used to identify underlying issues, analyze data, and develop solutions.

In conclusion, the two approaches can be used in tandem to effectively address complex problems. By combining the strengths of each approach, we can create a powerful tool for problem-solving that can be used in a variety of settings.

References

international relations theory, diplomacy, and the analysis of conflict resolution processes. Their primary goal was to provide a research project within the framework for the development of new decision-making tools that could be applied to international conflicts. The workshop was designed to facilitate a series of discussion sessions among the participants, who were divided into three main groups: (a) the instruction group, which included experts in international relations and conflict resolution; (b) the mediation group, which consisted of mediators and practitioners involved in conflict resolution; and (c) the research group, which was composed of students and researchers interested in conflict resolution. Each group was responsible for generating a set of recommendations for the resolution of the conflict, which were then discussed and evaluated by the entire workshop. The workshop was divided into two main phases: (1) the training phase, during which the participants were introduced to the theoretical foundations of conflict resolution, and (2) the application phase, during which the participants developed and applied their own strategies for resolving the conflict. The workshop also included a series of role-playing exercises, which allowed the participants to practice their newly acquired skills in a simulated conflict-resolution setting. Overall, the workshop was designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complexities of international conflict resolution and to foster the development of new, innovative strategies for resolving conflicts. Through the workshop, the participants were encouraged to think creatively and to develop solutions that were both practical and effective. The workshop was a valuable opportunity for the participants to learn from each other and to share their experiences and insights. The workshop was also an opportunity to network and to establish new professional relationships.
me, in their conceptions of precisely where the workshop fits into these political processes and what it is intended to accomplish.

In Burton's conception, the workshop is one of the closely linked to national and international processes. The concept of controlled communication flows out of a theoretical orientation toward international relations, containing such propositions as: that "international conflict is a spill-over from internal or communal strife," that the "starting point in analysis and resolution of conflict is at the systems level of highest transactions," that "conflict occurs as a result of ineffective communication, and that its resolution, therefore, must involve processes by which communication can be made to be effective," and that "since the resolution of conflict depends upon effective communication, it can come only from the parties themselves. Processes are required that alter perceptions, and promote the points of view of the parties, and not of third parties."

In Burton's view, then, procedures like those of controlled communication represent crucial steps in the conflict-resolution process.

In keeping with this conception, Burton's workshops are closely coordinated with the relevant decision-makers. The participants must be individuals who are fully aware of the positions of these decision-makers. Though they need not be officials themselves and do not come to the workshop in any official capacity, they are nominated by the top decision-makers and are in touch with them both before and after the workshop. Burton himself, both before and after conducting a workshop, tries to establish and maintain contact with the relevant governmental and intergovernmental agencies. In the first project conducted by the London Centre, the meetings themselves extended over a period of several months; after an initial week of intensive discussion, the group reconvened under the Centre's auspices, and although the participants were not there to act, this was a useful process. In principle, then, controlled communication is not a one-shot exercise, but can be tied into a continuing process of conflict resolution at various points in time. Of course, such coordination of workshops with ongoing political processes is greatly facilitated when the sponsoring organization is specifically devoted to research on international conflict.

The Bermuda Workshop was further removed from the political process. Though the organizers communicated with the governments concerned, their purpose was to inform the governments and get their approval, rather than to coordinate directly with decision-making bodies. Though the participants were potentially influential members of their societies, they were selected by the organizers and could not be viewed as even unofficial representatives of their respective governments. Both Burton and Doob took pains to hold the workshop itself in a setting isolated from the pressures of political and diplomatic environments, but Doob placed greater emphasis on separating the total enterprise from the political process.

In Doob's conception, as we understand it, a workshop can contribute to conflict resolution by creating certain products that can then be fed into the political process. In other words, the workshop itself is not directly linked to national decision-making or diplomatic efforts at conflict resolution, but its products may well be relevant to these activities. The workshop's potential products are of two kinds: they may take the form of attitude changes in influential persons, which would be reflected over time in the input these individuals make into their national policy debates; and they may be documents, setting forth possible solutions that would not have emerged as readily from the usual political procedures.

The difference between Burton's and Doob's conceptions of the enterprise thus has some clear implications for what the workshop is intended to accomplish. For Doob, it is a more self-contained enterprise, standing alone in the immediate products that emerge from it. There, therefore, more emphasis on the personal learning of the participants—on whether they come away from the workshop with demonstrably greater knowledge and insight. There is also more emphasis on producing an agreed-upon solution, in the form of a document that can serve as an input to the policy debate. For Burton, too, it is important to produce changes in the participants and to promote problem-solving; however, these effects are viewed as steps in the conflict-resolution process more than as ends in themselves. There is less emphasis on the personal learning of the participants, except indirectly as it influences the new information, and insights that they can feed into the policy process. Similarly, there is less emphasis on the production of agreed-upon documents within the workshop itself. The presumption is that the actual working out of solutions must happen elsewhere; the workshop will have made its contribution if it has brought some new possibilities for solutions to the attention of the relevant decision-makers.

If we look at the two ends of the enterprise that are closest to both approaches—creating an atmosphere in which change can take
The role of government is to set the conditions for change, while the role of the government is to provide the conditions. The government can provide these conditions by setting the conditions that allow for the development of the conditions for change. The government can also provide the conditions by setting the conditions that allow for the development of the conditions for change. The government can also provide the conditions by setting the conditions that allow for the development of the conditions for change.
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The Problem-Solving Workshop is a process that enables participants to work together to identify and solve problems. It is a cooperative endeavor that requires participants to engage in active participation and to work as a team.

The workshop begins with an introduction to the problem at hand, followed by a brainstorming session where participants generate ideas and solutions. This is followed by a discussion where participants refine and evaluate the ideas.

The workshop concludes with a summary and action plan, where participants discuss how to implement the solutions.

The Problem-Solving Workshop is designed to improve collaboration and to foster creativity and innovation. It is a valuable tool for teams and organizations that want to work together effectively and efficiently.
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A novel approach to problem-solving is described in this chapter. The approach is designed to encourage group participation and facilitate the development of innovative solutions. The method involves the use of a series of structured exercises and discussions that help participants to identify and analyze problems, to generate alternative solutions, and to evaluate and select the most effective strategies. The workshop is designed to be interactive, with participants actively engaged in the process of problem-solving.

The workshop begins with an introductory session in which the facilitator outlines the goals of the workshop and introduces the problem that will be addressed. The facilitator then divides the group into smaller teams, each of which will focus on a specific aspect of the problem. Each team is provided with a set of guidelines and a set of tools that will help them to develop their own solutions. The teams then work independently to generate ideas and to develop their solutions. After a period of time, the teams present their solutions to the larger group, and the facilitator guides a discussion in which the various solutions are compared and evaluated.

Throughout the workshop, the facilitator provides support and guidance, helping the groups to stay on track and to develop their ideas in a constructive manner. The facilitator also encourages the groups to think creatively and to consider a wide range of possibilities. The workshop concludes with a summary session in which the facilitator reviews the key findings and encourages the participants to consider how they might apply the ideas and strategies developed in the workshop to their own work.

Incorporating a variety of problem-solving techniques, the workshop aims to help participants to develop their own problem-solving skills and to enhance their ability to work effectively in teams. The workshop is designed to be flexible, with participants able to adapt the techniques to their own particular needs and circumstances.
be effective, given the nature of the particular conflict, the occasion for convening a workshop, and the relationship of both the organizers and the participants to the various decision-making units.

**UNIQUE STRENGTHS OF THE WORKSHOP APPROACH**

In the most general terms, the unique strength of the workshop approach is that it allows certain processes of communication that are almost impossible to achieve in the settings (particularly the more public and formal ones) where conflicting parties usually interact. The workshop facilitates such communication, first, by providing a novel context for communication and, second, by using a uniquely set of techniques and third-party inputs to guide the communication process.

In many conflict situations, the very fact that communication is taking place may be seen, by one or both sides, as a concession—because it suggests that the other side may have a valid claim, or even because it constitutes recognition of the other side's existence as a legitimate entity. Communication may also be avoided because it represents an unacceptable risk; decision-makers may be afraid that their willingness to talk would lead to a course of action, or that they would inevitably lead to compromises which would weaken the regime's domestic and international standing, or that they would lead to failure with a resulting loss in credibility and prestige. Conflicting parties may, therefore, refuse to communicate at all, or at least to engage in meaningful communication. Once such a pattern has been established, public commitments and private fears make it difficult for the parties to break out of it—even when they have come to feel that something might be gained from communication. In this type of situation the workshop may be particularly helpful by providing a context in which parties can enter discussion with minimum commitment and risk. If the outcome of the workshop seems promising, decision-makers can continue discussions through more formal channels. If it yields nothing useful, they can ignore it without feeling discredited. If, for some reason, it blows up, they can easily dismiss it, since it was merely an academic exercise to which they had no formal commitment.

These considerations suggest one criterion for determining whether or not a workshop is indicated. When there is some desire for communication among the conflicting parties but the official channels for communication are unavailable, or their use entails unacceptable risks at this point, a workshop may provide the needed alternative mechanism. It may allow decision-makers to transmit and receive information otherwise unattainable, and to see whether officially acknowledged invitation or persuasion of communication is likely to have more positive that negative consequences. In the limiting case, a workshop may serve as dress rehearsal for more formal negotiations.

For the individual participants, the workshop offers an opportunity to communicate with minimum commitment and risk. This fact has a bearing not only on their willingness to participate, but also on the type of communication they are prepared to engage in. I have already indicated how the context of both Burton's and Doolin's workshops enhances the participants' freedom to express ideas that they would be inclined to shelve in settings marked by greater public accountability. The usual norms against deviating from the position of one's own side, so pervasive in a conflict situation, are relaxed in the workshop context. More than that, an opposing set of norms, calling for unimpeded exploration of all possibilities, is generated in this setting. In Burton's workshop it derives from the requirements of the research for careful analysis of all dimensions and ramifications of the conflict; in Doolin's, from the requirements of the laboratory method for open and honest communication. Having committed themselves to the enterprise, the participants feel a sense of obligation to abide by its norms.

To provide a novel context, it seems to me, the workshop must be held under the auspices of some institution independent of the political process which is an overarching set of norms to bear on the proceedings. In other words, there needs to be some institutionalized basis for the norms governing the workshop, if the participants are to regard them (while they are in the situation) as binding and as superseding their national norms. A workshop held under the auspices of some such as the United Nations Security Council, for example, might not provide the necessary novel context, since it does not claim a set of norms independent of the member states. An agency more nearly transnational in character—set up to perform a function that cuts across (rather than coordinates) national interests—would be more suitable. Burton's and Doolin's experiences suggest that such a transnational institution for conflict resolution might be the most effective if it included research and training as part of its mission.

Dr. Burton describes one of the activities of the Security Council as a possible institutional basis for conflict resolution. See His Conflict and Communication, p. 223.
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For both the London and the European workshops, the leading

initiative was the European Union. They provided the most

prominent context in which the workshops were conducted.

Participating in this context, particularly in the case of the

London workshop, it was apparent that the facilitation of

the workshop was dependent on the role of a facilitator

and a sufficiently large number of participants. The

facilitator was responsible for ensuring that the

workshop proceeded smoothly and that the session

remained on track. The facilitator also helped manage

the time and kept the participants engaged.

In the context of the workshop, the participants were

 divided into groups of 5-10 people. Each group had a

leader and a reporter who would provide updates on

the group's progress. The facilitator also played a

role in ensuring that all participants had the opportu-

nity to contribute to the discussions.

The European Union provided the financial support

for the workshops, and this was instrumental in

ensuring their success. The support included

expenses for travel, accommodation, and supplies.

In the case of the London workshop, the Union also

provided a grant for the establishment of a

network of researchers who could continue to

work together after the workshop.

The success of the workshops was attributed to the

active participation of all the attendees. They

engaged in discussions, shared ideas, and

constructed models of potential solutions.

The workshops were structured to

encourage active participation and

 facilitation of discussions. The

participants were divided into

small groups, and each group was

assigned a specific task or problem

to solve. The facilitator helped

coordinate the groups and

facilitate the discussions.

The workshops were

concluded with a final

presentation of the results by each

group. The findings were

summarized, and the

participants discussed the

implications and potential

next steps.

Overall, the workshops were

successful in providing a

framework for problem

solving and collaboration among

researchers. The European Union

and other organizations

provided necessary support and

resources to ensure the

workshops' success.

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kinds of questions they ask, by their reactions to what the parti-
cipants say and do, and by the way they handle participants' efforts
to induce them to assume leadership, to take sides, or to make au-
thoritative pronouncements.

To keep the discussions moving in constructive directions, the
social scientist infers observations about the ongoing group process
everywhere the group seems to have reached an impasse. He may sim-
ply point out that the discussions have stalled or that the particip-
ants have reverted to the standard pattern of argumentation among con-
flicting parties. He may describe what has been happening in the
group, thus bringing to the members' attention some of the inter-
actions that may have failed to register on them, but leaving up to
them the interpretation of these events. At times, he may himself
offer possible interpretations of the dynamics of the group process
that seem to be impeding progress. Such interpretations, in my view,
ought to be relatively infrequent. Moreover, they must be presented
in the form of tentative hypotheses, recognizing that they may be
wrong or (even if they are perfectly accurate) that the group may
not be quite ready for them. (These considerations are similar to
those governing a psychotherapist's tentative allusions to a pa-
tient's unconscious defenses in interpreting his resistances to the
therapeutic work.) Finally, such interpretations in a problem-
solving workshop must be at the level of group process, rather than
personality dynamics.

Group process observations are useful, not only in keeping the
discussions moving in constructive directions, but also in transmitting
to the participants a potentially effective tool for problem-solving.
Participants are encouraged to engage in process analysis themselves
and thus to acquire a more analytic stance concerning their own and
other members' interactions in the group. The ability to step aside
and observe the ongoing interaction process is particularly valuable
in the resolution of conflict, for which such an ability is the
very nature of the tool. Effective communication and problem-solving.

The purpose of initiating and facilitating new patterns of com-
munication in the workshop is to provide opportunities for the emer-
gence of ideas, observations, and information on which new learn-
ning and insight can be built. It is such new learnings and insights
that make it possible, for participants to reassess their attitudes and
reformulate the issues in ways more con-
ductive to problem-solving. Some of the new information is injected
directly into the discussion by the social science panel. Much of the
information is specifically introduced by participants, or emerges
from their discussions, or is generated by their interactions; but the
social scientists contribute to the process by helping to elicit the in-
formation, by encouraging the participants to focus on it, and by
suggesting some of its implications.

One can distinguish at least three sources of new information in the
workshop situation from which potentially new learnings and
insights may emerge:

1. In the course of the discussions, participants may acquire new
information about the perceptions and intentions of the other side.
The relatively private and relaxed setting may induce them to ex-
press sentiments that have not previously been acknowledged in
public statements. Such information is bound to be useful, by adding
depth to one's understanding of the other side's position, but there
is also some danger in overemphasizing the significance of this in-
formation: the public positions of a government may be better in-
dicators and predictors of policy than the private sentiments of
individuals, even if these individuals are high officials (particularly
since public pronouncements set constraints on future action). The
workshop setting not only encourages the transmission of such new
information, but also increases the probability that others will be
receptive to it, to the extent that a degree of openness and mutual
trust has developed. The social scientists contribute to the transmi-
sion and reception of this type of information by creating an atmos-
phere in which there is greater openness to new information and
setting a task around which trust can be built. Moreover, when new
information is introduced, the social scientists can call attention to
it and make it a focus for discussion. They can encourage the par-
ticipants to confront the information, making sure that it is neither
avoided nor distorted and that its implications are duly drawn.

2. The workshop can introduce the participants to a new con-
cceptual framework for the analysis of conflict, a set of theoretical
propositions, and a body of empirical findings, all of which may be
applicable to their own situations. In the London workshop, such
information was provided fairly systematically by the panel of social
scientists, who then drew the participants into discussion of the
theoretical models and their implications for various conflicts. The
participants thus acquired some new insights into the nature of con-
lict, as well as a common language and frame of reference for
analyzing specific conflict situations. The learning process may be
aided, as in the Fermuda Workshop, by the introduction of games
and simulations when such procedures might help illustrate and give
experimental meaning to a theoretical proposition. In any event, the


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application of the new concepts and analytical tools to their own situations must be left largely to the participants themselves. The social scientist can encourage the participants to make such efforts; they can ask leading questions, engage in gentle proddings, and suggest tentative hypotheses to explain the nature and course of the conflict. But, in the final analysis, the application must be made by the participants if it is to have major impact on the resolution process. The timing of interpretations is also crucial, even if they are presented in tentative fashion. Again, the analyst can take a leaf from the psychotherapist’s book: an experienced therapist does not offer an interpretation unless he feels confident that the patient is ready for it.

(3) As the participants interact with each other and with the third parties in the course of the workshop, they may be illustrating—here and now—some of the underlying dynamics of the conflict between the communities they represent. Their behavior in the group may reflect the nature of the relationship between their communities and the self-perpetuating pattern of interaction that they have adopted. For example, in the course of the London workshop, I developed (but was unable to explore) the hypothesis that some of the interactions of the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot participants, with each other and with the social science panel, could be understood in terms of their statuses as members of the majority and minority populations respectively. The exploration of such hypotheses, based on ongoing interactions, can be a source of profound insight, since the participants can see the conflict in operation. They can observe its concrete manifestations in the various situations in which they are still actively involved and almost at the very moment that the interaction occurs. This type of experience has much in common with the “corrective emotional experiences” that many psychotherapists see as the heart of the therapeutic process. In the context of psychotherapy, the essence of a corrective emotional experience is the fact that the patient’s examination of his attitudes and behavior patterns occurs simultaneously with the actual manifestation at a real-life level of emotional intensity. He examines his attitudes and behavior while he is still experiencing the relevant feelings, which makes this more than a mere intellectual exercise. Like the psychotherapist, the social scientist in a workshop can facilitate such insights by calling attention to ongoing interactions that might illuminate

LIMITATIONS OF THE WORKSHOP APPROACH

The ultimate goal of a problem-solving workshop is to feed the changes and solutions it has generated into the policy process. As I have already pointed out, however, it is more effectively designed to produce changes in its participants and to generate innovative solutions than it is to transfer these products to the policy process. Much of the workshop’s strength derives from its separation from the policy process. It is held under independent auspices, in a setting removed from decision-making agencies, with participants acting as relatively uncommitted individuals, and according to ground rules that encourage the transcendence of official positions. All of these features, by removing some of the usual barriers to change, make its occurrence more probable, but by the same token they make its transfer more difficult.

The problem of transfer actually involves two interrelated questions. First, if an individual changes in the workshop setting—that is, if he reassesses his attitudes and accepts a new approach to resolving the conflict—what is the likelihood that he will maintain these new attitudes and formulations once he returns to his home setting? Second, assuming he does—or to the extent that he does—maintain these changes, what is the likelihood that he will be able to bring his new attitudes and formulations effectively to bear on the policy process?

The first question is common to all types of workshops, ranging from those primarily oriented toward individual change to those oriented toward organizational problem-solving. It refers to what has been called the “reentry” problem. The workshop takes the individual into a different world, frees him from the usual pressures and constraints that bind him to a limited perspective, and thus allows him to reexamine his assumptions and to develop new ways of looking at things. But once he leaves this more open and protective environment and returns to the real world, there is a great danger of backsliding. The old pressures will come into play, and the dominant frame of reference will begin to reassert itself. Moreover, the individual may find that the new ideas he expresses are met with hostility and that the proposals he put forth are systematically shot down. Of course, the severity of the reentry problem varies as a function of many factors. But I think it can be fairly said that, given an influence attempt that removes an individual or a small group from their usual environments, any feature that enhances the probability for change almost invariably compounds the problem of reentry.

Workshops involving conflicting nations or communities may well present serious reentry problems, because here the issue of group loyalty is particularly salient. An individual who returns with a less militant view of the conflict may find himself treated as one who has been coerced by the other side, who has betrayed his own group, or who has inadequately defended its position. These pressures may make it difficult for him to express and ultimately to maintain his new attitudes.

The ease of maintaining changes produced in the workshop depends partly on the nature of the setting and the experiences it provides for the participants. The more different the setting and experiences are from those in which the participants habitually find themselves, the greater the likelihood that the workshop will present novel inputs, break up old thought-patterns, and produce change. These same conditions make the probability of transfer less likely, however. New attitudes may be closely associated with the unique stimuli of the workshop setting and fail to generalize to the home environment’s radically different stimuli. Furthermore, a setting so different that it removes all reminders of home fails to prepare the individual for the reactions his new attitudes are likely to elicit upon his return. By keeping reminders of the home setting to a minimum, the workshop may reduce resistance to change, but at the same time fail to build immunity against the pressures to which the new attitudes will later be exposed.

These considerations must enter into the decision of how much the workshop should isolate its participants from family, work, and political distractions. As Walton points out, comparative insulation “allows for a deeper immersion in the mental and emotional processes of the workshop and permits the development of a ‘cultural island,’ which in turn encourages participants to challenge cherished assumptions, break old thought patterns, and modify attitudes.” But it also has its disadvantages:

Because the attitudes, views, and products generated by the workshop must eventually be persuasive to communities who have not attended the workshop, it is possible for the cultural island effect to be too complete, if it leads to proposed solutions which will later be dismissed out-of-hand back home as unrealistic or idealistic. Similarly, some would consider the cultural island too complete if upon returning home a participant expresses conciliatory atti—
On the other hand, participants returning from government agencies, or the public sector, may find their role more difficult because they are more likely to respond to the question of organizational background and leadership. They have more difficulty maintaining a dialogue with the group, if the leader is the person who is directing the workshop, than they do in the case of external workshops, when the facilitator is the one leading the discussion. However, the leadership position of the group is more likely to come into play in the case of the identified leader, who is responsible for the decision-making process, than in the case of an external facilitator, who is more likely to be in a neutral position.

The situation is more complex in the case of the participants' role in the decision-making process, which is likely to be more difficult if the workshop is run by the participants themselves, rather than by an external facilitator. This is because the participants are likely to have more difficulty in maintaining a dialogue with the group, if the leader is the person who is directing the workshop, than they do in the case of external workshops, when the facilitator is the one leading the discussion. However, the leadership position of the group is more likely to come into play in the case of the identified leader, who is responsible for the decision-making process, than in the case of an external facilitator, who is more likely to be in a neutral position.

The participants' role in the decision-making process is also more complex in the case of the identified leader, who is responsible for the decision-making process, than in the case of an external facilitator, who is more likely to be in a neutral position. This is because the participants are likely to have more difficulty in maintaining a dialogue with the group, if the leader is the person who is directing the workshop, than they do in the case of external workshops, when the facilitator is the one leading the discussion. However, the leadership position of the group is more likely to come into play in the case of the identified leader, who is responsible for the decision-making process, than in the case of an external facilitator, who is more likely to be in a neutral position.

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The Problem-Solving Workshop

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holds. Say a workshop participant concludes from the discussions that the other side may be using a different type of argument or reasoning. The participant decides that the other side's arguments are not persuasive, and he or she is not in a position to understand those arguments sufficiently to challenge them effectively. The participant then concludes that the other side is more likely to be correct, and adopts their position. This is a form of reasoning by consensus, and it may make little difference. I may not enhance my ability to express my views clearly, or I may not understand the other side's arguments sufficiently to challenge them effectively. The participant may feel that it is better to adopt the other side's position than to continue to argue with them.

Perceptions of the other side's arguments may make little difference. I may not enhance my ability to express my views clearly, or I may not understand the other side's arguments sufficiently to challenge them effectively. The participant may feel that it is better to adopt the other side's position than to continue to argue with them.
workshops as inputs to international conflict resolution. This article represents a call for applying a variety of approaches, and it has revealed some of the distinctions among these approaches. The paper has also emphasized the need for further exploration of the factors that contribute to the success or failure of workshops. This exploration is critical in light of the growing importance of international conflict resolution in the post-Cold War era. The article concludes by calling for increased research and investment in conflict resolution workshops.
Diplomats or students of international relations in particular might see the workshop as a practical exercise in working through the types of conflicts that are recurrent in international affairs. The occasion for the workshop should help discuss not only the techniques of negotiation, but also the rules of the game. The workshop should aim to provide a forum for discussing the various strategies available for managing or solving conflicts.

The workshop should be organized in such a way that all participants can contribute equally to the discussion. This can be achieved by dividing the participants into small groups, each with a specific role. For example, one group could focus on the legal aspects of conflict resolution, while another group could focus on the psychological aspects.

The participants should be encouraged to share their experiences and insights, and to challenge each other's assumptions. This can be done through facilitated discussions, role-playing exercises, and other interactive activities.

The workshop should also include a discussion of the role of international organizations in conflict resolution. This can be done through case studies, guest lectures, and panel discussions.

The workshop should be concluded by a summary of the key points discussed, and by a discussion of the next steps for action. This can be done through a group discussion, or through a written report that is presented to the participants and stakeholders.