

The Development of Interactive Problem Solving: In John Burton's Footsteps

Herbert C. Kelman
Harvard University

I first learned about the new approach to unofficial diplomacy that John Burton was developing when I met him on his visit to the University of Michigan in the summer of 1966. He called it controlled communication at the time (see Burton, 1969) and had first applied it in an exercise on the conflict between Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore earlier that year. The approach immediately resonated with me. I saw it as a way of putting into practice the social-psychological approach to international conflict that I had been exploring at the theoretical level. When Burton invited me to come to London in the fall of 1966 as a member of the third-party panel in an exercise (what we now call a problem-solving workshop) on the Cyprus conflict that he was planning, I accepted with enthusiasm.

My meeting with Burton and participation in the Cyprus exercise represented a major turning point in my work and in my life. It is important to note that I was well into midcareer at the time I met Burton. I was 39 years old and well-established in my field of social psychology. I had received my Ph.D. at Yale University in 1951, and in 1956 I was awarded the Socio-Psychological Prize of the American Association for the Advancement of Science for my theoretical and experimental work on social influence (Kelman, 1956). I was a full professor in the Psychology Department at the University of Michigan, with a joint appointment at the Center for Research on Conflict Resolution. I was also one of the founders of the peace research movement in the United States, starting in 1951, and of the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*—the first journal in the field. I had even acquired some respectability within the IR field—despite my origins in psychology—especially with the publication of *International Behavior: A Social-Psychological Analysis* (Kelman, 1965a). Thus, my growing engagement in the type of endeavor pioneered by John Burton represented a significant change in my professional agenda—although, as I shall spell out in this article, a change that has drawn extensively on my earlier work and is directly continuous with it.

The change in my endeavors as of 1966 has not been immediate and certainly not complete. I have done research, writing, and teaching in areas other than conflict resolution over the years. I have continued work in some of my earlier areas of concern. I initiated one major line of research—starting with a study in 1971, in collaboration with V. Lee Hamilton, of public reactions to the My Lai massacre and the trial of Lt. Calley, and culminating in a book entitled *Crimes of Obedience* (Kelman & Hamilton, 1989). But, increasingly over the years, my work came to center on activities that derived directly from John Burton's pioneering contributions to theory and practice (Burton, 1969, 1979,

1984, 1987). I have written elsewhere about the evolution of my work in this domain (see Kelman, 2010a, for the latest statement). In this article, I thus offer only some highlights since the purpose here is to explore the continuities between this work and my earlier research and related activities.

Interactive Problem Solving

Following my first direct exposure to Burton's model of practice in the Cyprus exercise of 1966, I began to think about the model and, gradually over the years—in collaboration with colleagues and students—to develop our own clearly related approach, which I came to call *interactive problem solving* (see, e.g., Kelman, 1986a, 2002).

I first thought of applying Burton's model to the Arab-Israeli conflict at the time of the 1967 war in the Middle East. Burton and I explored the possibilities, but nothing came of this initial effort—largely because we were not sufficiently tied in to the relevant networks in the two communities. This was my first lesson about the critical importance of networking as part of the role of the third party (cf. Kelman, 2010a, pp. 375–376). In the late 1960s, I began exploring the idea of Arab-Israeli workshops with colleagues in Israel and—whenever the occasion arose—with Arab colleagues whom I met in the United States. My travels to the Arab Middle East did not begin until the summer of 1975.

In 1970, I presented my first article on “The Problem-Solving Workshop in Conflict Resolution” at the meetings of the American Political Sciences Association (see Kelman, 1972a, for the published version). The article compared Burton's approach—as I experienced it at the Cyprus exercise—with the Fermeda workshop on the conflicts in the Horn of Africa (Doob, 1970; Walton, 1970), which I had discussed in some detail with Leonard Doob—one of my mentors at Yale. In this early article, I discussed the two goals of workshops—producing change in the particular individuals participating in a workshop and transferring these changes to the policy process—and pointed out that the requirements for maximizing change may be contradictory to the requirements for maximizing transfer. I later referred to this dilemma as the *dialectics of problem solving workshops* (Kelman, 1979) and saw it as a central issue in the theory and practice of interactive problem solving. Such concepts as the *uneasy coalition* (Kelman, 1993) and *working trust* (Kelman, 2005a), as well as the focus of our work on *political influentials*, who are not currently in official positions, are all designed to balance the potentially contradictory requirements for maximizing the occurrence of changes in the course of workshops and the transfer of such changes to the policy process.

After reading a draft of my article on problem-solving workshops, Stephen Cohen, a young colleague at Harvard with whom I cotaught a graduate seminar on social-psychological approaches to international relations, suggested that we organize a pilot workshop as part of the seminar, in which the students would be able to observe the process and participate as members of the third party. Contrary to our original intention, this pilot workshop (Cohen, Kelman, Miller, & Smith, 1977) focused on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and thus became the first in a long series of Israeli-Palestinian workshops that I have conducted over more than four decades, continuing to the present.

At the time of the 1973 Arab-Israeli war—while I was home recuperating from a heart attack—I committed myself to placing conflict resolution in the Middle East at the top of my agenda—where it has remained ever since. Stephen Cohen and I invited three Arab-American scholars to join us in an ethnically balanced third-party team, which worked together for several years. I became increasingly involved in Middle East-related conferences and meetings. I traveled extensively in the Middle East, meeting officials and scholars in several Arab countries and in the West Bank and Gaza, as well as Israel. Over the years, jointly with different colleagues and students, I have organized a variety of workshops and related activities, including a continuing

workshop, cochaired by Nadim Rouhana, that met between 1990 and 1993 (Rouhana & Kelman, 1994); a Joint Working Group on Israeli-Palestinian Relations, also cochaired by Nadim Rouhana, which met between 1994 and 1999, and produced three concept papers on final-status issues in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations (Alpher, Shikaki, et al., 1998; Joint Working Group, 1998; Joint Working Group, 1999); and a Joint Israeli-Palestinian Working Group on Rebuilding Trust in the Availability of a Negotiating Partner, co-chaired by Shibley Telhami, which has met periodically between 2001 and 2013. I have described this array of activities elsewhere (most recently in Kelman, 2010a, 2010b) and shall only mention some highlights here.

Interactive problem solving—our model of practice—is firmly anchored in Burton’s approach. However, starting with our first pilot workshop in 1971, we developed our own style of running workshops, which is reflected in the typical ground rules, agenda, and third-party interventions that have characterized our work. Not surprisingly, both our evolving theory of practice and our analysis of international conflict—which shape the process and content of problem-solving workshops—are explicitly informed by social-psychological principles. Even in this respect, however, there is obvious continuity of our work with Burton’s approach. I did not learn until much later that Burton’s first degree was actually in psychology. In any event, his early theorizing on controlled communication focused extensively on perceptual processes and their role in exacerbating conflict (Burton, 1969). Later, of course, human needs theory became a central element of Burton’s model (see, e.g., Burton, 1990). While I may disagree with some details of Burton’s version of human needs theory (cf. Kelman, 1990), human needs are central both to my analysis of conflict (Kelman, 2007a) and to the form of practice that my associates and I developed.

Our form of practice evolved over the years—as, of course, did John Burton’s—as we accumulated different experiences. The model was adapted as we came to deal with different conflicts, different phases of a conflict, different types of participants, different settings, and different specific purposes. From the beginning, our model was particularly geared to conflicts between identity groups—such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—and workshop discussions often focus, in various ways, on the “negotiation of identity” (Kelman, 2001).

Our pilot workshop in 1971 not only laid the groundwork for the development of interactive problem solving but also served as a model for a series of workshops—mostly on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—that we organized as part of my graduate seminar on *International Conflict: Social-Psychological Approaches*. Seminar students served as apprentice members of the third party and were subject to the discipline of the third party. They participated actively in the planning, conduct, and debriefing of these workshops. The seminar thus provided them a unique learning experience, without compromising the conditions required for an effective workshop that served the interests of the parties to the conflict. The seminar became a major setting for recruiting and training students interested in conflict resolution.

The training of students in the scholar-practitioner model has been a central part of our enterprise over the years. By the mid-1980s, the number of my students and post-docs working in the area of conflict resolution had reached a critical mass and—largely at the initiative of Tamra Pearson d’Estrée—we formed a group that met regularly to discuss ongoing research and practice and plan joint activities. This group became the nucleus of the Program on International Conflict Analysis and Resolution (PICAR) that was established at Harvard’s Weatherhead Center for International Affairs under my direction with a grant from the Hewlett Foundation in 1993 and continued until 2003 (four years after my retirement from teaching in 1999). Eileen Babbitt was PICAR’s first Deputy Director, and she was succeeded by Donna Hicks, who still runs the Seminar on International Conflict Analysis and Resolution at the Weatherhead Center. PICAR was a membership group that included current and former students, post-docs, and associates devoted to practice, research, training, and exchange of ideas and experiences. Note that the inclusion of conflict *analysis* and *resolution* in the title emphasized our origins in and continuing links to the Burton tradition.

The Middle East Connection

My students and associates have applied the techniques of interactive problem solving to a number of protracted conflicts between identity groups around the world, including Cyprus, Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka, Colombia, and Bosnia. Personally, I have returned to the Cyprus conflict on a number of occasions and have done some work on Northern Ireland. My own efforts since the early 1970s, however, have concentrated on the Arab-Israeli conflict and particularly on its Israeli-Palestinian dimension (Kelman, 1998a, 1999a).

With my intensive engagement in the Arab-Israeli conflict over the years, I eventually turned into a Middle East specialist of sorts—although I always tried to be clear that I spoke from the perspective of a social psychologist, with some background in IR theory, but without formal credentials in Middle East studies. Increasingly, the Israeli-Palestinian case became a major point of reference and source of illustrations in my writings about the nature of international conflict and its social-psychological dimensions (e.g., Kelman, 2007a). Starting in the late 1970s (Kelman, 1978), I have written regularly—in journal articles, book chapters, and newspaper opinion pieces—about issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and possibilities for its resolution (e.g., Kelman, 1982a, 1982b, 1986b, 1987, 1988, 1992, 1997a, 1998b, 2007b, 2007c, 2011). These writings represent a form of policy analysis from a social-psychological/conflict resolution perspective.

In specializing in a particular conflict and writing policy papers with recommendations for dealing with it, I may have been deviating from Burton's views of the role of the third party. Burton warned against the third party becoming area specialists or having strong ideas about the shape of a solution to the conflict—although, in his own practice, he always made sure to be well-informed about the conflict on which he was working, and he certainly had ideas about the requirements for a mutually acceptable solution. His concern was that a highly specialized and committed third party may be inclined to push for its own ideas rather than facilitating the process whereby the parties themselves generate mutually satisfactory ideas for resolving the conflict. I am in complete agreement with the proposition that solutions that emerge out of the interaction between the parties themselves are more likely to be responsive to their needs, to engender their commitment, and to lead to stable and durable peace. I have indeed considered it the primary task of the third party in interactive problem solving to create the conditions that will facilitate the emergence of new ideas out of the interaction between the conflicting parties. I have felt, however, that my personal engagement with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has not been inconsistent with my third-party role. If anything, it may have enhanced my performance of that role rather than detracted from it—in several ways.

First, my policy writing has been consistent with my conception of the third-party role. I have always attempted to be evenhanded and multipartial in my analysis. My recommendations—as suggested by the titles of the articles cited above—have been geared to overcoming barriers to negotiation and promoting conflict resolution efforts that meet the needs of both parties.

Second, my policy analyses and recommendations have been significantly influenced by what I have learned from the unique opportunity of listening to the workshop discussions. Thus, as the late Cynthia Chataway pointed out in one of her special gifts to me, the writings of the third party are an important part of the transfer of what is learned in workshops to the policy process (Chataway, 2002). Thus, instead of being deviations from the role of the third party, they represent contributions by the third party to one of the central goals of interactive problem solving.

More generally, I have found in my work that some degree of expertise in the region—among at least some members of the third party—is essential for the third party to establish and maintain its credibility in the eyes of the conflicting parties. The third party's expertise in workshop process is generally not enough to establish its credibility without some indication that it is knowledgeable about the history of the conflict and the issues that drive it.

The subtleties of third-party credibility are illustrated by my most controversial foray into the policy debate. In 1980 and again in 1981, I had long private meetings with PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat in his headquarters in Beirut. (I continued to meet with him periodically in subsequent years, until shortly before his death in 2004.) These meetings were not interviews, but conversations; my purposes were to gain a direct impression of his thinking and to acquaint him with my work in the hope that he would give his approval to Palestinians who might ask him about participating in some of our workshops or related projects. I had no intention to write about these conversations (although they were not “off-the-record”). After the 1982 war in Lebanon and the expulsion of the PLO from Beirut, however, I felt that it was important to communicate my conclusion that Arafat was ready to negotiate a peace agreement with Israel.

I published my first report on my conversations with Arafat in *Foreign Policy* in the fall of 1982, in an article that the editors aptly entitled *Talk with Arafat* (Kelman, 1982b). The article offered the hypothesis that Arafat was prepared to negotiate a historic compromise with Israel. I based this conclusion in part on what was known about Arafat’s role in the debates within the Palestinian national movement. My primary source, however, was Arafat’s cognitive style and image of the enemy as they emerged in the course of our intensive conversations. The article proposed that my hypothesis that Arafat was open to negotiating a peace agreement be put to the test—by talking with him.

The article was severely criticized in some quarters because it deviated from the widely accepted view that one cannot negotiate with the PLO, and it presented Arafat as a serious partner for negotiation. Interestingly, however, the appearance of the article enhanced my credibility as a third party on both sides. On the Palestinian side, my credibility rose—even among some of the anti-Arafat elements of the PLO with whom I met on my visits to Damascus—because publication of this article demonstrated my readiness to take an unpopular position in support of the Palestinian cause. On the Israeli side, my credibility rose in those circles that were interested in exploring the possibilities for negotiations—i.e., the kinds of people that I sought to recruit for problem-solving workshops—because the article demonstrated that I had significant connections on the Palestinian side. In short, for both sides—for each in its own way—publication of this article contributed to my image as a serious player in this arena.

It cannot be denied that in my *Foreign Policy* article I was taking a position on a key issue in the debate on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at the time: Is it possible and advisable for Israel to negotiate with the PLO? Yet I believe that publishing this article and taking this position was consistent with my role as third party. At the microlevel, problem-solving workshops are designed to identify and explore openings for negotiations. In selecting workshop participants, we look for people who have an active interest in pursuing this workshop agenda, even though they may be skeptical about the prospects. At the macrolevel, I have become identified as a carrier of the sense of possibility—as someone who can be relied upon to seek out whatever openings for a peaceful resolution of the conflict may exist and to pursue them, whether in problem-solving workshops or in policy analyses. This approach is based on what I have called *strategic optimism*: “a strategy designed to seek out and actively pursue all possible openings to peace, which can help to counteract the pervasive pessimism that dominates deep-rooted conflicts and the negative self-fulfilling prophecies that it engenders” (Kelman, 2010a, p. 384).

The *Foreign Policy* article and related writings also contributed to the empowerment of Palestinians by acknowledging the PLO as their relevant representative in political negotiations. Here too there are definite continuities with the role of the third party. I learned from the recruitment of participants for our first pilot workshop in 1971 that we had to work with Palestinians broadly identified with the PLO, just as we had to work with Israelis broadly identified with the Zionist movement. Moreover, we concluded early in our work that one of the functions of the third party is to help empower the weaker party in any given context—which is not always the Palestinians. Such empowerment may be necessary at times in order to maintain equality of the two parties within the workshop

setting—which is one of the ground rules that govern workshops. In short, even in this respect, I believe that my contributions to the policy debate have been consistent with the role of the third party.

John Burton's Influence: Change and Continuity

In the development of interactive problem solving and its application to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as I have shown, my associates and I have adapted the Burton model as we went along, innovated within it, and at times deviated from it—just as John Burton himself has done. There is no question, however, that Burton has been an inspiration for me, my students, and my colleagues. He has had a profound impact on my activities over the past 45 years, and his influence generated a gradual but significant change in my professional agenda. My first meeting with Burton and my participation in his Cyprus exercise in 1966 clearly mark a major turning point in my life and work.

Yet, as I reflect on my work over the course of those years, I am struck by the extent to which the new entries on my agenda, inspired—directly or indirectly—by John Burton, are continuous with my earlier work. Both in its general orientation and in many of its specific details, interactive problem solving—at the levels of theory, practice, and application—draws upon my ideas and experiences as a social psychologist active in the beginnings of the peace research movement and, more generally, interested in combining social activism with scholarly pursuits. Thus, over the years, Burton has not only inspired me to move in new directions, but has given me the opportunity to utilize earlier ideas and experiences in new contexts.

At the broadest level, Burton's approach in all of its dimensions—the process of direct communication between adversaries, the human-needs framework, the scholar-practitioner model—spoke to my interest, from the beginning of my career, in contributing, as a social psychologist, to the emerging peace research enterprise. It struck me as the kind of direct and—from my parochial perspective—social-psychological contribution to resolving international conflicts that I had been searching for. I saw it as a concrete expression of a social-psychological approach to peacemaking.

Beyond that, as I became increasingly involved in this work, I found that it picked up on many of the themes of my earlier work in several domains. Various ideas developed in other contexts proved to be directly relevant to my new endeavors. Thus, even though my precise work agenda gradually changed following my exposure to Burton's influence, there has been an organic relationship between my post-Burton and my pre-Burton activities. In the sections that follow, I shall describe some of the ways in which my earlier research, ideas, and experiences have informed the development and application of interactive problem solving in six domains: (1) contextual social psychology and the point-of-entry problem; (2) social influence and attitude change; (3) psychotherapy and group process; (4) international educational and cultural exchange; (5) nationalism and national identity; and (6) ethical issues in social research and social action.

Contextual Social Psychology and the Point-of-Entry Problem

Social psychology is a highly diverse field. It developed almost simultaneously as a specialty within both psychology and sociology. Not surprisingly, different ways of doing social psychology have evolved within the two parent disciplines, although there have also been significant points of contact. Apart from this divide, there have been debates over the years over the appropriate methodological repertoire, substantive focus, and level of analysis for the field.

I have defined social psychology as the discipline “concerned with the intersection between individual behavior and societal-institutional processes.” Social interaction, in this view, is a primary focus and the most distinctive level of analysis for social-psychological study, since it is, “par excellence, the area in which individual and institutional processes intersect” (Kelman, 1965b, p. 22). This

view of the field has been described as *contextual social psychology* (Pettigrew, 1991)—the study of the behavior and interaction of individuals in their societal and organizational context.

This view of social psychology has helped address the question about the potential relevance and utility of psychological contributions to the study of international conflict that my colleagues and I raised, starting in the 1950s (see, e.g., Kelman, 1955, 1965c, 1970). Since war and peace are societal and intersocietal processes, how can social psychology—which operates at the level of individual behavior and social interaction—contribute to their investigation? I start with the assumption that there is no social-psychological theory of international relations, but a general theory—multidisciplinary and multilevel—in which social-psychological variables and processes play a part. Thus, the contribution of a social-psychological perspective to the study of international conflict depends on identifying the appropriate *points of entry* for social-psychological analysis—those points in a general theory of international relations where social-psychological propositions may provide useful levers for understanding what is happening at the societal and intersocietal levels (Kelman, 2007a, p. 63).

As I indicated at the beginning of the article, John Burton's model immediately appealed to me because I saw it as a way of putting into practice the social-psychological approach to international conflict that I had been exploring at the theoretical level. Problem-solving workshops are designed to produce new insights into the conflict and new ideas for resolving it through the face-to-face interaction, in a group setting, of individual members of the conflicting societies.

The point-of-entry problem at the level of practice arises in two ways. First, what are the points within the larger diplomatic process where problem-solving workshops or related activities within the controlled communication/interactive problem solving tradition become feasible and particularly useful? In this connection, I have identified the different functions that interactive problem solving can serve at different stages of the negotiation process: the pre-negotiation stage, the para-negotiation stage, the breakdown of negotiations, and the post-negotiation stage (Kelman, 2010b).

Second, the point-of-entry problem arises with respect to the ways in which the products of workshops—the new insights and ideas generated in the course of the interaction between the parties—are fed into the policy process. This raises the question of the transfer of workshop learnings to the policy process. As mentioned earlier, the goals of producing change—in the form of new learnings—in the workshop participants and transferring the new learnings to the policy process may come into conflict, in that the requirements for maximizing change in the setting may contradict the requirements for maximizing transfer. Balancing these contradictory requirements poses a major challenge to the theory and practice of interactive problem solving.

A prime example of this issue is in the selection of workshop participants. Possibilities of transfer would be maximized by recruiting officials, who offer a direct point of entry into the policy process. But officials are more likely to be constrained in their interactions and thus less likely to change in the course of the process. To balance these contradictory requirements, we prefer to work with political influentials, who are less constrained because they are not currently in official positions, but who occupy positions within their societies that enable them to have an impact on the thinking of decision makers and of the wider public. Another example of the dialectics of problem-solving workshops is the degree of cohesiveness we try to promote in the workshop. A degree of cohesiveness and mutual trust are important to productive interaction within the workshop setting, but if these become too high, participants may lose credibility and political effectiveness within their own societies and hence be less able to transfer what they have learned to the policy process. To balance those contradictory requirements, we recognize that the coalition across conflict lines that the workshop process represents must remain an uneasy coalition (Kelman, 1993), and we aim for the development of working trust across the divide—trust based not so much on interpersonal closeness, but on the conviction that the participants on the other side are sincerely committed, out of their own interests, to the search for a peaceful solution (Kelman, 2005a).

In sum, interactive problem solving has spoken to one of my long-standing concerns by providing a point of entry for social-psychological contributions to international relations at the level of practice. At the same time, a key issue in the practice of interactive problem solving has been to maximize the likelihood that the products of workshop interactions—the new insights and ideas generated by the process—will gain entry into the policy debate and the decision-making process.

Social Influence and Attitude Change

My primary work within social psychology has been in the area of social influence and attitude change. Various strands of this work are reflected in the theory and practice of interactive problem solving—in its purposes and procedures.

Processes of social influence

A central focus of my work in social psychology has been on the nature and quality of changes in individuals' actions, attitudes, and beliefs induced by influence from an external source. My doctoral dissertation explored some of the conditions under which a persuasive communication leads to mere public conformity versus private acceptance of the induced behavior—i.e., attitude change (Kelman, 1953). I proceeded to develop and test a theoretical model that distinguishes between three qualitatively different processes of social influence—compliance, identification, and internalization—that differ in the depth and stability of the changes resulting from the influence and in the degree to which the new beliefs are integrated into the person's value system (Kelman, 1958, 1961). In line with my evolving definition of social psychology, I came to look at the three processes as different ways in which the individual is linked to the social system (Kelman, 1974a). One of the key determinants of the three processes is the source of the influencing agent's power—whether it is based on the agent's means control (i.e. control of desired resources), attractiveness, or credibility. These can be seen as different types of relationships between the influencing agent and the influencee.

This concern with the depth, quality, and stability of change is very much reflected in the design of problem-solving workshops. Workshops are intended to contribute to conflict resolution, which (in contrast to conflict settlement, following Burton's distinction) is likely to lead to a more durable peace that meets the needs of both parties and transforms their relationship.

In recent years—particularly since the dramatic changes in South Africa—many of us in the field of conflict resolution have become interested in reconciliation as a process that not only follows a peace agreement, but that may actually contribute to achieving such an agreement. Elements of reconciliation have entered into our conflict resolution practice. Nadim Rouhana, with whom I worked closely during the 1990s, conceptualized conflict settlement, conflict resolution, and reconciliation as three distinct processes (Rouhana, 2004). I found this formulation very appealing and have adopted it, although my view of reconciliation differs from Rouhana's in several important respects. I view reconciliation as a change in each party's identity, at least to the extent of removing negation of the other as a central component of each party's own identity and accommodating the identity of the other (Kelman, 2004a). This formulation has enabled me to coordinate the three processes of peacemaking with my three processes of social influence—compliance, identification, and internalization. Both the three processes of social influence and the three processes of peacemaking can be linked to three central issues that all social entities—ranging from individuals to nation states—have to address as they negotiate their social environments: protecting and promoting their *interests*, establishing and maintaining their *relationships*, and affirming and expressing their *identities* (Kelman, 2006).

The role of action in attitude change

Another topic to which I have devoted considerable attention in my social-psychological research and writing is the role of action in attitude change (Kelman, 1962, 1974b, 1980). I have argued that significant changes in attitudes invariably occur in the context of action. The requirements of action, the experiences engendered by action, and the consequences of action often create the opportunity and necessity for attitude change.

Problem-solving workshops provide a unique arena for action and interaction conducive to attitude change. Participants are able to observe in real time the impact of their own actions within the workshop setting on their counterparts from the other side and the impact of the other side's actions on themselves. Moreover, in the relative safety of the workshop and with help from the facilitators, they are able to analyze these reactions and draw on them in the joint development of ideas for resolving the conflict.

A key assumption of interactive problem solving is that ideas for resolving the conflict or specific issues within it that arise out of the direct interaction between the parties themselves are more likely to lead to a durable, high-quality peace agreement than ideas imposed or proposed by third parties, for several reasons: They are more likely to address the needs and concerns of the two parties; the parties are more likely to have a sense of commitment to solutions that they themselves generated; and the very process of jointly developing these ideas—the actions and interactions that it entails—instantiates the new relationship that a durable, high-quality agreement must put in place. The big issue, of course, is the extent to which ideas developed in the workshop setting are transferred to the policy process. While I have no systematic evidence about the kind of transfer that has taken place over the years, I believe that the ideas generated in workshop interactions between members of the two sides' political elites have found their way into the political debates and the decision-making processes in the two societies.

Legitimate authority

Over the years, I have focused increasingly on influence emanating from legitimate authority (e.g., Kelman, 1969, 1974a), particularly in the work on *Crimes of Obedience* with Lee Hamilton (Kelman & Hamilton, 1989). The concept of legitimacy has not been central to our theory of practice, but it has, in a number of ways, informed our thinking about the selection of workshop participants and the characteristics of the third party.

In recruiting workshop participants, we have always looked for people who are interested in exploring the possibilities of a negotiated solution to the conflict, but who represent the political mainstream of their respective societies. As mentioned earlier, this has meant recruiting Palestinian participants who identified with the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and Israeli participants who identified with the Zionist movement and the state of Israel. Interaction among mainstream members of the two communities is more likely to reveal the obstacles to negotiations as well as the possibilities for overcoming these obstacles. Moreover, mainstream members of the political elites are better situated to transfer what they learn from their workshop interaction to the public debate and the decision-making process within their own societies. Thus, our workshops—along with many other activities and experiences—helped to generate the ideas for resolving the conflict that became the building stones of the Oslo agreement and to inject them into the political cultures of the two societies. Among these is the idea that negotiations between legitimate national representatives of the parties are not only necessary, but also possible—i.e., that a credible negotiating partner is available on the other side (Kelman, 1995, 2005b).

In establishing and maintaining the legitimacy of the third party, a key issue has been the ethnic composition of the team. In planning and conducting our first Israeli-Palestinian workshop in 1971, Stephen Cohen and I were concerned about the fact that the two senior facilitators of the event were both Jewish. When we decided to pursue this work more systematically in 1973, one of our first steps

was to bring together an ethnically balanced team, including three Arab-American scholars. This team worked together on a number of projects throughout the 1970s. In my subsequent work, I have partnered with Palestinian colleagues in the various projects that we carried out over the years.

My legitimacy as a third party was also enhanced by my evenhanded approach, characterized by multipartiality—rather than impartiality or neutrality, which I never claimed. This approach also characterized my writings on the conflict, which offered conceptual analyses and policy proposals from a social-psychological, conflict-resolution perspective. Though these writings were a form of advocacy, they did not advocate for one or the other side, but for negotiations toward a mutually desirable peace agreement, responsive to the needs and concerns of both sides. Finally, my legitimacy was supported by my institutional base and professional credentials. It helped that my work was based, not only at Harvard University, but at its Center for International Affairs—rather than, say, a department of psychology. My professional credentials included not only expertise in conflict resolution and international relations, but also—as mentioned earlier—some degree of regional expertise.

Psychotherapy and Group Process

I am not a clinical psychologist and have not engaged in psychotherapy practice. I have, however, had considerable experience as a student of psychotherapy. As a graduate student at Yale, I took the year-long course in psychotherapy, which included a closely supervised practicum in psychoanalytically oriented short-term therapy. I read a good deal of Freud, and, while I was not particularly drawn to his theory of personality, I was very interested in his writings on therapeutic technique. I became interested in group psychotherapy from a social-psychological perspective: as a social-influence setting designed to produce significant changes in attitude and personality. After completing my doctoral work, I received a postdoctoral fellowship to pursue this interest and chose Jerome Frank's group therapy project at Johns Hopkins University as the site for my fellowship. At Johns Hopkins, I observed numerous therapy groups, participated in research on the evaluation of psychotherapy, and was greatly influenced by Frank's approach to the therapeutic relationship (see, e.g., Frank, 1961). During the three productive years that I ultimately spent in Baltimore, I also underwent a personal psychoanalysis. Moreover, during these years, as well as before and after, I acquired some experience in self-analytic groups, broadly within the encounter-group tradition. I might add here that my first teaching appointment at Harvard—as Lecturer on Social Psychology between 1957 and 1962—was in the clinical program, where I taught the course on theory and research in psychotherapy required for third-year clinical students.

I have always been very clear in differentiating problem-solving workshops from therapy or encounter groups. They differ fundamentally in their purpose, their analytical focus, and the contract under which they operate (cf. Kelman, 1991). Unlike therapy or encounter groups, problem-solving workshops are designed to contribute to changes at the system level—in the political debate and the policy process—rather than the personal or interpersonal level; they focus on intersocietal processes rather than the actions or interactions of individual participants; and they operate on the understanding that participants have come to learn about the conflict between their societies, rather than about themselves or about their interpersonal relations. Nevertheless, my experience with psychotherapy and group process has influenced my conception of the third-party role, of the nature of third-party interventions, and of the relationship between changes in the workshop setting and transfer of these changes to the policy process.

Third-party role

My conception of the third-party role is considerably influenced by a therapeutic model. I do play an active role in setting the stage and in summarizing where the group seems to be—particularly at

the beginning and end of sessions. But, when the discussion is underway, I tend to be quiet for much of the time. In part, this stance is based on my conviction that ideas for the analysis and resolution of the conflict are most meaningful and useful when they emerge out of the interaction between the parties themselves. In part, I often feel the need to listen attentively in order to gain a fuller understanding of what is going on in the group. As in psychotherapy, the timing of third-party interventions is important; I prefer to wait until I feel both that I have a fairly good grasp of the issue under discussion and that the group is ready for what I have to offer. I am also reluctant to intervene prematurely, trying to redirect a discussion that appears to be floundering, since it may turn out to be a prelude to a productive exchange. When I do intervene, I prefer to put my observations in a tentative way, often in the form of a question or hypothesis.

Corrective emotional experiences

Third-party interventions include *content observations*, which may take the form of summarizing, highlighting, asking for clarification, or pointing to similarities or differences between the parties; *process observations*, which suggest how interactions within the group may reflect the dynamics of the conflict between the two societies; and *theoretical observations*, which offer concepts that might be useful in clarifying the issues under discussion, perhaps using illustrations from other conflict arenas (Kelman, 2010b, p. 397). Theoretical contributions by the third party played a central role in John Burton's model as I experienced it in the Cyprus exercise in 1966. He invited members of the panel to present mini-lectures on some aspect of their work and encouraged the parties to apply the concepts to an analysis of their own situation. For example, Robert North's brief presentation of his work on arms races was used as a jumping-off point for analysis of the escalatory process in the Cyprus conflict. This kind of systematic presentation of theoretical ideas dropped out of my practice quite early, but we do introduce theoretical concepts or experiences from other conflicts when we feel that they may contribute to the discussion.

Process observations have always been of particular interest to me, although I have learned that they must be introduced cautiously. In my very first article on the problem-solving workshop (Kelman, 1972a, pp. 193–194), I pointed out that participants in the course of a workshop may reflect and illustrate some of the underlying dynamics of the conflict between their communities. In the 1966 Cyprus exercise, for example, I felt (although I did not articulate it publicly) that some of the differences in style of interaction between the Greek and the Turkish Cypriots could be understood in terms of their majority versus minority statuses within their society. By the same token, interactions in the course of a workshop may also illustrate possibilities for conflict resolution in the larger system, as suggested by Tamra Pearson d'Estrée's analysis of the role of symbolic gestures in the workshop setting (Pearson, 1990). Third-party interventions in the form of process observations, suggesting ways in which interactions between the parties "here and now" reflect the dynamics of the larger conflict, may encourage participants to examine and analyze these dynamics in real time—at or very near the moment they occur and while they are still emotionally salient (Kelman, 1997b, pp. 216–217). The insights that such observations can generate are comparable to the "corrective emotional experiences" that play an important role in psychotherapy (Alexander & French, 1946, pp. 66–68) and particularly in group therapy (Frank & Ascher, 1951). In problem-solving workshops, however, it is essential that the analysis focus not on the actions and interactions of the participants per se, but on what we might learn from them about the conflict between the two communities and possibilities for resolving it.

Two phases of behavior change

In an early article, comparing group processes in social group work, adult education, and group therapy, I distinguished between two phases of change, which I described as the practice phase and

the action phase (Kelman, 1952, pp. 86–87). I elaborated on this distinction in a later article on group therapy, which argued that the therapeutic process requires changes in the patient's behavior both *within* the therapy situation and *outside* of the therapy situation (Kelman, 1963). I proposed that these two phases of change may represent competing demands—i.e., that the conditions most conducive to change in behavior during the therapy sessions may interfere with the generalization of these behaviors to real-life settings. I proposed that a major challenge for the theory and practice of psychotherapy is to find the proper balance between the forces conducive to change within the therapy situation and those conducive to change outside.

This distinction had a direct influence on my analysis of problem-solving workshops from the beginning. As already mentioned toward the beginning of this article, my very first publication on the topic (Kelman, 1972a) argues that the conditions for maximizing change in the workshop setting may be different from and indeed contradictory to the conditions for maximizing the transfer of such changes to the policy process—a dilemma that I have come to describe as the *dialects of problem-solving workshops* (Kelman, 1979). The discussion of the point-of-entry problem above offers some examples of these contradictory requirements and the ways in which we have tried to balance them.

International Educational and Cultural Exchange

In the 1950s and the 1960s, a major focus of my work, in collaboration with several colleagues, was on international educational and cultural exchanges. One of our studies explored the impact of a year in the United States on the national, professional, and personal images of students from the Scandinavian countries (Bailyn & Kelman, 1962; Kelman & Bailyn, 1962; Mishler, 1965). Data were obtained through questionnaires and interviews before the students' arrival in the United States, on three occasions during their stay, and a year after their return home. Another study evaluated the impact of an intensive exchange program, based at Brandeis University, for broadcasting specialists from 16 countries around the world, who spent four months in the United States (Kelman & Ezekiel, 1970).

One of the major conclusions of this research was that exchange experiences are most likely to have a positive impact on attitudes and images if the participants are actively engaged in joint activities with members of the host society that meet the following criteria: (1) their participation is on an equal basis; (2) the activities are personally and professionally rewarding and self-enhancing; and (3) the participants' relationship to members of the host society is based on interdependence and reciprocity. We also found that the most significant and enduring changes are likely to be at the cognitive rather than the affective level—that is, the experience tends to produce more complex and differentiated images of the host society and not necessarily greater liking for it.

Problem-solving workshops, of course, involve an encounter across national and cultural lines that is very different from the exchange situation. Participants represent parties in conflict, and they are explicitly brought together to explore ways of resolving the conflict. Nevertheless, my research on international exchange has had some influence on my conflict resolution practice. Most notably, it has underlined the importance of ensuring equality in status between the parties.

We try to maximize equality in the definition of the parties and the selection of participants. This can be a challenge in situations marked by structural asymmetries in power, such as the Israeli-Palestinian case, in which we are dealing with a state-actor versus a non-state-actor, an occupying power versus an occupied population. Furthermore, one of our key ground rules is equality in the setting, while remaining cognizant of the asymmetries between the parties. Within the workshop, both parties have the same right to have their concerns heard and their needs seriously considered: The Israelis cannot argue that the Palestinian needs deserve less weight because they are the weaker party, nor can Palestinians argue that Israeli needs deserve less weight because Israel is the oppressor. As

mentioned earlier, one of the functions of the third party is to help empower the weaker party in any given context.

Our finding that the major impact of the international exchange experiences that we investigated was at the cognitive rather than the affective level has helped to clarify the purpose of problem-solving workshops. Workshops are not designed to bring representatives of the enemy camps together so that they can get to know each other, like each other, and be ready to make peace with each other. It is important that they learn to respect each other, develop working trust, gain an understanding of each other's perspective, and engage in a productive process of joint thinking. But, as I have already pointed out, if the participants form too close a coalition, their effectiveness in transmitting what they learned to their own communities may in fact be impaired.

Nationalism and National Identity

My interest in nationalism and national identity goes back a long way. In 1945, at age 18, I published two Hebrew-language articles in student magazines, one of which was entitled "In defense of nationalism" (Kelman, 1945a). It distinguishes between positive potentialities of nationalism—such as its contribution to the liberation of oppressed peoples and to the self-esteem of individuals—and to its negative manifestations—such as exaggerated national pride and hostility toward other peoples. In the 1960s, my research, in collaboration with Daniel Katz and colleagues at the University of Michigan, focused on varieties of nationalism and personal involvement in the national political system (DeLamater, Katz, & Kelman, 1969; Katz, Kelman, & Flacks, 1964; Katz, Kelman & Vassiliou, 1970).

I further developed the typology that emerged from this research with a special focus on the different ways in which individuals accept the legitimacy of the nation state (Kelman, 1969). In its final form, the typology distinguishes six patterns of personal involvement in the national political system, summarized in a three-by-two table: three types of political orientation—rule orientation, role orientation, and value orientation—and two types of attachment to the political system—sentimental and instrumental—that cross-cut the political orientations and represent two fundamental sources of legitimacy of the political system (Kelman & Hamilton, 1989, p. 119). Lee Hamilton and I, in close collaboration with Frederick D. Miller and later also with John D. Winkler, developed scales to measure the three types of orientation and two types of attachment, which we related to respondents' attitudes toward orders from legitimate authorities and crimes of obedience (Kelman & Hamilton, 1989, Chap. 12).

I have applied the same typology to the analysis of national identity, distinguishing between three types of orientation to the group and two sources of attachment to it (Kelman, 1997c). The issues of nationalism and national identity are at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The conflict has its origins in the clash between two national movements. It has taken on the character of a zero-sum conflict around national identity and, indeed, national existence. Clearly, then, national identity is a central substantive focus for discussion in our Israeli-Palestinian workshops (Kelman, 1999b, 2001). Furthermore, interactive problem solving in general, in my view, is particularly relevant to conflicts between identity groups. Not surprisingly, in addition to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it has been applied in identity-group conflicts, such as Cyprus, Northern Ireland, and Sri Lanka.

Group identities and the clashes between them are central to our workshop discussions. In the needs analysis, which is a key component of the typical workshop agenda, the need for identity—along with security—often tops the agenda. Although, as mentioned above, theoretical observations are infrequent in my style of intervention, they tend to focus on issues of national identity—perhaps pointing to the extent to which conceptions of nation and group identity tend to be social constructions. Workshop discussions often focus on sharing the two groups' national narratives with each

other and trying to understand the other's narrative from the other's perspective. A unique feature of our problem-solving workshops is the process of "negotiating identity" in which each side can acknowledge and try to accommodate the other's identity—at least to the extent of eliminating negation of the other and the claim of exclusivity from its own identity—in a context in which the core of its own identity and its associated narrative are affirmed by the other (Kelman, 2001).

Ethical Issues in Social Research and Social Action

Before I became a social scientist, I was a social activist. I chose social psychology as my discipline because I saw its domain as directly relevant to the issues of peace, justice, and social change with which I was concerned. In keeping with this orientation, I was actively involved in the beginnings of the peace research movement in the early 1950s, including the formation of the Research Exchange on the Prevention of War and the development of the *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (see, e.g., Kelman, 2010a). My efforts to define the social-psychological dimensions of international conflict, as well as my research on international exchange and on nationalism, were my early contributions to this enterprise. As I have already indicated, John Burton's approach immediately captured my imagination because I saw it as a direct application of social-psychological principles to the resolution of international conflicts.

There are several other ways in which my work on interactive problem solving has picked up on earlier concerns with ethical issues and experiences in social action.

Arab-Jewish relations

It is not a coincidence that the primary focus of my conflict-resolution work has been the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I grew up in the Zionist youth movement and realized very early that the Zionist enterprise would have to find an accommodation with the Arab population of Palestine. I was born into a Jewish family in Vienna and was 11 years old at the time of the Anschluss—the annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany. At that time, my sister (who is two years older than I) and I decided to join a Zionist youth group. Recently, my sister found a diary that she kept during this period in 1938, in which she reports on our search for a suitable organization. She mentions a conversation with some older boys who belonged to a right-wing group and whose solution to the "Arab problem" was to relocate the Arab population elsewhere in the Arab world. She writes that this idea was not well received at home and, specifically, cites my reaction: "Herbert did not find the solution to the Arab problem to his liking, 'because,' he said, 'surely we cannot force the Arabs to leave the land in which they are now settled.'" Needless to say, we joined a group with more moderate views.

The second of the two Hebrew-language articles that I published in 1945 was entitled "On the question of Jewish-Arab cooperation" (Kelman, 1945b). It discussed the common interests of Jews and Arabs in Palestine and argued that establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine required cooperation between the two peoples. Shortly after that, I came to support the concept of a binational state in Palestine, which was advocated by a minority within the Zionist movement, including Martin Buber and some of his colleagues at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, as well as the left wing of the Labor Movement.

Although I still think a binational state was a good formula at the time, I do not favor it today because it is a prescription for continuing the conflict. I am a strong supporter of a two-state solution and have advocated a visionary version of it, which I call the "one-country/two-state solution" (Kelman, 2011). Our latest Israeli-Palestinian working group explored ways of rebuilding trust within the two communities in the availability of a negotiating partner on the other side, in the hope of bringing the parties back to the table to negotiate a two-state solution.

The microprocess of social change

In the immediate postwar years, I became actively involved in the American civil rights and anti-war movements. My social activism has continued, in various forms, throughout the years. One of my richest experiences in social action was my work in the 1950s with the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), which pioneered in the use of Gandhian methods of nonviolent direct action in the struggle against racial segregation. I was one of the cofounders of a CORE chapter in Baltimore and actively participated—along with my wife, Rose, whom I met in Baltimore—in a long and ultimately successful campaign to end segregation of the luncheon counters of the “five and ten cents stores” of the day, all of which belonged to national chains. Our efforts combined nonviolent direct action in the form of sit-ins with other strategies, including picketing, public education, negotiations with local store managers, and raising the issue at shareholder meetings of the parent companies of the Baltimore stores.

I continued my involvement with CORE after leaving Baltimore, including service as an elected field representative of national CORE between 1954 and 1960. But it was the Baltimore experience that was the most exciting and most instructive. It had a major impact on my thinking about the nature of social change—particularly about the relationship between the microprocess and the macroprocess of change—which is reflected in interactive problem solving. There are several features that problem-solving workshops share with nonviolent direct-action projects of the kind that CORE undertook in the 1950s:

First, both are “based on a model of social change that envisages complementary efforts at many system levels. Microlevel activities, such as bringing together individual members of conflicting parties in a workshop or organizing a sit-in at a neighborhood department store, can contribute to the larger process by challenging assumptions, raising consciousness, and introducing new ideas, which gradually change the political culture and increase the likelihood of change at the level of political leadership, institutional bodies, and official policy. Microlevel projects are more likely to make such contributions insofar as they have built-in multiplier effects, achieved, for example, by strategic selection of participants in a workshop or of the target of a direct-action campaign” (Kelman 2004b, p. 269).

Second, both workshops and direct-action projects rely on the cumulative effect of small efforts. Both, therefore, require a readiness to work toward change patiently and persistently—one luncheon counter at a time, one problem-solving workshop at a time. The cumulative effect is enhanced, of course, if there are a number of similar action programs within the system and, importantly, if the work at the microlevel is integrated with work at other levels in the system: with negotiation, political action, and economic pressure to promote social justice; with official negotiations, grassroots (people-to-people) efforts, and public education to promote conflict resolution at the macrolevel.

Third, workshops and direct-action projects, each in their own way, employ methods that instantiate the future relationship that they are trying to bring about. In a lunch counter sit-in, participants symbolically create a postsegregation situation in which Blacks and Whites can sit down and eat together. In a workshop, participants begin to practice the new roles that will ideally define the relationship between the parties in the postsettlement future: a readiness to look at conflicts that will inevitably arise as shared problems that require joint efforts at analysis and resolution in order to achieve solutions responsive to the needs of both parties.

Action research

One of my abiding concerns throughout my career has been with the ethics of social research, focusing both on the products and on the process of social research. In the first category, I have been concerned with the social uses—and potential abuses—of research findings. In the second category, I have been concerned with the treatment of the individuals and groups who serve as the subjects of social research and the consequences that research participation may have for them.

In an article on the implications of the frequent power imbalance between investigators and research subjects (Kelman, 1972b), I called for the development of alternative research models that can be characterized as *participatory research* (p. 1003), without implying that this approach is suited for all research problems. One model that meets the criteria of participatory research is action research, which goes back to Kurt Lewin (1946) and is now often referred to as *participatory action research* (cf. Chataway, 1997). Action research has been done in community and organizational settings, in which a research effort is directly linked to an action program. Often the research is designed to improve and evaluate the program. The research may at times be an integral part of the program itself and program participants may be involved, to varying degrees, in the planning and conduct of the research.

I have described our workshop program as a form of action research (e.g., Kelman, 1979, 1999a), although it does not quite fit the “classical” model of action research. It is basically an action program, designed to contribute to the resolution of the conflict between the societies that our participants represent. At the same time, however, it provides a unique opportunity for the third party—often including our students—to observe at close hand the intensive interactions between parties in conflict and learn about the dynamics of international and intercommunal conflict in general and in the particular case. These learnings are reflected in our writings and in the research of our students. For the participants, the academic setting and the third party’s research interest in international conflict and in the particular case enhances the legitimacy of the enterprise: In the early days of our Israeli-Palestinian work, when meeting with the other side was controversial, the sense that they were contributing to a research enterprise helped some of our participants to overcome the taboo against such meetings.

In the model of action research that underlies our workshop program, it has been a cardinal principle that we will “do nothing for the sake of research that would in any way interfere with our practice or undermine its integrity” (Kelman, 2008, p. 41). If there is a conflict between the requirements of our research and the requirements of our practice, the latter will always prevail. In keeping with this principle, we have refrained from taping workshop proceedings and have relied on detailed notes, because we felt that the presence of a tape recorder would inhibit the free flow of the discourse. We have also abstained from the use of before-and-after questionnaires or structured interviews that might make participants feel that the workshop is part of a psychological experiment rather than the occasion for serious political dialogue. Despite these constraints, my students have been able to conduct systematic research on the workshop process, relying on the workshop notes (Müller-Klestil, 2009; Pearson [d’Estrée], 1990; Wolfe, 2002), and in-depth research on the impact of the workshop experience, based on follow-up or retrospective interviews (Babbitt & d’Estrée, 1996; d’Estrée & Babbitt, 1998; Kollars, 2010).

Conclusion

This article began with the observation that my meeting with John Burton and participation in his Cyprus exercise in 1966 represented a major turning point in my work and in my life. It then described the development of interactive problem solving, which is firmly anchored in Burton’s approach to conflict resolution, and its application to the Israeli-Palestinian case. What has struck me, as I reflect on the range of these activities in the realms of theory, practice, and application, is the extent to which they are continuous with the major themes of my earlier work and life. In the remainder of the article, I discuss some of the ways in which my conflict resolution efforts draw on and utilize earlier ideas and experiences in several different domains. The sense of continuity within change and the utilization of so many strands of past endeavors help to explain why I have found this work so engaging and absorbing across the years.

In the terms of the three processes of social influence that I distinguished in my earlier research, John Burton’s impact on my work can best be captured by the process of internalization. Internalization occurs when individuals accept new attitudes, ideas, or behaviors from a credible source because

they are congruent with their personal values and identity. The new acquisitions are integrated into the person's own value system and behavioral repertoire, but with some degree of flexibility. They may be adjusted and modified in keeping with the person's own personal style and experiences. Though typically derived from a trusted and respected source, they become self-sustaining and largely independent of the original source. In short, they are internalized. Internalized change, in my estimation, is the greatest tribute to the one who inspired it.

NOTE

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Herbert C. Kelman, Harvard University, William James Hall, Room 1308, 33 Kirkland St., Cambridge, MA 02138. E-mail: hck@wjh.harvard.edu

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