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The Journal for the Study of Peace and Conflict is the annual journal of the Wisconsin Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies, with its office at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, 900 Reserve Street, Stevens Point, WI 54481. Officers are Executive Director Deborah Buffton (University of Wisconsin–La Crosse), Associate Director John Fields (Edgewood College, Madison, Wisconsin), and Administrative Director Kathryn Blakeman. The Institute is committed to a balanced review of diverse perspectives. Views of the authors are their own. The Journal is a refereed journal. To purchase a copy, send $15 to the Wisconsin Institute at the above address.

CALL FOR PAPERS: The 2010-2011 issue of the Journal will publish a variety of scholarly articles, essays, poetry, and book reviews on topics such as war, peace, global cooperation, domestic violence, and interpersonal conflict resolution; including questions of military and political security, the global economy, and global environmental issues. We wish to promote discussion of both strategic and ethical questions surrounding these issues. Our audience includes scholars with a wide range of interests within the academy and educated members of the general public. Contributors should avoid discussions accessible only to specialists in their field. Submissions are accepted on a continuing basis. Contributors should first contact the office at wiinst@uwsp.edu for a brief style sheet.
Journal for the Study of Peace and Conflict
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Editor’s Forward

The 2009-2010 issue of the *Journal for the Study of Peace and Conflict* contains several articles first presented as papers at the October 2009 Peace and Justice Studies Association conference, hosted by Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and co-sponsored by the Wisconsin Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies, as well as research papers from faculty and work from students at Marquette. The publication of this issue of the journal is in celebration of the recently launched interdisciplinary minor in justice and peace studies at Marquette University, and the recently founded Center for Peacemaking.

In the first two articles, themes of loss, of lives spent in prison and on the streets, belie the myth of domestic peace and harmony while the country is engaged in two wars in the Middle East. Then, four articles unveil new ways of thinking about conventional topics that lead to new ways of seeing and being peace: Listening as a means of conflict resolution, the concept of Peace Journalism as opposed to the news industry’s glamorization of war, the cost and image of Maternal Sacrifice on WWI, and the rhetorical analysis of presidential defense of the Iraq war at the country’s leading military college. These contribute to our ability to revise the paradigms and refresh the language with which we talk and think about peace. Two articles on urban life, one about forgiveness education in public schools and the other about a grassroots celebration in a place we usually think of as peaceful, Charleston, South Carolina, but which has problems of inner city violence common to the rest of America, follow. Two poems by poetry students at Marquette and five book reviews of new, recent, and just published topics we hope will be of interest to our readers are also included.

Thanks to Michael Duffey, Robert Ashmore, and Terry Rynne, and to the other faculty and referees who volunteered their time to read and evaluate manuscripts. Thanks also to Kathryn Blakeman, who has contributed to the detailed work of putting this issue in its final form.

Claire H. Badaracco, Ph.D.
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Guest Editor, *Journal for the Study of Peace and Conflict, 2009-2010*
The Future of the Global Prison Industrial Complex

Mary K. Ryan

Nations are becoming increasingly interconnected in the 21st century. A person’s security, health, and safety are no longer limited to the plight or success of the country in which he or she is a citizen or resides. With an ever-connected international order, the global prison industrial complex is increasingly being seen as the governmental answer to societal woes. Punishment has long been practiced in human cultures, but the global prison industrial complex presents numerous challenges to sound global order which must be examined. Corporate influence and ownership of prisons, and the governmental outsourcing of prison operations, are emerging trends with legitimate challenges to reducing violence and crime worldwide. Private prisons force countries to examine the role of prisons in modern society, but the implications of the global prison industrial complex go far beyond the prison walls.

Instead of incarceration functioning as a means within its own end to control social problems, it is, ironically, becoming a social problem in its own right. This paper will explore the origins and magnitude of the global prison industrial complex and survey the key global challenges. Criminology and sociological thought exist in four main areas which inform and influence the international evolution of prison development: international definitions for and laws regulating crime; economic motives and ramifications of the global prison industrial complex; societal customs manipulating the role of prisons; and the role of identity politics in the growth of global prison industrial complex.

Background

The global prison industrial complex is the interweaving of private business and government interests, or more simply, the privatization of prisons.¹ It reveals the friction between the need for profit versus crime control and the relationship between private profit and public cost. Private prisons develop in two forms: the takeover of publicly-operated prisons by private companies and the development of new prisons by for-profit companies. Private prison companies can be contracted by governments to build prisons as well as manage day-to-day prison operations.

The International Centre for Prison Studies documents over 8 ½ million prisoners being held in penal institutions around the world. Prison populations grew in most countries throughout the 1990s. Amongst industrialized countries, the growth during this period was as high as 40 percent.² How did incarceration rates become so dense? Minor policy changes to

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¹ Mary Ryan will graduate in 2010 with her M.A. in Public Service from Marquette University. Mary received her B.A. in Political Science from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and is an alumnus of Future Milwaukee.

² It is imperative to note that global prison growth is not solely in private prisons. The levels of incarceration are rising within government-owned and -managed prisons as well as private prisons. However, the swelling prison populations are a critical baseline area of understanding how the global prison industrial complex has come to pass.
incarceration have occurred throughout the last thirty years, but the use of punishment as a response to social problems has remained the constant underlying foundation of law enforcement. Criminologist Pat Carlen suggested that there was a brief downward imprisonment trend in the late 1980s and early 1990s due to policies of transcarceralism, or the geographic dispersal of the prison into home detentions, curfews and tougher community sanctions. Ultimately, though, such polices were deemed “soft on crime” and subsided. In their place, the staid ideological counterpart to transcarceralism, prisons, returned with a vengeance (Sudbury, 2000, p. 137). Leading the global incarceration race are the United States and the United Kingdom. Although the United States houses a higher rate of prisoners per capita, today the United Kingdom has a higher proportion of prisoners in private institutions than the United States, with 7.2 percent and 11 percent respectively.

**International Definitions**

Since incarceration is predicated upon the conviction of a crime, how crime is defined is a critical baseline measurement in the global prison industrial complex debate. International definitions for and laws regulating crime can be used as indicators of anticipated inmate population levels. If prison populations declined, current prisons may not endure and the necessity to build new prisons would be mitigated. The nature of crime is a fluid concept. What qualifies as a crime changes over time and definitions of crime also vary between countries. This variability evokes a nationalistic undertone to how citizens conceive crime and presents a significant impediment to thinking about crime and prisons on a global scale. Lacking a global mindset, the global prison industrial complex is free to grow without concern to cultural changes and the trends of modernization that impact all nations. The ascent of the Internet and the onset of increasing globalization have caused some crimes, namely pornographic activity and gambling, to shift from corporeal to cyberspace. More importantly, the definition of a crime is inconsistent between regions and nations at the epicenter of the global prison industrial complex. The United States and the United Kingdom define crime differently, yet both uphold the highest incarceration levels. Online gambling firms in the United Kingdom were engaged in activities deemed legal under European Union law, but illegal in the United States. Contrastingly, pedophile rings prohibited by EU law are protected under the First Amendment in the United States. Other industries and systems are also at risk and in need of uniform prosecutorial practices. For example, telephonic advancements in banking, such as the ability to make payments with cell-phone transfers, present challenges to the monetary system (Aguilar-Millan, et al, 2000, p. 44).

Additionally, the lack of an internationally agreed upon definition for white-collar crime reveals the various levels of acceptance and immersion in capitalism. International cooperation is more readily accessible when countries are trying to deter money laundering or terrorist activity, but the areas of corporate and security fraud still have scarce regulation across countries. The global free market is unlikely to react to economic disruption in any single and the continuing threats in the future. Furthermore, not all research published on issues of crime, prisons, or judicial areas distinguish between private or public prisons. It is not common practice to delineate private prisons.
country until it presents a more substantial threat to the stability of the world’s market system overall (Aguilar-Millan, et al, 2000, p. 49).

Certainly none of these technological advancements are unique to the crime; they are endemic to the transformation of business and lifestyle changes in the last couple decades, as well. Still, these issues influence the functionality and judiciousness of punishment. Technological advancements assist crime and permit activity in multiple countries regardless of citizenship or origin. The 20th-century notion of crime being a geographically-constrained action is thwarted. Perhaps more so than in any prior century, governments ought to rethink if punishment, in the form of prisons which house criminals who committed crimes in its country, can continue to be a relevant, effective practice. Furthermore, the ascent of the private prison business and the increased use of punishment as a solution to societal malice raise significant questions about morality, human rights, and the integrity of government bodies. Societies across the world ought to contemplate the implication of corporate entities managing the treatment of prisoners. Corporations and governments, especially within democratic or free societies, have distinct responsibilities, obligations, and principles.  

The difficulty of policing wider jurisdictional boundaries has spurred increased cooperation between law enforcement agencies and military intelligence. Effectually, the enforcement response has been to mirror the pattern of the criminal behavior. As gangs, drug trade, pornography, gambling, and other crime went global, governmental law enforcement agencies followed. Private prisons may indicate the first sign of the coming crime control management practice: militarization. The global prison industrial complex is, as will be discussed later in sections on identity, a form of war against communities of color in various societies. It is especially troubling that private prison companies could be enlisted to help wage this battle and be so intimately aware of governmental efforts to keep citizens safe. How crime is regulated is an indicator of whose interests the government puts first.

Finally, the wide spectrum of criminal justice policy between nations sheds light on the reactionary role of prisons and the looming challenges for lawmakers. Deep discussions need to occur about what it means to be a global citizen and how to create a just global community. Instead of making societies safer, the need for private prison companies to make a profit is pressuring government adoption of new laws. Simultaneously, it is clear that criminal sophistication will require some new laws to protect the community. Governments face a significant challenge of not simply playing into the game established by corporate lobbyists. As the next section on economic motives and ramifications of the prison industrial complex shows, governments engaged in the global prison industrial complex have thus far failed to deliver safe, citizen-oriented protection to their constituents.

**Economic Motives and Ramifications**

Since the global prison industrial complex is spreading rapidly within capitalist countries, it is important to consider the economic motives and ramifications of the prison industrial

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3 Ample public service literature exists on the roles and expectations of government agencies compared to private industry. The book *Practical Ethics in Public Administration* (Geuras and Garofalo, 2005) provides a helpful briefing on ethics and explanation of how ethics differs from the public sector to the private sector.
complex. By 1989 in the United States, correctional firms operated two dozen facilities. The private prison industry took off in the 1990s. After a law signed by President Clinton in 1996 ended court supervision and decisions, overcrowding and violent, unsafe conditions in federal prisons developed. Thus, one of the key factors opening the door to prison privatization in the United States was the overcrowding of federal prisons. Leading the world in incarceration rates, U.S. federal prisons are functioning at 137 percent of their capacity. Private prison corporations in Texas began to contact other states whose prisons were overcrowded, offering “rent-a-cell” services in the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) prisons located in small towns in Texas. The commission for a rent-a-cell salesman is $2.50 to $5.50 per day per bed. The county gets $1.50 for each prisoner.

The first private prison in the United Kingdom, Altcourse, opened its doors in 1997 and the United Kingdom remains the flagship area for private prisons in Europe. In the United Kingdom, the private finance initiative (PFI) helped institutionalize private prisons. Although originally only one private prison was renewed and only two new ones were launched, within a year it was announced that all new prisons in England and Wales would be built and run by private companies, under the PFI.

Now, many state and national budgets are strapped and ill-suited in the current economic climate to invest the time or capital to build new facilities. This dire fiscal climate makes private ventures more attractive to governments. According to an October 2009 article from the Wall Street Journal, “half the new inmates over the past year were sent to private prisons, even though less than 9 percent of prison beds are privatized.” Over the last few years, it has become increasingly common for privately operated prisons to absorb the spillover from these congested government-run sites.

The exploding prison population can be seen as both an explanation for as well as a reaction to the global prison industrial complex. According to the Centre for Research on Globalization, in 1998, there were only five private prisons in the United Kingdom to house just 2,000 inmates. Prison privatization flourishess most heavily in neocapitalist cultures due to the relationship between state and capital it cultivates so well. Government is attracted to privatization because of cost-savings and corporations are motivated to privatize due to the logic of profit maximization and accumulation of capital. The prison industry now employs more than half a million people—more than any Fortune 500 corporation, other than General Motors. Mushrooming construction has turned the prison industry into the main employer in scores of economically depressed rural communities. A host of firms profit from private prisons, prison labor and services like healthcare and transportation, as well.

Private prison companies have a sweeping global influence. The security firm Wackenhut Corporation (WCC) maintains operations in 56 countries on six continents. It offers “global integrated service solutions” and describes its international trading base as Central and South America, although recently it has established itself in Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa. WCC’s main domestic rival, Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), has prison contracts in the United Kingdom and Australia. CCA’s joint venture partner and a major shareholder is Sodexho SA of France, which has operations in 60 countries and offers “a whole world of services across five continents.” Based in Nashville, TN, CCA operates the largest women’s prison in Australia. The European security firm Group 4, which runs prisons and associated services in the United Kingdom and Australia, will soon open a 3,024-bed maximum security
facility in South Africa. In May, the company announced a merger with Danish security firm Falck, creating a combined operation base of 50 countries. One of the most important areas affected by the global prison industrial complex is prison labor. Prison labor is economically valuable and undermines the prisoner’s sense of personal control. The private prison effectually transforms the prisoner into a commodity where the prisoner’s primary function is capitalist tool instead of human being. The largest state prison industry in 2000 was in Texas where it used 7,000 inmates to generate $83 million in sales. Across the nation, state governments use prison inmates as cheap, captive laborers and sell the labor to prospective companies looking for manual, unskilled labor. More than 37 states in the United States have legalized the contracting of prison labor by private corporations that mount their operations inside state prisons. Contracting companies include: IBM, Boeing, Motorola, Microsoft, AT&T, Wireless, Texas Instrument, Dell, Compaq, Honeywell, Hewlett-Packard, Nortel, Lucent Technologies, 3Com, Intel, Northern Telecom, TWA, Nordstrom’s, Revlon, Macy’s, Pierre Cardin, and Target Stores. Just between 1980 and 1994, profits went up from $392 million to $1.31 billion. State penitentiary inmates usually receive minimum wage for their work, but Colorado has paid as little as $2 per hour. In privately-run prisons, inmates receive as little as 17 cents per hour for a maximum of six hours a day, the equivalent of $20 per month. The highest-paying private prison is CCA in Tennessee, where prisoners receive 50 cents per hour if in a “highly skilled position.” In federal prisons, inmates can earn $1.25 an hour and work eight hours a day, with occasional overtime.

Although government policies and legal regulations provide an instructive guide to predict inmate populations, the projected growth of the private prison industry can also be seen through examining the stock market offerings to potential public investors from private prison operators. Table 1 explores the 5-year projected growth rate of seven private prison companies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>5-Yr. Projected Growth Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China Security &amp; Surveillance Technology (NYSE: CSR)</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornell Companies</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrections Corp of America</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geo Group</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L-1 Identity Solutions (NYSE: ID)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith &amp; Wesson (Nasdaq: SWHC)</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taser (Nasdaq: TASR)</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Yahoo! Finance

As a private company, the private prison industry is logically expected to boom and the investors in such companies expect their success. However, the implication of the private prison industry’s success on the global prison industrial complex is an altogether different story. The high profits seen by private prison companies are particularly troubling given the track record of worker conditions. Scotland’s examinations of private prison conditions have, for example, described workers that bemoan the cost-cutting, intense workloads, and understaffing. Ultimately, a Scotland governmental study found that a private prison contractor degraded the conditions of staff to such an extent that the public interest was undoubtedly compromised.
There is no guarantee or necessity for private prison companies to act as citizen corporations which respect the public interest and treat prisoners and workers with respect, decency, and dignity. It is entirely reasonable to presume that the more profit these companies earn, the more profit they would like to keep. As a private business, their shareholders would expect nothing less from them. But the problem in the private prison industry is this directly undermines the safety, well-being, and dignity of the inmates and prison staff. This disparity between the expectations of private industry versus governmental values lies at the heart of the global prison industrial complex.

Societal Changes

In addition to government-driven incarceration through the international definitions and economic incentives discussed in the previous two sections, the global prison industrial complex is also manipulated through societal changes and social practices. Education in the United States is the most sweeping societal development of the last couple decades to affect the global prison industrial complex. The school to prison pipeline has become well-documented. The school-to-prison pipeline is a system of local, state, and federal education policies combined with public safety or criminal justice policies which push students away from school into the criminal justice system.

“Zero tolerance” policies in school districts are on the rise, contributing to an increase in suspension, detention, expulsion, and discouragement which translates into other areas of a student’s life. Rather than helping educate students, these policies criminalize and punish them. The ACLU and NAACP suggest that zero tolerance policies are often a student’s first exposure to the criminal justice system. Situations which may have once resulted in a trip to the principal’s office or a stern lecture are now resulting in handcuffing and being taken out of school to the police. Children as young as five have made national news for being arrested for throwing tantrums, riding bikes where it was not permitted, and throwing rocks as toys—all behavior which is a part of growing up. But instead of providing guidance and teaching right and wrong to these children, schools have started slapping them with criminal records.

Unfortunately, the disparity seen in the nation’s prisons is dominant in education, as well. In 2003, African-American youth made up 16 percent of the nation’s overall juvenile population, but accounted for 45 percent of juvenile arrests (Snyder, 2005, p. 9). The juvenile justice system is priming black youth for encounters with the prison industry, rather than providing alternative lifestyles and deterrence from incarceration. To make this pattern worse, the reaction to youth violence is over the top since the levels of youth violence are exaggerated. The explosion of school-based arrests cannot be attributed to an increase in youth violence. Between 1992 and 2002, school violence actually dropped by about half (Advancement Project, 2005, p. 11). Despite the fear generated by a handful of highly publicized school shootings, schools remain one of the safest places for young people.

The role of testing in American schools could be reformed to reduce juvenile arrests. The rise in suspensions, expulsions, and school-based arrests may be attributed, in part, to the rise of high-stakes testing. As a result of test-based accountability regimes such as the No Child Left Behind Act, schools have an incentive to segregate out low-performing students to boost overall test scores. One study found that schools dished out longer suspensions to students
who performed poorly on standardized tests than to high-performing students for similar offenses. This gap in discipline based on performance grew substantially during the period of time when standardized tests were administered (Figlio, 2006). Such a practice suggests that schools may be selectively employing discipline strategies that keep low-performing students out of school during testing days as a means of artificially inflating the school’s performance.

The school-to-prison pipeline has criminalized our schools, a cruel irony which guts a physical space intended to represent freedom and possibility in a democratic America. The American Bar Association has condemned zero-tolerance policies as inherently unjust:

zero tolerance has become a one-size-fits-all solution to all the problems that schools confront. It has redefined students as criminals, with unfortunate consequences. ... Unfortunately, most current [zero-tolerance] policies eliminate the common sense that comes with discretion and, at great cost to society and to children and families, do little to improve school safety.  

Just as the global prison industrial complex is not a long-term solution for a safe, productive society, zero-tolerance policies do not deliver safer schools nor directly create smarter students in our schools. If anything, the social transformation of education only extends the reach of the global prison industrial complex into the childhoods of vulnerable student populations.

Identity Politics

Finally, it is crucial to explore how the global prison industrial complex masks the devastating effects of the prison industry on communities across the globe. The global prison industrial complex invites identity politics to be prevalent. Prisons have traditionally been understood to exist as a means to separate those who have offended the social body politic. The behavior of a prisoner is deemed “criminal” and accepted by the mainstream population as categorically different from that of a “normal” person. As a result, identity in the prison world is of central importance to being an inmate. Inmates are frequently segregated based on age, gender, and race. The assumption of heteronormativity, or heterosexuality as the normative sexual orientation preference, also pervades in the prison scene. Finally, mental health and intelligence factor into incarceration, as well. All of these identity issues could pose threats to community safety if retaliation around exclusivist causes were to occur.

In the United States, numerous governmental policies have been adopted over the last twenty years which have directly contributed to the increase in prison populations. These policies include truth-in-sentencing laws, three-strikes laws, treating juveniles as adults, and allowing juveniles’ criminal histories to be considered by adult courts. These policies effectually target vulnerable populations, causing certain types of people to be more harshly affected by growing incarceration rates.

The crisis of the prison boom and the threat of the global prison industrial complex are directly related to identity and oppression. Activist Angela Davis has long since proclaimed that

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4 http://www.abanet.org/crimjust/juvjus/zerotolreport.html
criminization has become the government’s weapon of choice in responding to social problems caused by capitalism, globalization, and the protests engendered by the globalization of capitol (Davis, 1998, p. 66). Overt racism against African Americans, Native Americans, and Latinos, and overt sexism against women, has transitioned into sanctioning of prisoners who were never welcomed among the dominant society which established the prison industry in the first place. The prevalence of the prison industry is a troubling addition to a global community which is now engaged in wars against terror and international crime control. If prisons can be created for the same reasons countries choose to engage in war, philosophical distinctions between defense, retribution, and protection are blurred.

In the United States, African-American women andLatinas are disproportionately affected by mandatory minimums judicial sentencing. Since the only way a lesser sentence can be given is in cases where the defendant provides ‘substantial assistance’ in the prosecution of another person, women, who tend to be in subordinate positions within drug syndicates and thus have little access to information are usually unable to make such an agreement. The crack-cocaine disparity also feeds the disproportionate impact on women of color. The mandatory minimum sentence for crack cocaine is one hundred times harsher for crack than for powder cocaine. Since crack is cheaper, it has flooded poor central city neighborhoods. In turn, African-Americans and Latinos receive disproportionate sentences when compared with white powder cocaine users and dealers residing in more affluent areas (Sudbury, 2002, p. 64).

Undereducated and low-income African Americans are especially vulnerable to winding up in prison. In fact, some sociologists suggest incarceration amongst this population is not unlike joining the military or parenthood. “The novel pervasiveness of imprisonment indicates the emergence of incarceration as a new stage in the life course of young low-skill black men” (Petit and Western, 2004, p. 151). Likewise, professor Julia Sudbury contends that black women (and women of color overall) essentially fuel the global prison industrial complex by functioning as scapegoats for tough-on-crime rhetoric and the war on drugs and also carrying out the prison labor in workshops once incarcerated (Sudbury, 2002, p. 72). Serving time remains a prevalent event in the U.S. African-American community.

Regrettably, the decried racial disparity found in incarceration rates is not unique to the United States’ prison population. In Australia, the aboriginal Koori women represent 2 percent of overall population, but are 30 percent of prison population. In Canada, aboriginal people comprise 3 percent of the general population, but represent 12 percent of federal prisoners, a figure which increases to over 60 percent in the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta. Finally, in England and Wales, 12 percent of female prisoners are African-Caribbean British passport holders compared to 1 percent of the general population.

The classic writing by Charles Mills on the racial contract in the United States contends the prison system is an indicator of the ignorance of white leaders who strive to maintain their stature. As Mills discusses the role of race in U.S. history, he writes:

One could say, then, as a general rule, that white misunderstanding, misrepresentation, evasion, and self deception on matters related to race are among the most pervasive mental phenomena of the past few hundred years, a cognitive and moral economy physically required for conquest, colonization, and enslavement. And these phenomena are in no way accidental, but prescribed by
the terms of the Racial Contract, which requires a certain schedule of structured blindesses and opacities in order to establish and maintain the white polity (Mills, 1997, p. 19; emphasis original).

The racial dynamics of the global prison industrial complex are incredibly important to human rights, equality, and justice. The racial contract targets a crucial, yet often overlooked, part of the 21st-century criminal justice evolution: prisons cannot deal only with the prisoner. Identity politics needs to be as much about the race of who is incarcerated as it is about who has the power to incarcerate. Mill also urges looking beyond the sheer racial composition to understand the philosophy and motivation for the continued implementation of the “contract.” The global prison industrial complex warrants the same investigative and judicious mindset.

Along with race, gender equity and the role of feminism are important, complex philosophical quandaries within the global prison industrial complex. Sometimes reforms dubbed as feminist in efforts to equalize the treatment of prisoners across gender lines has the unintended effect of making the lives of prisoners more dangerous. For example, Tekla Miller, the former warden at Huron Valley Women’s Prison in Michigan, complained that the arsenal at the women’s prison was inferior to those at men’s institutions. Miller also successfully lobbied for the right to shoot at women escapees. As the global prison industrial continues to grow, the ability to maintain prisoner and employee safety as well as to cultivate nonviolent communities could be threatened by such activity which fronts as equality, but does not do anything to assist or improve the lives of vulnerable people.

The final important identity heavily afflicted by the global prison industrial complex is the mentally ill population. Statistics from the Bureau of Justice (Right to be Hostile, p. 102) indicate that the largest mental institutions in the world come in the form of three jails. The Bureau of Justice Statistics acknowledges that the three largest de facto mental institutions in the world are Riker’s Island (New York), Cook County Jail (Illinois), and Los Angeles County Jail (California). The treatment of the mentally ill has evolved dramatically over time, and the high density of prisoners with mental illness ought not to be surprising. Nevertheless, the manipulation of human identity for the purpose of feeding a government’s bottom line is unacceptable.

The issue of identity politics embraces an important philosophical discussion of how we isolate and punish “the other” in our societies. Sociologist Slavoj Zizek suggests the United States exhibits obscene, brutal, racist, sexist fantasies under the guise of power by “official” (Christian, white, democratic, etc) societal entities. Zizek suggests these motives are not deliberatively displayed or overt, but instead carried out in a censored, latent form. Ultimately, the global prison industrial complex could be seen as the manifestation of this bigoted mindset. In essence, the global prison industrial complex can be equated to Freud’s suggestion that “the unconscious knows no negation” run amok (Zizek, 2008, p. 101). The global prison industrial complex thrives on the ability to cordon off certain citizens. Zizek’s philosophy works to create a symbiotic relationship in the prison industry, where continued captivity of the “non-citizen” is necessary for the elevation and continued prosperity of the free citizen.

Simply, the global prison industrial complex is predicated upon the ability of political leaders to scapegoat “despised others”: welfare mothers, immigrants, those from lower social status, the underserved populations, and prisoners. Scapegoating refers to the act of identifying
the wrong perpetrator or enemy and making this person culpable for someone else’s mistakes. In the discussion at hand, political leaders could identify failed punitive and enforcement policies, education, cyberspace, standard of living, overpopulation, economic shifts, or employer/corporate greed or liability as part of the global social disarray. Instead, the blame is placed on individuals from communities that represent embedded anxieties about race, gender, and power in the United States. Consistent with the aforementioned philosophical bent advanced by Zizek, this scapegoating represents “disdain built on the U.S. bedrock of white supremacy but without the indelicacy of using explicitly racist terms” (Gilbert, 2005, p. 315). Scapegoating undermines the dignity of the global prison industrial complex and opens the door to backlash and instability.

Identity politics is made even more challenging because the general public is painted a skewed, incomplete, and dramatic picture of prisons. Anthropologist Rhodes describes prisons as an “absent site” (Rhodes, 2001, p. 65). Prisons, crime and criminals are not represented by mass media in their entire portraits nor do mass media portrayals represent realistic life in prison. Instead, mass media circulates themes or images which trigger and reinforce feelings and beliefs which resonate with the public: violence, prison bars and uniforms. For example, consider the best-selling video game Prison Tycoon 4: Supermax which presents this challenge to consumers: “Build a profitable privately run prison from the ground up...Grow your facility to Supermax capabilities, housing the most dangerous and diabolical criminals on earth—all for the bottom line.” Such stereotypical fragments, layered on top of the latent philosophies of power and whiteness described in the preceding paragraphs, are used to sensationalize prison life by invoking and engraining racialized fears.

Conclusion

Changing criminal law, dominant identity politics, private bidding, and intensified school and crime punishments have simultaneously created a new type of prison while putting into flux the sheer value of prisons. Although often a byproduct of government-run prisons, the private prison industry threatens to distort much of the reality we once knew when the government ran prisons by itself. By depleting the social wealth of institutions related to child care, education, housing, and hospitals, the prison industry plays a central role in creating the appearance of mayhem. By laying the groundwork of desperation, the private prison industry paints a picture of need for more prisons. And the more prisons which are built, the less social capitol there is to go around, adding—and effectually justifying—an influx of new and repeat prisoners, and justifying the development of new prisons. It’s a vicious cycle and the governments all over the world are implicit bystanders via the global prison industrial complex.

The global prison industrial complex may suggest serious questions about how to keep people safe in the 21st century. Future research must explore how the public fares with increased military and police cooperation and intelligence sharing. Private prisons also raise additional questions about economic profits and corporate influence which could threaten the value of human life, the safety of prisoners, and the legitimacy of criminal laws if left unexamined. Most would agree that government should punish some people and that crime in a society should be controlled. But the global prison industrial complex presents the possibility of a potentially violent, alienated prison industry. Instead of being driven by open, deliberative
bodies, the private prison industries could go unchecked and be dominated by companies looking to protect the bottom line at all costs, not the prisoners and society at large.

Activists and opposition to the global prison industrial complex also have challenges moving forward. Since the global prison industrial complex defies national borders, anti-prison activism will be challenged to expand beyond the borders of any single nation and become a global agenda. It seems unlikely activism in any one country would be sufficient to topple the industry’s expansion, especially in highly westernized countries. Conversely, the global prison industrial complex presents the international community with an opportunity to examine the nature of punishment, race, and gender. In an era of global terror, it is clear questions of identity politics and crime control cannot be ignored or simply locked away in a prison cell.

As the debate continues about how to control crime, who should fund prisons, and the value of the global prison industrial complex, it must be remembered that societal changes will not procure any form of lasting societal advancement so long as any single segment of the population is destabilized in the process. The global prison industrial complex is troubling, but it is useful to acknowledge that it is also a malleable and fragile system. The silver lining of the global prison industrial complex is that governments can intervene now to slow its growth. Governments must quickly identify: what role prisons play in national economies when crime is global and fluid; how to manage private prisons to create consistent standards and operational procedures; and how to cultivate cultural reforms which work across mental, health, economic, and sociological lines to save money, become institutionalized more effectively, deter crime, and increase the productivity and vitality of citizens in countries all over the globe. No person deserves to be endangered, whether inside or outside a prison. All people deserve to have a government which supports their potential, protects their dignity, enacts anti-racist policies, and advances anti-retributive and safe institutions above profit for an elite few. Governments should rise to the challenge of transforming the global prison industrial complex.

References


Homelessness as Nonviolent Resistance

Randall Amster and David Cook

Discussions of peaceful social change run the gamut from the realm of individual choices to the domain of structural processes. To capture the essence of this spectrum, the forms of nonviolent resistance explored here are grounded in small acts of individual will and community solidarity, focusing on intensely local battles with implications ranging from the level of homeless bodies and municipal policies to national trends and global developments. The challenges faced by movements for peace and human rights are bolstered by the irreducible nexus of people and place that all forces of contestation must by necessity embody, perhaps best exemplified through the work of Gandhi in South Africa and India. Homelessness in the United States allows for an exploration of many issues surrounding peace and nonviolence, and Gandhi’s words and work offer much to the possibility of achieving these ideals. The aim here is to develop a sense of the pragmatic possibilities for promoting a more just and peaceful world without losing sight of the concrete needs and challenges that impact people and the places they reside. Perhaps even more to the point is that homelessness asks us to view the world through a lens of engaged empathy, as Martin Luther King, Jr. once suggested: “True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring.” Tracing the full dimensions of this call for multi-leveled analysis is the purpose of this exploration of homelessness and nonviolence.

Resisting Homelessness

One of the keys for advocates and mobilizers for peaceful change has been to discover strategies that simultaneously address both the personal and structural components of their struggles. Legal strategies sometimes make this connection, as do direct action tactics of civil disobedience and nonviolent political protest. In the quest for peace, it is important to bear in mind that there simultaneously exist acute injustices that need to be remedied as well as larger implications that must not be abandoned in the process. Activists and advocates in many areas experience similar phenomena, being forced into reactive postures regarding arrests and police

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harassment at the expense of more proactive engagement with the substantive issues uppermost in their minds. How many episodes of nonviolent political demonstration ultimately degenerate into a battle between police and protesters, while the powerholders and policymakers continue their business as usual, immune from the movement’s challenges?

The issue of homelessness presents a unique moment in peace and social change praxis to unify both reactive survival aims with proactive policy shifts, since it is precisely the continued existence of homeless “street people” that often seems to represent one of the greatest ‘threats’ to business as usual; as Talmadge Wright (1997, p. 182) cogently observes, for such marginalized populations, “existence is resistance.” The encounter between the housed and the homeless in a shared urban environment has been described as an exchange. This moment can be seen as a meeting, a transaction, a message, and for most of the non-homeless, this exchange – often psychological – is one to be avoided. In A Monk in the World, Wayne Teasdale (2002, p. 122) equates modern homelessness with ancient leprosy, confessing his own inability to accept the homeless as long as he viewed them as different from himself: “I had to face my own inner leper, my own fear of the vulnerability I saw in these souls.” The homeless, Teasdale observes, remind us of things we wish to forget.

Joel Blau (1992, pp. 3-4) compares the homeless to “urban graffiti,” and for the mainstream public an encounter with the visible poor “disrupts the ordinary rhythms of public life.” While careful to avoid generalizations, it is safe to state that this disrupting encounter is one that many citizens wish they could avoid, oftentimes evidencing a perspective that says: ‘Let the poor exist, but don’t let me see them on my way to Starbucks, sleeping in the alley and begging for change.’ As Blau (1992, p. 4) observes, “Witnesses to homelessness then become like the unwilling spectators of an intimate domestic quarrel. They know these things occur, but firmly believe they should be kept private if at all possible.” In this manner, as Susan Ruddick (1996, pp. 64 and 194) contends, homeless people manifest a form of resistance “simply by their presence;” this is particularly true when they “subvert the meaning of structures not intended for them” by appearing in otherwise-Disneyfied spaces, “ready to confront new, gentrified users of their turf.” Moreover, “the presence of the homeless in a gentrifying area or a post-industrial city space . . . can undercut the tenets of the space itself, and its implicit ideology about leisure and wealth” (Ruddick 1996, p. 49). As Peter Marcuse (1988, p. 93) explains, “homelessness is such a danger to the legitimacy of the status quo. Homelessness in the midst of plenty may shock people into the realization that homelessness exists not because the system is failing to work as it should, but because the system is working as it must.” In this sense, “people who occupy the margins of society can transform the world in unexpected, even profound ways” (Harter, et al. 2005, p. 324), and at times “expose the tension between the universality of freedom and the unequal distribution of private property that prevents the enjoyment of freedom” (Kohn 2004, p. 172).

The homeless exist because our economy exists. Like cracks in a system, the homeless poor are the consequence of an economy rooted in competition, isolation, and market-based ‘pursuit-of-happiness-as-property’ avarice. Therefore, their presence is problematic to those who believe in the ideals of Western capitalism. “In part, the desire to sweep the homeless from visibility responds to the central contradiction of homelessness in a democracy composed of private individuals and private property,” writes Don Mitchell (2003, p. 135). ‘Public space’ as a rubric is defined in opposition to the notion of private property ownership, and the homeless
– who are very much property-less and thus constrained to occupy public spaces – are left in a geo-political and social purgatory. As Blau (1992, p. 175) writes, “By making every homeless person a messenger and every passerby a witness, homelessness triggered a crisis of visibility that scratched the psychological armor of even those citizens who insisted that all those people on the street were still the unworthy poor.” This may serve as an effective summary of public attitudes toward homeless people and other marginalized populations in Western societies.

In confronting these realities, it is instructive to note the difference in Gandhi’s approach to poverty and economy. Speaking to Indians facing British domination and oppression, Gandhi – perhaps more than anyone else in modern history – embraced and pioneered a nonviolent and resolution-oriented approach toward conflict. “All of us are one. When you inflict suffering on others, you are bringing suffering on yourself. When you weaken others, you are weakening yourself, weakening the whole nation” (in Easwaran 1978, p. 56). Gandhi’s views on poverty and destitution were rooted in this perspective, as was his condemnation of economic competition and inequalities in wealth. One story provides a summary of this perspective: when the plague descended on the Indian ghetto in South Africa, dying Indians were quarantined in abandoned buildings. One nurse provided most of the care until Gandhi arrived. She counseled him to leave, as the plague was quite contagious. Bending over a dying man covered with vermin, Gandhi replied, “He is my brother,” and attended to the man through the night (Easwaran 1978, p. 25).

Later, Gandhi proclaims: “For a nonviolent person, the whole world is one family” (in Easwaran 1978, p. 115). It is this perspective – namely that the human race is a connected family – that guided Gandhi’s actions toward his oppressors and his views on poverty alike. “Happiness, the goal to which we all are striving, is reached by endeavoring to make the lives of others happy, and if by renouncing the luxuries of life we can lighten the burdens of others … surely the simplification of our wants is a thing greatly to be desired!” (Gandhi 1968, p. 71). One can imagine Gandhi smiling and explaining the idea that the poor can indeed save us from ourselves. Through the reduction of needs and wants – what Gandhi and others call “the simple life” – the non-homeless can tilt the economy toward a more generous balance, involving more cooperation and less competition. Poverty, indeed, can be abolished, but only when the Gandhian perspective is embraced and the homeless become our “brothers and sisters” instead of “urban graffiti.” In Gandhi’s (1968, p. 231) vision, when one person is poor the entire community is poor, and the “neglect of this simple principle is the cause of the destitution we witness today not only in this unhappy land but in other parts of the world too.”

In the economy of the West, poor people are left to their own devices, at the mercy of the leviathan known as ‘The Market’ where there are no brothers and sisters. In our nation’s psyche, work is the ladder that achieves the American Dream, and anyone who does not work, who is idle, is deserving of the condemnation of a life on Skid Row, or under a bridge, or in jail. As history tells us, idleness essentially has been a crime in one form or another at least since colonial times – and it is this scarlet badge that the homeless individual wears, placing them outside the fruits of labor that all working people deserve. “They make it their own choice for staying out there,” President Reagan once remarked (Miller 1991, p. 161), reflecting a widespread notion about the homeless. Yet this perspective is fundamentally flawed, as Michael Katz (2003, p. 228) cogently observes: “The availability of work for every able-bodied person who really wants a job is one of the enduring myths of American history.”
Coupled with the passive resistance the homeless provide to this myth by their simple existence are a growing number of communities using active resistance. Accordingly, Susan Ruddick (1996, p. 63) suggests the use of peaceful resistance strategies centered upon the “tactical control of space;” Talmadge Wright (2000, p. 53) likewise favors activities through which spatial “hierarchies can be contested.” Don Mitchell (1995, p. 123) concludes that “social movements must occupy and reconfigure material public spaces in the city,” and in a later work (1996a, p. 129) urges that “dissidents of all types must continually assert their presence into public space, if they are ever to be seen and heard.” Margaret Kohn (2004, p. 184) adds that “if the homeless do not have the opportunity to be visible in public space, if they cannot communicate their needs, then there is no chance that they will convince others to make the social changes necessary to meet these needs.” Neil Smith (1992, p. 66) points out that the spatial struggle must simultaneously contemplate its human scale and inherent grounding in the lives and experiences of street people, arguing that “reappropriation of the body, in association with the reappropriation of space” must remain a priority. Thus, for Wright (1997, p. 255), it is possible for the spatial and the social to merge in ways that are both strategic and subconscious: “The sudden occupation of a stretch of pavement in a public place may be carried out without the conscious intent to redefine the meaning of that space. However, the very act of creating a place to sleep, of survival itself, contributes to the redefinition of that space, especially in the eyes of authorities who wish to maintain a ‘proper’ version of space as one in which those activities should not and will not be allowed.”

The Ecology of Nonviolent Contestation

In this spirit, an essential project in mobilizing peaceful yet potent resistance is ‘placemaking,’ which involves “creating ‘safe’ spaces in which to gather” (Wright 1997, p. 262), and also embraces the more proactive side of contestation that includes articulating what one is for in addition to what one is against. Sometimes this takes the form of “establishing encampments” or ‘squatting’ abandoned spaces, employing tactics that are at once “adaptive and defiant” (Wright 1997, pp. 199 and 266). Challenging prevailing stereotypes of the homeless as “a disabled, laggardly, and incompetent population incapable of collective action” (Snow and Mulcahy 2001, pp. 162-3), it is apparent that homeless people often deploy “strategies enabling individuals to weave together survival and in some cases social transformation” (Harter, et al. 2005, p. 324). The example of Justiceville in Los Angeles exemplified this paradigm of both “survival and transformation;” as Richard Ropers (1988, p. 199) observed, “Justiceville was more than an attempt to protect its residents from the elements; it became a real community, with a division of labor and a sense of sharing, caring, and solidarity.” Before being mercilessly bulldozed, “Justiceville would come to represent a case study in ‘empowerment,’ an attempt by the homeless to provide themselves with the shelter, community, and dignity denied them by their social system” (Ropers 1988, p. 199).

Picking up on and further extending these themes is the remarkable example of Dignity Village in Portland, Oregon, as described in the homeless newspaper Street Spirit by Jack Tafari (March 2005): “What was birthed by an act of civil disobedience and protest by homeless people who began a campaign has changed into what we are today…. What guides the transformation of this piece of ground is … the vision of a green, sustainable urban village
where we may live simply and in harmony with our mother Earth and where we may do for ourselves and help ourselves and others.... Dignity Village is the ... most cost-efficient, self-help model for transcending homelessness in the nation.” Touting its ‘green’ dwellings (including ‘strawbale’ and ‘cob’ houses), Dignity Village brings together social and environmental justice as “a model for the future, while helping develop the tools with which to build the model and others like it.” This is a powerful reminder of Gandhi’s call for simple living and mutualism.

Homeless communities such as Justiceville and Dignity Village are emblematic of the principles and practices of nonviolent resistance in both its reactive and proactive aspects. The lessons learned from these moments of ‘revolutionary placemaking’ are fundamentally important for movements of all stripes, and are crucial for discerning the potential impact of ‘homeless resistance’ on the larger society. Because of the relative material scarcity of their lives and their general condition of dispossession, homeless people can sometimes appear as “urban nomads” pursuing “the realization of human freedom” by rejecting “the constraints of bourgeois society” and instead becoming “a source of alternative values” (Kohn 2004, p. 178). As such, homeless communities, when they emerge, can invent new forms of both social and structural relationships, simultaneously challenging the socio-spatial hierarchies inherent in mainstream society and modeling new visions. All of which, of course, can make homeless resistance appear dangerous to powerholders, and thus susceptible to the sort of draconian outcomes experienced by Justiceville in particular and homeless people more generally.

In many respects, these nascent communities model the basis of Gandhi’s quest for independence and self-rule. Demonstrated in his call for homespun cloth and the practical yet symbolic ‘spinning wheel’ resistance, Gandhi (1968, p. 202) believed it was the responsibility of all citizens to provide for themselves and one another: “Real Swaraj (self-rule) will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when abused.” In our time, these sorts of nonviolent strategies of self-sufficiency indicate new ways of configuring social and material relationships. This, then, is the ‘new ecology’ of homelessness, born out of mobilizations by homeless people themselves against criminalization and erasure, with the support and encouragement of domiciled advocates.

Taking Things Sitting Down

Consider a concrete example of these processes, where advocates and residents in Tempe, Arizona, became determined not to take the city council’s adoption of a ‘no sitting on the sidewalk’ ordinance, well, sitting down. Or more accurately, sitting down was precisely how they would take it, as plans were quickly made for a community ‘sit-in’ on the day the ordinance would take effect: January 18, 1999, Martin Luther King Day! It was apparent to many that the coincidence of King’s legacy converging with the planned protest was an indicator as to how people might conduct themselves. King, like Gandhi before him, had taught us to confront authority not out of anger but with respect, and to meet one’s adversaries in a way that preserves and enhances their dignity and acknowledges their humanity. After all, this is what the protesters were asking for the homeless, as well.

The ensuing sit-in protests, done in solidarity with homeless communities, brought a sense of empowerment to many of the street people, as well as genuine feelings that at least someone in their community really did care. Some of the positive effects for the homeless
included the then-Mayor’s subsequent State of the City address that identified the sidewalk ordinance battle as the impetus for creating a Homeless Task Force that would eventually recommend a more service-friendly than enforcement-oriented approach. The community activists had undergone a transformation in the media “from protestors to homeless advocates,” as Wright (1997, p. 239) found in similar actions in California. Another measurable change was in the “moderating effects on belligerent police practices” (Wright 1997, p. 290), at least for a few months, as the city tried to recover from the public relations black eye it had taken, and as the police tried to figure out how to justify letting people sit down and break the law one day and then trying to enforce the ban the next.

Interestingly, many people really did get what was going on in Tempe, including calls to action such as that from columnist Brad Whisler (ASU State Press, January 22, 1999): “In a blatant betrayal of the spirit of Dr. King’s message, the City Council enacted the sidewalk-sitting ban..... The question that remains is: How will we as a community address the blatant disregard for human liberty initiated by our governing body? ... Through political activism and civil disobedience change can occur.... There is a time for change and the time is now. If the cycle of oppression is to repeat itself, then for the sake of humanity, so must the cycle of liberation. We are the agents of change; the responsibility is ours.” Still, the inevitable backlash came in prototypical patterns of homeless demonization, for example in Dan Durrenberger’s caustic Arizona Republic column (January 22, 1999) titled ‘Non-bathers Shouldn’t Set Agenda.’ This attack on human dignity was an invitation to submit counter-views, and one ran in the Republic four days later: “A number of sources have criticized our invocation of Dr. King at the sit-in..... King understood the inherent interconnection of humankind, that when anyone is oppressed – particularly the ‘least of these, my brethren’ – we all share in that oppression.” Indeed, some in the media understood that this was a struggle for peace and justice, as in the Salt Lake Tribune editorial (January 25, 1999) titled ‘In the Spirit of Dr. King’: “The connection of their cause with that of King, who championed civil rights, as well as Gandhi’s ideas of passive civil disobedience, is admirable. It is what the holiday is supposed to be about.”

This initial wave of nonviolent direct action, centered upon the ‘tactical control of space’ and ‘empowerment of the homeless,’ had yielded many beneficial outcomes. The homeless community was as vocal and visible as they’d ever been. Citations were not being issued under the sidewalk law, and a vibrant dialogue had taken hold in newspaper editorial pages and city council chambers alike. What started as a nonviolent response to a pressing ‘social problem’ had spawned a bona fide community movement over issues of development, resource allocation, treatment of the poor, and preservation of spaces for democratic activity. By grounding their efforts and energies overtly in the spirit and teachings of Gandhi and King, homeless people and advocates in the Tempe community had directly experienced the transformative power of nonviolence. And that, in the end, may be the greatest legacy one could hope for in social change work.

**Homeless Rights are Human Rights**

While all of the nonviolent direct-action drama was unfolding on the streets of Tempe, the sidewalk law was simultaneously being challenged in federal court. This was, after all, a struggle for basic human rights, and the courts are often the primary venue utilized to protect
vulnerable populations – something that Gandhi himself had recognized as a young lawyer in South Africa. Homelessness as a social issue implicates the structural ‘edifice’ that King asked us to scrutinize, calling into question matters of equal opportunity, wealth distribution, living wages, health care, and criminal justice. As Richard Ropers (1988, p. 215) observes, the treatment of the homeless in society likewise highlights the everyday plight of actual persons caught up in that edifice, creating a situation where “the problem of homelessness may be the leading human rights issue for the United States.”

Recently, the two leading U.S. homeless rights organizations (NCH/NLCHP 2006, p. 18) argued that “laws and practices that criminalize homelessness ... violate international human rights law,” including basic rights such as freedom of movement, equal protection and non-discrimination, and prohibitions against ‘status crimes.’ In advocating specifically for the civil rights of homeless people, the National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH) and the Bringing America Home campaign have focused upon issues including the proliferation of hate crimes, the imposition of fines and criminal sanctions, police harassment and brutality, profiling and selective enforcement of laws, spatial exclusion orders, ‘bum-proof’ benches, lack of available shelter spaces, and the infringement of the right to vote. Specifically, the NCH published a report on the ten U.S. cities most aggressive in their attempts to criminalize the homeless. In the report, these cities passed similar legislation making the space in which homeless people live and move smaller and smaller, creating punitive laws against everything from sharing food to sleeping in a car. Other official tactics include the destruction of encampments and personal forms of identification, and the provision of one-way bus tickets as a form of “homeless aid.”

Despite their existence as a marginal group, the homeless find ways to resist such violations. Homeless newspapers such as Street Spirit often publish ‘know your rights’ information offering counsel regarding trespass laws, sleeping in parks, panhandling, vending newspapers, recovering confiscated property, and properly managing pets. In order to ensure the protection of homeless peoples’ human and civil rights, the NCH (2004) urges “using the legal system to fight unconstitutional ordinances that criminalize life-sustaining activities.”

Sometimes, people with more secure domains and support systems should indeed be the ones to stand up publicly and ‘take the heat’ over controversial actions, as long as the people most immediately affected by the challenged policy or law are fully empowered to decide for themselves how (or even if) they want to participate. Thus, the extra-legal nonviolent strategies (e.g., sit-ins, demonstrations, encampments) detailed here are fully informed by the belief that “it is necessary to bring the often abstract pursuits of attorneys back down, quite literally, to the cold concrete – to face the miseries that mock all pretensions of a just society” (Blasi 1987, p. 180), and remain guided by the notion that “it is essential that activists continue to challenge restrictive-rights discourse not just in the courts, but also in the street, where a more positive vision of a just society can be fought for” (Mitchell 1996b, p. 172). The sidewalk campaign in Tempe was built on these premises, namely that legal advocacy had a role to play but ultimately the vision of a more just and peaceful world would manifest – if at all – outside the courtroom.

And indeed, the lawsuit itself was ultimately unsuccessful, with the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals overturning an injunction that had been issued against the sidewalk law by a federal district court judge. Still, the overall impact of the nonviolent homeless-rights campaign in Tempe was quite positive, as Don Mitchell (2003, pp. 231-32) affirmed: “Project members
engage in civil disobedience (staging sit-ins on Tempe and other Arizona sidewalks, thereby updating that old tradition of disobedience that runs through the labor activists of the first part of the 20th century and the civil rights and student activists of the 1950s and 1960s), legal action, education, and outreach.... Simultaneously, the Project continually highlights the fact that there is not a single homeless shelter in the city of Tempe. In such a circumstance, the enforcement of no-sitting and no-sleeping laws is simply perverse; it quite fundamentally denies the right of some people to inhabit the city. Project S.I.T. is working to implement a more just vision of order on the streets of Tempe.”

Nonviolent Placemaking and Collective Empowerment

Following the work of the aptly-named Project S.I.T. (the Sidewalk Initiative Team), further community action and peaceful protest in Tempe continued. By late 2003, under banners such as ‘Stop the War Against the Homeless,’ a group of local activists, street people, and members of the college community called the Free to Camp Coalition launched a colorful campaign aimed at Tempe’s homeless policies in general and the ‘urban camping’ ordinance in particular. At its initial protest event, it was reported by Dennis Welch (East Valley Tribune, November 16, 2003) that “protesters marched peacefully Saturday night through downtown Tempe in opposition to an ordinance that bans sleeping on city property,” and that this event was part of what would become “an ongoing effort to repeal the ordinance.” Although unsuccessful in accomplishing this ultimate aim, the effort highlighted the need for basic human rights and the power of peaceful protest.

Indeed, the continuing struggle over Tempe’s policies, the effort to promote respect for its homeless residents, and the quest to bring democratic vigor to its dwindling downtown public spaces continues to this day. The combination of peaceful ‘placemaking’ and nonviolent ‘empowerment’ efforts with more service-oriented approaches potentially indicates that the political landscape there has shifted, with possibilities for meaningful transformation at least viable if not demonstrable. In fact, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals recently ruled in a parallel case that Los Angeles’ version of the ‘no sitting’ law was unconstitutionally ‘cruel and unusual’ (Jones v. City of Los Angeles, 444 F.3d 1118 (2006)). Most importantly, homeless people in Tempe have appeared more situated and thus less vulnerable, benefiting the whole community in a Gandhian and King-like moment of intertwined fates and shared destinies. This, in the end, was the aim of the movement after all.

Placemaking as a nonviolent strategy links people and space together in a seamless ecological web. Homeless people are *de facto* placemakers oftentimes out of a mere attempt to survive in the margins of an unforgiving society. Gandhi and King alike recognized the inherent interconnectedness not only of all humanity, but of all *creation*, as well. This holistic, ecological perspective on nonviolence asks us to consider both the social and environmental implications of our work, seeking to liberate both peoples and places with our efforts. As Talmadge Wright (1997, p. 324) recognizes: “Collective empowerment must be the focus of the continuing struggle to end homelessness and achieve social justice. The celebration of democratic self-realization and self-management without the necessary public and cultural spaces that allow that to occur merely reinforces systemic inequities required by the reproduction of capital.”
The Catholic Worker Movement (CWM) and its founders Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin provide evidence of what such “collective empowerment” action looks like, and the philosophies motivating it. Rooted in the Catholic acts of mercy, the CWM has created hospitality houses across the nation: serving food, giving shelter, protesting injustice, existing as a safe refuge for the outcast and poor. Such compassionate radicalism was, for Day, an extension and obligation of her spiritual faith. “I felt keenly that God was more on the side of the hungry, the ragged, the unemployed, than on the side of the comfortable churchgoers who gave so little heed to the misery of the needy and the groaning of the poor,” Day writes in *Loaves and Fishes* (1997, p. 13). The tradition of Liberation Theology renames this as God’s “preferential option for the poor” and suggests that the believer encounters the divine alongside and among those who are suffering. Such deeds of compassion, like the CWM and all acts of solidarity, are therefore done both in selflessness and selfishness; participants find themselves renewed with such acts of mercy, as Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz implies (1998, p. 34): “The starting place of the theory of solidarity has to be the oppressions of specific persons, oppression caused or maintained, directly or indirectly, by the privileges of the oppressors. Only because the theory of solidarity is grounded in particular forms of oppression can we claim that solidarity involves understanding and undoing the connections among different forms of oppression.”

Christian theologian James Cone (1975, p. 35) takes this a step further, stating unequivocally that: “Any interpretation of the gospel in any historical period that fails to see Jesus as the Liberator of the oppressed is heretical.” When considering the impermanent rise of the Religious Right, so linked with capitalism, militarism, and governmental hegemony, Cone’s statement is altogether tremendously sad, illuminating, and condemnatory. It is also hopeful, for within it exists a hope in – as the old spiritual says – a way out of no way. Robert McAfee Brown (1993, p. 36) writes that “where we stand determines what we see.” If we are to alleviate the suffering of the homeless, we must begin to stand where they stand – or sit where they sit. This is solidarity, and its practice is an important precondition for collective empowerment.

Gary Smith, a priest who made such a descent into a life of voluntary poverty, confesses that it was the trash-digger that in fact saved his life (2002, p. 57): “The poor teach us to be truth tellers: to speak to what must be done to transform oppressive structures even as we are meeting individual needs. The poor teach us of compassion: to feel another's heartache even as we are creating concrete practices of relief. The poor teach us to embark on the sacred search for indignation: to discover our anger in the face of the greed, malice, and human indifference that give birth to suffering and to speak to it.” In this manner may we learn to connect another’s oppression to our own, and likewise link another’s prosperity to ours, as well. The nonviolent teachings of the great faiths all possess elements of this spirit at their core, and the application of these principles is limitless.

Accordingly, if the causes of peace and justice are to have any meaning whatsoever, we must work to carve out and maintain small spaces for resistance, and at the same time continually move toward a strategy of “linking local struggles together on a global basis” (Wright 1997, p. 324) – something practiced both implicitly and explicitly in the campaigns undertaken by Gandhi and King against colonialism, segregation, and inequality. This local-global linkage is a prescription for creating a just and peaceful world, and the issue of
homelessness in particular represents a unique opportunity to redress these issues at the levels of individual lives, community choices, and global economies. Drawing upon the history and theory of nonviolent struggle, we come to view the inherent passive resistance of homeless existence, coupled with the active contestation of placemaking and community-building, as important points of reflection in a rapidly-changing social and ecological landscape. While homelessness is sometimes overlooked in peacebuilding efforts and nonviolence dialogues, we contend that it is a fundamentally critical issue for confronting pressing societal concerns, and likewise for exploring the full potentialities of compassion and justice.

References


Compassionate Listening As a Path to Conflict Resolution

Frida Kerner Furman

We live in an impressively verbal culture. As citizens, we evaluate a politician’s mettle by his or her capacity to captivate an audience through articulate speech and well-honed debating skills. As teachers, we often measure our students’ worth by their capacity for oral expression and their active engagement in class discussions. If we are city dwellers, our senses are bombarded by the unceasing chatter of pedestrians, shoppers, tourists, and even drivers seemingly glued to their cell phones.

Though perhaps to a different degree, the tendency to value talking is nothing new under the sun. Even the God of Judaism and Christianity creates through speech. And the Western philosophical tradition—along with the culture it created—decidedly privileges *logos*, while hardly addressing its corollary, listening. As philosopher Gemma Corradi Fiumara (1990) suggests, “The illusion that we can speak to others without being able to listen is, perhaps, one that we all share” (p. 29). In a somewhat different key, speech pathologist Rebecca Z. Shafir (2000) writes, “Many of us were conditioned to think that listening is a passive process, that it is the wiser person who does the talking” (p. 16).

These observations might be particularly fitting to the academic world and its tendency to privilege speech; in addition, they do not necessarily reflect the experience of all people, as those with less social power are typically obligated to listen to those with more social power—but not vice versa.

The Roman philosopher Seneca (in Skog, 2001) introduces another factor related to listening, that is, the human need to be understood and supported. He said: “Who is fair in all the world who listens to us? Here I am—this is me in my nakedness, with my wounds, my secret grief, my despair, my betrayal, my pain, which I can’t express, my terror, my abandonment. Oh, listen to me for a day, an hour, a moment, lest I expire in my terrible wilderness, my lonely silence. Oh God, is there no one to listen?” (p. 115) And Paul Tournier (in Powell, 1969), a Swiss psychiatrist and author, has noted: “It is impossible to overemphasize the immense need humans have to be really listened to, to be taken seriously, to be understood. Listen to all the conversations of the world, between nations as well as those between couples. They are for the most part dialogues of the deaf” (p. 5).

Who in U.S. society has not engaged in the perfunctory greeting, “How are you?” without expecting or welcoming a response? Though perhaps not generalizable to all such encounters, I keenly remember my response to a colleague’s such query. “I am not feeling very well,” I said, only to have him go on his way, cheerfully exclaiming, “Good!”

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1 I imagine that in oral cultures listening is valued more than in our own, given the need to pass on cultural knowledge to future generations without reliance on a written record.
In recent years, increased attention has been directed to the significance of listening in a variety of contexts. The business world has come to recognize that work performance can be significantly enhanced by providing listening workshops for workers and managers alike. The field of communication has, concomitantly, engaged in both research and practical applications pertaining to and enhancing listening. Concerns about effective listening are also evident in educational contexts, one expression of which is the feminist emphasis on student-based learning, which shifts some of the authority typically associated with the teacher and her speaking and invests it in the students. Consequently, everyone in such a class environment is expected both to speak and to listen attentively. It is also seen in such approaches as critical race theory, where the majority is encouraged to listen to those who are marginalized for the sake of giving voice to the silenced and thereby bringing about greater social justice. In medical education, future doctors are being trained to address patients as human beings, not simply as symptoms, by listening to their concerns in the context of their whole lives. Psychotherapists, of course, have been in the business of listening for a good long time, humanistic psychology having paved the way several decades ago with client-centered therapy. Today, changes are taking place in some of the more traditional therapeutic approaches, such as psychoanalysis, whereby some counsel the practitioner to dispense with theoretical or ideological lenses, which are seen as impediments to truly engaged and empathic listening. The popular area of “spiritual direction” as a subset of pastoral counseling reveals an emphasis on listening and discernment (see, for example, Guenther, 1992). The rapid contemporary growth of the field of mediation—from family struggles to global conflicts—further suggests the importance of listening as a critical tool for using communication to transform discord. And a myriad of efforts labeled “spiritual” by its practitioners—sometimes independent, sometimes embedded in more conventional practices—give listening pride of place. These efforts can be seen in recent publications about listening and in projects involving listening as a central activity (see, for example, Brady, 2003; Lindahl, 2002; and Shafir, 2000).

Last but not least, in recent years conflict resolution scholars and practitioners have highlighted the centrality of listening, with some calling for more research on listening as an important tool of their craft (see, for example, Gopin, 2002, p. 167, and 2004, ch. 4; and Lederach, 1999, ch. 10). Individuals and organizations have advanced several methods that address listening in conflict management and intervention, peacemaking, and reconciliation at the international, organizational, and interpersonal levels; these include Marshall B. Rosenberg’s (2003) nonviolent communication, Jay Rothman’s (1997) ARIA, the Arbinger Institute (2008), and The Compassionate Listening Project, whose emphasis on listening is the most pointed.

In this paper, I describe and analyze the practice of listening advanced by The Compassionate Listening Project (TCLP), which I use as a case study. This is a non-profit organization based near Seattle that teaches “powerful skills for peace-making, starting with peace within ourselves, and with family, community, in the workplace and beyond…. our emphasis is learning to listen and speak from the heart—even in the heat of conflict” (http://www.compassionatelistening.org).

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2 Carl Rogers is still identified by many as the guru of listening.
Using TCLP’s publications, website, and actual trainings as sources, as well as my own experience, I apply a phenomenological approach to explore some of its assumptions about the self, human nature, conflict and its resolution. Having been a participant in a listening delegation to Israel and Palestine with this Project, and having participated in its advanced training, I analyze and evaluate the assumptions and methods utilized by this approach. I conclude with the suggestion that compassionate listening might be seen as a moral imperative.

**Becoming a Compassionate Listener**

As a Jew keenly interested in peace-seeking and justice in the Middle East, I joined a Compassionate Listening delegation of North Americans to Israel and Palestine in November of 2006 as a way to explore my developing interests in interpersonal and group reconciliation. I had done considerable reading in this area and, as is my wont, I had been searching for a concrete venue where I could experience reconciliation work on the ground, so to speak. The trip was described as an opportunity to learn the “craft of listening and speaking from the heart,” to “come away with a deepened understanding of Compassionate Listening, a powerful skill set for peace-building in our families, communities, and in all conflict situations” (http://www.compassionatelistening.org).

Our delegation work began in Jerusalem with one day of intensive training in the methods of Compassionate Listening; this was followed by ten days of meeting with and listening to a variety of Israelis and Palestinians—Jews, Muslims, and Christians—in various parts of Israel and the West Bank tell their stories of the conflict, stories of pain, suffering, frustration, anger, fear, and sometimes, hopelessness turning to hope. This was no pleasure trip—not that I had expected that; but I also had not anticipated the level of grief and the transformational power of the experience.

**A Visit to Beit Ummar with The Compassionate Listening Project**

It is a sunny November day as we head south from Bethlehem, towards the West Bank village of Beit Ummar. For the first time since our Compassionate Listening delegation began its work, some five days earlier, I feel a good deal of anticipatory anxiety. Our destination is the mayor’s office. We’ve been told that the mayor we are about to meet is a member of Hamas. I am asking myself: How can I, as a committed Jew who loves Israel and affirms its right to exist, listen compassionately to someone who shares Hamas’s commitment to the destruction of the Jewish state? Is my participation in this listening moment an act of disloyalty? Will I be able to suspend judgment and “open my heart” in order to listen to Mayor Farham al-Qaham’s story?

With mounting trepidation, I climb the few steps that lead us into the village’s whitewashed municipality, resolving to give listening a chance. We are taken to a spacious, inviting meeting room, where we sit around a very large rectangular table. As is by now becoming predictable, the first sign of welcome arrives in the form of refreshments, a prelude, it seems, to any kind of engagement between Palestinians and their visitors. We chat amongst ourselves as we sip our drinks and savor our treats. I am sitting across from the head of the table, where an empty chair presumably awaits the mayor’s arrival. Within minutes, a
handsome, bearded man enters the room; he is youngish looking, 42, to be precise, as we soon learn. He is wearing a dark suit, a tie, and a kaffiyeh. Interesting mix of traditional and western attire, I muse, though on second thought the kaffiyeh is likely worn as a political rather than a cultural or sartorial statement. Smiling all around, he extends a warm greeting, speaking to us in Arabic. Maha El-Taji, our Palestinian co-facilitator, becomes the translator for the rest of the meeting.

As is standard in the practice of Compassionate Listening, Maha begins by asking the mayor to tell us his story. The mayor announces his date of birth, then shares his early interest in science and his graduation with a bachelor’s degree in “computers” at Al-Quds University in East Jerusalem. The narrative that follows soon becomes part of a familiar refrain for us, one we hear again and again from the Palestinians we encounter during our days of active listening. It is the story of the Israeli occupation and its impact on village life. “It is natural that I was imprisoned,” he reflects. “This is a natural experience for us, typical of young men.” An account of multiple incarcerations is followed by a description of his involvement in social activism within the village’s city council, intended to improve the condition of the villagers. He segues into the second Intifada and the “complete and total” closure of the town, where the single gate leading to the town is arbitrarily opened and closed at the whim of the single Israeli soldier posted there. We hear of the land confiscations threatened by the construction of the separation wall, and of the consequences of the likely loss of land—the single source of income—for the villagers. We then learn of the obstacles encountered by the village in its efforts to work through the Israeli legal system against this and other land confiscations—some for the use of a nearby Jewish settlement—and against the closure of roads that prevents harvesting and taking produce to market. We are told that Palestinians need people to understand their needs and their suffering, to recognize that they, too, have a truth to tell.

I listen to all of this, my heart open and breaking, just a little bit. The facts are painful enough, and they gain additional poignancy through the mayor’s beautifully poetic language—even in translation. But I also recognize this as a well-traveled narrative, one he has delivered repeatedly to one group of visitors or another. It’s not that it lacks authenticity; it’s just that it is somewhat canned; it is something of a “spiel.”

He ends his prepared remarks—not that he uses notes, mind you. Someone in our group asks him to share something personal about himself and his family, about the personal impact of all this on his own life. This is when the spiel comes to a full stop. He tells us of his most recent arrest, when Israeli soldiers arrived at his home at 2:00 a.m., refusing to let him change his clothes or say goodbye to his young, sleeping children. “I wanted to leave soon; I did not want the children to see the house occupied.” When the children went to see him in prison, they were emotionally hurt, he reflects. His 12-year-old son began crying that “bars are for criminals,” not for those pursuing good for people (his father had been arrested for his resistance against land appropriations). “These visits were so difficult, I asked my wife not to bring the children anymore.” He now fears that his sons will learn to hate.

I might be cautious when the mayor talks about land confiscations, resistance strategies, and the injustices committed by the Israeli military and legal systems. After all, I don’t have all the facts. I have not heard the Israeli point of view regarding these precise events. But when I listen to the stories of a father’s love and protectiveness toward his children—and of his pain when his children are in pain—I don’t need to hear facts, statistics, or pros and cons. I only
need to think of my daughter and of Farham al-Qaham’s children. And then my heart cracks wide open and, in the depth of my soul, I affirm this man’s conviction that “what unites us—Jews and Palestinians—is greater than what divides us.”

A couple of weeks after my return to the States, I receive a pithy e-mail from the mayor, written in broken English and sent to the whole Compassionate Listening delegation. He writes that his meeting with us was unique, the first of its kind. He says that he’s telling everyone he knows all about it.

I will return with an interpretation of this encounter following a discussion of the methods and assumptions advanced by The Compassionate Listening Project.

**Compassionate Listening: Methods and Assumptions**

Compassionate Listening is one of a number of approaches being used in what is known as “Track II” or “citizen diplomacy” in the Middle East and elsewhere. Participants in these efforts concede that while “Track I” or government-level diplomacy is essential for arriving at formal cease-fires and peace treaties, it is insufficient in establishing the infrastructure necessary for peacebuilding. This perspective was supported everywhere our Israel/Palestine delegation visited; people repeatedly told us that they distrusted politicians and governments, that they wanted peace, and that they could not rely on their formal representatives to achieve it. Governments were perceived as working on the basis of power and politicians for their own self interests; ordinary people, by contrast, were seen as having the capacity to understand one another and to connect at the level of one another’s humanity. Cognizant of the degree of fear and rage each side feels for the other, people we listened to were skeptical that formal channels could or would engage in efforts of reconciliation deemed essential for sustainable peace. Many of the Track II diplomacy initiatives thus aim to bring about some form of reconciliation, however preliminary, across divides. TCLP believes that compassionate listening is the way to do it.³

Gene Knudsen Hoffman (2003a), the conceptual architect of the Project, advanced a major assumption held by TCLP: “An enemy is one whose story we have not heard” (p. 302). To be more precise, compassionate listening as an approach to conflict intervention is committed to cultivating reconciliation as a necessary step in paving the way for just resolutions to conflicts. Using listening as a main tool, the goal of compassionate listening is “to awaken the hearts of the various conflict participants. If the conflict participants can come to see one another as human and to feel one another’s sorrows, we advocates of compassionate listening believe, they will be able to resolve their conflicts. Without such deep, mutual empathy between the parties in conflict, conflict resolution efforts often result only in temporary truces, soon broken” (Hoffman, 2006, p. 15). From the point of view of this approach, the work of peacemaking is “not to take sides but to seek truth”; its conviction is that “there will never be

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³ Carol Hwoschinsky (2006) articulates this view when she writes, “Unless peace is generated among the people who live it out, treaties are not really operational on a practical level. It is the plain ordinary person who ultimately lives peace or not.” She concludes that peace-makers’ responsibility is to “build opportunities in all communities for people to listen to each other” (p. 9). Of course, in my judgment, diplomats working in Track I diplomacy would also benefit from more formal training in active and compassionate listening to their opposite numbers.
peace unless both sides are listened to” (Hoffman, 2003d, p. 281). The assumption underlying this position is that people are changeable and that listening to their concerns can facilitate their transformation (Manousos, 2003, p. 264), which, in turn, can lead to openness to their opponents’ humanity. Carol Hwoschinsky (2006), a lead trainer for TCLP, argues that “Compassionate Listening seeks to establish relationship through deep listening with the heart,” by which she means listening empathically. By contrast, she adds, “politicians work with positions, a mental approach. Both approaches are necessary for peace and a functioning society” (p. 8).

The emphasis on the heart versus the mind as a critical tool in listening and hence reconciliation is particularly intriguing. On our first day in Jerusalem, when our delegation was engaged in an intensive day of training in the methods of compassionate listening, we were taken through the various stages of the process of listening productively, that is, compassionately, to one another. Listening in this manner is seen as a practice, not simply as a technique. It involves concentration, focus, awareness, and attunement with the other. By necessity, it demands displacing one’s own concerns and interests during the period of listening. Obstacles to effective listening include distraction, curiosity and the desire to satisfy it, attending to one’s own positions about what is being said, and impatience to have one’s say. If I am building an argument in my mind or preparing a clever question to ask the speaker while she speaks, I am unable to truly listen and register that person’s ideas, values, and feelings, all of which are significant in appreciating her experience. This view is consonant with many other perspectives advanced by specialists in listening. For example, according to psychologist Michael P. Nichols (1995), “The essence of good listening is empathy, which can be achieved only by suspending our own preoccupation with ourselves and entering into the experience of the other person” (p. 10). Similarly, Tom Bruneau (1989) a communication scholar, calls this type of listening “empathic listening,” which he claims “sometimes requires courage and much effort to lose one’s own egocentric identity…. It is the obverse of selfish listening” (p. 16).

In the training, we are taught to listen by first carefully attending to the speaker’s story, its content and explicit facts. We listen to the speaker, provisionally extending the status of truth to his perspective, even if such truth is partial in nature. Those facts reflect how the speaker has experienced the conflict under consideration; and it is that experience that needs to be validated and acknowledged in this process. Yet, listening to verbalized facts is only the start; we need to move from effective listening to compassionate listening. We are thus also taught to listen for the speaker’s values and feelings, discernible under the surface of speech, perhaps in the tone of voice, perhaps through body language, perhaps in the pauses and the silences that punctuate his speech. In the training, these tasks are taught separately, isolating one from the other; but the goal is to attend to all three levels while we engage in compassionate listening, a difficult challenge indeed. And while we do all of this, we must quiet our own minds and silence whatever agitation begins to creep up as we get “triggered” by the

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4 According to physician and writer Rachel Naomi Remen (2007), the facts of a story may be understood as its “bones,” with the speaker’s experience overlaid upon them.

5 Paul Friedman (1993) writes, “Embedded in our narratives are clues to what we really think and can not, or will not, articulate in an expository way. Discerning belief systems that drive narrative accounts is a listening skill vital to social researchers” (p. 205).
speaker’s facts and affect, which may well offend if not enrage us. In a sense, this emphasis on listening to the speaker’s own experience while quieting our own assumptions and perspectives reflects a commitment to a phenomenological process of knowing and understanding, one that calls for the “bracketing” of our own views.

As a group, we decide that if we perceive that a delegation member sitting next to us during a listening session is becoming unduly exercised by what is being said, we are to turn towards her and give her a kiss on the cheek, to remind her to return to a neutral emotional state. We must discipline ourselves to locate that quiet space within, the unflappable core essence of our being, where we find we are connected to everyone and everything around us. I ask if this “core essence” is to be thought of as Buddha Nature, since I find the language being used very redolent of Zen. “Whatever you can connect with or associate with ‘core essence’ works,” explains Leah Green, director of The Compassionate Listening Project and our trainer, adding, “It is that high loving essence that we can intuit when we are centered at that place.” We are instructed to pay attention to our body, for when we are in tune with our core essence, the body is soft, quiet; the body can also tell us when we are engaged in reactivity, when we have been triggered; it will then feel tense, anxious, tight.

Our job as compassionate listeners is to create a safe space for the speaker, and this means making room for her truth to take center stage, while our own truths are put in abeyance. As I come to understand it, what this means, de facto, is the displacement or suspension of the listener’s self in the service of the speaker. TCLP uses the language of “letting go of ego attachment, of the need to be right” (TCLP’s Advanced Training, Seabeck, Washington, February, 2008). Like other spiritually informed approaches to listening, TCLP has been deeply influenced by Buddhism. Gene Knudsen Hoffman, characterized as a “Quaker peacemaker and mystic” (Manousos, 2003), was a dedicated student of Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh and provided much of the conceptual foundation for the practices and principles of The Compassionate Listening Project in its early years.6 Hence, the appeal to remove the ego, quiet the mind, open one’s heart, and return to the “core essence” when one is disquieted by the speaker’s message can be seen as a very direct dimension of Buddhist practice, somewhat modified for the purposes of placing listening as the central activity of this process.7 But one can also interpret the removal of the self or ego from the listening moment as a type of love, perhaps in its agape form, as a sacrifice of one’s own interests and concerns for the sake of affirming the other.

Of course, listening is not seen as an end in itself, but as the practice of being present to our interlocutors on a daily basis, and in so doing helping them to feel acknowledged and accepted. Ultimately, this practice is to be put in the service of conflict intervention, when listening deeply can connects us across significant boundaries of difference for the sake of deep mutual understanding. There is an emphasis here on right relationship, an ethical view

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6 Since its founding in 1996, TCLP’s practices and principles have grown and have been further developed by a small cadre of certified trainers, including its director, Leah Green.

7 In fact, Thich Nhat Hanh (2003, ch. 2) speaks of “deep listening” or “compassionate listening” when referring to methods similar to TCLP’s. Quakers refer to this kind of attentive listening as “devout listening” (Halifax, 2003, p. 138).
emphasizing care, healing, and, ideally, reciprocity and mutuality between speaker and listener—emphases that analytically may be located within the ambit of feminist ethics.

Gene Hoffman was a long-term peacemaker, involved in efforts of citizen diplomacy during the Cold War, participating in many delegations to the Soviet Union involving American and Soviet citizens. In the 1980s she turned her attention to work in the Middle East with Israelis and Palestinians. Hoffman’s views on conflict and peacemaking were also shaped by her multiple experiences with psychotherapeutic methods—and her responses to them. She became an active participant in Re-evaluation Counseling, some decades ago espoused by Quakers across the country, which she describes as follows: “We were taught to listen to one another and care for one another in new ways, and we belonged to a network of people who were all seeking self-healing through this peer counseling process....Re-evaluation Counseling was a gift of caring that people could give one another—a ministry of love.... This was part of its great appeal to me ... the capacity for ordinary people to help each other heal themselves by means of aware, attentive, safe, caring listening” (Hoffman, 2003b, pp. 154-155).

The intention behind compassionate listening is thus to bring healing to the speaker—and possibly to the listener as well—since the “fundamental premise of Compassionate Listening is that every party to the conflict is suffering and that every act of violence comes from an unhealed wound” (Green, 2007, p. 106). By promoting the idea of “healing the world from the inside out” (TCLP’s Israel/Palestine delegation training, Jerusalem, November 7, 2006), Compassionate Listening thus advances a spirituality grounded in healing.

In the mid-70s, Hoffman completed her master’s in religion and pastoral counseling. Her rich and varied background shaped her view that

While we stand steadfast against cruel actions, our attitude toward violent people requires ... compassion towards them.... I believe that our work as peacemakers is not to take sides but to seek truth, that there will never be peace unless both sides are listened to. We must care about those who hurt others, and listen with respect to those who disagree with or oppose us. I believe that through such listening we can open new avenues for communication where people are in conflict. We hope that one day they will be able to listen to each other. (Hoffman, 2003e, pp. 278, 281)

As she claims that no side “is the sole repository of Truth,” Hoffman (2003d) reveals her Quaker commitments: “But each of us has a spark of it within. Perhaps, with compassion as our guide, that spark in each of us can become a glow, and then perhaps a light, and we will watch one another in awe as we become illuminated. And then, perhaps, this spark, this glow, this light will become the enlightening energy of love that will save all of us” (p. 190).

To listen compassionately, TCLP’s literature frequently reveals, is to “listen with our ‘spiritual ear’” (Green, 2007, P. 106), which is more than a well honed skill. “I am not talking about listening with the human ear,” Hoffman (2003c) explains, “I am talking about ‘discernment,’ which means to perceive something hidden and obscure.... This is very different from deciding in advance what is right and what is wrong and then seeking to promote our own agenda. We must literally suspend our disbelief and then listen to learn whether what we hear expands or diminishes our sense of Truth” (p. 254).
Such listening is to be done through the provision of attention and uninterrupted space for the articulation of the speaker’s thinking, feeling, and valuing. Another way that empathy is encouraged in this approach is, as has been suggested, through “listening with an open heart.” This I take to mean suspending judgment and connecting to the basic humanity and the suffering of the being to whom we listen. Martin Buber (1970) might conceptualize such an encounter between speaker and listener as one between an “I” and a “Thou,” one characterized by unconditional acceptance.

I return now to the Compassionate Listening delegation’s visit to Beit Umar and our meeting with Mayor Farham al-Qaham, which I introduced earlier in the paper. You will remember that soon after our trip, I received an e-mail from him suggesting our visit had had a major impact on him. Upon reflection, I wonder why this meeting was so significant for him. I intuit that he is not used to being listened to by outsiders (including the Jews amongst us) and to have his “truth”—however partial—acknowledged and affirmed; this may well have felt that he was being acknowledged and affirmed. This is, of course, an experience that is common for people who experience oppression, insofar as their voices are often silenced in the public arena. Being listened to attentively and with care and compassion by a delegation of international non-Palestinians is likely to be a healing moment for Palestinians, for the pain they experience under occupation is exacerbated by their perception that the world has forgotten about their suffering.

Buber (1966) reminds us that the kind of acknowledgement and affirmation extended by compassionate listening “does not mean approval; but no matter in what I am against the other, by accepting him as my partner in genuine dialogue I have affirmed him as a person” (p. 105). So I conclude that this, too, must have been a transformative moment for the mayor, as it was for me. I begin to understand the power of compassionate listening more deeply. My experience mirrors Hwoschinsky’s (2006) observation that “the real challenge of Compassionate Listening is to hear the stories of both the oppressed and the oppressors, to listen to people who hold very different values from our own, and to develop empathy for the human being which transcends the issues” (p. 11). A similar understanding of the complex concept of empathy is articulated by Alan Geyer (1998), Canon Ethicist at the Washington Cathedral, when he writes that peacemaking requires “[t]ranscendence of one’s interests and perspectives for the sake of understanding the interests and perspectives of the other side, which calls for the virtue of empathy” (p. 87; italics in the original).

I am reminded here of psychologist Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela’s (2004) powerful account of her meetings in South Africa with Eugene de Kock, the Afrikaner known as “Prime Evil” and considered by many to be the most brutal of apartheid’s covert police operatives (p. 4). In her book, A Human Being Died That Night, she tells of the time when she asked him to talk about his encounter with the widows of two of his victims. “His face immediately fell, and he became visibly distressed.... There were tears in his eyes.” As he expressed his feelings, his hands trembled, his mouth quivered. Gobodo-Madikizela continues, “Relating to him in the only way one does in such human circumstances, I touched his shaking hands, surprising

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8 A similar view is advanced by psychologist Michael Nichols (1995) when he writes, “By momentarily stepping out of his or her own frame of reference and into ours, the person who listens well acknowledges and affirms us. That affirmation, that validation, is absolutely essential for sustaining the self-affirmation known as self-respect” (p. 15).
myself.” She recoils for a moment, becoming aware that “not too long ago [he] had used these same hands, this same voice, to authorize and initiate unspeakable acts of malice against people very much like myself.... And yet ... something else seemed to assure me that there was nothing especially incongruous in this display of emotional vulnerability and my response” (p. 32). In that encounter, Gobodo-Madikizela recognizes an empathic response on her part after the fact; this was a spontaneous response to de Kock’s suffering, not one following rational reflection.

A similar dynamic may well be at play when Israelis and Palestinians who have lost a loved one to the Middle East conflict are brought together by The Parents Circle – Families Forum to share their stories of grief and loss. Half Israeli, half Palestinian, these bereaved families, bonded by their sorrow, turn their efforts to reconciliation between their peoples while the conflict goes on (see http://www.theparentscircle.com/about.asp and the film Encounter Point, directed by Julia Bacha, 2006, which movingly features some of these families.)

Scholars and practitioners of conflict resolution agree that when opposing sides are brought together, it is important to establish trust by first exploring similarities across their divides. This is certainly the case, for example, in religious dialogue, where the discovery of similar ethical impulses or shared scriptural figures may be used as a stepping stone to deeper connection between the two sides. (See, for example, Abu-Nimer, 2002, and Gopin, 2002). It seems to me that in the case of compassionate listening, the commonality that is discovered is more affective and less consciously mediated by analytic, religious, or intellectual categories. The listener is confronted with the raw emotions of the storyteller, whether they be grief, anger, or fear. My experience with the mayor, as Gobodo-Madikizela’s with de Kock, suggests that empathy may be the only available response in such encounters—that is, feeling the pain of the other—assuming the listener truly opens herself to the other. This takes me to a particularly poignant reflection shared with our delegation by a group of Israeli Jewish women we met in the Galilee. One of them, Marsha, told of “a moment of moral shame” she experienced during her first visit to the West Bank some years back. She was shaken to the core as she listened to the Palestinians’ stories, recollecting that “The world broke apart when I realized what Israel is doing to the Palestinians.” Like the others we met that evening, she is now involved in the Israeli peace movement and active in projects toward reconciliation. This might suggest that when empathy is at work in the ways described, when space is created to truly listen to the other, a move toward compassion has taken place, that is, a shift that might well move to action on behalf of the other.

It is important to recognize that however fruitful engaging in compassionate listening across divides may be, it is obviously not the be all and end all of reconciliation and peacemaking efforts. There are certainly limits to this method, as alone it cannot secure peace between opponents. I like to picture it as a beginning point in a trajectory of conflict resolution and peacebuilding, insofar as it brings adversaries together to recognize each other’s pain and humanity, which helps to create trust. In so doing, compassionate listening has the capacity to lay the groundwork for other necessary steps leading to reconciliation and lasting peace, including the recognition of power differentials between adversaries and to injustices calling for redress.
Storytelling in Compassionate Listening

In compassionate listening, storytelling and listening go hand in hand. Unlike some methods of conflict resolution that involve dialogue or the exchange of political points of view, this approach relies on storytelling as central to communicating one’s experience to another. In my estimate, it is this emphasis that particularly contributes to the effectiveness of compassionate listening as a method of conflict intervention. You will recall that I first referred to the mayor’s narrative as a spiel; I perceived the many facts he delineated about the conditions of his village as unfortunate and even tragic. But I was only able to get past his being a member of Hamas when he shifted his narration to his personal experience. My concerns about Hamas’s position regarding the state of Israel were temporarily displaced as I focused my attention on this man’s painful experiences, vulnerabilities, and protective love for his children. Retrospectively, as I analyze these dynamics, I identify several dimensions of compassionate listening that contributed to my ability at that time to see the mayor in his full humanity, and not as someone potentially threatening to my Jewish identity, which is partly defined by my commitment to the state of Israel.9

During our group process meeting the evening of our visit to Beit Ummar, a Jewish member of the delegation expressed tremendous distress at having had to engage with a member of Hamas. She experienced this as a betrayal of the Jewish people. Particularly addressing other Jewish members of our delegation, she asked us to share our reactions. I first explained my original reservations and apprehensions; but then I said, “I made myself bracket out the mayor’s political views by centering myself and listening to his humanity.” In short, I had been able to access that “core essence” that Leah Green had spoken about in order to focus on the mayor’s story. As a Jew, I had felt no inconsistency between my Jewish commitments and the experience of being in touch with my “core essence.” Perhaps this approach works because of the elasticity of this concept; Leah may have been right—one may fill it with any content that feels personally fitting and appropriate to one’s religio-ethnic worldview. I suspect that Yossi Klein Halevi (2002) did just that when he ventured into a journey of reconciliation with Christians and Muslims in the Holy Land. Of course, it helped that he was involved with mystical fellow seekers whose boundaries are far more permeable than more conventional borders. As he movingly tells it in his book, At the Entrance to the Garden of Eden, he connected with others across hatred and distrust by engaging in listening and silence with an open heart.

The emphasis of listening to the other’s stories with an “open heart”—of listening with the heart, not the mind—serves to suspend hierarchal and dualistic forms of thinking and categorizing. One is encouraged to relate to the other outside familiar social conventions and cultural constructions, embracing the notion that our core essence connects us to each other at the level of our very humanity. In doing so, we are called, at least momentarily—in a kind of

9 I recognize, of course, that my perspective is not generalizable to everyone; I am not an Israeli citizen and do not live with the potential violence experienced by Israelis on a daily basis, which often colors their views on peace and security, and which might well affect their openness to listening to Hamas members and other Palestinians. At the same time, sessions conducted between Israeli Jews and Palestinians by TCLP have resulted in experiences similar to mine on the part of Israeli Jews (Leah Green, personal communication).
liminal space—to disengage from our group affiliations. This kind of listening, therefore, becomes an exercise in empathic connectedness. At that moment, for me, the mayor ceased being a threat to my people—given his association with Hamas; I came to perceive him as a wounded human being; I became connected to him by his suffering and my empathic identification with that suffering. This process of identification reverses the dehumanization of the other so common in conflict situations (see Lederach, 1999, ch. 3).

Another dimension that forwarded this type of connectedness for me was hearing about the mayor’s experience through an actual story, a personal testimony, as opposed to the discussion of facts told in the “spiel.” Stories engage us emotionally—through the heart, as it were; by contrast, facts command the mind’s attention, which is not the principal seat of empathy. It is not coincidental, for example, that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission relied on narration of life stories as a process of national healing in South Africa. So, for me, it was not only the mayor’s personal account, as such, that was significant, but the fact that this account was delivered in story form—that is, his experience of being arrested and its consequences for himself and his family, particularly his children.

I entered the mayor’s office with a good deal of anxiety about meeting him, given his membership in Hamas, classified as a terrorist organization by the West, its charter known to call for the destruction of the state of Israel. My encounter with and openness to the mayor’s personal story highlighted his humanity, thereby displacing for me my internalized “master narrative” about that organization and its members, and hence suspending my totalizing identification of him with Hamas’s charter. His story challenged that master narrative; instead, listening compassionately to the mayor’s story revealed a suffering, vulnerable human being—whatever else he might be. This dynamic ultimately problematized my reliance on what James C. Scott calls “public transcripts,” (in Lipsitz, 1977, p. 13) or representations of reality favored by dominant groups, in this case, by the West, in general, and by the United States and the state of Israel, more specifically. Given this tendency, George Lipsitz (1997) observes that “every representation leaves something out.” He goes on to suggest that every struggle to tell a story “is also a struggle to displace a story” (p. 19). The upshot is that I left the village of Beit Ummar enlarged by this encounter and compelled to humanize the other—a member of Hamas—and to reorganize my attitudes and emotional predispositions, even as I struggled and continue to struggle with the political complexities of the conflict on the ground.

Conclusion

My hope is that the preceding account of compassionate listening communicates its effectiveness in engendering empathy and its potential as a path to conflict intervention and reconciliation across individual and group divides. The idea behind this method is to practice it enough so as to become compassionate listeners in our everyday exchanges. Yet, like any other practice that calls for inner transformation, this one presents difficult and ongoing challenges. So often, preoccupied with our own lives and responsibilities, our everyday encounters lack attention, empathy and compassion toward the other. If that is the case, what can we expect when traversing divides across serious or seemingly intractable conflicts?

As I suggested at the beginning of this paper, Paul Tournier (in Powell, 1969) believes that most conversations are “for the most part dialogues of the deaf” (p. 5), failures, in fact, at
authentic communication. Do we, as ethicists, teachers, or practitioners, currently model such “dialogues of the deaf” for our students, colleagues, and others in our social worlds? Should we? How do we invite our interlocutors to consider the value of active, compassionate listening?

Tom Bruneau (1989) believes empathic listening “can be taught and should be taught as a natural and essential skill in being fully human.” Though “it is difficult [and] ... requires much listening energy,” he concludes that “the alternative is much too grim to consider” (p. 16). How do we begin the process of learning and teaching this form of listening? How do we engage others in what undoubtedly involves what David Wellman calls “creative discomfort” (personal communication)?

Social activist Fran Peavey (2003) spent several months traveling the world with a sign reading, “American Willing to Listen.” In some places people lined up for the opportunity to talk about their lives to someone truly interested in listening to them without judgment. She herself was transformed by the experience of meeting so many people and learning so much about their realities, concerns, hopes, and dreams. Not too many of us are willing or able to undertake such a project of boundary crossing across the globe. But ethics involves the establishment of right relations between and among individuals and peoples. If compassionate listening constitutes a path to such relations, perhaps we need to see it as a moral imperative and begin thinking of ways to implement it in our teaching, in our collegial relationships, and in our daily lives. We might then view listening as a form of social action,\(^\text{10}\) as a type of social transformation.

References


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\(^{10}\) According to Johanna Leseho and Laurie Block (2005), “In the therapeutic context, listening is social action” (p. 184). Might such a claim apply elsewhere as well? If so, are we as ethicists and teachers mandated to pursue such a form of social action?


The Ethics of Non-Violence in Journalistic Terms

Clifford G. Christians

Theories are not pure, apriori and decontextual. René Descartes (1596-1650), the intellectual father of the Enlightenment, thought they were. In his view, scientific theories were as cognitively clean as arithmetic; $10 \times 10 = 100$ was true in all circumstances. But the Enlightenment was wrong. Theories are not generalizations about an objective world. They are provocateurs; they open up new perspectives. Theorizing is not an examination of external events, but the power of the imagination to give us an inside perspective on reality. Thomas Kuhn (1996) calls this revolutionary science—the construction of paradigms—rather than the normal science of verifying that propositions are externally and internally valid. New theories do not arise in purity ex nihilo, but contradict the limitations or errors in existing theories. Einstein did not formulate $E=mc^2$ in isolation, but in opposition to Newtonian physics. Chomsky’s transformational linguistics is contrary to Skinner’s behaviorism. Habermas pushes Kant in a new direction, and feminist relational theory defies the innermost self of John Locke.

One kind of theorizing in these new terms replaces modernity’s emphasis on individual autonomy with universal human solidarity. Both terms in the mainstream view are turned on their head—individual becomes universal and autonomy is replaced by solidarity. For communication ethics, research in 16 countries on 4 continents identified a universal value called the sacredness of life (Christians & Traber, 1997; cf. Christians, 2008). The rationale for human action was affirmed to be reverence for life on earth. Purpose is embedded in the animate world, evident in its own reproduction. Ontologically speaking, the natural order has a moral claim on us for its own sake and in its own right. Veneration of human life represents a universalism from the ground up. There is at least one generality of universal scope underlying systematic ethics. The primal sacredness of life is a protonorm that binds humans into a common oneness. Rather than generating an abstract conception of the good, the primal sacredness of life is a catalyst for binding humans universally into an organic whole. Various societies articulate this cross-cultural value in different terms, but every culture can bring to the table this fundamental norm for ordering social institutions such as the media.

The veneration of human life is a protonorm similar in kind to the proto-Germanic language—proto in Greek meaning underneath—a lingual predecessor underlying the Germanic languages as we know them in history. We should think of protonorms as presuppositions, or in other words, originating claims that are fundamental to ethical reasoning. As Aristotle made irrevocable, we need a place to begin or we go nowhere intellectually—infinite regression makes meaning impossible. The notion of protonorms has been put forward as a way of rooting our universals in ontology, rather than in rationalist epistemology with its roots in the Western tradition. The sacredness of life, evident in nature itself, grounds a responsibility that is global in scope and self-evident regardless of cultures and competing ideologies.

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Footnotes:
1 For elaboration, see Christians (2010, ch. 1).
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Non-violence is an important ethical principle entailed by the sacredness of life. My purpose is to ensure that the ethics of non-violence is credible philosophically. I do so by integrating it into religious ethics, with the connection between them becoming obvious as the argument develops. Journalism must depend on this work in the general morality for its own understanding of non-violence. As a form of public communication, journalism’s definition of and application of the principle of non-violence ought to resonate with the public at large. Similar to the principle of social justice, the wider context for non-violence prevents journalism’s code of ethics and professional standards from being narrow and often self-serving.

I introduce peace journalism as an illustration of how this principle works itself out in the news of violent conflict worldwide. This principle provides a moral foundation for both journalists and audiences. Peace journalism is an interpretive process, and the principle of non-violence gives the direction by which the interpretation ought to be done.

Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., developed non-violence beyond a political strategy into a philosophy of life. Vaclav Havel and Nelson Mandela were totally committed to it. For Emmanuel Levinas, the self-Other relation makes peace normative. When the Other’s face appears, the infinite is revealed and I am commanded not to kill (Levinas, 1981). Ahimsa (non-violence) is basic to the Hindu worldview. For St. Augustine, peace is natural to human relationships. In communalistic and indigenous cultures, care for the weak and vulnerable (children, sick and elderly), and sharing material resources are a matter of course. The public’s revulsion over physical abuse of children or rape and brutal crimes are a glimmer of hope reflecting the validity of this principle.

The urgent need for a global media ethics that matches the scope and muscle of today’s communication technologies has become obvious. In light of the power of transnational media corporations and high-speed electronic technologies worldwide, it is imperative that communication ethics become broad and strong enough to match the media’s international impact. Issues of peace journalism are a global concern also. Without universal principles to deal with them, we are stuck with a subservient ethics that echoes the status quo. A primary concern of journalism ethics ought to be identifying a different kind of universal, one that honors the splendid variety of human life while articulating cross-cultural norms.

Peace journalism faces a heavy agenda (cf. Dayton & Kriesberg, 2009, chs. 10-17). In order to advance it, journalism needs to give up its rationalist individualism and detachment, and adopt the principle of non-violence. Humans are moral beings and this ethical principle can inspire journalists to give peace priority even while reporting on a violent world.

Philosophical Anthropology

My perspective on violence and reporting is philosophical anthropology. Instead of choosing epistemology or metaphysics, I engage in the philosophical examination of human

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2 Philosophical anthropology is generally understood as the philosophical examination of the necessary and sufficient conditions of being human. Though controversial to the philosophy of mind and North Atlantic analytical philosophy, it has been part of the European philosophical landscape for the past century and a half, emerging as a main interest of post-Hegelian philosophers from Feuerbach (1804-1872) and Marx (1818-1883) to Nietzsche (1844-1890) and Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911).
nature. Working out the character of the human species is the most appropriate framework for establishing the non-violence principle. Seow Ting Lee (2008, pp. 259-260) argues that journalists must give up their mainstream commitment to objectivity and neutrality for peace journalism to be possible. This epistemological step is necessary. But I’m contending for something deeper—the nature of the human—calling for a transformation in our understanding of the human species. For journalism to be committed to non-violence, the first step is to move beyond its longstanding commitment to the individual self. When the public is understood in terms of individual rights, aggression and defensiveness are typically considered the natural state of affairs. In liberal democracy, individuals enter into a social contract as a means by which to maximize their own interests; they presume that none of the qualities they insist on for themselves are owed to anyone else.

A shorthand version for peace and reporting argues that a dialogic model ought to be substituted for monologic transmission between discrete individuals. In fact, the argument here is stronger. For non-violence to be legitimate intellectually and possible practically, only a dialogic social philosophy is defensible. A normative dialogic paradigm is a decisive alternative to individual autonomy and a fruitful framework for an ethics of non-violence in an age of globalization and multiculturalism.

According to the dialogic perspective, *homo sapiens* is the one species constituted by language; therefore, humans are fundamentally cultural beings. As creators, distributors, and users of culture, humans live in a world of their own making. And this cultural character of our humanness illustrates both our dialogic composition as a species and the relationship between human beings and the media. When the lingual interpretation of ourselves constitutes who we are, human action is dialogic. Our experience is then understood largely in terms of rhythm with other inter-related actors. Humans are dialogic agents within a language community. Therefore, all moral matters must be seen in communal terms. Morality is a shared process of discovery and interpretation. Rather than patch up liberalism’s individual autonomy, the dialogic paradigm enables us to start over intellectually and thereby establish a more credible humanness for understanding non-violence and acting peacefully as journalists.

**The Spiritual Dimension**

In concentrating on the relational human as the basis for the ethics of non-violence, the dimension of spirit becomes *sine qua non*. Humans are endowed with mystical power in their spirit that can only be cultivated by non-violence. In Taoism, the focus is on nurturing and awakening our basic humanity, that is, our whole human being. Humans are understood to be a vital organic unity with multi-sided moral, mental and physical capacities. The body, mind, and heart are developed in concert with one another. Even deeper than journalism strategies for peaceful reporting, is the profound need to touch our inner being in order to awaken the higher elements that release the inner powers that reside within us. Holistic humans cultivate a

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3 For an introduction to the theoretical issues regarding a dialogic approach to language and mind, Gadamer’s (1965/1975) work is particularly helpful. As Richard Bernstein summarizes it, “Gadamer’s entire project of philosophical hermeneutics can be read as an attempt to recover...the quintessence of our being [as] dialogical” (1986, p. 65; cf. Shin, 1994).
harmonious spirituality that exists and need not be imposed. Only in non-violence is our inner energy liberated through a natural internal unfolding. And when the unity of our being enriches us, we have the ultimate resources for dealing with a violent world. Through an authentic awakening to the interconnectedness of life, we see the larger vision of what it means to be a human being inhabiting the cosmos (Huang, 2007). When we are harmonious within ourselves, we are able to live out of the whole picture of our being in relation with others and our connection to the universe. Harmony within spreads to compassion for others and oneness with the eternal. Taoism is one example of a radical alternative to the liberal self, one that promotes peace in positive terms, instead of the weaker, avoidance of harm since John Stuart Mill.

Spirituality refers to the deeper and higher reality beyond the immanent. This spiritual dimension of the holistic human is stated in different ways and from different cultural perspectives, but with the same meaning. The Dalai Lama’s best-selling book, Ethics for a New Millennium (1999) is written for all though it is intensely spiritual in character. Karol Wojtyla (better known as Pope John Paul II) writes of horizontal love (human-to-human) and vertical love (divine-to-human and human-to-divine) as a trained philosopher speaking to the human race, not as official teaching for the Roman Catholic Church (1981). The Protestant theological H. Richard Niebuhr turned Christian love ethics into a definition of the person as The Responsible Self (1963). Note is taken here of Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965) for whom the sacredness of life was his overarching belief about the world. This multi-gifted man was a musician, physician, philosopher and theologian, but perhaps most famously he founded the Lambaréné Hospital in Gabon, Africa. He received the Peace Prize in 1953 for his Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben which he described in his autobiography (Out of My Life and Thought) as his greatest single contribution to human civilization. For him, respect for every kind of life had to be restored or ethical principles would continue to decay.

This understanding of our humanness from the Dalai Lama to Albert Schweitzer turns our eyes to the unity of life in the hope of making the world a better place physically and spiritually. If both media practitioners and the public as a whole were schooled in these sacredness-of-life terms, the ethics of non-violence would flourish. Philosophical anthropology that takes seriously not just body and mind, but spirit, provides us a vocabulary for and definition of a distinctive humanness. The seeds of such holism are already in the dialogical humans-in-relation. But including the spiritual makes holistic humans explicit and transparent, and it gives us a principle for thinking and acting non-violently—the golden rule.

Discussion of the ethics of non-violence typically refers to the golden rule as a guide for morally appropriate action. Hans Küng (1993), representing one approach to it, concludes that all the great religions of the world require something like, “Do to others as you would have them do to you.” This is a norm that is not just hypothetical and conditional, but is categorical and unconditional. Küng is correct that it is practical and actionable in the face of the extremely complex situations reporters must describe and groups most often act. Its secret is avoiding a list of prohibitions, but instead providing a non-violent way to think about and behave toward others. The golden rule as a principle of reciprocity can function effectively as an ethical standard without borders, that is, as an expression of the common moral wisdom of humanity worldwide. This strategy for and ethics of non-violence can be adapted to people groups, among nation-states, and for multinational corporations in order to build a world in
which cultural diversities are respected and shared. Media organizations as social institutions can resonate with the golden rule also as their ethical standard for public affairs reporting.

**Peace Journalism**

Peace journalism puts the ethics of non-violence to work. This ethics, made specific through the golden rule, is the ground and boundaries for a news reporting called peace journalism. When peace is a moral imperative, it is not reduced to the politics of war, but is a fundamental way to understand the sacredness of life intrinsic to our humanness. The principle of non-violence promotes a discourse of peaceful coexistence in community life rather than a preoccupation with peace-making between inter-governmental bodies.

The Norwegian scholar Johan Galtung has developed and applied the principle systematically through peace studies, concerned not simply with the standards of war reporting, but positive peace—non-violent resolution of all cultural, social, and political conflicts (e.g., 2000, 2004). Jake Lynch recognizes that military coverage feeds the very violence it reports, and therefore he has developed an on-the-ground theory and practice of peace initiatives and conflict resolution (e.g., Lynch, 2008; Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005).

Standard journalistic norms favor conflict, directly or inadvertently. Peace journalism is a self-conscious, working concept which denies that premise. “Galtung (1998) made a strong case for rerouting journalism to a ‘high road’ for peace, instead of the ‘low road’ taken by news media in chasing wars and the elites who run them, fixating on a win-lose outcome, and simplifying the parties to two combatants slugging it out in a sports arena” (Lee, 2009, p. 258). The high road means among other things a focus on negotiation and resolution rather than voyeurism.

Consistent with a commitment to the sacredness of life, worked out in terms of the golden rule, Seow Ting Lee (2009) concludes there are three strategies for peace journalism: 1) Instead of being consumed by military action, present context, background, and historical perspective. Linguistic accuracy is crucial—not speaking of Muslim rebels as a generic group, for example, but identifying dissidents of particular political factions. 2) Rather than elite sources, political and military, emphasize the people’s perspective and advocate editorially for peace for the benefit of the non-combatants. Instead of organized violence between nations as the framework, focus on common values and patterns of cooperation among citizens of both sides. 3) Instead of a dichotomy of good and evil in a zero sum game, represent all parties. Report on the various ways the conflict could be resolved without violence (e.g., see Dayton & Kriesberg, 2009).

**Audience Engagement and Action**

Non-violence, developed in strategic terms as the golden rule, is an ethical principle for audiences as it is for journalists. Jolyon Mitchell (2007) demonstrates how audiences can become “dynamic moral agents….who can learn to analyze, critique, deconstruct and, where necessary, oppose….media violence” (p. 4). In his words, further, “Not only widely publicized hostilities, but also hidden, forgotten and structural violence can be re-envisioned, reframed, and redescribed in ways that promote peacemaking actions” (p. 5). The norm for doing so is
the golden rule. We are moral beings, and the ethical principle of non-violence can inspire audiences to engage with journalists who “provide a different description of reality which challenges the claim that violence has either the first or the last word” (p. 9). It discredits the myth “that by using violence lasting peace can be achieved—sustained” (p. 16). There is no easy answer to what Jolyon Mitchell calls violence fatigue, that is, boredom that desensitizes us to the outrage of violent behavior (p. 31). But when the golden rule is robust there is the possibility of avoiding or overcoming this weariness. Mitchell emphasizes community life as the effective framework for re-envisioning violence in news and entertainment. Communities together can enable readers and viewers to apply the principle of non-violence and reinterpret media violence without being consumed by it (2007, ch. 7).

Through our everyday conversations and experience, human sacredness will either flourish or wither. Within the popular mind it can prosper at hospital bedsides; among citizen action groups; through people’s radio; in churches, temples, mosques, and synagogues; on the school playground when the disabled are struggling to keep up; or among campesinos as they’re learning to read. In communal settings people can empower one another toward peace—school classrooms, family life, NGOs, friendship circles, where an interpretive frame of non-violence is enacted. We can go beyond abstractions such as national security and states’ rights, to represent the struggles for peace in children’s theatre, aboriginal art, folk tales, local composers, poetry, and community media. With its roots in language, culture, and relational identity, the golden rule speaks prophetically about living in peace on all levels in a complicated world.

Conclusion

Rooted in the sacredness of life as a universal value, non-violence is an obvious ethical principle for the global media. In order to establish its legitimacy as a moral norm, I have chosen philosophical anthropology as the most suitable framework. This intellectual strategy validates dialogic relations as the appropriate communications theory in contrast to those appeals to peace and peace-making rooted in individualism. For peace journalism itself, our first order of business is transforming our philosophy of the human. The foundation of new thinking is holistic humanness rooted in the universal sacredness of life. When we start over intellectually with humans-in-relation, the golden rule becomes a credible normative standard for peace journalism in this contentious age.

References


World War I and the Mobilization of Maternal Sacrifice: Considerations for Peace Politics

Ana C. Garner*
Karen Slattery*

We ask the reader to consider the following stories that appeared in the *The New York Times* during the first year of World War I:

In June, 1917, Mrs. Louis Meyer of Wheeling, Virginia, received a reply from President Woodrow Wilson thanking her for her wartime sacrifices. She had written to the president to tell him that she had given two sons to the war effort and that she was willing to give her third if necessary (“Thanks Heroic Mother,” June 19, 1917).

A month later, Connecticut state police, along with U.S. marshals and agents of the Department of Justice, seized another mother, Mrs. Mary Balaski, at her home in Hartford while she was “brandishing a revolver and shouting that she would kill the first officer that tried to enter the house to get her son for the army” (“Forbade Son,” August 18, 1917).

These two stories reflect alternative voices of mothers of soldiers during wartime. The behavior of Mrs. Meyer, the mother in the first story, is consistent with behavior associated with an important cultural archetype, the patriotic mother. The patriotic mother supports the nation’s war effort and her child’s role in it. She is also expected to remain stoic and silent about the personal costs involved. The behavior of Mrs. Balaski, the mother in the second story, is normally associated with another prominent cultural archetype, that of the good mother. The good mother protects her child from harm and nurtures the child psychologically and socially.

Both archetypes are grounded in maternal work, which, according to Ruddick (1989), offers “important resources for developing peace politics” (p. 12). Maternal work is the hands-on, day-to-day work of raising a child. Ruddick argues that the experience of this kind of work leads to a way of thinking about the human body and its vulnerability, attentive love, and other issues related to care that are useful when thinking about the problem of peace.

With peace politics in mind, then, we describe how the archetypes of the patriotic mother and the good mother differ, and how the image of the patriotic mother eclipses that of the good mother during wartime. We focus on the image of the patriotic mother as she appeared in World War I because the shift in archetypes in that period set the stage for similar patterns that emerged in subsequent wars in the 20th and 21st centuries. Finally, we argue that

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a more thorough understanding of this wartime cultural shift, which is subtle but profoundly significant, affords insights into how we might more fully realize the resources that motherhood offers in terms of peace politics.

**Conflicting Maternal Archetypes**

The archetype of the good mother is held culturally dear during times of peace. In the United States, the good mother has historically assumed responsibility for physically nurturing her children and keeping them out of harm’s way. She has also been charged with developing her children cognitively and morally, and has assumed control of training the children socially. On its face, the concept of war directly contradicts the concept of maternal work; war threatens to obliterate, in a single instance, all of the maternal care invested in a child during the first eighteen years of his or her life (Ruddick, 1989). Viewed this way, Mrs. Balaski’s response to the government’s efforts to press her son into wartime service, appears logical and quite natural.

At the same time, however, the archetype of patriotic motherhood makes different demands on mothers. This archetype stresses maternal work as it relates to socialization of the child. Since the earliest days of the Republic, mothers have been expected to train children to be good citizens and adhere to the requirement of citizenship, which for male children has historically included the expectation that they will defend the nation. Likewise, mothers are expected to willingly sacrifice their children to a nation in need. Willingness to sacrifice is a hallmark of the mother’s own good citizenship. Cordero (2008) argues that in order to count as a sacrifice, something of value must be given up in exchange for something of greater value. In wartime, then, mothers of soldiers are expected to stoically and silently sacrifice the lives of their children for the life of the nation.

In sum, the good mother archetype focuses on the mother’s role as mother. Her cultural worth is based on keeping her child alive, well and safe. In contrast, the patriotic mother archetype focuses on the mother’s role as citizen. Her cultural value during wartime is based on her willingness to sacrifice her child for the nation’s war effort, all the while remaining stoic and silent about the personal cost (Garner & Slattery, 2010).

**The Eclipse**

Both archetypes are omnipresent in the culture, but their prominence appears to depend on whether the nation is at war. Historical evidence suggests that the emphasis shifts, particularly as it relates to mothers of soldiers, in times of conflict (Garner & Slattery, 2010; Slattery & Garner, 2007). The media offers one cultural narrative that reflects this shift. Specifically, an examination of the coverage of mothers of soldiers during World War I in the nation’s wartime news media helps illustrate how mothers of soldiers were moved to make the shift. We focus on the news media because, according to Lule (2001) and Koch (1990), news as narrative serves the process of myth-making in a culture. News functions as a “socializing voice” (Koch, 1990, p. 176) by pointing out who is important in a culture, what counts as appropriate behavior, and what is worth valuing (Lule, 2001).
We argue that the voice of the soldier’s mother, as a good mother, is silenced during war, while her voice as a patriotic mother is afforded center stage. However, there is a caveat. The mothers of soldiers are encouraged to loudly voice support for the war effort but are expected to remain stoic and silent about the cost of her sacrifice. World War I offers a clear example of how mechanisms were put in place to silence those mothers who opposed the sacrifice of their children. But, before turning to a discussion of how the media depicted mothers of soldiers, we must first situate the media coverage within the larger cultural context of the war.

**Cultural Zeitgeist of World War I**

In the years leading up to World War I, President Woodrow Wilson had advocated U.S. neutrality. Suffragists, maternalists, and pacifists were actively engaged in peace and anti-draft movements (Zeiger, 1996). Reflections of their feelings appeared in cultural texts including poems and songs. One of the ten most popular songs in 1915 was “I Didn’t Raise my Boy to be a Soldier.” When President Wilson made his decision to take the country to war he knew it would be necessary to mobilize citizens to support the conflict (Vaughn, 1980). To successfully prosecute the war, he and his administration believed it was necessary to create an “outraged public,” one that was willing to “enlist, contribute money and make the many other sacrifices war demands” (Cooper, 2008, p. 196). The Wilson Administration put mechanisms into place to accomplish mobilization, including the National Council of Defense (NCD) and the Committee on Public Information (CPI). Both had women’s divisions and went a long way toward fostering an environment in which the archetype of the patriotic mother could flourish.

The NDC was created on August 29, 1916. Comprised of six cabinet members and a civilian advisory committee, it was charged with exploring issues related to the country’s wartime mobilization of resources, including “civilian forces” (Grover, 2003, p. 432). The NCD set up State Councils of Defense, which, in turn, set up the local councils of defense whose purpose was to actively engage state and local citizens in war work. The depth and reach of these activities is apparent in the activities of the local council of defense in Milwaukee County, Wisconsin.

On an average day during the First World War, the Milwaukee County Council of Defense and its employees in its various Departments, relentlessly engaged civilians in the nation’s war-related activities. They tapped people from all walks of life, including those who worked in commerce and finance, public affairs, public welfare, manufacturing, business, churches, school, civil and patriotic groups, and homemakers. The Council and its employees encouraged civilian participation in such activities as going door-to-door to raise money for Liberty Bonds and Thrift campaigns, organizing parades and service flag pageants, driving soldiers to train stations, giving 4 minute men speeches at movie theaters, writing letters to sailors overseas, making service flags, hosting soldiers in private homes, creating comfort kits, knitting sweaters, giving newspaper boys badges and certificates for victory gardens created in their backyards, training housewives in food and fuel conservation, arranging military balls, banquets, band concerts, and theater parties, as well as working to Americanize foreign born women, looking for spies and searching for and reporting on slackers, i.e., those who evaded the draft or war work (The Milwaukee County Council of Defense, 1919).
The government designed the CPI as a propaganda machine that would work in hand-in-hand with the NCD’s mobilization efforts. The CPI was an “extraordinarily effective nationalizing agent” (Vaughn, p. 4), and was able to build “patriotic fervor” among Americans (Cooper, 2003) by generating war-related news stories, feature articles, and cartoons all of which appeared in the nations news outlets; as well as pamphlets, films, and advertising. According to CPI chairman, George Creel, “there was no part of the great war machinery that we did not touch. No medium of appeal that we did not employ” (“United States Committee,” 1972, p. 2).

With the Administration’s propaganda machine in full force by 1917, thinking about the soldier’s mother’s role vis a vis war had shifted as reflected in poems and songs popular in the wartime era. The predominant maternal voice in the news media belonged to the soldier’s mother as patriot rather than mother as mother. In light of mounting public opinion favoring the war, many of the peace activists suspended their efforts (Zeiger, 1996).

The passage of federal laws in 1917 and 1918 further stifled questions about the nation’s role in the “war to end all wars.” These included among others, the Espionage Act, the Trading-With-The-Enemy Act and the Sedition Act. Lest the reader think that these were minor forces in the lives of American citizens, one need only read the newspaper for tales of women who dared to speak out. For instance, a judge in North Dakota sentenced socialist editor, Mrs. Kate Richards O’Hare, to five years in prison for “making utterances” in a speech in which she voiced her opposition to military registration. She reportedly said, “mothers who raised sons to be ‘cannon fodder’ were no better than a farmer’s brood sow” (“Five Years,” December 15, 1917). And, recall the story of Mrs. Balaski, the mother in our introduction, whose home was charged by federal and local agents. They seized her from behind and hauled her, her husband, and son off to jail and held them there for $5000 bond. According to the news account, a federal officer called the incident “one of the most important arrests made in the country under the Registration Act” (“Forbade Son,” August 18, 1917).

Stories of mothers of soldiers who opposed the draft and/or war were few and far between. We cannot say if other mothers harbored questions about the war and were reluctant to speak out given the nation’s wartime climate, but our data show that the press depicted most mothers of soldiers as supportive of the nation’s war effort. Our examination of newspapers from Wisconsin, California and New York reveal that there were a lot of mothers like Mrs. Meyer, mentioned in the introduction to our essay, who gave two sons and was willing to give a third (“Thanks Heroic Mother,” June 19, 1917). Mrs. Elsa Kragh, a Wisconsin mother, said she wished that she “had a 100 sons to give for the cause of democracy.” Her son, Herbert, was one of the first to enlist from Madison (McCormick, 1917). Mrs. Magdalena Mueller, of Monroe, Wisconsin, gave seven sons to the military (“Monroe Woman,” August 5, 1917). When Mrs. Augusta Johnson learned her son was injured overseas, she replied, “Carl has done his duty by his flag and I am proud of him” (“2 S. F. Boys Win Honor in France,” January 31, 1918). A 98-year-old mother in Ohio, who knitted socks for soldiers, was described in one story as “wearing the uniform of the United States on the inside and answering roll call right” (Boyle, 1918). Eleanor Markle (1918) wrote one of the many poems appearing in newspapers about mothers of soldiers; she titled it, “The Answered Prayer”:
You were so little that first day
    I held you on my arm,
A rose leaf cheek against my breast,
    My mother love to shelter
    You from harm.
And then I prayed
    As mothers ever do—
“Make him a man, dear Lord,
    Brave, honest, kind and true.”

Today a message came
    From distant lands across the sea,
Only a word or two,
    But ah! So much to me!
And thru the tears I read
    As best I can:
“He died for home and country,
    A brave man.”

Other mothers believed it was their job to keep up the morale on the home front. One wrote a letter to the editor in which she encouraged all mothers to organize and unite in their war effort (“Mothers United,” August 3, 1917).

The rhetoric of the mothers of soldiers, as it appeared in the news coverage, fits well with the cultural expectation of the archetype of the patriotic mother. But it runs contrary to Ruddick’s (1989) observation about the contradiction between mothering and war: “Mothers protect children who are at risk; the military risks the children that mothers protect” (p. 148).

Conclusion

The archetype of the patriotic mother was a prominent feature of the World War I wartime news narrative, eclipsing the archetype of the good mother, which appears so prominently during peacetime. Efforts by the World War I federal government, in tandem with local governments, the wartime mass media, and mothers themselves, set the stage for promoting the archetype of the patriotic mother as a wartime norm in later conflicts. This archetype appears in the wartime press in later 20th century wars and again in the news media during the U.S./Iraq War (Slattery & Garner, 2007).

It is worth noting that evidence of organized counter voices began to appear in the news coverage of more recent wars. After losing her son, Peg Mullens loudly voiced her objection to the American presence in Vietnam (Mullens, 1995). Cindy Sheehan did the same after her son died in the U.S./Iraq war. Both mothers were publicly vilified. But, despite public condemnation, the evidence suggests that these and other mothers keep reappearing in wartime news; they refuse to go away (Slattery & Garner, 2007). It is our view that feminist and peace scholars should pay serious attention to these viewpoints when they appear because they speak to another truth and, as Mill (1992) observed:
.... when an opinion is true, it may be extinguished once, twice, or many times, but in the course of ages there will generally be found persons to rediscover it, until some one of its reappearances falls on a time when from favorable circumstances it escapes persecution until it has made such head as to withstand all subsequent attempts to suppress it... (p. 68).

Scholars and others who are interested in realizing the resource that motherhood offers in terms of peace politics should keep two things in mind. First, the cultural shift from the archetypal good mother to the archetypal patriotic mother during wartime is extremely subtle. More work must be done if we are to understand the nature of this dynamic. Only by understanding how this cultural shift occurs can we move closer to protecting against it when the shift is not appropriate for mothers, soldiers, or the democracy.

Second, peace activists who are interested in mobilizing mothers for peace rather than war, must engage mothers during peacetime. During wartime, the music, the poems, the press coverage and the propaganda make it extremely difficult for mothers to counter the prevailing forces that have been mobilized for conflict. Historical evidence reveals that those who have dared to challenge the wartime status quo have easily been typecast as unpatriotic, marginalized and/or punished.

We focused on World War I in this essay and the overwhelming propaganda force that was wrought on the mothers of soldiers. We note that it was highly effective, in part, because mothers at that time in U.S. history did not have a vote and had only a limited voice in the public sphere. Contemporary mothers are fully franchised citizens of the republic. Peace advocates can work with mothers to understand the nature of the pressures that they will face during wartime, and the means through which they can be fully engaged in the social, political, and economic decisions that go into a nation’s decision to enter a war, as both mother and citizen.

That work must be done before the bullets begin to fly.

References


Commencing the Rationale for War: George W. Bush’s Address at West Point, June 1, 2002

Steven R. Goldzwig*

On a gray day in June of 2002, President Bush delivered a pivotal commencement address at the U.S. Military Academy. The president employed this occasion to announce a new preemptive doctrine that would guide U.S. foreign policy and ultimately serve as a rationale for the Iraq War. In choosing to deliver a commencement address at one of the nation’s most venerable military academies, Bush found a perfect match for the rhetorical situation he faced and for the rhetorical situation he was trying to shape. The epideictic occasion was perfectly suited to Bush’s epideictic goals, which were central in establishing a moral framework for his new foreign policy doctrine. There was an eloquence to the speech and a high-mindedness that had the potential to serve the president and the nation well.

In the end, however, I maintain that this same epideictic discourse was neither enough to sustain a cogent and compelling rationale for war with Iraq nor, in the final analysis, able to confront or overcome some compelling factual evidence that would drain support for the president’s monumental efforts. To advance this argument, I will (1) provide a rhetorical and political context for the speech that will aid in the interpretation and analysis of the address; (2) discuss the nature of epideictic address and appropriate a unique reading of epideictic theory to its particularized enactment in the West Point commencement address; (3) interpret and account for the rhetorical themes and strategies contained within the address; and finally, (4) try to highlight some of the significant rhetorical and political implications of presidential epideictic address under the particularized circumstances of the post-9/11 era and an ongoing but increasingly unpopular war.

Approaching West Point: A Rhetorical and Political Context

Just three months after the September 11, 2001, (9/11) terrorist attacks on the United States, it was clear that the president was in the process of reorienting and retooling his entire military and foreign policy to conform with a changed global environment. In remarks at the Citadel on December 11, 2001, we glimpse the evolving rationale for a new doctrine of preemption. Bush argued that the new terrorist threat posed a significant challenge to the United States and the changed circumstances demanded nothing less than major reforms “essential to victory in our war against terror.” Indeed, for Bush, 9/11 shattered the national “illusion of immunity,” as a “far away evil” became a present danger. September 11 had refocused the mission of U.S. foreign policy. As Bush described it, “a great cause became clear: We will fight terror, and those who sponsor it, to save our children from a future of fear.” The

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strokes could not have been any higher: “The great threat to civilization is that a few evil men will multiply their murders and gain the means to kill on a scale equal to their hatred. We know they have this mad intent, and we’re determined to stop them. Our lives, our way of life, and our every hope for the world depend on a single commitment: The authors of mass murder must be defeated and never allowed to gain or use the weapons of mass destruction.”

Not only would the United States have to track down the terrorists, monitor their communications, seek to impede their funding, and, finally, uncover their “silent” cells and eliminate them, the president informed the nation that he was about to embark on an even more important task:

Above all, we’re acting to end the state sponsorship of terror. Rogue states are clearly the most likely sources of chemical and biological and nuclear weapons for terrorists. Every nation knows that we cannot accept—and we will not accept—states that harbor, finance, train, or equip the agents of terror. Those nations that violate this principle will be regarded as hostile regimes. They have been warned. They are being watched, and they will be held to account.

Bush pledged to “give our men and women in uniform every resource, every weapon, every tool they need to win the long battle that lies ahead.” Engaging in this battle required multiple strategic, diplomatic, and military reforms, including, among other activities, stepped-up efforts at nuclear nonproliferation, increasing U.S. biodefenses, improving missile defenses, and retooling our intelligence apparatus.1 According to William Kristol, “On December 11, the president . . . ushered the United States into a new era. In this new era, containment and deterrence will be supplemented by defense, regime change, and pre-emption, in order to deal with the overwhelming threat now facing us—terrorist-sponsoring regimes seeking to acquire weapons of mass destruction.”

As the notion of preemption began to take shape, it was posited as a new doctrine to help America win the war on terror, rid the world of dictators, and prevent rogue states from supporting terrorist activities. The president soon fixed his most rapt attention on “regime change” in Iraq. Influential political leaders at the time resurrected the Munich analogy to reinforce the view that the “gamble” was worth taking. As Richard Perle noted, “A preemptive strike against Hitler at the time of Munich would have meant an immediate war, as opposed to one that came later. Later was much worse.” Indeed, in Washington in 2002, the prevailing view was “that forcing ‘regime change’ on Iraq was our era’s grim historical necessity: starting a war would be bad, but waiting to have war brought to us would be worse.”

Not surprisingly, the rhetorical drumbeat for war quickened in 2002. President Bush’s January 29 State of the Union address was a rather telling example as the president warned against threatening shadows cast by North Korea, Iran, and Iraq, an “axis of evil” that threatened world peace: “By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. They could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States. In any of these cases, the price of indifference would be catastrophic.” The need for swift action was framed rhetorically as in the immediate interest of nation; inaction in the face of such grave circumstances was made to seem foolhardy.

Evoking memories of 9/11 and the heroism and virtues summoned by that particular tragedy, Bush appealed to a set of transcendent values as a baseline for encouraging concerted and vigilant efforts against terrorism: “In the sacrifice of soldiers, the fierce brotherhood of firefighters, and the bravery and generosity of ordinary citizens, we have glimpsed what a new culture of responsibility could look like. We want to be a nation that serves goals larger than self. We’ve been offered a unique opportunity, and we must not let this moment pass.” In drawing a rhetorical vision of a “new culture of responsibility,” Bush invited Americans to not only identify with his values, but to take up his cause. And while Bush’s 2002 State of the Union pleas may have been based on presumed shared values, the president’s prerogatives in this matter were uniquely and individually defined—posited as largely derivative of his office as Commander-in-Chief. “I will not wait on events, while dangers gather. I will not stand by as peril draws closer and closer.” Bush, adopting a familiar presidential persona, spoke as the super-representative of the nation: “The United States of America will not permit the world’s most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world’s most destructive weapons.”

This early invitation is but one of a number of rhetorical occasions in the first half of 2002 in which Bush sought to fortify and extend an emerging rationale for preemptive action. The president’s bellicose stand was increasingly viewed as univocal and unilateral; his implied solution to the present danger seemed to be pointing in one direction—swift action in the form of war. In these early rhetorical efforts, Bush provided little hint of preserving the old cold war doctrine of containment and the presumed need for international cooperation. At best, international help was destined to be redefined as a “coalition of the willing” rather than importuning a wide number of nations as allies in the cause.

While Bush’s rhetorical posturing was important to understanding the evolving context for the June 11 address, the speech must also be viewed against some rather significant political developments. In the three months preceding the address, a number of people argued that the administration’s focus on the “axis of evil,” which targeted rogue regimes, had displaced its attention from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The administration’s perceived aloofness was viewed as a gaffe that had precipitated a negative drift resulting in worsening relations in the Mideast and emboldened terrorist activities.

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In late March 2002, Israel suffered a series of terrorist attacks that provoked promised retaliation. On March 27, a Palestinian suicide bomber blew himself up in a crowded hotel dining room in Netanya, Israel, just as more than 200 people gathered for Passover holiday meal, killing at least 19 and wounding more than 100 others. Hamas took responsibility and Israel vowed a “swift response.” An Israeli government spokesman called the incident a “Passover massacre.” Authorities suggested that the peace mission of General Anthony C. Zinni, American mediator, had been severely undermined. President Bush called for an end to such “callous” terrorist acts; the Palestinian Authority condemned the attack, saying it was intended to undermine the Zinni mission and the Arab summit meeting, where Saudi Arabia’s peace plan was being discussed. Hamas officials rejected that plan.5

After two subsequent terrorist attacks, the Israeli government declared Yasir Arafat an “enemy” and sent in tanks and armored personnel carriers in an effort to isolate him in his Ramallah headquarters while simultaneously launching an “extended operation” in the Palestinian territories meant to root out the terrorist threat. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon indicated he was calling up 20,000 reserve soldiers to free regular forces for an operation that could last a long time. Arafat’s compound was subsequently ringed by tanks and armored personnel carriers and bulldozers breached a hole in the wall around the compound. Gun battles broke out between Israeli troops and Arafat’s guards. Nabil Aburdeineh, senior aide to Arafat, called on the United States to call off the Israelis and to isolate Sharon and his government.6

Bush’s influence over events in the West Bank seemed tenuous at best. At a minimum, the terrorist activities slowed down the peace process. Moreover, the unfolding events complicated the coherence of the emerging preemption doctrine. To maintain consistency, the president would not only have to ask Arafat to put an end to the suicide attacks, but also have to direct “swift action” against him. Since Bush was in need of Middle Eastern allies in the run-up to an increasingly likely war with Iraq, he could ill-afford to alienate more nations in the Arab world and remained reticent to take this additional step.

On March 29, the United States approved U.N. Security Council Resolution 1402 calling for a cease-fire in the region. On March 30, the president went before the press corps and announced that he had called several world leaders expressing his concern over the escalating violence in the Middle East. Walking a fine line, Bush lamented that Arafat “could do a lot more to prevent attacks” and cautioned that the Israeli government needed “to keep in mind the need that there’s got to be a peaceful solution at some point.” Bush also indicated that he had directed General Zinni to stay in the region in an effort to keep peace efforts alive.7

On April 1, the president was asked directly whether or not the Bush doctrine on terrorism applied to Mr. Arafat and why he refrained from labeling Arafat a “terrorist.” Bush

replied: “I’d like to see Chairman Arafat denounce the terrorist activities that are taking place, the constant attacks.” Another reporter, trying to get a coherent answer, asked pointedly: “What’s keeping you from labeling Chairman Arafat a terrorist?” Bush’s retorted meekly that Arafat “agreed to a peace process,” but this did not adequately answer the question, which pressed the president’s seeming doctrinal inconsistency.  

With his feeble policy in seeming disarray, politicos and pundits alike speculated that the president would up the ante—more so than at any time since 9/11—by initiating a more robust involvement in the peace process in the Middle East. This was confirmed April 4 when the president announced that he was sending Secretary of State Colin Powell to the Middle East. He called upon Arafat to help control terrorist activities and asked the Israelis to act in concert with the U.S.-sponsored plans, which called for a halt to settlement activities and withdrawal from the occupied territories. Bush proclaimed: “The world expects an immediate cease-fire, immediate resumption of security cooperation with Israel against terrorism. An immediate order to crack down on terrorist networks. I expect better leadership, and I expect results.” The irony of President Bush demanding better leadership in efforts to reduce violence in the Middle East did not escape his more vociferous international detractors who firmly believed Bush’s foreign policy had actually created the climate that led to the latest imbroglio.

Powell was given a tall order, including, among other items, securing the implementation of U.N. resolution 1402 fostering an end to the terror and violence, ensuring withdrawal of Israeli troops from Palestinian cities, including Ramallah, and implementing the U.S.-sponsored plans for peace. In his April 6 radio address, Bush indicated that “this could be a hopeful moment in the Middle East.” His tentativeness was marked by both a desire for future peace and the tempered realism of the present intransigent situation: “I believe the region could write a new story of democracy and development and trade and join the progress of our times. Yet, progress requires an atmosphere of peace, and peace requires acts of leadership, not acts of terror.” On April 8, Bush reiterated his demand that Israel’s Prime Minister Ariel Sharon direct Israeli forces to withdraw from the West Bank territories “without delay.” When Secretary Powell returned from his peace mission in Israel, the Israelis had not fully withdrawn from the West Bank towns and villages. Press accounts at the time noted the high likelihood of the failure of Powell’s mission and spoke ominously of a region of growing “turmoil” that was now “out of control.” Press accounts at the time portrayed the ongoing

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conflict in the Middle East as taking a sizable “toll” on the Bush administration’s erratic and effete foreign policy.\textsuperscript{12} On April 18, Powell tried to put a positive spin on his accomplishments: “We made clear to the leaders in the region that we want to move forward with negotiations as soon as possible, and we’re looking at different ways to do that once security has been established.” But when the president was pressed as to exactly what kind of progress had been achieved by his Secretary of State, he replied that “going to the region and convincing the parties that we’ll never get to peace if there’s violence” was itself a strong step. Bush said that laying out a “vision of hope” was “important,” as was “convinc[ing] others that these terrorist acts will forever and constantly undermine the capacity for peace.”\textsuperscript{13} Despite the diplomacy the violence refused to abate.

Along with increased diplomatic efforts in the Mideast, Bush traveled to Russia and Europe in the latter part of May 2002 in an attempt to underline and enhance bilateral relations with Russia, Germany, France, and Italy. Moreover, the president sought to strengthen the NATO alliance as a bulwark against global terrorism. This trip, an effort to shore up frayed relations and marshal cooperation and support for the war on terror, also presaged a plea for assistance in what increasingly looked like an upcoming U.S.-led war against Iraq.

Bush attempted to reassure the European allies regarding Russia. No longer portraying Russia as an “evil empire,” and intent upon defining a new post-cold war era where cooperation would replace competition in U.S.-Russian relations, the president remarked:

> The United States and Russia are rid of the last vestiges of cold war confrontation. . . . President Putin and I are about to sign the most dramatic nuclear arms reduction in history. Both the United States and Russia will reduce our nuclear arsenals by about two-thirds, to the lowest level in decades. Old arms agreements sought to manage hostility and maintain a balance of terror. This new agreement recognizes that Russia and the West are no longer enemies.\textsuperscript{14}

This depiction of a changed set of circumstances also would play well later on when Bush invited Putin to be a partner in the war on terror. Bush also argued that NATO played a vital role in helping win the global war on terror: “There can be no lasting security in a world at the


mercy of terrorists – for my nation or any nation. Given this threat, NATO’s defining purpose, our collective defense, is as urgent as ever. America and Europe need each other to fight and win the war against global terror.”

In a news conference preceding his trip abroad, Bush tried to join “common values” and “common cause” as a centerpiece for improving relationships and fostering joint initiatives with Russia and Europe. Although his phrasing certainly left something to be desired, the president’s intent could still be gleaned from a rather ironic misstatement: “I mean, listen, fighting for terror is a common cause that is a powerful force that unites us.”

In addition to touting his diplomatic success in arms reduction negotiations with the Russians, Bush pledged that Russia also would be a staunch partner in the “war on terror”: “We’ve also signed a joint declaration of new strategic relationship that charts a course toward greater security, political and economic cooperation between Russia and the United States. Our nations will continue to cooperate closely in the war against global terror.” The president also commented on upcoming discussions in Rome on a new NATO-Russia Council, declaring confidently, “For decades, Russia and NATO were adversaries. Those days are gone and that’s good.” Other pledges were made to work together on regional challenges and economic cooperation.

Delivering the good news of cooperation with a long-time adversary was also targeted persuasively as a sign that the United States could work productively with its European allies, as well.

In sum, as the June 1 address at West Point approached, the president was making a case for war as well as a case for peace. In his view, the two were inextricably linked. While Saddam Hussein had become a primary U.S. target in the war on terror, Bush had hoped to demonstrate that he could gain the cooperation of his European and Russian allies. The clear implication was that friends could demonstrate compliance by sharing U.S. values and goals and “enemies” simply comprised all those who veered off in a direction different from or even hostile to the president’s desires.

15 Ibid.
A Particular Reading of Epideictic Theory

In rhetorically framing the June 1, 2002, commencement address, we are reminded that elements of remembrance, legitimation, and celebration attend most epideictic occasions. The rhetorical performance enacted in an epideictic form such as an inaugural address, eulogy, or commencement address is anything but an empty gesture because it formally enacts “a discourse of power,” which “guide[s] and constrain[s] consciousness” and provides “sources of legitimation.” Christine Oravec notes that epideictic address can be pivotal in that “[t]he praiseworthy object, if represented with accuracy, may become a standard for action [emphasis added].” In epideictic, then, we encounter a rather formidable form that lends a president powerful persuasive influence.

In employing epideictic address, the president often serves as Educator-in-Chief; among his principal duties is to impart requisite values. The president’s epideictic performance is apt to be perceived by audiences as a ritual enactment of presidential duty. The presumption is that the president will remain true to form and execute his responsibilities with the care and devotion called for by the rhetorical situation. The mere act of performance, in this instance, legitimates the president and the presidency as an active force in shaping symbolically national attitudes. Ideally, epideictic performances help presidents reinforce the authority conferred by the office to help solidify the larger institutional legitimacy necessary for effective governance. The president’s ability to shape the national consciousness is a direct result of audience’s complicity with his perceived role. In acknowledging the role the president plays here, there is also an implicit acknowledgment of presidential power. For example, as Commander-in-Chief, the president’s authority to craft and impart a message praising the nation’s fallen heroes goes largely unquestioned. The president’s particular enactment not only carves out a particular occasion but endows it with a moral presence—a presence that over time can constitute an evolving but generally implied stable moral universe.

Interestingly, Beale argues that epideictic discourse “does not merely say, argue, or allege something about the world of social action” but “constitutes (in some special way defined by the conventions or customs of the community) a significant social action in itself.” Thus, epideictic address is perhaps best judged on whether or not the speech performs an appropriate or valuable social function rather than on the truth value of its claims. In essence, the epideictic form has often been viewed as one that creates social truths rather than merely

21 As Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca observe: “In epideictic oratory, the speaker turns educator. . . .He is, so to speak, the educator of his audience, and if it is necessary that he should enjoy a certain prestige before he speaks, it is to enable him, through his own authority, to promote the values that he is upholding . . . .Epideictic speeches [are] appeals to common values, undisputed though not formulated, made by one who is qualified to do so, with the consequent strengthening of adherence to those values with a view to later action. Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation. Trans. John Wilkinson and Purcell Weaver (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), 51-53.
reporting on them. Epideictic rhetoric, then, enacts present values that are presumed to be goods in themselves, requiring little justification. Traditionally, then, proof is not usually associated with epideictic public address. In the main, epideictic discourse has been characterized by its penchant for display, i.e., its performance as demonstration rather than reliance upon probative evidence. For a president, epideictic rhetoric is often critical in preparing the ground for deliberative action. The values adumbrated are crucial to public predispositions that can help sanction future policy.

I suggest that a commencement address as an epideictic form, delivered at one of the nation’s most venerable military academies, provides an almost perfect place and occasion for a presidential attempt to legitimate authority and appeal to a common, sacrosanct political-cultural script of power and permanence in sustaining American cultural and political memory. Commencement addresses shape public memory and ground our attitudes about the future, including public policy. Presidential commencement addresses delivered at our great educational institutions whose mission is to instruct and train the military seem to deserve special attention because they are rhetorical artifacts that can be useful in an interpretation that speaks to epideictic rhetoric’s role in the evocation and maintenance of power and authority, and in negotiating legitimation processes that can authorize attitudes and predispositions toward war. In fact, decisions to go to war and declarations of war themselves have always relied on some measure of epideictic public address.

One particularly instructive lens for interpreting the nature and function of epideictic in this instance can be derived from Michael Madden’s research on Ronald Reagan’s funeral addresses commemorating the Vietnam War. Madden argues that presidential funeral orations, as forms of epideictic address, (1) legitimate political authority and national sacrifice; (2) influence popular reception of cultural history; (3) mobilize popular loyalties and nationalist sentiments; and finally, (4) tend to manipulate, coerce, and deceive the American public. \(^{23}\) Importantly, the sum total of these influences is to “subvert the public’s capacity for effective dissent.” In brief, “epideictic address is a suitable vehicle for containing public resistance to the violence and brutality of war.”\(^{24}\) In Reagan’s case in particular, Madden encountered a leader who “while ostensibly highlighting the martial valor of Vietnam veterans [through] the presidential funeral address operates largely to recover a sense of public faith in the American tradition of just war.”\(^{25}\) As Madden makes clear, commemorative addresses memorializing the war dead and their sacrifice may also be occasions for legitimizing the state and inducing “sentiments supporting future armed conflict.”\(^{26}\)

Furthermore, to wrap oneself up in the power and paraphernalia of a modern nation-state as represented in and by the most powerful military apparatus in the world is to summon

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\(^{25}\) Madden, “A Covenant with Death,” 3.

\(^{26}\) Madden, “A Covenant with Death,” 4.
a silent juggernaut of credibility as a backdrop for one’s words and a veritable fortress as an explanation for one’s proposed deeds. This is not to say that such enactments are risk free. Banners emblazoned with “Mission Accomplished” can create haunting images indeed if perceptions change and the mission seems to have unraveled. But in the moment of enactment, there is potent force displayed and the epideictic form leaves very little opportunity for dissent.

Madden, relying on John Lucaites’s articulations of the substantive and regulative functions of ideographs as keys to presidential epideictic address, explains that presidents display substantive ideological commitments when articulating what are widely viewed as the proper charges of government—securing “safety” and “happiness.” Not surprisingly, these two ideological commitments may conflict with one another and create tensions. When a president calls for “national sacrifice,” he often is interested in preserving national security over individual liberties, which presumably lead to “happiness.” What helps to regulate the choice for national sacrifice over happiness are the regulative functions associated with the nature of a just war and our commitment to the rule of law. Terms such as “duty,” “honor,” and “country” are “lower order” ideographs that help to structure audience predispositions toward assent to the need for national sacrifice. As Madden makes clear:

Such ideographs are not to be considered a rhetoric of war, but rather constitute a rhetoric of moral righteousness used to justify war. They serve to legitimate the state’s authority to call for national sacrifice by positioning the experiences of war within a tradition of uncritical “faith” in the American credo of war. In short, such a rhetoric embedded within the epideictic vehicle is culturally deterministic, at once concealing the “doubt” incurred in war and perpetuating an illusion of America’s “just wars” for Liberty and its pledges to God.

It is not surprising that when calling for national sacrifice, presidents would privilege ideographs such as “safety” over individual “happiness.” What is interesting, however, is the extent to which George W. Bush has relied on this tactic. President Bush has employed epideictic address extensively post-9/11 and throughout the duration of the Iraq war.

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Epideictic address lends the president a powerful invention resource—the power to define. For President Bush, the power to define means that, in John Murphy’s words, “the world is, as it ever was, divided between good and evil. People of character oppose evil. Policy is justified not by expediency arguments, but by metaphysical ends—by character and faith.” Thus, Bush’s epideictic address “creates a kind of hermetically sealed system in which the world is as its, people are as they are, and real Americans act accordingly.” Furthermore, and “equally important,” in Bush’s epideictic rhetoric, “public judgments are rendered through the prism of honor or dishonor.”

Depending on the rhetorical situation at hand, the dialectical relationship between epideictic and deliberative address in various presidential iterations has taken on different relational forms. I argue that regardless of its various manifestations and relationships, epideictic address—as a form of cultural, social, and political influence—gains added intensity and power when it is delivered by a president on an epideictic occasion at a military institution. I will treat President Bush’s commencement address at West Point as a politico-cultural epideictic rhetorical artifact that opens up the inner workings of the nation-state and, in this instance, provides us with a particularly unique opportunity to analyze and apprehend the justificatory rhetorical strategies that prepare a nation for war. At West Point, we encounter President Bush “commencing the rationale for war.” In what follows, then, I analyze and evaluate a unique form of epideictic discourse management—one specifically premised upon the need to justify war through the rhetoric of moral righteousness.

**Bush at West Point**

Besides handling the requirements of the occasion, i.e., honoring and congratulating the cadets at their graduation and encouraging their successful future activities as military officers, a close reading of the speech text reveals that President Bush pressed three major rhetorical aims in response to the complex rhetorical context described earlier. First, he sought to recommit the United States and his administration to the fight against global terrorism. Second, he was intent upon employing his speech for developing a rationale and establishing the need to justify war through the rhetoric of moral righteousness.

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30 Murphy, “Our Mission and Our Moment,” 626.

31 The flexibility and elasticity of the epideictic form has been well-demonstrated in previous rhetorical studies. For example, Dow has made the case that Ronald Reagan employed both epideictic and deliberative discourse in an effort to address foreign policy crises during his administration. Dow argues that there are two types of crisis rhetoric, those that fulfill the need for communal understanding (i.e., epideictic functions) and those that fulfill the need for policy approval (i.e., deliberative functions). See Bonnie J. Dow, “The Function of Epideictic and Deliberative Strategies in Presidential Crisis Rhetoric,” *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 53 (1989): 294-310. Murphy has made a strong case that both epideictic and deliberative address can also be used in mounting dissent against armed conflict. Murphy notes, “epideictic rhetoric is concerned with issues of honor and dishonor; all other concerns fade before this key issue” (pp. 67-68). Furthermore, Murphy explains: “While the function of war rhetoric is primarily deliberative—that is, justifying a change in policy from peace to war—epideictic appeals are also used to establish the honor of the decision to go to war” (p. 67). See John M. Murphy, “Epideictic and Deliberative Strategies in Opposition to War: The Paradox of Honor and Expediency,” *Communication Studies* 43 (1992): 65-78.
groundwork for a new foreign policy of preemption—the goal of which was to authorize a war with Iraq as a pivotal step in the prosecution of the war on terror. Third, having recently returned from trips to Europe and Russia, Bush wanted to signal that he was still intent on strengthening relations between the United States and Russia and our European allies, as well as impress upon the world community that he was not only seeking cooperation in his quest for regime change in Iraq, but remained vitally interested in traditional U.S.-sponsored cooperative ventures aimed at advancing human rights, human dignity, and the economic opportunity that he believed often accompanied democratic development. Interestingly, to realize these goals, Bush had to provide justifications for going to war while simultaneously offering measures for continuing the peace. For Bush, this required outlining and justifying a sweeping in change in the direction and substance of long regnant U.S. foreign policy. The graduation speech at West Point provided a perfect opportunity and occasion for such a complex task.32

**Epideictic Stirrings.** In Bush’s view, the military plays an indispensable and primary role in the development and execution of the new doctrine of preemption. Indeed, the military is described as necessary to prosecute the doctrine and thus pivotal to winning the war against terrorism. Bush pays due respect to the cadets by associating them with the “Long Gray Line” of warrior officers who have served as their heroic predecessors: “You walk in the tradition of Eisenhower and MacArthur, Patton and Bradley—the commanders who saved a civilization. And you walk in the tradition of second lieutenants who did the same, by fighting and dying on distant battlefields.” The president lauds the cadets’ “creativity and courage” while linking their future service to a vaunted history and tradition of American sacrifice in warfare:

Every West Point class is commissioned to the Armed Forces. Some West Point classes are also commissioned by history, to take part in a great new calling for their country. Speaking here to the class of 1942—six months after Pearl Harbor—General Marshall said, “We’re determined that before the sun sets on this terrible struggle, our flag will be recognized throughout the world as a symbol of freedom on the one hand, and of overwhelming power on the other.”

[Bush continues:]

Officers graduating that year helped fulfill that mission, defeating Japan and Germany, and then reconstructing those nations as allies. West Point graduates of the 1940s saw the rise of a deadly new challenge—the challenge of imperial communism—and opposed it from Korea to Berlin, to Vietnam, and in the Cold War, from beginning to end. And as the sun set on their struggle, many of those West Point officers lived to see a world transformed.

Such a narrative provides very little differentiation between World War II and subsequent wars like Korea and Vietnam. The particulars of each of these operations are flattened for the epideictic occasion; each is depicted as resulting in wholly positive outcomes

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and each is argued to have resulted in a “world transformed.” The particular facts that
differentiate these engagements and their differing outcomes are scrupulously avoided. Bush’s
historical narrative links this newest cadre of West Point graduates to a similar glorious destiny
as they begin the long, arduous task of taking up their mission and their watch under the
present Commander-in-Chief: “History has also issued its call to your generation. In your last
year, America was attacked by a ruthless and resourceful enemy. You graduate from this
Academy in a time of war, taking your place in an American military that is powerful and is
honorable.” The West Point code—duty, honor, country—is invoked here and the earlier
linkage to others who have served in the vaunted tradition of the “Long Gray Line” gives those
present a reason to be proud and a mandate to walk tall. Any deviation in this charge would
presumably bring dishonor. At West Point, Bush finds ample occasion to advance touchstone
epideictic claims of the American experience.33

President Bush provides encouragement for the dangerous tasks ahead by expressing
his pride in those who have already served under his command. His entreaty also further
establishes and legitimates his credentials as commander-in-chief. The president presents
himself as the symbolic super-representative of a grateful nation: “I am proud of the men and
women who have fought on my orders. America is profoundly grateful for all who serve the
cause of freedom, and for all who have given their lives in its defense. This nation respects and
trusts our military, and we are confident in your victories to come.” Bush’s prediction of more
“victories to come” certainly implies he is contemplating entering a new war zone.
Furthermore, Bush takes the opportunity to provide a rationale for why another war on
another front may be necessary:

Wherever we carry it, the American flag will stand not only for our power, but
for freedom. Our nation’s cause has always been larger than our nation’s
defense. We fight, as we always fight, for a just peace—a peace that favors
human liberty. We will defend the peace against threats from terrorists and
tyants. We will preserve the peace by building good relations among the great
powers. And we will extend the peace by encouraging free and open societies on
every continent.

This excerpt not only provides a mini-summary of the goals of the president’s address, but also
appeals to his immediate audience and their sacred values. Engagement in war is characterized
as a sacred quest for “freedom” and an effort to exact a “just peace.” War is posited as
necessary in confronting “terrorists and tyrants,” not just to defend U.S. interests, but “free and
open societies” everywhere. Furthermore, the cadets are challenged to participate in Bush’s
overarching vision: “Building this just peace is America’s opportunity, and America’s duty. From
this day forward, it is your challenge, as well, and we will meet this challenge together.” These

33 Perhaps the most famous instantiation and reminder of the West Point code is memorialized in General Douglas
MacArthur’s Thayer Award Acceptance Address “Duty, Honor, Country,” delivered May 12, 1962, at West Point.
See Douglas MacArthur, Thayer Award Address Delivered May 12, 1962, West Point, NY. Transcription by Michael
E. Eidenmuller. Available online at http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/
regulative ideographs are critical to the president’s appeals. In substantive ideographic terms, “war” equals “peace.”

Bush also makes the case for American exceptionalism and righteousness: “You will wear the uniform of a great and unique country. America has no empire to extend or utopia to establish. We wish for others only what we wish for ourselves—safety from violence, the rewards of liberty, and the hope for a better life.” In taking up this challenge, the cadets are assured that America’s goals are noble and expansive: “safety,” “liberty,” and simple quest for a “better life.” The iconic ideographs rehearsed here are crucial to the epideictic occasion and reinforce the mission Bush articulates. The values adumbrated also prepare the ground for the introduction of a new doctrine of preemption.

**Arguing for Preemption.** The urgency of the new mission for the new graduates is made starkly apparent by a description of the emergence of an unprecedented enemy in unprecedented times. The president defines this new enemy and tells the cadets that the fearsome threat they pose must be thwarted:

The gravest danger to freedom lies at the perilous crossroads of radicalism and technology. When the spread of chemical and biological and nuclear weapons, along with ballistic missile technology—when that occurs, even weak states and small groups could attain a catastrophic power to strike great nations. Our enemies have declared this very intention, and have been caught seeking these terrible weapons. They want the capability to blackmail us, or to harm us, or to harm our friends—and we will oppose them with all our power.

The peril described here becomes a key rationale for preemption and this excerpt was later quoted verbatim in the United States National Security Strategy of 2002.

Opposing one’s enemies in the 21st century also requires a change in strategy, one that overturns the cold war doctrine of the past: “New threats also require new thinking. Deterrence—the promise of massive retaliation against nations—means nothing against shadowy terrorist networks with no nation or citizens to defend. Containment is not possible when unbalanced dictators with weapons of mass destruction can deliver those weapons on

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34 For a substantive book-length analysis of how the rhetorical drumbeat for “war” is argumentatively positioned as the best path to “peace” and how those opposing war are labeled as “traitors” or “unpatriotic,” see Robert L. Ivie, *Dissent from War* (Bloomfield, Conn: Kumerian Press, Inc., 2007). For an important and timely essay on the rhetorical processes shaping the impulse for war in a democracy, see Robert L. Ivie and Oscar Giner, “Hunting the Devil: Democracy’s Rhetorical Impulse to War,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 34 (2007): 580-98.

35 “The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, September 2002.” Available online at http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf. Accessed May 12, 2007. Three significant passages from the West Point Address appear as primers for the NSS document. Section 1 leads with this passage: “Our Nation’s cause has always been larger than our Nation’s defense. We fight, as we always fight, for a just peace—a peace that favors liberty. We will defend the peace against the threats from terrorists and tyrants. We will preserve the peace by building good relations among the great powers. And we will extend the peace by encouraging free and open societies on every continent” (p. 1); Section 2 leads with this banner: “Some worry that it is somehow undiplomatic or impolite to speak the language of right and wrong. I disagree. Different circumstances require different methods, but not different moralities” (p. 3). Finally, Section 5 is highlighted with the excerpt utilized here (see p. 13).
missiles or secretly provide them to terrorist allies.” Having provided the principle rationale for the change in doctrine, the president assures the cadets that the best course of action is to preempt those who would employ weapons of mass destruction or provide them to others: “We cannot defend America and our friends by hoping for the best. We cannot put our faith in the word of tyrants, who solemnly sign non-proliferation treaties, and then systemically break them. If we wait for threats to fully materialize, we will have waited too long.” Thus, despite all U.S. efforts on homeland security and missile defense systems, Bush argues that the only “real safety” lies in preemption: “The war on terror will not be won on the defensive. We must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans, and confront the worst threats before they emerge. In the world we have entered, the only path to safety is the path of action. And this nation will act.” This bellicose statement veers American foreign policy away from traditional forms of negotiation, cooperation, and diplomacy and turns sharply from traditional cold war doctrines of deterrence and containment toward an unprecedented call for unilateral action against a newly defined and nefarious enemy, “terrorists and those who harbor them,” wherever they may be.

The new doctrine is introduced as the key to the safety and security of the United States in the post-9/11 environment. In the following portion of the address, security is privileged over any other competing value or concern and the president puts all of the citizens of the United States on notice that they too must stand the watch for America or risk ruin:

Our security will require all Americans to be forward-looking and resolute, to be ready for preemptive action when necessary to defend our liberty and to defend our lives. All nations that decide for aggression and terror will pay a price. We will not leave the safety of America and the peace of the planet at the mercy of a few mad terrorists and tyrants. We will lift this dark threat from our country and from the world.

The cadets, like all Americans, become part of the rhetorical “we.” This tough talk instills confidence and its certainty leaves little room for negotiation. We do not normally seek diplomacy with “mad terrorists and tyrants” and the removal of a “dark threat” seems less than amenable to another round of mere peace talks. The statement sweeps us all into the path of war.

The President as Arbiter of Moral Truth. The president also legitimates the new preemptive doctrine by reserving his right to serve as arbiter of moral truth in the world. Bush argued that the U.S. had the right and the duty to interpret and act on that truth by pursuing a “firm moral purpose.” The president advanced the policy of U.S. intervention through preemptive action by informing the cadets and the nation at large that America was uniquely equipped to identify evil, confront it, and remove it: “Moral truth is the same in every culture, in every time, and in every place. . . . We are in a conflict between good and evil, and America will call evil by its name. By confronting evil and lawless regimes, we do not create a problem, we reveal a problem. And we will lead the world in opposing it.” If this breathtaking language had been employed in a purely context-free, hermetically sealed deliberative setting, its moral and political certitude might have seemed even more shocking, if not arrogantly inappropriate. In the wake of 9/11, however, and as a rationale for going to war on an epideictic occasion, this
Manichaean depiction seems like a stroke of bold leadership and an efficient and effective way to go to the heart of a serious and intractable problem. The new doctrine provides a high-order mission in a time of maximum threat and the language used to convey it seems to contribute powerfully to its perceived legitimacy.

“Defend[ing] the Peace that Makes All Progress Possible.” Since the president was having a hard time convincing Russia and our European allies of the wisdom of his Mideast policy, much less joining him in an attempt at regime change in Iraq, he spent a little less than the latter third of the commencement address trying to assuage these parties as well as other members in the international community. The president made it clear that his new doctrine also included a vision of world comity: “Competition between great nations is inevitable, but armed conflict in our world is not. More and more, civilized nations find ourselves on the same side—united by common dangers of terrorist violence and chaos. America has, and intends to keep, military strengths beyond challenge—thereby, making the destabilizing arms races of other eras pointless, and limiting rivalries to trade and other pursuits of peace.” Bush argued that common values require common cause: “Today the great powers are also increasingly united by common values, instead of divided by conflicting ideologies. The United States, Japan and our Pacific friends, and now all of Europe, share a deep commitment to human freedom, embodied in strong alliances such as NATO. And the tide of liberty is rising in many other nations.” Indeed, the president was positively ebullient about the rising tide: “Today, from the Middle East to South Asia, we are gathering broad international coalitions to increase the pressure for peace. We must build strong and great power relations when times are good; to help manage crisis when times are bad. America needs partners to preserve the peace, and we will work with every nation that shares this noble goal.”

The president indicated that his efforts at cooperation were aimed at social and economic progress and that his vision for development was based upon timeless principles that would ensure “hope of a better day”: “The 20th century ended with a single surviving model of human progress, based on non-negotiable demands of human dignity, the rule of law, limits on the power of the state, respect for women and private property and free speech and equal justice and religious tolerance. America cannot impose this vision—yet we can support and reward governments that make the right choices for their own people.” Moreover, Bush sought to assure the international audience that those states that make “the right choices” will find a trusted ally in the United States: “In our development aid, in our diplomatic efforts, in our international broadcasting, and in our educational assistance, the United States will promote moderation and tolerance and human rights. And we will defend the peace that makes all progress possible.”

Bush casts national aspirations to democracy and freedom as universal and unassailable: “When it comes to the common rights and needs of men and women, there is no clash of civilizations. The requirements of freedom apply fully to Africa and Latin America and the entire Islamic world. The peoples of the Islamic nations want and deserve the same freedoms and opportunities as people in every nation. And their governments should listen to their hopes.” While the words are noble, they give no indication of attempts to differentiate between the varying notions of freedom that may stem from different lands, cultures, and belief systems. In sum, Bush offers an ideological vision of democracy as an emotionally charged “one size fits all” proposition.
In his peroration, Bush reconnects the nobility of the U.S. mission to the role of the West Point graduates, who, as the president explains, not only serve as the first line of defense in freedom’s cause in for the nation, but also globally:

The bicentennial class of West Point now enters this drama. With all in the United States Army, you will stand between your fellow citizens and grave danger. You will help establish a peace that allows millions around the world to live in liberty and to grow in prosperity. You will face times of calm, and times of crisis. And every test will find you prepared—because you’re the men and women of West Point. You leave here marked by the character of this Academy, carrying with you the highest ideals of our nation.

The only appropriate conclusion in interpreting this narrative is one that acknowledges and accedes to a preemptive doctrine as a moral duty and a global mission.

Finally, Bush praises the West Point cadets by again pointing to their revered motto—Duty-Honor-Country—and summoning these newly-minted officers to uphold the highest ideals of their long tradition: “Today, your last day at West Point, you begin a life of service in a career unlike any other. You’ve answered a calling to hardship and purpose, to risk and honor. . . . May you always bring to that duty the high standards of this great American institution. May you always be worthy of the long gray line that stretches two centuries behind you.” With that final salute, President Bush had just proclaimed a new vision of American foreign policy in the age of global terrorism. In the words of Yale historian John Lewis Gaddis, the president had introduced “the most sweeping redesign of U.S. grand strategy since the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt.”

36 Gaddis notes that Cold War planning included developing scenarios for actual “hot wars.” That planning included distinctions between pre-emption and prevention. At that time, “preemption” meant taking military action against a state that was about to launch an attack; international law and practice had long allowed such actions to forestall clear and immediately present dangers. “Prevention” meant starting a war against a state that might, at some future point, pose such risks. In mounting its post-September 11 offensive, the Bush administration conflated these terms, using the word “preemption” to justify what turned out to be a “preventive” war against Saddam Hussein’s Iraq.” See John Lewis Gaddis, “Grand Strategy in the Second Term.” Foreign Affairs 84 (January-February 2005). Available online at http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?id=845825731&sid=4&Fmt=3 &clientid=55898&RQT=309&VName=PQD. This has produced some unnecessary confusion regarding the moral as well as practical differences between “preemptive” and “preventative” war. What the Bush administration has called “preemptive” is actually “preventative” war as understood by Just War theorists. The former refers to situations such as when the missiles have been fired at you and you respond by destroying them or otherwise attacking “the enemy.” Preventative war allows for a prediction of a future danger, as in: “They are developing WMDs that will threaten us down the road.” The slide of U.S. foreign policy toward the latter posture while invoking the former term is both dangerous and confusing because the distinction between these two types of “justified” war has become entirely obscured in public discourse. For an excellent treatment of the preemption doctrine and relevant distinctions and ramifications see William W. Keller and Gordon R. Mitchell, eds., Hitting First: Preventive Force in U.S. Security Strategy (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006).
Rhetorical and Political Implications

At a minimum, the president had announced a controversial new foreign policy with ominous implications. New York Times reporter Elisabeth Bumiller described the West Point commencement address as both “a toughly-worded speech that seemed aimed at preparing Americans for a potential war with Iraq” and “a forceful distillation and refinement of the war themes of the Bush presidency since Sept. 11." But there is something more involved in this address than its bellicosity.

Like presidential funerary addresses described earlier by Madden, this particular presidential commencement address seems capable of trivializing the horrors of war, closing off the possibilities of effective opposition to militaristic solutions. Such discourse practices may obscure the difference between justifying war in terms of sacred ideographs (peace and liberty) and glorifying public faith in the American credo of war at a particular moment of national celebration [e.g., a graduation speech]. By collapsing this distinction, the epideictic creates the discursive possibilities for an uncritical celebration of war.

To engage in war on behalf of the state becomes both a duty and a badge of honor. By being discursively framed as pursuing just ends, such as liberty and justice and democracy over autocracy, dictatorship, and tyranny, war is revealed to be a just means to accomplish a noble end. However, the particular war and the particular situation at the time will often calibrate this judgment. Thus, when people begin to examine closely the reasons for going to war, the strategies, and the outcomes, and when each is found wanting, our evaluations can change. Support can turn into disagreement, and disagreement can turn into disdain. The result is a nation divided as it experiences increasing calls to cease and desist. Those who vote for war can come to regret it.

In Bush’s case, the epideictic discursive formation is intended to give people a sense of communal purpose and meaning in contemplating engaging Iraq in war. To bring “democracy” to Iraq, we must engage in war, root out the tyrant, and restore liberty. Shooting our way in to bring out democracy in a country or a region has never been entirely anathema to the American political rhetorical script or culture. What is ultimately authorized here is a “military” view of the world. The men and women in uniform represent our last best hope. They are called upon only when all other options have failed, when diplomacy has curdled, negotiations have stalled, and the good-faith efforts of many parties have come to an ignominious end. The heroic efforts of the men and women in uniform are legitimated by the monumental failure of talk and the need for arms, which is usually posited as a last-ditch attempt to restore order and establish the peace. When all human comity has been torn asunder, the honorable thing to do is to take up arms. Dishonor is often the place reserved for those who refuse the call to battle.

38 Madden, “A Covenant with Death,” 164-165.
No one at West Point on June 1, 2002, would be among that group and it was therefore a perfect place and a perfect occasion for delivering a call to war. After all, even in the larger culture, those who dissent over the reasons for going to war, denigrate its “progress,” or remain skeptical of the fruits of its outcome are often relegated to the shadows of suspicion in that ignoble darkness where inaction seems traitorous and cowardice seems to lurk just behind every “negative” argument and assessment. Bush has a penchant for selecting sites and delivering speeches to audiences that rarely accommodate his opponents. West Point was a perfect place for a president who has opted time and time again for the epideictic form of address. Such a choice, of course, helps keep one in a hermetically sealed environment that ensures that the values trumpeted will rarely be upset by a reality check, at least not without great prodding.

The epideictic discourse featured here can now be reviewed and recast with the benefit of hindsight. The president’s narrative has implications for our notions of war rhetoric, the mythic structure of the nation’s war credo, our own democratic impulses, the president’s preemption doctrine, and ultimately the president’s ability to lead and the nation’s ability to retain its national ethos.

**The Rhetoric of War.** President Bush utilized an epideictic occasion to launch a major foreign policy initiative intended to justify war with Iraq. Campbell and Jamieson, using the United States War Powers Act of 1973 as their model, define war rhetoric as a genre of discourse “justifying the introduction of the United States Armed Forces into hostilities, or into situations where imminent involvement in hostilities is clearly indicated by circumstances, and to the continued use of such force in hostilities or in such situations.” Campbell and Jamieson argue that in their rhetorical justifications of war, “presidents attempt to prove that military action is or was the only appropriate response to a clear unavoidable, and fundamental threat. However, although the events that precipitate the intervention are concrete and time-bound, the values being defended are timeless and enduring.” These authors point to a style of discourse that is both urgent and plaintive: “The tone is exhortative, calling on Congress and the citizenry to put aside dissent and unite in committing themselves to protect fundamental values through combat. It is a rhetoric of immediacy, calling for action now.” For Campbell and Jamieson, the key to rhetorical attempts to justify war is for the president to mount “a narrative detailing the events that constitute the threat and showing that military intervention has become a last resort. In such a rhetoric, presidents ask the audience—Congress and the public—to empower them to act as commander in chief leading a crusade to preserve the nation and civilization itself.”

Many of these components have manifested themselves in the Bush administration’s various attempts to justify the war in Iraq. Reviewing these characteristics in light of the introduction of the preemption doctrine at West Point reveals that Bush’s discourse also displays most of the characteristics outlined above. One major exception is Bush’s introduction of the preemption doctrine. For the president, the argument justifying the use of force is not so much an appeal to war as a “last resort” as it is characterized as a necessary “first resort” due


40 Campbell and Jamieson, *Deeds Done in Words*, 122.
to the changed post-9/11 environment and the ominous threat posed by and circumstances associated with global terrorism. I believe that Bush’s use of the justificatory epideictic form on June 1 provided an opportune occasion and a well-honed venue that allowed him the luxury of bypassing the traditional “last resort” argument. This is significant. If future presidents continue this line of discourse (and the policy it enumerates), they will be changing the face of war rhetoric as well as the criteria rhetoricians have traditionally used to analyze it.

**The American War Credo.** The American war credo is difficult to supplant because its mythic cultural authority is powerful. Its historical referents are compelling and the values proffered are comforting. In particular, the credo provides a simple and seemingly unimpeachable explanation for war and it makes the loss of life and casualties that inevitably accompany war meaningful, if not redemptive, through its appeal to heroic sacrifice on behalf of a just cause.

The American war credo only becomes diminished when there is doubt, but the acceptable evidence that produces doubt is often hard to come by. If encountered, it is often ignored or disbelieved. Duty, honor, and country are powerful epideictic ideographs and they, along with the starry-eyed goal of “spreading democracy,” argue powerfully for citizens to “stay the course.” How can Americans “cut and run” from their most precious values? If the counter-evidence that speaks against the creed cannot be ignored, then it is often relegated to the back pages of our news media and our collective consciousness. But if in time this evidence cannot be relegated to the back pages and begins to draw attention and slowly but inevitably takes hold of a populace, it can be devastating to a war president.

For George W. Bush, who seemingly has tethered his whole presidency and its implied legacy on the outcome of the war in Iraq, this was quite a gamble. The president’s credibility gap widened as the discomfiting facts slowly seeped in; in time, he began to seem more and more unqualified to represent and defend the American war credo. Our moral leadership was being questioned not only by the world, but by ordinary Americans who began to see the American war credo break down before their very eyes. The stark facts were intruding at breakneck speed and compellingly hard and difficult to overcome. The actions, the dissembling, and the weak explanations slowly and painfully created a disquietude that helped break our covenantal bonds of trust. Indeed, the arguments Bush employed in favor of the Iraq war such as connecting Saddam to the atrocities of 9/11; misleading statements on Iraqi nuclear, chemical, and biological capacities; and the ability to deliver those WMDs to the U.S. homeland all rang hollow as additional contravening evidence mounted.

The U.S. war credo was also unraveling as U.S. citizens began to hold a mirror up to the conduct of the “war on terror” and were horrified to find an alien image. The failure of leadership that seemed to accompany this war was made more horrific by the haunting images Americans encountered in the Abu Ghraib coverage. Our self-image as defenders of freedom was belied by the photos of U.S.-inspired-and-led torture. Our shared values of freedom of religion seemed tarnished in the stories of the destruction of the Quran and assorted attempts to humiliate Muslims by engaging in acts counter not only to their traditional values but also to basic human decency. At Guantanamo Bay, prisoners of war were labeled “enemy combatants” and denied due process. Other terrorist “enemies” were denied access to the courts and tortured in foreign countries under “extraordinary rendition.” Furthermore, our quest for democracy abroad seemed to suffer from post-9/11 security measures at home as the nation
grew wary over measures that seemed clear violations of civil liberties. It just struck many Americans as ironic at best and hypocritical at worst that while we were fighting to bring a fledging democracy along in the Middle East, we were eavesdropping on our own citizens at home and circumventing normal conventions of due process for prisoners at home and abroad.

Even leaving the initial discursive deceptions aside and even if events at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo could be seen as aberrations, and even if one was willing to live with the added disquietude of the implementation of a homeland security that might leave innocent Americans subject to wiretaps, this latest American war effort unfolded in a way that precluded anticipation or realization of the prosecution of a just war or even its eventual success. Reports of inadequate troop strength and protection, poor post-war planning, and a seeming inability to train enough Iraqis to take over the security of their own country all militated against any real confidence that the United States was exercising prudence in its execution of the Iraq war. Then came the rather daunting realization that our troops were seemingly, and inexplicably, trying to “spread democracy” in Iraq while Iraqis themselves seemed to be engaged in civil war. Such details were learned slowly, gradually seeping into our national consciousness in dribs and drabs, mostly after-the-fact, and they militated mightily against an epideictic discourse of any sustained duration and influence.

In essence, the war credo’s mythic structure was upended and finally pierced by disconfirming and uncomfortable factual information that led to differing conclusions about the reason, direction, feasibility, pre-and-post-war planning, and ultimate moral validity of this particular war. Certainly the 2006 mid-term elections were in part a referendum on the Iraq war and its perceived inelegant, incompetent, rambling, and numbing prosecution. To “stay the course” in this instance meant that America had lost its way as it fumbled through a series of treacherous rationales and activities that wasted lives and treasure and subverted the national ethos. The weight of world opinion and U.S. public opinion had finally cracked the mythos of the war credo because the evidence that turned up told a different story; the counter-narrative it evoked was disconcerting, embarrassing, and finally devastating.

**Spreading Democracy.** Bostdorff has suggested that “President Bush’s epideictic discourse swept away [the] complexities of democratization . . . in favor of a simple and seemingly timeless principle: world peace will only come with democratization.” Harvard sociologist Orlando Patterson has offered an interesting take on this particular argument, which speaks to the potential constraints of the president’s epideictic style and the policy he pursued employing such discourse: “As we now know,” writes Patterson, “the war was motivated less by any real evidence of Iraqi involvement with terrorism than by the neoconservatives’ belief that they could stabilize the Middle East by spreading freedom there. Their erroneous assumption was a relic from the liberal past: the doctrine that freedom is a natural part of the human condition.” Importantly, “A disastrously simple-minded argument followed from this: that because freedom is instinctively ‘written in the hearts’ of all peoples, all that is required for its spontaneous flowering in a country that has known only tyranny is the forceful removal of the tyrant and his party.” For Patterson, a “basic flaw” in the president’s and his advisers’ approach was in “their failure to distinguish Western beliefs about freedom from those critical features of

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it that non-Western peoples were likely to embrace."\textsuperscript{42} If Patterson is correct, it seems that the president’s and his advisers’ ideological commitments simply displaced and overwhelmed their cultural understanding. This was a failure of profound consequence.

\textit{Holding on to the Doctrine of Preemption.} Some might argue that the appeal for preemptive action has now been made less palpable in that preemptive action in Iraq has been tried and judged a failure, both as an attempt to bring democracy and as an instrument for reducing global terrorism. Many argue that there are more terrorists in Iraq now than before the war began. Others point to inconsistency in the application of the doctrine arguing that there are potentially greater threats in North Korea and Iran; yet the preemption doctrine seems to have been bypassed in these instances. Bush’s second term in office has been marked by a more moderate tone and he has counseled patience rather than resort to immediate military action. This might indicate that the preemption doctrine is losing favor or has already experienced a decline.\textsuperscript{43} Regardless of the status of the doctrine itself, the Bush administration’s latest diplomatic efforts do seem to reflect a new realpolitik in which heady attempts to “spread democracy” are being replaced with more moderate goals such as the achievement of “stability” in the Middle East.\textsuperscript{44}

Nevertheless, the president has found it difficult to relinquish his global vision and his preemptive doctrine. On May 27, 2006, President Bush addressed West Point graduates yet again. He told the cadets that his policy was similar to that of Harry Truman’s during the inauguration of the Cold War; that like Truman, he was in the process “of laying the foundations of victory.” As one \textit{Washington Post} reporter described the speech, “Bush recounted his strategy for fighting terrorism, saying the United States continues to consider any country that harbors a terrorist to be as guilty as the terrorist being harbored. He was applauded when he discussed his doctrine of preemptive strikes—attacking enemies abroad before they can attack U.S. soil.”\textsuperscript{45} So, despite sometimes mixed diplomatic signals, President Bush continued to show little interest in rhetorical retreat. The president contended that we were neither winning nor losing the war in Iraq as he defended sending in 20,000 more troops (labeled a “surge”), not only to stabilize Iraq, but also to continue to prosecute the global “war on terror.”\textsuperscript{46} At this writing, over 4,000 U.S. troops have now given their lives in service to their country in the Iraq war. One wonders if the president’s own words and deeds have produced a quagmire from which he cannot extricate himself; it is surely one that his successor will also inherit with its attendant and intractable difficulties.

\textit{The Moral High Ground.} In creating a generally stable—and therefore a more simplistic and shareable—moral universe, the president often engages in a significant socio-political

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\textsuperscript{46} Bush’s January 2007 nationally televised address calling for more than 20,000 additional troops in Iraq was one of the few times the president had ever publicly admitted mistakes in conducting the war in Iraq (and by implication the implementation of his preemptive doctrine). See David E. Sanger, “The Struggle for Iraq; Bush Adding 20,000 U.S. Troops; Sets Goal of Securing Baghdad,” \textit{The New York Times}, January 11, 2007, A1.
\end{footnotesize}
action that can assure his audience of a particularly useful but largely Manichaean moral order. To wit: audiences are assured that good will triumph over evil; right will trump might; honor will prevail over dishonor, and our better angels will triumph over our darker impulses. This ideological triumphalism is premised on human nature and audience complicity. As Mundell notes, “A binding force in a community is the agreement to act as if there is an accepted definition of good and evil. Such a ‘truth’ helps establish meaning in a community. If there is a community-defined good to aspire to, and be acknowledged for, our conduct matters somehow.” Thus, “The subject matter of good and evil and the concern with the present are two critical ingredients in an epideictic experience. Concern with the present includes concern with eternity; it addresses what ‘is.’”47 For this reason, all presidents need to use care in their descriptions of “good” and “evil” and they ought to be intentionally circumspect in their descriptions of reality. This requires a rather hefty dose of prudence and a rather large measure of responsible public address.

For a president, epideictic rhetoric establishes the moral grounding for public policy deliberation. A president so disposed can make much of the attendant discourse premised upon discussions of good and evil as a measure for community welfare and public policy. Our mission is noble and our calling is sacrosanct. Scapegoating others (sometimes labeled “enemies”) with implied “lesser” ideals, ignoble aims, and treacherous goals relegates them to the dustbins of history and the margins of public policy and, ultimately, public memory. This message is reinforced in the tales of individual heroism and glory accomplished under the banner and on behalf of a just and righteous nation-state. This can become a particularly important tool when the president seeks to inspire the nation to take on a new challenge. It also is the kind of discourse that is especially difficult to challenge because its ideographic-mythic status seems sacrosanct and self-evident.

Over time, however, developments associated with the Iraq war increasingly led to the obfuscation, if not the obliteration, of our nation’s abstract epideictic goals. When the facts on the ground did not square with the American values we had been advised we were acting on, the result, for many Americans, was to question their leaders and the rhetorical premises upon which the war was launched. The inevitable moral comparison of ends and means was found wanting. As a result, a nation was divided.

Conclusion

Bush’s commencement address at West Point served his immediate audience well, but its larger implications remain suspect. In the hands of President Bush and his administration, epideictic address has been employed to build a culture of war. In promoting liberty and global democracy largely in military terms, the president and his administration have lost friends and potential allies, made negotiation more difficult, upended chances for conciliatory gestures, precluded opportunities to learn from different cultures, and perhaps most importantly, sacrificed U.S. moral leadership on the fires of abstract ideological expediency. This is to say

nothing of the human cost of the Iraq war. All of these difficulties have made prosecuting the larger war on terror more difficult and less intelligible.

Epideictic discourse remains essential to the enactment of the office of the presidency and to solidifying our notions of presidential leadership. In speaking to a dynamic present, how the president enacts epideictic discourse is a primary embodiment of what the president does in the exercise of his presidential duties. If the president is to give voice to the ethos of the nation and assist the United States in both securing and defending the moral high ground, high-minded words must match deeds and policies must uphold stated values. Otherwise, the rhetoric of moral righteousness rings hollow and leadership is impaired. Epideictic discourse embeds the president in the moral obligation of the presidency itself. Dishonor lies in its use as a tool of deception or as a crutch for a flawed policy.
Forgiveness Education:
Urban Youth’s Perceptions and Collective Narratives

Sharon M. Chubbuck*

Violence has been called the result of a “lack of imagination” (Jenkins 368), in particular, the inability to envision options that include nonviolent responses. While observing in an urban high school first year English classroom, I heard the following discussion that captured some young people’s experience of that lack of imagination:

Teacher (White female): “What would it take to imagine a world without violence?”

Genevieve: (African American female): I doubt we could have a world without violence. Anger doesn’t just exist on its own. People talk about you and you get mad. I don’t think we can even imagine it.

Teacher: You’re telling me that you can’t even imagine a world where there’s no violence? Not even in your imagination, your farthest imagination? Is that true?

Jacob (African American male): Yeah, because I get frustrated all the time.

Kevin (White male): I think it is impossible because people have anger.

Teacher: Okay, but is the only choice to respond to anger with violence?

Kevin: It’s the easiest. People don’t think, “I’m going to resist.”

Though the reported incidences of violence in schools have decreased since 1993, the reported level of gang activity has increased in urban schools with approximately two times more urban students than suburban or rural expressing a fear of attack at school in 2005-6 (Dinkes, Kemp, & Baum, n.p.). This level of violence in central city communities and schools can produce debilitating effects on many young people. Rooted in both micro-level causes (personal injury, insult, abandonment, and abuse) and macro-level causes (unremitting poverty, institutionalized inequity, and exposure to violence), retaliatory responses of violence are the frequent expressions of anger. Providing peaceful, healthy options for responding to anger and injury, whether the result of individual injury or systemic acts of injustice, warrants the attention of scholars and advocates of peacemaking who hope to reduce violence. One option being explored in peace education is the possibility of teaching individuals to respond to anger and injury with forgiveness.

This qualitative research, the first stage of a larger study of the effects of an educational forgiveness intervention as a tool to help students respond peacefully to anger and injury, addresses these research questions:

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1. How do urban high school students of color conceptualize and describe their experiences of forgiveness?
2. How do the student’s collective socio-cultural identities and narratives intersect with their understanding/experience of forgiveness?
3. How does forgiveness intersect with issues of injustice for these students?

Theoretical Framework

The study of forgiveness has a relatively short history, with the vast majority of empirical work done by counseling psychologists in counseling settings in the last 20 years. Formulating a coherent, agreed upon definition of forgiveness is even now in progress (Worthington, “Handbook” 2), yet, common core elements seem to exist. Frequently, the delineation of those elements is prefaced with a clear description of what forgiveness is not. While consensus is not universal among scholars, there is significant agreement that forgiveness is not the same as forgetting, condoning, minimizing, excusing, legally pardoning, or automatic reconciliation or restoration of trust (Enright 28-31). Included in the most commonly accepted definition of forgiveness are a reduction of the components of unforgiveness, meaning less anger, bitterness, rumination on the offense, motivation for retaliation, isolation, etc. This reduction of negative elements is not sufficient, however. Rather, researchers in the field frequently claim that forgiveness also includes an increase in positive cognitive, affective, and behavioral components directed to the offender, including empathy, compassion, generosity, good will, and motivation for conciliation (Freedman, Enright, & Knutson; McCullough, Worthington & Rachal). Enright (31) and Worthington (“Path” 36) also include in their definition those actions done to in response to these changes including offering a gift, either physical or symbolic, to the offender who has been forgiven. For example, a victim of parental incest who chose to forgive might decide to sit with her dying father, her gift to the one who had harmed her. Another aspect included in some definitions of forgiveness is finding meaning or purpose in the offense that leads to either personal or societal improvement (Enright 172). For example, a rape victim who has chosen to forgive might then turn her energies to working to support other rape victims. Enright (25) makes particular mention that maintaining negative emotions/responses is the right of the offended person and that the offender has no right to expect or demand any positive emotional responses, much less a gift given by the one harmed. The decision to forgive, then, is a choice to let go of the right to negative responses and embrace positive attitudes and, perhaps actions, instead.

Empirical studies in the field of counseling psychology have explored the effects of leading individuals, in both group and one-on-one settings, through the steps of the forgiveness process in order to see if choosing to forgive has emotional/psychological effects. Though variation of thought exists on the order and the possible inclusion of additional components, Enright identifies the commonly agreed upon steps of the forgiveness process as following: 1.) uncovering/facing the pain of the injury; 2.) deciding that unforgiveness is an ineffectual response and deciding to choose to enter into the forgiveness process; 3.) doing the work of forgiving which includes exercises to reframe the event, to develop empathy, to gain compassion for the offender, etc.; and, in some cases, 4.) finding meaning in the injury,
sometimes seen in a gift to the offender or working to prevent further injury of others (Enright; Worthington “Path”).

These studies of forgiveness interventions, with incest victims, youth of divorce, partners of women who have chosen abortion, among others, have produced quantitative data, based on pre- post-intervention psychometric measures of the participants’ emotional state. Results of these studies have been promising (Enright & Fitzgibbons; Freedman & Knupp; Freedman, Enright, & Knutson), with strong indications that interventions that teach the process of forgiveness indeed do reduce the negative cognitive, affective, and behavioral components of unforgiveness, components that comprise many of the core components of psychologically damaging stress (rumination on offense, bitterness, motivation for retaliation, etc.) (Toussaint & Webb 350) and increase positive cognitive, affective, and behavioral components (compassion, empathy, conciliation, good will). These effects have then been associated with indicators of improved well being in other areas including decreased depression, reduced residual anger, greater self-reported hope, etc. (Enright & Fitzgibbons; Toussiant & Webb 350) and improved physical health, though suggested cautiously (Harris & Thoresen 330). The inclusion of forgiveness interventions in therapy, then, is experiencing growing support among proponents of positive psychology (Worthington, “Handbook” 2).

Study of forgiveness beyond the area of counseling is less extensive and even more recent. The majority of this work focuses on the use of a curricular intervention on the forgiveness process as a tool in educational settings in order to reduce violence and hostility. Gassin, Enright, and Knutson have incorporated a variation of Enright’s forgiveness intervention in a forgiveness curriculum presented to elementary school children in Milwaukee, WI, in the last several years, teaching them alternative non-retaliatory responses to anger, with promising results. Similar work has also been applied in Belfast, Ireland, among school children from both sides of the intractable violence of their community, again with promising results of reduced unforgiveness and the accompanying retaliatory motivations, and increased forgiveness (Holter, Martin & Enright 316). In discussing these two projects, both of which relied primarily on quantitative data, Enright, Knutson Enright, and Holter described measuring a similar level of anger among the children of Belfast and the children of Milwaukee, suggesting that the stresses of poverty and racism, as well as a higher level of exposure to violence in urban contexts, produced a need for forgiveness interventions in urban populations similar to that found in contexts of intractable violence (Enright, E. D., Knutson Enright, J., & Holter n.p.). The implication is that teaching urban children the steps of forgiveness could reduce their level of anger, and as a corollary, reduce the level of violence and possibly increase the level of academic performance (Gassin, Enright, & Knutson 327).

In light of the promising research on the value of teaching the process of forgiveness, continued research in this area is clearly warranted. Yet, several gaps remain that require attention. First, in directing attention to urban contexts, the present level of research, particularly in the realm of counseling psychology, adopts a one-size-fits-all approach, with little empirical or theoretical work addressing the significance of cultural and contextual variables in relation to forgiveness (Sandage & Williams 41). Attending to these variables is critical; all interventions occur within cultural contexts and current understanding of possible multicultural meanings of forgiveness are poorly understood (Harris & Thoresen 330). Sandage and Williamson (46) theorize several elements of a heuristic of cultural differences related to
forgiveness, including how individualistic and collective cultural orientations would engage in forgiveness based on their particular interpretations of self, relationships, face, reconciliation, self-forgiveness, the goal of forgiveness, and cultural tools for achieving forgiveness. Study of how cultural realities can shape the nature and experience of a forgiveness intervention is clearly needed, and given the complexity of how we come to understand cultural knowledge, qualitative as well as quantitative data is needed to support this research.

One significant aspect of the role of cultural identity in research is the implicit distinction between individual and collective. The focus of empirical research related to forgiveness thus far has retained an individualistic lens, with emotional well-being, levels of forgiveness, degree of anger, etc., seen as residing in the interiority of each individual, and though perhaps reported in aggregate, they are measured individually with little regard for the presence of any collective influence. Clearly, the very nature of cultural identity implicates a collective aspect that can influence individual’s perspectives; the deeper issue, however, is how the shared narratives and the emotion attached to them can become political forces that are themselves constitutive of relationships and hierarchies of power that operate beyond the individual. For example, Zembylas describes how victims of trauma (war, genocide, intractable violence, etc.) construct and repeatedly recount collective memories/narratives. Through that retelling and the attachment of rituals and symbols, these collective narratives become embedded in the nationalistic identity, each time reifying the emotional level of reaction to the trauma, the sense of nationalistic identity, and the continuation of dehumanizing the Other, the conditions that support a continuation of hostility and an absence of reconciliation. Studying the effects of a forgiveness intervention with attention to the socio-cultural identity of the participants, therefore, requires analyzing data with a collective theoretical lens to be able to identify how collective narratives shape and create the participants’ understanding of and relationship to forgiveness.

A third important aspect to consider when introducing a forgiveness intervention to urban students of color concerns the relationship of justice and forgiveness. Social scientists’ interest in justice as a complementary process of forgiveness is growing (Mahoney, Rye, & Pargament 65-67). Retributive or punitive justice is one commonly accepted way that individuals can deal with injury, using the legal system as the source of retribution rather than pursuing personal retaliation. Restorative justice, which combines compensation for damages (often through the legal system) with conciliatory behaviors (meetings between victims and offenders, where grievances are aired and direct apologies and remorse are expressed), has been mentioned as a venue for exploring the healing of forgiveness, though restorative justice does not explicitly promote forgiveness (Armour & Umbreit 490) and in fact, can be seen as putting an undue burden of responsibility on the victims who have already born the brunt of pain and struggle in the offense. While forgiveness scholars tend to agree that seeking justice and offering forgiveness are not mutually exclusive (Mahoney, Rye, & Pargament 65-67), the connection between the two is not simple. Worthington (“Forgiving”) hypothesized what he called the “justice gap”—that is, the gap between the level of justice desired by the injured and the actual level of justice they perceive has been meted out to the offender. According to Worthington, this gap may decrease the likelihood of forgiveness; that is, if the act of offering forgiveness seems to reduce the level of justice provided, i.e. the punishment for wrongdoing is lessened, then the choice to forgive may be less likely. Consequently, for members of a racial
group that has historically and into the present experienced injury and injustice simply because of their race, both at the hands of individuals and through institutional policies, the question of forgiveness cannot be separated from the concerns of justice.

Similarly, Murphy, drawing from a philosophical perspective, warns that “hasty forgiveness” (33), that is, forgiving too soon and forgoing the need for retaliation, can be harmful, leading to reconciliation that might invite further harm. Freedman, Enright, and Knutson agree that premature forgiveness can be counterproductive, but they hold that adhering to the process of forgiveness should preclude the dangers of premature forgiveness. Yet, Murphy (35) calls for a more critical analysis of the thought that forgiveness, especially when done in a thoughtful, timely manner, is an inherently good state. His analysis would pursue the question of how forgiveness and a need for justice actually intersect. For example, Murphy suggests that feelings of resentment and desire for revenge are signs of “self-respect, self-defense, and respect for moral order” and a lack of resentment over being wronged may indicate (or be perceived as) a lack of self-respect and “respect for the rights and status that attach to being a free and equal moral being” (35). Offering forgiveness may actually strip an individual of the self-esteem and power that seeking revenge might engender. Similarly, Sandage and Williamson suggest that even though forgiveness can be an attempt to balance power and control, the “dynamics of power and control are largely neglected in the psychological literature on forgiveness” (44.) This concern raises the question of how an exploration of urban students of color who participate in a forgiveness intervention might change their attitudes towards appropriate ways of responding to injury, whether through administering personal retaliation, seeking legal retribution, or engaging in personal activism to fight injustice. Would participating in a process of forgiveness empower them to fight the sort of injury/injustice they forgave? Or would forgiveness render them passive in face of efforts to reduce injustice?

Attending to these gaps in the field preceded conducting an actual forgiveness intervention with urban youth of color. Consequently, the present study attempts to uncover some of the complexity raised by these limitations, by listening to the voices of the urban youth of color themselves as they discuss their conceptualization/experience of forgiveness, with particular attention to socio-cultural identity and the possibility of collective narrative and the relationship of justice and forgiveness.

Methodology

This qualitative research was conducted with first year high school students at a Midwestern private urban Catholic high school, serving approximately 600 students of color (African American, Hispanic, and Asian American). This research site was chosen because of their openness to the topic of forgiveness, due to the religious focus of their curriculum. A verbal invitation to participate was extended to approximately 150 students enrolled in first year theology classes at the school. Of those 150, 37 students, ages 14-15, agreed and provided parental consent: 21 African American females and 10 African American males, 3 Hispanic females, 1 Hispanic male, 1 Asian American female, and 1 African female immigrant. All were 14-15 years of age; all resided in the city. No data was collected on the socio-economic status of the students, but the majority of the students attending the school qualified
for vouchers, limited to families with incomes up to 200% of poverty level, to cover tuition. Though no question explicitly evoked this information, approximately 30% of the 37 voluntarily described significant levels of violence/injury (parental abandonment, physical/sexual abuse, violent death of family member, or violence done by family member).

Data comprised a 45-minute individual interview with each student, audio-recorded and transcribed, where they discussed their understanding of forgiveness, its importance/lack of importance, reasons to forgive/not to forgive, what forgiveness is not, etc. In addition, the students were asked to describe their own experiences with forgiveness and their reactions to hypothetical scenarios that might require forgiveness. These questions were specifically designed to elicit culturally responses related to socio-cultural identity and justice. For example, questions like these were included in the interviews, with follow-up probes: “Who is more likely to be forgiving a person, males or females, or are they about the same?”—“Imagine a scene where a crowd of teenagers has gathered to watch two of their peers fight. One of the potential fighters says, ‘Wait a minute. I’m not going to fight. I forgive you. The violence stops here,’ and then walks away. How would the crowd react?”—“Imagine two women have been sexually assaulted. One decides to forgive her assailant, the other refuses to forgive. Which of the two will be more likely to work to end sexual violence or will they both be equally likely to do that work?”—“Some injury is done just because of a person’s race, an insult, discrimination, or racial violence. Is there a place for forgiveness when that happens?” These interviews, conducted by the author, a white female teacher-educator at a local university, were held during students’ lunch hour with food provided.

The transcriptions of the interview data were analyzed first through establishing general coding categories (Bogdan & Biklen 161), with every comment labeled. Data were then analyzed and coded using the definitions of forgiveness found in the literature to see the extent to which each students’ perceptions aligned and what new ideas emerged. Finally, the data were analyzed in relation to issues related to cultural identity and justice. The codes derived from this process with each individual interview were then analyzed both within and across cases to identify common themes. The result was the formation of a schema of baseline understanding of the participants’ perceptions that would inform a later forgiveness intervention with similar students.

Findings

Related to the first research question, students’ conceptualization and described experience of forgiveness closely paralleled the literature. Students, male and female and of all races represented, uniformly described the cost of not forgiving as diminishment of mental, emotional, and physical well-being due to ongoing stress, describing it as “getting stuck,” “a ball of fire inside,” “your heart gets cold,” “grudge taking over my life,” or “flipping out.” These responses may have then indicated that students at least indirectly recognized the potential mental, emotional, and physical value of offering forgiveness, which many described as “relieving stress,” “dropping a burden from your shoulders,” being able to “put it in the past” and “move on with your life,” and being free to “be happy with myself,” with one directly saying that “holding on to anger isn’t healthy” (Harris & Thorreson; Toussaint & Webb). With very few exceptions, their answers also indicated that they agreed with the current understanding of
what forgiveness is not (not condoning, forgetting, minimizing, reconciling, trusting, or relinquishing legal punishment) (Enright 28-31; Freedman, Enright, & Knutson; McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal).

Some answers given extended beyond the definitions provided in the literature. In particular, several students also articulated their sense of the moral implications of forgiveness/unforgiveness, suggesting that revenge multiplied the initial injury and reduced the one who had been hurt to the level of the wrongdoer. While a small number indicated that any offense was forgivable, most stated that murder was not forgivable since the loss of life could never be replaced. In addition, the students did not describe forgiveness as gaining feelings of empathy, compassion, or any level of beneficence towards the offender. As one student stated, “Everyone may have dignity, but they don’t all deserve my respect.” This raises questions concerning the sufficiency/accuracy of the currently theorized definition of forgiveness that includes developing positive emotions towards the offender.

Related to the second question, the effect of socio-cultural identity and collective narrative on the forgiveness process, the data revealed contradictory findings. As stated earlier, in terms of defining forgiveness and stating the cost of not forgiving and the benefits of forgiving, the answers were fairly consistent between male and female. In their answer to the question of which gender is more likely to forgive, about one third of the students said it depended on the personality and inclination of the individual person, while the rest, male and female students alike, almost equally identified either gender. When asked to explain their answers, nearly all implicated emotion as the basis for their thinking. Some said that girls would be more likely to forgive because of their emotional openness; others said that girls’ emotional volatility and “drama” would produce more fighting than forgiveness. Among those who stated that boys would be more likely to forgive, emotion was also cited, both in type and in expression; that is, students described males as less emotional—“tough” and “stoical”—and less inclined to “drama.” stating that they would brush aside injury more easily and not engage in conflict. In their focus on avoiding conflict, however, these answers did not address whether or not males would be more forgiving, simply that they would be less likely to engage in conflict. Those who took the opposing view, that males would be less likely to forgive, also named the cause as an apparent lack of emotion in males, that is, they would not have access to the emotional work forgiveness requires, while others identified the emotions related to competition, being the winner, and saving face as the reason for males being less willing to forgive.

The socio-cultural identity of participants as part of a youth culture, in this case the multiple cultures of urban youth of color, also emerged in interviews. When asked if a person who regularly practices forgiveness is a weak or a strong person, participants all responded that a forgiving person is strong. Their reasons for this centered on an acknowledgement of how hard forgiveness is, indicated in comments such as “that person is a bigger person,” “forgiving takes courage,” “forgiving takes strength” and “forgiveness takes a lot out of you.” Yet, while all stated that a person who is able to forgive is a strong person, every participant claimed that a group of peers would evaluate a teenager’s decision to forgive and not engage in a public fight as “weak,” “afraid,” or “unable to fight,” and some suggested that the youth who chose not to fight could then become a more likely target of violence from a wider range of peers. Several
stated that the negative evaluation of the forgiving youth would be accompanied by the crowd’s disappointment over not seeing a fight.

Though they stated that this group response might not reflect the thinking of individuals in the group (including themselves), the power of the corporate response, which several identified with thinking common to “being a teenager” or “part of society,” would be difficult to overcome. When asked what it would take for someone (not necessarily the interviewee personally) to speak out in agreement with and support of the fictive youth who walked away from the fight, they all indicated a degree of personal courage—“takes guts,” “a lot of courage,” “it’s scary to be called ‘scared’ too,” and a “lot of bravery...it’s like being person against society.” One student claimed that “educated, smart people would support” the youth choosing to walk away from the fight and that only “ignorant, uneducated” people would call her/him weak; however, this student stated that typically there wouldn’t be very many of those “educated” people in the crowd. These responses seem to validate Sandage and Williamson’s theory that cultural groups may bring collective norms and narratives to the task of forgiveness and its corollary of resisting retaliation and violence. The interesting aspect of the findings, however, is that the students almost universally positioned themselves in opposition to the collective narrative they attributed to the youth culture, even though most did not see themselves as standing up and offering a counter-narrative in the scenario.

In relation to the participants’ socio-cultural identity as people of color, findings were equally intriguing. The question posed asked students if forgiveness “has any place” in response to injury motivated by racism, such as racial slurs, discrimination, or racial violence. One African American male stated emphatically that there was no place for forgiveness, that racial injury was “unforgiveable” because “It’s like you ain’t giving the person a chance to tell you who they really are.” One other African American boy stated that he would forgive a person who committed a racially based injury if he believed the person acted in ignorance. If the person, however, was knowingly racist, the student said that forgiveness was not appropriate since there would be “no hope” for a person who was racist.

The rest of the students’ responses to this question were strikingly similar. Several stated that the presence of racial injury was very real and prevalent in their experience; several stated that forgiveness of such offense would be hard. The overriding theme from both male and female participants, however, was that there was a place for forgiveness in the context of racially-based injury. The students then proceeded to minimize the culpability of the offender. For example, students made statements like “You don’t know how they were raised,” “They probably didn’t realize what they were saying,” and “They are just ignorant.” A few students then offered a second level of justification for forgiveness, indicating that their own well-being depended on it. One stated, “I don’t get too deep into that.” Another said, “You have to let it go and move on.” Yet another, “If I don’t, then I’ll be stereotyping them just like they did me.” And finally, one student stated “I’m still going to be me. I’m still going to be myself, but I’m not going to let what they do, what they say, take away my confidence on how I feel about the world.” For some then, this minimization through reducing culpability seemed to be a way for them to cope with and move on from regularly experienced racially-based injury. The question that remains, however, is the possibility that these responses may also have indicated premature forgiveness (Murphy 33) with the possibility of internalized emotional pain and a reduced ability to resist injustice.
Data on the third question, the relation of forgiveness and justice, revealed interesting responses. Participants were given a scenario, two people injured because of their membership in a socio-cultural group—such as sexual violence or a racially-based hate crime—with one forgiving the offender and the other not. They were then asked which of the two would be more likely to engage in activism to reduce or prevent further violence of that sort—such as join a group to educate young people about sexual violence or to teach them greater racial tolerance. All but a few of the participants stated that the person who forgives acts of racial/gender violence would be more likely to work to end such injustice because they would be “the stronger person” and not “trapped in their anger.” In this group, some stated that the forgiving person would “know they can survive and move beyond their pain” and would “have hope.” The corollary comments indicated that the lack of forgiveness would be a hindrance to activism, with the unforgiving person more likely to be “stuck” and “keeping it alive,” with anger “taking away their energy” and leaving him/her in danger of “snapping.” None of the students indicated that the unforgiving person would be more likely to engage in activism; rather, several stated that the issue of who would become an activist had less to do with forgiveness and more to do with the “what type of person they are.” One student responded that both would equally fight to end injustice since both had been “violated.” Another indicated that not forgiving would “help her fight” against the injury (sexual violence) but that the forgiving person would not become “passive” and would also work against the violence. The more salient factor for this student was “whether they care about other people or not.”

Finally, in relation to justice, students were asked about the possibility of forgiving institutions that harm people as opposed to individuals who harm people (e.g., Jim Crow laws, women receiving lower pay for equal work, etc.). Many of the participants were confused by this question, saying either that they had no answer or that one could forgive institutions but they weren’t sure how or what it would mean. A small group of participants, however, displayed significant insight into the complexity of responding to systemic injustice. One African American female stated that it would be difficult to forgive without having “a person to focus on” but that an individual could forgive and “try to change the system, to change minds.” Another African American female indicated that forgiveness would depend on one’s ability to fight and change the system, stating that “if it’s just constantly in your face, avoid it, move. You can’t forgive if it is surrounding you.” One African American male described the tension of living in a context where institutions and larger systems form much of the fabric of our lives, even as they continue to enact policies that are inequitable and unjust. He first stated that “you have to forgive because you have to live in the system.” He then appeared to backtrack and stated “but it is good to protest against unjust systems,” finally reconciling the two positions with the statement that a person can “forgive and still protest.” Another African American male stated that he would not forgive if the institution was based on “deep racism because there is not hope then.” A Hispanic female student referenced this question to treatment of immigrants and stated that she would not forgive since “they are denying us. I don’t forgive. Without our help, none of this could have been made.” The level of both confusion and insight raise significant questions about the methodology of this study as well as the developmental nature of the participants’ ability to conceptualize the issues.
Discussion and Implications

This study contains multiple limitations. Interviews where an adult asks children for their responses is problematic for several reasons including the power differential, developmental limitations of students’ understanding of questions, and the students’ willingness to sustain lengthy conversation. Having a white interviewer with participants of color also adds to the complexity and the caution we must use in approaching these findings. These issues were exacerbated by the fact that, with 22 of the participants, their classroom teacher had stressed the importance of being interviewed by a professor of a local university, increasing the possibility that students would simply tell me what they thought I wanted to hear. Finally, the atmosphere of the Catholic school very likely shaped the responses. Though the students themselves included Catholics, people of other Christian faith, or people with no apparent religious faith (not asked explicitly, but information volunteered by several), the fact that they were in a religious school where theology is taught may have produced “expected” answers, as well.

Given all these limitations, however, the need to hear the voices of individual students as expressed in qualitative data still remains crucial for any insight into their perceptions of forgiveness. For that reason, more interviews, with students in public secular schools, are needed, perhaps conducted by a person of color who does not represent either the allure or the power of “the university.” Also, the fact that answers emerged that were not simply what would be expected from young people speaking with a white adult in a religious school context indicates enough validity to continue exploring the issues.

For example, these findings raise implications regarding the nature of forgiveness as experienced by members of specific socio-cultural groups, in general and in relation to responding to injustice. Rather than being an individual, personal act, forgiveness appears to be embedded in larger collective socio-cultural narratives of race, age, and perhaps gender, as Sandage and Williamson suggest (2005). The role of emotion in relation to gender and forgiveness is apparent, yet no common narrative emerged. The strongest evidence of the power of collective narrative emerged in the conflicted responses that forgiving people are strong yet the evaluation of their peers would be that they are weak. Which answer reveals the students’ actual thought? If the response that forgiving people are strong is simply students’ providing the “right answer,” then their engagement in retaliatory violence would be expected. Yet, if they have answered honestly, that they believe one who walks away from the fight is strong, and if their appraisal of their youth culture’s narrative that normalizes retaliatory, even pre-emptive violence is accurate, this finding adds complexity to the theories Zembylas proposes, that collective narratives shape people’s perceptions and responses in conflict situations. These students indicated both the power of the collective narrative and, at the same time, the simultaneous presence of their own counter-narratives. Gaining clarity as to what those socio-cultural narratives are, how they shape a collective response of forgiveness/unforgiveness, and what will support the voicing of counter-narratives in urban contexts will require significantly more qualitative investigation.

And finally, the findings regarding forgiveness and racial injury and justice correlated in complex ways. The need to minimize the intent of racial violence seemed to be a coping mechanism to allow the youth to move beyond what they perceived as the entrapment of
anger over racially based hurt. The profession of many, that forgiveness would actually support an individual’s efforts actively to resist the perpetuation of injustice and injury, also seems to indicate their belief that releasing anger and desire for revenge is a healthy move that will empower rather than create passivity. Finally, the findings evidence of some students’ understanding of the complexity of responding to systemic injury with forgiveness indicates that youth are only beginning to conceptualize the larger experience of structural injustice and how their own response to it may or may not result in productive action, either for themselves or for the betterment of society.

Yet, what may appear to be a successful adaptation to racial injury, that is, release of anger and revenge through a process of forgiveness, may, in fact, be a maladaptive response of internalizing the pain of the injury, leaving individuals less able to resist injustice. Whether the response students’ gave to these questions indicates a healthy stance of releasing debilitating anger or a minimizing of injury that only internalizes the pain experienced and perhaps diminishes the empowerment for activism is not clear and warrants serious attention. Moving from individual offender to systemic offender complicates this question further. In particular, further exploration is needed on the role of emotion surrounding these experiences, both expressed within individuals and collectively as politically constitutive forces that can reify relationships of inequitable power, on-going hostility, and Otherness.

Insight into power of the collective socio-cultural narratives to shape the understanding and practice of forgiveness is needed since an educational forgiveness intervention without sufficient attention to the reality and power of collective narratives of socio-cultural identity may be ineffective. This is particularly true in urban settings where students’ higher levels of exposure to violence may construct a shared narrative that normalizes retaliatory response. More research on the power of the collective socio-cultural narrative, then, must occur. Does such a narrative impede forgiveness and support violence? Does it prompt premature forgiveness and reduce engagement for greater justice and peacemaking? In addition, how will urban youth of color experience an educational forgiveness intervention? To what extent is the process of forgiveness experienced as an individual action and to what extent is it a collective action embedded in and supported/impeded by the socio-cultural realities of the context? These questions, derived from the findings of this study, hold great importance in the pursuit of greater peace and nonviolence for urban students of color.

References


Building Tangible Peace in the Heart of the South

Reba Parker*

If you were to think that South Carolina would be a likely place to begin a peace movement in the twenty-first century, you might think again. South Carolina has been ranked as the most violent state in the United States the last three years.¹ Regarding discrimination, this state has ranked first in hate crimes for many years in a row, finally falling to fourth, due to anti-immigration issues in other states.² We love our guns, hunting, neo-confederates, patriarchal homes and religions, not to mention our history with gender inequality.³ Nonetheless, I truly believe that a movement of peace is sweeping through this southern state, and most of its current roots can be traced to a stark classroom in the basement of the old library at the College of Charleston.

Being a full-time adjunct instructor at the College of Charleston for the last ten years has given me opportunities to work with many students. I also pick up classes at a local technical college as well as a local religious private college. One thing I have found to be true is that students love to step outside the classroom. Most students learn natural sciences in a lab, by doing, so why not with social science, where the lab is our neighborhoods and communities. I believe that the best way to truly learn is by getting a healthy mixture of lecture, private study, participatory type dialogue, and lastly, application. So, it is not unusual for my students to step into their city to make observations, ask questions, or apply their “sociological imagination” in the civic community.

It is fall 2007 and I was anxiously planning for a new semester. Most semesters I teach four to five classes with a mixture of Introduction to Sociology and Contemporary Social Issues classes. But this semester I would have to change the curriculum a bit after watching a video days before the first class. I had stepped into the local Hollywood video store to buy a few documentaries in the “going out of business” bin. One of the films I bought that day, Peace One Day, was a story about a young journalist from Great Britain who, in 1999, went on a quest to film a story about peace.⁴ He wanted the United Nations to change the International Day of Peace that fell every 3rd Tuesday of September to a fixed calendar date in September. He then, literally, went around the world to see if others wanted the same. All I can say is that I felt compelled to change my syllabus and implement this video into each of my classes. This inclination proved to be invaluable. After each class watched the video they all had basically two responses, “Why don’t we know about this day?,” and, now that we do know, “why don’t

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¹ www.fbi.org. See uniform crime reports.
² www.splcenter.org. See hate map.
³ South Carolina has never had a female state senator.
⁴ Peace One Day Film. www.peaceoneday.org.
we do anything on this day?” We had two conclusions, one, it was up to us to create awareness about this day on our campus, and two, we needed to celebrate this day as well. Only problem was, the day was three weeks away.

**Creating Awareness**

So, how do students go about creating awareness? We basically, in the fall of 2007, put up home-made posters all over campus on the International Day of Peace, which now falls September 21st of each calendar year. We created informational brochures, set up a table outside the cafeteria, handed out free peace cookies and brownies, and told students about the day. We also had the *Peace One Day* video playing for bystanders to watch. That was it! It was a start.

Spring 2008, I continued to show the video, again at three different colleges. Students began to ask more questions and also wanted to create even more awareness. One student suggested that we make the awareness city-wide. Charleston, South Carolina, is a beautiful city with a large central park. We envisioned that our next booth would be centrally located at that park.

In order to get permission to use the park we found that we needed city permits. With an energetic student intern from the College of Charleston, who was majoring in communication/event planning, I headed to the Charleston Parks and Recreation Department to “sell” our idea of a peace day in Charleston. The story would then begin to grow. We had to define peace, the International Day of Peace, and create a mission statement. I remember trying to explain this idea to a key African American civil rights leader in our city, and his response was, “This event will either be cute or quaint, don’t know that I’m interested.”

5 So, we literally had to build a case for peace day, without actually knowing the final outcome. It was a symbolic action that, for onlookers, simply made a statement, hence, had no substance. We had to prove that this day would make a difference in our city. “The powerfulness of symbolic actions requires that onlookers are either sympathetic but need to be moved to action, or that they can become sympathetic once they have the matter brought to their attention” (MacNair, p. 140). Creating awareness is an art, not magic, and it takes time.

In time, and with a healthy momentum, ideas of a booth began changing to an actual festival. With that came speakers, city fees, bands, choirs, tents, port-a-potties, police officers, sound technicians, a stage, vendors, and, lastly participants. Students began to work on publicity, t-shirt designs, making contacts with cub scouts, local public/private secondary schools, and even began to work with clubs on their campuses. We needed a website, of course: social networking sites and an appearance on the local TV affiliate soon followed. Students worked around their areas of interest and expertise. I began writing grants and taught my classes how to write grants, as well. My intern and I headed to the bank to open an account, located a fiscal financial sponsor and met with key leaders in the city. One respected pastor of a historical congregational church believed in what we were doing, and with the

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5 Reverend Joe Darby is the pastor of the Morris Brown AME Church in Charleston. He spoke at both Charleston Peace Day Festivals, and is a strong advocate for peace in our state.
moral and financial support of that local congregation, we were on our way to gaining legitimacy. On September 21, 2008, we had our first annual Charleston Peace One Day festival at a picturesque riverside city park and the people came. We had a kid’s global village that taught small children about peace and peace-building skills. A children’s book author created a professional children’s activity booklet that was passed out to each child. You could see a climbing wall, face painters, vendors working toward non-violence, pizza, musicians, poets and speakers from the major world religions all focused on peace. The day worked. Local citizens were making the connection of peace to the local community and now knew about the International Day of Peace. Students sang in choirs, ran booths, worked with children, were interviewed, raised funds, parked cars, and brought friends. A battery was pulled out of my car to support the small solar panel that would fuel the vendor tents with energy. We had over six hundred participants with many more learning about the day through the local media. Globally, “In 2008, it was a day when Afghanistan soldiers and Taliban militants reportedly put down their weapons. It was a time when temporary demilitarization made way for the delivery of 1.8 million much-needed vaccinations, and when villages otherwise ravaged by violent conflict received food and water from relief groups.” The U.S. media barely mentioned the day.

In the spring of 2009, the department head of sociology/anthropology at the College of Charleston offered me the opportunity to start a seminar class called the “Sociology of Peace.” I now was able to create a curriculum that taught students about ideas of peace and how we could really make those ideas practical in the city and state we lived in. The first class made within a week or so, with nine overrides. My intern by this time had graduated from college and became my teacher assistant for the class. We sat down together and created the course. These students learned about the history of war, positive/negative peace, peace movements, ways to create tangible peace, and were given assignments to take the content learned and to apply that “content” to social gatherings of their choice. They created curriculum that taught about peace, peace day and peace-building skills, bringing back demographics, stories, and presentations. One group worked with a local environmental inner-city children’s garden, another met with the political science professors at the College of Charleston to ask them about peace from their prospective fields and had discussions about the Department of Peace Bill 808. One group met with students at a local high school to talk about beginning a Peace Alliance club on their campus. Other groups met with soccer clubs to make the connection between soccer, peace, and intercultural cooperation. Two other teams worked in after-school programs for at-risk kids in the most dangerous neighborhood in our state. Students were able to see firsthand that teaching about peace was a good step toward creating awareness.

That semester, we started the first Student Peace Alliance Club in South Carolina on our campus with students from the Sociology of Peace class as acting officers. Without knowledge

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6 Circular Church, Charleston, South Carolina, was founded in 1641. Bert Keller is the pastor, a peace activist, and was a speaker at both Charleston Peace Day Festivals.
7 [www.readcharlie.com](http://www.readcharlie.com) “Peace in the Southeast.”
8 [www.thepeacealliance.org](http://www.thepeacealliance.org).
9 Chicora Community in North Charleston, South Carolina.
of how to start a club, these officers had to research the organization, attend meetings, write constitutions, and educate the student government about the Student Peace Alliance. The club has a political, educational, and community focus creating projects on campus, in the community at large, as well as working hand in hand with our local peace day organizers.

By the end of the semester, students not only helped to spread awareness about the day of peace, but were beginning to see a bigger picture. Now, peace was not so much about a day, but more about a culture. They found that peace could be tangible and they were eager to do their part to create a much needed cultural shift.

**Culture of Peace**

Why does the default button always seem to favor violence, and not peace? It does not help that we live in a country where our homes, religions, myths, wars, songs; literally our entire culture spreads the message that violence is natural and effective, hence justifiable. The dominator model has been a major component of America’s foundation, a model that over time has been based on fear, scarcity, and the abuse of power. How could we begin the process of changing that paradigm where peace would actually become the new, normal?, Where the partnership model made more sense?, and Where respect for humanity and the earth were paramount? “Our ideas and stories are blueprints for our future. Of course, ideas and stories don’t arise in a vacuum. They come out of particular times and places” (Eisler, p. 139). As a teacher, I knew that I would have to provide my students with plenty of examples that showed that peace was obtainable, tangible, and possible. We can have lower crime rates, treat our children and families with more respect, implement restorative justice measures in our prisons, and work toward intercultural cooperation. We can begin to educate students, across the country about cultures of peace, tell new stories, show new heroes, and respond to violence in different ways.

One way that I began to show evidence of this change was implementing an education component in my classes that focused on social entrepreneurship. They could hear stories about innovative people who took their skills, knowledge, and passion and began to create solutions for world problems. They saw that application works and many times not just for the local community but on a much larger scale. Ideas of intercultural cooperation, sharing the credit and knowledge, and working for the greater good were seen as worthy and valuable goals. With social entrepreneurship we saw inter-disciplinary groups working together on a common task. Changing culture was not just the responsibility of the social sciences but spread the gamut of disciplines and types of people. “Because social entrepreneurs do not have an army or police force behind them, they work to elicit change rather than impose it, so they build human capacity rather than encouraging dependency” (Bornstein, p. 6). People can make a difference without waiting for governments to act. Students today, I’m finding, are seeking smart solutions and have the very tools and skills needed to produce them. They are “questioning the answers” more than “asking questions.” One of the leaders of social entrepreneurship wrote, “Indeed, for anyone who has ever said, ‘This isn’t working’ or ‘We can

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10[www.studentpeacealliance.org](http://www.studentpeacealliance.org).

11The Domination Model comes from the works of Riane Eisler.
do better!’—for anyone who gets a kick out of challenging the status quo, shaking up the system, or practicing a little entrepreneurial ‘creative destruction’—these are propitious times” (Bornstein, p. 10). I wanted my students to see that the process of cultural change is already happening and they could be the next key players. If war is an invention, what inventor can come along with a better model that doesn’t use the cruelty and inefficiencies of war? That was my challenge.

Guest speakers are always a welcomed relief for most students, a chance to learn from other voices. In a city that doesn’t talk much about peace and its connections to various fields; I invite a community leader to class and ask them to make the connections between peace and their work. When they leave my class they are now part of the growing peace movement in our city. I remember calling and asking the key environmental group in our city to speak about peace and their response was, “What do the environment and peace have in common? I don’t see the connection.” I’ve had a speaker from a water conservation group who had to think this “peace thing” through. He “got it,” and is now a peace advocate in the city. Others include a financial investor that specializes in social responsibility who learned about caring economics and prison wardens who are asked by students about peace and restorative justice. By meeting with religious leaders in the city, or the director of the center for women, or inner-city school principals, and asking them about their role in peace-building, this has started a new dialogue that can’t help but to continue to grow. And with dialogue comes contact. The natural progression could be, with contact, communication; with communication, cooperation; and then conciliation is soon to follow.

Intercultural Cooperation

As a sociologist, the ideas of intercultural cooperation are close to my heart, and ideology for that matter. One reason I believe the Charleston Peace One Day festival has worked in our city is because it is led by students and members of the community and not from one particular religious, educational, or political institution. Being an adjunct instructor has provided me with more freedom to work in the city, with fewer institutional restraints. However, we did need some structure to keep up with the growth of the festival and other educational components. Charleston Peace One Day, a grassroots organization was born in May of 2008, with a nine-member board made up of city leaders, two former students, one high school student, and my intern sitting as Vice President. We are currently working on non-profit status.

Our intention is to bring cultures together under the umbrella of what we have in common—peace—and not so much around our differences. Intercultural cooperation is one of the objectives of the Charleston Peace One Day organization and we take that seriously. We intentionally create action plans that bring groups together, whether on peace day or during the year. For example, on peace day we have a soccer tournament where various groups of kids play on teams with mixed groups. The “us” and “them” dichotomy quickly fades as a sense of “we-ness” takes front stage. We are partnering with the Charleston Symphony Orchestra and their hundred-member gospel choir to celebrate Martin Luther King Day, where

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12 “The Invention of War.” Margaret Mead.
connections of King’s dream and local action come together. Working with local professional artists and many of the children from the inner-city public elementary school, Charleston Peace One Day and Walk Gallery had a city-wide art walk around artists’ interpretations of peace. We are meeting with interfaith ministerial/religious leaders to bring ideas of peace to the table. Many had sermons or messages of peace on peace day. On peace day, private schools, parochial schools, and public schools are volunteering side by side. Charleston Peace One Day met with the mayor of Charleston offering a peace pole to the city to be placed at the park where peace day started, as a symbol of unity and world peace and to foster inner peace. As the pole sits quietly under a tree by the children’s playground, the words, “May Peace Prevail on Earth,” can be read in four languages, one being our city’s cultural language of Gullah.\(^{13}\)

**Conclusion**

The 2\(^{nd}\) Annual Charleston Peace One Day tripled in size this year with attendees coming from over twenty-seven counties, states, and countries. The demographics were varied, by age, race, political affiliation, educational opportunity, socioeconomic status, and religion. Our kid’s global village was led by seven Montessori schools, private and public schools, secondary schools, three colleges, a Roots and Shoots program, the Girl Scouts of Eastern South Carolina, and a local soccer club. We had an art curated tent and close to forty-five vendors ranging from anti-hate GLBT advocates, the green party, and local artisans, to inner peace yoga sessions. Everywhere you looked, people were participating, actively engaged as a community. Speakers and poets included teenagers, college students, as well as religious, civic, and environmental leaders. A young teen spoke of peace this way:

> Peace...can mean so many different things, such as war being eliminated or just a state of mind. In the United States we are very lucky that we don’t have to deal with poverty, war, slavery, or disease. One person can’t just fix everything, there has to be others willing to help because everyone caused this and everyone is affected by our mistakes. The opposite of peace, to most people, is war, but peace goes hand in hand with love so I would think the opposite of peace is hatred and fear. We may not have peace in the world yet, but we will always have it in our mind and as long as it’s there it can be brought into the world for others to spread.\(^{14}\)

Music ranged from Indian flute circles and choirs to popular rock groups. A mini-documentary was staged that day to tell the bigger story. After peace day, secondary schools were inquiring about ways to celebrate peace day in their schools, grants were being submitted and awarded, and students were applying for the Peace Corps, AmeriCorps or seeking degrees in Peace Studies or Social Entrepreneurship.

Future goals include creating a state-wide peace curriculum for public schools. We are currently engaged in ideas for developing a full-length documentary project with a local

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\(^{13}\) The peace pole is located at Brittlebank Park, Charleston, South Carolina. You will find four languages: English, Gullah, Chinese, and Spanish.

\(^{14}\) Taken from excerpts from the Peace Day 2009 Charleston speech of Hannah Marie Garcia, age 15.
production company. Also, at the local technical college, a pilot project is underway, focusing on all Introduction to Sociology classes, where a peace component is implemented, even for on-line classes. Another aspiration is to plant peace poles in various parts of the city. We are currently working with an inner-city elementary school to do just that. Two Sociology of Peace classes are planned each semester at the college for the next year, and thereafter. Dialogue has begun among professors at the College of Charleston about the possibility of a Peace Minor Degree. Partnerships are being formed among businesses, nonprofit organizations, schools, faith circles, artists, and children regarding future projects.

In less than two years South Carolina has seen a movement toward ideas of peace. As one local on-line magazine described peace day:

_In Charleston, it’s a day when we can all put aside our differences and take a good, hard look at what peace and conflict resolution can do for the lowcountry. True, our cities don’t experience damaging food shortages, and the last war that ransacked the area was the one that, thankfully, ended slavery. Yet too many of our residents are going hungry, and we see unfortunate incidents of violence and animosity all the time. Come out September 20th for a new lowcountry legacy._”

We started out with the need to spread awareness about the day of peace, which led to actively working toward a culture of peace, centered on a community that appreciates the value of intercultural cooperation. My students have learned that peace is tangible and that change is possible. We have seen the power of community working together toward a common goal and the excitement for a new paradigm that focuses on cooperation and respect. As Eleanor Roosevelt so memorably said, “Some of us are dreamers and some of us are doers. But what the world really needs are dreamers who do and doers who dream.”

References


__15 www.readcharlie.com__ “Peace in the Southeast.”
Sam Cooke

“I was born by the river”—
In the ghetto of Chicago
Surrounded by nothing but poverty
And low-income housing.

“Just like the river I’ve been running ever since”—
Jumping back and forth to different mindsets,
to escape the chaos around me
and to plan out a better future.

“It’s been too hard living but I’m afraid to die”—
Because what if I never make it to heaven.
Based on the situation that I was placed in,
so I rather live in hell on Earth, because I’m familiar with it.

This can’t be normal life,
Not with Disciples and Lords a block apart,
killings of black males younger than 21,
and drugs floating around like our local McDonald’s.

This is not normal life,
When our school systems set us up to fail,
the police are locking everyone up,
and the respect for ourselves and our community has diminished.

“…Change is gonna come”—
When we let our mind be our 9,
and we strategically plan for the future
instead of being content in our current living situations.

“…Change is gonna come”—
When we invest in the future of our children,
instead of jewelry, cars, and rims
realizing that they are only short-lived pleasures.

“Change is gonna come, oh yes it will”—
When we take responsibility for what we bring into the world,
teach them how to love and treat others,
and lead by example, instead of by words.

By Josephine Brown

Josephine Brown is a student at Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, studying finance management.
I have a dream...

I dream of a time when kings, presidents, and dictators realize that maybe there's more to the world than power;

When reverends, pastors, popes, and priests will come down from their pedestals of pride and be the first to serve where the work is most laborious;

Missionaries and the spiritually gifted who finally use their callings and talents without even a hint of self-interest;

Catholics and Christian denominations that conquer their differences to serve one God under one purpose, unified as Paul had imagined to the Corinthians;

Parents and children alike serving on the same mission fields, in foreign countries as well as in their very homes.

...that we might overcome original sin.
...that the meaning of freedom would become a way of life.
...that the impossible would be made possible by His power.
Humility that is unfathomable to us mere mortals--the humility of a God who made himself nothing that we might live.

But today, that dream no longer remains a dream.
Today, that dream becomes a prayer.
Because a dream is powered by my subconscious mind,
But a prayer is from mountain-moving faith in a God whose power is limitless!

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:
Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to death—
even death on a cross!
Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father. 

By Tim Gee

Tim Gee is currently a student at Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, majoring in the infamous subject of physics. Ironcally, he finds a surprising amount of satisfaction in reading and writing poetry, and aside from writing poems about peace, he also muses on topics such as music, rock climbing, and of course, physics. The primary motivation behind his writing is in the hopes that his poetized-reflection will not only develop his own character, but that the readers—however few—might reassess their purpose and goals to contribute toward a better tomorrow.

Partners in Peace is a timely, well-grounded, and important book. The author, Mathijs van Leeuwen, sets out to give texture and depth to claims that are frequently made about the strength and potential of civil society. “Civil society has become a catch phrase associated with the ‘shared vision’ of a local population as opposed to the machinations of regional or national power politics” (p. 5). As is well known, emergent and established visions among local populations can play enormous roles in conflict resolution and peace building, yet there are few in-depth, long-term studies of how this occurs, especially outside the field of cultural anthropology.

The author begins with three key assumptions to guide his exploration of diverse cases: (1) the interplay of individuals, groups and institutions is fluid and complex. (2) Interpretations of conflict situations themselves are challenging, multiple, and in certain ways, unmanageable. (3) Immersion in the community through ethnographic research is needed to begin to grapple with these nuances as well as to document the course of events and understandings. Partners in Peace attempts to make vivid images of peacemaking through engagement of on-the-ground activities by individuals and groups. The work is based on three years of field work in southern Sudan, Burundi and the Great Lakes Region, and Guatemala.

Van Leeuwen’s book helps to fill a very important niche in peace research through detailed comparative analysis and the examination and modification of assumptions about peace processes. His emphasis on discourses in social context brings to life these various cases, therefore making it possible to (re)evaluate theoretical claims and provide case studies that can be used as guidelines for future research and intervention.

Chapter one lays out well the course of the book’s discussion, along with the assumptions already described above. Importantly, the chapter also speaks about how the repeated, public images of peacebuilding are often at odds with the realities of day-to-day experience of the people involved. In examining how images and experience converge and diverge, van Leeuwen considers peacebuilding as both a set of skills and processes (such as advocacy and training for human rights) and a broader process of societal transformation. This distinction is typical of the careful analysis the author brings to his subject. This orientation applies as well to the author’s perspective on communication, where he considers such aspects as framing devices as well as entire sets of organizing activities that presume certain kinds of interactions.

Chapter one also explains the nature of the relationships between the researcher and several NGOs that played important roles in this study as well as having track records in the countries and regions of concern here. This part of the discussion is interesting both methodologically and politically-practically in that van Leeuwen explains in very concrete terms the types of negotiations and expectations associated with each organization.

Chapters two and three treat various discourses and their associated expectations with respect to peacebuilding. Beyond that, there is significant attention given to the influences of such discourses on the practices of the NGOs themselves. As the author explains, the growing credibility of perspectives on positive peace has simultaneously brought the entire spectrum of groups and organizations in a nation, region or community into the spotlight. In this respect it
makes sense to speak of “domains of peacebuilding,” related to such affairs as diplomacy and negotiation, military peacekeeping, economic reconstruction, reforming governance, human rights protection, and restoration of the fabric of society. In this respect, then, the different domains call for different strategies and, by extension, different capacities of local civil organizations. Again, van Leeuwen’s analysis is extremely useful in terms of charting an array of implications and possibilities, sharpening the discussion of specific policies and interventions in terms of their suitability to the situation and the available resources (economic, organizational and social). Against this framework, van Leeuwen considers the involvement of several international organizations in terms of their long-term policies and practices. Of particular interest in this part of the discussion is the degree to which explicit articulation to peacebuilding matters in the effectiveness of policies.

Chapters four through seven offer detailed treatments and comparisons of the cases in southern Sudan, Burundi and the Great Lakes Region, and Guatemala. In all three (or actually four, when Burundi is parcelled out) instances, van Leeuwen treats organizations as well as communication processes as dynamic, and his ethnographic approach affords him the opportunity to demonstrate how and why that must be done. In the southern Sudan, for example, the assumptions with which organizations approached the formation of alliances and the work on capacity building proved to be extremely important. In chapter five in particular, the author considers what is involved in taking a regional approach to peacebuilding, and what needs to occur to make that level of coordination possible. The Guatemalan case, discussed in chapter seven, is the one where there was the least attention given to explicit frames of post-war, post-treaty peacebuilding and also the one where there was the most difficulty in sustaining the coordination of efforts over time.

Chapter eight, the conclusion, offers a wealth of lessons about peacebuilding that may be found at the intersection of politics, ethics, and communication/rhetoric. Van Leeuwen offers challenges to individuals, groups and organizations working in this arena, by highlighting certain practical-linguistic tendencies (e.g., the tendency to frame conflict in a way that justifies a technical response) and then drawing implications for reflection on and practices of intervention. Above all, Partners in Peace offers a strong foundation basis for the (re)examination of assumptions about the possibilities for peacebuilding within diverse national, cultural, and community contexts.

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This innovative, highly readable volume grounded in communication and social science theory explores the multiple ways in which the Islamic religious identity is being shaped by cyberspace, as the co-authors cross the interdisciplinary and international borders of their subject, and discuss the multi-faceted identities on the three most frequently visited websites, where the imagined community reinvents itself in the process of deconstructing the political and social issues of the day. For example, non-Muslim or lay readers are brought through three initial theoretical chapters that provide context for framing whether or not the websites facilitate a “rational and critical public sphere in the Muslim umma,” (p. 18) as derived from the six criteria derived from Habermasian theories of the public sphere and communication action, Benedict Anderson’s ideal of the imagined community, and their compatibility with the key Islamic concepts of shura (consultations), jihat (independent interpretation), and ijma (consensus). These concepts are fully explained in the first three chapters, as they apply to communicative action, rational-critical debate, and consensus, and are applied to the discourse on the three website discussion boards (p. 7). Often the political analysis of the role of Islam in the public sphere overshadows the larger moral question, which is, “Who speaks for Islam?” and “What does the Muslim religion mean to those living outside of the Islamic world”? This media research fills the gap in the scholarly literature that analyzes online communities and their role in defining religious identity as it pertains to the Islamic world.

This book modestly claims that it is a scholarly “snapshot” (p. 19) of a rapidly evolving mediated public square constructing political and religious identity, based on content and textual analysis of Muslim discourse on three of the most frequently visited interactive Islamic websites: islamonline.net, islamway.com, amrkhaleed.net. The first site is in Arabic and English, the other two are multi-lingual, available in Arabic, English, German, French, Turkish, Spanish and other languages. This multi-linguality in an oral culture is central to the enduring importance of this innovative study in the field of new media and religion, one which seeks to explain whether the internet is a centripetal or centrifugal social force, uniting a diasporic population that is fragmented or, through a virtual democratic blogosphere, creating new divisions by permitting all forms of discussions, including those that are uncivil and more emotional than rational.

In this cyber discourse, a discussion of the rich theoretical foreground in communication theory makes a strong case for the importance of the ordinary conversational exchanges on the three website discussion boards, explaining how the internet and virtual public sphere are both reflexive and constructive.

In two central evidentiary chapters exploring Collective and Divergent Identities respectively, the co-authors provide textual evidence excerpted from the internet discourse. In the realm of the collective and in the realm of the divergent, the co-authors describe “heated debates between the Muslim umma and those who do not belong to it,” (p. 165) such as: Sunni versus Shi’ite discourses about marriage between members of the two sects, marrying a non-Muslim, a debate between a Catholic and a Muslim about the concept of truth in the Bible and the Quran, Danish cartoons and the lack of respect for the Prophet, gender and political
discourses including intercultural marriage, the Israeli-Palestinian territorial wars, violence in Lebanon, and even the rising suicide rate in the U.S. Army (p. 111).

Dr. Mohammed el-Nawawy has written and conducted research extensively about Al-Jazeera, and holds the Knight-Crane endowed chair in the school of communications at Queens University in North Carolina. His co-author, Sahar Khamis, is assistant professor in the department of communications at the University of Maryland. Both are Arab-Americans and both teach courses in communication specializing in Middle Eastern mass media.

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This book is highly needed in a body of literature that is very lacking when it comes to the description of media consumption patterns among the Arab minority in Israel. In the book, Amal Jamal presents two main themes: Israel’s utilization of its state-owned media to manufacture consent among members of the Arab minority, and the Arab minority’s attempts to constitute a counter-hegemonic public sphere that enables them to reach a state of “in-betweenness” or “a sophisticated blending of resistance [to Israel’s suppressive tactics] with pragmatic behavior that guarantees survival” (p. 56).

The two themes mentioned above are presented succinctly with vivid and illustrative examples throughout Jamal’s seven-chapter book. According to Jamal, the communicative behavior of the Arab minority in Israel, which has been facilitated by the modern media technologies, has contributed to freeing the members of what used to be referred to as the “captive minority” (p. 2) from the restrictions posed on them by the Israeli local media. Jamal makes an interesting distinction between the sentimental and instrumental identities of the Arab citizens of Israel. This means that those citizens’ sentimental affiliation to their Palestinian identity does not preclude them from the instrumental consumption of the Israeli media to enhance their own political and economic interests in the hegemonic Israeli society.

In chapter one, Jamal presents the theoretical framework that serves the book’s themes. In this framework, he refers to the constructivist theories of identity formation and the powerful role played by the media in forming social realities and framing perceptions about conflict. In this context, the author should be commended for not falling into the trap of technological determinism that exaggerates the media power, and for giving some credit to the media consumers who are described by Jamal as “partially active” (p. 19). Jamal argues – and correctly so – that the consumers play an active role in choosing media content and judging and interpreting this content. Jamal applies this active consumer role to the members of the Arab public in Israel, who, according to him, “are capable of resisting – again, at least partially – the techniques of persuasion and manipulation that the [Israeli] media employs…” (p. 19). Chapter one has a very brief section (only two pages) on Habermas’ theory of public sphere and communicative action. More discussion should have been devoted to the Habermasian public sphere, particularly since it plays a critical role in the findings of Jamal’s study of the Arab minority’s media consumption and communicative behavior patterns.

Given that so little is known about the situation or living conditions of the Arab citizens in Israel, chapter two provides a description of what Jamal refers to as the policies of deportation, evacuation, and demographic segregation that are practiced by the Israeli state against members of the Arab minority. In this chapter, Jamal also discusses discrimination practiced against the Arabs in the Israeli job market, or what Jamal refers to as “the structural inferiority of the Arab labor force in Israel” (p. 35).

Chapter three discusses the Israeli authorities’ attempts to re-socialize the members of the Arab minority through education and propaganda for the purpose of co-opting them in the hegemonic Israeli way of life and suppressing their opposition to the system. In this context, Jamal cites several examples of Jewish figures who were recruited from Arab countries and employed in the Arabic-speaking Israeli media to enrich and strengthen the Israeli propaganda
machine targeting the Arab minority. An interesting aspect highlighted in this chapter is the Israeli newspapers’ attempts to generate more profits through advertising by encouraging consumerism among members of the Arab minority.

Chapter four focuses on the efforts by members of the Arab minority to develop an oppositional public sphere that can counter the hegemony of the Israeli state. The chapter highlights four historical periods of developing the mediated Arab public sphere in Israel. This chapter provides good background information that helps put into context the results of Jamal’s study of the members of Arab minority’s media consumption patterns.

In chapters five through seven, Jamal highlights the main results of his survey of the media use of the Arab population in Israel. One interesting finding is that the Arab minority’s reliance on broadcast media for news and entertainment is much higher than its reliance on print media. Moreover, a high percentage of the people surveyed reported reading both Arabic and Hebrew press. This, according to Jamal, is a strong indication of the Arab minority’s instrumental use of the Israeli media to survive. In this context, Jamal argues that the Hebrew press provides the Arab minority with political and economic information that is highly needed in their day-to-day lives in the Israeli society. However, according to Jamal, “this need [on the part of the Arab minority] does not automatically translate into trust or sympathy [for the Israeli media]” (p. 99). Jamal mentions several reasons as to why members of the Arab minority are highly dissatisfied with the way they are neglected and negatively stereotyped in the Hebrew press.

One of the survey’s other important findings is that the Arab satellite channels, particularly Al-Jazeera, reinforce the sense of Arab belongingness among members of the Arab minority in Israel in a way that empowers them and helps them connect with their fellow members in the Arab world. In this context, Jamal explains in eloquent terms how the Arab minority’s consumption patterns of Arab broadcast media are a manifestation of “a form of contention against structural limitations set by stronger political or cultural actors. Instead of accommodating the cultural and political reality set by the hegemonic Israeli state, the Arab minority strives to ‘cross’ the Israeli borders and to enjoy the cultural life available in the Arab world” (107). As a side note, it would have been interesting to see if gender was a significant variable in the consumption patterns of the Arab citizens in Israel.

Overall, *The Arab Public Sphere in Israel* by Amal Jamal is an interesting book that fills a big gap in the literature about the media use of the Arab minority in Israel. It shows how the Arab citizens in Israel have developed a hybrid, “in-between” identity that utilizes the Arab media for staying connected with their Arabness, and in the meantime, consumes the Israeli media for survival purposes.

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Shakedown is part memoir, part history, and part manifesto, written with impressive intelligence and verve by Ezra Levant, a Canadian lawyer and political activist who, over the past two years, has led the fight to expose government corruption and restore civil liberties. Levant’s unapologetic thesis is that freedom of speech is absolutely vital to the wellbeing and health of a society, and that government censorship is ultimately lethal to true peace and social stability. He cites numerous real-life examples of Orwellian bureaucracy gone mad, and illustrates just how easy it is for the officious and well-placed to impose their agenda upon a nation and circumvent constitutional protections and how difficult it is to fix a system once it’s broken.

The central storyline of Shakedown revolves around Levant’s discovery of the abuses and unethical behavior of the Canadian Human Rights Commissions. Levant opens by conceding that the CHRCs were originally a well-intentioned idea over three decades ago, but he quickly informs the reader that the CHRCs gradually moved beyond their originally intended sphere of influence, which was to serve as a venue for individuals to seek protection from discriminatory practices, such as being denied access to certain housing or jobs due to race or religion. Unfortunately, CHRC officials began to assume powers outside of their original venues, most notably censorship powers that flew in the face of all traditions of free speech and fair comment.

The CHRCs are unlike regular Canadian courts. Anyone can file a complaint, even if one is not a direct victim of alleged discrimination. The plaintiff does not have to pay any legal fees whatsoever— the taxpayers foot the entire bill. Defendants, however, must pay their own legal bills, as well as any damages that the CHRC courts see fit to award. As Levant quips, “the process is the punishment.” Many defendants face economic ruin if they dare to defend themselves. This has led to significant exploitation, as CHRC tribunals have imposed substantial damages for bizarre offenses. In one case, a small printing company was prosecuted for refusing to print pro-pedophilia publications. In another, a pastor was sentenced to make an insincere apology and publicly renounce his religious beliefs after a litigant took offense to his writings.

Levant himself came under fire from the CHRCs for printing the “Danish cartoons” in his coverage of the story in his news magazine The Weekly Standard, arguing that their presence was vital if he was to thoroughly and accurately report on the situation and inform readers of what precisely was causing so much controversy. Litigation and CHRC charges followed, and Levant decided to fight the charges despite the prevailing wisdom that informed Levant that fighting the CHRCs could lead only to destitution. Levant gained attention by posting videos of his CHRC interrogation on YouTube and by posting editorials and news on his blog, ezrlevant.com. Levant gradually gained supporters, particularly amongst other writers who chafed against the CHRC exercising censorship powers over them, often not because their work was libelous or genuinely bigoted, but because it was politically incorrect.

Despite Levant’s consistently critical tone, his attitude overall is clearly one of “with malice towards none.” Levant has no patience with racial or religious bigotry, as he clearly
illustrates in his work, but he insists that the best way to deal with such social blights is through speaking out against them.

Many U.S. citizens are unaware that the United States’ First Amendment free speech rights are an anomaly in the world. Most nations, including Canada, lack the absolute protections to unrestricted expression that Americans enjoy. Many Canadian pundits argue that restrictions on speech are necessary in order to prevent minority groups from being exposed to “hatred and contempt.” Levant wholeheartedly rejects this assumption, pointing out that contrary to the assertions of many CHRC officials, there is no legally viable “right to not be offended.”

Levant’s battle against the CHRCs has come at a heavy price. The constant litigation against him has cost him thousands of dollars. Thankfully for him, in the months since Shakedown was first published, the abuses of the CHRC have received unprecedented media attention, and several legal victories have followed, although the CHRC bureaucracy still maintains much of its self-appointed power. Levant has gained many allies, such as Mark Steyn, a prominent commentator and fellow victim of the CHRCs. Steyn’s introduction to Shakedown bristles with moral indignation at how well-placed bureaucrats have managed to turn political correctness into a truncheon in order to pummel their opponents. This poses a moral conundrum for many readers. How many of us would imperil our financial status and subject ourselves to the constant stress of litigation in order to defend others’ civil liberties?

Levant’s work does need occasional clarification. There are some places in his narrative where the reader would benefit from additional background information. Some added details regarding the differences between the legal systems of Canada and the United States would have made the book easier for American audiences to understand. There are also several instances of repetition—some incidents are described multiple times.

Shakedown is informative and impassioned without being strident or mean-spirited. It is, quite simply, a denunciation of the idea that censorship is a necessary and vital tool to prevent social conflict. Instead, Levant advances the argument that complete freedom of debate is necessary for a society to peacefully and honestly confront its problems and disagreements. Levant clearly and justifiably loves his country, and this book is an attempt to save his fellow Canadians from the specter of censorship.

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Melissa Nobles offers us a fresh and vibrant perspective on the importance of official state apologies. Analyzing their many dimensions and nuances, she looks at Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States, and how these countries defined their native/minority group’s legal, political, and affective membership status within the community up to the 1960s. She declares that these original membership definitions led to the perpetuation of major injustices and inequalities, arguing that the terms and conditions of national membership have to change for natives/minorities to improve their overall position within the community.

Nobles focuses on the national membership of natives/minorities over the centuries to develop her theoretical framework, and demonstrates how prior to the 1960s each of the four Western governments attempted to subjugate and assimilate the natives/minorities. Nobles contends that even though the four governments had policies of separation and neglect, their real intent was cultural assimilation and socio-economic destruction.

National history is a critical element to official apologies, and the author writes that official government policies presuppose a fundamental change in historical perspective, lead to a change in the public’s perspective, and open up the door for future policies to correct past injustices. Nobles analyzes the convergence of a number of important factors that appeared after WWII which altered the political landscape and popular views of natives/minorities. She notes that there was a combination of changed values and perspectives among the political elites, as well as a recognition that past native/minority policies had grievously failed and were now clearly seen as immoral and unjust. She also states that the native/minority groups became better organized and learned how to work within the political system in a more effective manner, and concludes that this combination of political elite evolution and native/minority organization led to significant changes from the 1960s to the present.

Declaring that formal government apologies are far more important than any other apologies in that they signify a more comprehensive change in state policies and attitudes towards the aggrieved, Nobles focuses on the political elites and their essential role in making official apologies. She points out that the natives/minorities may or may not request an official apology, but it is the political elites’ decision on whether to make the apology. The author downplays a very fundamental actor in this entire equation—the general public. Although Nobles acknowledges a place for the general public in the overall results/effects, she deals very little with the importance of the grassroots—both the majority and the native/minority groups—in deciding on whether to make official apologies and how to follow-up on the apologies. This leaves the question as to whether Nobles is suggesting that the general public is irrelevant to the overall process or that it is completely submissive to the declarations of the political elite. This in particular gets into the issue of what follows from an official apology, since any substance and reparations would require large amounts of public money and resources, and would indeed require the majority public’s support. Nobles’ top-down approach seems inadequate to the task and begs a grassroots factor within her theoretical model. Without the general public’s critical role in finalizing the deals with the natives/minorities,
Nobles’ book ends essentially with official apologies and a lot of dissatisfaction and unfinished business, especially from the viewpoint of the natives/minorities.

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