Interactive Problem-Solving Approaches

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Problem-Solving

- Is a strategy for achieving a goal

- Individual problem-solving
  mental representation and mental computation

- Group problem-solving
  (re)framing problem and generating solutions
  fostering diverse perspectives and information

- Competition vs. cooperation
  whose solution will dominate, versus framing
  as joint problem to solve
Collaborative Problem-Solving Approaches: range

- Intercommunal conflict, using societal influentials
- Intracommunity conflict, using faction leaders
- Organizational conflict
- Public policy conflicts, using leaders of stakeholding groups
- Dialogue
Collaborative Problem-Solving Approaches: characteristics

- Interdependent parties seeking integrative solutions
- Confidential
- Third party facilitation
- Strategically involves influentials as participants
- Discuss issues without negotiating solutions: discuss concerns, possible solutions, and constraints to those solutions
- Parallel to, with input into, official decision-making processes
Collaborative Problem-Solving in Protracted Social Conflicts

- Includes aforementioned characteristics, *plus*
- Focuses on addressing basic human needs
- Considers intersocietal rather than interstate nature of conflict
Protracted Social Conflicts

- Azar: “hostile interactions which extend over long periods of time with sporadic outbreaks of open warfare fluctuating in frequency and intensity”
- Deep-seated religious, racial, and ethnic animosities; rights are asserted and sought through identities
- Structural inequalities & political power differences, resulting in differential distribution of rewards among societal groups
- Domination, discrimination & victimization are linked to group identity
- Negative and escalatory interaction
“The real source of conflict is the denial of those human needs that are common to all and whose pursuit is an ontological drive in all… [especially] security, distinctive identity, social recognition of identity, and effective participation in processes that determine the conditions of security of identity” (Azar, 1985)
Figure 2. Actors and Approaches to Peacebuilding.
**Actors & Approaches to Peacebuilding (Lederach, 1997)**

### Types of Actors
- **Level 1: Top Leadership**
  - Focus on high-level negotiations
  - Emphasizes cease-fire
  - Led by highly-visible, single mediator

- **Level 2: Middle-Range Leadership**
  - Problem-solving workshops
  - Training in conflict resolution
  - Peace commissions
  - Insider–partial teams

- **Level 3: Grassroots Leadership**
  - Local peace commissions
  - Grassroots training
  - Prejudice reduction
  - Psychosocial work in postwar trauma

### Actors
- **Military/political/religious/leaders with high visibility**
- **Leaders respected in sectors**
  - Ethnic/religious leaders
  - Academics/intellectuals
  - Humanitarian leaders (NGOs)
- **Local leaders**
  - Leaders of indigenous NGOs
  - Community developers
  - Local health officials
  - Refugee camp leaders
Interactive problem-solving approaches are unofficial, off-the-record, face-to-face meetings between typically influential members of adversarial groups, where a third party facilitates the participants working through a structured agenda for analyzing their conflict, testing assumptions, and generating new insights and policy options.
Problem-Solving in PSCs: Shapers

- Burton
- Doob
- Kelman
- Cohen
- Rouhana
- Fisher
Problem-Solving in PSCs: Shape

- Different *kind* and *focus* of interaction
- Maximize education
  - Norms of communication
    - Elicit by context/setting, Size of group, Ground rules, Modeling by 3rd party
  - Learn about others
    - Agenda, informal time
- Maximize transfer
  - Participants
  - Preparation
  - Seating
  - Written outputs
Problem-Solving in PSCs: Basic Design Elements

- Topic and communication
- Participants
- Setting
- Time frame and timing
- Third party role
- Agenda
Problem-Solving in PSCs: Examples

- Indonesia/Singapore/Malaysia
- Cyprus
- Israel–Palestine
- Egypt–Israel
- Lebanon
- Sri Lanka
- US–Soviet Union
- Tajikistan
- Hopi–Navajo
- Ethiopia
Problem-solving in PSCs: Critiques

- Reentry
- Transfer/relevance/macro-level change
- Research and evaluation
- How define success
- Perpetuates existing power relations
“When dialogue becomes a substitute for action, there are two results. First, it assuages the conscience of members of the oppressor group to the point where they feel they do not have to do anything else. The conscience is soothed and satisfied. On the other hand, for the members of the oppressed group it becomes a safety valve for venting frustrations. In both cases it becomes a means of reinforcing the existing oppression and therefore serves to perpetuate it.” (Kuttab, 1988)
Modifications and developments

- Reinforce change
- Provide networks
- Extend engagement over time (Rouhana & Kelman)
- Include affect (Chataway, 2004)
- Increase effective transfer to official track (Chataway, 2002; Fisher, 2006)
- Focus on meso-level as entry to structural change (d’Estree et al, 2001, 2006)
- Re-emphasize action research dimension (Fisher, 2004)
Peacemaking and Peacebuilding

- Create the conditions for not only *negative peace* (the absence of violence) but also *positive peace* (the structural conditions that promote just intergroup relationships) (Galtung)

- Is about changing human beings and human institutions in a constructive direction
Change

- requires both force and direction – motivation and action
- Providing only motivation without a path forward results in inertia and/or anxiety
- Ripeness without readiness will not lead to any conciliatory action (Pruitt)
Peacebuilding tasks

- Change attitudes, perceptions, relationships: change the willingness to engage/partner contact, dialogue
- Jointly develop solutions to problems: identify the path forward integrative negotiation
- Change structures (policies, laws, institutional practices): provide hope that the path is sustainable and partnerships to work toward these goals
Peacebuilding tasks

- Change attitudes, perceptions, relationships: change the willingness to engage/partner problem-solving approaches (?)
- Jointly develop solutions to problems: identify the path forward problem-solving approaches (?)
- Change structures (policies, laws, institutional practices): provide hope that the path is sustainable and partnerships to work toward these goals problem-solving approaches (?)