

CCER Working Paper Series
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"Insight Literature Review"

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May 5, 2012

In 2007 as a student of Reconciliation at Trinity Dublin in Belfast, I was harrowed by the destruction ravaged by America's War on Terror--the countless suicide bombings in Afghanistan and Iraq, the ripple of war in Parisian protests and British plots, the persistent unwillingness of anyone to learn or to change, the unyielding call for victory. As reconciliation is about repairing relationships, I was hopeful that within the field I could find answers and resources for figuring out how my country, America, could set policies to bridge their divides rather than keep on burning bridges. I set out to write my Master's thesis on a concept I idealistically imagined would be called "Global Reconciliation," and a path out of the War on Terror I would forge.

My high hopes for changing the world began to crumble when I found that the field of Reconciliation was rather out of order. There were all kinds of ideas about reconciliation, about healing social division, particularly in the form of what types of activities would be required, but there was no method. Each thinker was on a different page, contesting each other's definitions and recipes to the point where the literature revealed that rather than holding hope, reconciliation as an idea and an aspiration was starting to fall apart. People were using the term to talk about the kitchen sink, so much so that scholars and practitioners were beginning to throw it out, opting for "coexistence" or "shalom" instead.

It became clear to me that I would not be applying reconciliation theory to the War on Terror with any reliability, so my task became sorting out what was going on in

the current thinking on reconciliation. What I found consistent within what was otherwise inconsistent was a conceptualization of reconciliation as a static thing. But I, frustratingly on yet another page, intuited reconciliation to be a function of the dynamic relationships that characterize a conflict, which was why recipes for reconciliation were unsatisfactory. Relationships and contexts of conflict and healing are unique. They have to be treated that way. I discovered in 2008 that the Insight approach to conflict resolution thought so too.

The Insight Approach

The Insight approach is a new development in the field of conflict analysis and resolution. Based on the critical reflexive philosophy of Bernard Lonergan, it seeks to explain what we are doing when we are in conflict and when we disengage from it. From this framework our attention and curiosity is directed toward the way we make meaning, value, and decide how to act in unique contexts of peace and conflict.

Bernard Lonergan writes in *Method in Theology*, “one does not understand the text because one has observed the rules but, on the contrary, one observes the rules in order to arrive at an understanding of the text.”¹ This subtle but profound distinction separates the Insight approach from other ideas I was finding on reconciliation. What the Insight approach offers are “rules” to observe in order to come to understand conflict and reconciliation, not rules to follow for their own sake. Those rules are grounded in the concrete experience of conscious operation and expressed in an emergent and evolving explanatory framework that captures our concrete and subjective experience in the world.

¹ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 159.

The turn to the subject is an anchor of the Insight approach and a crucial development in the conflict resolution field. Price expands on this in two articles to be published this year. The first is “Completing the Turn to the Subject In Conflict Analysis and Resolution: The Insight Approach to Problem-Solving Workshops”.² In it he argues that while Burton’s human needs theory begins with the subject and intends to situate the subject at the center of his analysis, his ontological objectification of needs foils that project. By drawing on critical reflexive philosophy, Price brings the subject back in noting that people cannot pursue basic needs without the hearts and minds to do so. In his second article, he and Bartoli show the development in the conflict field from the logical deduction of realism to an emerging science of conflict resolution grounded in the empirical data of how we experience.³ This development shifts our focus from the external world to the subjective and intersubjective world and has implications for how we build policies and procedures that cultivate peace and security rather than reify conflict divisions.

At this point it is critical that I mention that for some thinkers, theorists, and practitioners the notion that “people have minds and use them,” that attending to the cognitive experience of the subject is crucial for the critical control of meaning-making, screams red flag. There is an established body of literature devoted to challenging the idea that our minds are *a priori*, the primary locus and initiator of reality. Certainly critical reflexive philosophy does not take that view. “Meaning,” Lonergan writes, “is

² Jamie Price, “Completing the Turn to the Subject In Conflict Analysis and Resolution: The Insight Approach to Problem-Solving Workshops” in *Beyond Basic Human Needs: Implications for Theory and Practice*, (New York: Routledge) forthcoming 2013.

³ Jamie Price and Andrea Bartoli, “Spiritual Values, Sustainable Security, and Conflict Analysis,” in *The Routledge Handbook on Religion and Security*” (New York: Routledge), forthcoming 2012.

embodied and carried in human intersubjectivity.”⁴ However, for him and for the Insight approach, the intersubjective, social and collective nature of reality does not discount the conscious, cognitive and affective operations of the subject, who knows, values and decides to act concretely in the world. The cognitive dimension of the Insight approach needs to be more explicitly situated within this debate.

For now, though, my efforts to attend to, understand, and verify the data of my own cognitional experience has convinced me that the Insight approach offers a promising explanatory framework for understanding how we dynamically function in conflict and in reconciliation. In fact I explored this very topic in a paper delivered to the 18th annual Symposium on Conflict Resolution in Ottawa.⁵

If the Insight approach is the methodological answer to how we heal social division, then my next task is to test it. That will occupy the form of my dissertation project. While in my experience the Insight approach provides an accurate account of how I come to know, decide to act and ultimately interact in the world, my question is: is my conclusion generalizable? Can the Insight approach, as one that contends concreteness, be empirically validated?

But before I can test it, I need to determine where the thinking on Insight is now. As it is based in the epistemology of critical reflexive philosophy, the Insight approach does not depend on the observance of rules, or first principles, whereby the nature of conflict can be logically deduced. Rather, as articulated by Price and Bartoli, the Insight approach is part of an emerging science of conflict resolution that is grounded not in

⁴ Lonergan, *Method*, 57.

⁵ Megan Price, “How Insight Theory Can Make a Difference in How We Reconcile,” Delivered February 6, 2009 at the 18th Annual Symposium on Conflict Resolution sponsored by Carlton and St. Paul Universities in Ottawa, Canada.

logic, but in empirical experience. As such, the Insight approach, like any experiment, has gone through a succession of cumulative hypotheses, each one generating insights towards a more adequate understanding of what we are doing when we are in conflict and what we are doing when we are disengaging from it. This succession is by no means complete.

My goal here is to map the Insight approach. What follows, then, is a review of a decade of work on the Insight approach and the concrete experience of conflict and resolution that it strives to explain. The literature review and intellectual history I present represents its development—where it came from, how it began, how it developed and where it is going—particularly to show that the project of my dissertation, an effort to empirically ground the approach, is apropos.

As a project of history, I am consciously engaging in a particular functional specialty. I do not explicate the meaning of the Insight approach or formulate its foundations—those I leave to the exegetes and the frame-setters. Here I lay out from its origins its forward movement.

Origins

It all began in Ottawa circa 2002. Cheryl Picard, an expert mediator and professor at Carleton University, was wondering what it was about how she practiced that got disputing parties to resolve their conflicts. In a lot of ways she identified with the interest-based approaches that prioritized helping parties fix the problem by attending to the interests that underlie conflict positions. But for Picard, the interest-based approach could

not explain her experience of the depth of the issues, the idea that people are motivated by self-interest did not seem to satisfy, nor did it adequately attend to the relationships that she noticed animated conflicts. When Bush and Folger came out with *The Promise of Mediation*⁶, Picard thought—yes, empowerment and recognition are what transform conflict interactions. And when Winslade and Monk published their book on narrative mediation⁷, she thought, this must be it. But the more she read and compared and practiced, the less affinity she found with those approaches. Where the interest-based approach did not penetrate to the adequate depth, the transformative and narrative approaches advocated side-stepping the problem so to avoid further entrenching it. In contrast, Picard was finding that conflict relationships change when parties are able to face their problems directly and understand them fully.

This kind of reflective practice is a foundational piece of the Insight approach.⁸ Not only is Lonergan’s critical reflexive philosophy grounded in the normative practice of self-appropriation,⁹ which attends to intentional consciousness—what we are doing when we are doing it—but it is in line with current trends in the social sciences. Finlay and Gough, the editors of *Reflexivity*, contend that researchers come to know their subjects from subjective positions.¹⁰ Reflexivity is critical awareness of subjective positions and decisions *in the moment*, which reduces bias and promotes authentic understanding. Reflective practice is the practice of critically recalling what one has

⁶ Roger Bush and Joseph Folger, *The Promise of Mediation: Responding to Conflict through Empowerment and Recognition*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994).

⁷ John Winslade and Gerald Monk, *Narrative Mediation*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001).

⁸ See Morag McConville, “Reflexivity as a Method to Empirically Validate ‘Insight’: An Introductory Primer” (Ottawa: Working Paper, Unpublished, 2009).

⁹ See Bernard Lonergan’s *Method* as well as Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, Collected Works vol. 3, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1992).

¹⁰ Linda Finlay and Brendan Gough *Reflexivity*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003).

already done. Picard's search to articulate her method is an instance of reflective practice with the aim of reflexivity.

Her method began to come together theoretically when Kenneth Melchin, a Lonergan scholar, theologian and ethicist at St. Paul University saw what Picard was doing when she mediated. He told her that she was right. She was not negotiating interests, or helping parties recognize one another, or co-creating new non-conflict narratives. Picard was helping people in conflict get insights.¹¹

Melchin saw Picard's practice through the lens of critical reflexive philosophy, which puts forth a cognitional theory that observes that as people, we have minds and we use them. Even though we have minds and we use them, most often we are unaware of what we are doing when we are using them unless we are intentionally attentive to it. In the flow of everyday life, we tend to be swept away by the content of our consciousness rather than the way our minds are operating on that content. Lonergan's cognitional theory involves the theoretical objectification of consciousness, giving us the opportunity to be reflexive about how our minds move. When we become reflexive about how our minds move, we can begin to see patterns in how our minds and the minds of others move as well. While the content of our consciousness—comprised, for example, of our hopes, fears, experiences, expectations, knowledge, understanding—is unique to each individual, its flow is patterned. Melchin recognized the flow of the operations of consciousness in Picard's mediation changing when parties got insights. The insights parties were getting expanded their understanding of not only themselves, but of the other party and the situation that was locking them into conflict, opening up the possibility of acting in new ways that no longer necessitated conflict.

¹¹ Personal conversations.

Melchin and Picard collaborated on the analysis of a full-length mediation role-play to pull out with more precision what the mediator was doing when she was facilitating conflict resolution and what the parties were doing when they were opening their horizons. A strategy of reflective practice, this role-play formed the basis for early writings on the Insight approach to mediation, which was the Insight approach's first designation.¹²

Picard and Melchin discovered that what was happening in mediation was that parties were getting insights and that they were learning in such a way as to ultimately delink "the perception that the other's cares and concerns must necessarily be a threat to their own."¹³ Mediators, therefore, were thought of as "learning-facilitators" and parties who were resolving their conflicts were being helped to get insights that would delink certainty around threats.¹⁴

This early articulation focused on learning about cares that threaten. And while it was a novel way to understand mediation, Picard struggled to differentiate it from interest-based approaches. In the mediation textbook, *The Art and Science of Mediation*, she and her coauthors identify Insight to be "like other interest-based approaches" particularly in its attention to helping parties reach an agreement.¹⁵ "What differentiates it... is that its goal is to help parties gain insight into the cares and concerns that underlie the conflict situation," which, rather than bargaining for a deal, ultimately changes the relationship between parties.¹⁶ The five stages of the insight mediation, though, candidly

¹² See Cheryl Picard, *Mediating Interpersonal and Small Group Conflict* (Ottawa: Golden Dog Press, 2002).

¹³ Cheryl Picard, "Learning About Learning," in *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, vol. 20, no. 4, 2003. 480.

¹⁴ Picard, "Learning About Learning," 482.

¹⁵ Cheryl Picard et al., *The Art and Science of Mediation*. (Toronto: Edmond Montgomery Publications, 2004). 120.

¹⁶ Picard, *Art and Science*, 120.

drew on the language of interests. Its third and fourth stages were “seeking insight into interests” and “collaborating to meet interests.” The differences between cares, or sometimes called values, and interests was also unrefined.

Explicit that the Insight approach to mediation shared many things with other approaches, and that “each model of mediation has its merits and its place,” sorting out exactly how the discovery that insight mediations were learning-based distinguished it from the others was still in its early stages.¹⁷ It was not until *Transforming Conflict through Insight* (2008) that Insight mediation was able to clearly differentiate itself from the language of interest-based approaches.

Insights

The publication of *Transforming Conflict through Insight* (2008) was a pivotal moment for the Insight approach. Not only did the work clearly differentiate Insight from other approaches to mediation, it laid out foundational components and opened the door for the application of the approach beyond interpersonal and small group conflict. What follows are some of the key ideas from *Transforming Conflict through Insight*, and how they have been built upon and developed in the four years since its publication.

Grounding the Insight approach, as mentioned above, is the method of self-appropriation. Melchin and Picard are explicit that Lonergan’s philosophy is not a philosophy of precepts or of the nature of things, it is a philosophical method of self-understanding. “It involves a process of reflecting on ourselves as we go about our

¹⁷ Kenneth Melchin and Cheryl Picard, “Insight Mediation, 2007. “Insight Mediation: A Learning-Centered Mediation Model” In *Negotiation Journal*. vol. 23, no. 1, 2007. 39.

experiences of daily life... The focus of [this reflection] is our personal acts of understanding.”¹⁸ Lonergan’s cognitional theory identifies four levels of conscious operation: experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding. Once we experience something—Melchin and Picard use the example of a crossword puzzle—so let’s say the clue to a crossword puzzle, our minds generate ideas to understand the clue that we have just read. These are insights—they are the answer to the question “what did I just experience?” and they are the basis for our understanding. The next thing we do is judge, or verify, whether our insight fits. If it does not fit, we get an inverse insight, an understanding that we were heading down the wrong path and need to ask the question again. Once we are satisfied that we have the answer and that it fits into the puzzle—that “it is so”—we ask ourselves what to do about it. Likely we will decide to write in the answer and progress to the next clue.¹⁹

We normally do not pay attention to these operations, we mostly pay attention to the objects or data that our operations are operating on. We focus on the puzzle and the clue and the letters and how they fit, not on what we are doing when we are seeking to understand, verifying if our understanding is correct and deciding what to do about it. In the case of a puzzle, we are more likely to notice our operations than in other daily activities, because we are directly engaged in trying to get insights in order to figure it out. When we do a load of wash, we zip through our operations, because the activity is one that we already are familiar with and does not require many novel insights. The example of the puzzle though demonstrates that our operations are within our field of

¹⁸ Melchin and Picard, *Transforming Conflict through Insight* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008) 51.

¹⁹ Melchin and Picard, *Transforming Conflict through Insight*, 51.

experience, so it is possible to pay attention to what we are doing as we are puzzling through a crossword puzzle, or coming to understand any situation we face.

The generation of insights through the performance of understanding is the basis of the Insight approach, particularly in its articulation in *Transforming Conflict through Insight*. This is because insights are the answers to the questions of understanding posed by experience. They form the basis for what we know. In conflict we have gotten insights that we have verified to be true, and those insights paint a particular story. Melchin and Picard have identified that story to be one where cares—our deeply held values that “are what matter to us, what we care about, what animate our lives”—are threatened by what we interpret to be the cares of others.²⁰ This conception of conflict has been refined since, and I will come back to that refinement. For now, though, what Melchin and Picard noticed was that often the defensiveness with which we protect the cares that we interpret to be under threat leads us to verify that we have a complete story when really it is incomplete. If mediators were able to facilitate new insights into the stories of threat that were locking parties in conflict, new, more adequate understanding—learning—would take place that would open parties up to new ways of relating and interacting.

The incredible thing about insights, according to Melchin and Picard, is that “once achieved, [they] reshape the way we experience... data the next time around.”²¹ Insights shift horizons, “they involve a shift that is often so complete... [that] before the insight, we cannot imagine what it was like to understand, and after the insight, we find it difficult to remember what it was like not to understand.”²² Getting new insights into the

²⁰ Melchin and Picard, *Transforming Conflict through Insight*, 70, 82.

²¹ Melchin and Picard, *Transforming Conflict through Insight*, 58.

²² Melchin and Picard, *Transforming Conflict through Insight*, 52.

meanings we make in conflict, therefore, has the potential to dramatically shift our understanding of those meanings to the point where the conflict becomes obsolete.

Picard encountered this time and again in her practice. Parties got insights. They learned by paying attention to their own insights and the insights of the other party that the threat they were interpreting was not necessarily going to lead to the dire future they were imagining. This certainty became delinked by these insights and the parties left the mediation with a new kind of relationship ready for new patterns of interaction.

The idea that insights ground how we move in and out of conflict generated a number of further questions.

Melchin and Price, took on the question of whether delinking threat through insight could happen on a scale more complex than interpersonal conflict. In “Recovering Sargent Shriver’s Vision for Poverty Law” Price and Melchin seek to explain an unexpected collaboration between poverty lawyers at the Shriver Center for Poverty Law and the community organizers of United Power over the Illinois FamilyCare Campaign. The Illinois FamilyCare Campaign was legislation intended to provide health coverage to the working poor, an issue that both groups had been working toward independently. Despite the many reasons why the two groups would be unlikely collaborators, they created a successful coalition that helped pass FamilyCare legislation. While the article relies heavily on an interpersonal framework to explain the conflict/collaboration dynamics between two groups of policy makers, it takes the first step in applying the Insight approach in the social realm.

In a different kind of effort to understand the potential contribution of the Insight approach to how we understand, value and decide to act in conflict situations, I wondered

what cognitive psychologists had to say about our cognitive operations and the cognitive capacity we have in conflict. In a paper delivered at the 2011 Spirituality, Reconciliation, and Emergent Creativity conference in Ottawa, I explored the compatibility of “schema” to Insight’s “interpretive framework.”²³ Cognitive psychologists have observed that schemas are cognitive mechanisms that automatically order what we perceive, allowing us to efficiently process data and interpret it. Without these mechanisms our senses would be continuously overwhelmed by the onslaught of the external world. Through cognition we figure out—by insights as it were—what to pay attention to and what to leave aside. Cognitive psychologists call what we do when we leave information aside “selective perception.” We tend to pay little attention to those things that do not fit into our schemas for understanding. In conflict this contributes to positions of certainty that we are under threat, which makes it difficult to get new insights without the help of outside curiosity.

From this wondering, I presented a paper on the function of trauma in conflict to George Mason graduate students working on the problem of veteran integration on college campuses.²⁴ Traumatic experiences lead people to become hyperaware of potential threat and to inappropriately respond in defensive ways. These defend responses tend to generate conflict with others, resulting in alienation and the actualization of many of the dire futures their responses were intended to defend against. Understanding the way trauma functions to pattern how we understand and know bears on how we can deal constructively with trauma populations, including veterans. We can become curious about threatening meanings to spur the generation of transformative insights and prevent potential conflict.

²³ Melchin and Picard, *Transforming Conflict through Insight*, 60.

²⁴ Megan Price, “Deployments to Degrees: Understanding the Function of Trauma in Conflict,” Working Paper, unpublished, 2011.

Sargent also drafted a working paper in 2011 that explores more fully the function of insights in learning, drawing particularly on Argyris and Schon's work on single and double loop learning.²⁵ They find that in the single loop, we learn new things within our existing schemas. We learn things that confirm the frameworks we have built from which we understand and know. Double loop learning is where horizons can shift and new patterns of interaction can emerge. Where Argyris and Schon rely on the skill of thinkers to frame problems in ways that access the double loop, the Insight approach contends that generating insights for a more adequate understanding of how we make meaning and come to know will impel double loop learning. Sargent and I intend to collaborate on a paper that integrates the discoveries of cognitive psychology and the Insight approach in the coming months.

Insights to Decisions

The attention that *Transforming Conflict through Insight* gave to the operation of understanding led it to formulate conflict positions as “answers to questions” based on “misunderstanding what parties truly care about.”²⁶ It is true that Lonergan describes each operation of consciousness as responding to the question posed by the preceding operation. Upon experiencing, we seek to understand by asking ourselves “what is it?” and to verify, we ask “is it so?” Similarly upon verifying that what we have understood is right, we value what we now know by asking ourselves, “is it good?” Then we wonder, “what can I do about it?” in our deliberations; “which option is best?” in our evaluations,

²⁵ Chris Argyris and Donald Schon, *Theory in Practice: Increasing Professional Effectiveness* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1974).

²⁶ Melchin and Picard, *Transforming Conflict through Insight*, 57, 73.

and “will I do it?” in our moment of decision. Our minds flow from experiencing to acting in this way, though we are rarely attentive to the questions we are asking ourselves. Furthermore, the way that we ask ourselves is not strictly through an intellectual question, but is often through the feelings we have about what we experience, know and do.

So indeed, conflict positions are answers to questions. However, what Price discerned while co-teaching a 2008 advanced skills course with Picard at Carleton, was that conflict positions are not answers to the questions that precede knowing, but answers to the questions that precede doing. Insights, therefore, shape the understanding upon which a person decides what to do, but conflict positions are the manifestations of decisions to act in ways that protect threatened cares. This insight differentiated two levels of consciousness that had been inadvertently collapsed. It differentiated the reflective level of consciousness—the level on which we experience, understand and verify—from the existential level of consciousness—the level on which we value what we know, deliberate options for what to do, evaluate the best option, and decide to do it.

This breakthrough led to Price’s depiction of the operations of consciousness as a “looping” figure “8.” While the “loop” has yet to be published, he has been refining and teaching the development since 2010. The lower loop represents the reflective operations of consciousness and the upper loop, the existential operations. Price writes in “Circulating Grace: Healing, Creating and Lonergan’s Economics,” that “we don’t just learn things. Our conscious operations do not just come to a halt after we have engaged at the levels of experiencing, understanding and judging. Spontaneously, we engage emotionally with what we have learned or come to know. We register feelings that usher

us into a new level of conscious operation: a level on which we grasp insights into possible courses of action, use our minds to evaluate those options, and decide what we are going to say or do.”²⁷ In the same article he expands on the relevance of our decisions. They are the means by which “we become who we are that constitute the worlds of meaning in which we live.”²⁸

Our decisions and actions are how we move in the world among other people. Decisions to act become interactions that establish meaning, which as I noted earlier is understood by critical reflexive philosophy to be “embodied and carried in human intersubjectivity.”²⁹ What we do, as Price points out, is patterned by the way we “register feelings” or value the insights that we have determined to be true. The emergence of the existential loop has had implications for the Insight approach’s definition of conflict.

Values to Valuing

Transforming Conflict through Insight describes “conflicts [to] arise when we believe that our cares are threatened by those of others.”³⁰ This has also been formulated as an experience of “threat-to-care.” The contention of *Transforming Conflict through Insight* is that “understanding values can change how we experience conflict.”³¹ If we can become curious and self-reflective about our cares and the cares of others, we generate

²⁷ Jamie Price, “Circulating Grace: Resources for a Just Economy” in *The Lonergan Review*, vol. 2, no 1, 2010. 332.

²⁸ Jamie Price, “Circulating Grace: Resources for a Just Economy,” 332.

²⁹ Lonergan, *Method*, 57.

³⁰ Melchin and Picard, *Transforming Conflict through Insight*, 82.

³¹ Melchin and Picard, *Transforming Conflict through Insight*, 83. Cares here are synonymous with values, though the language was changed in an effort to distinguish the values of Insight with values of interest-based approaches.

insights, we learn and we end up with a better understanding of the conflict. A better understanding leads to new non-conflict patterns of interaction.

In this conception cares are meaning objects. They constitute data for our operations of consciousness. Melchin and Picard explain how cares are consciously operated on by each of four levels: experiencing, understanding, verifying and deciding. As objects of our experience, both our own cares and the cares of others elicit feelings in us. As objects of our understanding, we discover the narratives surrounding cares. Cares are rooted in personal and cultural history and “carry implicit ideas of how things ought or ought not to be.”³² When we verify cares, not only do we ask ourselves if we have understood the narratives that support our values correctly, but we ask ourselves if our values adequately portray who we are and who we reasonably and responsibly want to be.³³ As objects for decision, we ask ourselves if we want to stand by our values.³⁴

When conflict is a matter of conflicting cares, together with the observation that cares often coexist peacefully, the logical conclusion is that if we can understand them better as anchors of who we are and how we see the world, they can coexist. But what about when cares can’t coexist? When my well understood deep care is incompatible with your well understood deep care? For example, Ahmadinejad’s deep care that Israel be obliterated is clearly incompatible with Israel’s deep care to persist. The thing about Insight is that it wants to know more about that deep care. It wants to probe into the narrative—the experience, feelings and expectations—that makes Ahmadinejad so sure that Israel’s nonexistence will make things better for him. This information is not really just about a clash of cares, it is about what sense Ahmadinejad is making of Israel’s

³² Melchin and Picard, *Transforming Conflict through Insight*, 71.

³³ Melchin and Picard, *Transforming Conflict through Insight*, 73.

³⁴ Melchin and Picard, *Transforming Conflict through Insight*, 74.

existence, what dire future it forecasts, what ultimately what he thinks he needs to do in order to protect against it.

What Price's turn to the existential loop does is show that cares as objects are not the sticking points. The sticking point is in what Lonergan calls the "apprehension of value," and Price calls "valuing," which is how we feel about what we have come to know, and how that feeling shapes what we do about it. Our actions are what create conflict interactions, not our cares. While cares are essential components of the meanings we make and profoundly inform what we decide to do, it is the operation of valuing that Price differentiates in the existential loop that moves us from what we think we know to what we can imagine doing about it. Valuing poses the question: is it good? And animates the narrative structure of our knowing to tell us how to interpret the present and anticipate the future. What this move does is shift the focus from getting insights into cares, to getting insights into how we are valuing what we know in such a way that compels us to respond in ways that perpetuate conflict.

Unpublished research that Price and I conducted on an archive of 1969 War on Poverty tapes of a community dialogue process called Fogo in Greenville, Mississippi illustrates in real time that conflict is not so much incompatible cares, though it may appear that way, but a valuing of the situation as threatening to our cares, which motivates defensive responses that perpetuate the conflict interaction.

For four nights in the smoke filled room of a community center, unlikely community members from Washington County, Mississippi got together to discuss hunger. Poor women, liberal activists, businessmen, city council members, reverends, a school commissioner, the manager of a welfare office, people who would otherwise never

have the will or the opportunity to dialogue, did. The program was organized in such a way that individual interviews of 19 participants were taped and screened during four group sessions. After the final group discussion, individual recommendations were recorded and sent back to Washington. What was captured on tape was extraordinary. On display are the very instances when community members got insights into the way they were making sense of the problem of hunger in Washington County. Before the viewers eyes, their sense changes, as do the ways they imagine for themselves to respond. Revolutionary shifts in how participants understood took place and new, previously unimaginable, collaborative courses of action came to be seen as the right thing to do for Washington County. This research provides data for what happens when we get insights. Not only does our understanding shift, and as Sargent points out, double loop learning engages to imagine new frameworks, but how we value the situation shifts and moves us from conflict decisions that protect us against threat to collaborative decisions that engage us in creativity.

Understanding to Doing

The Insight approach has developed in the last four years from explaining that what we are doing when we resolve conflict is getting insights into what we know and care about, which gives us a more adequate understanding, to explaining that what we are doing when we resolve conflict is getting insights into what we know and care about, which changes how we value and then how we decide to act in the world. This has refined the definition of conflict from an experience of threatened cares, to what Price has

captured in a functional equation: $C = [At][dR]$.³⁵ Conflict equals the functional relationship between an apprehension of threat (instance of valuing what we know as threatening to what matters to us) and a defend response (the action we take to protect ourselves from a seemingly inevitable dire future). This equation is still in development, but its functional relationship encapsulates the beginnings of a method: an interpretive framework that can focus the questions we ask about conflict and peace so that we can develop research and interventions that build peace.

Price expands on the need to establish a method in which peacemakers can creatively and collaboratively yield progressive and cumulative results for peace in a book chapter titled, “Method in Peacemaking.”³⁶ He argues that the state of the field is much like the state of the natural sciences before Galileo’s mathematical breakthrough redirected scientific verification from deductive logic to inductive measurement. It was a breakthrough because Galileo asked revolutionary questions about how the natural world worked and formulated the tools and measurements by which so seek answers to those questions. In order to build peace, Price argues that the field needs a framework for asking the right questions and seeking answers to them. He submits that “the development of method in peacemaking calls for the identification and development of a critical, reflexive, philosophical framework that helps us to notice, identify, and verify the inner acts and patterns of consciousness associated with peacemaking in all its manifestations.”³⁷ Price is conscientious that more work needs to be done to “critically assess the range of models and approaches that might be helpful in developing the

³⁵ Presented in CONF 795, George Mason University, Spring 2012.

³⁶ Jamie Price, “Method in Peacemaking,” in Susan Allen Nan’s Book.

³⁷ Jamie Price, “Method in Peacemaking” in *Peacemaking: From Practice to Theory*, eds. Susan Allen Nan et al. (Praeger, 2011) 15.

critical, reflexive, philosophical framework.”³⁸ The conflict equation, however, is a piece of that puzzle, as it directs our attention to questions of how we value (apprehension of threat) and decide to act (defend response) to create an interaction of conflict. This opens up vast possibility for research and intervention.

While Price has been working on refining method in peacemaking, Picard and Jull have been refining the practice, applicable to both research and conflict intervention. “Learning through Deepening Conversations: A Key Strategy of Insight Mediation” sets forth the strategy that Insight mediators and researchers use to elicit information about how parties are making sense, valuing and deciding to act in conflict patterns. Through deepening conversations in which the mediator or researcher becomes intensely curious about the parties, parties have the opportunity to reflect on what they are doing in conflict situations. They begin to reflect on how they have come to decide to do what they are doing. By objectifying their operations of consciousness as data of experience itself, insights about it can be generated. In mediation and intervention settings, these insights have the potential to “delink” a party’s certainty that the situation they are facing is threatening to what they care about, shifting the imperative that they have to protect.³⁹ In a research setting, deepening conversations are not necessarily intended to delink, but to elicit information that sheds light on the conscious looping that has constructed the contours of the situation at hand.

For example, a recent evaluation project of the Insight Conflict Resolution Program at the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution in collaboration with CHF International used deepening strategies to understand what it is about CHF International’s

³⁸ Jamie Price, “Method in Peacemaking,” 17.

³⁹ Cheryl Picard and Marnie Jull, “Learning Through Deepening Conversations: A Key Strategy of Insight Mediation,” in *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, vol. 29, no 2, Winter 2011.

Participatory Action for Community Enhancement (PACE) programs that consistently lead to sustainable projects in some of the world's most conflicted regions. Where impact evaluations measure outcomes like sustainability—how often a community center is used, by how many people, the state of its maintenance—and Insight evaluation asks what it is about the policies and procedures of the program that lead people to use the community center often and keep up its maintenance. What the evaluation found in its evaluation of programs in the West Bank was that an historically rooted and pervasive mistrust between local government and community members on the one hand kept community members from supporting local government improvement initiatives, which fell into disrepair as a result. On the other hand the mistrust kept local government from including community members in their development decisions because their experience of the people's neglect was that the people neither care enough or know enough to decide what is good for them. This cycle of meaning motivated action and patterned interactions that inhibited the development of many West Bank communities. CHF's PACE programs delinked the certain knowing of threat of government and community members through a program of participation which allowed each side to generate insights and shift their horizons about how to best interact to develop their community.

In the instance of CHF, it was not that the cares of the community could not coexist with the cares of the government, or even that their cares clashed. In fact, both groups wanted a better life, but were unwilling to collaborate because of the motivations they attributed to the other. The functional definition of conflict, which pays explicit attention to the apprehension of value and decision to respond, pushes the definition of threatened cares towards a more adequate depiction of how conflict operates in the world.

It stretches it beyond interpersonal valuing and decision making to collective valuing and decision making.

Subject to Collective

The leap from figuring out what happens in interpersonal and small group conflict resolution and the conscious looping of the subject to large group conflict and “collective” looping takes practical shape in the CHF evaluation project. Sargent, Picard and Jull in one and Price in two others are exploring the relevance of a Lonerganian heuristic for patterns of cooperation that create and sustain social structures called “goods of order.” This has yet to be fully articulated. Once it is, it will further enhance the way the Insight approach is applicable to social contexts. Three efforts to help situate Insight in the social realm have taken shape.

The first is “Rethinking Conflict” by Sargent, Picard and Jull⁴⁰. Because the Insight approach speaks to the social world, Sargent, Picard and Jull sought to put the approach in conversation with experts on the social world: sociologists. This article lays out five perspectives of the Insight approach and grounds each perspective in sociological theory. The five perspectives are that conflict is relational, drawing on the symbolic interactionism of George Herbert Mead; conflict is dynamic and adaptive; conflict emerges from meaning-making; values are always operating in conflict; and communication involves interpretation as well as intention.

⁴⁰ Neil Sargent, Cheryl Picard and Marnie Jull, “Rethinking Conflict: Perspectives from the Insight Approach,” in *Negotiation Journal* 27, 3, 2011.

In the works currently is an effort by Price to articulate what the interactive and social character of conflict means for social structures and institutions. He begins this effort in “Practical Idealism: How Sargent Shriver Built the Peace Corps,” where he uses the example of Sargent Shriver’s development of the Peace Corps as an example of building institutions and structures—goods of order—that sustain peace, rather than conflict. These kinds of institutions, he contends, integrate policies and procedures that promote curiosity and delink threat, much like CHF International’s PACE programs. The policies and procedures of Peace Corps “facilitate the movement of what Shriver recognized as the conscious desire of all people to communicate effectively with each other: to hear and be heard, to connect and be connected.”⁴¹ Being heard and being connected are interactions that are consistently valued by people as nonthreatening, which leads to openness, curiosity, and creativity as opposed to defensiveness and conflict. By paying attention to the way valuing operates as we construct institutional policies and procedures is central to peacemaking, “for it is in *making* peace with others that we create the conditions for *building* the institutions and structures required to sustain it.”⁴²

A follow on effort and practical application of the Insight approach to social systems began this year under a Department of Justice grant to the Insight Conflict Resolution Program, which is headed by Price. The project, called the Retaliatory Violence Insight Project, is working with police departments in Memphis, Tennessee and Lowell, Massachusetts to develop Insight-based strategies that aim to shift the social

⁴¹ Jamie Price “Practical Idealism: How Sargent Shriver Built the Peace Corps” in *Commonweal*, vol. 139, no 3, February 10, 2012.

⁴² Price, “Practical Idealism,” 6.

patterns and institutions—the goods of order—that are sustaining retaliatory violence in economically distressed communities.

Further work needs to be completed to firmly ground the Insight approach in the complexity of social conflict. Questions about goods of order, collective looping, and social movement will greatly enhance its applicability.

Conclusion

As I have shown, ten years of intense noticing, seeking to understand, and verifying what has been understood has led Insight thinkers to progressively and cumulatively refine the pieces that make up the Insight approach to conflict resolution. On the horizon are a skills book by Picard and a method book by Price, both to be published this year. While the components of the approach are being formulated and reformulated in more adequate ways, the epistemological assumptions remain consistent. In order for Insight to advance its contribution to method in conflict resolution and reconciliation, the next step that I see for the approach is to enter it into conversation with other conflict epistemologies. Price refers to the need for this effort in “Method in Peacemaking” and Sargent, Picard and Jull begin it in “Rethinking Conflict.” What I propose to do is to take on that task in my dissertation.

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