CHILDREN AS PEACEBUILDERS:
THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF
YOUTH PEACE INITIATIVES IN RESOLVING
PROTRACTED SOCIAL CONFLICT

by

ED GILLIS, B.A. (Hon.)

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submitted by Edward W. Gillis as partial fulfilment
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Professor Fen Hampson, Director
The Norman Paterson School
of International Affairs

Professor David Long, Supervisor

Abstract

Because protracted social conflict is passed between generations, and learned by children through socialization and experience, the ideal locus of intervention into the cycle of conflict is in the development of children's evolving worldviews, before the social constructs of conflict have become rigidly embedded in their attitudes. This intervention can be undertaken through youth peace initiatives (YPIs) that positively transform the attitudes of 'enemy' children toward each other and toward their conflict. Elicitive facilitation, effective contact, the introduction of a viable peace dividend, and the adaptation of interactive conflict resolution workshops to children are used to achieve such transformation. A case study of *Seeds of Peace*, a prototypical YPI, serves as a plausibility probe for the assertion that YPIs can effect positive attitude change in children, and as a heuristic tool to instruct the theory and practice of YPIs by highlighting key conditions, challenges, and limitations.

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Introduction

If we are to have real peace, we must begin with the children.
– Mahatma Gandhi¹

When news broke in September 2000 that violence had resumed in the Middle East, scenes of Palestinian children – appearing as young as ten or eleven years old – angrily hurling stones at unseen targets, and being fired upon and occasionally hit by Israeli soldiers, left observers with a confused sadness. What could incite such young children to act so violently toward people they surely did not know? What led them to risk their lives in such a futile attempt to strike at a faceless enemy? When and how had the innocence and optimism of childhood been so profoundly shaken and replaced with hatred? The search for answers led to this thesis.

It led to the conclusion that children born into regions of protracted social conflict are taught prejudice, hatred, and violence from birth, and learn conflict as they develop the values, beliefs, and norms that will shape their adult worldview. From generation to generation, the conflict between ancient enemies is passed down, and the underlying origins of the conflict are largely lost behind emotion, rhetoric, and pride. The intergenerational cycle of conflict spirals more and more deeply into a tacitly accepted social phenomenon. Attempts to mediate or negotiate settlements between bitterly divided peoples are fragile, complicated, slow, and ineffective. While leaders bargain over seemingly irreconcilable positions, their people retain their resentment and hatred toward each other, and the conflict continues.

Armed conflict devastates people, families, communities, and nations. It not only obliterates the present, but it also mutilates the future. It shatters the lives of the current

¹ Quotation from <http://www.freethechildren.org/peace/resources/quotes.html>.

generation, and the dreams of the next. It destroys homes, buildings, and physical infrastructure, but most importantly, it destroys precious human and social capital that is not as easily rebuilt. Conflict takes many forms; most prominent since the end of the Cold War have been intra-state wars, over resources or political power, with loosely organized militias targeting overwhelmingly civilians. Some are fought over legitimate grievance, with underlying issues that require resolution. Others cloak various levels of greed – for wealth or power – beneath the rhetoric of grievance. Most are long-standing, protracted social conflicts between clearly identifiable, traditional enemies along ethnic, cultural, religious, or geographical lines. In all cases, there are many more victims than victors, and among those victims, an appalling proportion are children.

Children are exposed to horrific abuses and violations, and left with severe physical and psychological trauma from which they may never fully recover. Warring parties recruit, coerce, and abduct children as cannon fodder, suicide martyrs, spies, cooks, and sex slaves. UNICEF and children's rights groups commonly estimate that 300,000 children under the age of 18 are actively engaged in armed conflicts around the world (UNICEF 2000, 1). War's other nefarious effects on children are well documented in a UN-commissioned study by Graça Machel, *Impact of Armed Conflict on Children*. It found that over 2,000,000 children were killed in war in the 1990s, and that if war did not take a child's life, it took a child's family, security, or future.

Yet, children are not solely passive or coerced victims: they are also active participants, especially in wars driven by grievance. Children are the stone throwers and the front line rioters in Palestine and Northern Ireland. Although they represent a small proportion of the children in their society (Cairns 1996, 111), they are visible, and they attract the attention of the world to their plight. Those who recognize the benefits of such

attention place children at the front of the riots in order to win favour in the international media (ibid, 112). As a result, in the Palestinian intifada of the late 1990s, 'the vast majority of deaths, injuries and cases of imprisonment occur among the younger generation' (Darweish 1989). Similarly, in the South African struggle against apartheid, youth took up a substantial role in the resistance in the streets. Crackdowns by police led to the death of 300 children, the injury of 1,000, and the detention of 173,000 more.² Rioting is a collective act. It is very easy for children to get caught up in a riot without fully comprehending the potential consequences. Coupled with an underdeveloped death concept (Cairns 1996, 114), children are often willing to get involved in any group activity, especially one that appears adventurous.

Children used in or exposed to armed conflict are taught conflict, enmity and war by their parents, their warlords, or their communities from a young age. Knowing nothing but war and hatred, they grow up to become adults with the same prejudices and historical enmity of their ancestors, often without having ever met their 'enemy'. Conflict is perpetuated through this intergenerational cycle. Yet, peace is a child's right. The world declared in 1959 that:

The child shall be protected from practices which may foster racial, religious and any other form of discrimination. He shall be brought up in a spirit of understanding, tolerance, friendship among peoples, peace and universal brotherhood, and in full consciousness that his energy and talents should be devoted to the service of his fellow men.³

War's most vulnerable and widely affected casualties must be protected from the

² Statistics by M.A. Simpson (1993), 'Bitter Waters: Effects on Children of the Stresses of Unrest and Oppression', in J.P. Wilson and B. Raphael (eds), *International Handbook of Traumatic Stress Syndromes* (New York: Plenum) are cited in Cairns, 1996: 13.

³ United Nations General Assembly (1959), *Declaration of the Rights of the Child* (Resolution 1386 (XIV), 20 November), Principle 10.

numerous devastating ways in which war can impair their physical, social, and psychological development. However, the impact that armed conflict has on the future of children may be equalled in significance by the impact that children can have on the future of a protracted armed conflict. If, as social constructivists and others like the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict assert, violent conflict is not inherent, and the cycle of violent conflict that fuels protracted wars can be broken, then surely the ideal place for intervention is between generations: the reconstruction of long-term conflict in the minds of children.

To this end, a new field of conflict resolution is emerging, with the goal of deconstructing conflict and building cultures of peace starting with children. It is founded upon an idealism that aims to replace the world's conflict, war, and enmity with a global culture of cooperation, peace, and camaraderie. Dr. Doris Allen founded the Children's International Summer Villages in 1951 on the premise that 'teaching children to live together as friends could create true and lasting global peace' (CISV Canada).

Children as peacebuilders initiatives (CPBIs) can be divided into peace education and youth peace initiatives. Peace education consists of individual and group conflict resolution curricula in primary and secondary schools, and school curriculum reformulation towards the better promotion of tolerance, understanding, and the peaceful resolution of disputes. In *The Two Faces of Education in Ethnic Conflict* (2000), Kenneth Bush and Diana Saltarelli advocate a peacebuilding education regime that:

seeks to build bridges between groups and communities that have been separated and polarized by violent conflict. The guiding logic of interaction would shift from intolerance, suspicion and hopelessness to tolerance, trust, and hope. So too would it seek to re-humanize those who have been de-humanized. (Bush and Saltarelli 2000, 30).

In the many situations in which school-based peace initiatives are unfeasible or inaccessible, and to complement peace education where it exists, a range of extracurricular programmes may be tried. Youth peace initiatives (YPIs) are established to deconstruct long-term conflict and reconstruct bridges of peace between the children of traditional enemies. They seek to challenge the constructs of conflict, to develop empathy and understanding for the enemy, and to address the underlying issues that prevent a just and sustainable resolution. Although they are often conducted with children from each side separately, they generally aim to bring the children together in order to recognize their commonalities, to develop an understanding of how the enemy sees the conflict, and to develop a partnership for peace across conflict lines. YPIs can take the form of, but are not limited to, international peace and leadership camps and institutes, inter-ethnic or inter-group exchange programmes or camps, inter-group mixing initiatives linking youth groups across group divides, or rehabilitation centres and programmes for child soldiers and war affected children. Unlike the direct grassroots approach of in-class peacebuilding education, most YPIs are voluntary, and aim to empower and equip future leaders with peacebuilding skills and a sense of mutual understanding and empathy that they, in turn, bring back, promote and foster within their home communities. Their motivation and rationale flow logically from their common underlying premise: that deep-seated inter-group conflict can be alleviated, and a global culture of peace and cooperation can be achieved, by teaching young people to live together and resolve their disputes peacefully – in essence, that intergenerational cycles of war and conflict can be broken through children.

Like the daily idioms upon which political actions, decisions, and programmes are based, the rhetorical foundation of youth peace initiatives (YPIs) appears straightforward

and indisputable: teach peace to children now, and in future generations a completely new, cooperative and peaceful world can be realized. Yet such logic may not satisfy the critical mind: it must be borne out in sound theoretical research and concrete empirical practice.

This paper, then, has two objectives. First, it aims to elaborate a theoretical framework that underlies and legitimates youth peace initiatives in the overall process of conflict resolution. In short, conflict is socially constructed, and therefore transformable; in fact, it *must* be transformed in order to be genuinely and conclusively resolved. Further, because protracted social conflict is passed between generations, and learned by children through socialization and experience, the ideal locus of intervention into the cycle of conflict is in the development of children's evolving worldviews, before the social constructs of conflict have become rigidly embedded in their attitudes. This intervention requires the transformation of the attitudes children from conflicting parties hold toward each other and toward their conflict. By turning the children of traditional enemies into friends dedicated to the peaceful and just resolution of their conflict, the intergenerational cycle of conflict can be gradually reversed, and a culture of peaceful coexistence can be realized. While not necessarily a sufficient condition for peace, the transformation of the relationship between belligerents – from enemies engaged in a competitive fight to partners seeking a mutually satisfactory solution to a common problem – is clearly a necessary condition for a peace that is genuine and sustainable, and introducing peace to their children through YPIs is a potentially effective tool in such a strategy.

The paper's second objective is to establish a practical framework of principles, issues, strategies, and challenges that must be taken into consideration when designing

and implementing a youth peace initiative that positively transforms the attitudes of 'enemy' children toward each other and toward their conflict. Elicitive facilitation, effective contact, the introduction of a viable peace dividend, and the adaptation of interactive conflict resolution workshops to children will be submitted as powerful tactics to achieve such transformation, subject to a number of conditions and limitations.

The practical framework will be assessed and contextualized through a case study of *Seeds of Peace*, a prototypical YPI that brings together children from all sides of various global conflicts in Maine every summer. Under Eckstein's case study methodology (1975), this model serves as a plausibility probe for the assertion that YPIs effect positive attitude change in children from enemy sides in a protracted conflict, and as a heuristic tool to instruct the further development of the theoretical and practical frameworks by highlighting the conditions, challenges, and limitations of YPIs in practice.

It is hoped that the theoretical and practical frameworks articulated here will be of use to researchers and practitioners in the field of conflict resolution and youth peace initiatives. They are based on a range of research in various fields, from social constructivism to child psychology, conflict resolution to group sociology. This is a general work aiming to build credibility for the emerging YPI field by situating its niche and its impact in the wider field of international conflict management, and to offer a broad picture of the types of conditions, strategies, and potential outcomes that are involved in this promising area of international relations theory and practice. Clearly, each conflict possesses its own unique dynamic, and YPIs must be flexible in adapting to the vastly diverse conditions, circumstances, and needs of the children involved. A conflict may not be conducive to youth-based interventions at a particular stage, or at all.

Yet, while it provides a series of direct prescriptions for the design of YPIs in the mould of *Seeds of Peace* – for protracted social conflicts with a degree of stability and clearly delineated parties – it is equally intended to serve as a guide for reflection and action in dealing with war affected children as more than passive victims, but as potential actors in the movement for a just and sustainable peace.

On a conceptual note, it should be noted that the terms ‘children’ and ‘youth’ are in themselves social constructs, and their meanings differ substantially across cultures and other groups. The age or event of passage from childhood to adulthood, the connotation of a ‘child’ as innocent and vulnerable or informed and responsible, and even the very notion and content of children’s rights all make any attempt at generalizing the world’s children under one set of assumptions highly problematic. The United Nations generally defines a child as a person ‘below the age of eighteen years’ (United Nations, 1989), as does *Kids Can Free The Children*, a prominent international charitable organization directed by children. Generally, however, young people between the ages 12 and 18 prefer the term ‘youth’ to distinguish them from younger children. For this reason, the term ‘youth peace initiative’ implies a degree of maturity and, importantly, intellectual independence, which is a pivotal issue in the empowerment of those who participate in YPIs to make their own, active choice for peace in their lives. However, it is important that those who are subject to the intergenerational passing and social learning of conflict are the same as those who participate in YPIs. As such, the term ‘child’ will be used throughout the paper with the exception of the term ‘youth peace initiative’. The general definition of persons aged 17 and under will apply in all cases; however, it is preferable to avoid imposing strict limitations based on age for participation, and this definition is subject to adjustment pending further research.

Finally, this paper will use the male default when referring to child or person in the generic singular, for the lone reason of simplicity. The default is male because the author is male, and in no way because male children or persons are more affected by conflict, desirable for YPIs, or capable of leading their communities for peace than female children or persons. If such a distinction required, it will be explicitly stated.

Chapter 1: Conflict Is Transformable

War (...) is a form of social behaviour, and it appears that very few of the essential conditions affecting human behaviour are entirely beyond human control given sufficient time.

– Quincy Wright, 1942⁴

At the very heart of the theory that underpins youth peace initiatives (YPIs) is the assertion that war is not inevitable. It rejects the traditional realist submission that war is ‘politics by other means’, emerging necessarily from the conflicting objective interests of states or groups. It asserts instead that violent conflict – including the relationships and constructs that lie beneath it – is transformable. Rather than invoking the appealing yet simplistic argument that people should just get along, it is reasoned that the underlying origins of any given conflict can be addressed and resolved to the mutual satisfaction of all parties involved without resort to violence. Those origins – the threat or denial of ontological human and social needs, injustice, and inequality – are socially constructed conditions that can be resolved given open communication and cooperative will. Yet instead, conflict becomes protracted and violent when its underlying origins are buried under social constructs of identity, mutually exclusive interests, enemy images, and the legitimization of violence. Therefore, it is argued that genuine conflict resolution can be achieved through constructive interaction between all parties, transforming their relationship from confrontation to cooperation, and enabling them to address the conflict’s underlying origins and devise win-win solutions.

The present chapter aims to elaborate on this optimistic profession by exploring the social constructivist stream of international relations theory and the growing theory and practice of interactive conflict resolution. The former argues that all phenomena

⁴ Quincy Wright (1942), *A Study of War Volume I* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 13.

related to human interaction are socially constructed; that is, the relationships between individuals and groups, as well as the structures and institutions that govern those relationships, are determined by a long series of subjective perceptions and decisions. Deeply embedded in individual and group psyches, and long-established in social practice over multiple generations, these constructs are accepted as inherent and inescapable. Yet, they are constructed by people, and can therefore be de-constructed and re-constructed by people – in essence fully transformed. The latter field of exploration – interactive conflict resolution – contends that sustainable peace cannot be achieved until the fundamental issues that lie beneath the rhetoric and emotion of a conflict are addressed and resolved. Socio-political structures that create and perpetuate asymmetrical relationships between communal groups and underdevelopment are often at the root of conflict: groups will relentlessly pursue their ontological needs and struggle against perceived victimization. Traditional strategies of conflict management and settlement do not address the underlying sources of conflict, and they actually impede efforts to genuinely resolve and transform the conflict into a process that leads to sustainable peace. While often necessary to curb escalating violence, they are insufficient means to achieve a just and sustainable peace. Instead, the conflict must be transformed from a competition between enemies to a common problem to be solved between partners. In contrast to traditional realist thought, many conflict theorists believe today that conflict is a function of human social interaction that, while perhaps natural and understandable, is neither inherent nor inescapable: it is humanity's habit to engage in violent conflict when our interests differ, and it is our choice to change our habit and take the path to peace.

1.1 Conflict is what people make of it: social constructivism

Realism, long (and still) the dominant stream of international relations theory, holds that the social structures and institutions that govern human interaction are inherent and unchangeable. Conflict inevitably occurs as rational actors continuously seek to enhance their relative power in order to optimally satisfy of their objective interests. It unavoidably becomes violent when it cannot be reconciled through peaceful means. War, therefore, is a natural progression of politics, and an inevitable feature of human relations.

Social constructivism challenges the notion that conflict and, in turn, war are inevitable. It argues that all phenomena related to human interaction are socially constructed; that is, the relationships between individuals and groups, as well as the structures and institutions that govern those relationships, are determined by a long series of subjective perceptions and interactions between individuals and groups. Deeply embedded in worldviews and long established in social practice over multiple generations, these constructs are accepted as objective realities. However, they are the result of a long process of social construction that is neither inherent nor inevitable, because it is subject to human choice. New perceptions and interactions continue to construct an ever-evolving social reality. Apparently inescapable features of any given relationship are either confirmed or disproved on a constant basis, and social reality is appropriately transformed. It becomes possible to transform any given aspect of social reality by changing perceptions and interactions.

That is certainly not to say that transforming deep-seated social constructs is a quick and easy task. To be sure, entrenched social practice is a heavily influential determinant of future attitudes, behaviour, and interaction. One person cannot construct a

new global state system spontaneously, or transform a protracted violent conflict overnight: social construction is a long, evolutionary process. However, social constructivism simply argues that social reality is not beyond the grasp of human capacity to change, because it is constantly evolving based on subjective perceptions, decisions and interaction between people (Fisher 1991). The way in which we relate to each other – from governance to conflict to basic interaction – is determined fundamentally by us. In short, regardless of the degree of difficulty or likelihood, all of our social reality is subject to change, because we constantly construct our reality.

As such, it is not pre-determined that two communities will engage in violent conflict; it is through a lengthy and complex series of social interaction cycling amongst them that such groups *perceive* a conflict in interests and *choose* to use violence to resolve that conflict. Their relationship is developed and solidified as the cycle of social construction spirals toward cooperation or toward conflict. Interaction that is experienced and perceived as either antagonistic or conciliatory feeds perceptions, which mould attitudes and worldviews, which determine future interaction.

Just as conflict is rooted in a person's perceptions, interpretation, expression, and action, so too is a group identity rooted in its members' perceptions, interpretations, expressions, and actions (Lederach 1995, 9). The meanings attached to one's identity, as constructed through social interaction, are subjective and constantly changing. Identities are created and expressed from a group's common knowledge that is embedded through a process of socialization and the subjective interpretation of personal experiences. Quite logically, positive traits – generally righteousness and greatness – are emphasized to foster pride and security within the identity group. A common history, value system, and destiny are the unbreakable bonds that grow stronger as they are perpetually reinforced

through social interaction. Triumph and adversity contribute to the solidarity of the group to the point that, frequently, the worth and confidence of the individual is directly dependent on the glory and value of the group. When hyper-politicized, identity is a powerful agent for mobilizing violent conflict, because it is so viscerally fundamental to individual and group psychology. Reason and normal conceptions of human life are jettisoned and replaced with volatile tension and desperation. The mere existence of an out-group can be seen as a threat to the in-group's very existence (Bush and Chase 2002), leading to distorted perceptions and irrational behaviour.

As cemented as identity groups become in the collective psyches of their members, and while the need for identity is objective and ontological, the means of satisfying that need – i.e., the specific identity group that is constructed on the basis of a subjectively chosen trait – remain socially constructed, at their base subjective, and therefore potentially transformable. For example, citizens of France and Germany were bitter and violent enemies for centuries; yet, over the latter half of the twentieth century and beyond, they have come to shift the focus of their identities, albeit not absolutely, towards their common European heritage over the past fifty years. Clearly, their identities have proven subjective and transformable.

Individuals adhere to group identity out of the need for self-esteem and for belonging. They take injury to the group – humiliation, lack of recognition, unjust or unequal treatment – personally. The psychology of the identity group can be seen as an aggregate of its members' psychologies of the self: the group reflects individual needs for self-esteem, recognition, and justice; and when the group is humiliated or slighted, its members will collectively react based on their individual psychology. Just as an individual will act out in a 'narcissistic rage' when he feels unjustly wronged, losing all

regard for common morality or norms, so too will the identity group – as a collective of enraged individuals feeling jointly wronged – act out irrationally and dangerously, leading to escalated conflict. As a result, more attention must be paid to ‘non-rational human needs, including those especially for recognition and ‘justice’, (that) provide a driving force in conflict behaviour’ (Wedge 1986, 61).

Inherently, the construction of an identity-based ‘in-group’ implies the existence of a specific ‘out-group’, whose members are excluded from the former group, and form their own in-groups based on their own perceptions and meanings. This ‘us-them’ dyad need not lead to conflict, however. Peaceful and mutually enhancing coexistence can be constructed and reinforced by recognizing the reciprocally enhancing nature of basic human and social needs, and the benefits of mutual respect and empathy. Examples of multiethnic societies at peace are abundant in the modern world. Too often, however, such is not the case, as needs are clouded and subjective interests are framed, concocting a debilitating zero-sum construct. It is at this stage that conflict emerges.

It is quite natural that individuals assemble into identity groups to collectively articulate and protect their common human and social needs. Now, those fundamental, non-negotiable needs must be distinguished from group *interests* and *positions*. The interests of the identity group are determined subjectively as the most effective means of securing the group’s needs. A variety of interests – most commonly land, power, and resources – are sought by the group as a whole to ensure basic needs and security for its members. Interests, then, are flexible – not exogenously fixed or absolute. Conflict between groups occurs when groups determine, for whatever reason, their interests to be the *only* means to satisfy and protect their needs. Their subjective interests are perceived to be absolute, and therefore inflexible. Given that interests, unlike needs, are dependent

mostly on resources with finite dimensions, group interests can conflict if those limitations are reached or appear close (Burton 1987). Scarcity is perceived, and a zero-sum game – to gain at the expense of the other – is begun.

In order to secure the biggest possible piece of the finite pie, and thus maximize the satisfaction of their interests, groups establish their respective *positions*: self-imposed limitations used in traditional, power-based bargaining and negotiation processes. Such processes are socially constructed structures that privilege power and competition over innovation and collaboration as means of settling conflicts. Analysis and creativity are shunned, and participants are socialized to pursue gains in relative bargaining power in order to maximize their interests. Positions budge only due to shifts in relative bargaining power. Interests will not be revised, and soon, alternative means of satisfying basic human and social needs are forgotten under the zero-sum construct.

Conflicts between groups' interests are perceived on two levels of analysis. First, at the individual level of group leaders, a variety of experiences, attitudes, and other psychological factors contribute to the determination that their devised interests are inflexible and conflicting with those of another group. The perception of the individual (or leadership executive) is critical to the way in which the group's membership perceives various situations. This crucial factor adds to the subjectivity, and in many ways to the transformability, of inter-group interaction, because it has a direct effect on the second level of analysis: that of the collective perception of the group's individuals. Charismatic leaders with powerfully emotive messages have led entire nations into violent conflict throughout history. Often, it is their personal pride and greed that

motivates decision-making related to conflict or compromise.⁵

The perceived mutual exclusivity of interests forged by the zero-sum construct mutates the 'us-them' dyad created through group identities into a 'friend-enemy' dyad. The powerful influence of the latter on the social interaction between groups must not be underestimated. In essence, groups 'act differently toward enemies than they do toward friends because enemies are threatening and friends are not' (Wendt 1992, 397). The adrenaline effect of threat and fear transforms the perceived conflict of group interests into a menace to one's very survival. It is at this stage that the 'enemy' is defined and dehumanized. A faceless, relentless, evil enemy is constructed as the polar opposite of the in-group, whose members are linked by their righteousness and greatness. Again, interested parties, such as power-thirsty leaders or profit-driven criminal 'militias' perpetuate the conflict by feeding fears, prejudices, or pride that drive conflict.

Once the friend-enemy contrast is constructed and embedded in the collective psyche of the in-group, it affects the way in which future interaction and events involving the 'enemy' are interpreted (Silverstein and Flamenbaum 1989), adding another layer to the subjectivity of conflict that complicates reconciliation efforts. Offences are derived from harmless incidents, defensive actions are viewed as aggressive, and signs of good will are mistrusted. On each side, insecurity, fear, and the zero-sum construct lead to 'militant, uncompromising, threatening' posturing that 'reinforces the enemy's hostile image and creates self-fulfilling prophecies' (Kelman 1998, 192). At this stage of the social construction of conflict, reconciliation is as far away as the issue of basic needs is deep beneath the rhetoric and emotion of deep-rooted conflict. The social construction of

⁵ Of course, monarchs and warlords have led their people into war for personal pride or greed over the millennia; however, modern examples abound as well. Napoleon perpetuated the Revolutionary War as a means of maintaining his emporship, while Milosevic recently fanned ancient fires of hatred in order to achieve and retain office.

violent conflict feeds upon itself and spirals deeper and more irreversibly into enmity, fear, and aggression.

Finally, given a powerful friend-enemy dyad and a perceived conflict of group interests, the decision must be taken to use violence to resolve conflict. It is commonly argued that war is the natural extension of politics when politics by peaceful means fails to resolve a dispute. However, that violent combat is the best, or only, way to resolve a given conflict is a subjective choice based on social construction. The perception that the very survival of an individual or group – expressed through constructed interests – is threatened by a ruthless, immoral and irrational enemy constructs a conflict that is nothing less than a ‘primeval struggle’ between good and evil: (Heraclides 1997, 696):

if the alternative is perceived, rightly or wrongly, as nothing less than torment and suppression, death, or a fate worse than death, such as cultural extinction through ethnic cleansing or forced assimilation, armed struggle could be the only alternative, even if it is obvious to the separatist movement that the prospects for success are dim (ibid, 699).

Indeed, in some cases, individuals and groups may come to perceive that ‘there are values greater than those of peace.’⁶ As will be discussed below, injustice, inequality, oppression, or other threats to basic human or social needs are understandable causes to use all available means to resolve a conflict. War will occur if a *just* peace cannot be found; however, such a determination will be based on the social interaction between the groups involved, and is therefore not inevitable.

Given this social construction of conflict, questioning the use of violence or positing peaceful alternatives is often viewed as naïve and dangerous. Interaction with

⁶ Kalevi J. Holsti, ‘Paths to Peace? Theories of Conflict Resolution and Realities of International Politics’, in Ramesh Thakar (ed.), *International Conflict Resolution* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press), 114. Cited in Heraclides 1997, 697.

the enemy is considered treasonous. Dissension from the war programme is heretical.

Mob conflict mentality – nurtured carefully by belligerent actors and leaders – is a weighty force that buries underlying motivations and sources of conflict and blinds individuals with primitive, existential fear and pride. Once violent conflict is seen as necessary and justified, whole populations disregard the moral standards that restrain violence in everyday life. When moral disengagement occurs, the ‘enemy’ is dehumanized, and ‘normal’ or ‘good’ people may be capable of savage atrocities. They can behave violently with a clear conscience. In studies of individual and group violence, moral disengagement has been shown to strongly influence a person’s willingness to inflict suffering upon others (Osofsky 1997).

Another social construct that is commonly cited in explaining the ready resort to violent combat to resolve conflict is simple masculine heroism and aggression. Identity group leaders are largely men, and the masculine military ethic is a primordial force in many societies. Notions seen as more feminine, such as conciliation, compassion, and empathy, are easily trumped in the realist paradigm of modern political practice. The socially constructed notion that real men fight and find glory in war is deeply engrained and highly influential in its appeal to young males in virtually every human society.

It must be noted that social constructivism does not proffer any moral judgement regarding perceptions, interactions, or structures that are socially constructed. It does not, then, discard the idea that identity groups often use violent conflict justifiably as a last resort to protect their basic human and social needs against a clear oppressor. However, it is intended to demonstrate that the process that leads to such a clear necessity is neither inescapable from the outset, nor an inherent fact of human nature. Whether ‘caused’ by environmental, ethnic, resource, religious, or other factors, violent conflict is founded on

a socially constructed reality that was moulded by human interaction, and can thus also be transformed and reversed through human interaction. To borrow a phrase from Alexander Wendt's assessment of the social construction of international power politics (1992), conflict is what people make of it.

1.2 Transforming conflict in practice: conflict resolution theory

Conflict resolution theory agrees that conflict is a phenomenon rooted in social interaction. However, it takes a more practical approach to defining conflict and asserting its transformability. It accepts that individuals instinctively assemble into social identity groups; in fact, it argues that the identity group is the 'most useful unit of analysis in protracted social conflict situations' as the true holder of legitimate authority over individuals – not the state – for its role as protector of the basic human and social needs of its members (Azar 1985, 62-3; also Burton 1986). Further, it accepts that conflict exists naturally in human social interaction; conflict can be inevitable when the socially constructed relationship between two or more groups makes it so by threatening or denying basic needs through injustice or inequality.

Yet, conflict resolution theorists agree with social constructivists in that conflict is not inescapable: they submit that 'the way we deal with conflict is a matter of habit and choice. It is possible to change habitual responses and exercise intelligent choices' (Miall et al 1999, 5). Indeed, the way in which conflicting parties perceive and handle their conflict is certainly subject to social construction. That they will choose to resolve their conflict in any particular way is not absolute, but based on the perceptions they have, the attitudes they possess, the social structures they have constructed, their past experience dealing with conflict, and their relationship history. The sum of these factors could lead

to a cooperative, problem-solving approach to resolving their conflict, to a violent, zero-sum approach, or to an approach anywhere in between.

Conflict resolution theory, then, operates with the reality that conflict does indeed happen, and that strategies can and must be taken to transform and resolve conflict where it exists. While conflict may naturally arise due to any number of factors, it is clearly arguable that conflict is escapable, transformable, and resolvable without resort to violence. Relationships can be remade to be symmetrical and cooperative, basic needs can be secured, and social constructs can be changed toward a just and sustainable peace.

The theory and practice of conflict resolution is founded on the assertion that there are ‘underlying origins’ (Burton 1987) to every conflict that must be addressed before genuine conflict resolution can be realized. They are the very foundation upon which the conflict is based: the lowest common denominator that is left after removing all layers of social construction, emotion and rhetoric – indivisible and not subject to compromise. Without resolving the core issues, the conflict will never truly end: the threat of future conflict will persist. The aim of conflict resolution, then, is to uncover those underlying origins by analysing through the social construction, so as to tackle the conflict at its source and find solutions that satisfy all parties. Only then will the conflict be ended.

1.2.1 The underlying origins of conflict

The underlying origins of most conflicts are related in some way to basic human and social needs. These needs are the true motivators of human behaviour, for they are universal and ontological (Azar 1985; Burton 1987): they are essential to being human, sought by all individuals and their representative identity groups, at all costs. Generally,

conflict resolution theorists list these needs as security, identity, human development, and political participation (Azar 1985; Burton 1987). Indeed, it can be contested that the meanings attributed to these four terms, and the various means by which they can be fulfilled, are subject to social construction. Yet, it is clear that in their most fundamental sense, they are objective needs. For example, it is reasonable to ask whether conflicting groups necessarily need control over certain lands or resources in order to have security; there may be alternative means to achieve that goal. However, it cannot be said that a group can surrender its security in exchange for something else. It is the base need.

Basic needs share two critical properties. First, when they are threatened or denied, individuals and their representative identity groups will struggle to fulfill them at all costs, even violent conflict and death. Basic human needs cannot be negotiated or compromised, and as such no conflict can be genuinely and, therefore, durably resolved without addressing them. Fortunately, their second common property is that they can be in virtually infinite supply, given creative and cooperative relationship structures. This notion effectively fuels the optimism of the conflict resolution movement:

As these needs of security, identity and human development are universal, and because their fulfillment is not dependent on limited resources, it follows that conflict resolution with win-win outcomes is possible (Burton 1987, 16).

In fact, human and social needs can be mutually reinforced and expanded through reciprocation and collaboration (*ibid*). Simply put, when the needs of one party are satisfied, the needs of the other are enhanced as a result. Tragically, the opposite is also true (and frighteningly more prevalent): as one party's needs are threatened, so too are the needs of the other. The phenomenon bounces back and forth with every reciprocal gesture, spiralling positively with goodwill or negatively with retaliation. Security is the

best-known example, and in the case of violent conflict, the most pertinent. Clearly, a reassuring, cooperative action such as arms reduction leads to an enhanced sense of security, while a belligerent action such as arms build-up sets the security spiral downward as parties compete for power. The same link can be made for identity: as one group's culture and values are nurtured and protected, so too are the culture and values of other groups. Once one group attempts to impose its culture or values over another, that group's own distinct identity will be at risk of becoming diluted and disrespected. More importantly, the resultant resentment of the group whose identity is threatened destabilizes the relationship between the two, decreasing each side's security and capacity to practice their culture in peace.

Basic needs, then, are not finite. There is no reason to doubt that inventive, constructive means cannot be found to ensure that the needs of all individuals and groups are met. It should follow that basic human needs – not interests – must be the principal focus of any attempts to resolve conflict truly and effectively. Indeed, it would appear almost absurd that they are not. Tragically, though, they are buried – by a variety of natural and unnatural forces – beneath the emotion and rhetoric of conflict.

Basic human and social needs are most often threatened or denied through social structures and institutions that create and perpetuate injustice and inequality between advantaged and disadvantaged groups, or that entrench conflicts of group interests. In his search for the 'enduring features' of 'protracted social conflicts', Azar (1985) links underdevelopment and its numerous resultant conditions – distributive injustice, scarcity, structural inequality, desperation, and differential political power, among others – to the construction and protraction of conflict between identity groups. Underdevelopment and inequality, he reasoned, make people hungry, resentful, and desperate. Through their

identity groups, they seek security and control over their own affairs. As such, the 'real source' of protracted social conflict is the denial of universal, basic human needs, resulting from underlying structural conditions, such as authority roles, power, participation, and distributive justice. When an identity group feels victimized or that their non-bargainable human needs are threatened, they will seek to satisfy those needs through conflict, 'in effect seeking change in the structure of their society' (ibid, 69). The inertia of the status quo, often because of a desperate lack of social or political structures through which change can be discussed and enacted, leaves violence as the only means to achieve change when needed (Burton 1987, 19). Resistance to the struggle for change follows, logically, from conservative elements that stand to lose accumulated advantages and privileges. The state system plays an additional role, as the state – in this day often created with borders that ignore ethnic and societal geography – has traditionally had the task of suppressing identity groups to maintain state power (Azar 1985, 63). Armed conflict, then, is most often a struggle between those who seek change and those who resist it. On either side are individuals or groups who perceive their fundamental needs to be at stake, and violence becomes the way in which the debate is framed. Yet, Azar argues that containing violence through force could only be a temporary tactic, covering inequality and ignoring legitimate grievances until violence could explode again. A latent conflict can only be genuinely resolved when all sides feel secure that they will have control over their satisfaction of their basic needs in existing or new political arrangements (Azar 1990, 2-3).

Thus, the objective of conflict resolution becomes not peace by itself, but a *just* peace: a situation in which the basic needs of all parties are satisfied, and the means to satisfy those needs – mainly power and resources – are equally and justly distributed.

Structures and institutions that create and perpetuate injustice and inequality are often deeply entrenched in law and practice over a very long evolution. Yet their threat to or denial of basic needs is an underlying origin of conflict that must be addressed. The economic restraints imposed on Germany after World War One – seen as the only way to ensure the basic need of security for the rest of Europe – led in part to World War Two. The lack of representation in politics and the police force – seen as the only way to ensure the basic need of identity for British loyalists – led in part to the Troubles in Northern Ireland. The settlement of Jewish settlers in the West Bank – seen as the only way to ensure the basic need of security for Israeli Jews – have led in part to the ongoing intifada in the Middle East. In each case, the relentless and myopic struggle of each side to satisfy their basic needs led to a situation in which all groups' basic needs were threatened by violent conflict.

When expressed in terms of subjective interests such as land, power, and resources, conflicts are seen as zero-sum, characterized by rigid positioning, perceptions of scarcity, refusal to consider compromise, and moral disengagement. Hence, conflict resolution theorists advocate digging beneath the constructs and interests of conflict 'to ascertain the hidden data of motivations and intentions and to explore means by which common human-societal needs can be achieved' (Burton 1987, 16):

By pushing behind the parties' incompatible positions and exploring the identity and security concerns that underlie them, it often becomes possible to develop mutually satisfactory solutions, since conflicts about identity, security, and other psychological needs are not inherently zero-sum (Kelman 1998, 191).

1.2.2 The insufficiency of settlement

Because there are non-negotiable underlying origins that lie at the root of

protracted social conflict, conflict resolution theorists argue that traditional tools of conflict management that do not address those core issues are grossly insufficient conditions for achieving lasting peace. As has been made clear, identity groups pursue basic human and social needs that cannot be negotiated or suppressed. If these needs are threatened or denied, groups will continue to struggle and the conflict will continue until they are met and protected. If social structures institutionalize injustice and unequal distribution of the means of satisfying those needs, conflict will remain a persistent threat: no amount of coercion will quash the ultimate struggle for basic needs. Burton warns against the misdiagnosis of a conflict's true sources:

If a conflict is caused by an unsuppressable need for identity and cultural security, but is defined and treated as one stemming from aggressiveness, the likely outcome will be protracted and escalating conflict. Equally, if a conflict stems from blatant attempts to pursue ideological or leadership interests, but has been defined and treated as one based on legitimate aspirations, there could be outcomes that would threaten the societies involved as well as the global society (Burton 1987, 21).

Solutions that misdiagnose the true underlying origins of the conflict are destined to fail. Azar's study of protracted social conflict found that conflict does not begin and end according to the incidence of violence; but rather, it is to be found within those structures that threaten basic societal needs and favour one group over another (1985, 69). He advocates an analytical process to explore and address the underlying structural conditions, because negotiated agreements 'that come out of negotiations that [...] do not touch upon the underlying issues in the conflict, do not last' (Azar 1985, 62).

Conflict management reduces the likelihood of further armed conflict, but it does not terminate the rivalry. In fact, it generally only delays 'the onset of the next dispute by a couple of years' (Bercovitch et al 1997, 761). Burton argues that management implies

a bias towards the status quo, as though the conflict must be suppressed and order restored or even imposed. It seeks to control the conflict without societal change (Burton 1987, 8) – a clearly unacceptable solution for groups whose ontological needs are denied by existing social, political, and economic structures.

Conflict settlement, typically achieved through bargaining, negotiation, mediation, or arbitration, is similarly criticized because it does little to address the basic needs and socio-political structures that form the genuine sources of the conflict. Imposed or superficial compromises typically ignore the structural and need-based roots of the conflict, and refuse to consider societal change. They serve only to gloss over issues of underdevelopment, asymmetrical power and resource distribution, and the resultant threat to the weaker group's ontological needs. They may bring about a peace, but not necessarily a just and sustainable peace. Fighting is only momentarily halted, and until the underlying causes are addressed, there will be a lingering potential for a return to war (Bercovitch et al 1997, 762). Hence, while conflict settlement tools are undoubtedly valuable in tempering hostility, saving lives, and preventing escalatory events, they perpetuate the tragically unproductive perception of scarcity and the zero-sum construct by providing an arena for interests to be negotiated, instead of needs addressed and innovative alternatives tried. Groups engaging in conflict formulate their strategies based on this power-bargaining paradigm; and as a result, their positions become rigid and their interests are presented as non-negotiable in order to protect their underlying needs. Problem-solving approaches or any other form of conciliation or flexibility are not suggested or tried for fear of weakening their bargaining position. Winners and losers are created, existing power structures are rarely questioned, and long-held advantage is viewed as inherent. Thus, not only does conflict settlement not resolve the underlying

issues to make a lasting peace, but it also stifles any potential for conflict resolution through analysis and dialogue.

It is therefore argued that conflict resolution must necessarily include conflict *transformation*, consisting of two simultaneous processes: transformation of the conflict and transformation of the relationship between conflicting parties. First, the conflict must be transformed from a competition that must be won into a mutual problem that must be solved jointly (Groom 1986). This process entails the analytical isolation of the underlying origins and the creation of mutually satisfactory solutions. It looks past the competing positions and subjective interests to a 'facilitated analysis of the underlying sources of conflict situations by the parties in conflict [...] whereby institutional and policy options are discovered that meet the needs of the parties' (Burton 1987, 7; also Azar 1985; Kelman 1997; and others). Instead of power-based bargaining using rigid positions, it is a process of collaborative problem solving using innovation and flexibility.

Second, the relationship between the parties must be transformed from enemy to partner: the past need not be forgotten, but it must be forgiven, and a common, cooperative, peaceful future must be foreseen. This transformation must deconstruct enemy images and asymmetrical social structures, and reconstruct a mutually respectful relationship founded on power-sharing institutions that guarantee the basic human and social needs for all individuals and groups. Just as conflict constructs – resentment, prejudice, and dehumanization – impede the will for a just peace during a conflict, they can linger as latent threats to any peace. As such, true conflict resolution 'must aim toward the ultimate establishment of a new cooperative and mutually enhancing relationship, and must involve a process that paves the way to such a relationship' (Kelman 1998, 191). Since the perceptions of enemy and competition are socially

constructed, and because basic needs are infinite and mutually reinforcing, it is entirely reasonable that such a transformation is possible, and that 'the development of shared visions of a desirable future' (Kelman 1998, 194) is within the grasp of a holistic approach to conflict resolution. Humankind has consistently demonstrated its ingenuity in technology, medicine, arts, language, and countless other areas. Surely, that innovative imagination can be applied to problems of resource scarcity and underdevelopment, and especially to the design of the requisite social, economic, and political structures that institutionalize justice, equality, and the capacity of all identity groups to have control over the satisfaction of their members' ontological human and social needs.

Therefore, conflict resolution implies a permanent end to the conflict by devising and implementing a lasting solution that conclusively resolves the core issues and eliminates all tension between the various parties. While settlement – based on negotiation, mediation, or other similar strategies – is often a necessary condition in the short-term, it is not sufficient. Not until the underlying origins of the conflict are genuinely resolved and the relationship between the conflicting parties is reconstructed to one of respect and equality, is the latent threat of future conflict drastically reduced. As such, transformation of the conflict from competition to cooperation, and of the relationship from enemy to partner – in essence, 'a fundamental change in dyadic relationships where the resort to militarised actions is no longer likely' (Bercovitch et al 1997, 758) – is clearly a necessary condition in the long-term for a just and sustainable resolution.

1.3 Achieving transformation: the ICR problem-solving workshop

University of Saskatchewan psychologist Ronald Fisher coined the term 'interactive conflict resolution' to represent the theory and practice of analytical, problem solving workshops as a way to analyse and resolve conflict between conflicting parties. Based on the pioneering work of John Burton, Herbert Kelman, and Edward Azar, among others, interactive conflict resolution (ICR) is founded on the belief that protracted, violent, intergroup conflict can be genuinely and durably resolved through constructive interaction between all parties, which transforms their relationship from confrontation to cooperation, and enables them to isolate and address the conflict's underlying origins and devise win-win solutions.

The interactive problem-solving workshop involves unofficial but influential representatives of conflicting parties in a 'private, confidential setting for direct, non-committal communication' (Kelman 1998, 190) so that they may openly and collaboratively analyse their conflict and generate ideas for a mutually satisfactory resolution without the pressures and requirements of a traditional, adversarial negotiation environment. The process is facilitated by a neutral but informed third-party panel of four to five 'scholar-practitioners' (Burton 1987), who serve as experienced guides who 'enable the parties to learn about each other, their perceptions, and their actual and potential goals, and to encourage the parties to indulge in a private exploration of their problems, without commitment, or prestige or status being involved' (Groom 1986, 90). In contrast to traditional third-party strategies, such as mediation or arbitration, facilitators are 'to be supportive of all the parties and not to press compromises'; yet, they must work to 'widen' the 'tunnel-vision' that impairs traditional enemies from seeing the conflict any differently than a strictly right-wrong dyad (ibid, 86-8).

The problem-solving workshop is intended to serve a 'dual purpose' (Kelman

1997, 214). First, it aims to transform the attitudes of its participants toward each other and toward their conflict. By bringing traditional foes into contact with each other, it is hoped that they will garner an appreciation and respect for each other as people rather than as faceless enemies. Derogatory stereotypes can be debunked, or at least better understood. By discussing the conflict privately and confidentially – away from the pressure of domestic opinion and positional bargaining – participants are encouraged to explore beneath the rhetoric and posturing of their own and the other side, in order to ‘to reveal directly to each party the attitudes and motivations of the other, and the costs of various policy options’ (Burton 1987, 32). Indeed, the workshop should enable participants to analyse and redefine their conflict by isolating its underlying origins, and to brainstorm inventive ideas for mutually satisfactory solutions. The facilitators will encourage the parties to see the conflict as a common problem to be resolved jointly; they will refocus the enemy and move away from blame, a decision on who is right, and past grievances. Minimally, the parties will come to understand each other and their conflict better than before. Ideally, they will discover new paths to a just and sustainable peace that would otherwise never be considered: they will recognize that their traditional enemies in conflict can potentially be partners for a just and mutually beneficial peace.

The second component of the workshop’s dual purpose is to impact the overall conflict through the influence of the participants upon their return to their respective communities. ‘The ultimate goal’ of the ICR workshop, according to Kelman, ‘is to transfer the insights and ideas gained from these interactions into the political debate and decision-making processes in the two communities’ (Kelman 1998, 190). Not only, then, can participants brainstorm and devise potential solutions to their conflict, but they can also generate shared information and insight for an effective action plan for the

implementation of those solutions through a cross-conflict consensus (ibid, 191).

Kelman (1997) specifically addresses this impact through his work with continuing workshops in the Middle East conflict. Having a renewed understanding of their enemy and of their conflict's underlying origins, the participants serve as a coalition across conflict lines – a 'cadre' that is willing and prepared to seek fruitful negotiations. In their influential positions, they can be effective advocates for seeking a just peace within the decision-making bodies in their communities. Kelman's participants have served in high level posts in the Israeli and Palestinian governments, and even on the Oslo Accord negotiation teams (1997, 215). Further, the understanding that participants gain and the ideas that they brainstorm act as 'important substantive inputs into the negotiations.' Of course, the insight gained in the workshops, based on honest and open communication, can form the foundation of a final resolution or, as in the case of Kelman's work, input into the improvement of the process (ibid, 216). Finally, the workshops are said to foster 'a political atmosphere' that facilitates the transformation of the inter-group relationship – as argued above, a necessary condition for sustainable peace. Kelman notes several areas in which his workshops and other initiatives had this effect leading up to the Oslo Accords and beyond:

the development of more differentiated images of the enemy, of a deescalatory language and a new political discourse that is attentive to the other party's concerns and constraints, of a working trust that is based on the conviction that both parties have a genuine interest in a peaceful solution, and of a sense of possibility regarding the ultimate achievement of a mutually satisfactory outcome (ibid).

The transformation is thus begun, 'from power politics to mutual responsiveness, reciprocity in process and solutions, and invitation to a new relationship' (Kelman 1998, 192). The self-perpetuating dynamics of conflict, then, can be effectively reversed, and a

just and sustainable peace can be found.

To be sure, interactive conflict resolution is an approach of reasoned optimism. However, far from naïve or impractical, to approach socially constructed conflict by genuinely resolving its underlying issues 'is actually the most realistic approach to solving such a conflict. Nothing less will work in the short run, only a process embodying the principle of reciprocity that is at the center of a new relationship is likely to succeed' (Kelman 1998, 191). Indeed, it must be remembered that conflict transformation, while in many cases not a sufficient condition for peace, is certainly a necessary condition for a just and sustainable resolution.

ICR, then, as generally conceded by its proponents, is 'not a panacea' (Groom 1986, 86; also Fisher 1997). The field is commonly questioned as to its generalizability across cultures and various types of conflict. Indeed, culture plays a substantial role in most – if not all – conflicts: culture moulds the socially constructed worldviews and behaviours that can lead to conflict, and each culture handles conflict differently. Most cultures, according to Burton, deal with conflict 'in an authoritative, coercive, and if necessary, violent manner' (Fisher 1997, 261).⁷ Yet, ICR is intended, much like the world of diplomacy, to create its own culture: a 'paradigm shift' in the way that all cultures deal with conflict amongst themselves and with each other 'from the settlement of conflict through control by authority to resolution by the parties themselves through problem solving' (ibid, 259). Certainly, however, ICR must recognize the role that culture plays in conflict, and be capable of adapting to various cultural environments in order to be optimally effective. Indigenous resources – people, norms, knowledge, experience, and understanding – must be tapped for the critical contribution that they can

⁷ The wording is Fisher's based on various works by Burton.

make to the resolution process. Lederach's elicitive approach (1995) explicitly makes use of those resources in adapting conflict resolution strategies across cultures, and will be elaborated in Chapter Three.

In the end, ICR is an alternative, and it must respond to a need or call for an alternative to traditional strategies of dealing with protracted violent conflict. Like any other means of resolution, it must not be forced upon its subjects; indeed, it is its voluntary nature – its belief that the ultimate decision making power must remain in the hands of the parties themselves – that distinguishes it from other strategies. By going 'beyond traditional, realist assumptions that are made about the causation and resolution of international conflict' (Fisher 1997, 162), ICR questions the inevitability of war and seeks ways to arrive at a mutually acceptable, enduring solution to conflict that satisfies the basic human and social needs of all parties involved.

1.4 Conclusion

In its *Final Report* (1997), the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict asserted that '[w]arfare does not simply or naturally emerge out of contentious human interaction'. Given the process of social construction that leads two or more groups or states to perceive the mutual exclusivity of their interests, the recourse to war to resolve the conflict is certainly not inescapable. Rather, the range of political, peaceful means to resolve perceived conflict is more than sufficient to avoid the recourse to war.

Perhaps most crucially, as Azar argues, war and poverty 'combine to demoralize entire populations and reduce their capacity to search actively for conflict resolution' (Azar 1985, 68). A people that has known nothing but conflict and underdevelopment for generations is ignorant of the alternatives. It has neither the time, nor the opportunity,

nor the resources to even begin to consider a different way of life. Yet, war is 'a social invention, not a biological necessity'.⁸ Alternatives must be introduced. Hope must be restored – in many cases, created for the first time – for a better, more peaceful future.

It is clear here that traditional strategies of handling protracted social conflict are insufficient conditions for a sustainable peace. The underlying origins of a given conflict must be resolved if the lingering threat of renewed escalation is to be durably quashed. Basic human and social needs, when threatened or denied by asymmetrical social relationships cemented in unjust and unequal structures, create and perpetuate conflict. By transforming the attitudes of the parties toward their conflict and toward each other – from competition between enemies to cooperation between partners – a just and sustainable peace is achievable.

Protracted violent conflict is socially constructed, and therefore transformable. Interactive conflict resolution provides one strategy of intervention into the social construction of conflict. Its effect can be increased if a point can be found at which the worldviews and behaviours that lead to conflict are less deeply embedded. Since protracted social conflict flows unabated through the generations, the first place in which conflict constructs can be challenged – and relationships between long-time enemies can be transformed – is at the very point at which conflict is first constructed: during the social learning process of children.

⁸ Margaret Mead, 'Warfare Is Only an Invention – Not a Biological Necessity', in *War: Studies from Psychology, Sociology and Anthropology*, Bramson and Goethals, eds., 269-74. Quoted in Boulding 2000, 27).

Chapter 2: Conflict and war is learned: socialization theory and child psychology

War had not only stolen our loved ones, but the optimism of youth that generates hope.

Sally Trench, *Fran's War*⁹

To realize the theoretical transformability of conflict and war requires an entry point into the nefarious spiral of fear, enmity, and aggression, in order to reverse the flow of social construction in a new direction of confidence, conciliation, and peace. The endurance of protracted, inter-group conflict requires that it must necessarily be passed from one generation to the next. Today's children 'become the leaders who initiate, the public which approves, and the men who fight wars' (Tolley 1973, 124). Yet, conflict is not passively inherited; it is learned as children develop their own individual and generational understanding of their social reality. Through the social learning process – socialization and experience – conflict must be constructed anew in each successive generation in order to maintain its ferocious grip on the psyche of entire societies. It is sensible, therefore, to explore the social and psychological formation of children as the optimum locus to intervene in protracted social conflict, by fostering alternative perceptions and meanings – constructing a culture of peace before the notions of enemy, conflict and war of past affected generations are deeply embedded.

2.1 Children's understanding of war

Social learning is a highly subjective process in which individuals develop their own worldview, personality, and behaviour through their interaction with their social environment. While various streams of child psychology differ as to the level of

⁹ *Fran's War* is a 1999 novel by a British aid worker about a fictional twelve-year-old girl who lives through the horrors and tribulations of a genocidal civil war in the Balkans (Trench 1999)

children's passivity or activity in acquiring the values, attitudes, and behaviours of their environment,¹⁰ they all believe that children's worldview and social understanding are constructed through their interaction with their social environment. Children's cognitive development begins with basic concepts based on concrete ideas and experiences, and gradually matures to include more complex and abstract understanding of social phenomena. Throughout this developmental process, their worldview – including general values, specific beliefs, and behavioural norms – is affected by two sets of factors. First, socializing agents impart the values, beliefs, and norms of their culture on the new generation, in effect passing down the social constructs of their ancestors. Second, children's experience within their social environment leads to the subjective construction of new perceptions and meanings that modify the social knowledge and understanding imparted through socialization. Within this second category of social learning factors are, first, specific situations and events that impact the collective experience of those who witness them or who are directly affected by them – creating a common set of social constructs for the individuals who share those memories – and, second, direct personal experiences that affect each individual uniquely, tailoring that individual's perspective to be different from all others. Together, these factors involved in a child's social learning – intergenerational, generational, and personal – shape each individual's worldview, and, in

¹⁰ There are four principal streams of thought in child developmental psychology related to how children learn. The cognitive-developmental approach best associated with the work of Jean Piaget finds that children are active participants in their environment; they 'adapt to their environment by assimilating new information and experiences to fit existing knowledge structures' (Raviv, Oppenheimer, and Bar-Tal 1999, 6). In contrast, social learning advocates such as Bandura view children as passive and moulded by their environment and experiences. In between fall most contemporary thinkers who favour the idea of socialization, a process whereby socializing 'agents' (parents, teachers, peers) communicate values, beliefs, and principles to children in various ways. Finally, the ecological approach taken by Bronfenbrenner and others focus on the 'interplay between changing children and their changing relationships with different ecological (societal) systems' (ibid, 7). In essence, the child and his environment are constantly affecting and shaping each other through change.

turn, affect that individual's subsequent interaction with their environment: their attitudes, behaviours, and actions. Through each of these sets of factors, constructs of enemy, conflict, and war can be perpetuated, or new constructs of friend, cooperation, and peace can be forged.

Based on their thorough collection of developmental, theoretical, and empirical studies, Israeli psychologists Amiram Raviv, Louis Oppenheimer, and Daniel Bar-Tal apply this developmental framework to children's social understanding and attitudes towards conflict, war and peace, and conclude that they are:

based on personal constructions which are codetermined by a multitude of individual and environmental variables. While this knowledge may be shared by cohorts within sociocultural contexts, it is *subjective* knowledge which is directly related to the experiences and individuals and their level of operational thinking (Raviv, Oppenheimer, and Bar-Tal 1999, 8, emphasis added).

Most importantly, children's views of conflict, war and peace are 'always subject to changes as a result of a changing understanding' and, therefore, 'considered to be changeable and dynamic' (ibid, 8). This key notion feeds Piaget's widely accepted conclusion that a society's general worldview is perpetually reinvented as its children's understanding evolves based on new interpretation and interaction (Cairns 1996, 116). Social reality is constructed anew with each generation. There is hope, therefore, that the social constructs of protracted social conflict that are passed between generations can be transformed by intervening in the social learning process of new generations, to reverse the cycle of conflict and begin to reconstruct a cycle of peace.

2.1.1 Socialization

By its very definition, culture is a set of common values, beliefs, and norms,

based on shared memories, symbols, and traditions of an identity group. Culture serves to satisfy the basic human need for identity and belonging. To survive, it is passed down to successive generations, and its values, beliefs and norms become fundamental to the social understanding of its children. The intergenerational transfer of culture is achieved through the process of socialization, whereby various 'agents' – families, teachers, media, peers, and others – influence and mould a child's worldview and behaviour. Most psychoanalytic and sociocultural development theorists agree that socialization through human relationships is the key to concept formation in children (Punamaki 1999, 140).

Socializing agents perpetuate the social constructs of preceding generations, implicitly and explicitly, by assigning such development as desirable and appropriate for the child's present and future role in society. Adhering to the worldview of the identity group is crucial to a child's acceptance in the in-group, which is in turn crucial to the child's self-esteem. In protracted social conflict, the constructs of inflexible interests, zero-sum positional bargaining, enemy images, and the legitimacy and glory of violence are passed from generation to generation. The child's entire identity and worldview is constructed in the context of the conflict:

Society at war provides heroic explanations for traumatic events and encourages strong ideological commitment as a solution and as healing. Ideological conceptualization of war helps children to understand why hardships happen, to feel protected, and to ventilate feelings of frustration and aggression (Punamaki 1999, 139).

Indeed, ideology is a necessary foundation of group culture: a primary commonality shared by its members and a means to explain their social reality. However, it is a dangerously powerful tool in shaping worldviews and behaviour. It is fundamental to the child's sense of self-worth and identity, and it shapes the way in which children interpret

and understand their subsequent social experiences and interactions.

In many cases, the righteousness and justice of a people's cause are expressed from a monolithic perspective without alternative, through glorious myths and legends of past interaction with a demonized 'enemy' and the formation of ideological dyads that legitimate the use of violence, in what is constructed as a fundamental struggle of right versus wrong. To cope with trauma and justify their struggle, their enemies are dehumanized: the value of human life is systematically removed from the psyche of the child. Perry (1997) asserts that belief systems are the catalyst that incites children exposed to horrific abuse and neglect to act out in remorseless violence instead of remaining socially and emotionally distant in isolation. That an enemy is not human can only come from a strong attachment to a profound ideological righteousness in whose name the individual can accept or even commit acts of intense cruelty.

Insofar as ideology truncates normal moral development, it is a serious impediment to the movement for peace (Garbarino et al 1991, 25). Sustaining the rigid ideology constructed toward conflict becomes the primary means by which children cope with the trauma of war: their only source of explanation and justification for their lives, and 'when they grow up this same ideology spurs them to continue the war and subject another generation of children to suffering' (Garbarino et al 1991, 23). The intergenerational cycle of conflict continues.

'God promised us the land of Israel. The Arabs came and took it!' says Moishe Bar Am, an Israeli boy from Beit-El:

a settlement, a place where people who fight with Arabs live. We fight because this land is ours. If I could make my own future, all the Arabs would fly away. The Jews would stay and the Temple would be rebuilt. This fence separates us from that Arab village. If the Arabs break in, there's nothing we can do. We're

surrounded. We can't escape. But we have our army to protect us. We have our firing range. And if the soldiers aim poorly, it's OK 'cause they might shoot an Arab! (Goldberg et al 2001).

'I support Hamas and Hezbollah,' says a Palestinian boy living in Jerusalem, after watching the parades and celebrations for the anniversary of the reunification of the holy city after the 1967 war. 'They kill women and children, but they do it for their country. The more Jews we kill, the fewer there will be. Until they're almost gone' (Goldberg et al 2001).

Studies into when and how children learn about notions of conflict, war, and peace have revealed the foundational influence of socializing agents on a child's worldview. Tolley's Vietnam-era study (1973) of the political views on war and peace among east coast American children aged seven to fifteen demonstrated the unmistakable passing of general public understanding, attitude and opinion from socializing agents to the children surveyed. The most direct and important influences on children's political worldview are generally cited as family, school, the media, and peer groups. Each group of agents is pivotal to how children will understand and approach conflict in their society.

2.1.2 Experiential factors in social learning

Aside from the intergenerational transfer of values, beliefs, and norms, children construct their social understanding based on the events they witness in their lifetimes, and their personal experiences in their environment. Experience is 'the major modifier of all human behavior', making the neurological make-up of the child highly malleable (Perry 1997).

The situations that whole generations experience collectively shape their common worldview, and form images and memories that will last throughout their lifetimes.

Generations that live through a given episode of conflict or violence will have a vastly different perspective than succeeding generations that did not. A generation that has known mostly peace will see a latent conflict differently than one that lived during periods of more intense escalation.

The situation in which a child grows up inevitably shapes his perspective on the social world and his relationship with others. The inhuman circumstances and demands of a real war take a massive toll on the normal development of the child:

[When their identity group is not directly involved in a given conflict,] older children increasingly understand the causes of war in terms of mutuality and can perceive enemy sides as equally guilty and equally deserving of legitimate rights. [...] In a society at war, the actual dangers hinder children from using logic based on the aspects of mutuality, empathy, and universality in the conceptualizations of hostilities and the enemy. [...] Children [in warring societies] cannot afford to explain their own war in diplomatic terms as a mutual disagreement; instead they perceive the conflict as an antagonistic 'us or them' and as a question of life or death. [...] They] perceive the very existence of the enemy as a direct personal threat. They fear and despise the enemy not in abstract terms but because it has the power to destroy their home and deprive them of their parents (Punamaki 1999, 137-8).

War cripples normal development in children. If it spares their life, it can still steal their limbs, senses, or other physical capacities. It destroys schools and educational systems, maiming their ability to develop intellectually or mentally. It prevents their appreciation for the value of human life, crippling their moral development. It shatters their families and communities, depriving them of sources of love, support, self-esteem, positive relationships, and hope for the future. This critical deficiency truncates their normal emotional and psychological development to varying degrees depending on their level of involvement.

A child directly affected by war is forever changed by violence. In the formative

years of a child soldier's socialization and development of values and self-worth, he is subjected to intense cruelty and a warped lifestyle of brutality and misogyny, greed and inhumanity. The distorted social structure of the military privileges obedience over moral judgement and robs the child of a loving, nurturing, esteem-building environment. That adults perpetrated such vile crimes shatters a child's trust in adults – both in strangers to not harm them, and in their parents and friends to protect them from harm (Machel, 1996). They may be left with no one to care for them, and a rifle as their security blanket. Worst of all, children are deprived of their humanity: the ruthless torture and killing of innocent victims leads the child to dehumanize people, and lack the basic capacity to value human life. Being directly subjected to vicious brutality – beatings, rapes, torture – further desensitizes recruits to human suffering (Garbarino et al 1991, 23). Neglect and abuse retards the physical development of the brain that allows the child to feel connected to other people, and instead builds a capacity to inflict pain and to kill without remorse (Perry 1997, 132). The rehabilitation and reintegration of demobilized child combatants is intricate and trying: their recovery could take months or years to be fully realized, if at all.

Though to lesser degrees, children affected less directly by war suffer many of the same effects. The loss of parents, family, friends, or community members at the hands of the enemy are practically unavoidable, and severe injury – from land mines or other flashes of violence – is common. Emotionally, socially, psychologically, and morally, a child's development is forever distorted from what should be normal. Daily scenes of brutality and exposure to anger, hatred, fear, and grief desensitize and destabilize fragile, budding psyches. The value of human life is never fully appreciated, and optimism for the future is crushed before it can build its foundation.

'It was during the intifada and there was a curfew,' said Faraj Husein, a Palestinian boy in Deheishe refugee camp. 'My friend Bassam threw a stone through an open window. And a soldier shot Bassam. Killed him. I wanted to cut that soldier in half. Shoot him or blow him up to avenge Bassam's death' (Goldberg et al 2001).

It is clear, then, that children exposed only to conflict will learn mostly conflict at the most sensitive and formative period of their lives. That a child is subjected to abuse and violence does not lead directly to an abusive and violent adult, but rather an adult that is predisposed to violence neurologically (Perry 1997). Added to a socialization process that accepts and legitimates the use of violence as regrettably necessary, or even glorious and honourable, the predisposition of children exposed to chronic violence becomes very likely to be realized.

2.1.3 Processing social understanding: self-esteem and hope for the future

Having addressed the influence of socialization and experience on the worldview of children, it is important to recognize two fundamental themes in the social learning process that play a substantial role in how children interpret and act upon their evolving worldview: self-esteem and hope for the future. Both issues are of primordial concern to children as they grow to better understand their environment and their place in the world. First, children's self-esteem requires continuous nurturing. They seek purpose and confidence in a place or group to which they belong, and to which they contribute. Second, children hope for a positive future. They desire a vision of hope and potential to which they can look forward, particularly if their present is marked with fear and despair.

These two issues are of critical importance to the present discussion because children will seek and most easily adhere to worldviews that deliver positive results:

those that increase their sense of self-worth and belonging, and those that offer a brighter future. For this reason, it is often argued that poverty, inequality, and strong adherence to ideology provide fertile recruiting grounds for children who are prepared to accept a worldview that legitimates violent conflict. As Garbarino et al submit, children choose to fight 'if they are angry, if they despair of a better future, or if they believe in a cause' (Garbarino et al 1991, 17).

Where there is poverty, there are low self-esteem and dim prospects for the future. Studies of children from Lebanon, the Philippines, and Central America note near-epidemic sentiments that 'I see no future ahead of us' – a lack of 'futuraity' that characterizes an uncertain future for children who have known nothing but war and poverty (Cairns 1996, 139). Irvin Staub¹¹ has capably drawn the link between a child's sense of self-worth and his susceptibility to manipulation, particularly to messages of scapegoating for his desperate plight or, just as often, that of his identity group – his 'people'. By removing responsibility and passing blame to a faceless other, self-image is bolstered, and the potential to solve problems and ameliorate conditions through action against the enemy provides a longed-for sense of purpose and belonging that justifies any act, no matter how contrary to their humanity. Mired in depression and lacking any optimism for the future, young people are prone to any message of a different life, and especially prone to messages of victimization, righteousness, and revenge. Studies of children in refugee camps reveal parental neglect and diminished future prospects, leading to a lack of direction that 'produces depression, rage, and disregard for human life – their own and others' (Garbarino and Kostelny 1997, 38).

¹¹ E. Staub, *The Roots of Evil: The Origins of Genocide and Other Group Violence* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989), cited in Bush and Saltarelli 2000, 14.

This concept is being challenged by profiles of Palestinian suicide bombers in early 2002: middle-class, educated, and relatively well off. While these profiles are generally accurate, they point to a second series of influences that facilitate the easy appeal of taking up violence among young people: a sense of inequality and injustice, and the attraction of glory and heroism. Again, though, these factors relate back to issues of self-esteem and purpose. Violence is legitimate if it is to right an egregious wrong that affects the community to whom one is profoundly attached. As preceding martyrs are praised and celebrated by their communities and families, new martyrs are made among those who wish to follow in the example of preceding 'heroes', to bring honour to their family, and to contribute to a cause they wholly believes is just. Further, the future is bright for the martyr. An eternal afterlife in paradise awaits he who dies for his cause, and promises of substantial care packages for the families of martyrs from their colleagues and communities add to the incentive to make their lives count in death. Self-esteem and better future prospects, therefore, play a significant role in inciting young people in their late teens and early twenties to go proudly and without regret into a violent death. A similar pattern emerges from profiles of the young perpetrators of political violence during North Ireland's Troubles: well-off youth from stable families believed in their cause and the cult of heroism (Cairns 1996, 119). One cannot underestimate the power of political ideology in perpetuating violent inter-group conflict.

It should be noted that no one region or culture is alone in the portrayal of war as glamorous, adventurous, and heroic. Around the world, military service is seen as 'a way to achieve status and prestige, with peers and adults' (Garbarino et al 1991, 16). Even in the 'civilized' world, the armed forces are advertised as an exhilarating quest: the opportunity to 'be all that you can be'. War is glory, and martyrdom – or the sacrifice of

one's life for one's cause or country – is the best prospect for the future in many respects when compared to the economic and social alternatives.

Finally, it is common that the best way to a prosperous and secure future is in war, especially in civil conflicts in regions with lacklustre economies in Africa, Central Asia, and Latin America, where resource-based wars of greed have quietly supplanted issue-based wars of grievance (Berdal and Malone 2000). Beyond the glamour and prestige that come with membership in guerrilla groups, economic perks abound – in line-ups for scarce food and supplies, and in booty from pillaging missions – in some cases through respect, but in most cases through fear.

2.2 Making peace instead of war

The portrait of a child's understanding of conflict and war is dire. However, there is much reason for hope that children's social learning can be effectively led in the direction of peace. Socialization, experience, and issues of self-esteem and the future can be equally powerful tools for promoting and perpetuating values, beliefs and norms that are conducive to cooperation, friendship, and peaceful coexistence in new generations.

Socializing agents must not be seen as a monolith of conniving devils whispering in children's ears. They merely pass the social constructs that have become the basis of their worldviews and ontological to their being – their values, beliefs and norms – to future generations. The socialization process is one of humanity's most natural social functions, and in no way should it be stopped. In fact, Bush and Saltarelli argue that violent conflict 'short-circuits' the normal socialization process by impairing the 'development of confidence' and 'sense of responsibilities' (2000, 29). As such, one can reasonably argue that the destructive constructs of conflict can and should be addressed

and reconstructed to restore normal socialization and social learning processes that foster understanding and promote tolerance in the name of a lasting and equitable peace.

Experiences that expose children to the alternative idea of peace and cooperation can also begin to offset the effects of conflict on a child's development. Common generational events that provide realistic hope for peace, like Egyptian President Sadat's historic visit to Israel in 1977 (Raviv, Bar-Tal, Koren-Silvershatz, and Raviv 1999, 165) or the Good Friday Accord in Northern Ireland can shape how the children who witnessed them understand war and peace. Likewise, exposure to the alternative idea of peace, cooperation, and friendship – at home, at school, in the community, and even through personal interaction between children across conflict lines – can demonstrate that peace is a viable, and arguably preferable, option.

An individual's relationships – with peers, communities, and role models – are heavily influential in determining his worldview by appealing to his self-esteem and hope for the future. The Big Brothers programme recognized long ago the power of direct contact with, and attention from, positive role models on the self-esteem and socialization of children. In Palestine in March 2002, older role models are kamikaze martyrs who blow up themselves and dozens of Israelis, and are subsequently hailed as heroes worthy of their admiration. They could instead be mentors who advocate for peace and maintain personal links with troubled youth, providing the needed self-esteem and hopeful future that drive some children into conflict.

The Oscar-nominated documentary, *Promises*, demonstrated the impact and respect that B.Z. Goldberg, an Israeli-American man in his late twenties, was able to earn through a caring and respectful friendship with Palestinian and Israeli youth in Jerusalem and the West Bank. One of his Palestinian friends, having expressed his profound hatred

of Jews, was surprised to learn that his dear friend and mentor was an 'authentic' Israeli and not just an American of Israeli descent. Goldberg's relationships with children on both sides of the conflict led to a meeting between several of the children – two Israeli twins from Jerusalem and a number of Palestinians at Deheishe refugee camp. The children of ancient enemies revelled in a soccer game, wrestling matches, pillow fights, and a discussion about their experiences on either side of the dreaded checkpoints. The meeting revealed the open mindedness of children given a mentor who can cut across lines of long-time conflict.

Finally, the issues of self-esteem and hope for the future must be addressed if children and youth are to be convinced that peace is the way:

The greatest challenge for peace education is to create the conditions (or empower people to create the conditions) in which the young can find employment, recognition, security, belonging and a sense of control over their lives so that they do not become the victims of peace, so they feel an ownership of the peace process and benefit from a Sierra Leone of their own making. Unfortunately, the peace movement still finds itself sheltering in safety surrounded by language and ideals that resonate with "femininity." Without an adequate perception of masculine psychology, and without incorporating this into peace education, glory will never be situated in peace.¹²

The peace dividend is a prerequisite in the demobilization and reintegration of former enemies at all age levels. Without a positive economic and social outlook for the future, conflict will continue to be more appealing to children and adults alike. Just as the drive for individuals and identity groups to satisfy ontological human and social needs cannot be suppressed through coercion, neither can it be stifled by the process of socialization (Burton 1987, 23). Conflict will continue until basic human needs are satisfied. Setting

¹² Joanna Skelt (1997), *Rethinking Peace Education in War-Torn Societies: A Theoretical and Empirical Investigation with Special Reference to Sierra Leone* (Cambridge: International Extension College), cited in Keen 2000, 40.

aside these concrete economic, political, and social structures required to create the empirical peace dividend, the appeal of peace can be fostered in the minds of children through the socialization and experiential processes. As femininity and masculinity are themselves socially constructed, it becomes possible to 'glorify' peace in terms of the more basic child needs for self-esteem and hope for the future. The sense of belonging, self-worth, and control can all be satisfied, theoretically, through active participation and contribution to one's family and community. Alongside positive economic prospects for the future can be the betterment of one's family and community. Even in the face of tremendous injustice and inequality, children are equally apt to express a desire to make positive, constructive contributions toward the betterment of their situation, lifting their people up instead of bringing others down (Cairns 1996, 143). If there is an inherent need for struggle, competition, and victory in 'masculine psychology', let it be satisfied in a battle against common, superordinate 'enemies', and in the work that will make the world a better place for all. These ideals are not feminine; they are fundamentally human. Indeed, the glory that war provides must be found in peace. The good news is that it can be.

Social learning is a complex process that provides the foundation of an individual's worldview from childhood through adolescence. It can lead to constructs of conflict or of peace, and many shades in between. It is also highly dynamic: some influences play against others, and it is to each individual to manage – not fully consciously, but certainly subjectively – the conflicting signals and pressures in deciding their unique, personal worldview. The conclusion by Raviv, Oppenheimer and Bar-Tal that a child's social learning is dynamic and subject to change (1999, 8) is the basis for youth peace initiatives that aim to reverse the intergenerational cycle of enmity and

conflict through the socialization and experiential social learning process of children.

2.3 The potential to intervene and transform attitudes in youth

Gillet has argued that ‘the development of a peace culture is not easy in any circumstances ... in which conflict has developed a long history and become part of the culture.’¹³ Indeed, conflict is often very deeply rooted in culture and society, and as Tolley concluded in 1973:

children reflect contemporary public opinion, so that attempts to create new attitudes in school can never completely transform their outlook. Parents and the media exercise enough influence to frustrate a teacher’s effort in inculcate contrary views. By and large, children seem to reflect the opinions of their elders, and adopt “adult” opinions as a result of growing up. If their attitudes are so deeply influenced by contemporary public opinion, then there appears somewhat less hope of changing the next generation of adults by educating this generation of children. If growing up entails an acceptance of adult values, and if adults generally accept war as necessary, then children will too (Tolley 1973, 136).

Children who have directly experienced the trauma of war will necessarily be more difficult to rescue from the spiral of socially constructed conflict, and in many conflict areas, schools are purposively destroyed, so that education is not even an option for transforming attitudes. Further, the window of opportunity associated with a child’s formative years would appear quite limited: attitudes and experiences compile quite quickly and heavily on the developing mind of the young child. Padilla, Ruiz and Bland found that ‘ethnic attitudes are formed early, and that once positive or negative prejudices are formed, they tend to increase with time.’¹⁴

However, there remains hope. To begin, it is reasonable to believe that just as

¹³ N. Gillet, “‘An Agenda for Peace’ and the role of peace education”, *Peace, Environment and Education*, 5, p. 20; cited in Raviv, Oppenheimer, and Bar-Tal, 2.

¹⁴ Padilla, A.M. and R.A. Ruiz (1994), *Latino Mental Health: a Review of the Literature* (Rockville, MD: National Institute of Health), in the words of Bush and Saltarelli 2000, 3.

children are susceptible to messages of enemy and conflict from an early age, it must then follow that they are also susceptible to messages of friendship and peace. Instead of being raised as suicide bombers, children can be raised as peace personalities: 'persons who are predisposed to attend to similarities (rather than differences) between themselves and others may be expected to be more empathetic and less hostile under a variety of interpersonal conditions including conflict and war' (Ziller et al 1999, 78), leading to a concept of universal orientation, general empathy and identification with others, an appreciative regard for the feelings of others.

Cultures of peace abound. The concept of the peace personality, non-violence, and universal orientation or oneness – selectively attending to the similarities rather than the differences between the self and others – is present in Buddhist and Gandhian teachings. The first decade of the new millennium is the United Nations' International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World. The proponents of the culture of peace are growing in number, enthusiasm, and refinement of purpose:

The culture of peace should be understood as the creation of peaceful, non-violent behavioral patterns and attitudes. [...] The replacement of the existing culture of violence by a culture of peace can only be achieved in a longer perspective, grouped around such key notions as justice, tolerance, human rights, democracy, development, non-violence, and peaceful resolution of conflicts (Sharma 2000, 5).

Many of these notions are 'western', to be sure; however, they have not always been. Rather, they have been constructed over time in western society, and conceivably can be constructed elsewhere as well through indigenous movements and cultural evolution, as long as such construction is led and decided by the people themselves. If children are socialized to believe that a peaceful world is indeed possible, they will be more likely to

pursue that objective with vigour and confidence.

Indeed, while children may be born to a particular 'side' in a conflict, they are not born on a particular side. Children are not born with prejudice or hate. They are not innately or inescapably enemies with the children across the conflict line. Conflict is not inherited; it is learned. Identity groups, conflicting interests, enemy images, and the legitimization of violence are constructed anew in each and every child. A child is only born human, open to the world, and prepared to interact with his environment. It is with this notion in mind that the Machel report asserts that:

In a world of diversity and disparity, children are a unifying force capable of bringing people to common ethical grounds. Children's needs and aspirations cut across all ideologies and cultures. The needs of all children are the same: nutritious food, adequate health care, a decent education, shelter and a secure and loving family (Machel 1996, para. 6).

Yet, children who have learned conflict need not be surrendered so easily. To be sure, children are raised to reflect the opinions and attitudes of their parents and the general public; however, the evident interplay of socializing elements and the influence of situational and personal experience on a child's evolving worldview cannot be underestimated. It must be remembered that a child's worldview is transformed with each new social interaction, and it evolves throughout life. Some argue that the most crucial time for political socialization is as late as early adulthood (Cairns 1996, 128).

Traditional healing and community-based methods of rehabilitating and reintegrating severely war-affected children have proven effective tools in the struggle to establish peace in nations devastated by war. Faith, family and community play a large part in restoring secure relationships and hope for a better future; they have served to

foster ideas of solidarity and cooperation in Angola, El Salvador, Mozambique,¹⁵ and Nicaragua.¹⁶ Examples of resilience in war-affected children abound; in fact, psychiatrist Robert Coles has noted that moral sensibility is actually enhanced in some children affected by violence and conflict (Garbarino et al 1991, 27). A 1990 study showed that 'a clear majority, perhaps as many as 85 percent' of children affected directly by war 'will overcome their symptoms of distress and will find a way to live a "normal" life.'¹⁷

Further, Cairns recognizes a body of research that rejects the overall pessimism of children at war by asserting that the 'overwhelming picture is one of individuals who condemn violence and see as an ideal 'a world at peace':

The single most common theme in the dreams of Israeli children was peace, (...) in South Africa children are more negative about violence following direct exposure, and (...) in Uganda and Sudan the overwhelming majority of teenagers consistently expressed the view that they were tired of war (Cairns 1996, 145).

He concludes by citing Raundalen and Dodge:

Overall, therefore, this research evidence 'gives some cause for optimism' suggesting that if young people are 'given a meaningful alternative' to the current political violence in which they find themselves enmeshed, 'the great majority of the new generation will grasp it.'¹⁸

2.4 Conclusion

Long-term, deep-rooted violent conflict cannot be sustained without the

¹⁵ Faith healing and reuniting child soldiers with their families are featured as primary tools of reintegration and community healing (Verhey; UNICEF, 2000; Thompson, 1999).

¹⁶ Based on research by the author in Waslala, a rural town and vast group of small communities in the northwestern mountains of Nicaragua, where the Catholic church has been heavily involved in health and education projects in addition to bringing formerly divided families and communities together to work and grow in the name of solidarity.

¹⁷ Fish-Murray, C. (1990, October 10), *Memories of trauma: Place and path*, Keynote presentation, NAIM Foundation Conference on Children and Trauma, Washington, DC. Cited in Garbarino et al 1991, 30.

¹⁸ The embedded quotations are from M. Raundalen and C.P. Dodge (1991), *Researching Children in War: Sudan, Uganda, and Mozambique* (Bergen, Norway: Sigma Forlag), p. 117. The entire passage is from Cairns 1996, 145-6.

intergenerational transfer of that conflict's social constructs: the passing of prejudice and hatred from adult to child. Children's social understanding evolves gradually and is constantly transforming based on new interactions with their environment. They develop social knowledge and understanding through socialization and experience. The cultural and political socialization of children is as old as human civilization. It is not a process to be scorned or stopped. Rather, it is a process to be used to build a better future, not to destroy it. Just as socializing agents can construct notions of enemy, hatred, and conflict in children, they can equally serve to construct notions of friendship, cooperation, and peace. Further, since children's social understanding is dynamic and alterable, it is possible through socialization and new experiences to deconstruct worldviews that lead to conflict and replace them with a viable alternative of peace.

A child's need for a positive self-image and hope for the future are crucial to the worldview he will espouse. The alternative of peace must satisfy these two fundamental needs in order to effectively reconstruct a culture of peace in societies faced with protracted social conflict.

Children represent a promising hope for peace in deep-seated conflict. They are not born enemies with the other side – they learn to be. There is equal hope that the intergenerational transfer of historical enmity and conflict can be reversed through the same processes of socialization and personal experience. In that way, children who have been raised in an environment of fear, hatred, and war:

may come through the challenge of facing danger with an enhanced capacity to see the world with sensitivity and moral astuteness. This can happen if adults help them process their experiences, heal their pain, and help put those painful experiences in a humanistic framework that refuses to dehumanize the enemy and instead encourages the development of empathy (Garbarino et al 1991, 27).

Since 'the shared sociocultural structure or the view of the world as shaped in childhood and adolescence to a large part determine adult perspectives' (Raviv 1999, 3), any new spirit of conciliation and cooperation must be forged in childhood if there is to be any hope of an appreciable movement towards peace. A movement of peaceful children can admittedly not exist spontaneously without influential adults who seek peace. However, it will be argued in the following chapters of this work that, given those adults, a powerful movement for peace can be achieved, and entire conflicts can be transformed and permanently resolved through children.

Chapter 3: The Curricular Approach to Youth Peace Initiatives

There can be no more important initiative than bringing together young people who have seen the ravages of war to learn the art of peace.

– Kofi Annan (SOP 2002)

The theoretical premise behind youth peace initiatives (YPIs) has been established in two critical steps. First, conflict must be transformed in order to be genuinely resolved. Only by deconstructing the social constructs of conflict – isolating and addressing its underlying issues, reconstructing social structures that promote cooperation instead of inequality, and transforming the relationship between conflicting parties from enemy to partner – can a just and lasting peace be forged. Second, given that the social constructs of a protracted conflict must necessarily be learned by new generations in order to endure, the transformation of conflict can be optimally achieved through interventions into the social learning processes of children before conflict constructs are cemented in their evolving worldview. Introducing the alternative of peace to new generations can break the intergenerational cycle of conflict and construct a new culture of peace in the future. YPIs, then, clearly have a potential niche in the processes of conflict resolution and peacebuilding in areas of protracted social conflict.

Having established this niche on a theoretical, macro-systemic level, it becomes necessary to formulate the practical, micro-procedural framework of the youth peace initiative itself. This chapter will explore thoroughly the key issues, conditions, and criteria in order to establish a viable and flexible framework from which YPIs can be designed and implemented in various conflict situations and circumstances.

YPIs are largely inspired by the problem-solving workshops envisaged in ICR theory. They share Kelman's aim 'toward the ultimate establishment of a new

cooperative and mutually enhancing relationship' (Kelman 1998, 191), by introducing a viable alternative of a just and lasting peace to the children of traditional enemies. To that end, YPIs can assume a variety of shapes and structures. This paper will focus on those that entail organized and facilitated interaction and exchange between children from opposing sides of a protracted conflict. They may take the form of summer camps like *Seeds of Peace* in Maine, conferences like the one *Seeds of Peace* organized for youth representatives from nine Balkan nations in Greece in 1999, or regular meetings like *CARE Canada's* Civil Society Development Project in Bosnia that established partnerships between youth organizations across ethnic lines, among others. The key component of a YPI venue is that it fosters interaction on both individual and group bases, so that participants get to know each other in casual settings and develop friendships by discovering commonalities, while also engaging in an analytical process of joint problem solving that seeks a just peace between their respective groups. The precise structure and programme of the YPI is determined by the conflict situation and the innovation of its designers. It may be necessary to precede the joint programmes with separate workshops to deal with individual or group psychological issues – trauma, anger management, and grief, among others – before the groups are fully prepared to interact with each other. If the conditions for interaction are not favourable, YPIs may focus entirely on the deconstruction of conflict and the fostering of peaceful attitudes on either side separately. However, the end goal of the YPI remains to bring together children from enemy sides of a conflict in order to construct a lasting peace between them, and as such, this study will remain focussed primarily on initiatives like those described above.

Like ICR workshops, YPIs have a 'dual purpose' (Kelman 1997, 214) that links micro-change in the worldview and behaviour of individuals with macro-change in

political decision-making and intergroup relations and conflict. First, the YPI aims to transform the perceptions and attitudes of the children involved, deconstructing enemy and other conflict constructs and reconstructing a worldview of peace and cooperation. Second, it aims to impact the larger conflict by fostering in those children a commitment to peaceful conflict resolution and the capacity to take an active role in effecting such a transformation through various means of influence in their respective societies. In short, the YPI seeks to develop determined and skilled leaders for peace among the children of protracted conflict.

To date, YPIs have been predominantly targeted and successful at the first component of the dual purpose, with mostly indirect or long-term impacts on the overall peace process that are difficult to evaluate at this time. In theory, as the children who are transformed by YPIs grow into older youth and adults in their societies, their socializing influence on succeeding generations will be toward peace, effectively contributing to the reversal of the intergenerational cycle of conflict. However, while more direct impact strategies are currently being tried, they exist largely only in Western youth leadership and social involvement models, and have not yet been borne out in practice on a scale large enough to determine any viable framework outside of pure theory. As such, this chapter will focus on the transformation of attitudes in the participants with a view to reversing the intergenerational cycle of conflict in the long run.

To transform a child's worldview – the values, beliefs, and norms learned through socialization and experience – is a very difficult task. However, as discussed in Chapter Two, it is possible because the child's worldview is constantly evolving, based on a dynamic social understanding that changes with every new interactive experience with his environment. Stereotypes, prejudice, enmity, and other conflict constructs are not as

profoundly embedded as in adults, and their conflict experience is more limited.

Children are more liable to change attitudes and behaviours based on the influence of peers and mentors, thus allowing for positive influences to have an impact on their evolving worldview. With their future at stake, children may be more open to dismantling constructs and structures that entrench injustice and inequality, and creating new ones that ensure the satisfaction of every group's needs and a peaceful prosperity for all. The fresh start of childhood can spark a fresh start for society.

In three principal ways, it is proposed that the children of traditional enemies can become friends dedicated to living together in peace. First, the contact hypothesis posits that direct interaction between children will lead to the rehumanization of faceless enemies, foster mutual understanding and appreciation, and develop true friendships that cross conflict lines and make them insignificant. Second, the introduction of a viable alternative of peace to their conflict can effectively convince children that peace offers a clear and concrete dividend that satisfies their self-esteem, hope for the future, and all other needs and desires that violence and war fulfill. Third, an adaptation of the ICR analytical workshop can serve to reveal to children other perspectives they have never known, allow them to explore the underlying issues and sources of their conflict, and empower them to take the conflict resolution process into their own hands, for their own and their society's future. With each of these strategies, numerous challenges are presented that must be understood and addressed when designing a YPI. It is hoped that the following examination will illuminate these challenges and provide hope for their potential to achieve the above objective of transforming attitudes in the children of enemies. To begin, an examination of the facilitation mindset and strategies involved in conducting YPIs is required as an overarching consideration for the YPI framework.

3.1 Facilitation

The style and strategy of facilitation is of fundamental importance to the success of YPIs at all stages and levels. It is the means by which participants are guided through the entire process from hated enemies in war, to friends and partners for peace. Literally, facilitation makes easier; helps bring about. It describes perfectly the required approach to YPIs: it implies no ownership of the process for the facilitator, but rather a valuable role as a dependable motivator that makes forward progress easier and the work of the true actors more efficient and effective. It is necessarily informed of and responsive to the situation for which it is needed. It entails an even-handed but not neutral pursuit of a determined objective, sensitive to the needs of the actors but honest in its advice regarding the best way forward. These are all important considerations when devising a facilitation strategy and selecting a team of facilitators for a YPI.

Concretely, in the YPI, the facilitation team is responsible for devising and administering the programme in every detail, from logistics like funding, venue, and food, to programming particulars like workshops, analysis sessions, and casual activities. They are more than the scholar-practitioners envisioned by Burton, acting as mentors and friends to the participants in addition to working toward tangible results. Before the precise make-up of the facilitation team can be determined considered, the facilitation strategy must be considered in detail.

The first tenet of facilitation is that ownership and energy of the process must be decidedly vested in the parties themselves – the facilitator does not take sides, but instead offers unconditional support and understanding to all sides. There must be no preconceived ideas of potential solutions: the third party must facilitate, not lead. The

definition and resolution of the conflict belong to the parties alone.

This philosophy is reflected in Lederach's 'elicitive' approach (1995). Drawing from theories of popular education, appropriate technology, and ethnology, he applies to conflict resolution the chief tenet of international development: that sustainable solutions to context-specific problems are best achieved through the participation and empowerment of those who are directly involved. The root word – elicit – indicates his strategy's fundamental tactic: to facilitate the development of a homemade, culturally and setting specific solution, by drawing out local knowledge, experience, and ideas from the people who live with the conflict every day. The elicitive approach also recognizes the powerful role that family, religion, community, ethnicity, and other setting-specific practices and resources play in all cultures and conflict zones. It seeks to build solutions with solid foundations in the context of the particular setting, so as to be relevant and practicable to the people who will live with them.

The elicitive approach sees learning as a mutual process between trainer and participant, and prefers a larger focus on reflection and discovery, while downplaying but not eliminating the prescription of established ideas. In other words, the internal, *in situ* expertise of the participants is placed on an even footing with the external expertise of the facilitator in devising solutions. Participants define, or 'name', their circumstances and their reality before setting out to analyse it critically. The elicitive approach recognizes the inherent value of implicit social knowledge and experiences stored in the minds of local people as indispensable resources in the process of understanding and defining the circumstances and problems involved in their particular setting, and of indigenous techniques and practices as critical building blocks from which their own lasting solutions can be forged. The facilitator is above all a guide with expertise in providing

participants with the direction and the means to discover their own solutions.

The elicitive approach has been implemented with children by the *Kids Can Free The Children's* Embracing Cultures Project, a touring workshop run by three youth leadership facilitators that encourages high school students throughout North America to build a more embracing environment for people of all backgrounds. The four-hour workshop is centred around an open, facilitated discussion with fifteen student leaders regarding the problems of discrimination and intolerance in their schools and communities. Participants are trained in conflict resolution and social advocacy skills,¹⁹ and then guided through the development of an action plan that is tailored specifically to their environment. The facilitators suggest ideas that have worked in other schools with similar conditions and problems, and taper those suggestions based on the *in situ* experience and knowledge of the participants. Facilitators and participants remain in contact through e-mail as the plan is implemented.

Clearly, this type of elicitive approach is useful when designing and implementing YPIs that are relevant and effective in specific conflict settings. First, YPIs must establish a safe, encouraging and empowering environment in which participants assume ownership of the process and the results. Group norms of confidentiality, respect, and openness should ideally be agreed upon and upheld by all parties. Children must be encouraged to share openly and honestly their feelings, attitudes, and experiences. This feat is not easy, given the psychological and emotional effects of violent conflict on children; however, an environment of trust and safety – physical and emotional – must be provided and proven if real answers are to come to the important questions that seek to understand the conflict and devise workable solutions. The definition and analysis of

¹⁹ Skills include assertiveness, leadership, inspiring others, fundraising, and interpersonal communication

their conflict must be genuine if genuine resolution is to be possible. Any action plan to be implemented upon their return must have met the scrutiny of their fears, doubts, experience, and limitations if they are to believe in it, commit to it and effectively carry it out. Not only will the plan not work if the participants' internal expertise is not elicited, but their passion and commitment will waver if they do not feel a sense of empowerment and ownership over a process that they have created.

Second, facilitators must possess an intimate knowledge of the conflict and of the context. The vastly different natures and circumstances of conflicts present challenges and sensitivities that must be known and understood. The innumerable ways in which children are affected by war and conflict demand highly sensitive and particular approaches. The meanings and beliefs attached to self-esteem, children's dreams of their future, social advocacy and political strategies, the role and influence of children in family, society, and politics, the extent and nature of acceptable democratic participation, and countless other issues vary substantially across cultures. These different circumstances call for a wide range of different skills and plans of action that may be tried and, more importantly, must *not* be tried. For example, to plan an open protest against war in a non-democratic society could lead to a tragic reaction. Similarly, asking all participants to wear baseball caps may contravene religious or cultural custom. Even details as mundane as the games to be played, the nature of the activities, the words that are escalatory or offensive, the programme timing related to religious or cultural hours or days, the food, the accommodations, and the materials must be subject to vigilant sensitivity. In addition, the impact of YPIs may face significant challenges arising from instability, repression, criminality, history, or any of a plethora of circumstances that have prolonged conflict for years, decades or centuries. As called for by Burton (1987), the

facilitator is an objective expert who understands and empathizes with each side, and seeks the best of justice and peace for all parties.

Lederach does not advocate a purely elicitive approach, but a healthy balance between elicitive and prescriptive strategies that leans much farther toward the former than traditional conflict resolution workshops usually do. Indeed, the facilitator remains a conflict resolution expert – a dependable resource to whom children can look for direction, knowledge, and ideas; a trustworthy friend and mentor to whom children can come for security, reassurance, and encouragement; a staunch advocate of a just peace; and a positive role model to whom children can look for proof of a peace dividend. The facilitator is a guide, providing an impetus to move forward in a constructive way, and reinvigorating the process with fresh perspectives and ideas from the outside.

When dealing with conflict that has arisen because of the threat to or denial of basic human needs, or some form of injustice or inequality, the definition of facilitator neutrality must be clarified. To be sure, the third party must never privilege one side over the other. However, this requirement must not imply that the third party remain silent on substantive issues related to the relationship. Indeed, a neutrality that does not question positions, challenge prejudices, or recognize asymmetries makes no progress. Yet, it must be recalled that the attribution of blame is to be avoided. Instead, the facilitative ethic might more effectively seek even-handedness over neutrality: seeking to defend the needs and rights of *all* sides rather than to condemn the actions and privileges of either side. An assertive approach – standing up for one's basic rights without violating the basic rights of the other – ensures that each side hears and understands the perspective of the other side and strikes the difficult balance that avoids blame while addressing the underlying sources of the conflict.

For example, an Israeli Jew may be challenged to understand and find ways to assuage the frustration of West Bank Palestinians who live in poor housing conditions, who cannot return to their former homes, and who have no official state; while a Palestinian may be challenged to understand and try to assuage the fear and anger of Israeli Jews who feel that they are unsafe in their own homes and insecure as a people when surrounded by hostile nations who vehemently deny their right to exist as a nation. Both may be encouraged to understand that the other sees Jerusalem as their religion's holiest site, and to find ways to share the city in peace. Through assertive facilitation, injustice and inequality are seen as barriers to resolution and peaceful coexistence, rather than as a reason for blame.

In this way, the facilitator plays a key role in the transformation of the conflict: motivating the parties to continually move forward and see their conflict as a common problem to be resolved jointly: to refocus the enemy and move away from blame, a decision on who is right, and past grievances. The facilitator's task is to focus on the problem, to protect 'the conflicting parties from the past' and to encourage them 'to think about an acceptable future relationship, putting aside, however hard it may be, the past relationship' (Groom 1986, 88). This task is, in fact, made easier in a YPI because children have less past and a greater desire to envision a bright future than adults. Encouraging children to dream of a better future of peaceful coexistence is a critical mission for the facilitator of a YPI.

Facilitators must establish a workable balance between authority and caring. Working with children requires both enforceable rules that ensure the security and welfare of the participants and the effectiveness of the initiative, and a safe, supportive environment that exemplifies and encourages positive interaction. The facilitator can be

neither too authoritative at the risk of stifling the participants' required ownership of the process, nor too permissive at the risk of descending into a chaos of disrespect and violence or a directionless stagnancy. The balance can be achieved by recalling the assertive approach to interaction: standing up for the process and the basic rights of everyone without exerting excessive authority. Concretely, both authority and caring must be checked to avoid either extreme, by passing ownership of the rule making process to the participants through elicitive group norms, and by assertive rule enforcement.

First, the empowerment of participants through the creation and acceptance of group norms devolves the absolute authority of the facilitator and passes both ownership and responsibility to the participants themselves. To be sure, YPIs demand additional responsibility of the facilitation team for the safety and welfare of the children. As such, certain typical camp rules, such as the prohibition of weapons, fighting, alcohol, smoking, sex, and drug use, must be enforced with authority and without question.²⁰ However, most other rules and regulations should be subject to the approval of the group. Some rules may be strongly recommended by the facilitation team, based on their knowledge of the workshop process, that serve to enhance the chances of success. These rules would include structural regulations such as sleep and awake times, scheduling, punctuality, and attendance; and behavioural regulations, such as no slurs or other offensive remarks, confidentiality, full energy and participation, no interrupting, and others that ensure a positive environment of respectful interaction. They can be amended and endorsed by the group in a democratic fashion of their choosing. Other 'group

²⁰ Any setting in which adults and older youth are responsible for the security and welfare of underaged children requires a vigilant stance on such rules as would be enforced in their homes or at their schools. This stance must be taken to protect not just the children, but also the credibility of the initiative with parents and other authorities, not to mention its legal welfare.

norms' can be brainstormed, designed, and accepted by the group as a whole in recognition of what behaviours are and are not appropriate for the effective success of the programme. The enforcement of group norms should also be devised and approved by the group. Ownership of the rule-making process increases the participants' attachment to the rules and the likelihood that they will adhere to them. Deviants offend the whole group, and not just the facilitation team.

The second means of striking the balance between authority and caring entails an assertive, reasoned approach to rule enforcement. The caring environment is certainly crucial to the effectiveness of the YPI: a positive space must be established in which participants are empowered, supported, and encouraged to freely express themselves, explore their conflict, and create lasting solutions. Children need to feel secure in the knowledge that their facilitators understand them and will defend them. However, they must also be prevented from offending other participants or damaging the process in any way. There are, of course, age-old parental tactics to elicit obedience, relating to either threat or incentive. In the empowering environment of YPIs, though, an alternative approach that combines both carrot and stick can be applied. That is, reasoning that adherence to the rules is important for mutual security and the effectiveness of the initiative. Having been actively involved in the creation and approval of the rules, participants will be aware of their reasoning. A caring approach to rule enforcement, then, would include phrases such as 'It's not cool to do that' and 'It's important that we all adhere to these rules and group norms'. The group's determination of the means of enforcement during the group norms process should dictate the approach that the group believes appropriate to strike that important balance between authority and caring that will ensure the success of the YPI. For the most part, group pressure should be sufficient

to enforce group-determined norms, and of course, in the case of strict, mandatory rules as outlined above, participants must be notified from the beginning that persistent violators will be dealt with in a specific, serious manner. Those options, including being removed from the group or sent home, are dependent on the context of the YPI.

Again, in the YPI, facilitators are also mentors – big brothers and sisters to whom children look up for support, encouragement, guidance, and a positive example to follow. Through their leadership and direct personal influence, they influence children's social learning through the two key factors by which children morally differentiate between war and peace: they boost the self-esteem of the participants, and provide the hope for a better future through peace. In vivid contrast to the negative role models – the soldiers and the suicide bombers – who pervade conflict societies, advocating and glorifying conflict and violence, facilitators prove that peace – not war – is cool, manly, glorious, fun, adventurous, righteous, or what one's religion or culture favours. Everything that war is seen to be, that lures children toward hatred and violence, is proven to be satisfied through peace. The idea of mentorship also implies a continued contact and source of support after the initial programme.

The facilitation team must be equipped to cope with severe and complex psychological and emotional effects of violent conflict on children. Knowledge of cultural meanings of violence and reconciliation are important, and a culturally relevant strategy for healing – including the involvement of the respective communities, faith healers, and families, if possible – must be established. The healing process is a delicate and fundamental one in the path to peace for the children and their societies, and should be an explicit component of any YPI. Angolan and Mozambican faith healing (Verhey; Thompson 1999) and the Batticaloa Butterfly Peace Garden in Sri Lanka (Chase and

Bush 2001) provide successful models for community-based, holistic healing and the development of a culture of peace for children affected by war. In the former, a full ritual ceremony involving the spiritual cleansing of the child is required for the community to embrace the child (in their faith, a completely reborn person) and reintegrate him or her after the atrocities committed on all sides. The latter is comprised of a lengthy process of self-expression and self-healing that builds the trust in adults and the outside world that was truncated by the war experience. Whereas a discussion of more detailed content of such programmes is beyond the scope of this paper, it must be made clear that the healing process must precede self-expression and the exploration of the conflict in a direct intergroup contact setting, or at least be complete to such a degree as the children involved are not vulnerable to further trauma. They must be fully reconciled with their past in order to participate in a process that brings the past back in the name of peace.

The multi-faceted facilitation strategy, including healing, mentorship, and interactive conflict resolution, requires a facilitation team with diverse backgrounds, expertise, skills, and roles. The expert 'scholar-practitioners' called for in ICR theory (Burton 1987, 7) are necessary members of the team: their knowledge and experience with the social-psychological dynamics of intergroup conflict and conflict resolution are required to construct and oversee the programme at every level to ensure the professionalism of the initiative, to which Burton especially attached so much importance.²¹ They would also be the guarantors of objectivity required at the highest decision making level for the initiative. However, they alone could not adequately address all of the considerations of the YPI. Experts in child psychology, social work,

²¹ The ICR workshop 'cannot be based on trial and error, hit and miss or some ideology,' wrote Burton (1986, 41).

and cultural healing practices must be present to monitor for signs of trauma and other special needs of the children, and to ensure that each child is psychologically prepared for each new activity. Finally, at the most personal level, the facilitation team should be staffed by young facilitators who can easily relate and become trusted by the participants, who are dedicated to peace, and who have been trained in facilitation skills. They will be the mentors, the leaders of games and activities, the resources, the confidants, the coaches, and the 'safe people' to whom participants look for advice, support, and encouragement on a constant basis.

The personal skills and attributes of individual facilitators are important to compiling a capable facilitation team and implementing an effective facilitation strategy. Facilitators must be active listeners in order to truly understand and validate the feelings and perspectives of participants.²² They must be sensitive to signs of trauma and need in children, in order to adapt their programme to suit the specific requirements of each participant. They must be amiable, fun loving, and able to relate directly with children, in order to gain the trust and respect from the participants that is desperately required for the mentorship strategy. Most importantly, they must be exemplary and passionate advocates for peace, in order to prove that peace is the way.

Such facilitators could be found among college students and recent graduates, in particular residence life workers, social work and counselling students, and peer tutors. Big Brother and Big Sister programmes are also excellent sources of qualified candidates.

²² Active listening skills involve making the speaker aware that the listener is listening, understanding, empathizing, and interested in them and in what they are saying. A person's view of themselves, of the listener, and of the relationship between them is drastically improved when they are listened to actively. Their feelings are validated, and the special importance of the relationship between them and the listener is confirmed. Conversely, they feel as though their feelings are wrong and unimportant to the listener, and their self-esteem and relationship with the listener is severely damaged if they feel they are not being listened to.

Some of them could also eventually be programme alumni, in order to enhance their resonance with the children and effectiveness in their role. To begin, they know firsthand how it feels to be a participant: the fears, the doubts, what felt good, what felt bad, what games are fun, what it takes to convince children of war that peace is the way, and the hardships of returning home. They know which components of their action plans worked and which did not, and can offer advice accordingly. Secondly, they provide positive role models from the same culture, experience, and circumstances of the participants, directly proving the 'coolness' of peace in their cultural setting. Thirdly, the mentors may also return home and provide support and mentorship during the re-entry phase for the new alumni.

As a final note on the role of the facilitator, a fundamental, overarching issue must be addressed. A recurring criticism of the theory and practice of YPIs will be that such intervention amounts to the manipulative politicization of children – that it is irresponsible for the proponents of peace to exploit the fragile malleability of children's worldviews and to allow children to be 'caught up' in their adult struggles (Cairns 1996, 154). There are two responses to this argument. First, children *should* be politicized; they must not be sheltered from political and social issues that concern their welfare and their future. Instead, they should be actively engaged in the social and political arenas of their societies. They should be made aware of the issues and the alternatives that exist, and empowered to develop their own worldviews and to make their own choices of behaviour. Children are very often more politically aware than adults would believe, and they question the social constructs that surround them. It was clear to B.Z. Goldberg, when studying the political attitudes of children in the Middle East that they 'have a

political awareness that will blow you away.’²³ For example, one Israeli boy told him ‘When I see them being killed, I ask myself, why? It’s so stupid. It could be prevented. In war both sides suffer. Maybe there’s a “winner” but what’s a winner? People on both sides die. Both sides lose.’²⁴ As such, YPIs must focus on the empowerment of children to make their own choices through the presentation of peace as a viable alternative to war, to be discussed below, and the elicitive approach to facilitation. In this way, the decision making process is owned by the participants, and the facilitators are there only to make the best possible case for a just peace, not to enforce it.

If critics remain unsatisfied and maintain that this approach still represents manipulation, the second response argues bluntly that YPIs’ strong advocacy for peace is a justified tactic in competition against the unabashed manipulation of children’s developing worldviews and fragile self-esteem by the proponents of violence and war. Garbarino and Kostelny fervently argue that war:

distorts the values of children. Unless we reach them with healing experiences and offer them a moral and political framework within which they process their experiences, *traumatized children are likely to be drawn to groups and ideologies that legitimize and reward their rage, their fear, and their hateful cynicism.* [... As a result] self-serving, antisocial individuals and groups [are] prepared to mobilize and exploit the anger, fear, alienation, and hostility that many kids feel (Garbarino and Kostelny 1997, 40-41, emphasis in original).

The result is a pivotal struggle for the minds and souls of a society’s children, and with them the potential for peace in succeeding generations. The sight of a toddler at an Islamic Jihad rally, posing in military fatigues and holding an automatic weapon that

²³ B.Z. Goldberg, in Goldberg, Shapiro and Bolado 2001.

²⁴ Daniel Solan, in Goldberg, Shapiro and Bolado 2001.

stands to her elbow²⁵ should be enough to argue that promoting peace to children is a critically necessary action for which there must be no apology.

3.2 Contact hypothesis

Peace between you and me is impossible unless we get to know each other. Our fathers are at war and if I don't know you, I can't have peace with you.

– Mahmoud Izhiman²⁶

A fundamental premise of youth peace initiatives is that when children from opposing sides of a conflict interact and get to know each other, they will develop mutual understanding, empathy, appreciation, and friendship that will cause them to renounce violence against each other and seek peaceful, win-win solutions. This largely implicit and unquestioned assumption appears logically sound on the surface: children especially are open to learning and making new friends, given their still-evolving worldview that is heavily shaped by personal experience and interaction. By exchanging and learning about each other, they will discover that they have much in common, including the same likes, hopes, fears, dreams, insecurities, and experiences. By living, playing, and working together, they will rehumanize and even admire other children whom they hated but never knew. By sharing their thoughts, their feelings, and their experiences, they will discover new information and a differing perspective of the conflict between their peoples, and come to understand and appreciate why the faceless 'other' feels and acts the way they do. Finally, given the right programme, they will develop an enduring and devoted friendship that crosses conflict lines, a respect for each other's people, and an

²⁵ Photograph in *Globe and Mail*, 2 April 2002.

²⁶ Appearing in Goldberg, Shapiro and Bolado, 2001.

accompanying commitment to achieve peace with each other and between their warring communities. This commitment can extend as far as righting long-time injustice and inequality: the mutual understanding and respect garnered through YPIs could theoretically create the will for the advantaged side to incur some relative losses in order for a just and peaceful coexistence to be achieved with their friend. The bonds that summer camp can forge between children from different cities can be formed between children from different realities. *Seeds of Peace*, the YPI to be studied in the next chapter, provides some convincing evidence that these assumptions carry some promise.

However, as Allport asserted with regard to the contact hypothesis in 1954, 'the case is not so simple.'²⁷ The type and context of contact play pivotal roles in the effectiveness of contact in achieving positive attitude changes. Most studies that have found no or negative impact from contact have been based on natural or casual contact situations, in which the purpose of improving relations was not explicitly defined to those involved.²⁸ As such, there are a series of conditions and criteria that provides some useful guidance and conditionality to the potential of intergroup contact to influence prejudice and other conflict constructs.

First, the participants must understand the interaction as being *intergroup* contact, and not merely interpersonal. Individuals, it is believed, do not necessarily generalize

²⁷ G.W. Allport (1954/1979 ed.), *The Nature of Prejudice* (Cambridge/Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley) quoted from page 261 of the 1979 paperback edition in Hewstone and Brown 1986, 2.

²⁸ An entire body of research on contact between white and black Americans in the 1950s and 1960s that fits this description is cited is presented in Amir 1969. A study of the readiness for contact with Jewish children among Arab Israelis in seventh grade (Yogev, Ben-Yehosuha, and Alper 1991) concluded that political identity played a much larger role in the readiness for contact than previous contact. However, the previous contact in question was largely superficial: most respondents who had contact had visited a Jewish community or had Jewish *people* as visitors to their house, while many fewer had visited a Jewish home themselves, and even fewer had Jewish friends. By contrast, the link between readiness for contact proved predictably much stronger among those respondents who perceived significant deprivation relative to Jews and who had negative stereotypes of Jews. The only useful revelation of this study is that uncontextualized contact is not a strong determinant of the readiness for future contact.

their contact experience outside of the specific contact setting. As a result, the new, positive perspective they have gained of the particular out-group individuals they have met does not extend to their attitudes toward the out-group as a whole (Hewstone and Brown 1986; Cairns 1996). They may believe that the individuals they met were exceptions to the stereotypes of their identity group, and those stereotypes are not broken. Therefore, the contact must be explicitly intergroup: participants must know that they are interacting with representative members of the enemy side.

At the same time, a second condition is articulated by Cook (1978, 97), who lists ‘acquaintance potential’ – interpersonal contact that ‘enables individuals to know each other as individuals rather than as stereotypical out-group members’ (Hewstone and Brown 1986, 4) – and the involvement of participants who disconfirm stereotypes as two key requirements for positive attitude change through contact. Clearly, the objective of discovering cross-group commonalities and developing strong friendships is crucial to the revelatory objective of the contact hypothesis. There has been substantial debate over whether contact is most effective when interpersonal or intergroup, and whether commonalities or differences should be emphasized more than the other. Hewstone and Brown endorse Stephan and Stephan’s conclusion that the ‘presentation of fundamental similarities *and* group-specific differences should help to attack intergroup ignorance and improve intergroup relations’.²⁹

The first condition is easily satisfied in YPIs through the ICR workshop model: by explicitly discussing the issues involved in the conflict between their two groups, it will be abundantly clear that the participants are representative of their groups. Of

²⁹ The quotation is Hewstone and Brown’s interpretation of a conclusion by W.G. Stephan and C.W. Stephan (1984), ‘The role of ignorance in intergroup relations’ in N. Miller and M.B. Brewer (eds), *Groups in Contact* (New York: Academic Press). From Hewstone and Brown 1986, 36 (emphasis in original).

course, contact must also be clearly interpersonal in order to establish the commonalities and friendships that lead to rehumanization. Once interpersonal admiration, appreciation, and respect have been established, and individuals have developed trust in each other – through activities around common interests like sports or arts, and trust-building exercises that develop bonds through common memories and experiences – then they can interact and exchange as representatives of various warring groups and see human beings – friends – across from them. Further, in making the transition from interpersonal to intergroup interaction, the YPI workshop should involve a healing and learning process, in which the feelings, experiences, and perspectives of the participants can be shared in a secure environment. The perspective and experience of individual participants should be viewed as intensely personal, but also as generally representative of the perspective and experience of their identity group, serving to more effectively debunk common myths and stereotypes, build intergroup respect and understanding, and explain why groups believe and act as they do. Both interpersonal and intergroup contact, then, are integral components of the attitude transformation process.

YPIs can further encourage the generalization of positive attitude change through prolonged, continued contact between participants, through alumni networks, facilitated exchanges, and joint projects such as voluntarism and reunions. Sherif (1966) and Pettigrew (1986) have stressed this ‘cumulative’ effect of contact: multiple opportunities to interact over time increase the positive change in attitudes, or at least perpetuate and strengthen existing friendships. Such prolonged contact can expose participants to many additional members of the other side – families, friends, and neighbours of their original contact partners – and concurrently affect the attitudes of those new people whom they meet. *CARE Canada’s Civil Society Development Project* links youth organizations

across ethnic divisions for the very purpose of establishing regular interaction and joint projects. As such, YPIs can expand the 'acquaintance potential' across more and more members of the out-group to enhance the nature of contact to be truly intergroup.

A third condition that augments the positive effects of contact is that interaction be cooperative rather than competitive. Again, this proposition appears to be basically logical. Sherif (1966) first submitted that positive and functional interdependence is required before conflict could subside between groups. Cooperative activities with common objectives are used primarily to encourage participants to recognize superordinate goals – goals that have 'a compelling appeal for members of each group but that neither group can achieve without participation of the other' (ibid, 89) – that unite all participants in a common cause. At the *Kids Can Free The Children* Kenya leadership centre, for example, participants are asked to construct a bridge or other project for a poor community with a set assortment of materials over the course of one day, and they cannot return to camp until it is completed.

A useful criticism of Sherif is that superordinate goals devised in cooperative activities within the contact setting are isolated from the real conflict situation: joining forces during a summer camp-like exercise does not necessarily translate to a united front for peace at home. YPIs clearly satisfy this criterion through their overarching goal: they create leaders dedicated to a just peace. The ICR workshop is at its heart non-adversarial: conflict resolution is approached as a joint problem to be solved rather than a fight to be won. Indeed, through the analytical workshop and joint action plans that accompany regular cooperative 'camp' activities, participants are exposed to the positive potential of cooperation in search of common goals, and subsequently apply their new knowledge to the real-life context of the conflict. In fact, the new superordinate goals are to live in

peace – rather than fear and violence – by finding a mutually satisfying, lasting resolution to the protracted conflict. More immediate goals may be to stay in touch, or to stick together and not lose hope, as displayed among *Seeds of Peace* alumni. Additional workshops in teamwork, leadership, interpersonal communication, and advocacy skills enhance the participants' capacity to achieve their joint goals in simulation and in practice upon their return home. The children return to their daily lives with a common goal still to achieve, and the experience, friendship bonds, and concrete skills they gained during the contact period give them the confidence and capacity to achieve that goal.

We must be careful in defining superordinate goals. Hewstone and Brown astutely prefer that superordinate goals 'supersede[...] other goals each group may have' (Hewstone and Brown 1986, 23), which raises an interesting discussion about the goals of groups in conflict. Their assertion implies that contact should help groups to discover joint goals that are of higher priority than all others. We may recall that all identity groups' primordial goal is the satisfaction of its members' basic human and social needs. Hence, superordinate goals need not be newly invented objectives designed to bring groups together artificially; but rather the most basic and fundamentally human goals – food, water, and shelter; identity, security, and political participation – that drive individuals and groups, and that are at the heart of conflict in the beginning. By analysing the conflict and addressing those most basic needs, groups can truly be brought together and encouraged to devise solutions that satisfy those needs for all. For indeed, neither group can achieve those basic needs – in particular security – without the wilful cooperation of the other and a peaceful coexistence. In fact, we recall Burton's argument that each group's capacity to satisfy its needs is actually enhanced through cooperation. YPIs must serve to reveal these ideas to participant children, and the use of cooperative

activities is an ideal strategy to introduce the enhancing potential of joint effort.

A fourth condition of effective contact is the equality of status for all groups within the contact situation. While some argue that achieving real equality within the contact situation is problematic given significant inequality in the overall intergroup relationship (Pettigrew 1986), others see 'status' as based on a series of expectations – of oneself and of the other. They argue that the upward manipulation of those expectations (i.e., the pre-challenging of prejudices and stereotypes) will reverse the effect of that self-fulfilling prophecy in shaping perceptions of underachievement and inferiority (Hewstone and Brown 1986). Indeed, Pettigrew is correct in asserting that structural inequality creates the negative stereotypes and prejudice between groups to begin; however, the dismantling of structural inequality is highly unlikely without the debunking of stereotypes that fuel it. The contact environment is the ideal setting to falsify harmful stereotypes, demonstrate the real equality between groups, and reveal the self-fulfilling effect of asymmetrical social institutions. 'We both love to play soccer and paint. We are alike in every way except my friend lives in a shack and I live in a nice home. That doesn't appear fair,' a YPI participant may say. Surely, the acknowledgement of real-life inequality is essential to addressing the underlying causes of conflict; the purpose of the YPI workshop is to explore, analyse and resolve those inequalities in order to achieve a just and lasting peace.

A final caveat for effective YPIs that emerges from the contact hypothesis relates to the intensity of the general conflict situation, and the presence or absence of any movements for reconciliation or peace within warring parties. It can be argued that contact can easily be successful in situations where an appreciable movement for peace exists on both sides – where a peace dividend is acknowledged and the public mood is at

least partially susceptible to a message of peace – but such a movement will likely lead to peace in any event, with or without contact. In essence, this position argues that contact is redundant where peace already hangs in the air. Conversely, if no such movement exists, and the climate of conflict is intense and intractable, simple contact between children is unlikely to succeed in breaking through an ingrained system of hatred and violence. It is doomed to failure, and therefore useless.

In the case of conflict situations that are amenable to messages of reconciliation and peace, YPIs clearly contribute in a substantive way to existing movements and accelerate the process of peace by introducing the peace alternative to children. In addition to transforming the attitudes of the children themselves, YPIs equip its participants with the confidence and skills to continue the work of existing peace movements, by expanding the reach of the peace message into families, communities, and regions where it did not previously resonate. Contact through YPIs, then, are of significant use in conflict situations where peace has begun to build. Conversely, in cases of intense conflict with little movement for reconciliation or peace, YPIs have a critical niche in planting the ‘seeds of peace’. Admittedly, if violence and intense hatred are universal – if peace is absolutely nowhere in a given society – YPIs will likely never be started. The initiative will require some context and support in order to be minimally effective. Pettigrew argues that contact requires ‘the positive support of authorities, laws or customs.’³⁰ That said, there are few cases in which the idea of peace is completely unheard of. Peace is never entirely dead, as difficult as it may be to resuscitate.

Evidently, if children have had negative experience with the out-group – directly

³⁰ The quotation is Hewstone and Brown’s interpretation of Thomas F. Pettigrew (1971), *Racially Separate of Together?* (New York: McGraw-Hill), p. 275, from Hewstone and Brown 1986, 5.

or indirectly – it will be difficult to effect positive attitude change through contact.

Physical and emotional scarring, or the loss of family members and friends are significant psychological barriers to fostering reconciliation at the very start of the process. When children are taught relentlessly to hate each other, contact between them may be exceptionally difficult, but not impossible. The very purpose of contact – and of YPIs in general – is to challenge the prevailing ideas and attitudes that incite conflict and that have been inculcated to children without alternative. The intention is to introduce peace as an alternative: to introduce and encourage critical thinking toward the messages of both conflict *and* peace, and the empowerment of children to make their own choices between the two. Of course, YPIs advocate very strongly in favour of reconciliation and peace; however, this advocacy serves primarily to counteract the forceful endorsement of conflict that occurs in participants' everyday lives. In a society where peace is rarely discussed, it may well never be known to children, whose developing worldview requires a full understanding of all alternatives – conflict as well as peace.

Again, contact is not a magical solution. As such, YPIs need not necessarily entail contact from the outset; peace education and initiatives involving each side separately may be necessary to introduce peace and instil the critical thinking necessary to make contact possible at a later stage. In short, YPIs are not uniquely about contact, although contact holds considerable promise for the transformation of individual attitudes towards members of the out-group, the out-group as a whole, and the conflict itself.

Finally, the Lewinian approach to transforming attitudes in YPI participants submitted by Bargal and Bar (1992) offer a number of strategies and tactics that enhance the effect of contact. Most importantly, the issue of the self-esteem is critical in facilitating changes in worldview and attitudes, particularly for the minority or

disadvantaged group, whose 'notorious lack of confidence and self-esteem' must be raised as 'one of the most strategic means for intergroup relations'.³¹ Specifically, the child's need for group belongingness is a pivotal focus in two ways. First, their ethnic and national identities are their most salient, and as such it is important for each side to meet in unilateral workshops prior to contact to foster ethnic self-esteem and develop interpersonal skills necessary for the workshop encounters. Also, it is of great importance that each side 'get acquainted with each other's identities.' Second, the creation of a 'strong "we feeling"' reinforces that 'everybody is in the same boat (and) has gone through the same difficulties',³² and contributes to the sense of belonging in the new cross-conflict group of friends. 'We have both suffered the loss of family members because of the same conflict,' they may say. The 'interdependence of fate' is the primary constituent of a group, not similarity or dissimilarity, according to Lewin. Another reason for the importance for focusing on self-esteem cited in the study is the emotionally involving and difficult 'reeducation' process, in which the individual critically challenges and actively revises his self and social perceptions – his worldview – through the discovery of alternative views during group exchange experiences. The group workshop must be a planned forum for such confrontation between established and alternative perceptions in order for genuine attitude transformation to take place, argue the authors based on Lewin's writings: the reexamination 'cannot be left to accident' (ibid, 145), yet must be made by the participants themselves. In other words, simple contact is insufficient for attitude change; it must be carefully planned, both for its effectiveness and because of the potential toll it can take on the self-esteem of an individual whose

³¹ Bargal and Bar (1992: 143) cite directly from Kurt Lewin (1948), 'Action research and minority problems', in G. W. Lewin (ed.), *Resolving social conflicts* (New York: Harper & Row), 214-5.

³² Bargal and Bar (1992: 144) cite directly from Kurt Lewin (1948), 'Conflict, knowledge and acceptance of new values', in G. W. Lewin (ed.), *Resolving social conflicts* (New York: Harper & Row), 67.

confidence is not prepared to question ontological perceptions.

Another, simpler view of the importance of self-esteem to the contact hypothesis is the argument that prejudice on an individual level is an issue of self-esteem – a means of inflating one's own self image by attributing negative traits to others, especially in children. By focusing on self-esteem in the YPI, much prejudice can be alleviated by demonstrating how a child can fit in without prejudice. By encouraging and building a solid fundamental self-image in participants, their resort to prejudice is less necessary. At *Leaders Today* youth leadership programmes in Toronto, participants who stand out for their negativity have been quickly transformed when included by an older mentor or role model.³³ Those children whose intense attitudes are fuelled by self-esteem issues may be astonishingly transformed through the unique programming of YPIs.

The contact hypothesis offers promise for positive attitude transformation in children given a series of conditions that enhance the contact context instead of relying on casual contact alone. They must achieve a suitable balance between explicit interpersonal and intergroup interaction, provide for equal status within the contact situation, include cooperative activities that entail superordinate goals, and adapt to the entire spectrum of conflict intensity and ripeness for peace. Cumulative contact that is prolonged over multiple occasions is most effective at sustaining and entrenching the attitude transformation. In addition, YPIs must entail a focus on self-esteem that

³³ In the summer of 2002, a 14 year-old, particularly macho male participant at *Free The Children's* Toronto Leadership Academy told the author, a male facilitator, that his blue painted toenails were 'queer'. He was promptly asked to refrain from using the word 'queer' in a derogatory fashion, asked if he would paint his own nails of several of the other male participants did as well, because it 'is what we do here – it's cool'. He accepted, and within 24 hours, his toes and fingers were painted. Two days later, he was overheard at the public phones telling his mother that he had met 'this cool guy', and that he had painted his toenails because 'it's cool'. He has since told his friends of the experience, and asked them to refrain from using 'queer' in a derogatory fashion. Over the years, numerous young males have undergone similar transformations in their attitudes and the colour of their toes.

addresses group belongingness and the emotional investment involved in the reeducation process outlined by Kurt Lewin. The principal criticism of contact is that if these conditions do not simultaneously exist, contact will have either no transformative effect or a negative effect on the attitudes of participants. Clearly, YPIs can – and must – satisfy each of these conditions, and effectively make use of the contact hypothesis in transforming the attitudes and behaviours of the children involved. The result will be the effective deconstruction of friend-enemy dyads that lead people who do not know each other or understand each other's point-of-view to use violence to resolve their differences. The development of mutual respect and the sharing of feelings and experiences will foster among new friends a common understanding and a common desire to find non-violent, genuine solutions to their common problems. Using the case of *Seeds of Peace* in the next chapter, the plausibility of these conditions, and the practical challenges they present, will be explored.

3.3 Introducing peace as a viable alternative

The second means of transforming the worldview and behaviours of YPI participants is to convince children that peace is a preferable alternative to conflict:

Peace cultures thrive on and are nourished by visions of how things might be, in a world where sharing and caring are part of the accepted lifeways for everyone. The very ability to imagine something different and better than what currently exists is critical for the possibility of social change. (...) People can't work for what they can't imagine (Boulding 2000, 29).

Given a positive and nurturing environment, children are the world's most powerful and inspired optimists. They are untainted by pessimism, prejudice, or the artificial limitations of adult realism; they have the capacity to dream with unrestrained passion

and idealism. Children, therefore, are the ideal visionaries of peace cultures and a better world for the future – *their* future.

Yet, children who grow up knowing only struggle, conflict and tension ‘find it difficult to imagine what peace is’ (Cairns 1996, 146). It is both futile and insufficient to force-feed peaceful attitudes and behaviours to such children. Their struggle is real and fundamental to their identity, and the use of violence in that struggle is a legitimate and righteous – in many cases the *only* – form of expression and behaviour. Caught in a situation in which violence is the only means of communication and of survival, children are especially powerless to try any other way. Rather, peace must be offered as an alternative to violence that children are empowered to choose. Those to whom peace is suggested may not be convinced that the peace dividend is sufficiently attractive to change their perspective or behaviour: war offers considerable benefits ranging from adventure and glory to financial gain to a sense of belonging and purpose. YPIs must understand why children choose to fight, and offer peace as an alternative that is clearly and tangibly preferable to war.

Child psychologist Jean Piaget said the role of the educator is ‘to mold a spiritual tool in the mind of the child – not a new habit, or even a new belief, but rather a new method and tool that will permit him to understand and to find his way’.³⁴ By exposing conflict as a series of social constructs that are susceptible to change, children can be empowered to break free from those constructs that have dominated them, and to recognize that alternatives exist. Social workers have long used ‘constructivist alternativism’ to empower people with the knowledge that our social world is constructed

³⁴ J. Piaget, *To Understand is to invent: The future of education* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1980), 135. This work was originally published in 1948, and is cited in Raviv et al 1999, 4.

by the 'meanings we give to ourselves, to events and to relations between the two'

(Fisher 1991, 5). Our subsequent capacity to make choices gives us the power to control and reconstruct our realities through our own behaviour and our interaction with others (ibid).

What this field of research brings to conflict resolution and YPIs is the notion of empowerment through the introduction of alternatives:

Children take their cues from the legacies of hate and distrust that permeate a post-conflict setting. It would be naïve to believe that the existence of a place of tolerance, dignity, and respect will meet and defeat a militarized culture in a direct confrontation. The fundamental objective is to show children that alternatives exist, *if choices are made*. While these choices might be hard and painful, they do exist. This, then, is a message of empowerment: you have a choice; you have the power to change your world in a way that affects your place and your role – past, present and future (emphasis in original) (Bush and Saltarelli 2000, 29-30).

Children must be encouraged to question and challenge the basic notion of violence and good versus evil with which they are confronted: to construct their own meaning from the constant images and ideas that bombard them (Kinneer 1990, 29). The use of violence to resolve disputes is taken for granted by virtually all societies to varying degrees. There must be an adamant and influential voice to debunk that socially constructed myth and rebuild a culture of peace in place of the inhuman endorsement or even fatalist acceptance of violence.

Yet, the mere introduction of images and ideas of peace will not necessarily be sufficient to convince any children that peace is the way. First, a viable peace dividend must be made clear and tangible to those who view war as the best or only way; and second, those who choose to espouse peace must be empowered to know that their dream is not a hopeless fiction, but a real and possible aspiration.

Individuals will seek tangible reasons for moving from war to peace. Again, the life versus death dyad may not be sufficient if life is not appealing and the future holds nothing better. It is equally ineffective if an individual's opportunity cost – perceived or real – is too high; in other words, if the social, political, or financial benefits of war could not be replicated or increased in peace. A peace dividend must guarantee more security – physical and financial – and opportunity – for employment, recognition, and happiness – in the transition from war to peace. In other words, there must be positive benefits to disarming and reintegrating into peaceful society. On a macro-societal level, what is required is an equitable political and social structure with appropriate and effective institutions; a functional economic system that provides the basic necessities of life and a suitable level of comfort for all; and, most importantly, a secure and positive future in which everyone can be a productive and valued member of society. However, such infrastructure is not a dire necessity in the short-term: individuals require only the capacity and opportunity to make a valuable and productive contribution to his, his family's, and his community's futures. For example, many innovative reintegration programmes include providing basic training, tools, and temporary income support with which a tangible contribution can be made to the productivity of the community. Vocational opportunities for children – in particular those directly affected by war – are recognized by the Machel report as 'most often the determinants of successful social reintegration and, importantly, they are the factors that prevent re-recruitment' (Machel 1996, para. 53). Children will not hear the message of YPIs without some vision of a concretely better life in peace.

The concrete and psychological components of an attractive peace dividend can work in tandem. Specifically, participants in YPIs can be introduced to the idea of

solidarity: that working together to resolve common problems instead of against each other has the potential for a much brighter future. Real-life superordinate goals, such as food, health, and education, can be used as an incentive to see one's enemy as a partner instead. The post-war society in rural Waslala, Nicaragua exhibits clearly the fruits of such an approach. After the civil war ended, a programme led by the Catholic Church fostered a participatory peace dividend by involving war torn communities in the rebuilding and development of their society. Children are taught *solidaridad* at schools and in youth groups to reverse ideas of enemy and violence ingrained in their society during the civil war. By working together in solidarity, whole communities that were bitterly divided have reunited and are actively moving forward towards a common future. United, they build and maintain schools, community health centres and natural medicine gardens, which serve as both concrete instruments of development required for a peace dividend and proud monuments to their solidarity and cooperation. The self-esteem – individual and collective – that the joint accomplishment has generated is plainly evident in their smiles and their energy. Their renewed hope for the future has shifted from waiting to die and live forever in heaven to 'building heaven here on Earth.'³⁵ They are the active creators of their own peace dividend. Told that story and others like it, YPI participants are presented with tangible evidence of the peace dividend they so badly require in order to justify a move from war to peace in their own minds.

The role of the church and of faith in the Waslala case also testifies that ideology can be used to promote peace as strongly as to encourage violence, and should not be automatically discounted as a tool in YPIs. A people's devout adherence to their religion can be used by religious leaders to motivate the people to take their future into their own

³⁵ Author's personal discussion with Father Cleto Stulp in Waslala, March 2002.

hands with pride and hope.³⁶

A comprehensive way to clearly articulate and demonstrate the peace dividend is through mentorship. Garbarino and Kostelny advocate the mobilization of 'prosocial' older youth and young adults to provide strong leadership in the struggle for peace, by engaging vulnerable children in constructive community activities and being visible and outspoken role models to whom children can look for positive examples and evidence of a genuine peace dividend. Through direct contact and attention to individual children, they can provide encouragement, reassurance, and the positive relationship that many children are lacking. In addition, they become a positive socializing agent among the many influences that shape a child's worldview toward conflict or peace. In short, these mentors are required to provide the self-esteem and hope for the future that children require, and to demonstrate through their example that both can be achieved through peace.

Other factors that make war appealing must also be especially addressed with children. Of course, the notion that violence and war are exhilarating and glorious must be dispelled by exposing the reality of war: horrifying, disgusting, and painful. Yet, the abstract ideal that is constructed around war is a powerful force that attracts those who seek the prestige, sacrifice, and adventure that war appears to offer. It is necessary and, fortunately, possible to provide an alternative path to those attractive sensations through mentorship initiatives. Recalling Skelt's assertion that there must be glory in peace, it can be argued that if glory is defined as recognition and prestige garnered from

³⁶ Father Carlos Alberto Pinto da Silva, Father Cleto Stulp, and Father Nelson Libano are Brazilian priests who have spent various lengths of time in Waslala since 1997 to provide spiritual guidance and support, as well as to lead faith-based and secular development and community building efforts in the town and outlying communities. Each year since 1997, they have chosen a theme for their semi-annual masses in each of the over 70 remote communities, relating to an evolving message of solidarity, community, and growth.

accomplishment or excellence, it becomes possible to remove the competitive aspect of glory and construct a new 'glory' in making productive contributions to society.

The ethic of voluntarism carries tremendous potential to lift children's self-esteem and hope for the future, through their direct and active involvement in counteracting their depressing living conditions, and bettering their own lives and communities.

Voluntarism has long been strongly promoted as a peaceful and constructive means of displaying courage, strength, and heroism in North American society, as evidenced in Kennedy's Peace Corps (Dean 1998) and *CARE Canada's* aforementioned Bosnia project. In societies where poverty and despair are pervasive, the empowerment of children to actively contribute to the betterment of their own and their communities' futures is a potent mechanism to boost both self-esteem and hope for the future.

There is a limitless supply of work to be done in the reconstruction of a war-torn society – to rebuild infrastructure and institutions, to struggle from out of poverty and underdevelopment, and to address inequality and injustice. These fundamental, superordinate goals provide the ideal project in which former enemies must participate actively and together in the creation of their own future. Surely there is glory, adventure, and pride to be found in the pursuit of those accomplishments that can be shared between new friends, whether in the physical exertion of building a well or a school, or the intellectual challenge of starting a small business or increasing crop yields. If an aspect of competition is to remain an integral component of glory, there are certainly more peaceful and controlled means of achieving it, including friendly sporting events, games, and other challenges in which sportsmanship limits the seriousness of the competition and ensures that all participants maintain sight of what is most important: life, friendship, and peace. Instead of direct community versus community events that can engender

nationalism, teams can be mixed to ensure that competition is limited to the playing field, and the players remain friends at the end of the game.

Finally, a peace dividend must include the remedy of any injustice or inequality – real or perceived – that underlie the protracted conflict and impedes a genuine and lasting resolution. For this effect, the problem-solving workshop model articulated in ICR theory may be suitably adapted to the YPI, to reveal the deeper causes of the conflict and to convince the young participants that a mutually satisfying resolution is indeed possible through non-violent means.

3.4 The ICR workshop for children

Contact and the peace dividend break down the social constructs of conflict that create friend-enemy dyads and legitimize and glorify the use of violence, respectively. What remains in transforming the conflictual relationship from enemy to partner is the zero-sum construct that focuses on negotiable positions and power bargaining instead of the underlying sources of conflict. Like its adult version, the YPI problem-solving workshop will encourage its participants to rethink the conflict as a mutual problem to be solved rather than a fight to be won. Through the exchange of feelings, perspectives, and experiences, it is hoped that participants will be able to abandon blame, isolate the underlying origins of their conflict, and devise innovative ways to genuinely resolve the conflict and to construct a just, equitable, and sustainable future.

One of the key rationales for adapting ICR for children is that children have less past to burden their psyches and their egos, and impede their desire for peace. At the heart of the interactive conflict resolution is Kelman's 'ultimate establishment of a new cooperative and mutually enhancing relationship' (1998, 191). The whole purpose of

ICR is to transform attitudes and redefine the conflict; children's attitudes and understanding of the conflict are still evolving and therefore malleable, making childhood the perfect time to introduce non-power, non-violent forms of interaction that can be taken into their adult lives. In short, there is less violence to deconstruct and, therefore, greater opportunity to reconstruct peace. Children are typically disposed to ideas of fairness and equality, and may be more open to dismantling structures that create injustice in their societies. Further, Kelman's new relationship between enemy sides can be accomplished by new generations on each side becoming committed to peace and passing that commitment into the future.

It may be suggested that children will not understand the complex political issues behind the conflict. Indeed, if adults cannot solve the puzzle, how could children possibly make a contribution? In fact, children may be uniquely positioned to analyse the conflict between their respective groups at its most basic roots. The numerous social constructs of conflict that have been discussed *complicate* the conflict by clouding its true nature and sources, focussing on rigid bargaining positions over basic needs. Underlying issues of injustice or inequality are ignored or forgotten under the weight of belligerent rhetoric, blame, retaliation, fear, and pride. Without the blinders imposed by the 'complexity' that hides the underlying causes of the conflict, children may be able to see new, innovative ideas that adults have overlooked, dismissed, or ignored. Their view of each other as the enemy is addressed by the YPI's focus of making enemies into friends, which leads to a more conciliatory atmosphere in brainstorming potential solutions that can lead to a just peace. The rationale behind adults' positions and opinions – both legitimate and unreasonable limitations to what the children who participate may devise – can be objectively presented by the knowledgeable facilitators as required so that the

group remains in touch with the realistic track.

Children need not necessarily create the perfect solution to the conflict in order for the YPI to be successful. Understanding the root causes of the conflict, they need only decide that they want to resolve the conflict peacefully and fairly. After all, they are now friends with their traditional enemies, and they understand and respect each other and each other's needs and perspectives. The potential created by this transformation cannot be underestimated: friends are much more trusting and much less antagonistic toward each other; they are inherently more flexible and willing to sacrifice for each other than are enemies. The recognition of interdependence, commonalities such as basic human needs, and other superordinate goals increases their desire to find a resolution that is mutually satisfying and sustainable. Further, children could set certain principles or guidelines for a potential solution, such as the alleviation of a certain injustice or inequality, or the assured fulfillment of a threatened basic human need.

At the very least, children ask the simple, 'naïve' questions that would require the adults of their respective communities to provide a simple answer that justifies the conflict, thus leading to a rethinking and reanalysis of the problem at a fundamental level. Most adults have been asked 'Why?' repeatedly to explain a situation or phenomenon that a child does not understand, and rightly, children often refuse to accept 'Because' as a legitimate response. If those questions are 'Why are we fighting?', 'Why do we have more money or power than they do?', 'Why do we hate that group?', or 'Why do they hate us?', the eventual, core answer (especially when asked directly of one's enemy sitting across the room) cuts through the constructs of the isolates the underlying issues: security, identity, development, injustice, or inequality. Adults would be forced to consider such simple details and possibly recognize that their traditional answers are not

as justified or sensible as they have always appeared.

The problem-solving workshop within a YPI would be quite different than that envisioned by ICR theorists. A more intense focus on rehumanization, the discovery of commonalities, and the development of friendships would be interwoven throughout the analysis sessions. Feelings and experiences would have a more prominent place in the analysis itself as well. Further, fun activities such as sports, arts, drama, and social time are essential to children's needs, to offset the emotional intensity of the other sessions while continuing to develop the new relationships and mutual learning. These additional components would require more time, ranging from four to five weeks instead of Burton's three to four days. Hopefully, children are available during the summer or other prolonged school breaks for such lengths of time; ideally, schooling should not be interrupted for children in conflict zones, because education in such situations is never sure to be a lasting luxury.

Like ICR workshops, YPIs must consider problems of entry and re-entry. Questions of whom and how to recruit are pivotal to the credibility and success of the initiative. Returning to one's everyday environment after participating in such a unique initiative can likewise present sensitive political, social, and psychological issues that can make or break the entire process. Entry may in fact be easier when dealing with children. Burton notes that 'heads of state and communities often respond positively and quickly to the idea of exploratory discussion for which they do not have to take any public responsibility' (1987, 37). An experimental project using children as the symbolic hope for a peaceful future can be quite helpful in garnering the appearance of commitment to the peace process for group leadership. It would be difficult to oppose an innocent venture of mutual discovery and understanding. That said, the selection of participants in

YPIs is a pivotal matter, and depends largely on the circumstances of the conflict and objectives of the YPI in terms of reach and impact. Regardless, the ultimate target is all children. The YPI should not be afraid to confront the entire range of opinions on all sides in order to effectively induce positive attitude change.

Children's loyalty to their family and community is fundamental to their worldview and self-esteem. Positive mentors – serving as big brothers and sisters who demonstrably care for the children – can foster relationships that coexist with their home relationships. The friendships with their peers across conflict lines can also be close to as strong and important as their home relationships. The objective is certainly not to rival or replace family and community, but rather to eliminate hatred and prejudice toward the once faceless 'other'. Post-YPI, the child's loyalty to his family and community would extend only insofar as it does not incite hatred or violence against his newfound friends.

Poverty, geography, and military instability and insecurity are factors that prevent children from attending workshops or other post-YPI programmes. Children who have to do chores or work to survive and for their families' survival will be unable to participate. Yet, it is the poor and the vulnerable who are in most need of YPIs, and whom YPIs must reach most. To this end, international funding and creative initiatives are required: alternative income plans along the lines of those used to encourage families to remove their children from exploitative child labour so that the children may go to school are one example of innovative and effective means of overcoming obstacles to participation. As an alternative, follow-up initiatives in which YPI alumni facilitate peace workshops at the convenience of those who cannot attend the original ones may effectively get those children involved in the pursuit of peace. Military instability is a difficult barrier to surmount; however, it is also critically important to remove the conditions for recruitment

and re-recruitment of child soldiers, as well as other conditions of war that adversely affect children. A degree of stability may be a necessary condition for reconciliation and rehabilitation in some cases. However, providing children with a viable peace dividend and an alternative, positive, contributory role in their communities that promotes peace over conflict are equally necessary conditions in securing the lasting peace within those communities that settlement without transformation cannot achieve.

The re-entry problem is much more difficult for children. Returning from a protective, positive environment to their everyday lives in a war zone can be a traumatic experience that must be monitored and controlled. The role models and influences of violent conflict will persist. For these reasons, post-setting support programmes and networks must be established for YPI alumni as part of their action plan, including means to keep in contact with each other and with facilitators. The elicitive process would lead to brainstorming strategies that work in the specific home environment with which the participants are familiar. The facilitators who are alumni themselves would provide valuable input based on their own experiences, challenges, and barriers. Reunions, continuing workshops in or near their communities, and other joint, inter-group activities – voluntarism, sporting events, or theatre performances – are merely a few ideas for continued support and contact that would help to ease the stressful re-entry process. Participants should be solidly committed to such strategies before leaving the initial programme together. Again, the *Seeds of Peace* case in the next chapter sheds some light on the feasibility and challenges of continued contact: for example, the many negative influences that persist in the conflict zone – violence, fear, hatred – present significant challenges to maintaining contact and a positive mindset as times passes between participants and their last time together.

In a way, the YPI's lower-level contact between representatives of conflicting groups carries an advantage over the prescribed ICR strategy. Kelman and others contend that a certain degree of antagonism must persist between the various sides, because a coalition that is too cohesive would damage the credibility of the process, alienate the participants from their co-nationals, and forfeit their political influence upon re-entry. Their argument makes sense for adults, who must 'begin to humanize and trust each other to develop an effective collaborative relationship, without losing sight of their separate group identities and the conflict between their communities' (Kelman 1997, 219). However, YPIs may comfortably aim at fully eliminating the antagonism between the participants, as its objective is to purge the prejudice and enmity that fuel conflict, and instil the recognition that a peaceful resolution can be found. To be sure, the identity barriers between the groups would not be eradicated entirely; instead, those differences that do not lead to conflict are to be celebrated, while those that fuel conflict are purged. YPIs aim to create a model relationship of respect, understanding, and cooperation between children of opposing sides to exhibit what the overall relationship can become, and they can freely aim for the ideal without fear of appearing unrealistic.

The solutions that children can create for their conflict hold a great deal of potential. Unburdened by the weight of embedded conflict constructs and able to view the situation from a much more simplistic, fundamental perspective, children can use curiosity, openness, and imagination to devise strategies that address the truly important matters of the conflict: basic human and social needs, injustice, inequality, and basic happiness. As newfound friends, they are more willing to bend and sacrifice in order to achieve a peaceful future that fulfills everyone's needs. The idealism, hope, and energy that are supposedly lost as children enter the 'real world' adulthood are the fuel for

reconciliation, cooperation, and peace. These notions are indeed simple; however, it has been shown in Chapter One that conflict's very complexity is what impedes the honest exploration of its underlying causes and its eventual resolution. YPIs help everyone to recall why the conflict exists at all, and truly seek its genuine end.

One final note regarding the framework for YPIs comes from the Bargal and Bar study of the Lewinian approach to intergroup workshops. The principle of action research dictates that a continuous process of evaluation be established to ensure the constant improvement of the workshop's effectiveness. Lewin considered 'action, research and training as a triangle that should be kept together for the sake of its corners.'³⁷ In other words, insight and best practices must be harvested from the workshops as they take place, and the lessons learned must be reinserted into the training of facilitators and the development of programmes. Lewin also advocated a thorough system of training and support – emotional and psychological as well as professional – for facilitators through regular meetings and exchanges (Bargal and Bar 1992).

3.5 Conclusion

The argument in favour of YPIs was presented in Chapters One and Two: war is neither inescapable nor inevitable, because conflict is transformable and resolvable. The optimum entry point into the intergenerational cycle of protracted violent conflict is in the social learning process of children. What follows is a means to empower a new generation with the alternative of peace and the capacity to take action to realize a just resolution to their conflict together. The above framework for the design and

³⁷ Bargal and Bar (1992: 143) cite directly from Kurt Lewin (1948), 'Action research and minority problems', 211.

implementation of youth peace initiatives is broad and flexible; it covers a varied and extensive range of issues and challenges. It is far from exhaustive or specific because YPIs themselves come in various forms and structures to adapt to vastly different situations and conditions. However, it attempts to survey the primary considerations that must be addressed for a YPI to fulfill the first component of its dual purpose: to transform the attitudes of the participants toward each other and toward the conflict. The strategy of facilitation is the pivotal factor when working with children affected by violent conflict. It must be elicitive, even-handed, sensitive to the complex psychological effects of war on children, and focused on empowerment – through an effective balance between authority and caring, and the provision of positive mentorship. Carefully contextualized contact rehumanizes faceless others and forges respect and friendship between the children of long-time enemies. The peace dividend is required to convince children that peace is preferable to war; that the incentives for the use of violence can be better satisfied through non-violent interaction. The analysis of the conflict that a problem-solving workshop fosters is critical to understanding the origins of the conflict and devising potential win-win, lasting solutions.

The second component, empowering the participants to impact the overall peace process, is a challenge that has yet to produce significant empirical results. To be sure, the transformation of the conflict and of the relationship between the conflicting parties in children will have some effect in reversing the intergenerational cycle of conflict, as they socialize their own and their communities' children to peace instead of war. However, any further impact is at present hypothetical. Its potential will be addressed briefly in the conclusion as a subject for further research and practice.

To be sure, criteria for success of YPIs are not easily met, and the challenges

involved are not easily overcome. However, it must be recalled that the YPI is by no means intended as a panacea; it is a new and powerful tool in the arsenal of conflict transformation and resolution. It does not replace ICR, just as ICR is not intended to replace traditional methods of conflict management. Yet, it is argued here that YPIs represent an innovative strategy of adapting the practice of ICR to break the intergenerational cycle of conflict, and in the long run, achieving a more just and sustainable peace in our world than any other previous mechanism of conflict management. It is hoped that this framework represents the first step in developing an evolving theory and a flourishing, diverse practice of engaging the children of conflict in the pursuit of a just and sustainable peace for the generations to come.

Chapter 4: Case Study – *Seeds of Peace*

The world today is crying out for leadership. There is an urgent need for a new generation of men and women who have the courage and the will to battle for justice and compassion as mightily as those who have set out to destroy the possibility of peace. It is our responsibility to provide a new foundation for a generation born in an era of instability, hatred and fear, and arm them with a reverence for humanity. Our task is to instil in them the confidence to shout out the song of peace and silence the sounds of war.

– John Wallach (2001a)

The preceding framework for the design of youth peace initiatives addresses the key issues and considerations involved in the effective transformation of attitudes in participant children toward each other and toward their conflict. It was established that contextualized contact, the introduction of a viable peace dividend, and the analytical confrontation of the conflict in the model of the ICR problem-solving workshop are the primary components of the transformation strategy, which is in turn necessary for the enduring resolution of protracted conflict by reversing the intergenerational cycle that teaches the social constructs of conflict to children. The following case study aims to probe the plausibility of curricular framework of YPIs presented in the last chapter, and to offer instructive input in refining it, by exploring the philosophy, approach, and results of *Seeds of Peace*, a prominent YPI based in a summer camp in Maine. This case provides insight into the successes, challenges, and limitations of YPIs in practice.

4.1 Case study methodology

The practice of YPIs is still young, and as such, concrete evidence of their absolute validity is difficult to come by. Eckstein's seminal work on crucial case studies (1975) offers two alternatives to definitive evidence through case study that are

particularly useful to this paper. First, a case study can be used as a plausibility probe in order to demonstrate less than the actual validity of a theory, but simply that it has sufficient potential to merit further testing, especially where the required evidence does not yet exist and testing is costly and complicated. Such probes 'simply attempt to establish that a theoretical construct is worth considering at all, i.e., that an apparent empirical instance of it can be found'. They 'confront theory with lesser challenges than they must certainly withstand if they are not to be toppled by larger ones' (ibid, 109). Second, Eckstein offers heuristic case studies that serve theory building, not concrete evidence of validity. Such a case study is undertaken as a complement to the theorist's logical ability, 'to stimulate the imagination toward discerning important general problems and possible theoretical solutions', leading to a 'gradual unfolding of increasingly better theoretical constructs through the study of individuals' (ibid, 104-5). In other words, the heuristic case study is instructive: Eckstein argues that the 'track record of case studies as stimulants of the theoretical imagination is good' (ibid, 106).

Both types of case study have weaknesses: neither seeks to establish concrete evidence of the theory's validity, reducing the overall impact of the paper. However, given the relative novelty of the YPI regime, they represent an important first step toward the development of both theory and practice. In fact, the two approaches are complementary in assuaging the weaknesses of each other. The heuristic case study lends some additional merit to a plausibility probe that would otherwise be only testing the merits for further testing, and the plausibility probe lowers the expectation of achieving breakthrough evidence, permitting the heuristic study to focus on potential problems instead of exaggerated claims of validity, a frequent trouble with that approach (ibid, 106).

Eckstein asserts that a case for a plausibility probe may be chosen because it is 'somehow critical for the theory to be tested, in the sense that the theory could hardly be expected to hold widely if it did not fit closely here' (ibid, 111). *Seeds of Peace* is a well-established YPI with significant support from high-level politicians, a solid financial base, and programmes in a number of different conflict areas. It is admittedly limited as a conclusive case study because of a dearth of concrete quantitative evidence detailing the direct effect of the programme on all participants. The evidence presented by the case entails largely testimonials and reflections by individual participants, and participation rates in follow-up programmes. As such, it will be examined first as a means to probe the plausibility of the assertion that attitudes of young people from enemy sides of a protracted conflict can be transformed from hatred to understanding and even friendship. Through its philosophy and approach, it is clear that *Seeds of Peace* is an empirical example of a YPI that uses elicitive facilitation, contact, the peace alternative, and the ICR workshop model to achieve positive attitude transformation. Second, the case will be explored as an instructive, heuristic tool to discern the conditions and challenges involved in YPI practice. The result of this study, then, will be a determination of the theoretical plausibility and practical conditions of the effectiveness of the YPI approach, making a case for – and a path to – further research and practice.

4.2 *Seeds of Peace*: an introduction

At home watching news of the World Trade Centre bombing in February 1993, international reporter John Wallach asked himself what appeared a simple question: 'Can people stop hating?' His search for an affirmative answer led him to spontaneously announce an idea he had previously only thought to himself at a dinner honouring

Shimon Peres, in front of delegations from Egypt, the PLO, and Israel: a peace camp for Arab and Jewish teenagers. Wallach had often pondered the vicious cycle of hatred and violence: he and his wife, Janet, spent several months living in the Middle East with average Israeli and Palestinian families in 1987, and found that their similarities far outweighed the differences that led to violent conflict. The timing of his public revelation regarding the peace camp turned out to be perfect: the political rhetoric of peace in the region was positive, and by the end of the evening, all parties present had agreed to send a delegation to Maine that summer. The Wallach family rented a campground for a week at the end of August 1993, and 45 boys arrived as the first-ever *Seeds of Peace* camp (Wallach 2001b).

Seeds of Peace (SOP) is now among the best-known youth peace initiatives that work directly with youth from war-torn societies and aims to foster a culture of peace, mutual empathy, friendship, and cooperation through interaction and peace and leadership training. Since its first summer, over 2,000 boys and girls aged 14 to 17 have become 'Seeds' through the summer camp and other various programmes, including 323 from the Middle East, Cyprus, South Asia, the Balkans, and various refugee communities in the United States³⁸ in two summer camp sessions in 2001 (SOP 2002). It has grown to include a lifetime support network in the Middle East, Cyprus, the Balkans, and South Asia for its over 2,000 alumni. The underlying premise of their programmes – and of YPIs in general – is briefly and well elaborated in their material:

[By] bringing Arab and Israeli teenagers together before fear, mistrust and prejudice blind them from seeing the human face of their enemy, [... *Seeds of Peace*] reverses the legacy of hatred by

³⁸ The 22 nations represented over the summer of 2001 at *Seeds of Peace* international camps were Afghanistan, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, Greece, India, Israel, Jordan, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Morocco, Pakistan, Palestine, Qatar, Serbia, Tunisia, Turkey, Yemen, and the United States (*Seeds of Peace* 2002).

nurturing lasting friendships that become the basis for mutual understanding and respect. By training these young leaders in conflict resolution skills, *Seeds of Peace* helps them become the seeds from which an enduring peace will grow (*Seeds of Peace*).

In short, '*Seeds of Peace* equips the next generation with the leadership capabilities required to end the cycles of violence.'

4.3 The philosophy

Seeds of Peace (SOP) is the prototypical youth peace initiative, beginning with its philosophy. Its motto – 'empowering children of war to break the cycles of violence' – encapsulates the idealistic spirit that the organization and its 'seeds' exude, and reflects the theoretical argument constructed in this essay's first two chapters: that conflict is transformable and resolvable through the introduction of a viable alternative of peace to children. On the first page of its brochure, it asserts that while 'diplomacy and peacekeeping forces are designed to relieve immediate flashpoints of tension, the program attacks the root causes of conflict' (SOP 2002). Whereas it defines those root causes as 'the prejudices, fears, hatreds that culminate in' war (Wallach 2001a) instead of basic needs and asymmetrical relationships that compel groups to fight, it is clear that SOP believes that conflict is socially constructed, and therefore transformable. Most importantly, it believes that the transformation of attitudes is essential in the enduring resolution of conflict.

Further, SOP's philosophy is that the optimum locus of intervention into the intergenerational cycle of conflict is through children. It believes 'that the cycles of violence can only be broken if youngsters are given the tools to turn inherited hatreds into tolerance and trust' (Wallach 2001a). Again on the first page of its brochure, it asserts

that it: ‘brings teenagers together before fear, mistrust and prejudice have permanently shaped their vision of the “enemy”’ (SOP 2002). To be sure, it is believed that conflict is learned, and that a culture of peace can be constructed in its place through the SOP experience. ‘By nurturing lasting relationships, *Seeds of Peace* gives the next generation of leaders the foundation upon which they can build a future of peaceful coexistence and security’ (ibid). Indeed, its philosophy is based largely on its firm belief in the contact hypothesis. Through contact, it seeks:

to re-humanize a process that has too often been hijacked by regimes intent on dehumanizing their adversaries. Just think how much easier it is to kill someone in a drab olive uniform or someone whose face is hidden by a head scarf. How much harder it would be if you got to know your enemy as a human being, as someone you liked or at least understood (Wallach 2001a).

When children learn more about each other, understand each other, and become friends, the use of violence to resolve their conflict becomes less feasible than when they are faceless enemies. In essence, then, SOP seeks to achieve the transformation of the relationship between conflicting parties by transforming conflict attitudes in children.

Clearly, the philosophy that drives SOP is founded in the theoretical framework presented in this essay. Next, its approach will be explored in the context of the practical framework elaborated in Chapter Three, specifically related to facilitation, contact, the peace dividend, and the problem-solving workshop.

4.4 The approach

The SOP approach represents an empirical example of the curricular framework elaborated in Chapter Three. Its foundation and first step is the summer camp, the primary objective of which is the first component of the dual purpose of conflict

resolution: to transform the attitudes of the participants toward each other and toward the conflict. Its methodology combines intense contact – facilitated and casual – with conflict analysis and discovery:

Set in a neutral environment at a summer camp in Maine, *Seeds of Peace* creates a comprehensive coexistence experience in which teenagers from regions of conflict learn about each other's histories and pasts by living together in a mutually supportive community. This intensive, month-long program combines recreational sports and arts activities with daily conflict-resolution sessions led by professional facilitators. Through coexistence workshops, participants develop empathy, respect, communication / negotiation skills, confidence and hope – the building blocks for peaceful coexistence (SOP 2001b).

The SOP strategy represents an intriguing approach to the contact hypothesis, by enhancing contact through the direct confrontation and analysis of the conflict itself. During the coexistence sessions, participants 'have a chance to "rail" against each other, to shout and scream and often cry as they slowly learn that they are not the only ones who have suffered' (Wallach 2001a). These 'de-tox' sessions of shared feelings and experiences – fear, hatred, poverty, and the death of family and friends, for example – are simultaneously healing therapy, conflict analysis, and peacebuilding workshops. They allow participants to become more aware and capable of dealing with their psychology and perceptions, they offer firsthand insight into the candid perspective of human beings on the enemy side, and they develop behaviour and skills in conflict management and resolution – on interpersonal and intergroup levels – that are instilled for use back home:

Every day the campers met in the big hall for a minimum of two hours, encouraged to confront the volatile issues. Who has a moral right to the land of Palestine? Who should govern Jerusalem? The boys were asked to share personal tragedies too, the death of a family member – perhaps at the hand of relatives of the kid in the next chair (Wallach 2001b, 22).

The sharing and discussion continue on during the casual contact time: at meals, in the bunks, and free time.

The coexistence sessions are supplemented by a variety of facilitated and informal contact activities, including the typical fare of everyday summer camp – swimming, tennis, outdoor adventure, arts and crafts, drama, bunk beds, and camp food – during which participants get to know each other as individuals. ‘Group Challenge’ consists of a series of adventurous teamwork and trust games run regularly throughout the camp to reinforce concepts and skills of cooperation, communication, and trust; and ‘Color Games’ between mixed teams with members from all delegations are held at the camp’s finale to further strengthen the bonds of interpersonal friendship and cooperation across conflict lines. In addition, religious services are held weekly, and open to everyone at camp as an opportunity to learn about each other’s culture firsthand. Similarly, a cultural fair is held toward the end of camp to promote cultural pride and the celebration of difference. Finally, free time – at meals, in the bunks, and at play – leads to casual contact and, importantly, continued discussion of the difficult issues of the conflict.

Through the balance between building friendships and confronting divisive issues, the four-week programme aims to develop strong friendships between the children from enemy sides and a commitment to the peaceful resolution of their differences. If not, they will have at least discovered the human face of their enemies, recognized commonalities between them, and gained a new perspective of their conflict. They will recognize that the enemy side has reasonable arguments as well, agree to disagree on the key issues involved, and decide that peaceful means of resolving those issues are preferable to violent conflict.

The annual summer camp is the first step in the SOP experience. Since 1996,

follow-up programmes based out of Jerusalem have served to facilitate the re-entry process and to support the efforts of Seeds to maintain their commitment to each other and to spreading the message of peace in their communities and throughout the region. Initially, these activities sprouted from the initiative and energy of individual Seeds to stay in touch and to change the attitudes of their compatriots by introducing them to the friends they made on the enemy side. In need of an adult to chaperone the cross-border visits, they turned to Ned Lazarus – the editor of *The Olive Branch*, the quarterly magazine for Seeds alumni – who coordinated a rapidly growing portfolio of activities from his apartment: homestays, school visits, and volunteer projects across conflict lines. In 1999, SOP opened its Centre for Coexistence in Jerusalem, where six full-time staff coordinate follow-up activities ranging from bi-weekly coexistence workshops, classes in art, photography, music, and puppetry, meetings for parents and families, and talents shows. The Centre continues to publish *The Olive Branch* and serve as the nucleus for Seeds-led activities to spread their message of peace, through homestays, school visits, and joint community service projects. SOP alumni also keep in contact over the internet through a popular alumni web site, *Seeds Clubhouse*, and chat group, *SeedsNet*.

SOP appears to be an excellent candidate case for a plausibility theory and heuristic study. A more detailed examination of SOP's facilitation style, contact strategy, introduction of the peace dividend, and conflict analysis workshops will clarify both of these points. First, in each category, the SOP approach has been effective for a number of individuals, lending some plausible justification for the theoretical underpinnings of YPIs. Second, the SOP experience offers some instructive insight into the conditions and challenges involved in each of the four critical aspects listed.

4.4.1 Facilitation

The SOP programme clearly demonstrates Lederach's balance between prescriptive and elicitive approaches to facilitating attitude and conflict transformation. Participants are guided through structured contact activities that are designed to reveal shared interests, talents, and passions, and to build trust and friendship. They are led through analytical conflict confrontation that is designed to direct discussion toward the discovery of common fears, hopes, and experiences; of completely new and opposing perspectives; and of potential means of enduring resolution. Questions are asked to elicit the experience and perspective of all sides on the most contentious theoretical and substantial issues; yet, only minimal restrictions are imposed, so that the discussion is allowed to take its natural course. 'The facilitators laid down only three rules. No violence. No insults. No interrupting. A pencil was passed from hand to hand; only the boy holding the pencil was allowed to speak' (Wallach 2001b, 22).

No grand solutions are expected, only a deeper understanding of one's own and one's enemy's perspective, and thus of the conflict itself. Participants are left to make their own conclusions about the conflict and the potential for peace. Some groups progress to the point of devising concrete solutions, and others do not. Rules relating to acceptable behaviour are strictly enforced, and group norms are vaguely expressed to allow for broad, yet flexible interpretation. For example, respect and participation are generally taken to include issues from punctuality to treatment of others. Participants remain empowered to informally construct their own norms as a group based on those general guidelines.

The facilitation team is comprised of various role players, from diverse

backgrounds, age groups, and levels of expertise.³⁹ Counsellors are in contact with the participants around the clock, sleeping in the bunks, eating in the hall, leading the casual contact activities, and sitting in on the coexistence sessions. They are the 'safe people' – the mentors who provide support and affection in confidence – directly witnessing and managing the transformation of perceptions and attitudes. They are 40-45 college students or recent graduates with a variety of camp experience and expertise, from games to safety. On the front lines, they are trained to recognize when the limits of their training require them to refer a case to a higher level. Facilitators are conflict resolution professionals – ICR's scholar-practitioners – with graduate degrees or related expertise in various fields from education to interpersonal relations, and they possess a solid understanding of the dynamics and politics of one or more of the conflicts addressed at the camp. They facilitate the coexistence sessions and handle more serious cases as referred by counsellors. They can also serve as resources for participants and counsellors, and possibly as alternative safe people who can listen and advise in confidence. Various programme directors and other senior staff have similar training or experience. They oversee the design and evaluation of programmes in coordination with facilitators, coordinate and facilitate conferences and the follow-up programme in Jerusalem, and perform the administrative roles required from fundraising and finances to public relations. There are no specific ethnic or cultural background requirements for counsellors, facilitators, or senior staff: most are American of various backgrounds. There are a select few former Seeds who serve as junior counsellors, and they are particularly valuable toward the end of the camp to share their experiences and offer

³⁹ Facilitation strategies were discussed in a telephone conversation between the author and Lesley Adelson, a Programme Director at *Seeds of Peace* in Washington, 30 May 2002.

advice regarding the re-entry process.

The SOP approach to facilitation appears to fit the elicitive model outlined in the curricular framework. In particular, the division of roles between counsellors and facilitators effectively achieves a variety of balances – between expert and friend, adult and youth, and authority and caring. Both positions must aim to create an environment that is at once safe and challenging. Participants must feel comfortable in confronting emotionally difficult issues and emerge with a positive outlook, self-esteem, and hope for the future. Of counsellors, one Seed wrote in an e-mail, ‘The main deal is you are the people who I love and helped me get through that unique experience’ (SOPb). The balance between prescriptive and elicitive facilitation is heavily weighted toward the latter, which coincides with the programme’s chief objective of transforming attitudes. However, for such an initiative to have a greater impact in the overall process, the facilitation of concrete skills in peace advocacy for the return home – balanced between prescriptive skills and elicitive action plans – would have to be strengthened considerably.

4.4.2 Contact

Clearly, the SOP approach is founded on the power of contact to promote positive attitude change. It also demonstrates a fairly thorough understanding of the various conditions required for that contact to be effective. In particular, the intertwining combination of contact with conflict analysis offers insight into how those conditions may be satisfied in practice.

From a theoretical standpoint, the critical balance between interpersonal and intergroup contact is achieved as Seeds participate concurrently in camp activities as

individuals, and in conflict analysis workshops as members of conflicting groups. The constant casual contact – living, eating, sleeping, and partaking in traditional camp sports, drama, and art activities together – truly represents Cook’s ‘acquaintance potential’. The coexistence sessions are explicitly between representatives from conflicting groups, by eliciting emotions, experiences, and perspectives from all sides, and prompting candid and heated debate on the contentious issues between them. In fact, the SOP balance between interpersonal and intergroup is such that the friendships forged in their daily contact translate into a new openness when addressing the difficult issues of the conflict:

I never spent such wonderful moments as with the people I was taught to hate. [...] I listened to their side of the conflict for the first time, and tried to understand them. I saw that they suffered too, and that they have hearts just like us. I saw they wanted peace, just like me. It wasn’t just the Coexistence sessions that made me realize that, it was everything: Group Challenge, Color Games, meals, the rest hour, swimming [...] They are supposed to be my enemies. But, I can’t call them enemies. Not when I can remember Agon’s jokes, not when I can almost hear Miranda’s singing. Not when I think of what they said about how they suffered too. Not when I know they are normal people, just like me, just like my family. Not now (Vasevska 2001).

The second day at camp we met our “enemy” and what amazed us was that we got along fabulously! During the day we played soccer and volleyball together and at night we plunged into girl gossip. At the same time we began our coexistence sessions. Our first step was to learn to listen to each other. It was difficult even to hear something that directly opposed everything I had always unquestioningly believed. Next we learnt to understand each other – understand that there could be a perfectly valid reason for the so-called “unreasonable” behavior of the enemy nation and it’s [sic] people. [...] Next came the toughest part – acceptance. To understand our differences and to ACCEPT them. Respect the other nation for what it is and strives for. The co-existence sessions grew tougher each day, but only pulled us closer together to form a tight bond of trust (Mansukhani 2001).

Their bonds are strengthened through the cooperative activities of the Group

Challenge – typical camp trust and teamwork games such as blind trust falls and brain teasers – uniting individuals from opposing backgrounds in the pursuit of superordinate goals, and developing deep interpersonal trust and camaraderie across conflict lines. Even in the more competitive Color Games – sports like soccer and talent-neutral games like scavenger hunts – teams are mixed, and the notions of glory and defeat are surpassed by the cooperation required among team members and a strong spirit of sportsmanship. Significantly, the transition from the superordinate goals at camp to the larger goal of peace is not explicitly made: rather, it appears that the point to be made is that the enemies can work together in general. A more explicit link between working together to achieve a camp objective and working together to achieve a lasting peace is an important component to be considered if participants are to dedicate themselves – together – toward the latter goal upon their return home. However, through the cementing of friendship bonds, Seeds develop the mindset and skills to choose non-violent means of resolving differences in coexistence sessions, like this Greek Cypriot:

By solving simple problems as a group we planted seeds of trust, which showed in coexistence. We stopped facing the enemy and started looking at our friends. [...] Often I disagreed with friends but I left the disagreements in the Green Hut [the location of the debates on the hard issues of the conflict] so they wouldn't affect the relationship (Heorgiou 2001).

The principle of equal status is promoted in the SOP 'neutral environment' on the other side of the world from their real conflict: all rules apply equally, and everyone is issued the same green t-shirt. Further, expectations are manipulated through a Lewinian approach to building the self-esteem of all groups: national delegations convene weekly to share their feelings within their own identity group alone, cultural and religious awareness is explicitly promoted, and cultural and religious differences are formally

celebrated. At the same time, the real inequalities in the larger relationship are expressed and recognized in coexistence sessions, and harmful stereotypes are dispelled through daily contact and discovery of new perspectives:

Who would believe that I would befriend Pakistanis, whom I used to consider bitter enemies? Participating in the myriad of activities, we began understanding each other on a deeper level. I started to appreciate their view of our conflict, the problems they face. The discussions were heated, passions and voices raised. Though we did lock horns, we were able to “rise” above and strengthen our bonds. As the days progressed, I realized I had been prejudiced. The Pakistani boys were not irrational fanatics, the Pakistani girls not clad in burkhas [sic] as I had imagined – they were just like me! (Kutar 2001).

Notably, the Lewinian approach of creating cross-conflict groups of friends that reinforce that ‘everybody is in the same boat [...] has gone through the same difficulties’,⁴⁰ is clearly evidenced at SOP, in particular in the face of tragic news from home that threatens the newly formed bonds. Such was the case when a Jewish Seed from Haifa learned of a suicide bombing in Jerusalem that left over a dozen dead. Liav Harel was:

in an emotional storm, but outside two of my bunkmates from Jordan were waiting for me, and they asked me if my friends and family were all right. It made me feel better, that they really cared about me. [...] Friends from the other side gave me the support I needed at that time; that was the meaning of the whole camp for me (Harel 2001).

The SOP story is not one without challenges. Bad news from back home always threatens to unravel the camp’s delicately woven camaraderie and understanding. In July 1997, news of a terrorist attack on an Israeli vegetable market in Jerusalem made its way

⁴⁰ Bargal and Bar (1992: 144) cite directly from Kurt Lewin (1948), ‘Conflict, knowledge and acceptance of new values’, in G. W. Lewin (ed.), *Resolving social conflicts* (New York: Harper & Row), 67.

to the secluded Maine camp, and thrust a wedge immediately between the Jewish and Arab participants. The effect of the co-existence programme, after only eleven days, was evident in the reaction: after initial glares of accusation and a retreat into each side's traditional conviction that the other was the aggressor and itself the victim, the morning's exchanges led to a gradual realization that violence victimizes all sides, and that those who were killed 'were human beings too.'⁴¹ In the summer of 2000, when news came to Maine that a cousin of a Palestinian Seed at the camp had been killed. A funeral parallel to the one at home was demanded, and angry calls for revenge against Israeli campers were heard amongst the crying and praying. The worst sign of that day happened when several campers, and then close to half the group, stripped off their green SOP t-shirts, threw them to the ground, and stomped on them in defiance. Founder John Wallach was present, and reacted, removing his own t-shirt: 'You're right and I'm wrong. If "peace" is just a word on a T-shirt, I don't want to wear mine either.' One by one, beginning with the boy whose cousin's death had sparked the crisis, the campers put their shirts on again (Wallach, 2001b). Wallach's positive mentorship had fostered a respect in the participants that was able to overcome the negative emotions spawned by conflict.

Clearly, the SOP approach to contact fulfills the conditions set out in the curricular framework, to ensure that it is effective in rehumanizing enemies and developing understanding and even friendship is effective between young adversaries. To be sure, the several examples given do not lead to a general conclusion regarding the programme's effectiveness, and quantitative evidence is required in the form of pre- and post-tests and surveys. However, it does reveal the plausibility, as well as some challenges, of the approach. Some circumstantial evidence of the effectiveness of the

⁴¹ An anonymous Seed, as quoted directly in Wallach 2001b, 23.

contact on the general group can be found in the considerable popularity of SOP follow-up programmes in the Middle East. Those programmes facilitate the ‘cumulative’ contact favoured by Sherif and Pettigrew by coordinating regular reunions and joint activities across conflict lines upon re-entry. Their respective successes and challenges are discussed below.

4.4.3 Introduction of the peace dividend

The children at SOP are not ignorant of the idea of peace, yet they must be introduced to peace as a viable alternative to war, and empowered to choose it with conviction and confidence. Again, the development of friendships through contact and understanding through conflict analysis is intended to lead children to discover their own vision of the peace dividend. Coming into the programme, participants are assured that their side is right, and that the conflict is a competition to be won. They leave realizing that the case is not so clear. Sarah Sham, an Indian girl, describes her transition in *The Olive Branch*:

We were prepared for a debate, an argument. [...] My scheme was, “Pakistanis will now know who is right, and who Kashmir belongs to! We will win this debate and return victorious!” [...] Then, we exchanged our accounts, and to our disbelief saw what we acknowledged as the supreme truth was being completely contradicted! We finally arrived at the fact that history was only one’s own interpretation of certain events.

Her conclusion echoes what many Seeds have expressed as the most important effect that the experience has had on their attitudes – an openness to seeing peace as a viable alternative, an end in itself:

If you’re wondering, we did return victorious. Not because we won a debate but because we won the trust and love of our Pakistani friends; because we earned a profound understanding

about them. We reached no solution, but reached a compromise, which is FAR more meaningful; and we both emerged triumphant (Sham 2001, emphasis in original).

The coexistence sessions provide the venue by which the children learn firsthand of the devastating effects of the conflict on children from the enemy side. Often, they hear of experiences and emotions very similar to theirs, and it becomes evident to them that the conflict victimizes all sides. In the case of most Seeds, then, there are few if any opportunity costs of moving from war to peace, and the peace dividend is easily established as the absence of fear, loss, and devastation. They do not require additional guarantees of physical and financial security to make peace worthwhile in their lives. Strategies to offer such guarantees – such as vocational training, the provision of tools or land, or ideas for joint communal projects such as school building – could easily be included as part of a re-entry plan at camp or during follow-up if they were required.

The need for self-esteem and hope for the future are pivotal in establishing a viable peace dividend. SOP fulfills those needs in a variety of ways. Again, the aforementioned cross-conflict group of friends in the Lewinian model of group belongingness serves as the most important source of self-esteem provided by SOP. It clearly removes the appearance of glory and adventure from conflict as experiences are shared, and it offers the enticement of purpose and belongingness in peace and friendship across enemy lines. The glory is not completely removed from war, but the exhilaration of accomplishing goals cooperatively is effectively added to the picture. The follow-up programme includes joint community service projects that demonstrate the power of collective action for the betterment of their societies, and at the same time, they spread awareness of the potential for cooperation between individuals from opposing

communities. In addition, the mentorship provided by counsellors in particular serves as another source of self-esteem. The return of former Seeds who have successfully returned home in peace also provide mentorship and inspiration for those about to go through the re-entry process.

The missing component of the peace dividend as introduced by SOP is the remedy of injustice and inequality in the real-life conflict. Mostly, Seeds return home with a new appreciation of the perspective of the other side, and the beginnings of friendships across conflict lines. However, the conflict will continue to be justified if the underlying origins are not addressed. SOP creates awareness among children of those underlying origins – the asymmetrical relationship that deprives one or all parties of their basic human and social needs – but cannot magically address and resolve them. In this way, the peace dividend may be deficient in the minds of the participating children: indeed, we must resolve our differences peacefully; however, simple peace instead of a *just* peace means that the underlying issues of needs and justice persist, and the conflict continues. YPIs can theoretically respond to this problem in two ways: first, injustice and inequality may be misperceived – socially constructed as a justification for war. They can dispel false or exaggerated constructs of injustice through coexistence sessions and address the true underlying issues of the conflict. Second, in the case that injustice is determined through conflict analysis to be an objective underlying source, then Seeds can spread awareness of the injustice in their communities and, as a cross-conflict coalition of children, advocate for its remedy. This solution is admittedly a long-term prospect, and does not provide immediate evidence of a peace dividend to the children who seek it at present. It also requires a thorough problem-solving process in coexistence sessions, which SOP does not explicitly provide. However, like ICR workshops, the YPI is not a

panacea, but must be seen instead as a necessary step in building understanding of the underlying issues, by breaking down the hatred and other conflict constructs that obscure them.

4.4.4 Conflict analysis

SOP's primary objective is the first component of the dual purpose of interactive conflict resolution: to transform the attitudes of children from conflicting parties toward each other and toward the conflict. Regarding the second component of the dual purpose – to impact the overall peace process – its aims are long-term: to reverse the intergenerational cycle of conflict through the future impact of its child participants as parents and adult role models, and in the long-term as the future leaders for peace in their respective communities. As such, the adaptation of the ICR problem-solving workshop in the SOP model is focussed around the transformation of attitudes, and not necessarily the creation of potential solutions to the conflict. To be sure, the dynamic of the conflict is transformed in the attitudes of the Seeds – from a fight to won competitively to a problem to be solved cooperatively. The myriad social constructs that obfuscate the underlying issues of the conflict – zero-sum interests, perspectives of history and truth, and enemy images – are explored and recognized, if not fully deconstructed, and the true sources of conflict are discovered. However, concrete solutions and the paths to achieving them are not explicitly sought. Some groups – individual friends or coexistence session groups – progress naturally to that stage of their discussions, and many Seeds seek the answers in follow-up programmes or at future Seeds conferences⁴²;

⁴² SOP has held a number of major conferences bringing alumni together to draft concrete proposals for peace in their communities. The Charter of Villars – a blueprint for Israeli-Palestinian peace – was drafted

yet, it is not actively encouraged at camp. The goal remains to become friends committed to resolving the conflict peacefully; the details are left for later, and as an organization, SOP is beginning to address that issue through its conferences and follow-up programmes.

The process of conflict analysis has been described above: during coexistence sessions, Seeds explore their conflict on a variety of levels. Experiences are shared and perspectives are expressed. Profound and sensitive issues – of right and wrong, guilt and innocence, aggressor and victim – are debated at length in a search for answers from the participants themselves. Are differences irreconcilable? Are the deaths of innocents forgivable? The resultant discussions often continue into the Seeds' free time – at meals, at play, and in their bunks. The quotation above from Sarah Sham, the Indian girl who came to SOP prepared for a debate over Kashmir and left with an appreciation for the perspective of her new Pakistani friends, tells of the openness of children to new points of view. The story of the Greek Cypriot Seed who left her disagreements in the 'Green Hut' reveals the openness of children to compromise and to putting friendship over differences. While not conclusively representative of the group as a whole, these experiences would appear to substantiate the belief that children's worldviews are evolving and transformable, and that the transformation of attitudes can be achieved in children.

SOP fits the general model of adapting the ICR workshop to YPIs submitted in Chapter Three. It is more focussed rehumanization, the discovery of commonalities, and the development of friendships rather than seeking concrete solutions in the short-term.

at a Conference of Middle East alumni in 2000 and presented to Kofi Annan, who took it to leaders in the Middle East.

It offers fun activities as a means to offset the emotional intensity of confronting the conflict. As such, it is a few weeks in length as opposed to Burton's three to four day ICR workshop. Also, it takes place in the summer, so as to avoid interrupting their education. Finally, its approach to issues of entry and re-entry are handled along the lines suggested.

Seeds are selected by their respective governments, normally through their school boards in a competitive process. Generally, Seeds are open to the idea of contact with children from the other side of their conflict, which eliminates children with strong antipathy toward their enemies, or whose parents are hostile to the enemy or the initiative of contact. However, this factor must not lead to the conclusion that all Seeds are ready converts. The above stories of Seeds show that they come to camp with a range of views on their traditional enemies and the conflict between them. One Pakistani Seed recounts her first night at camp, which 'was horrible. Though my eyes went dreary because of lack of sleep I was reluctant to shut them for below me slept the Indian girl, Sarah. I was afraid that she might do something horrible to me' (Nagi 2001).

The entry process incurred its first grave challenge in 2001, when the Palestinian leadership pulled its 40-person delegation from the occupied territories at the last minute. Israel and six other Arab states including Jordan, whose delegation includes Palestinians, sent their delegations anyway, and four Palestinians from the occupied territories came on their own.⁴³ The effects of this absence are considerable: those children who intended to come miss the opportunity to experience the camp, and those others who did attend are deprived of the friendship and the perspective that the missing Seeds would have brought to their experience. Although the Middle East Seeds pushed on and learned a great deal

⁴³ Abby Zimet, 'Letting go of blame', *Maine Telegram*, 15 July 2001.

about each other and about their conflict, this incident reveals the fragility of the programme due to its reliance on support from the adult leadership of the respective sides. Networks for recruitment and selection outside of the conventional structure – through domestic NGOs, for example – may be required to make YPIs fully effective.

The re-entry problem is first addressed at camp. Facilitators lead role-plays that address real-life situations that Seeds will encounter as they work for peace on their return home. What do you do when trapped among hostile members of the other side? How do you defuse tensions at home or in your communities? How do you handle accusations of treason? How do we stay in touch? Trust, peer and family pressure, prejudice, and cultural assumptions are among the challenges that Seeds must tackle and reconcile in Maine before confronting them in their daily lives. The former Seeds who are junior counsellors spend the last few days of camp to share their experiences and advice for surviving the re-entry process. In the end, however, the most potent factor in the difficult return home is the committed friendship developed with one or more special individuals from the enemy side, which is explicitly encouraged throughout the camp. A small, tight-knit group imbued with trust, respect, compassion, and camaraderie provides a solid source of support for the many difficult times ahead.

The resilience that these friendships foster in the face of horrific circumstances is clear in correspondence over SeedsNet. In an exchange of letters just after the start of the intifada in September 2000, two close friends – a Palestinian and an Israeli – wrestle with the violence but stick together. The Palestinian boy had witnessed the killing of several Israelis, and expressed his repulsion at the act, but also explained his understanding for the anger that provoked it. He asked why Israel is ‘giving fear and throwing fear in each heart of us children and even men – why?’ and concluded, ‘We must believe in peace,

then trust that it's the way for a good life, then do it, then act for peace, do whatever we can for peace.' His Israeli friend responded the next day that the lynching was 'terrible' and 'unforgiven', but concluded by expressing admiration and love for his friend for 'feeling our pain as much as I feel yours.... You made me feel so much better cause now I know that not everybody want war and there are Palestinians who feel like I feel.' He signed off telling his friend: 'you are and you will always be my best friend no matter what happens. I love you... like a brother and I don't want anything to happen to you or your family' (SOP 2000).

A significant concern regarding the friendships fostered at camp is their endurance potential. Lifelong friendships require sustained contact, which is facilitated by SOP through explicit follow-up programmes.

4.5 Follow-up

SOP's follow-up programmes fulfill a number of needs for the ultimate achievement of its objectives. First, they serve as a means for cumulative contact between Seeds – to strengthen the bonds forged at camp – and to expand the reach of contact to Seeds' family, peers, and other community members. Second, they provide pivotal support during the difficult re-entry process. Finally, they facilitate the work of Seeds in spreading the message of peace in their communities and across conflict lines. The number and popularity of follow-up programmes, specifically in the Middle East, also demonstrate the success of the camp programme in fostering committed friendships among a larger number of participants than is shown through testimonials.

The programmes have evolved considerably since they were spontaneously born in Ned Lazarus' apartment in Jerusalem, in number, in size, and in scope. The most

wide-ranging projects are *The Olive Branch*, a 30-page magazine composed uniquely of letters and articles by Seeds from various conflict areas, published quarterly and distributed to all interested SOP alumni and friends; SeedsNet, the internet-based chat group for Seeds; and Seeds Clubhouse, the internet web site for alumni, with links to news sources from all perspectives of various conflicts, news from camp, games, and a community contact list of over 1,600 former Seeds. Through these forums, the discussions and debates from camp are continued, and mutual support and encouragement are exchanged. One particularly notable example was written by an Israeli, just weeks after the renewal of the intifada in September 2000:

I cannot tell you how painful this last week has been for me. I am sure there are those of you who have suffered far more than I have. Nevertheless, these past 7 days have probably been the worst in my life. The reason for this is, that along with all the horrible death and violence and bloodshed, I have seen far too many people give up on peace. Well, I'm proud to tell you all, in defiance of all that has happened lately, I am nowhere near giving up hope.... I have made my choice. I know, that I will walk the path of peace.... [N]o matter what happens around me, I will never give up on peace. I invite you all to join me in the greatest achievement of all, the victory of peace over war. I need you to do this with me (SOP 2000).

For Middle Eastern Seeds, the Centre for Coexistence in Jerusalem has become the hub of follow-up activities and re-entry support. It was created as the movement of follow-up initiatives by individual Seeds 'exploded'.⁴⁴ Friends from across enemy lines visited each other's schools to demonstrate the commonalities and humanity of the faceless other. Week and month-long homestays were arranged between Israel, Palestinian territory, and Jordan. In 1997, a Christmas gathering in Bethlehem gathered twelve Seeds, including two Israelis. In 1998, 40 Seeds came out, including 17 Israelis;

⁴⁴ Ned Lazarus, telephone conversation, May 30.

and in 1999, 100 Seeds attended the annual event, including 45 Israelis⁴⁵. The official opening of the Centre for Coexistence in October 1999 saw over 500 Seeds and their families. Ned Lazarus, a mentor at the Centre for Coexistence, estimates that three-quarters of Middle East Seeds participated in follow-up events in the year after they attend camp, two-thirds of which participate monthly or more often. Some 60-70 Seeds attended bi-weekly coexistence workshops in 1999, and in the summer of 2000, programmes were held every day, ranging from art to photography, music to puppetry. Close to 200 Seeds attended the Talent Show at the end of the summer. Follow-up activities organized through the Centre continue to take place across the region as well. In 1999, some 60 Israelis and 100 Palestinians crossed conflict lines for homestays, and close to 100 Israelis visited Jordan.⁴⁶

The value of voluntarism in the cementing of friendships, the demonstration of a peace dividend, and the exhibition of the potential for cooperation is substantiated in the Seeds Community Service Team, which is:

dedicated to showing that Arabs and Jews can work together toward common non-political goals. The committee decided that it wants to dedicate most of its time to helping children in need. Four times a month Community Service Team members volunteer with Arab and Jewish children at Friendship's Way, an after-school program for children from troubled families in Jaffa. The seeds help the children with homework, read to them, play with them and offer the love and support that is often lacking in their own homes. The seeds also gave a presentation on *Seeds of Peace* at Friendship's Way, and many of the children now want to go to the camp when they get older. [...] The Community Service Team also collects clothes, food, toys and shoes for Palestinian and Israeli families in need. [...] The team is also planning a big day of community service for the larger Seeds community, possible focused on erasing racist graffiti in Israeli cities (SOPa).

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

The follow-up programmes face some challenges and limitations. When Seeds hit age 18, Israelis have mandatory military service – three years for boys and two years for girls – and many Arabs attend college, often as far away as the United States. Before that age, parental opposition – mostly for reasons of safety, but often of politics – prevented continued involvement for many. For Seeds in other conflict zones, similar follow-up initiatives remain ad-hoc and rudimentary, although Greek and Turkish Cypriot Seeds played a significant role in the month-long festival of bi-communal activities in September 2001 that culminated in Cyprus Peace Day, at which over 1,000 Cypriots of all ages were reunited with old friends after as long as 27 years divided by the conflict (Polychroni 2001).⁴⁷

However, the most serious challenge to follow-up programmes is the escalation of conflict. The outbreak of the intifada in September 2000 changed everything. Passage across conflict lines in either direction was severely restricted: because of checkpoints and curfews for Palestinians, and because of the threat of violence for Israelis. The ability to meet face to face at home was ‘completely gone’.⁴⁸ The programme has adapted, however. Palestinians hold separate meetings among themselves to share and plan activities, and Arab and Jewish Israelis continue to meet, sometimes with some East Jerusalem Palestinians who can move freely. Coexistence seminars now attract 40-60 Seeds, albeit only in periods of relative quiet. Clearly, conflict escalation presents a serious challenge to the continued support and cumulative contact required for the re-entry process. However, the threat posed by escalation has appeared to be almost entirely physical, not psychological. In other words, Seeds may be inhibited from seeing

⁴⁷ Also Helena Smith, ‘Island Dream’, *London Guardian*, 29 January 2002.

⁴⁸ Ned Lazarus, telephone conversation, May 30.

each other face to face, but their friendship and their commitment to peace is unaffected.

The resilience of Seeds during the intifada – persevering in exchanging experiences and commiserating as a still-united cross-conflict group of friends – is impressive. They appear to lose hope, but remain defiant as their communities choose violence.

Recounting an incident in which the people of her school burned an Israeli flag in protest, an Egyptian seed wrote:

I did nothing. I do not feel it would do anything. But maybe I am wrong. I do not know whether I should've said something anyway, however ineffectual it would prove to be. Am I making excuses for myself? Am I just running away from the names they would call me and the trouble the kids would make for me if I was the least bit pro-Israeli? I do not know if I am just a coward or a realist. I do not like the Israeli government but I have nothing against the people. I know they are like us, however much I disapprove of the leadership governing them. How can I get that idea across to people who have nothing in their heads but what they feel is their DUTY?

Although the crucial separation of a government and individual citizens is clearly present here, it is important to note that a critical mind toward one's own government is lacking. To be sure, this issue must be somehow addressed through the YPI if a clearer, more objective picture of the conflict is to be achieved. Nevertheless, the wondrous optimism of camp always comes back in the end:

All of you others do not let all the empty slogans get to you, and remember what it felt like to sing the *Seeds of Peace* anthem, with your arm around your Israeli or Arab friends (SOP 2000).

Another Egyptian Seed replied:

Start in your schools and with your family. Express to them how you feel, how things must change. Do not let the fear of rejection by your colleagues in school force you to keep your feelings to yourself. That is how you can be active... let us stick together in these hard times, don't let it blind you from the true friendships

you've made in *Seeds of Peace* and stop thinking that they're contradicting. Having TRUE friends from the other side doesn't make you less patriotic, and don't let anyone convince you otherwise. Believe in yourself, that's the only way you'll make others believe in you (ibid).

SOP's actual impact on the peace process, although too young to be decidedly told in terms of the intergenerational cycle of violence, is clearly visible in the resilience of its alumni in the face of gruelling reality back home, to maintain their dedication and their hope in spite of war's worst challenges. At the November 2000 UNESCO Award Ceremony, after SOP received the Madanjeet Singh Prize for the Promotion of Tolerance and Non-Violence, Netta Corren, an Israeli teenager from Haifa and SOP alumna, spoke eloquently about the trying return home after the wonder and magic of camp. In Maine for the first time, she 'actually realized [...] that there are human beings across the border'. She found it 'suddenly [...] the easiest thing to bond with people when you all live and share the same reality, the same daily life experiences. [...] I came back from camp feeling that the sky had burst open and right there beyond a magical truth was exposed to me'. Then, however, life 'in the Middle East adjusts you very quickly'. Not seeing or talking to her Palestinian friends every day – communicating only through the remarkable e-mail network of *Seeds* alumni – dug a channel between them that Netta found difficult to accept. Yet, through the Centre for Coexistence, a reunion was arranged in which every alumnus brought an additional friend from home to partner up with old camp friends for a day. The 'bring-a-friend' programme set up Netta, her Palestinian SOP friend Mai, and their two friends from home for a day that Netta 'remembers with a big smile':

The four of us, two Israelis and two Palestinians, hung together in the mall for a whole day.... We discussed some really serious

issues like boys, school, family and other matters that meant a lot to all of us. And as I looked to the side for a moment I caught a glimpse of two of my best friends – one Israeli and one Palestinian – and the amazing connection they've managed to establish. And at that moment I really realized that I love them both the same way. No doubts, no limits' (Corren 2000).

The realization of that day – that she could still 'call Mai, and talk to her and cry on her virtual shoulder and laugh with her and yell and accuse and discuss and share the same pain we both feel' – changed Netta's life and made her a life-long peace advocate:

In the very same core in which human beings coming from different backgrounds, different cultures, different religions can still in spite of everything else hope together for a better future and believe, yes believe in peace as they are laying on each other.... We might not be able to determine everything about our reality.... I do believe that each and every one of us is able to determine his own reality. The reality in his mind in his thoughts and this is the reality combined all together that could lead to a better life for all of us (ibid).

Other e-mails exhibit the success of Seeds in spreading their message of peace to their families and communities. On November 17, 2000, a young Palestinian wrote that:

what really keeps me optimistic is that Noa's family and my family exchange calls every week. Whenever Noa's parents hear about anybody that got killed they call my family; and whenever my parents hear about anything they call Noa's family (ibid).

A final illustration of the intense effect of SOP on the children it reaches is the reaction of Seeds to news of the death of Asel Asleh, a popular Arab Israeli Seed who was shot by Israeli soldiers during a rock-throwing protest on October 2, 2000. Little is known about his precise role during the protests,⁴⁹ yet Asel has become the martyr for peace at SOP, mourned by Seeds from all sides of the conflict, and remembered as the brightest leaders in the programme. He is mentioned persistently by Seeds in *The Olive*

⁴⁹ Lee Hockstader, 'Israeli Bullet Ends a Life In Two Worlds', *The Washington Post*, 5 October 2000.

Branch and in chat groups, where he was an avid participant and mentor for many younger Seeds:

We can't change what we are, but we can change the way that we live already, we can take our lives in our hands again, we can move from a position as a viewer of this game to a player. We are no more asked to watch; we can make a change. We don't have to be caught; we can lead these two worlds, and still keep everything we had.⁵⁰

The reaction on all sides testifies to his impact on the lives of his fellow Seeds, and to the closeness of the Seeds family. An Israeli girl wrote:

On the one hand, I love my country, and I support my soldiers and think they're not trying to kill anyone – just trying to protect the people. On the other hand, I loved Asel, and I have a hard time picturing that he was such a threat to the security of Israel that they had to shoot him.⁵¹

Perhaps most importantly, Asel's death inspired his fellow Seeds to push on in their pursuit of peace. An Egyptian Seed argued:

We come out of this realizing that in time of war, everyone loses... we just lost Asel. If that doesn't make you realize how vital peace is, then I don't know what can. So stop being so passive... stop blaming each other for what's happening, it doesn't matter. What matters is how we stop it (SOP 2000).

4.6 Other issues

The conflicts confronted by SOP are of a particular type: identity-based, protracted conflicts with frequent and prolonged periods of latency and occasional sparks of escalation that affect the majority of the population only indirectly. These conflicts have underlying origins that are obfuscated by social constructs of zero-sum interests and enemy images, and have appreciable movements for peace in democratic or semi-

⁵⁰ Direct quotation of Asel Asleh, in an e-mail on SeedsNet. Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

democratic nations. Clearly, YPIs in regions with persistently high escalation and instability, unclear conflict lines, questionable sources, and little or no organization or motivation for peace would be unsuccessful with the precise SOP model. The exact approach would need to shift its focus to one or more of healing, rehumanization, education, the provision of opportunities for physical and financial security, or other tactics, depending on the dynamics of the conflict and the role of children within the conflict and within the particular society. The type of conflict addressed by SOP clearly requires a focus on effective contact that makes enemies into friends, and conflict analysis that reveals the social construction of conflict and explores its underlying issues, which SOP demonstrably provides.

Seeds are aged 14 to 17, which serves to show that the impact of YPIs on positive attitude transformation can in fact reach to the oldest limit of the definition of children provided. There is no indication that such a programme would or would not function as effectively with children of younger ages, whose political awareness and interest would be less, yet whose evolving worldviews would be more transformable. Again, however, the definition of child is a fluid one, dependent on many factors including culture. Those who seek to undertake a YPI must undoubtedly be fully aware of the specific conflict environment, including the cultural meaning of childhood and the capacities and readiness of local children for the difficult emotional experience offered by a YPI of this type.

The relative novelty of SOP – less than ten years – makes it difficult to draw a conclusive empirical link between attitude transformation in children and the reversal of the intergenerational cycle of conflict. To be sure, most Seeds believe that they are life-long peace advocates, like the 14 year-old Israeli Seed who wrote:

Well just think... every one of us will have a family someday (with God's help) and a child who we will be able to teach the real meaning of friendship and let him to discover other people by himself and not being so afraid of what everybody else thinks, well I guess we are not so few anymore (SOP 2000).

Indeed, there is no empirical reason to doubt that they will maintain the friendships made at camp throughout their adult lives, and pass the notion of just peace to their children and the children in their communities. However, not enough time has passed to see any empirical validation of this assumption. In fact, without sustained contact that, we have seen, is not always possible in war zones, it could reasonably argued that the positive effect of camp could be entirely engulfed by the emotions and constructs of war. SOP has yet to conduct a comprehensive survey of its 2,000 alumni that would exhibit any evidence to the contrary, leaving us to grapple with the problem of sustaining contact in the face of the logistical constraints of war.

As with any international initiative, money is a factor. SOP is a relatively wealthy organization, raising funds from foundations, corporations, governments, an annual gala in New York, and individual donors to sustain its various programmes. It is clear that considerable financial investment is required to achieve success on the level that SOP has realized; however, more modest, localized projects with volunteers and staff from the communities themselves could be effective with much less funding.

To end on a positive note, SOP's primary objective – making enemies into friends – is somewhat modest in comparison to its ultimate aspiration: to directly impact the overall peace process at the leadership level. In the short term, SOP visits Washington every summer to meet with the President, Vice-President, First Lady, or Secretary of State, to exhibit the passion and potential of the Seeds to be true leaders for peace. Also, the continued support of the programme – whether genuine or for show – by international

leaders and the respective sides' current leadership is in itself a contribution for peace by developing and maintaining the public rhetoric of peace as the ultimate objective. Even as the Palestinian leadership refused to send representatives to the 2001 SOP camp in Maine, Yasser Arafat continued to don his SOP pin.⁵² In the line of Herbert Kelman, whose adult ICR workshop alumni have gone on to high-level positions on their respective negotiation teams (Kelman 1998), SOP founder John Wallach visualizes a future in which Seeds alumni are those who lead their respective groups in the search for a just peace:

Perhaps one day my dream will come true and two of these newly inaugurated presidents or prime ministers will bypass Camp David and hold their first summit at the camp where they first met in Maine (Wallach 2000).

4.7 Conclusion

Seeds of Peace is an archetypical youth peace initiative. It is founded on the understanding that protracted social conflict can only be genuinely resolved when the attitudes of its belligerents are transformed toward the conflict and toward each other. It seeks, then, to transform both the conflict and the relationship between the conflicting parties, from a competitive struggle to be fought between enemies into a mutual problem to be solved between partners. Further, it recognizes that the optimum locus of intervention to bring about such transformation is through children, reversing the intergenerational cycle of conflict. Through its programme that combines effective contact with direct confrontation of the experiences and issues of the conflict, SOP turns the children of traditional enemies into dedicated friends, committed to finding non-violent means of achieving a just peace between their peoples. Rebecca Mahoney, a

⁵² Abby Zimet, 'Letting go of blame', *Maine Telegram*, 15 July 2001.

journalist witnessing the programme, captures its purpose clearly: 'The goal is for teen-agers who are born enemies to get to know each other as humans on neutral ground away from the conflicts in the hope that they bring their new attitudes back to their communities.'⁵³

The SOP philosophy and approach represent an empirical application of the theoretical framework developed in this essay. In particular, its approach provides numerous points of valuable insight into the effective implementation of YPIs. It also shows that the three principal strategies of transforming attitudes in children – contact, peace dividend, and conflict analysis – are much more interdependent and mutually enhancing than expected. The considerable success of its follow-up programmes – particularly in periods of relative peace – suitably complements the summer camp by providing an arena for cumulative contact, re-entry support, and peace advocacy across conflict lines, regardless of the physical barriers erected by conflict escalation. Their popularity shows the effectiveness of the camp programme in developing positive attitude change through contact. The SOP case does also reveal some of the challenges and limitations of YPIs in practice. First and most importantly, conflict escalation threatens both the entry and re-entry processes, as evidenced with the absence of Palestinian children from the camp and the restricted cross-border travel for follow-up programmes after the renewal of the intifada. While this instance has not damaged the spirit of SOP or the Seeds themselves, it has proven a serious threat to the programme's effectiveness. This problem feeds into another: that YPIs do not have any direct, immediate impact on the real-life situation of the conflict – especially the injustice and

⁵³ Rebecca Mahoney, 'Arab, Israeli teen-agers sow "*Seeds of Peace*"', *The Detroit News*, 27 June 2001.

inequality that underlie it – impairs YPIs’ capacity to articulate a practical peace dividend to sceptical children, in particular when bad news from home threatens to damage still-developing friendships between long-time enemies. A third challenge consists of the limits on the extent of attitude transformation that YPIs can elicit. While Seeds leave camp with a new appreciation of the other side’s perspective and the dynamics of the conflict, and with committed friendships with members of the other side, few leave with concrete knowledge of precisely how the conflict can be resolved. Finally, the resiliency of YPI alumni in the face of extreme conflict escalation and the durability of the attitude change through adulthood to the next generation have yet to be truly tested.

The SOP case is far from closed. The organization continues to expand its programmes and its vision. It has produced a 5½-hour curriculum for Israeli and Palestinian schools, *Teaching Peace*, on CD-ROM that aims to make the bridge between youth peace initiatives and peace education by bringing mutual empathy, conflict resolution and peace advocacy skills into the classroom in the near future. It has held a number of conferences uniting selected alumni to draft proposals for peace in their societies that have been presented to their respective leaders.⁵⁴ In November 2001, with the world focussed on global terrorism, 120 youth from 21 delegations representing close to all nationalities in the Seeds family drafted the Charter on Uprooting Hatred and Terror and presented it to the Secretary General. In it, the youth declared that they ‘are tired of hatred, violence and terror’:

Do not dismiss this as youthful idealism. Many of us live in places where killing and humiliation, poverty and homeless refugees are commonplace. We are surrounded by an atmosphere of hatred

⁵⁴ The Charter of Villars – a blueprint for Israeli-Palestinian peace – was drafted at a Conference of Middle East alumni in 2000 and presented to Kofi Annan, who took it to leaders in the Middle East.

created by unjust realities. [...] At *Seeds of Peace*, we have experienced real equality, unity, understanding & joy. Having faced this stark contrast, we now refuse to accept what is when we know what can be, if we truly implement these principles in our homes and our hearts. We refuse to be victims. We know it is possible to redirect human passions, even calls for revenge, toward the positive goal of creating peace. [...] We were raised in societies which taught us to hate each other. Despite that, we have united here to fight together for a better future for us all, in the name of the dead and the generations to come. In succeeding here, we prove to ourselves and our governments that a solution exists and peace is not impossible (SOP 2001).

The 28-page Charter, written by Seeds alone with no prior outline or structure, elaborates several potential areas in which the sources of and the solutions to the hatred and violence that plagues the world's peoples can be found. Education, economic disparity, media, pop culture, principles of governing, religion, and safety and security are specified and analysed in this highly aware, insightful, and forward-looking document that the adult leaders of the world have rarely expressed in such frank, concrete, and optimistic terms. It captures well what SOP exists to do: to 'reverse a legacy of hatred and reclaim what founder John Wallach calls "what is human in all of us"'.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Abby Zimet, 'Letting go of blame', *Maine Telegram*, 15 July 2001.

Conclusion

I keep wanting to explain these stupid politics to myself, because it seems to me that politics cause this war, making it our everyday reality. [...] It looks to me as though these politics mean Serbs, Croats, and Muslims. But they are all people. They are all the same. They all look like people, there's no difference. They all have arms, legs and heads, they walk and talk, but now there's "something" that wants to make them different. [...] I simply don't understand it. Of course, I'm "young" and politics are conducted by "grown-ups." But I think we "young" would do it better. We certainly wouldn't have chosen war.

– Zlata Filipović, age 11 (Sarajevo, November 19, 1992)⁵⁶

The present study was intended to explore the potential of youth peace initiatives (YPIs) as a tool for international conflict resolution. In theory, protracted social conflict must be transformed in order to be genuinely and durably resolved. Because a conflict's underlying origins – the frustration of basic human and social needs, asymmetrical relationships, and injustice – are obfuscated by social constructs such as zero-sum interests and enemy images, that conflict must be transformed in the minds of its belligerents from a competition to be won into a mutual problem to be jointly solved. Only when those underlying issues are openly addressed and solved can the conflict be resolved. Further, the relationship between the belligerents must be transformed – in mind from enemy to partner, and in social structure to ensure equality, justice, and the universal provision of basic human and social needs – in order to avoid a recurrence of violent conflict in the future. This transformation of the conflict and of the relationship, it was shown, can be achieved through interactive conflict resolution (ICR) problem solving workshops, as developed through the research and practice of Burton, Azar,

⁵⁶ Zlata Filipović (1994), *Zlata's Diary* (New York: Penguin Books), pp. 96-7. Seen as the Anne Frank of Sarajevo, Zlata Filipović kept a diary throughout her family's experience with the war in Sarajevo from early 1992 to October 1993. In December 1993, she and her parents were moved by the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) to Paris.

Kelman, Fisher, and others.

Because protracted social conflict follows an intergenerational cycle in which successive generations of children learn conflict through socialization and experience, it was argued that the optimum locus of intervention into the social construction of conflict is the social learning process, during which children's evolving worldview changes constantly based on new interaction with their environment. Children are more susceptible to the introduction of peace as an alternative to violent conflict before the social constructs of past generations are profoundly embedded in their worldviews.

As such, YPIs aim to transform the attitudes of the children of traditional enemies in protracted social conflict toward each other and toward their conflict, anticipating that those new attitudes – of mutual respect, friendship, and dedication to a peaceful and just resolution to the conflict – will be brought back to their respective communities and infused into the intergenerational cycle of conflict, reversing that cycle to gradually develop a culture of peace. This paper presents a practical framework of strategies and tactics, conditions, challenges, and other issues that must be considered in the design of YPIs. This framework is intended as a general guide with some specific recommendations for further research and practice in this emerging field of international conflict management.

A case study of *Seeds of Peace*, a prototypical YPI in Maine, serves as a plausibility probe and heuristic tool that demonstrates an empirical justification for further testing and instructs us on the conditions and challenges of the curricular framework in practice. In particular, its combination of trust-building contact with direct conflict analysis and confrontation of the experiences and contentious issues from all perspectives at summer camp has had some documented success in achieving positive

attitude change by forging understanding and friendships among a number of participants that transcend the social constructs of conflict. Although there is little concrete evidence yet to assert a more general validity to the YPI theory, the empirical example given by SOP demonstrates the plausibility of the theory pending further, more detailed study. Further, the number of participants at SOP follow-up programmes reveals the effectiveness of the programme in achieving positive attitude change and a commitment to furthering the pursuit of peace. Although challenged by conflict escalation, follow-up programmes have proven to be an effective complement to the summer camp by facilitating cumulative contact, the re-entry process, and initiatives to spread the message of peace into the Seeds' respective communities.

The objectives of this paper were to articulate and test theoretical and practical frameworks that demonstrate the potential of youth peace initiatives to reverse the intergenerational cycle of protracted social conflict by transforming the attitudes of the children of traditional enemies toward the conflict and toward each other. This indirect, long-term impact on conflict is difficult to prove empirically given the relative novelty of the YPI movement, and the dearth of academic research on its impact. As the ICR movement got its start and faced considerable opposition because of its lack of empirical evidence, Burton argued that:

In the absence of opportunities to test, reliance has to be placed on the validity of original hypotheses and logical deductions made from them. During the development of conflict theory, the philosophy of science was also developing. Despite earlier emphasis on testing as the main interest of science, a scientific value came to be attached to the validity of an original hypothesis (Burton 1987, 17).

Similarly, it is arguable that the hypotheses submitted in this essay are based on logical deductions emerging from various fields of research, and that the frameworks elaborated

here can be judged according to their validity where empirical evidence is as yet unavailable. In the coming years, *Seeds of Peace* will conduct a comprehensive study of its impact with alumni and, by extension, on the overall peace process. More importantly, it is further hoped that this paper serves as a basis for future theoretical and empirical study into the long-term impact of YPIs on conflict, and their role in the field of conflict resolution. In particular, as YPIs are refined to more effectively affect the intergenerational cycle of conflict, the field may consider expanding into efforts at having a more direct impact on the peace process. Instead of being victims and perpetrators of violent conflict, it is quite conceivable that children can be active leaders for peace and justice in their communities.

The logic behind YPIs at present is that as these Seeds continue to introduce their peers, families, and communities to peace, and as they grow to become parents and adult role models for children, a domestic constituency for peace will grow on all sides of a given conflict, motivating or even pushing group leaders to quickly realize a peaceful and just resolution to the conflict. YPIs create what Kelman (1997) calls a 'nucleus for a new relationship' leading to the building of 'coalitions across conflict lines' for a just peace. Participants represent Kelman's cadre of people who understand the underlying issues, are dedicated to peace, and have ideas for productive negotiations. However, Kelman's cadres are meant to involve 'politically influential people' who are not official decision makers, yet who have 'easy access' (Burton 1987, 39) and some influence with such authorities, so that the new perceptions and attitudes of its participants can impact the overall process of achieving real peace. This requirement is admittedly difficult for children, who not only have limited access to community or state leaders, but also whose voices are accorded little attention or importance by all adults, especially leaders.

In the future, YPIs can empower children to compensate for their lack of direct political clout by facilitating the development of setting-specific action plans, based on the children's knowledge of their environment, their experiences and their fears. The YPI will equip the children with concrete advocacy skills – public speaking, working with the media, fundraising, lobbying, and organization – that further empower them with the confidence and the capacity to enact real change in their society. Children in North America have found inventive ways to impact their world, and with internet and other media, their influence can grow immeasurably. Through the power of working with the media, twelve year-old Craig Kielburger called attention to the plight of exploited child labourers in India by holding a press conference during the Canadian Prime Minister's trade mission there in 1995. Through the power of public speaking, twelve year-old Iqbal Masih spoke out across North America and Europe against child slavery in Pakistan. Through the power of fundraising, Ryan Hreljac has collected over \$500,000 for clean water projects in Africa since 1997 at age six.⁵⁷ Through the power of collective action, elementary and secondary school students across the United States and Canada have successfully lobbied to ban their schools' purchase of uniforms and sports equipment made in overseas sweatshops. There is potential for children in regions of protracted social conflict to impact their conflict directly through advocacy and leadership: they can explain the perspective and experiences of the other side and introduce their new friends to their home friends, to rehumanize the faceless enemy and break down conflict constructs. They can broaden awareness of injustice, inequality, and the other underlying sources of the conflict. They can model de-escalatory attitudes, language and behaviours that delegitimize violence. They can tell of and work toward the creation of a viable

⁵⁷ Ryan's Well Foundation web site. Available at www.ryanswell.ca

peace dividend for everyone. They can articulate the principles and potential ideas for an eventual win-win resolution and peaceful coexistence that were devised by their workshop group, and they can encourage the formulation of new ideas through the input and involvement of everyone on all sides.

Citizen-based conflict resolution is not without precedent. In the Philippines, civilians in rural villages and university students declared peace zones and peace corridors in a stand against government and rebel forces in the 1980s, and by 1990s, people's organizations from various sectors – peasants, urban workers, fisherfolk and civil society – joined to formulate an acceptable peace agenda outside the realms of official state politics. Meanwhile, community-based activities in Northern Ireland served to bridge sectarian divisions, and women's and children's groups united to promote cross-community projects and activities. YPIs are a significant step in this tradition of war's most affected victims speaking up for peace against leadership and factions who crave war, by seizing the 'opportunity to build personal relationships, dismantle defensive barriers and dispel negative images of one another' (Rupesinghe and Andolini 1998, 120). They are both a forum for building consensus and an inspiring beacon of peace that can restore hope to those who yearn for an alternative to imposed violence.

Finally, YPIs can be used to bring together children from various regions of the world whose violence and conflict is interconnected. Empowering children from the United States to India, China to Argentina, South Africa to Bosnia, to realize peace on their terms is the larger objective of the YPI movement. Yet, as with all progressive movements, it requires patience, perseverance, and work from the bottom up.

Of course, these strategies are hypothetical and subject to considerable constraints, especially the lack of credibility given to the voice of children in most of the

world's societies. As such, these ideas are for future work. In the meantime, the short-term impact of YPIs on children's attitudes and the potential for long-term impact through the reversal of the intergenerational cycle of conflict as elaborated in this essay are a clear foundation from which more research, theorizing, and practice must be forged. The difficulty of securing tangible, empirical proof of the effectiveness of YPIs in terms of fostering a more peaceful world must not discourage theorists and practitioners alike from recognizing the potential of such initiatives to have an impact on children's perceptions of war and peace, and their future attitudes and behaviours as adults in their respective societies. For an enduring resolution of today's nefarious armed conflicts to be achieved, we must look to innovative approaches and ways that have not necessarily been tried. Indeed, to solve humanity's bleakest and most dire ill, we must look to our most fundamental human strengths: our idealism, our hope, and our dreams. Where we are sure to find all those wondrous things is in our children.

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