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SECTION IV

PEACEBUILDING: APPROACHES TO SOCIAL JUSTICE

Introduction by Daniel J. Christie

Peace psychologists are not only developing theories and practices aimed at the prevention of *direct violence*, but are also working to mitigate *structural violence*, which means the reduction of hierarchical relations within and between societies. Hierarchical relations privilege those on the top while oppressing, exploiting, and dominating those on the bottom. Framed positively, we can conceptualize peacebuilding as movement toward social justice which occurs when *political structures* become more inclusive by giving voice to those who have been marginalized in decisions that affect their well-being, and *economic structures* become transformed so that those who have been exploited gain greater access to material resources that satisfy their basic needs.

Although the chapters in this section focus mainly on structural transformation, peacebuilding has both structural and cultural dimensions (Galtung, 1976; 1996). While structure refers to external, objective conditions of a social system, culture refers to

internal, subjective conditions of collectivities within a social system. When people share subjectivities that justify and legitimize inequitable power relations in political and economic structures, *cultural violence* is taking place (Galtung, 1996). For example, *Just World Thinking* is a belief shared by some people that rationalizes disparities in power and wealth by assuming the world is fair; therefore, people get what they deserve (Lerner, 1980). Cultural violence and hierarchical societal structures are mutually reinforcing and highly resistant to change.

In contrast to cultural violence, the subjectivities associated with peacebuilding are characterized by an awakening of critical consciousness (Freire, 1970) in which the powerless begin to critically analyze and break through dominant cultural discourses that support oppression. It is the awakening and enacting of a critical consciousness that is central to this section on peacebuilding.

WHY PEACEBUILDING MATTERS

Peacebuilding matters because those with few resources have severe restrictions in everyday choices about health, education, child care, and other matters that affect their well-being. Peacebuilding redresses these inequalities and promotes the realization of human potentials for all members of a society.

In addition, other peaceful approaches, such as peacekeeping and peacemaking, tend to be reactive and may fail to deal with power differentials. Emphasis on *peacekeeping* by threatening to remove or actually eliminate violent people from society, without attending to the structural roots of violence, can lead to acceptance of “law and order” societies

(Galtung, 1969) where individuals who commit criminal offenses are incarcerated and macro-level structural changes are ignored. *Peacemaking* is also limited in part because those who have power can insist on peaceful means of resolving disputes, while ignoring socially unjust ends.

PEACEBUILDING THEMES IN SECTION IV

Peacebuilding Challenges Dominant Cultural Discourses

Several chapters offer thought-provoking critiques of discourses that support structural violence. Webster and Perkins critically analyze the field of psychology when they argue that structural violence is inherent in any discipline that locates the source of a problem in the individual without due consideration of structural factors in a society. They point out that poverty is related to child maltreatment; however, by ignoring the relationship, it is possible to locate the source of the problem inside the abuser instead of dealing with both the abuser and the structures of a society that generate enormous differences in material well-being. Similarly, Dawes is critical of the ideology that underlies psychology, an ideology that is greatly influenced by the tenets of capitalism, emphasizing individual freedom and psychological constructs of self (e.g., self-actualization) over equality and collective well-being.

McKay and Mazurana's critique of dominant discourses extends to peace psychology, arguing that the field is patriarchal or male dominated, as exemplified by the largely invisible contributions of women to peacebuilding, which they explore in their research. Steger discusses how Gandhi's successful experiments in nonviolent structural change

challenges the dominant assumption in the field of international relations that “power” can only be derived from the capacity to do violence on others. For Gandhi, major social change was accomplished by nonviolent means.

Peacebuilding Honors Multiple Voices and the Co-construction of Social Change

Nearly all of the authors are sensitive to the possibility of peace psychologists unwittingly committing *ideological violence*, which can occur when mainstream Western psychological approaches are exported to cultures that operate with different cosmologies of peace and social justice. These indigenous understandings may be regarded as inferior to the scientific approach used in the West (see especially the chapters by Dawes and by Wessells, Schwebel, and Anderson).

Webster and Perkins cite the problem that arises when policymakers fail to honor local voices and co-opt the language of empowerment while having little or no impact on those who are unempowered. Dawes is emphatic about the value of a *relativistic perspective* which recognizes that the meaning of social justice can only be understood when situated in a particular cultural context. Not surprisingly, nearly all of the chapters emphasize the importance of peace practitioners listening to local people, becoming contextually sensitive, honoring different perspectives, and forming partnerships so that social change is co-constructed.

An Activist Agenda Is Essential to Knowledge Generation

All of the authors in the peacebuilding section endorse an activist agenda, which

nonviolently changes structures of violence to structures of peace. Moreover, the knowledge and skills used by practitioners for peacebuilding purposes are often learned through activism, what Gandhi referred to as “experiments in truth,” rather than through traditional academic training. As Mayton and Steger note in their chapters, Gandhi’s political theory of peacebuilding was developed inductively, through the accumulation of concrete encounters with oppression.

Montiel’s chapter on peacebuilding is also problem-driven and informed by her experiences as an activist psychologist during the “people power movement” in the Philippines, a large-scale peacebuilding movement in which the Filipino people transformed political structures and gained greater representation and voice. Wessells, Schwebel, and Anderson also address activism as one of several specific avenues through which psychologists can contribute to public policy. They note that peace psychologists have training in mobilizing people and changing attitudes. Dawes also favors an activist agenda, but his approach more directly addresses social transformation. Steeped in the struggle against apartheid, Dawes offers insight on psychological processes involved in moving people toward democratization.

Empowerment Is Central to the Peacebuilding Process

Webster and Perkins define *empowerment* as individual and group efforts to gain control over their destiny. They shed light on the dynamics of empowerment at various levels, beginning with the individual and moving to the level of a whole society. Similarly, McKay and Mazurana assert that women’s peacebuilding efforts at the grassroots level are empowering as women seek solutions to local problems. Dawes addresses

empowerment from the framework of a *liberation psychology* that is unabashedly political and aspires to work in partnership with those who are oppressed and exploited. The goal is empowerment and emancipation of the powerless.

Peacebuilding as the Sustainable Satisfaction of Basic Human Needs

The satisfaction of basic human needs for all people is central to many analyses of peacebuilding. Montiel views structural peacebuilding as the transformation of societal structures toward a configuration in which “all groups have more equitable control over politico-economic resources needed to satisfy basic needs.” Webster and Perkins view empowerment as a process through which people gain control over the environment and their ability to satisfy basic material needs through adequate housing, health care, education, and employment. McKay and Mazurana note that many grassroots women’s groups emphasize psychosocial and basic human needs, such as safety, food, and shelter. According to Steger, Gandhi’s perspective on peacebuilding was tantamount to the nonviolent pursuit of socially just ends where the ends referred to the sustainable satisfaction of human needs for all people.

Wessells, Schwebel, and Anderson note that sustainable societies meet “the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability to meet the needs of future generations”; in other words, intergenerational justice. At the same time, Wessells and colleagues caution that warfare also satisfies human needs. Reiterating William James’s treatise on war, they note that war meets a variety of needs, such as the need for heroism and excitement. It follows that one task for peace psychologists is to find ways to present constructive alternatives for satisfying war-related needs. Dawes is critical of any human

needs approach that aspires to a hierarchical construction. He points out that Western liberal values put a premium on political rights, but in some societies there are greater needs for good nutrition and other material need satisfiers.

Taken together, although the precise number, kind, and order of human needs vary across cultures, many of the authors view the sustainable satisfaction of human needs for all people as coterminous with social justice.

ORGANIZATION OF THE CHAPTERS

The lead chapter by Cristina Montiel, “Toward a Psychology of Structural Peacebuilding,” frames the concept of peacebuilding. Drawing on two historical cases from the Filipino context, Montiel illustrates the political and economic dimensions of peacebuilding. The chapter makes the powerful point that unlike the harmony that is sought in peacemaking processes, peacebuilding engenders enormous levels of tension and discomfort, often resulting in psychological distress, pain, and sometimes even death.

The second chapter by Andy Dawes takes us to South Africa where psychologists participated in dismantling apartheid, a system of legal racial discrimination that lasted until 1994 when democracy was achieved. Dawes offers a provocative and critical analysis of the hidden values built into mainstream Western scientific psychology with its focus on the autonomous individual. The chapter offers an alternative, liberation psychology, a form of peace psychology that seeks to use psychological knowledge to socially transform societies. Dawes discusses the emancipatory agenda of liberation psychology in the South African context as he recounts some of the struggles that

psychologists faced during the apartheid era.

After examining peacebuilding in the Filipino and South African contexts, we turn to Gandhi's pursuit of social justice in India under colonial rule in the middle of the twentieth century. Dan Mayton offers an introduction to the key concepts in Gandhi's political philosophy from a social psychological perspective. He notes that principles of truth, nonviolence, and personal suffering are central to Gandhi's goal of political self-determination for the Indian people. Mayton's introduction to Gandhian principles lays the groundwork for Manfred Steger's chapter, which pits Gandhi's political theory of nonviolence against a *realist philosophical framework* that equates power with the capacity to do violence. For anyone who clings to the view that nonviolence cannot be a powerful force for social change, the case studies that Steger presents should leave naysayers with greater humility. One case even takes on what some might regard as the ultimate test of nonviolent power, the successful application of nonviolent social change procedures in the context of Nazi Germany.

Ilse Hakvoort and Solveig Hägglund give voice to arguably the most marginalized group in the world, children. In their cross-cultural study, Dutch and Swedish children express their views on the nature of peace and strategies to attain peace. Hakvoort and Hägglund demonstrate the diversity of children's concepts of peace and relate them to the varying contexts within which children are socialized.

Linda Webster and Doug Perkins turn our attention to social injustices in the United States, emphasizing the effects of structural violence on children and families. These authors give a great deal of clarity to what can be a murky construct, "empowerment,"

and delineate how it operates at various levels of aggregation, from individual empowerment to the empowerment of whole societies.

Susan McKay and Diane Mazurana pick up on the theme of peacebuilding and argue for “gender-aware and women-empowering political, social, economic, and human rights.” Feminist ideology is asserted and the centrality of gender equity in the peacebuilding process is emphasized. Global in scope, the McKay and Mazurana chapter surveys the many and varied ways in which women contribute to the reduction of direct and structural violence. Consistent with feminist views, they offer a critical analysis of the narrow conception of peace, as the absence of war, and note that women’s peacebuilding efforts extend to the social justice arena. The authors define women’s peacebuilding broadly, as activities that contribute to a “culture of peace.”

The concept *cultures of peace* is central to the last chapter in the peacebuilding section by Mike Wessells, Milt Schwebel, and Anne Anderson. The chapter is highly integrative and proactive, setting out a long-term agenda and delineating elements of cultures of peace that psychologists can actively pursue in the interest of preventing direct violence and diminishing structural violence. They discuss multiple venues for psychologists who want to make a difference in the public arena. Readers should come away from this chapter with an appreciation for the depth and breadth of peace psychology as well as a greater awareness of meaningful ways of contributing to cultures of peace.