How Psychology Can Contribute to a Culture of Peace

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It is fitting that the new journal *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* should appear at this moment in history, which—I am convinced—offers us an unprecedented opportunity to break with the culture of war and pursue a new path toward a culture of peace.

Psychological factors are especially important in bringing about this new departure. The preamble of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO's) constitution states "that since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed." To respond more effectively to this challenge, I have recently established a new programme at UNESCO specifically aimed at promoting and strengthening a culture of peace.

The task of constructing a culture of peace may be compared to that of orchestrating a vast symphony encompassing the whole gamut of human expressions. Every person has a part to play, within the family, the workplace, the community, the nation, multinational entities, and the international community. The role of civil society is at least as important as that of the nation-state and that of nongovernmental organizations as vital as that of intergovernmental organizations.

Psychologists have the opportunity to take the lead in orchestrating many of the most important parts of this great symphony: through research; through teaching, both formally and through the mass media; and by participating in actions for social change without which the culture of peace would remain only words. A priority of UNESCO's new Culture of Peace Programme will, therefore, be to engage psychologists in its development.

What is the most effective way to establish this relationship? To answer this question, I begin with a concrete and successful case that illustrates how such a relationship can bear fruit.

Recently, the International Union of Psychological Science (IUPS) wrote to UNESCO suggesting that more analysis be undertaken of factors that make for harmonious coexistence rather than of the determinants of disharmony and conflict—which has tended to be the focus in the past. They cited the work of Muzafer and Carolyn Sherif and their colleagues (M. Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & C. W. Sherif, 1961/1988) and indicated that the Sherifs' lead in this direction has not been adequately pursued.

Many of you, being psychologists, already know of the Sherif's work, because it is often quoted in the textbooks. But for me it is something new. Thus, it was with a sense of adventure that I took the opportunity to read their key study, the Robbers Cave experiment of 1954. As you know, the experiment is named after a state park in Oklahoma where 22 boys, divided into two groups, went to summer camp for 3 weeks. But the story could have been set anywhere in the world because it deals with how boys are socialized to develop the competitiveness of young warriors.

What struck me as most important was the conclusion of the experiment, as it attempted to disarm the culture of war developed by these young men and put in its place what we may call a culture of peace.

With my scientific background (having, before coming to UNESCO, run a laboratory investigating metabolic disorders in the brains of children), I was interested to see how such a problem could be addressed with the use of scientific method. I was impressed to learn how the boys were kept unaware of the nature of the experiment, and all of the staff members were part of the scientific team that established the experimental conditions and carefully observed and recorded the resulting events and changing attitudes of the boys.

The story unfolded for me like a good novel or film. I read how the boys formed two separate in-groups, unaware of each other, and established a typical summer camp, exploring the surrounding hills, forests, and streams; pitching tents; playing baseball; and facing the challenges of the outdoors. They spontaneously developed a leadership structure, sets of values, and group identity. When one group encountered a poisonous rattlesnake, they took its name and called themselves the Rattlers.

When the two groups were brought together by the staff, they were encouraged to take part in competitions that we can look at as a metaphor for the culture of war. It began with typical sports such as baseball and tug-of-war rope-pulling. But in the course of a week, their competition developed spontaneously into episodes of name-calling, flag-burning, a raid on the opponents' cabin, and the development of fistfights. The staff were forced to intervene when one group began storing rocks to be used for stoning their new enemies.

If the experiment had stopped here, one would have had the basic story popularized by William Golding in his book, *Lord of the Flies* (1959), which was subsequently made into a movie. But the experiment had more to accomplish: It was designed to study reconciliation as well. A series of

urgent problems were devised that the boys could only solve by working together.

As I followed the boys' attempts to solve these problems, I wondered if they did not offer pointers for addressing today's urgent global issues of interdependent living: a breakdown of the water supply for the camp, which required the tracing of water pipes several kilometers long, then finding and repairing the source of the problem; the need for money to pay for an entertaining film; and a breakdown of the food truck, which required that the truck be pulled with a rope to get it started. It seems significant that when the two groups combined forces to pull the truck, they used the same rope that they had used earlier for competition in the tug-of-war.

This concerted response to adversity proved the key to the success of the experiment. Gradually the two groups of boys began to cooperate as well in matters that were less urgent: food preparation and tent-pitching on a joint camping trip, and, once again, they pulled the truck when it became stalled. By the time 3 weeks had passed and the camp experience was over, the two groups of boys had become reconciled through their collaborative efforts, and they asked to go back to the city together on the same bus. In a final gesture of solidarity, the members of the Rattlers group decided to spend the money they had won in the competitive games to buy food for the other group as well as their own.

Of course, by reading the study like a good story, I skipped over much of its scientific context; its multidisciplinary, theoretical framework; several preliminary studies; and detailed observations and studies of attitude change among the participants. But its lesson for us is clear: Reconciliation should not be considered an isolated process, but must be linked to common endeavours.

The Sherif study brings to mind an issue of central concern for us: the linkage of the culture of peace to the process of development. For peace without endogenous, equitable, sustainable development cannot be a permanent, viable peace. At the same time, development cannot be sustained without peace. Development can be seen as a superordinate goal in the sense of the Sherif experiment.

Convinced of the importance of the implications of the Sherif study, I am struck by the conclusion quoted earlier from the IUPS that, since its publication in the 1950s, the initiative has not been adequately pursued by social scientists. After all, the Sherif study raises as many questions as it proposes solutions. As implied by the IUPS, we need to address these questions in a systematic and practical way.

Are there other methods available to us to promote reconciliation, and when are they appropriate? For example, I noted with interest that the Sherifs considered and rejected several other means of achieving reconciliation between the two groups of boys: (a) the development of a common enemy, (b) the breakdown of the group structure and an approach to reconciliation on the basis of individual contacts, and (c) the promotion of reconciliation between the leaders of the groups. Equivalents to these alternative

means may be found in recent efforts to construct peace at a national and international level.

What are the preconditions that are necessary for the success of various methods of reconciliation and peacemaking? What resources must be made available? How much and what kind of third-party mediation is needed, and what kind of training is best for these mediators, who could be called *peace promoters?* To what extent should the methods of reconciliation and peace-making be derived from local traditions and cultures, and to what extent is it possible to apply universal principles?

With these questions in mind, we may return to the practical issue with which we began: What is the most effective way to establish a relationship between psychologists and UNESCO'S Culture of Peace Programme? The answer, I believe, is to structure it around specific questions, such as those raised by the Sherif study, which have practical implications for the work of the Culture of Peace Programme. The Programme has a number of functions, of which the following would benefit especially from the work of psychology:

1. Developing national programmes of a culture of peace.
2. Providing an integrated approach to the ongoing activities of the various units and field offices of UNESCO that contribute to a culture of peace.
3. Establishing an information and networking system with other organizations and individuals working in this field.

Building on the approach of the Sherifs, UNESCO's Culture of Peace Programme has proposed a process of *cross-conflict participation* in human development, in which people from all parties in national conflicts are encouraged and supported to undertake human development as a common task and to participate as equals in the planning and implementation of specific development projects. In the first national programme of this type, in El Salvador, a series of human development projects have been designed through consultations involving both governmental and nongovernmental institutions. These institutions represent both sides of the conflict that had torn apart the society in years preceding the Chapultepec Peace Accords of 1992.

A second such programme has been initiated in Mozambique, and others are under consideration. Both the El Salvador and Mozambique programmes are associated with the United Nations (UN) follow-up to national peace accords that brought bitter civil wars to an end. They are examples of post-conflict peace-building, as described by UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in *An Agenda for Peace* (1992). These national programmes are carried out in a decentralized way by UNESCO staff working in cooperation with national and international governmental and nongovernmental organizations in the country concerned. They share the common feature of

promoting the cooperative planning of joint projects among all parties concerned, including both government and opposition groups.

Ways should be explored to involve psychologists in both the theoretical and practical details of these national programmes, following the approach described previously from the Sherif et al. (1961/1988) study.

Regarding other UNESCO activities integrated with the culture of peace, I highlight three areas: education, research, and communication. From its inception, UNESCO has played a leading role in the UN system in education for peace and international understanding, including the landmark declaration on this topic in 1974. We need help in researching many questions here. For example, How can the methods of education in themselves help empower students in the processes of democracy, development, and peace? How should teachers be trained and curricula constructed to promote peace? How can the best use be made of computers and other up-to-date technology?

In recent years, UNESCO has been asked to provide emergency educational assistance to countries whose educational systems have been devastated by war or natural disasters. Often there is a need for educational materials to promote tolerance and intercultural understanding in order to prevent a return to interethnic violence. How should these materials be developed? What is the best balance between local traditional form and content, on the one hand, and universal principles and modern technological means of communication, on the other? Obviously psychology has much to contribute to the working out of these problems.

Similar questions need to be asked about systems of mass communication, including the role of newspapers, radio, television, video games, and computer communication systems. How can the portrayal of peace be made as challenging and exciting as that of violence? These and other related questions were raised recently in New Delhi, India, at an international roundtable organized by UNESCO's Sector of Communication in collaboration with the Indian Government and the International Programme for the Development of Communication.

In basic research, the Culture of Peace Programme is linked with two UNESCO programmes in the social sciences: the Division of Human Rights and Peace and the new programme entitled Management of Social Transformations (MOST). Both are concerned with researching the basic causes of conflict and violence. In particular, the MOST Programme is concentrating, for one of its three main topics, on multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity. Here, too, is an important area of potential cooperation.

In all of this we need a much deeper understanding of the processes of consciousness development. What is the role of heroes and role models, and what are other sources of basic values? What is the role of vision? of anger? of learning through action? How can people learn to work together most effectively in teams, in organizations, in mass movements? How can leadership be learned and promoted?

All of these questions are best addressed by psychologists who themselves are actively engaged in the processes of social change associated with the transition from a culture of war to a culture of peace. Following the adage of "think globally, act locally," we need to provide ways in which the local activities in which psychologists, among others, are engaged can be linked to a global peace process at the level of the UN system.

The third function of the Culture of Peace Programme, to establish an information and networking system for the culture of peace, should provide a mechanism for strengthening our involvement with you and others who can contribute to the many themes of the Culture of Peace Programme.

I encourage you to take initiatives in the application of psychology to peace. I am convinced that the process of constructing a peace culture must come more from the bottom up, rather than from the top down. There are relatively few people working directly on these questions at the level of the UN, whereas you as psychologists are far more numerous and often more directly connected to local levels where a culture of peace must take root if it is to be truly effective.

As an example of one such initiative that originated from the bottom up, I close by recalling the history of The Seville Statement on Violence (1989). It originated in an initiative by a small group of scientists, including psychologists, associated with the International Society for Research on Aggression. They approached the Spanish National Commission of UNESCO to help sponsor the drafting meeting for the Statement that took place in Seville in 1986. I was privileged to be invited to take part in that process in my capacity at that time as a laboratory scientist in Spain. It was only later, in 1989, that the Statement was taken up at the International Congress on Peace in the Minds of Men, held in Yamoussokro, Côte d'Ivoire, and incorporated into the peace education materials of UNESCO.

The Seville Statement on Violence rejected claims that war and organized violence are biologically determined. Hence, it may be said that it prepared the ground for the construction of a culture of peace.

It was the International Congress on Peace in the Minds of Men (1989) that called on the world to "help construct a new vision of peace by developing a peace culture based on the universal values of respect for life, liberty, justice, solidarity, tolerance, human rights and equality between women and men" (p. 51), which became the foundation for the Culture of Peace Programme.

In The Seville Statement on Violence (1989), we began by addressing the question of responsibility: "Believing that it is our responsibility to address from our particular disciplines the most dangerous and destructive activities of our species, violence and war" (p. 16). After asserting, on the basis of careful consideration of the evidence, that "biology does not condemn humanity to war" and that "the same species who invented war is capable of inventing peace," we returned to the initial theme: "The responsibility lies with each of us" (p. 30).

Drawing on the authority of their research, psychologists have a special responsibility to be teachers, both of students and of the general public in relation both to the technical aspects of their work and also to the values of peace. No one can remain neutral in the great process of moving from a culture of war to a culture of peace. No one should remain silent in the vast debate over the values and the means involved, and those who have the deepest understanding of the issues concerned have an even greater responsibility to speak out.

I would, therefore, hope that the readers of *Peace and Conflict* would take this article as a personal challenge to engage with UNESCO and other international agencies in a dialogue on this question of paramount importance.

In conclusion, let me quote Sigmund Freud (1933), who wrote to Albert Einstein in the course of a famous exchange of correspondence:

> These two factors—man's cultural disposition and a well-founded fear of the form that future wars will take—may serve to put an end to war. ... But by what ways or byways this will come about, we cannot guess. (pp. 56–57)

Freud's words point up the great task that challenges us as we enter the 21st century—exploring and pursuing the ways and byways by which we may help to put an end to war.

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