

International Association for Conflict Management (IACM) Presentations

- Several doctoral students and research assistants traveled with the **ICCCR's Director, Dr. Peter Coleman**, to Stellenbosch, South Africa for **the 25th Annual IACM Conference**. Take this opportunity to read about each of the nine presentations they gave, including abstracts, and some photos from their trip!

1. Pride, Conflict and Complexity: Applying Dynamical Systems Theory to Understand Local Violence in South Sudan

Josefine Roos & Stephen Gray

Abstract:

South Sudan has experienced deadly conflict for much of the last five decades. While most attention has focused on the civil war, inter-related conflicts persist on multiple layers of society. Paradoxically, the termination of the war activated “local conflicts”, which have killed thousands since peace was brokered. This paper presents an assessment of a “typical local conflict” between two Dinka clans, based on field research in Jonglei State using Dynamical Systems Theory. The analysis revealed that typical explanations for local violence are superficial in this context. Rather, the desire to maximize group pride (coupled with insecurity) provided the underlying motivation for clans’ feud. The conflict resisted transformation because traditional, “pridesensitive” conflict mechanisms had become ineffective, while most interventions by state institutions had exacerbated the conflict. These findings illustrate how systemic thinking can reveal hidden conflict drivers, reveal the danger of external intervention, and illuminate new transformation opportunities.

2. The Dialectics of Culture and Conflict: A Dynamical Reconceptualization and Measure of Individualism and Collectivism

Regina Kim & Peter Coleman

Abstract:

This research examines the relationship between individualism-collectivism (INDCOL), conflict management styles and satisfaction. By taking a dynamical systems approach in conceptualizing IND-COL and measuring them as orthogonal constructs, rather than a bipolar, unidimensional construct, we employ a new method to study temporal data, which would allow us to investigate how different ratios of individualistic-to-collectivistic orientations are associated with different conflict management styles. This study focuses on the re-conceptualization of IND-COL as dynamical features of culture and their effects on conflict management styles and satisfaction at work.

3. Playing the Odds: Leadership and Organizational Frameworks for Assessing Probabilities for Intractable Conflict at Work

Peter Coleman, Lily Ng & Nicholas Redding

Abstract:

Approximately five percent of more difficult conflicts enter into escalating spirals that become increasingly intractable. Scholarship has identified a variety of individual-level and organizational-level variables associated with constructive vs. destructive attractors of organization conflict. At the individual-leader level, cooperative-competitive orientation, levels of integrative, behavioral, and emotional complexity, tolerance for ambiguity, and temporal scope or consideration for future consequences have all been associated with more constructive vs. destructive patterns of disputing. At the organizational level, external environment type of organization, crosscutting structures, cultural complexity, task-reward interdependence structures, social structures, and decision-making structures have also been identified. However, there is currently no unifying framework for assessing how various individual competencies and organizational structures work in concert to affect the probabilities for constructive vs. destructive conflict dynamics. The proposed project will lay out an approach for assessing conflict competencies and structures at both of these levels.

4. Conflict, Culture, and Complexity: The Effects of Simple versus Complex Rules in Negotiation

Christine Chung, Peter Coleman & Michelle Gelfand

Abstract:

The purpose of this research was to study how cultural rules of engagement affect conflict processes and outcomes through the framework provided by dynamical systems theory. By theoretically exploring the structures of rules and empirically examining their relationships with both subjective and objective responses, positive correlations were found between complexity and constructiveness of conflict systems.

5. A Project on the Dynamics of (In)justice, Conflict, Stability and Reform

Peter Coleman & Kyong Mazzaro

Abstract:

We are interested in examining the basic properties of constructive vs. destructive dynamics of injustice, conflict and reform in cases of asymmetrical bargaining by identifying stages and processes of change and developing a minimalist model of these dynamics for research, practice and policymaking. Building on the theoretical and empirical work on dynamical systems and process-of-change perspectives, we propose a study using a grounded theory approach to interviews with expert scholar-practitioners who have direct experience with the phenomenon. Our main objectives are to identify the implicit and explicit stages of change in low and high-power groups involved in cases of asymmetrical bargaining related to social justice and peaceful transformation, and to categorize processes of change that foster movement between stages of change and encourage shifts in power relations between low and high-power groups. Theory, methods and results of the study will be presented at IACM.

6. Motivations for Reconciliation: Regulatory Mode, Individual Differences, and Evolutionary Considerations

Christine Webb

Abstract:

Conflict is an integral component of human and other group-living animals' social nature. But conflicts are often managed through a process called *reconciliation*, whereby friendly relations between opponents are restored. In humans, conflict resolution research has focused primarily on forgiveness and less on this broader and more basic dynamic of when two individuals are actually *motivated* to come together in the first place. Further, research in all species has failed to emphasize *individual differences* as a potential source of variation in conciliatory tendencies, perhaps because reconciliation is inherently an inter- as opposed to intra-individual phenomenon. The overall goal of this paper is to expand what we know about reconciliation by examining individual differences in basic human motivations to reconcile. Regulatory Mode Theory (RMT) provides a promising approach to this goal by exploring the relation between motivation, individual differences, and reconciliation, not just in humans but in other species as well.

7. Mapping Peace: Rule Development Experimentation and Ethos of Peace and Conflict in Israel/Palestine

Peter Coleman, Taly Harel-Marian, Howard Moskowitz & Naira Musallam

Abstract:

In this study we wish to identify unique clusters of motives for peace and conflict in both Israeli Jewish and Palestinian communities in the Middle East. We hope to understand what induces individuals' investments in conflict and peace, what detracts from their interest, and what factors have no impact on their interest. We hypothesize that various components will each have different levels of impact on individuals' views of the conflict and peace. We are interested to compare the two types of ethos (conflict and peace) as different constructs. We wish to know if and how societies may hold both kinds of ethos simultaneously and whether these two types of ethos interact with each other. We use a unique online research tool known as RDE which allows for participants' segmentation into groups. It is intended to identify naturally occurring segments of the population that show similar patterns of interest and motivation.

8. The Essence of Peace? Toward a Comprehensive and Parsimonious Model of Sustainable Peace

Peter Coleman

Abstract:

Decades of research has taught us a great deal about conflict, war and resolution. However, in contrast, relatively little research has focused directly on sustainable peace. There is often a basic assumption that a thorough understanding of destructive conflict will, by default, provide insight into conditions and processes which foster and sustain peace. This assumption, however, has been found by researchers to be erroneous. Although the lessening of destructive conflict is a necessary condition for peace, there is no reason to believe it is sufficient. In fact, psychological research on positive and negative evaluative processes and attributions have shown that, at times, positive processes (like peace) and more negative processes (like conflict) function independently, and may involve very different parameters, temporal scales, weighting, and dynamics. This paper presents an approach to the study of sustainable peace that is holistic yet ultimately parsimonious.

9. Practical Theory for Practitioners in the Field; CMM and DST Interface

Beth Fisher-Yoshida

Abstract:

Practitioners work with people in the field and need to address many dynamics happening simultaneously. This differs from research within the confines of a controlled environment. Research confirms theory, theory generates knowledge and all of this can inform practice. There has been a dualistic framing and approach to theory and practice and this paper explores the concept of “practical theory” as a way of bringing theory to the field. Practice needs to be eclectic and practitioners may use more than one theory when facing complex issues and dynamics. Two practical theories that have been developed and have received increased attention over the years are dynamical systems theory (DST) and coordinated management of meaning (CMM). This paper explores the interface between the two theories and how their practical applications complement and support each other providing a robust resource for practitioners working in the field addressing complex conflict and sustainable peace issues.









