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Introduction

Societies worldwide, and the communities within them, are caught in a constant interplay between the needs for continuity, on the one hand, and change, with the stimulation and growth that accompany it, on the other. The public interface between these competing needs often manifests itself as the boundary between protest crowds and police. Some protester movements are resisting change, which they perceive to be harmful, and others are pushing for change to address what they perceive to be injustices embedded within the current situation. Police use a range of tactics—from repressive use of force to negotiation and many in between. Their relationship to their political masters ranges from being fully directed by political leaders to relative independence. In any case, police are active within communities in a way that brings them in direct contact with protest crowds. The protest crowd–police relational system is the primary focus of this book. The book examines the interface between crowds and police from the neutral perspective of community-based conflict resolution.

People nest their identities within a variety of groups based on kinship, ethnicity, values, religion, and calling—all of which are manifest at the community level. Community itself has taken on a complex set of meanings in the information age—ranging from geographical communities to communities of interest—that can bring together people with common values who may be spread around the world but linked through the internet. These diverse aspects of community are significant when dealing with protest crowds. Regardless of the type of community, protester engagement with issues often implicates their identities. This means that the values that motivate them are backed by a combination of rational argument, moral principles and emotional vitality.

Given the emotional engagement with the issues and the propensity of many of the players to resort to violence, the relationship between crowds and police includes features of deep-rooted or identity-based conflict. During our work, we have discovered that exposing the underlying conflict in an honest and open dialogue has the potential to transform the relationships and create space for more effective and safe, non-violent protest for all. In Part One of *Beyond Control* we present theoretical research on both protest

and policing interspersed with state of the art theories of identity-based conflict. Part Two tells the story of our Ottawa experiences which we present as a case study.

So, what happened? In the summer of 2000, we were given the challenge of addressing the issue of violence between protest crowds and police. Our community and others like it were facing escalating violence during international meetings and the accompanying demonstrations. What we observed was a conflict of cultures and a dearth of meaningful dialogue. Strategies for 'success' abounded on both police and protester sides and there were plenty of negotiations but no real dialogue. The anger and underlying needs of those in 'violent' conflict at the coal face of the demonstrations went largely unrecognized. The more the violence escalated, and escalate it did, the more angry everyone became until eventually the demonstrations became more about the violence during the protests than the issues the crowds were protesting. Demonstrators went out of their way to challenge the authority of the police and police erected barriers and deployed tactical troops in riot gear with Tasers, water cannon and other 'less than lethal weapons' to keep the demonstrators under control. Chaos reigned.

As experienced process leaders and professionals in community-based conflict resolution, we had developed the discipline of treating people equally and coming across as neutral about the issues. We were practitioners with little experience in either the protest or policing communities and we brought fresh perspectives to the challenges. We could provide a safe space for meaningful dialogue and had developed a methodology whereby the deep-rooted anger could be expressed with minimal hurt to either side.

Neutrality is never easy. Those who were intent on putting us in one corner or the other certainly found reasons to do that. In fact, we were accused of being on both sides of the issues as is usually the case when strong emotions and little trust are involved. The emotions and lack of trust were so strong in the beginning that it was difficult to convince enough representatives from divergent sides of the conflict to be in the same room together. By the end of our project, we were unable to meet the demand for participation in our processes.

Our work in the field and the subsequent research uses an interdisciplinary methodology of deep-rooted conflict, reconciliation and community-based conflict resolution that is applied to the protester-police relational

system. As such, it is not meant to provide a strategy for either side to win at the expense of the other. Rather we wish to look at the phenomenon as a conflict, a conflict that can take on a structure of violence or a conflict that can take on a structure that enhances creativity, justice and mutual empowerment.

Both public order policing and protest have developed over time; hence in our research we found it necessary to trace their histories, paying particular attention to paradigmatic changes and how each has understood their role and has been understood by others. An insight emerged from this historical reflection that both protesters and police are necessary for a well-functioning democracy. If both are necessary and both need to be effective to avoid the worst alternatives—violent anarchy or violent tyranny—the question arises, ‘What is to be the nature of the relationship between them?’ Relationships can never be prescribed; however, paradigms of what relationships could be can guide the imaginations, actions, and principles that help mould the patterns of how groups relate to one another. This book explores paradigms past and proposes future possibilities.

From our knowledge of several widely respected conflict theories, we knew that emotional reactions that fuel conflict and violence happen when needs are threatened. We also knew that violence on one side is returned by violence ‘with interest’ from the other and this results in an ever increasing spiral of violence. Our interest and our focus in meeting the challenge of how to imagine a protester–police relationship that allows both to fill their role with integrity was to find a methodology for exposing the underlying needs of participants on all sides of demonstrations regardless of roles. Additionally, we were interested in facilitating a process so that the divergent communities developed the requisite expertise to provide a platform for protesters to express the intense emotions associated with the important issues they wanted to address without resort to violence.

In describing our approach in Ottawa we believe we have produced a model whereby communities worldwide can adapt their own process for facilitating non-violent protest. It is a methodology for creating meaningful dialogue in confrontational situations where there are strong emotions and little trust. We recognize and acknowledge that there are members of the protest community who believe that destructive violence is the only way to get their message across. This book is not for them—or then again, maybe it is.

The insights that resulted from our intervention pointed to the need for more research and theoretical development. In turn, delving into public order policing and protest crowd literature helped us to see what we did in the early years of the new millennium in a fresh light. Hence, the theoretical research is presented first in Part One and is grounded for the reader with examples from our experiences as well as the documented cases of others.

In Part I we introduce the key players in the drama of the protest crowd—police encounter. The dominant parties are protesters and police to be sure but the picture is not complete without introducing bystanders, media and the targets of protest—with each of these the plot thickens as conflicts become more complex. The conflict theories we use to make sense of conflict are applicable to all players in the various relational systems. We have chosen to alternate the introduction of the parties with the presentation of theoretical perspectives that help us understand emotions, scapegoating, power structures, and reciprocal violence. These conflict theories feed into a description of the mutual respect approach that concludes Part One and which we advocate as a vision for productive relationships between police and protesters.

The story of the challenge and how we responded is told in Part Two. The initial action took the form of training as an intervention and eventually participatory action research. The subject of the training was deep-rooted conflict, a concept that the participants applied to the context of protests. We collected data during seminars and this data informed our research. We interpreted our data through the lens of the conflict theories with which we are intimately familiar and have been presented in Part One. Thus the book is positioned right at the nexus of theory and practice. As such, it could be read in two ways—beginning with either Part One or Part Two.

Part Two begins by telling the story of our project, a series of process seminars that brought together representatives of the various stakeholder groups. We present our story as a case study that illustrates a model for the methodology we recommend. We examine the links between lessons learned through these events and subsequent development of ideas and understandings. Part Two goes on to give voice to representatives of the different groups as they share from their own perspective what is significant in the protester crowd—police dynamic. Finally, it suggests what can be done at the community level to build constructive relationships between police and protesters, drawing on the early portions of the intervention model.

The combination in one manuscript of comprehensive overviews of both protest and public order policing academic literature along with our practical application of interdisciplinary conflict theories is unique in the field.

Our Context: Rooted in Canada with a Global Perspective

We live and work in Canada, a country with a unique place in the global community. We are geographically adjacent to the United States, the most powerful nation in the world, with whom we share many cultural affinities and apart from whom we take pains to distinguish ourselves. We emerged out of the British Empire yet retain a viable French legacy making us a vital player in *la Francophonie*. We have an indigenous population that has preserved a complex mix of tradition, creativity, and cultural development, on the one hand, and struggled to overcome a legacy of forced assimilation and loss of land, on the other. As much as any other country we have welcomed immigrants from the global community and encouraged them to keep their customs and languages. Within our corporate psychological make-up, we bear the marks of both power and vulnerability, of victor and victimized. All these factors have shaped both what we protest about and how our police have evolved.

Though we cannot escape the specific context out of which we view the world, we hope that the present work will be useful in many societies. We have tremendous respect for the complexity of different cultures. Each culture looks at acts of protest differently. However, the world has shrunk and mimetic contagion does not respect the fine points of culture: protest and police practices are replicated globally. Moreover, the conflict theories that form the foundation of our work have been demonstrated to be useful to people from countries around the world.

Nothing can take the place of dignifying all individuals with the intrinsic value that accrues to them by being part of the human family. Nor is there a substitute for respect for the stories, imaginations and personal space of people. There is a blow to our collective well-being when people are designated as anything less than fully human. Stereotypes and disparaging language are the first tools of human atrocity. The bottom line message for protesters and police is that there has to be mutual dignity and respect. Within this context, we present an ethical vision of blessing that means that if relationships were framed such that parties would truly contribute to one another's well-being the world could become a better place. Dignity, respect, mutual blessing—the rest is truly commentary.

For some people, 'blessing' is a problematic word since it is associated with religious institutions and may not resonate positively with people. This is understandable; hence we will provide some background on the etymology of the word and how it is technically defined in this book. The English word 'blessing' translates Hebrew and Arabic words *berikah* and *barakat* respectively. These Semitic words connote the orientation, attitude and actions meant to enhance mutual well-being. We will use it to designate *the mutual concern for, and actions that reciprocally enhance the well-being of those within a relationship*. We find no other word works as well for the concept we wish to describe.²

We make reference throughout the manuscript to concepts of complexity and levels of consciousness. Both of these theories have been developed in interdisciplinary ways and we are just beginning to see how relevant they are to the issues talked about in this book. Complexity and chaos theory links us to broad systems theory that emphasizes our interconnectedness (Sword, 2003). The connections among us are so complex that we cannot think in linear cause and effect terms. Any action can set in motion a myriad of consequent actions and events. As soon as we do anything, the effects are out of our control. At certain times, there is a convergence of events such that one small action can have a huge impact. Richard McGuigan has shown us that those with a well developed level of consciousness are able to handle complex conflicts creatively (2003). We have great hope that these theories will bring clearer insights into the relationships associated with protest crowds, thus raising the level of consciousness and hence a capacity to prevent a spiral of destructive violence.

More than anything, it is our hope that the pages that follow will inspire the parties involved, in any country and any culture to get together for honest dialogue. There is nothing that takes the place of a free, open and honest flow of meaning. From the First Peoples of Canada we learn the importance of coming to dialogue with a good mind. They use the smoke of smoldering sweet grass, cedar, tobacco or sage to wash their minds so they think good thoughts, their ears so they hear good things, their mouths so they say what

2 For a complete discussion of the issues involved in using 'blessing' in this context see Vern Neufeld Redekop, 'Teachings of Blessing as Elements of Reconciliation: Intra- and Inter-Religious Hermeneutical Challenges and Opportunities in the Face of Violent Deep-Rooted Conflict,' in Mathieu E. Courville (ed.), *The Next Step in Studying Religion: A Graduate's Guide* (London: Continuum, 2007, 129–146).

will be constructive, their eyes that they will see what is important ... and so on. The emergent willingness to engage in dialogue with an open spirit is the beginning of creative understanding and mutually beneficial exchange. We know that this is not easy; distrust abounds along with memories of past hurts. The threat of an angry crowd and the bruises of batons leave emotional memories. By presenting brief histories of protest, crowds and policing and our analyses of theories that help understand their dynamics we hope to provide a framework and vocabulary that will enhance mutual respect.

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