

## Evaluating the Contributions of Interactive Problem Solving to the Resolution of Ethnonational Conflicts

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Interactive problem solving is a form of unofficial diplomacy, centering on problem-solving workshops and related activities with political elites in conflicting societies. Its dual purpose is producing *changes* in individual participants that are *transferred* to the policy process. The most relevant criterion for evaluating the effectiveness of interactive problem solving is its contribution to changes in the political cultures of the parties that would make them more receptive to negotiation. The article describes the difficulties in evaluating such changes in political culture, because of the inapplicability of the standard experimental model of evaluation and the ethical and methodological obstacles to the use of procedures that may interfere with the practice of conflict resolution. It then presents two models of evaluation research, based on gradual accumulation of evidence in support of the assumptions of interactive problem solving: the “links-in-the-chain” model, testing by appropriate means each of the steps in the logic of the approach; and the experimental model, using a variety of settings for empirical tests of the assumptions of the approach.

The approach to evaluation described in this article refers specifically to the model of track-two diplomacy that my colleagues and I have developed over the years and applied most intensively—though not exclusively—to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The model, which I have come to call *interactive problem solving* (Kelman, 1979, 1996, 1998a, 2002), derives from the pioneering work of John Burton (1969, 1979, 1984; see also Kelman, 1972) and is anchored in social-psychological prin-

ciples (see Kelman 1997a). Interactive problem solving is very much in the spirit of Morton Deutsch's distinctly social-psychological analysis of conflict and his emphasis on creative thinking, cooperative problem solving, and the joint process of discovery and invention of mutually satisfactory solutions as defining features of the constructive resolution of seemingly intractable conflicts (see, *inter alia*, Deutsch, 1973, especially Chapter 13).

The paper argues that the standard model of program evaluation, which seeks to examine the effects of an intervention on various relevant outcome measures, is neither appropriate nor feasible for the evaluation of interactive problem solving. Instead, it proposes two approaches to evaluation—the “links-in-the-chain” model and the experimental model—both of which call for the gradual accumulation of evidence in support of the underlying assumptions of the intervention. These approaches to evaluating interactive problem solving must start from a consideration of the goals and of the logic of our efforts. In other words, we must ask: First, what is it that we are trying to accomplish in this work? And, second, what is our theory of practice? The answer to the first question provides the criteria for evaluating the work, and the answer to the second question directs us to the points in the process at which the effects of the work can be observed.

## INTERACTIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

Interactive problem solving is an academically based, unofficial, third-party approach to conflict resolution. It brings together politically involved and influential members of conflicting parties for direct communication, facilitated by a panel of social scientists with expertise in group process, international conflict, and the particular region in which the conflict takes place.

The ultimate goal of interactive problem solving is to promote change in individuals—through face-to-face interaction in small groups (Kelman, 1997b)—as a vehicle for change in national policies and in the larger conflict system. The core of the work is a particular microprocess, best exemplified by problem-solving workshops, that is intended to contribute to the macroprocess of conflict resolution.

### Relationship to Negotiations

Problem-solving workshops and related activities are not negotiating sessions. Negotiations can be carried out only by officials authorized to conclude binding agreements, and workshops—by definition—are completely nonbinding. Their nonbinding character, in fact, represents their special strength and is the source of their unique contribution to the larger process. They provide an opportunity for sharing perspectives, exploring options, and joint thinking. Such exploratory inter-

action is essential to negotiation at all of its stages, but it is usually difficult to arrange in an official context, especially around the negotiating table.

Even though workshops must be clearly distinguished from official negotiations, they can be viewed as an integral part of the larger negotiating process, relevant at all stages of that process. At the pre-negotiation stage, they can help the parties move toward the negotiating table by contributing to the creation of a political environment conducive to negotiation. At the negotiation stage itself they can perform useful para-negotiation functions, by helping to overcome obstacles to the negotiations, to create momentum and revive the sense of possibility, and to identify options and reframe issues so that they can be negotiated more effectively once they get to the table. Finally, at the post-negotiation stage, workshops can contribute to resolving problems in the implementation of negotiated agreements, as well as to the process of peacebuilding and reconciliation in the aftermath of an agreement and to the transformation of the relationship between the former enemies.

Our Israeli-Palestinian work (Kelman 1998b, 2005) has sought to contribute to all three of these stages of the negotiating process over the course of the years. All of our workshops in the 1970s and 1980s took place, of course, in the pre-negotiation stage and were designed to explore the possibilities for movement toward the negotiating table. The participants were members (or soon-to-be-members) of the political elite: political actors, such as parliamentarians and leaders or activists of political parties or political movements; political influentials, such as journalists, editors, directors of think tanks, politically involved academicians, and former diplomats or military officers; and pre-influentials, such as advanced graduate students who seemed headed for politically important careers (and some of whom did indeed become political influentials as their careers progressed). Moreover, all of the workshops during this period were "one-time," self-contained events. Some of the Israelis and Palestinians, as individuals, participated in more than one such workshop, and the one-time workshops that we held over the years had a cumulative effect within the two societies and helped to inject new ideas into the two political cultures. But, until 1990, we made no attempt to reconvene the same *group* of participants for another occasion.

In 1990, for the first time in our work, Nadim Rouhana and I organized a continuing workshop: a group of highly influential Israelis and Palestinians—six on each side—who agreed to participate in a series of three meetings over the course of a year, and in the end continued to meet (with some changes in personnel) until August 1993 (Rouhana & Kelman, 1994). As it happened, with the onset of official negotiations in 1991, first in Madrid and then in Washington, this continuing workshop also provided our first experience with interactive problem solving as a para-negotiation process. The political relevance of this work was enhanced by the appointment, in 1991, of four of the six initial Palestinian participants in the group to key positions in the official negotiating teams, and, in 1992, of several Israeli participants to ambassadorial and cabinet positions in the new Rabin government.

The resulting overlap between the official and the unofficial process, however, also created some ambiguities and conflicts of interests for some of our participants (Kelman, 1998b, pp. 19–20).

Our efforts from the 1970s to the early 1990s, along with other unofficial efforts, we believe, helped to lay the groundwork for the Oslo agreement of September 1993 (Kelman, 1995, 1997c, 2005). They contributed by developing cadres prepared to carry out productive negotiations; by creating opportunities to share information and formulate new ideas that provided substantive inputs into the negotiations; and by fostering a political atmosphere that made the parties open to a new relationship.

After the Oslo agreement, Nadim Rouhana and I initiated a new project: a Joint Working Group on Israeli-Palestinian Relations, which met periodically between 1994 and 1999. For the first time in our work, this group set itself the goal of jointly producing written documents: joint concept papers on the final-status issues in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, viewed in the context of what would be required to establish a long-term peaceful and mutually enhancing relationship between the two societies. The group thus intended to contribute both to the final-status negotiations themselves and to the post-negotiation process of peacebuilding and reconciliation. Three papers were published (Alpher, Shikaki, et al., 1998; Joint Working Group, 1998, 1999) and a fourth, on Israeli settlements, was close to completion, but was in effect overtaken by events in the summer of 2000.

With the failure of the Camp David summit in the summer of 2000 and the outbreak of the second *intifada* in the fall of that year, the conflict entered a new phase. This new phase—in which we still find ourselves as of the time of writing (January 2007)—has been marked by the breakdown of what were once promising negotiations. The essential tasks for conflict resolution at this time are rebuilding the two populations' trust in the availability of a credible negotiating partner on the other side and rekindling their hope through development of a positive vision of a common future for the two peoples in the land they must share. Our current work is directed to these goals. A new Israeli-Palestinian joint working group, which I co-facilitate with Shibley Telhami, has been exploring ideas for framing a final agreement for a two-state solution, embodying a historic compromise, in a way that would engender trust and hope in the two publics and elicit their wholehearted support. Such a task can best be accomplished through a process of joint thinking and interactive problem solving, with an emphasis on the “negotiation of identity” (Kelman, 2001).

### Dual Purpose

Problem-solving workshops can best be viewed as “workshops” in the literal sense of the term: as providing a specially constructed space in which the parties can engage in the process of exploration, observation, and analysis, and in which they can

fashion new products that can be exported into the political arena. Workshops thus have a dual purpose. They are designed, first, to produce change—new learning, in the form of new understandings, new insights, and new ideas for resolving the conflict—in the particular individuals who participate in the workshop; and, second, to transfer these changes into the political debate and the decision-making process in the two societies. Depending on their particular positions in the society, individual participants can communicate their new insights and ideas through their writing, lecturing, political activities, or the advice they give to political decision makers. The participants in our Joint Working Group on Israeli-Palestinian Relations took a further step by shaping these insights and ideas into concept papers, which were made available to decision makers, political elites, and the wider public as the two sides moved toward final-status negotiations. The hope is that our current working group will also produce a joint concept paper, focusing on how the idea of a historic compromise, and a final-status agreement embodying such a compromise, can best be framed so that wide support for them can be mobilized within the two populations.

An important theoretical and practical consequence of the dual purpose of workshops is that the two purposes may create contradictory requirements. The best example of these dialectics of interactive problem solving is provided by the selection of participants. To maximize *transfer* into the political process, it would be best to seek out participants who are officials, as close as possible to the decision-making apparatus and thus in a position to apply immediately what they have learned. To maximize *change*, however, it would be better to seek out participants who are removed from the decision-making process and therefore less constrained in their interactions and freer to play with ideas and explore hypothetical scenarios. To balance these contradictory requirements, we look for participants who are not officials, but who are politically influential. They are thus more free to engage in the process, but, at the same time, because of their positions within their societies, any new ideas that they develop in the course of a workshop can have an impact on the thinking of decision makers and the society at large.

### Ground Rules for Interaction

Problem-solving workshops follow a set of ground rules, which are presented to the participants in great detail. The central ground rule is the principle of privacy and confidentiality. In the early days of our Israeli-Palestinian work, confidentiality was particularly important for the protection of the participants, because the mere fact that they were meeting with the enemy was controversial and exposed them to political, legal, and even physical risks. Confidentiality is equally important, however, for the protection of the process that we are trying to promote in workshops. The ground rules are designed to encourage the participants to talk and listen to each other, rather than focus on their constituencies, on an audience, on

third parties, or on the record. We want them to think out loud, to experiment with ideas, and to explore different options, without having to worry about how others would react if their words were quoted outside. This is why we have no audience, no observers, no publicity, no record, and no attribution. Focusing on each other enables and encourages the participants to enter into a type of interaction that is generally not feasible among parties engaged in a bitter conflict—a type of interaction, that, indeed, deviates from the conflict norms that usually govern their behavior: an interaction that is *analytic* rather than polemical, that is, in which the parties seek to explore each other's perspective and gain insight into the causes and dynamics of the conflict; and an interaction that is *problem-solving* rather than adversarial, that is, in which the parties sidestep the usual attempt to allocate blame and, instead, take the conflict as a shared problem that requires joint effort to find a mutually satisfactory solution.

Another ground rule states that in a workshop—unlike a negotiating session—there is no expectation that the parties will reach an agreement. As in any conflict resolution effort, we are interested in finding common ground, but we stress that the amount of agreement achieved in the workshop discussions is not necessarily a measure of the success of the enterprise. If participants come away with a better understanding of the other's perspective, of their own priorities, and of the dynamics of the conflict, the workshop will have fulfilled its purpose, even if it has not produced an outline of a peace treaty. Our Joint Working Group was an exception in this respect, in that its purpose was to produce joint concept papers, although even these papers—while they explore different options and seek to reframe issues—do not necessarily come up with a single solution on which both sides agree. The Joint Working Group also differed from our earlier work in that the participants eventually went public with the issuance of the completed concept papers; up to the point of publication, however, the principle of confidentiality was strictly observed.

Yet another ground rule calls for the equality of the two parties within the workshop setting. Asymmetries in power, moral position, or reputation clearly play an important role in the conflict and must be taken into account in the workshop discussions. But the two parties are equals in the workshop setting in the sense that each party has the same right to serious consideration of its needs, fears, and concerns. Within the rules of the workshop, Israeli participants cannot dismiss Palestinian concerns on the grounds that the Palestinians are the weaker party and, therefore, in a poor bargaining position, nor can Palestinian participants dismiss Israeli concerns on the grounds that the Israelis are the oppressors and, therefore, not entitled to sympathy. Each side has the right to be heard in the workshop and each side's needs and fears must be given equal attention in the search for a mutually satisfactory solution.

A final ground rule concerns the facilitative role of the third party. The third party in our model does not take part in the substantive discussion; it does not give

advice or offer its own proposals, nor does it take sides, evaluate the ideas presented, or arbitrate between different interpretations of historical facts or international law. The task of the third party is to create the conditions that allow ideas for resolving the conflict to emerge out of the interaction between the parties themselves. The facilitation of the third party, however, is an important part of the process. The third party sets the ground rules and monitors adherence to them; it helps to keep the discussion moving in constructive directions, tries to stimulate movement, and intervenes as relevant with questions, observations, and even challenges. It also serves as a repository of trust for parties who, by definition, do not trust each other. They feel safe to come to the workshop because they trust the third party and are confident that it will make sure that confidentiality is maintained and their interests are protected.

### Workshop Agenda

In the typical one-time, free-standing workshop, the agenda is relatively open and unstructured with respect to the substantive issues under discussion. The way in which these issues are approached, however, and the order of discussion are structured so as to facilitate the kind of discourse that the ground rules are designed to encourage. A similar structure, with some necessary modifications, characterizes the agenda within and across the meetings of a continuing workshop.

The first discussion session of any workshop is usually devoted to an exchange of information between the two sides, which serves to break the ice and set the tone for the kind of exchange we hope to generate. Each party is asked to talk about the situation on the ground and the current mood in its own community, about the issues in the conflict as seen in that community, about the spectrum of views on the conflict and its solution, and about participants' own positions within that spectrum. This exchange provides a shared base of information and sets a precedent for the two sides to deal with each other as mutual resources, rather than solely as combatants.

Following the opening discussion, the core agenda of the workshop consists of four parts. It begins with a needs analysis, in which members on each side are asked to discuss their central concerns in the conflict—the fundamental needs that would have to be addressed and the existential fears that would have to be allayed if a solution is to be satisfactory to them. The parties are asked not to debate the issues raised, although they may ask for clarification of what the other says. The purpose is for each side to gain an adequate understanding of the other's needs, fears, and concerns, from the perspective of the other. Once they have demonstrated that they understand each other's needs to a substantial degree, we move to the second phase of the agenda: joint thinking about possible solutions—a process akin to the creative thinking and cooperative problem solving described by Deutsch (1973) as a central feature of constructive conflict resolution. What participants are asked to

do in this phase is to develop, through an interactive process, ideas about the overall shape of a solution for the conflict as a whole or, perhaps, a particular issue in the conflict, that would address the needs and fears of both sides. They are given the difficult assignment of thinking of solutions that would meet not only their own side's needs, but the needs of both sides.

As participants develop some common ground in this process of joint thinking, we turn to the next phase of the workshop: discussion of the political and psychological constraints within the two societies that would create barriers to carrying out the ideas for solution that have been developed in the group. This is a very important part of the discussion, because parties in conflict usually find it extremely difficult to understand the constraints on the other side—or even to recognize that the other, like themselves, has constraints. But we prefer to leave the discussion of constraints to this later phase, so that it does not hamper the creative process of jointly generating new ideas. Finally, depending on how much progress has been made and how much time is left, we ask the parties to engage in another round of joint thinking—this time about ways of overcoming the constraints that have been presented. The participants are asked to come up with ideas about what their governments, their societies, and they themselves might do—separately or jointly—that would help to overcome the barriers to negotiating mutually satisfactory solutions to the conflict.

### EVALUATING INTERACTIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

Evaluation of interactive problem solving and similar unofficial approaches to conflict resolution is confronted with many ambiguities and many practical, ethical, and inherent difficulties, to be discussed in the next section. Within the limits set by these difficulties, however, there is a need for scientific evaluation of such efforts.

Practitioners of unofficial diplomacy sometimes complain that they are being held to rigorous standards that are not applied to official diplomacy. One response to such objections might be that, indeed, official diplomacy too should be subject to much more rigorous standards of evaluation than is currently the case. But there remains an important difference between the two types of diplomacy. Official diplomacy, in principle—at least within democratic societies—is authorized and evaluated by the political process. Diplomats whose efforts fail can be dismissed or at least reassigned; governments that pursue failed policies can be voted out of power. Unofficial diplomacy, on the other hand, is not subject to such constraints. It is reasonable, therefore, to expect unofficial efforts to demonstrate their utility and success by way of systematic, empirical evidence that validates their claims. This is particularly true for innovative forms of intervention that are academically



based. They should be subject to standards similar to those applied to the evaluation of scholarly theories and paradigms that also emerge from the academy.

The call for evaluation does not imply any restrictions on the conduct of problem-solving workshops or similar track-two efforts. These are non-coercive activities that are as legitimate and protected by the principles of freedom of speech and association as other forms of communication, public education, and dissemination of ideas, as long as they adhere to such ethical norms as truth-telling, informed consent, and protection against harm. Evaluation, therefore, should not be a condition for the practice of interactive conflict resolution. It becomes necessary, however, when practitioners seek to persuade funding agencies to support their efforts, representatives of conflicting parties to participate in them, and governments or international governmental organizations to utilize their products in the policy process. Evaluation becomes essential as the field of interactive conflict resolution moves toward professionalization and institutionalization.

### Criteria for Evaluation

What, then, are the criteria by which unofficial efforts—and particularly interactive problem solving on which this article focuses—should be evaluated? In essence, these criteria must refer to the success of interactive problem solving in achieving its own stated goals.

The ultimate goal of the effort is to *contribute* to the achievement of a negotiated agreement that:

- is of high quality, in that it addresses the fundamental needs and fears of both sides;
- is lasting, because both sides consider it fair and are committed to it; and
- provides the institutional and psychological foundation for a new relationship between the parties that is peaceful, cooperative, and mutually enhancing. An important indicator of such a new relationship is the establishment of institutions of a civil society across national lines.

Interactive problem solving cannot aim to *achieve* such an agreement, because it is not in the business of negotiating agreements; it can aim only to *contribute* to its achievement. If an agreement of this caliber is, in fact, achieved, it would not automatically prove that the track-two efforts promoting it were successful; one would need independent evidence that these efforts contributed to this achievement. By the same token, if an agreement of this caliber is not achieved, or if no agreement is achieved at all, it would not automatically prove that the track-two efforts failed; they may have made a contribution that was outweighed by other forces, but that may have left an impact on the political cultures of the two societies that will show its effect at a later time. For these reasons, the most relevant criteria

for evaluating interactive problem solving refer to its success in achieving its intermediate goal rather than its ultimate goal.

The intermediate goal of interactive problem solving is to contribute to changes in the political cultures of the two sides that would make them more receptive to negotiation with each other. Depending on the stage of the conflict, these might be changes that would be conducive to beginning negotiation, to resuming negotiation after a period of deadlock, or to increasing the momentum and productivity of ongoing negotiations. Examples of such changes in political culture are:

- the development of cadres within each society with direct experience in communicating with the other, with the conviction that such communication can be fruitful, and with the commitment to pursuing it further;
- the emergence of a sense of possibility, based on the belief that—in view of changes on the other side—meaningful negotiations are possible, a satisfactory agreement is achievable, and the conflict can ultimately be resolved;
- increasing differentiation of the image of the enemy, leading to the belief that at least some elements on the other side are interested in a peaceful solution and to the identification of potential negotiating partners;
- greater awareness of the other's perspective, insight into the other's concerns, priorities, and constraints, and development of what Ralph White (1984) has called "realistic empathy";
- the development of a de-escalatory language in the political discourse between the two sides, designed to avoid the use of words that threaten and humiliate the other;
- the initiation of mutually reassuring actions and symbolic gestures, often in the form of acknowledgments—for example, of the other's humanity, national identity, ties to the land, history of victimization, sense of injustice, genuine fears, or conciliatory moves;
- the development of a shared vision of a desirable future, which can help transform negotiations in the parties' view from a dangerous minefield into a source of hope and opportunities;
- the exploration of ideas for the overall shape of a solution to the conflict that meets the needs of both parties and for mutually satisfactory solutions to the specific issues in the conflict; and
- the exploration of ideas for moving the negotiations forward—for getting to the table, staying at the table, or overcoming obstacles to productive negotiations.

### Dual Purpose

Insofar as problem-solving workshops can be shown to have contributed to the kinds of changes in political culture listed above, they have achieved their interme-

diate goal. The presumption is that such changes in the political culture are conducive to the achievement of the ultimate goal of contributing to a high-quality, durable agreement that provides the foundation for a long-term peaceful, cooperative, and mutually enhancing relationship.

In line with the logic of problem-solving workshops, if they are to contribute to the necessary changes in the political cultures of the two sides, they must achieve both of the purposes discussed in the preceding section. First, the individual participants must themselves undergo change in the course of the workshop: they must develop new understandings of the other's (and indeed their own) concerns, priorities, and constraints; new insights into the dynamics of the conflict; new ideas for resolving the conflict; and new attitudes about the necessities and possibilities for conflict resolution. Second, they must successfully transfer their new learnings to the public debate and the decision-making process in their own societies, thus contributing to changes in the political culture conducive to a negotiated agreement.

Before turning to an approach to evaluation that takes account of this logic of workshops, I shall describe and try to address the difficulties in carrying out a systematic program of evaluation research.

### CONFRONTING THE DIFFICULTIES OF EVALUATION RESEARCH

The time has come for me to confess that, in the more than 30 years that I have been engaged in developing interactive problem solving, building its theoretical foundations, and practicing it, I have not engaged in systematic research designed to evaluate its effectiveness. This may be particularly surprising in view of the fact that I am trained as an experimental social psychologist, who is naturally inclined to ask for empirical evidence that an intervention actually produces the effects that it claims to produce. Moreover, I am no stranger to evaluation research, having participated in a research project on the evaluation of psychotherapy early in my career (Parloff, Kelman, & Frank, 1954; Kelman & Parloff, 1957) and conducted an intensive evaluation study of an international exchange program in the 1960s (Kelman & Ezekiel, 1970). My failure to carry out evaluation research on interactive problem solving can be attributed to the inherent difficulties in applying standard evaluation models to this case, to the ethical and methodological issues raised by intrusive evaluation procedures, and to my own need to set priorities.

#### Inapplicability of Standard Models

What is, arguably, the best model of evaluation, the experimental field test, is inapplicable to the evaluation of problem-solving workshops. The experimental model is well exemplified by drug evaluation studies, in which comparable patients,

drawn from a specified population, are randomly assigned to either the experimental group, which receives the drug, or a no-treatment control group, which receives a placebo. Assignments follow a double-blind procedure, such that neither the patients nor the investigators know who is receiving the active drug and who is receiving the placebo. Differences in outcome between the experimental and control groups can thus be ascribed, with a high degree of confidence, to the experimental treatment. As one moves away from treatments in the form of a pill, the model of the experimental field test becomes less relevant. Still, it can be used effectively—especially if accompanied by other approaches—in the evaluation of social programs or educational endeavors, as long as these are discrete programs that can be extended to some elements of a population and withheld from others, with some assurance that the experiences provided to the members of the experimental group would not have been otherwise available to them and are not available to members of the control group.

Problem-solving workshops do not meet these conditions and, indeed, cannot meet them without distorting their logic and their purpose. To begin with, there are no meaningful control groups in this situation. Workshop participants, by design, are people who are politically involved. We cannot randomly assign a subset of eligible participants to a “no-treatment” condition, because they are likely to be involved in a variety of other activities and subject to a variety of other experiences, over which we have no control, that may influence their thinking about the conflict and its resolution. By the same token, we cannot be sure that changes manifested by workshop participants are attributable specifically and entirely to their experiences in our workshop. The people who participate in our workshops are generally people who participate in a variety of other activities, since politically involved people—the kind of participants we explicitly seek out—are multiply involved. There is no way of reliably isolating the effects of their workshop experience from those of other experiences in which they take part.

Furthermore, we are interested in the effects of our workshops not only on the participants themselves, but also on their communities. In line with the dual purpose of interactive problem solving, we expect and want workshop participants to disseminate what they have learned throughout their communities. To the extent that this happens, the effects of workshop experiences should ideally manifest themselves among many politically involved members of the community—including those that might have been selected for the control group.

In assessing change at the community level, compared to the level of individual workshop participants, it is even more difficult to isolate the effects of our activities from the effects of other activities—some with similar purposes, others with different purposes—that affect the political thinking of the communities. The logic of evaluation by way of experimental field tests simply does not apply to problem-solving workshops. What is needed is not so much a model for evaluating *social programs*, as a model for evaluating the impact of a *social movement*.

Problem-solving workshops, just like activities associated with a social movement, have their effect on the political culture of the community in interaction with a range of other activities taking place within the society, rather than as discrete interventions in an otherwise stable environment.

In fact, interactive problem solving is intended to contribute to a larger process that is influenced not only by a variety of other micro-level activities, including official diplomacy, government actions, and political movements, but also by macro-level developments that foster or impede change. The political contribution of our efforts thus, of necessity, interacts with and is conditioned by many factors. Most notable among these is the existence of a "ripe" moment for resolving the conflict—or, to be more precise, of an almost-ripe moment, since an important purpose of our work is, in fact, to help ripen the conflict for resolution.

### Ethical and Methodological Obstacles to Evaluation

As a scholar-practitioner of conflict resolution, I have a clear commitment—on both ethical and methodological grounds—to do nothing for the sake of research that would in any way interfere with our practice or undermine its integrity. Research is integrally related to practice in our scholar-practitioner model, but only as a by-product—albeit a very rich by-product—of our practice (Kelman, 2000). The unwillingness to let the practice be driven, in any way, by the requirements of research has set limits to the kind of evaluation research that could be conducted on problem-solving workshops.

Thus, we have never introduced interventions in the process purely for the purpose of observing their effects. Our commitment has been to conduct workshops in whatever way we consider optimal from the point of view of our practice, and not to alter these procedures in order to obtain research data. This is not to say that our procedures have been uniform across all of our workshops and remained unchanging over time. We have adapted our procedures to changes in the political situation, or to special characteristics of the setting and participants of a particular workshop, and we have revised our procedures as a result of what we have learned from practice. In all cases, however, these alterations were designed to provide the best practice we were capable of, rather than to observe or test the effects of different procedures.

We have also been very careful to avoid observations of workshops that would in any way interfere with participants' sense of privacy and confidentiality and limit their freedom to speak without concern about going on record or being quoted outside of the workshop. In particular, we have not audiotaped or videotaped workshop proceedings, even though such recordings would be extremely useful for purposes of evaluation. We have abstained from recording because of concern that it would interfere with the kind of interaction among participants that workshops are specifically designed to facilitate. We have, however, taken notes on

the proceedings and my students have been using some of these notes for purposes of research and evaluation. The notes, of course, provide a more limited and incomplete record than a tape-recording would, but it is precisely these limitations that make them less disruptive of the workshop process. We have also refrained from using participants' names in our notes (and so informed the participants), so that—even if the notes somehow became accessible to outside readers—it would not be possible to identify workshop participants or associate statements with specific speakers.

Finally, we have avoided the use of obtrusive or manipulative procedures that might violate participants' expectations, make them feel that they are being used as guinea pigs in a psychological experiment, make them suspicious of possible ulterior motives behind our procedures, or strike them as out of keeping with the political purpose and the seriousness of the enterprise. Our scrupulous efforts to eschew such procedures have militated against the introduction of questionnaires, interviews, systematic observations, or other interventions that might be useful for purposes of evaluation.

### Personal Priorities

Apart from the inherent complexities of evaluating interactive problem solving and the ethical obstacles to doing so, I have had to make personal choices about where to place my priorities. Do I invest my energies in the highly labor-intensive tasks of organizing and running workshops; developing and maintaining the regional expertise, contacts, and credibility required for effective practice; and refining the methodology of interactive problem solving and its theoretical base? Or do I attempt to tackle the difficult task of carrying out systematic evaluation research under the severe constraints described above?

I made the choice of giving priority to developing, applying, and refining the intervention method. It seemed to me that the first order of business was to demonstrate the feasibility of the approach even if we had no systematic proof of its effectiveness. Moreover, it seemed important to accumulate enough experience so that there would be a substantial body of practice that could in fact be evaluated. I felt comfortable to leave the actual task of systematic evaluation to the next generation of scholar-practitioners. My bet on the next generation, clearly, has paid off. Many scholars have, indeed, directed their attention in recent years to conceptual clarification of the issues involved in evaluating conflict resolution efforts and to carrying out empirical evaluation research (e.g., Anderson, 1999, 2004; Church & Shouldice, 2002; Fisher, 1997; Hoffman, 2004; Kleiboer, 1996; Maoz, 2000, 2004; Ross, 2000; Saunders, 1999, 2000; Stern & Druckman, 2000).

I am especially pleased that some of the active contributors to this growing literature are my students, including Eileen Babbitt (Babbitt & d'Estrée, 1996; d'Estrée & Babbitt, 1998), Cynthia Chataway (2002, 2004), Susan Cross (Cross &

Rosenthal, 1999), Tamra Pearson d'Estrée (Pearson, 1990; Babbitt & d'Estrée, 1996; d'Estrée & Babbitt, 1998; d'Estrée, Fast, Weiss, & Jakobsen, 2001), Daniel Lieberfeld (2002, 2005), Luc Reychler (1999, 2004), Jay Rothman (1997a, 1997b; Ross & Rothman, 1999), Nadim Rouhana (2000), and Rebecca Wolfe (2002). Cynthia Chataway's 2004 chapter, in the context of describing four different ways in which interactive problem solving has been evaluated, reviews a number of unpublished studies of actual or simulated workshops, mostly carried out by my former students. The article by Tamra Pearson d'Estrée and colleagues (2001) is one product of a comprehensive project designed to develop a framework and detailed criteria for evaluating interactive conflict resolution efforts.

### Requirements for Evaluation

Now that the next generation of scholar-practitioners is indeed turning its attention to the systematic evaluation of interactive conflict resolution, they will have to cope with the special difficulties that confront evaluation research in this arena. As they turn to their task, they will have to develop and refine research methods and evaluation models that are appropriate to the nature and purpose of the enterprise.

With respect to research methods and procedures, evaluation research in this field will have to adapt itself to the limitations of the data that can be collected under the ethical and methodological constraints imposed by problem-solving workshops. Thus, as my students have already learned, to study the workshop process and to analyze the nature of its discourse, researchers may have to rely on transcripts of written notes, rather than the richer and more reliable data that might be generated by audio or video tapes. Similarly, to probe the reactions of workshop participants or their peers, it may be necessary to rely on intensive personal interviews, rather than on written questionnaires, which are more efficient to administer and more readily susceptible to quantitative analysis, though generally less informative. The most appropriate approach here would be the "elite" interview, in which respondents are treated as special resources who can contribute valuable information based on their experience and expertise, rather than as names that happened to come up in the selection of a random sample.

At a more fundamental level, the challenge is to develop appropriate evaluation models that rely, not on a definitive field test, which is inapplicable to the situation, but on the gradual accumulation of pieces of evidence in support of the underlying assumptions of the approach. As empirical support for these assumptions accumulates, confidence in the approach as a whole increases. Two different ways of proceeding to chip away at the problem of evaluation can be distinguished. One involves identifying and testing the individual steps in the process of interactive problem solving—the links in the chain, as it were—that are presumed, on theoretical grounds, to account for its effectiveness. The other uses experimental and other empirical studies in settings that may be quite different from problem-

solving workshops (including analogs and simulations of such workshops) to test some of the underlying assumptions of the approach. The remainder of this paper briefly examines the potential utility of each of these evaluation models.

### THE LINKS-IN-THE-CHAIN MODEL

This article has referred, more than once, to the dual purpose of problem-solving workshops: They seek to produce changes—in the form of new insights and new ideas—in the workshop participants; and to transfer these changes into the political process and the political culture of the two societies. Change in the participants is a necessary first step for producing change at the societal level, manifested in public opinion and official policy. The logic of this two-step formulation can be extended by breaking down the workshop process into a series of steps, or links in the chain. It is the succession of these steps that accounts theoretically for the potential impact of problem-solving workshops.

These steps or links in the chain can be identified and empirically tested one by one, using different methodologies as appropriate to a particular step. As evidence supporting the component links of the chain accumulates, one gains increasing confidence in the logic of the entire approach. This model of evaluation thus resembles the way in which scientific theories are often tested: The logic of a theory is broken down into separate components, each of which yields testable propositions; insofar as propositions based on these separate components are confirmed, the theory as a whole gains support.

Nine steps in the process or links in the chain that constitutes the logic of interactive problem solving can be identified. I shall describe each of them and suggest ways in which it might be put to an empirical test.

#### Nature of Participants

In order for the logic of workshops to work itself out, they must attract the “right” kinds of individuals to take part and to continue their involvement in the particular effort or similar ones. As already indicated, we look for participants who are politically influential or at least actively involved, close to the political mainstream of their societies, and high in credibility—yet, at the same time, willing to sit down with the enemy on an equal basis, absorb new ideas, and engage in joint thinking. Thus, the first question to be asked in evaluating our efforts is whether we succeeded in attracting participants who both have the capacity to learn and change as a result of the interaction and are in a position to transfer what they learn into the public debate and the decision-making process in their own societies.

One way of answering this question is to analyze the transcripts of workshop meetings, which can give some indication of participants’ openness to change, of



their relationship to and role in their own communities, and of their thoughts about disseminating what they learn in the workshop. The most direct test of this first link in the chain, however, is to examine the list of workshop participants over the years. We have been constrained in making this kind of information public, because of our guarantee of confidentiality. However, the names of some participants have now been made public with the appearance of the concept papers written by members of the Joint Working Group on Israeli-Palestinian Relations (Alpher, Shikaki, et al., 1988; Joint Working Group, 1998, 1999). We also hope to obtain permission from former workshop participants to make their names public in the future.

For the moment, I can only say that the roster of participants in our workshops over the years is impressive in terms of the status and influence that many have had within their own communities, both at the political level and at the level of civil society. For example, as already mentioned, several participants in our first continuing workshop were appointed to the Palestinian negotiating team and to high positions in the Israeli government, in 1991 and 1992, respectively (see also Kelman 1995, 2005). In and of itself, of course, such evidence would not demonstrate the success of our workshops in meeting their goals. It would only demonstrate that we succeeded in selecting participants who were in a position to exert influence—the first link in the chain on which the logic of workshops is based. One would need to address the additional questions of what these participants learned in the course of the workshops and whether and how they used these learnings and transmitted them to their societies.

### Engagement in the Process

According to the logic of interactive problem solving, the learning of workshop participants depends on the extent to which they engage in the kind of interaction process that the approach stipulates. Do they present their views openly? Do they engage in active listening? Do they share their differing perspectives with each other? Do they explore analytically each other's needs, fears, priorities, and constraints, as well as the dynamics of the conflict between them? Do they pursue a process of joint thinking designed to come up with ideas for resolving the conflict that would meet the fundamental needs of both sides?

Thus, a second task for evaluation is to see whether workshop participants actually interact with each other in the way that is theoretically required if workshops are to have the anticipated effect on their thinking. This step in the process can be tested by discourse analysis of workshop transcripts. Such an analysis would examine not only the extent to which participants engage in the process stipulated by the approach, but also the conditions that seem to promote or inhibit such engagement. Rebecca Wolfe's doctoral dissertation (2002), for example, showed that the level of constructive engagement in the give-and-take of joint problem solving was

higher when the two sides in a workshop perceived themselves to be closer in power to each other. They were also more likely, under that condition, to generate mutually satisfactory options.

### Change in Interaction Over Time

The kinds of interaction that workshops seek to promote are very different from the way in which parties in conflict normally interact. Engagement in this process, therefore, requires some degree of learning, which is facilitated by the ground rules and third-party interventions, as well as by the gradual development of working trust among the workshop participants. We would, therefore, expect a change in the nature of the interaction over the course of a workshop or a series of workshops. The logic of workshops postulates an increase over time in analytical, non-adversarial discourse, and a commensurate decline in polemical, historical, and legalistic argumentation and in the emphasis on blame and defense. Furthermore, we would expect an increase in empathy with the other (in the sense of ability to take the other's perspective), in joint thinking, in the use of conciliatory and de-escalatory language, in the proffering of reassurances and acknowledgments to the other, in the discovery of mirror images, in differentiation of the enemy image, and in the search for and identification of joint gains. Finally, and importantly, we would expect an increase in creative joint thinking and cooperative problem solving, in line with Morton Deutsch's (1973) formulation of constructive conflict resolution.

This step in the process can be tested by discourse analysis of workshop transcripts over time. One would expect fluctuations in the indicators that I have listed above as a function of what is happening on the ground, as well as of occurrences in the workshop itself, but the general trend over the course of a workshop or series of workshops should be in a positive direction. Beyond assessing the overall trends, it would be valuable to identify the moments in the workshop interaction that are particularly conducive to setting such changes into motion. Tamra Pearson d'Estrée's doctoral dissertation (Pearson, 1990), for example, showed that symbolic gestures by one or the other party were especially prone to serve as turning points in the tone and quality of the interaction among workshop participants.

### Attitude Change

The interactions among participants over the course of a workshop or a series of workshops, and the experiences and observations that these interactions make possible, are expected to produce changes in the participants that they carry away from their encounter: changes in their attitudes, mutual images, insights into the conflict, ideas about solutions, or expectations for the future. For example, it is hoped

that they might develop a greater ability to enter into the other's perspective, a better understanding of the constraints on the other side, and a more differentiated image of the other side.

This link in the chain provides the most direct evidence of the extent to which the first of the two core purposes of workshops has been achieved, that is, the extent to which the anticipated changes in the participants themselves have taken place. The effect can be tested by interviews with the participants, probing their own perceptions of the changes they have experienced. Ideally, such interviews would be conducted at two points: immediately or shortly after the workshop, and after a delay of some weeks or months. The delayed interviews are more indicative of lasting change, since they capture the respondents' judgments and attitudes after they have returned to their home environments and have had a chance to reflect on their experiences. Participants' responses immediately after the workshop may be colored by their sense of excitement about (or perhaps disappointment in) the experience they have just undergone. Moreover, if the interviews are conducted on behalf of the workshop organizers, participants' responses may reflect the common tendency—in accordance with the norms of politeness—to describe the event as a success.

Students of attitude change generally question the reliability of self-reports as indicators of change. Evaluation efforts would be strengthened, therefore, by supplementing participants' reports of the changes they have undergone with direct measures of these changes. This would require assessment of participants' attitudes—about the conflict, about the other party, about possible solutions, about future prospects—both before and after the workshop. Again, after-measures should ideally be obtained both immediately after the workshop and after a period of delay. Out of ethical and methodological considerations, as described earlier in this chapter, I have been reluctant to obtain such measures in my practice. I consider before-measures particularly problematic because I am afraid that they may create confusion about the purpose of the enterprise in the minds of participants: Participants may be led to frame the workshop as primarily a research effort, rather than as an opportunity for the two parties to explore their conflict and the possibilities of resolving it. For similar reasons, I would avoid the use—both after and before the workshop—of written questionnaires that ask respondents to circle one of a number of responses to each item. Instead, I would assess participants' attitudes through personal interviews, conducted in a conversational style and with due respect for the participants as political actors rather than research subjects. Conceivably, the use of such interviews may even make it possible to obtain before-measures of participants' attitudes by asking appropriate questions in the context of the pre-workshop briefing. It may also be possible to obtain some indication of participants' attitudes in group meetings, held separately for each of the two workshop teams before and after the event as part of the briefing and debriefing process.

### Impact on Participants' Political Behavior

The changes experienced by the participants in the course of the workshop can be expected to have an impact on their political behavior once they return home. Depending on their particular positions and roles within their respective societies, they may have various opportunities to infuse what they have learned into the political process through their political actions, their writings and speeches, and their advice to political leaders.

One way of testing this link in the chain is through analysis of participants' post-workshop publications, of their oral presentations (insofar as records of these are available), and of any of their political actions that are part of the public record. Other sources of relevant data are self-reports and reports by colleagues of participants' political actions in the aftermath of the workshop, including speeches they may have made, positions they have taken, their subsequent interactions with the other side, their roles in official and public organizations, and their contributions to the political debate and the decision-making process.

### Impact of Participants' Political Behavior on Others

The next link in the chain that accounts for the potential impact of problem-solving workshops is the effect of participants' political actions, writings, and organizing activities on the thinking and actions of other members of their societies' political elites. Insofar as the participants are indeed politically influential, occupying pivotal positions in various networks in their own societies, they can be expected to play an important role in the diffusion of new ideas to the political elites and—directly or indirectly—the larger public.

This step in the process can be tested by interviews with participants' colleagues in their various enterprises, who can report on the impact that the workshop participants have had on their own political thinking and on that of other members of their network. Insofar as possible, one can try to trace any new ideas that the participants have introduced into the discussion to their workshop experience, although it will probably be rather difficult to pin down the precise connection. Another source of relevant information about the impact of the participants on others is analysis of the records of political events or organizations in which the participants were actively involved. Their contribution to the diffusion of new ideas may also be assessed by the direct or indirect references to their ideas in the writings of others.

Daniel Lieberfeld's (2002, 2005) intensive case study of three track-two initiatives in the 1980s, focusing on the conflict in South Africa, provides detailed evidence on this and preceding (and, indeed, subsequent) links in the chain. Through interviews with participants in the track-two meetings and other members of the political elites, and through analysis of a variety of documents, he is able to trace

the impact of the meetings on the participants' attitudes and political behavior and on the subsequent activities and decisions of other significant political actors and official bodies.

### Impact on the Political Atmosphere

The process of diffusion of new ideas generally starts at the level of the elites and then takes hold in the wider public. Thus, it can be expected that ideas diffused by workshop participants within their own elite networks might gradually spread and have an impact on public thinking and on the political atmosphere within the society at large. This impact might be reflected in the kind of language that is being used, the kinds of formulations and options that are being seriously entertained, and the prevailing moods and expectations.

This step in the process can be tested by analysis of public opinion data, editorials, media contents, and pronouncements of politicians. The purpose of such analysis is to ascertain the extent to which the kind of language, insights, and ideas generated in the course of problem-solving workshops have penetrated the political culture. Evidence of changes in this direction would lend some credence to the proposition that workshops and related activities have an impact on the political atmosphere and the larger political culture. The kinds of ideas that were developed, options that were explored, and mutual attitudes that were shaped in the course of our workshops gradually made their way into the political thinking and the public debate within the two societies and contributed to important changes in the political atmosphere (Kelman, 1995, 2005). It is impossible, however, to link such changes in a direct causal way to any particular workshop or set of workshops.

### Impact on Policy Makers

The actions and the ideas promoted by specific individuals within the political elite of each society—individuals who have themselves participated in workshops or who have been directly influenced by workshop participants—as well as gradual changes in the political thinking among elites and the general public can be expected eventually to have an impact on policy makers. According to this scenario, the approach of policy makers to the conflict and to negotiations would shift in the direction of seeking a reciprocal, mutually satisfactory agreement, conducive to a long-term transformation of the relationship between the conflicting parties.

This link in the chain can be tested by analysis of the pronouncements and policies of decision makers. The analysis would examine the extent to which the concepts and language used by decision makers reflect the kind of learning that workshops are likely to produce. Furthermore, the decision-making process can be examined to determine the degree to which and the way in which previous workshop participants were directly or indirectly involved in it. If it turns out that some

of the decision makers, negotiators, or advisers were in fact workshop "alumni," we would have evidence that the learnings produced by the workshop experience had an *opportunity* to influence the decision-making process. In and of itself, of course, such evidence would not tell us whether and how these individuals actually used their workshop learnings in the process. To demonstrate the actual use of workshop learnings would require both a fairly precise record of the process and decision makers' reflections on it—their recollections of what they did and where they got their ideas.

Neither evidence that ideas developed in the course of workshops are reflected in the pronouncements and policies of decision makers, nor evidence that workshop alumni have been involved in the decision-making process, can establish the specific and unique contribution of workshops to the policy process. What such evidence can do, at best, is to strengthen the claim that workshops have played a contributory role in developing new approaches to the conflict and to negotiations. In fact, as pointed out earlier, in my discussion of evaluation criteria, *contributing* to a political culture that is more conducive to negotiation and, ultimately, to the achievement of high-quality, lasting agreements, is all that workshops aim for and can possibly claim.

### Nature of the Agreement

The final link in the chain is the agreement itself. Changes in policy, in the official discourse, and in decision makers' thinking, along the lines fostered by interactive problem solving, should lead to a high-quality, lasting agreement.

The test of this proposition is provided by analysis of the agreement itself, of the experience in implementing it, and of the relationship between the two communities in the aftermath of the agreement. The durability of the agreement, of course, can be established only after it has been in effect for some time, but the process of implementing the agreement, the institutional mechanisms put in place across national lines, and the quality of the post-agreement relationship between the two sides can provide some indication of the agreement's long-term potential.

While achieving an agreement high in quality and long-term potential is the ultimate goal of problem-solving workshops, such an outcome would not allow us to conclude—certainly not by itself—that our efforts were successful. Establishing the specific contributions of problem-solving workshops to making an agreement possible and to the substance and quality of that agreement is clearly the most difficult task of all for an evaluation program. Indeed, as one moves from the first to the last link in the chain of assumptions that spell out the logic of interactive problem solving, evaluation becomes increasingly more difficult. It is easier to assess the impact of workshops on the individual participants than their impact on the larger conflict system—to evaluate workshops in terms of *internal* in contrast to *external* criteria of success, to use the distinction introduced by Ross and Rothman (1999).

Despite the difficulties, the accumulation of evidence in support of the linked assumptions—one link at a time—incrementally validates the model as a whole. Thus, for example, if workshop participants enter into the discourse of interactive problem solving, manifest changes in attitude, inject their new ideas into the political process, and then become personally involved—or advise others who are involved—in decision making and negotiation, we have some justification for concluding that the workshop experience, along with many other inputs, made some contribution to the agreement that is finally negotiated. This, I propose, is the closest that evaluation research can come to demonstrating the impact of unofficial efforts on the macro-process of conflict resolution.

### THE EXPERIMENTAL MODEL

Short of a definitive field test, comparing problem-solving workshops with an appropriate control condition, it is possible to conduct controlled experiments or other systematic empirical studies in different settings—including analogs or simulations of workshops—to test some of the assumptions underlying interactive problem solving. Such research cannot establish the success of problem-solving workshops in the real world, but it can provide evidence in support of the logic of the approach and thus increase our confidence in it.

The closest approximation to a controlled field test would be an experiment that compares actual problem-solving workshops, pared down and simplified for experimental purposes, with appropriate control conditions, but uses participants (e.g., college students) who are less influential, topics that are less sensitive, or contexts that are less consequential than those involved in the real-world practice of interactive problem solving. These quasi-workshops, designed for experimental purposes, would follow the interactive problem-solving model as closely as possible. The nature of the participants, topic, and context, however, would make it possible to introduce controls, experimental variations, and relatively intrusive research methods that would be ethically unacceptable in a real-life workshop. Thus, this research could establish causal relationships with some degree of confidence. The findings of such studies cannot be readily generalized to the real-life setting, but they can provide experimental support for the validity of the assumptions of the approach, suggesting that the hypothesized relationships are at least possible.

A rare example of research in this genre is a study by Cross and Rosenthal (1999). They did not run full-blown workshops, but they conducted one-hour-long discussions among pairs of participants on a topic important to the participants, under four different experimental conditions. Specifically, the participants—Arab and Jewish students—were paired into mixed-ethnicity dyads to discuss the issue of Jerusalem. Three experimental groups were instructed and guided to discuss the issue according to one of three models of conflict resolution, respectively: distribu-

tive bargaining, integrative bargaining, and interactive problem solving. A fourth group served as a control condition. Pre- and post-discussion questionnaires assessing expectations and attitudes showed the greatest amount of change in the interactive problem-solving condition. Participants using the interactive problem-solving model in discussing the issue of Jerusalem were more likely than those in the other three conditions to develop more positive expectations about the future course of the conflict in Jerusalem and the relationship between Israelis and Palestinians, and more favorable attitudes toward the other ethnic group. This finding lends some support to the fourth link in the chain of assumptions described in the preceding section: the assumption that interactions of the kind fostered in problem-solving workshops can produce changes in conflict-related attitudes and expectations of participants.

Another tool for experimental research directed to the evaluation of problem-solving workshops is the use of simulated workshops. Members of PICAR—the Program on International Conflict Analysis and Resolution at Harvard University's Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, which I directed for a decade (1993–2003)—developed two detailed exercises that simulate problem-solving workshops between the conflicting groups in protracted ethnic conflicts: *Avalon*, a simulation based on the conflict in Sri Lanka, developed by Donna Hicks; and *Cygnus*, a simulation based on the Cyprus conflict, developed by Susan Korper. These simulations have been used extensively for training purposes with different populations in a variety of different contexts. They could also be used, however, for research purposes. Using the same simulated conflict situation, the interactive problem-solving approach could be compared with other approaches to conflict resolution and with no-treatment control groups. Also, within the problem-solving approach, some of the features of the model could be varied systematically in order to test the effects of different procedures and interventions that are hypothesized to contribute to the outcome of workshops. The logic of experiments using quasi-workshops as tools of evaluation also applies to the use of simulated workshops: While the findings cannot be readily generalized to real-life workshops, they can provide experimental support for the validity of the assumptions that underlie the approach.

Evaluation research—as well as many other lines of research—can benefit greatly from the use of a “methodological triangulation” approach (Campbell & Fiske, 1959): exploring the same phenomenon in different contexts and with different methods. For example, d’Estrée’s doctoral dissertation (Pearson, 1990) used a simulated workshop along with observations and transcripts of real-life workshops to explore the effects of symbolic gestures on the interaction process. Wolfe’s dissertation (2002) used both the transcripts from Israeli-Palestinian workshops and data from a negotiation experiment in the laboratory to study the effects of power asymmetry on the interaction process and outcome. Combining data from these different sources strengthens the validity of the observed phenom-



enon and compensates to some extent for the limitations of each method: for the absence of experimental controls in the observations of real-life workshops and for the difficulty in generalizing from the experimental findings.

Finally, experimental and other empirical studies in a variety of different settings—unrelated to problem-solving workshops—can contribute to the evaluation of interactive problem solving by testing some of the assumptions underlying the model. For example, the model assumes that focusing on the parties' interests and needs rather than on their positions, taking the perspective of the other, and acknowledging the legitimacy of the other's concerns increase the likelihood that the parties will develop ideas for mutually satisfactory solutions to their conflict. Weisberg (1996) tested these and other propositions in a context quite remote from international conflict resolution: the negotiations of divorcing couples about custody for their children. He found, for example, that perspective taking and focusing on needs and interests increase cooperation over time. These propositions and other assumptions of interactive problem solving can also be studied, and some indeed have been studied, in the experimental laboratory. For example, in an experiment in which pairs of participants negotiated issues simulating the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Margolis (1991) found that pairs whose members received prior information about the other party's perspective as well as their own were significantly more likely to cooperate in the negotiations than those whose members received only their own party's perspective.

Chataway (2004) spelled out the logic of evaluating interactive problem solving through research in other contexts. She identified three key features of problem-solving workshops: "(a) confidential dialogue, (b) facilitated discussion of underlying needs and fears, and (c) joint problem solving by the parties to the dispute" (p. 214). She then offered illustrations of social-psychological research in the laboratory and other contexts that assesses the effects of each of these features. The research she cited suggests that confidentiality, focus on underlying needs and fears, and problem solving by the parties themselves do indeed have the effects on the attitudes and interactions of the participants and on their subsequent relationship that interactive problem solving postulates. Such research, clearly, cannot demonstrate that problem-solving workshops achieve their stated goals. It can, however, reinforce the validity of the assumptions that underlie the approach. Research in different settings that supports these assumptions can increase our confidence in the underlying logic of interactive problem solving.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The post-Cold War era has seen increasing efforts by a variety of non-governmental organizations to contribute to the resolution of ethnonational conflicts. With the growing awareness that such conflicts involve the entire body

politic of each society (cf. Saunders, 1999), there came the recognition that civil society can play a significant role in conflict resolution as well. Nongovernmental organizations have, therefore, drawn on members of civil society within each party to engage in a process of unofficial or track-two diplomacy, designed to complement the official process.

The expanding role of unofficial diplomacy has confronted practitioners with the necessity of evaluating their work—of demonstrating that it is effective in achieving its goals and producing the desired impact on the resolution of ethnonational conflicts. Evaluation must begin with a clear formulation of the goals that our efforts are designed to achieve and of the theoretical assumptions that guide our approach to achieving these goals. This formulation, in turn, allows us to select appropriate criteria for assessing success in achieving our goals and appropriate methods for determining how well these criteria have been met. The challenge for evaluation is to distinguish between what can and cannot be realistically accomplished by unofficial efforts at conflict resolution, and between appropriate and inappropriate models for evaluating these kinds of efforts.

In this article I have made an attempt to respond to these challenges with respect to interactive problem solving—an unofficial, third-party approach to the resolution of international and intercommunal conflicts that my colleagues and I have developed over the years and applied to the Israeli-Palestinian and other protracted ethnonational conflicts. The approach is best exemplified by problem-solving workshops with politically active and influential representatives of the conflicting communities.

Problem-solving workshops have two operational purposes: to produce changes, in the form of new insights and new ideas for resolving the conflict, in the individuals who participate in the workshops; and to transfer these changes into the political debate and the decision-making process in the two societies. This dual purpose is related to the ultimate goal of contributing to the achievement of a durable, high-quality negotiated agreement. The contribution of interactive problem solving to the achievement of this ultimate goal, however, cannot be demonstrated in any definitive way. Conceivably, an idea developed in the course of a workshop may eventually be translated into policy. But only rarely can one establish a direct and exclusive link between a policy option and the deliberations of a particular workshop.

The main way in which workshops contribute to policy decisions is by generating new ideas that are diffused throughout the conflicting societies and that—in interaction with similar ideas derived from different sources—exert an influence on their political thinking. The precise contribution of workshop products to the ultimate political decisions and negotiation outcomes can generally not be traced in detail. Thus, the most relevant criteria for evaluating the success of interactive problem solving are provided by evidence of its contributions to its intermediate goal, which is to contribute to changes in the political cultures of the conflicting

societies that make them more receptive to constructive negotiation with each other.

The success of workshops in contributing to changes in political culture cannot be evaluated by use of the standard, experimental or quasi-experimental model of evaluation. Workshops do not constitute a social program that introduces a special ingredient into an otherwise stable environment. Rather, they must be conceived as part of a social movement that interacts with other events and experiences to produce a change in political culture. Under the circumstances, there is no way of defining a meaningful control group with which workshop participants can be compared. These inherent difficulties in applying standard evaluation procedures are magnified by ethical and methodological obstacles to introducing the manipulations, observations, and measures that evaluation research typically calls for.

The challenge, therefore, is to develop evaluation models that are appropriate to the nature and purposes of the enterprise that is being evaluated and responsive to the constraints that the practice of interactive problem solving imposes. I have argued that approaches to evaluation appropriate to the situation are designed to "chip away" at the problem rather than confront it head-on. They are based on the gradual accumulation of pieces of evidence in support of the underlying assumptions of interactive problem solving. As empirical support for these assumptions accumulates, confidence in the process as a whole increases.

The article describes two approaches to evaluation, both of which involve the gradual accumulation of pieces of evidence in support of the assumptions that underlie interactive problem solving. The first, developed in greater detail, is based on the logic of the micro-process of interactive problem solving as a contribution to the macro-process of conflict resolution. According to this logic, interactive problem solving represents a series of steps—of links in a chain—whose succession accounts for the potential impact of problem-solving workshops. Nine such steps are identified, which together constitute the assumptions underlying the approach: (1) workshop participants are selected who are both prepared to engage in the process and in positions to influence political thinking within their own societies; (2) the participants interact with each other according to the ground rules and agenda that govern workshops; (3) over the course of the workshop, the nature of the interaction changes in the direction of an analytical, non-adversarial, problem-solving discourse; (4) as a result of their interaction in a workshop or series of workshops, participants' attitudes, mutual images, ideas for resolving the conflict, and expectations for the future change; (5) these changes in attitude produce changes in participants' political behavior once they return home; (6) the participants' political actions and statements have an impact on the political behavior of other members of the political elites in their respective societies; (7) these changes, in turn, help to produce changes in the political atmosphere of the two societies, making it more conducive to a negotiated agreement; (8) the changed atmosphere has an impact on the thinking and actions of policy makers; and (9) these, in turn,

lead to a durable, high-quality negotiated agreement. Evaluation research according to this model involves testing each of these nine links in the chain by methods appropriate to the particular step it represents.

The second approach to evaluation, described more briefly, involves the use of experimental and other empirical studies in settings that may be quite different from problem-solving workshops, but make it possible to test some of the assumptions that underlie interactive problem solving. Such research may involve quasi-workshops or simulated workshops, but it may also involve social-psychological studies in the experimental laboratory or in a variety of field settings that test assumptions on which interactive problem solving is based.

Both of these approaches to evaluation are based on the proposition that the impact of interactive problem solving has to be evaluated through the slow process of testing the different assumptions that underlie the approach. Clearly, more of this kind of research needs to be done, and it needs to be carried out systematically. I am gratified that a number of my former students, along with other members of the next generations of scholar-practitioners in interactive conflict resolution, have dedicated themselves to this task.

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