How Our Worldviews Shape Our Practice

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This article reviews research on the effect of a conflict resolution practitioner's worldview on practice. The results revealed patterns connecting worldview frames with differing uses of power. Forty-three environmental and intercultural practitioners were interviewed, and narrative and metaphor analysis was used to reveal key worldview orientations in their practice stories. The results are correlated in continuums and "profiles" of the worldview orientation. The findings strengthen previous work questioning the effects of the traditional neutrality stance, deepen fieldwide arguments for the embedded nature of worldview and culture, and describe new methods that reveal some of the dynamics between worldview and practice.

A Native American tribe spent many years struggling against a government agency for permanent residence status on their traditional homeland (the ability to live in and use their traditional homeland). Over time, their argument became a fight about permanent homes, because this was the only way to argue for use of the land that the agency understood. For the agency representatives, permanent housing (a building) was synonymous with permanent residence (ability to live on and use the land). One day, the mediator who was working with the tribe asked them *why* they wanted permanent homes. It turned out that the area became very hot during the summer; the tribe had traditionally built temporary homes in the winter and migrated to the mountains during the hot season. It become clear that the tribe did not even really want permanent housing, but a right to *reside legally* in the area—in their case, a very different goal. The tribe had been so deeply engaged in finding any argument that would be persuasive to the agency worldview that they had reframed their goal

into permanent housing, although this is *not actually what they wanted.* This happened so subtly that they found themselves pushing for this negotiation goal for many *years* before the discrepancy was revealed (personal conversation, respondent 75).

This story planted the seed that drove me to do this research. I wondered if mediators ran the risk of unconsciously shaping negotiations and mediations because of the natural boundaries of their worldview. The argument of the party more like us—often the more powerful party if we are mainstream culture representatives—might be so similar to our own norms and beliefs that it would be invisible *as beliefs,* and seem to be just the way things are. In the tribal case, a Caucasian, upper-middle-class intervener could easily have taken *permanent homes* as synonymous with permanent residence, as it often is for most white North Americans, and continued to help the tribe work for housing without ever looking more deeply into the assumptions driving their argument.

Multiple scholars have grappled with issues around culture and conflict, specifically how our processes are culturally embedded (not acultural) and how this affects what we do and how we should do it. To mention just a few: Lederach (1986, 1995) developed his elicitive training model, eloquently arguing for the importance of recognizing how culture is embedded in all our models, and not a technical add-on artifact; others have repeatedly argued, from an anthropological perspective, that the field needs to understand culture in more depth and complexity and how it has an impact on the work (Avruch, 1998; Avruch and Black, 1987, 1993); and Michelle Duryea LeBaron has several books, including an annotated bibliography of conflict and culture looking at how culture affects conflict and conflict resolution (Duryea, 1993, 1994; Duryea and Robinson, 1994; LeBaron, 1992; LeBaron, McCandless, and Garon,1998; LeBaron and Venashri, 2006). In Lederach's words, "Conflict is connected to meaning, meaning to knowledge, and knowledge rooted in culture" (1995, p. 8), so that every aspect of interaction involved in conflict, including those of the interveners, are embedded in and shaped by culture at every level.

These issues have specifically been raised in the environmental/public policy sector of the field (EPP). Recent work includes Bernie Mayer's excellent critique of the field as a whole (2004), and Golten and Smith's more specific review (Golten and Smith, n.d.) of critiques of the EPP sector's work. Of more immediate relevance to my study is the work of the Interuniversity Consortium on the Framing of Intractable Environmental Disputes, whose work is summarized in the book *Making Sense of*

Intractable Environmental Conflicts (Lewicki, Gray, and Elliot, 2003). The consortium developed a common framework for identifying and analyzing how parties in intractable environmental conflict used different frames to understand, interpret, and effect conflicts, and how those frames had an impact on the intractability of the conflict.

My work complements the consortium's work, and the previously mentioned culture and worldview research, by continuing it with an analysis of how worldviews, through the use of frames, influenced practitioners and their practices. The analysis being reviewed in this article showed strong correlations between practitioner worldview and differences in practice used to give and take power. I grounded my work in that of the field's worldview theorists and researchers, to be discussed later.

The concept of a worldview has linguistic and philosophic roots (Carroll, 1997) and has been used in a number of disciplines. It can refer to a comprehensive hypothesis of the world (Freud, 1965), or a sociopolitical orientation (Mowle, 2003), or a collective orientation of a group as with a religious or ethnic worldview (Sire, 2004). I use the term here as it has primarily been employed in the field of conflict resolution. It refers, generally, to the cognitive, ethical, and perceptual frames of an individual. Docherty uses the concept as an active one, reality-in-the-making: "World-viewing encompasses cognitive (psychological) processes such as categorization, boundary establishment, and the creation and use of scripts or schema" (2001, p. 50). Oscar Nudler is generally seen as the originator of worldview research within conflict resolution. He defines *worldview* as containing four key elements:

> Namely, an *ontology,* or a theory about the basic elements that populate the universe (for example, you can assume that only material entities are real, or else you can believe in the separate existence of ideas, numbers, souls, etc.), a *theory of world order* or, in other words, a theory about the ways in which those elements relate to each other (for instance, whether they are ordered in hierarchies or in networks or they are in a basically disordered state), an *axiology* or a value theory (which part or state of the universe, if any, you think is more valuable than others), an *epistemology* (how do you know, to what extent do you know, etc.) [Nudler, 1993, p. 4].

Blechman, Crocker, Docherty, and Garon (1998) built on Nudler's conception, adding *ethics,* which includes statements about how one *should* act.

This article is a continuation of previous worldview work; it describes rigorous, empirical, qualitative research that begins to detail some of the dynamics between practitioners' worldview and their practice. I discuss some of the theoretical grounding of the work in frame and worldview research; review the methods developed for this research, including examples to show how the methods were used; and summarize the key findings. I have summarized my interpretations of those findings through a map of the worldview continuums my research revealed, and "profiles" of major worldview orientations. I conclude with a discussion of the implications for practice and the questions these findings raise for our practice, including my concern that the traditional way in which we describe our work may obscure some of our real impact (especially if we have a dominant-culture worldview and some of the parties are of the same worldview and some are not). Finally, I propose some ways we may be able to address these issues in practice.

Theoretical Background

Humans make frames that delimit what they perceive, and those frames determine what is important, irrelevant, good, bad, and so on, about those perceptions—that is, some things are ruled in, and others are thrown out. Because this is reasonably well developed in the conflict resolution field's literature (for instance, in the previously mentioned work analyzing frames in intractable environmental conflicts), I won't belabor the point but just mention that it is well established in work on cognitive frames and social psychology. As examples, early thinking on this includes Adlerian psychotherapy (Mozak, 1979) and, in sociology, most notably Goffman on frames (1974). This has been discussed as important in the field from the standpoint of how parties frame and reframe conflict; my work adds to a small, but important, body of work on how the *practitioner's* frames and worldview affect conflict and parties.

I think it is also important because I believe that frame work, meaning working with frames, is what we practitioners do. We unmake frames. We unmake the status quo so people can allow something new to happen. Sara Cobb (1993) talked about this mediator capacity in terms of empowerment, saying that conflict resolvers can empower parties only by struggling to "destabilize conflict narratives . . . to open up stories to alternative meanings and interpretations" (p. 251). This may be what conflict resolvers do to make it possible for something new to happen; we unmake stuck narratives, or in

other words, rigid frames. Clearly, if conflicts are shaped and changed by parties' frames, it is possible that practitioners' frames affect conflict as well. This is often for the good. Because of our training and processes, we can perceive things that the parties are oblivious to and, for example, use reframing to open new frames for parties, or use hypotheticals to soften rigid, positional frames.

The concern is that if a party's frame is different enough, or even in conflict with the practitioner's, something of great importance or central to another's sense of self or the world can be discounted, or even invisible, to a practitioner whose frame rules it out. For instance, Christine Rack's excellent research (2000) shows that with most Anglo mediators in her study, Latino disputants were regularly disadvantaged in mediations because the practitioner's frame did not include some very important behaviors as salient. Rack's work was not specifically designed as worldview research, but her findings are extremely illuminating. She found that according to the Anglo mediators' orientation all disputants were equally protected because they (the mediators) took a neutral or impartial stance. However, Latino fairness norms inclined them to "be the most concerned with the outcome of the negotiation process for the other party. This pattern of other concern is consistent with collectivist culture expectations" (Rack, 2000, p. 9). Anglo norms, on the other hand, favored individualism, and Rack found that Anglo parties were more inclined to do "hard bargaining" and expected the other parties to do so as well. In her research she found: Latino male claimants often offered to split the disputed amount 50–50. Anglo male respondents especially appeared to interpret this large concession at early phases as a bargaining weakness, and the respondents proceeded to opportunistically exploit the concession. The Latino men who continued to negotiate thus found themselves conceding greater amounts as the mediation session went on. The Latino male claimants were able to settle at the 50% mark only in the 12 cases where they met with other Latino respondents [Rack, 2000, abstract].

Simply put, Rack found that the orientation of the Anglo mediators missed this dynamic in a way that seriously disadvantaged Latino parties. She found a "primary mediator pattern" was that Anglo mediators failed to realize what was happening, and that their behavior reinforced the problem. The implications for practice are powerful. Remaining ignorant of these dynamics, it seems, drastically increases the likelihood that we will unconsciously bias our processes.

Challenges to This Premise

There are two classic responses in the field to the dilemma posed by research like this. One is to claim that mediators can be neutral, and real neutrality would solve the problem. In the other response, knowledgeable mediators already know that neutrality, in the words of Cobb and Rifkin (1991), operates as a folk concept in the field and is not what real mediators do. Because both of these claims have been made regarding my own work, I will briefly respond to them. First, although academically trained mediators, or those of long standing in the field, may be aware of Cobb and Rifkin's work and all the research that has come out of it, many community mediators are not. From personal experience, I know several community mediators who are passionate believers in pure neutrality and train others to believe in it, including specific injunctions to "act as if they have no biases or culture of their own" (personal communication with trainer at state advanced mediation training). As Cobb and Rifkin, Rack, and the others mentioned show, the reality of frames and the reality that frames are culturally based, created in and through culture, make this an unreachable goal.

However, because many EPP mediators and practitioners already reject the idea of pure neutrality, I will also talk about "operational neutrality," or the idea that we can protect parties from our biases through giving them more power over the process. I strongly agree with this belief and think that the work on building reflective practice, going back to Schön's book *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983), builds fair, ethical, good practitioners. But I do not believe it completely addresses all worldview challenges. For example, let us consider the most extreme example of operational neutrality, Carl Rogers's "complete, unconditional, positive regard," which was the origin of reflective listening as we know it (Bozarth and Wilkins, 2001). The attempt to reflect back what the parties are saying with no judgment whatever could be seen as operational neutrality. But there are many cultures, including parts of the North American culture, that would see this behavior as uncaring, unresponsive, manipulative—a failure to respond interpreted as hiding something, insincerity, or emotional cowardice (see Kochman, 1981). It is, in fact, a cultural artifact of North America that equates the appearance of neutrality with fairness. Lederach talked early on in the field about the difference between cultures that feel safer having their conflict resolved by "insider partials" rather than "outsider neutrals" (1986).

Although operational neutrality is both powerful and useful, it does not obliterate the impact of the deeper, embedded layers of culture and

understanding that shape, often unconsciously, even what we do or do not perceive.

Worldview Research

This research carries on a relatively recent line of work from worldview theorists in the conflict resolution field. I chose to focus on worldviews (as opposed, for instance, to culture) because the most salient difference in a particular conflict—such as how land is valued—can be the *same* for those of dissimilar cultures, even though their worldviews differ as they relate to other, less salient issues, such as how to make fair decisions. That is, the fault lines separating those in a conflict often run through cultural and ethnic groups, rather than between them. For instance, in my experience with conflicts involving Native Americans there can be as much conflict between traditionalists and "business people" within a tribe as between angry, Caucasian citizens and tribe members.

As one would imagine, researchers have struggled to find methods that would reveal aspects of worldview relevant to conflict analysis. Worldview theorists (for instance, Blechman, Crocker, Docherty, and Garon, 1998; Docherty, 2001; Docherty and others, 1996; Carstarphen, Crocker, Docherty, and Garon, 1995; and Nudler, 1990) have often focused on narratives and metaphors as a way to reveal worldviews for research. Narratives, the *way* people tell their stories, reveal how they consciously organize and construct their understandings, what they value, what they exclude, and taken-for-granted practices of power. Hidden in these narratives are many collected, culturally, and experientially influenced sets of understandings and assumptions packaged as metaphors. Metaphor analysis reveals *unconscious* structures, and how beliefs are connected.

Metaphor analysis is one of the few researched and tested methods used to reveal worldviews in interview data. Blechman and colleagues (1998) pioneered worldview metaphor analysis when they did worldview research on the Northern Forest Lands Council Dialogue. They said: "Because these types of metaphors are often 'unmarked' or unconscious, they reveal what people take for granted about how the world works, or more important, how it should work. We theorized that we could gain indirect access to worldviews by analyzing the metaphors used in everyday language. This theory is built on the assumption that metaphors function as mental templates, helping people to structure and give meaning to their interaction with the world" (p. 5).

Having worked with the Worldview Analysis Group (whose work is represented in Blechman, Crocker, Docherty, and Garon, 1998), and having created my own version of their metaphor analysis form to analyze Hungarian and Slovak orientations to the conflict surrounding the Gabcíkovo Dam (Goldberg, 1995), I built on their experience, and mine, in designing the methods for this research.

Methodology

Building on this work, I developed new methods for revealing worldviews, although the methods still focused on the identified areas of greatest utility in worldview research: narrative and metaphor analysis. The research focused on professional conflict resolvers, specifically environmental conflict and intercultural conflict specialists, with a goal to gather data from the most experienced and influential practitioners in both sectors. Learning, in our field, generally proceeds through trainings and workshops, and the most influential and experienced people train the next generation. If there were patterns of worldviews, key orientations to conflict resolution practice, it could be hoped that those pioneers who shaped the field would represent the breadth of those values. Of course, this group could not be completely representative of the rest of the field, because pioneers and leaders are by nature different from those they lead. However, my hope was that there would be a reasonable correspondence between key worldview orientations shaping the map of practice of these leaders and the rest of us, or that the overall attempt to make the map would illuminate the potential for worldviews to be mapped for our field.

Qualitative researchers, who focus on depth and richness in data, must generally use a nonprobability sample (Berg, 2001). I worked to develop representation in the data by attempting to contact literally every major practitioner in the EPP and intercultural sectors, and I limited my focus by looking for those who were well known through snowball sampling and noting the number of times a given practitioner was referred to me. There was a risk that well-known people could be excellent marketers, good writers, and the like, rather than necessarily real leaders in the field. This risk was, I hope, somewhat compensated for by my knowledge of the field myself as a member of it for more than twenty years and being familiar with the reputations and works of many of those I was privileged to interview.

All interviewees were full-time, professional practitioners of conflict resolution, specializing in EPP, intercultural cases, or both. The final database

of 188 practitioners was narrowed to 78 with whom I did preliminary interviews. Of those, I ended up interviewing 43 as a representative group, and of those, 18 interviews were coded (although all 43 were transcribed). Eight of the coded respondents were predominantly EPP specialists, two were predominantly intercultural experts, and eight were both. The discrepancy is a reflection of the field; there were remarkably few practitioners who self-identified as being primarily intercultural specialists. The internal validity of the work would have been greater if I had been able to fully code all 43 interviews, but the length and complexity of coding methods made it prohibitive; full coding took 50 hours per interview. However, I did review all 43 interviews after the original map and profiles were completed and did not find any data that fell outside them, except the frames I ended up representing as "the Thinker," which were then added to the map.

The interview protocol focused on what interviewees did well, moving methodically through major parts of the intervention process and eliciting practice stories, and then the interviews were analyzed with narrative and metaphor to reveal the worldview and values of the speaker. Juliana Birkhoff, a professor at the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University at the time, recommended the focus on success (what they did well), saying that many things can cause a process to go wrong, but relatively few lead to success. To triangulate the data to see how great the degree of difference was between experts and young practitioners, I also interviewed five young practitioners. Their narratives lacked the self-reflection of the experienced, senior mediators to the extent that the data were not completely comparable, but the key worldview continuums were congruent. I describe the coding process in detail in the next section.

I wanted to build theory that was induced from the field—responsive to and grounded in the needs of a practice-based discipline. This meant I needed to do grounded theory building and analytic induction in my research, letting the data tell me what was important as I went. I was extremely privileged to have so many of the best people in both sectors agree to talk to me (only two eligible people declined to be involved in the work). The focus was on what a practitioner did well—for instance, in terms of gaining entry into a conflict—and then once they had described a technique or set of skills, they were asked to tell me a story of a time they used that technique and things went really well. The interviews covered each stage in a conflict resolution process, from case entry to wrap up and evaluation. I elicited these practice stories because "rich" or "thick" data were most likely to contain the narrative and metaphor elements, or the frames

and worldview data that I was looking for. I used narrative and metaphor analysis because classic qualitative methods reveal themes and patterns, but not worldviews. To uncover worldviews and correlate them with practice moves, which could be coded more conventionally, I needed more than information fragments to code, which is what classic qualitative analysis uses. The two key forms of data gathered from the interviews were the structure and content of the narratives, which were consciously constructed, so they revealed conscious worldview elements or frames; and the metaphors used, which revealed unconscious worldview structures and frames.

Narrative Analysis

Narrative analysis has been the analytic methodology of choice for worldview theorists because, in Riessman's words, narratives are a "primary way individuals make sense of experience" (1993, p. 4). Analyzing how people make sense of experience through narratives reveals a constructed recounting of understood reality, that is, how the interviewee thinks the world is constructed and organized and his or her internal worldview framework. Narrative analysts look at how stories are structured, composed, what themes drive them, how storytellers portray their own role, and so on. I drew from several prominent narrative theorists and analysts to develop ways to systematically analyze the data. Docherty, an expert in worldview analysis, suggested creating a series of questions based on these theories, and holding each interview to the same analytic set of questions about the information embedded in the narrative form itself. I will not go through the entire list of questions, which was quite long, but give quick examples. So, for instance, from the most famous conflict worldview theorist, Oscar Nudler, I drew the following questions:

- What is valuable or important to this person? (axiology)
- What is moral or right for this person? (ethics)
- What does the speaker consider "true" knowledge, and how is "good" information obtained? (epistemology)

If this seems abstract, here is a sample question I drew from Burke's theory of narrative dramatism (1945): How do the speakers see their role in the "drama" of conflict resolution work? What role(s) does the speaker see himself or herself as having?

There were also questionnaires based on the work of D'Andrade (1992), Bormann (1985), and the work of previously mentioned world-view analysts. After transcribing each interview, I coded them using Nvivo qualitative software. For instance, I coded for each separate role described by each practitioner as he or she narrated a practice story, each separate construction of the other actors in the narrative (parties, lawyers, government agencies, the press), and so on. From all this, in comparing data from one interview to the next I was able to discover differences in what is important to attend to or what is real for the speakers, and so on, which were summarized into continuums across which orientations varied.

It is useful to note that one inherent challenge in this work, as in all research, was that my own worldview obviously obscured some frames of reality and privileged others. Control was created through use of exhaustive coding (for apparently null data as well as clear data); using a strict analytic questionnaire; and layered, iterative analyses of each interview. I did this by analyzing one level at a time, going back and comparing one to another and coding again, and letting each iteration and comparison reveal more data. For instance, each interview was coded for level of narrative analysis, best practices, and metaphors. After the data began to reveal repeated, major themes, I went back and reviewed all the coded transcripts to see whether or not the themes that were appearing across all of the interviews were consistent.

Metaphor Analysis

Nudler notes that "most people's world views are normally not explicit, but, rather, they are unconscious. Consequently, we can only have an indirect access to them by analyzing their manifestations" (1993, p. 4). This is why he feels that metaphor and narrative analysis are particularly appropriate for revealing worldviews, and why Blechman and colleagues, Docherty, and other worldview researchers have relied on these techniques. Metaphors are a distilled method through which human beings carry and communicate a tremendous number of assumptions of the world. Lakoff and Johnson did much of the seminal work in this area (1987, 1980). Based on the work of Lakoff, as scholar of metaphors, and the work of worldview theorists Nudler and Blechman, I tracked both metaphors and similes specifically used to explain a point ("our work was like untying a big knot"), and those used in everyday language of the respondent ("using criteria to weigh options").

I found that doing the narrative analysis first, and then the metaphor analysis, revealed stronger correlations than previous worldview methods used by Blechman and colleagues (1998) and Docherty (1996), and my previous work, in analyzing EPP conflicts.

Process

My overall analytic process was to extract narrative codes individually from each interview, and do an individual metaphor analysis for each one. With such a complex analytic framework, the data revealed more than 440 primary codes, at which point the analysis became unwieldy. I then reviewed the data for the most salient narrative patterns within the set of interviews as a whole and found that the most salient data could be summarized as the categories of *role* (what does the practitioner see as her role?) and *mission* (what does the practitioner see as her mission? What drives the work for her?). The biggest difference between practices, generally, was in how practitioners either gave or used power. Role represented implicit data; how people described themselves implied a role of expert, risk strategist, smart guy, cartographer, process mom, and so forth. Mission, explicit or stated data, included things such as "I protect parties' rights," "I want to create a technically sound agreement," "I want to facilitate so people see the alternative view," and others. At the end I examined the larger datasets of role and mission for the breadth of worldview differences, from which came the continuums of key worldview orientations in my final map.

I did metaphor analysis as I went, in each interview. I was deeply appreciative of this technique, which I found both reliable and powerful. After collecting metaphors from a given interview, I invariably found that after going back and rereading it I saw worldview patterns as a whole that would otherwise have been invisible. In interview after interview, I would have a vague sense of what frames were shaping the practice of an intervener, and then do his or her metaphor analysis; the vague sense would crystallize and clearly reveal the worldview frames shaping the work.

Finally, I compared the collected narrative categories with the individual ones for congruence. That is, did my general data still explain the findings for individuals? There was an individual metaphor analysis for each interview, and a list of that person's coded missions collectively; and there were the role and mission worldview continuums from the data as a whole. The individual data were congruent with the collected datasets of role and mission, meaning that how an individual described his mission and the

metaphors he used always fell within the continuums of worldview orientations described by the collected data. Finally, once the continuums were clearly described, I began to detail differences along the continuums, places where the differences in worldviews were most patterned, and the associated practices that went with those patterns. I found that although the words used might have been similar (agent of reality, for instance), the acts taken by practitioners working from various places on the continuums differed in a patterned, repeating manner. After finding what seemed to be several key patterns of worldviews and practices, those were again compared to the individual interviews. The patterns that appeared to connect practices to locations on the continuums were congruent with the data from individual practitioners. For instance, I found a pattern relating an orientation in a particular narrative toward respecting diversity; focusing on the validity of multiple realities rather than one singular truth was associated with a focus on prioritizing time to build relationships as much more important than staying on task. After finding this pattern repeated, I went back to the original transcripts and found that, consistently, in stories where the practitioner emphasized the importance of respecting multiple realities, the associated practices stressed relationship over task.

There were several consistent patterns connecting locations on the continuums with practice choices. I pulled these together into miniprofiles of correlated worldview locations and practices: a focus on individual consequences (later called the Sheriff), focus on individual transformation (the Pastor), focus on better opportunities for individuals (the Captain), focus on the objective right answer (the Alchemist), focus on relationships and community (the Family), and focus on social justice (the Radical). Of note, these represented the *dominant* focus of a particular narrative, so even though a single practitioner might talk about relationships as well as the right answer, the primary focus of the narrative—in the case of those narratives associated with the Alchemist profile, for example—was the right answer. I then reviewed the data and found that all the data fell into one of the profiles except for a set of orientations from some of the academically based practitioners, with a focus on the best theory to ground practices (the Thinker). *I want to be quite clear that both the extreme ends of the continuums and the profiles do* not *represent real people; nor are they intended to.* They represent moments or locations along continuums that any practitioner may use at any time. I describe them as connections of associated worldviews and practices because of the patterned connections between them over layers of analysis, but this does *not* mean they are descriptive of any

practitioner in totality. I did find that, generally, key worldview orientations were consistent throughout a particular interview (so any given practitioner tended to draw heavily on a repertoire of a few orientations), but my interviews revealed that these pioneers and experienced practitioners generally were able to draw on more than one profile and move back and forth along the continuums.

Findings

Because I know these methods are hard to visualize, I am including a graphic representation of the flow of analysis (Figure 1) and a few short examples. I briefly review the map (Figure 2), then give examples of

Figure 1. Methods

"Thick" or "rich" data were collected from interviewees by eliciting descriptions of specific practices. Then practice narratives were elicited describing a time when the technique was used.

All interviews were coded using Nvivo, codes being created inductively as the interviews and the analysis proceeded. Data were coded for specific practices, narrative structures, and metaphors. Metaphors were coded individually for each interviewee. Other codes were collated and compared, iteratively, as the analysis proceeded. Both levels of analysis were compared again and again to deepen the analysis.

As codes were collected they were analyzed to find the most salient narrative structures, practices, and metaphors.

Role and mission were revealed as key narrative codes, and power as the key practice dynamic that varied by orientation.

These collected categories were analyzed and compared both as the analysis proceeded and collectively at the end, for key differences in practitioner orientation, or worldview frames.

The patterns in the collected categories were compared to the individual metaphor analyses, iteratively, to reveal patterns connecting all these elements.

Key, repeating patterns connecting role, mission, and the metaphor analyses became the continuums, which were again compared to the individual data for congruence.

The patterns connecting locations along the continuums to the patterns in the use of power were described in the profiles.

Figure 2. Map of Continuums of Difference in Practice

Ideological Metaframe

Realistic   Constructive

◄───►

Ontology: There is <u>one</u> reality   Ontology: There are <u>multiple</u> realities
Ethnocentrism   Ethnorelativism

Epistemology: We can know "the truth"   Epistemology: We can compare "truths"

Axiology: Objective factors matter   Axiology: Subjective factors matter

Logic/order: Analysis, cognitive,   Logic/order: Emotive, intuitive, relational
empirical processes; task has   processes; relationship has priority over
priority over relationship   task

Locating the Profiles

Realistic   Constructive

◄───►

Individualist goal   Collectivist goal
Individual rights, choice priority   Good of society priority

The Sheriff: The Radical:
Focus on individual   Getting to the root to
consequences,   make a better society
understanding reality

                    The Thinker: The Family:
                    Focus on the best theory,   Focus on relationships,
                    so that individuals make   build community
                    educated choices

                 The Pastor:
                 Focus on individual transformation,
                 so relationships are repaired/transformed

            The Captain:
            Focus on the right process,
            so individuals can get
            to chosen destination

The Alchemist:
Focus on the right formula,
best data, so individuals
make wise choices

patterns of practices, metaphors, and kinds of subcategories that emerged from the role and mission coding, and connect the examples to the profiles and the continuums.

The data were analyzed in the iterative manner described, and the worldview orientations that emerged formed the boundaries of the continuums described in the map. I should note that I found several more continuums but have limited this discussion to the most salient meta-frame to help focus this article.

The major ideological meta-frame continuum runs from what I call "Realistic" to "Constructive." The ends of these continuums parallel a larger debate in society and in the field around what political science calls Realism and Social Constructivism (nor is it surprising that the worldviews shaping our field are connected to those in the larger society). Realism is an orientation to decision making focused on responding strategically to power shifts through analysis of an individual's rational self-interest. Social constructivism emphasizes the belief that human understanding is created through interaction, and so it focuses on interpersonal relations and social learning. However, my data were really not the same as those concepts, so I found reminiscent but different terms to mark the worldview orientations I found in my data: Realistic and Constructive.

The Realistic end related to a focus on individual interests, helping parties create more "realistic" solutions, and an orientation to "reality," or the world as it is. The Constructive end represented a belief that morals and values are relative, and a corresponding focus on the parties' *perceptions* of reality. In my data, this end was also frequently associated with challenging the status quo and advocating for social justice or what "should" be. There are four continuums associated with and related to the meta, realistic-constructive continuum: the ontological, epistemological, axiological, and logic/order orientations associated with either end of the meta-continuum. This set of associated concepts shows some of the conceptual moves from orientation to practice. Ontology shapes epistemology, which shapes axiology, and logic or order.

From an ontological standpoint, then, the Realistic side of the continuum is connected with the idea that there is one "truth" out there, regardless of one's cultural frame, and that our cultural norms are more universal than relative. From the standpoint of epistemology, it follows that "the truth" can be completely known through diligence and using the right tools (often logic and empirical testing, because they are seen as the least biased). This leads to a mediator focus on objective rather than subjective truths,

and an assumption that if everyone can be made to see "the" truth of the situation, then clear, limited options that all can agree on will become visible. This is how the epistemology connects to the axiology—an assumption that what matters are objective factors. Similarly, this focus on "getting real" and on universality makes task a clear priority over relationship.

The Constructive end of the continuum is associated more with understanding the differences between contrasting realities. This concept of conflict also makes it unnatural to see the role of a mediator as a neutral, or capable of being fully "outside" the conflict, because every reality exists relative to others, and each reality creates the others through our interaction. This means relationship building is at least as important as data gathering. From an ontological standpoint, the constructive end is associated with an assumption that there are many truths out there, framed and shaped by worldviews. From the standpoint of epistemology, then, mediators engaging this end of the continuum would assume that the best we can do is share our truths and come to understand one another, and how our perceptions shape our realities, instead of attempting to get to the truth. This leads to a focus on mutual understanding, before the group proceeds to resolve the conflict, so that everyone can understand how his or her reality will shape that process. The epistemology connects to the axiology through an assumption that subjective factors matter, for instance, in prioritizing relationship over task.

The profiles, as previously mentioned, describe major practitioner moves around power as correlated with locations on the continuums and are *not* intended to describe real people, but rather places practitioners can go as they move along continuums and practice moves correlated with those locations. I should note again, however, that most respondents showed very strong, reiterated worldview patterns throughout their interviews. This doesn't mean that they were stuck in one place on the continuums or just reflected one profile, but it did mean they had strong, reiterated tendencies. For instance, *no* practitioner interviewed showed all the patterns from all the profiles, and most drew heavily on a select few.

Examples

In this section, I give examples from the data showing how the levels of analysis connected. I look only at one profile per respondent (although, as I say, most practitioners drew on more than one). The metaphor analysis represents the worldview orientation of an individual practitioner. Respondent

9, an EPP practitioner, often drew from the associated moves and location of the profile I called the Alchemist. The practice moves associated with that profile were code X = practices using power, O = practices empowering parties, and G = letting go of power. (This profile did not have many empowerment moves associated with it.)

X   I do the diagnosis of what's going on and what's negotiable

X   I make sure they stay on task

X   I make sure they have the right people there

X   I decide who needs to be there

X   I make sure they get the information they need

X   I get facts organized

X   I assess and analyze the conflict

X   I bring to the surface what needs to be revealed

Here are some metaphors used by respondent 9:

Leaving a certain vacuum

Refining a process

Complicated political chemistry

Set the atmosphere

If the wheels come off of this agreement

Catalyze something toward an agreement or solution

Criteria to weight options

Airtight correlation

My litmus test

The different moving parts of a situation

In more than one narrative, respondent 9's metaphors were strongly congruent with the Alchemist role and its location on the continuums. They were strongly on the side of, for instance, individual rights and objective, task-oriented work.

In contrast, these are the practice moves used by respondent 35, who is also a seasoned EPP practitioner, which are associated with the profile the Family:

X   I build space to help disparate people build relationships

X   I create relational space for folks who would not normally be together

X   I do relationship building so we can work with our hearts as well as our heads

X   I do work built from their setting, elicited from their knowledge and design initiatives

O   I help them tell their own story

O   I'm interested in the transference of skills, empowering them to be more and more effective in their relationships

O   I help them articulate what their vision for their community would look like; I use their words

O   I work with them one-on-one to help them see their power

G   I am always touching base, trying to figure out what's going on, what's working for them, and what's not

Respondent 35 used these metaphors:

Patch up

Salvage

Name what's going on

Like a doctor telling you

Adapt to their situation

See traps earlier

Rescue it

Putting people on a better track

Mystery

Clues

Come in with a magic cape

As you can see, this person in using this profile drew more strongly on the other end of the continuum, focusing on sharing multiple realities, subjective factors, and relationship before task.

The final example shows how the practice moves and metaphors, role, and mission of a particular respondent, in a particular narrative, locate

them on the continuums. Respondent 41's role and mission are to help heal community through relationship building, specifically with an agenda of surfacing and healing the wounds left by a socially unjust and oppressive society. The focus on multiple realities is associated with a strong focus on relationship over task, which tends to locate this narrative on the Constructive end of the continuum.

Here are some metaphors from respondent 41:

Nourishing

Intimate

Liberating

Hits home

Pedestal

Top-down

Walk this balance

Not aloof

Evolves

Building community

Reconcile task and community

Essence

Quieting

Cut them off

Soapbox

Tricks

Notice that these metaphors emphasize inequality in power, challenging that inequality, and community. Their role and mission in this story are associated with the Radical. This person also described practices from that profile:

X   I coordinate between people who could make change together but are suspicious of each other

X   I get the right people consolidated in the right direction

X   I create relational space for folks who would not normally be together

O   I help people create authorship of their own knowledge base

O   I try to be sensitive to the dynamics that exclude voices

O   If you're a participant in the process, you have a right to tell the story you think the other people need to hear, even if they don't want to

Lastly, here are two direct quotes from interviews strongly showing ends of the continuums. *R* stands for the respondent, and *M* for myself. First, from the Realist end:

R: So all of that goes into a calculus, which presumably leads the company and the government to look for acceptable settlement terms. And if they don't just come up with them themselves, I try to help them do that.

M: So what did it look like in that case? To look for mutually acceptable terms?

R: It looked like a permit for disposal of the contaminant. It looked like reduced fines.

M: How did you help them move from that to mutually acceptable—

R: You don't ne—that *does* that. There *is* no difference between when you uh, I mean unless they're irrational, once they realize risk they begin to move. There's no, there's no, nobody says I'm at risk and then freezes. . . . So once you get them to realize the risk, they will begin to invent methods for escaping it. I don't need to do that. I mean, they're not, stupid or crazy and I guess people need to understand that. You're depending on the rationality of the parties and their risk aversiveness.

M: OK. Why do you think—what happened to them when you made them realize the risks?

R: Realizing the risk *is* what happened [to] them.

And from the Constructive end:

R: Yeah, see, because I want to say and do things that's gonna generate conflicts. See the key point to understand all this is we're already *in* conflict. You know, it's not like it's gonna happen. It was institution-alized 250 years ago.

M: Um-hum.

R: With regard to Latinos and Native Americans, it was institutionalized 500 years ago with Columbus.

M: Um-hum.

R: So we're already in conflict. OK? So that if you really address diversity in any kind of realistic way, what you're gonna elicit is the conflicted feelings that are always there.

I hope these examples clarify some of the patterns I saw in the data.

Acknowledging Limitations

Although I was pleased to find that these methods did reveal clear patterns, it is also incumbent upon me to acknowledge the limitations of the research. One obvious limitation of this kind of research is that to be able to look at worldviews, I asked practitioners for their perceptions of their own work. Clearly, anything I found in my data should, in the future, be tested through observation of practitioners to test actual practice moves against self-perception. Again, the respondent pool itself was limited to well-known professionals and may not be representative of many practitioners who are not leaders or are in other sectors. I did attempt to triangulate the data using both young practitioners, as mentioned earlier, and also interviews with five professionals who do similar work in other fields—an environmental lawyer, an organizational development consultant who specializes in cross-cultural work, and so on. Those data were probably too sparse to allow meaningful comparison, but it was striking that *none* of the other five specialists focused on or talked about process with anything approaching the skill of the conflict resolvers.

Also, I must say clearly that I believe there are many more continuums and profiles and ways to approach practice not captured by this map and these profiles. My key aim was to test if such an undertaking was possible and if strong patterns could be identified. I did not aim for completeness and am not sure, in any case, whether any one study could claim to even approach a complete map of the worldviews shaping the field.

Implications and Conclusions

I hope these continuums will, among other things, begin to describe the edges of the map encompassing what we do, and raise questions about

what is or should be included in that map. I found that the practices chosen by excellent practitioners to exemplify what they did well appeared along both ends of our polarized debates, as well as many points in between. I hope this work can broaden some of the debate that sometimes seems to be a struggle to distill our collective knowledge into one right way and one (or many) wrong ways. For a field rooted in values cooperation and inclusion, our discussion of standards has often been too polarized and exclusionary. This work should add new dimensions to discussion about how we are different from and similar to one another as practitioners, how people handle and approach cases and why this matters, and how we enact the values of the field, such as self-determination, full participation, and empowerment.

Although there has been considerable discussion about pure neutrality in the field, I hope this research helps dispel any lingering doubts that it is likely to occur in practice. To engage the more currently relevant topic: Can we be impartial or effectively use operational neutrality? If so, should we? My work convinced me that most practitioners enact their worldviews in how they decide what it is important to focus on (ontology and epistemology) and decide what to do about it (axiology, logic and order, and ethics), and that those frames shape processes, specifically how they choose to give and use power in a process. Again, this is probably often useful for the parties, particularly if we are enacting professional frames such as an emphasis on inclusive process and full participation. However, I remain concerned that we may sometimes fail to perceive things of key importance to clients who are very different from us and may sometimes impose our own worldview without being conscious of it, in ways that are problematic for parties. As I said earlier, I believe that remaining ignorant of these dynamics or pretending they do not exist virtually guarantees that we will unconsciously bias our processes.

Several things may be developed to address these concerns. Certainly, we need more research actually documenting when and how these kinds of problems occur. Also, if we can learn more about how our worldview connects to our practice, we may learn more about how we can unconsciously skew processes. Better work in this area should lead to better techniques for successfully managing our own worldview. As with all intercultural and cross-cultural work, better self-knowledge is always a tremendous asset. The field already engages many wonderful techniques to develop reflective practitioners, and this research only underscores why they are so important. My theoretical work (in a forthcoming article on worldview theory) develops frameworks for considering how our worldview changes.

Another area that merits future research is what I call worldview shift, the ability to grow to encompass new worldviews, increasing the range of one's own, which I believe accounts for advanced practitioners' greater ability to move back and forth along continuums and access more profiles. I hope that there will be future research on which skills, approaches, and conditions encourage or support worldview shift. However, I also think there is a strong implication in my findings that, even with advanced reflective awareness, there may be a limit to the degree to which we can expand our worldviews, or perhaps even a limit to how much we should. One issue raised by my work is that people may be best suited to different kinds of cases; a bridge person or someone from or familiar with other worldviews may be needed as a colleague for some cases. Maybe no one is good or best for *all* cases. Although I did find that the advanced practitioners moved back and forth along the continuums and drew from several profiles, I did not find anyone who represented all points along the continuums and all of the profiles in one interview.

My work has also brought me to a relatively radical concept: perhaps the best way we can empower our clients is to be *more* explicit about our values, rather than attempting to limit our personal exposure. It might make us more effective practitioners and better able to serve our clients if we are more aware of who and what we are, and our clients learn more about the differences between practitioners, including their practice worldviews. Future research could include development of instruments for self-diagnosis and training to help practitioners and students become more aware of their own underlying worldviews, using similar narrative and metaphor analysis techniques. I also believe that client-friendly versions of the self-diagnostic instruments and the map could help clients choose practitioners thoughtfully and help practitioners explain to clients why they would be the right intervener for the job. I hope to use such self-diagnostic tools to gather data that can more clearly connect a practitioner's strengths to the kinds of cases or clients that are the best match. These instruments should also help reveal cases and practitioners that may be a bad match for a solo practitioner and may require a team—for instance, a case whose key issues are strongly at one end of a continuum and a practitioner whose greatest strengths are largely at the other.

I believe that, as a field, if we have greater clarity about the worldviews framing practitioners' work and how practitioners differ, and if we help clients understand these differences, we will have a much better chance of helping parties unmake stuck frames and reach satisfying solutions,

without unduly imposing our own worldview and frames. More critically, I think better access to self-diagnostic tools that help us see our worldview will help prevent cases like that of the tribe who wanted a homeland. I also hope these insights and new instruments help us respect and understand each other for the richness and diversity this field truly represents.

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