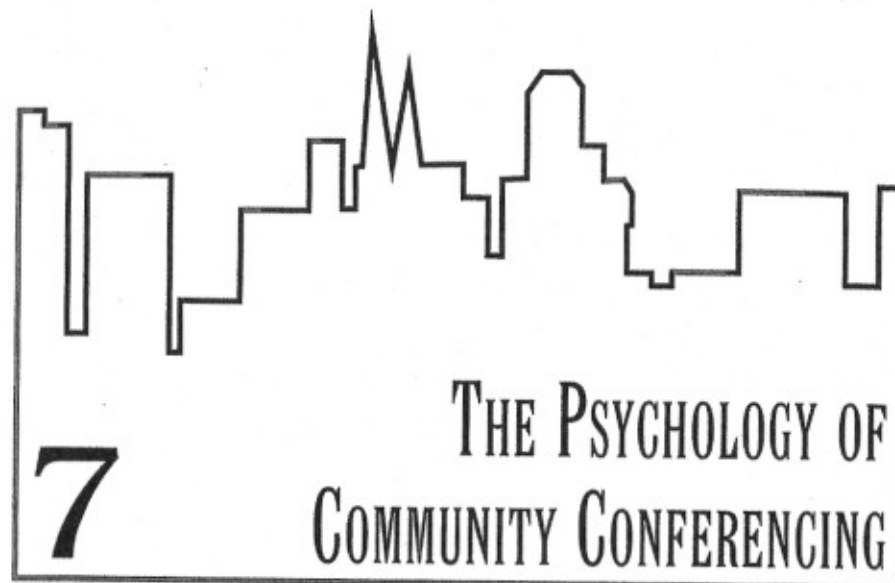Describe the three stages that are involved in Silvan Tomkins' model of personality which identifies the underlying emotional dynamic of a generic conference.

Why do the authors believe that minimizing conflict does not solve the problem of conflict?

In Perry, J. (ed) 2002,

Restorative Justice: Repairing Communities Through Restorative Justice. Lanham, MD: American Correctional Association.

7 THE PSYCHOLOGY OF COMMUNITY CONFERENCING

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Community conferencing is a process for transforming conflict. A community conference assists a community of people to experience a collective emotional transition. Together, they move from the negative emotions associated with conflict to the positive emotions associated with cooperation.

This chapter provides a case study that illustrates this transition from conflict to cooperation. We begin by examining how conflict transformation

differs from other approaches to conflict. Conflict transformation is the appropriate class of response in cases where the negative feelings associated with general conflict are far more significant to those affected than are the facts of any particular dispute. This is true when:

- A community of people has been affected by a single incident of undisputed harm.

- One or more disputes have been inadequately managed, leaving enduring ill-feeling in the affected community.

- Individuals may have no specific dispute with each other, but belong to different groups which are in conflict (McDonald and Moore, 2000).

In all such cases, in our experience, a dispute resolution process is not the required medicine. In such cases, there is either no dispute, or specific disputes are symptoms of the general conflict. Either way, destructive conflict is the primary problem. The community of people affected requires a process by which they can acknowledge and then transform that conflict.

We distinguish this approach from approaches that maximize or minimize conflict (Moore and McDonald, 2000). An example of conflict maximization is an adversarial court process. One side claims: "You did it!" The other counters: "No, I didn't!" The court is faced with a clear dispute, but no apparent common ground. To settle the dispute, an adjudicator arranges for both sides to gather their supporters and their evidence and to attack the supporters and evidence and to emphasize the differences between themselves and the other side. The conflict between the two sides is maximized as a side effect of seeking the best apparent outcome to the dispute: a win-lose outcome. This approach is considered a fundamental guarantee of the liberty when people are falsely accused, and the side effect of conflict maximization simply has to be endured.

An example of conflict minimization is negotiation assisted by a third party. In cases where a win- win outcome is still considered possible, the third party or mediator can help clarify issues and identify common ground, assisting the disputants to "get to yes" without getting overly heated. In this way, the disputants can resolve their dispute without destructive conflict developing between them.

Conflict minimization is the right approach when there is no deep conflict between disputants. When people are deep in conflict, however, conflict minimization is not the optimal approach. It may bring people together, but it fails to address the main problem that affects them. To focus on "clarifying the facts" under these circumstances is likely to make matters worse. It will produce stronger fuel for the existing fire of conflict, while the feelings associated with the conflict remain. A community of people who have been affected by a single incident of undisputed harm is certainly a community in conflict. So is a community beset by resentments because one or more disputes have

been inadequately resolved. These communities require a process of conflict transformation.

Community conferencing is emerging as the most appropriate intervention for such cases. Through the 1990s, the process was introduced in programs in education, justice, welfare, workplaces, and the governance of local neighborhoods. In some of these programs, the most common cases involved incidents of undisputed harm. In other programs, many poorly resolved disputes in the past and present were the more common cause and consequence of conflict.

A facilitator's preparation is generally more complex in those cases where many disputes have fueled and been fueled by conflict. Nevertheless, the fundamental dynamics of the community conference itself are essentially the same, regardless of whether the conflict is associated with many disputes, undisputed harm, or perceptions of fundamental differences between groups.

We examine the community conference here as an intervention in a program that is improving the governance of local neighborhoods. Some of the behavior in our case study could be defined as criminal. It is in such cases that community conferencing contrasts most strikingly with other current approaches. Unlike other approaches, a community conference does not ask: "who has done it? and what is to be done to them?"

A conference is only appropriate in cases where those who were involved actually acknowledge their involvement. In such cases, a community conference does not need to ask "who has done it? " Then, instead of asking "what is to be done to them?", it asks:

- What happened?

- What has happened since? Who has been affected?

- What do we need to do now?

In this way, community conferencing shifts the focus from an individual to a network of relationships. It does not focus simply on the individual who has most caused harm, nor does it just focus additionally on people who have been directly harmed.

Community conferencing also avoids the other extreme of focusing on society at large. Instead, it works with a specific community, all the members of which, by definition, have been affected by a specific conflict. Thus, they have a common interest in improving the situation that faces them.

It should be clear from this definition that community conferencing, as we understand and practice it, is decidedly not a process whereby: punishment is imposed by public officials on an individual; or therapeutic treatment is imposed by public officials on an individual; or punishment or therapy is imposed on an individual, by a group, on behalf of public officials (McDonald and Moore, 2000).

It should follow that the psychological dynamic of a community conference is decidedly not one in which individuals, confronted with the anger of those they have harmed, experience and express a cluster of shame-based emotions, such as remorse and guilt, and then design their own punishment. Nor is the psychological dynamic one in which individuals, confronted with the unquestioning support of those present, contribute to the design of their own therapy. Various versions of conferencing have been understood this way in theory and applied this way in practice. They, however, are not examples of conflict transformation and are not part of this discussion.

We have suggested what the associated psychological dynamic is not. To examine in some detail what the psychological dynamic is, we consider the experience of participants in one particular community conference—what they may have learned about themselves and others. Lauren Abramson facilitated this conference in a Baltimore inner-city community during the fall of 1999. It is similar to many conferences run by the Baltimore Community Conferencing Center in recent years.

The two-square block neighborhood where the conflict was occurring is filled with row houses. For decades, these housed families of European descent. In the past several years, many African-American families moved into the area. Most recently, the neighborhood has received refugee and immigrant families from Central America and Eastern Europe. The cultural transition in the neighborhood has not been easy. However, this particular conflict was not about clashing cultures or racism. The families primarily involved in this situation were African American. The most evident conflict involved some residents who were very angry at people living in a house around the corner and wanted them evicted from their subsidized housing. But was it this simple? What were they really angry and upset about? The answers to such questions tend to be more complex than they first appear—and so it was in this case.

Manifestation

A community organization wanted to provide some angry residents with resources to handle their ongoing conflict with the residents of one particular house. They said the mother, Mrs. Gray, did not have control of her two children, a boy age fifteen and girl age thirteen. The youths' friends would come and hang out in groups of thirty or more. They would cuss, make noise at all hours, vandalize, shoot, and make the block unsafe and unlivable. Three families were ready to move. The police were not helping either. Several calls had been made to no avail, according to the residents.

The community organization, to their credit, brought together a number of "providers" who might have something to offer the residents regarding the conflict. They would let the residents decide how they wanted to proceed. Mediation, parenting workshops, a listening project, and community conferencing were available. Everyone sat one day to listen to three women talk

about their rage at the situation. Mrs. Blue, the most angry and vocal resident, had a teenage son and mother for whose safety she feared. As she heatedly told her story, we learned that her oldest son and her nephew had been killed right by her house. "Something in her died" when she lost her son. Though she was no longer afraid for herself, she still lived in fear of something happening on the street to her mother or her surviving son.

Mrs. Blue had been speaking for more than twenty minutes when the mediation representative offered to mediate between Mrs. Blue and Mrs. Gray and her children. Mrs. Blue thought this was a good idea. Then, she heard about community conferencing and decided that having more people there would make it easier for her and probably better for the neighborhood. By the end of the meeting, they all agreed that a community conference should be their first step to deal with the situation.

Lauren told the residents that this "meeting" would be for anyone who is affected by this situation and for their supporters. We would hear what had been happening, and how people had been affected. Then, the group would decide how they could make things better. Mrs. Blue then turned to Lauren and pointed to a teenager walking outside by the window of the office and said, "There! There's one of the kids who is causing the trouble." Lauren left the office to talk to this young man about the conference, and so began the preparation. [Later, she learned that this spontaneous action had put the residents and community workers very much at ease. They were thrilled that she would "hit the street" to talk to conference participants.]

Preparation

Over the next week, Lauren knocked on doors and made phone calls to see who would attend the conference. At the identified "problem residence," she first spoke with a sixteen-year-old boy who was at home in the middle of the day on a Tuesday. When asked why he was not in school, he said he was trying to get into a GED class but they did not have the $108 he needed for tuition. When Lauren finally spoke with his mother, Mrs. Gray, she turned out to be a very hard-working single parent. Not only was she supporting her son, she was also supporting two others whom she took in due to extreme circumstances in their original homes. Mrs. Gray was fed up with people harassing her children. She loved them, and felt they were good kids. She agreed to attend the conference with her son and the other two in her home.

The more Lauren knocked on doors, the more neighbors stepped forward and expressed interest in attending the conference. Two long-standing residents, older women of European descent, agreed to participate as they were also concerned about the kids hanging out. One of these women, in fact, would walk two blocks out of her way to avoid having any contact with the teens. A mother, Mrs. Green, agreed to come, as did her teen daughter, who was in constant conflict with the teen daughter Gray.

After visiting the problem corner twice, Lauren still found no teens hanging out. Teen Green, however, knew most of the boys who hung out, so Lauren asked how she could invite them to the conference. Teen Green did not know their numbers, but agreed to get the word out. Three of the police officers who had been involved in this conflict also came: a lieutenant, a sergeant, and a community officer. They all knew the situation well. Fifteen people had agreed to come. By the time everyone sat down for the conference, word had indeed gotten out to the teens about this "meeting." Five minutes before the conference was to begin, twelve African-American male teenagers showed up because they "heard there was a meeting where they could have a voice." A city councilman showed up. All told, twenty-five participants sat down to hear about this problem residence.

Deliberation

The scripted community conference sequence (McDonald and Moore, 1998) is designed to encourage participants to paint a collective picture of what has happened and how people have been affected. Mrs. Gray was the first to speak. Nearly in tears, she told the group that she works hard at two jobs, had just earned her degree, and just wants to raise her children and provide for them. She stays to herself and wishes that her neighbors would stop harassing her children. If they had something to say about their behavior, she would like them to come to her, not call the police or yell at the children. Then, we went to find out how others had been affected.

Mrs. Blue spoke. Everyone was waiting to hear the litany against the Gray family. But not one word for the rest of the conference was about Mrs. Gray and her children. As it turned out, the conflict was not about this house, or that mother, or her children. Not at all. Instead, Mrs. Blue glared at the fifteen teenagers sitting across from her in the circle and yelled about how fed up she was with all these gangs of kids hanging out at the corner by her house. She was especially angry about one teen who had come to the conference, because he lived in another neighborhood. She shook her finger at him as she spoke. She told the group assembled how much noise and bother the kids are to her and her family. She told them she lost a son at that very corner. She complained bitterly about how the kids jumped all over cars when they played football, and screamed and used foul language.

At this point the young people chimed in. "Listen to what you're saying, Mrs. Blue! We were playing football! We just fell on your car going to catch a ball! We weren't climbing all over it or destroying it! We just have no place else to play. The lights go off in the park, and we get kicked out of the rec center at six! Where do you want us to go?" This was the primary source of the conflict: a group of fifteen (not thirty) teenagers who had no other place to play.

Twenty minutes of back and forth ensued between the teens and Mrs. Blue. The young men were very articulate. They even acknowledged to Mrs.

Blue, "We know you might want to make a memorial out of that corner, but we have nowhere else to go. The rec center closes at six and the lights go off in the park." Everyone was impressed. The city councilman told the youngsters that the rec centers are supposed to be open until nine. Several young men then told him how they are kicked out at six because there is another program that comes in, leaving them with no adult supervision. The councilman immediately got on his phone and left a message for the head of the city Department of Parks and Recreation, telling him that he had fifteen teenagers right in front of him with some issues about their recreation opportunities, and he needed to set up a meeting with them to work things out.

Several other related conflicts unfolded. Teen-girl Gray spoke with an air of defiance. It turned out that she was intimidated by teenage-girl Green and that they had some scuffles in the past. Girl Gray said that she "doesn't need anybody, so I just stay inside my house and mind my own business." The two teens and their mothers exchanged some words about their frustrations as well as their mutual desire to just stay out of trouble. But what this has come to mean for many young people in the city is that they keep to themselves and trust none of their peers.

Mrs. Gray and others spoke up about the nuisance that the vacant house next to her posed. Rats get in there because it is not properly boarded up. Mrs. Blue added that the graffiti on the house was an eyesore.

Everyone got a chance to speak. Most everyone talked about being kept awake at night due to noise, or being afraid of what the kids might do. But now that they heard these young people speak, they wanted to help them out. Everyone also talked about how angry and lousy they feel when others cuss at them. The adults do not like the young people cussing. And the teenagers were also angry that the adults cuss at them.

At one point when participants were discussing these issues, Mrs. Red, who came in late, began screaming at the male teenagers. The teens listened with looks of great disdain on their faces, but said nothing. Finally, the female police lieutenant chimed in to let the angry woman know that she would have her turn to speak, but that to interrupt in such a domineering way was not acceptable.

Decision

The police sergeant agreed that the vacant house was both a danger and an eyesore. He knew that a complaint had been made to the owner once before. He agreed to take this matter to the next level and put the process in motion to have the house properly boarded up. All of the residents expressed their thanks and said they would be even happier when it was done.

Then came the issue of how people would agree to speak to one another. Clearly, the use of offensive language was an issue for the participants. The proposed agreement was that the adults would agree not to cuss at the teens,

and the teens would agree not to cuss at the adults. The teens immediately agreed. To the surprise of many, two of the adults shouted forth with protests. "We don't swear at the kids!" "I'm not going to agree to something I don't take part in anyway!" The councilman spoke up. "Who are the adults here?" he asked. Both he and the lieutenant implored the adults to set an example for the young people; to be role models that can help them find their way. After ten minutes of discussion, the adults consented to an agreement stating that they would not cuss at the young people.

Several stories were shared by the adults about their own childhoods. They tried to convey to the young people that they knew some of the hardships that the children faced. They also said they wanted to help them in any way they could. The young people nodded with serious looks on their faces. Some adults said they would volunteer at the rec center, which was later detailed in the agreement. The councilman began to plan a meeting between the teens and the young people, when the community organizer piped in with, "Well, if this meeting is for the young people, why don't we see if one of them will volunteer to organize it?" A few moments of silence in the room ended when one fourteen-year-old young man raised his hand and quietly said, "I'll do it."

Refreshments

All community conferences end with some refreshments. This is an important time for participants to come together and talk to each other informally once the circle is dissolved. This conference was no exception. As pretzels, cookies, and chips were being devoured by hungry people (especially the teens!), the police lieutenant helped the new youth organizer get everyone's name and number so that he could contact them for their next meeting. Miss Mauve, an elderly white resident, made it a point to introduce herself to each of the young people present. There was a festive atmosphere as everyone ate and talked about what had just transpired and what they hoped might happen in the future.

Aftermath

There is simply not enough space in this chapter to describe in detail all that unfolded as a result of this conference. What follows is a simple list of some of the outcomes.

In addition, something very interesting happened two days after the conference. Mrs. Gray called the community organization in distress. Apparently Mrs. Red, the resident who had spoken so harshly at the teens during the conference, had called Mrs. Gray to tell her that the "real" reason for the conference was to get Mrs. Gray and her family evicted. Mrs. Gray was furious. Lauren immediately contacted Mrs. Gray. "You were there, Mrs. Gray. Is that

what you think the meeting was about?" "No. I guess she really just wants to get attention, huh?" The two talked for several minutes about her choices on this matter. She could follow through with the plans of the agreement and the spirit of the meeting which was to try to help each other. Or she could fuel the path of conflict and negativity and give this woman negative attention that might lead to another fight. Mrs. Gray laughed.

The following list summarizes the outcomes of the conference in the month that followed:

- The teen organized a series of meetings with young people and the recreation department/teen center.

- The youth organizer invited Mrs. Blue in person. Mrs. Blue agreed to volunteer to work with the teens.

- Several adults also agreed to help out the young people (including the associate director of Parks and Recreation, the councilman, the recreation center director, a police lieutenant, and the sergeant).

- Mrs. Gray and her daughter attended the young peoples' meetings.

- Mrs. Blue identified one teen who comes from another neighborhood as being "the problem."

- The police lieutenant told the young people how proud she was of them.

- The adults soon learned that no one comes to dances because they are held too early. The "problem teen" was assigned to work on organizing better dances.

- Teens met for a second meeting soon after the first. They discussed their desire for mentors, and decided to become mentors for younger children. Arrangements were made for this.

- Teens and adults planned a field trip to a local nature center that could offer summer activities.

- Two days after the conference, Mrs. Mauve, the older white resident who attended the conference, stopped by the neighborhood organization.

- She was ecstatic, because a group of the teens said hello to her by name and stopped to talk.

- The police sergeant checked on the vacant house. A registered letter had already been returned unclaimed. Actions were taken to get it properly boarded up.

- Free GED classes were located by the neighborhood organization, and two of the young people living in the original "problem residence"

have enrolled. A third was offered information about Job Corps, and an on-site visit was arranged.

- Regarding the recreation center:
  - The director is now more accessible.
  - Adult volunteers have stepped forward.
  - Miss Mauve now offers a sewing class for girls to make their own prom dresses.
  - The director now offers a cooking class.
  - An inter-rec basketball league team was established.
  - Jerseys were donated by a community worker's husband's store.
  - Two coaches volunteered, making a total of four teams.

- An adult who volunteered to coordinate youth activities for six months will be given space.

- The community organizer at the conference developed a new, positive view of teens.

- Regarding the establishment of new relationships:
  - Mrs. Gray and Mrs. Red (after Mrs. Red's "wedge" about the conference being about eviction) are now friends.
  - Mrs. Blue and the young people converse regularly.
  - Miss Pink and young people are now on friendly speaking terms.
  - The two teenage girls are now friends. A mediation had been offered, but they worked it out on their own.

- The city councilman brought twelve Orioles (professional baseball) tickets over to the corner the weekend after the conference. He was going to give them to the teens but they were not there. They had heeded the plea to not hang out on the corner.

- Mrs. Blue will be coordinator for the "Stoop Reading" Project.

- Teen mediators are being recruited from among the newly empowered group of teens.

- The police lieutenant met with the refugee center to look into ways to handle the conflicts related to the number of refugees who are being placed in this neighborhood.

- Teens have been asked to consult on a park development project in an adjacent community. The developer heard about the initiative of these young people and has enlisted them to help with the project.

All agreed, as one resident said to the lieutenant, they "can't arrest the problem away."

That is a profound insight. Yet, litigation is a common course of action for community organizations faced with these sorts of problems. One organizer told Lauren that, had it not been for the community conference, they would have proceeded with legal sanctions. Since the Grays live in subsidized housing, the community organization would have, upon the neighbors' request, approached the community board with the list of complaints and police calls about teen gangs. They would then have requested that this family be evicted. Yet, that family, in the end, proved not really to be part of the problem. To the contrary, the dialog of the community conference enabled them to play a significant part in the search for a practical solution.

The "Identified Conflict" and its Role in a System of Relationships

In family therapy, there is a common phenomenon that brings families into treatment. One family member, usually a child, is identified as needing the help; the rest of the family comes along to help this troubled family member. Therapists call this person the emissary or identified patient and sees them as the symptom. The actual client is the family system itself.

In much the same way, this community conflict had its emissary, its identified patient: the one house with a mother and her two children. In actuality, however, there were many interlocking relationships, all of which played a part in the conflict. Mrs. Gray and her children got the ball rolling. Once it began, the conflicts between several different groups of individuals emerged: Mrs. Blue and the teens; Mrs. Red and Mrs. Gray; the teens and the recreation center; the two teenage girls; the community and the police, and so forth.

Similarly, when a family begins to change patterns of maladaptive behavior, other members will react to try to maintain the status quo. In a sense, they benefit from the dysfunction. In the same way, Mrs. Red called Mrs. Gray in an attempt to keep the neighborhood in conflict. Mrs. Gray did not "take the bait." And then, without the currency of an ongoing conflict, Mrs. Red finally joined in the effort to build more positive relationships with her neighbors.

The Expression of Emotion as a Necessary Condition for Conflict Transformation

Our understanding of the emotional dynamic at work here is informed by a theory, which understands emotions to be the primary source of human motivation. This theory of personality was articulated most extensively by psychologist and philosopher Silvan Tomkins (1962, 1963, 1991, 1992; Demos,

1994). Tomkins extended the work of Darwin, who identified a set of innate emotional programs, or affects, which are part of our inherited physiology. The inherited affects include joy, interest, surprise, shame, distress, fear, anger, disgust, and "dissmell." Each of these "comes with" a facial expression that is universally recognized by all humans. However, these innate affects not only help us communicate with one another; their primary purpose is actually to motivate us.

As is elaborated by Tomkins (1962), the affect system is an amplifier. It draws our attention to whatever signal is being amplified at any given moment. And it is an abstract amplifier. Any similar signal will produce the same output from the amplifier, regardless of the source of the signal. For example, the affect level of distress is produced by any steady signal that produces an above optimal level of neural stimulation. A baby will experience and express distress in response to "too much." It makes no difference whether the signal "too much" is from the system of pain receptors (too much physical pain), from the thwarted drive system (too much hunger, too much thirst), from the five senses (too bright a light, too loud a noise, too much separation from touch, and so on).

These specific signal sources all produce the same general or abstract response. They all trigger the program for the affect of distress: the closed eyes, the clenched mouth, the tensed muscles throughout the body, and so on. So, it is with the other affect programs: anger, interest, fear, surprise, and enjoyment. Each responds to a particular type of signal triggered with a general response.

The system of six affects is supplemented or complicated by three additional programs. The negative response to taste (disgust) and the negative response to smell ("dissmell") are technically components of the drive system (emergency attenuators of the drives to breathe, drink, and eat). But they also function as elements of our emotional repertoire when they are used symbolically (to motivate and communicate about things that "make us sick" or "stink").

If disgust and "dissmell" are emergency attenuators of the drive system, shame can be understood as an emergency attenuator of the affect system. When we are having a good time and it suddenly stops, we feel ashamed. The shame program is triggered by any sudden and incomplete cessation of either of the positive affects: interest or enjoyment.

To be sure, socialization in the family, the community, and the society shape our emotional responses and our personalities. But the physiological programs of the affect system remain our most fundamental source of motivation and communication throughout our lives. Without emotions, our capacity for adaptation would be nominal. We need this system of motivation and communication to survive. Anger motivates us to attack. Fear makes flight possible. Interest prompts us to engage with the world. Sadness engenders care and comfort from others but what does this have to do with conferencing?

People in conflict come to the circle feeling strong negative affects. The experience is toxic, difficult, and distancing. Contempt, fear, and rage all keep us from getting along with one another. And our society provides few opportunities to cope with and/or transform these feelings. Therapists in this country can tell stories about the countless clients they see who suffer from high blood pressure, nightmares, panic attacks, and phobias as a result of being a victim of a crime in a highly charged conflict with others. Our institutional responses offer victims very little to address these matters, which deeply affect the quality of people's lives.

Conferencing, however, offers people in conflict a safe place in which they can literally give voice to these feelings. As they do so, they can begin to find ways to interpret their situation in a way that is healthier for themselves and ultimately for others as well. The conferencing process makes possible the transformation of conflict at several levels: within individuals, between individuals/within groups, and between groups.

In the generic community conference this transformation is, at its heart, a process dealing with emotion. Though many conferencing proponents have focused on the offenders' shame as being the cornerstone of this process, we feel this to be only one possible part of a successful conference. We assert that the sequences of emotions throughout a conference are critical to understanding the source of the efficacy and the power of the process. These affective sequences were first identified by Lauren Abramson (Abramson, 1998) and have since been characterized as taking place in four stages (McDonald and Moore, 2000). Again, this pattern tends to be particularly clear in cases where there has been a single incident of undisputed harm. In such cases, a conference will tend to begin with the following stages.

Stage I is marked by contempt, anger and fear, directed at individuals (on the basis of their actions in the past). However, as soon as people begin to describe what happened, and particularly when others respond with how they have been affected, the facilitator will notice the first major affective transition. The focus shifts from people to actions and incidents. This shift of focus is colored by a shift in affective tone. The conference moves to the next stage.

Stage II is marked by disgust, distress, and surprise that is evoked by revelations in the present about those actions and associated emotions and motivations. When everyone has had an opportunity to speak about what happened, and what has happened since, there is a powerful silence in the room. The sense that "we are all in this together" is tangible. Indeed, although it is only a brief interregnum in the process, we classify this short period as a stage in its own right.

Stage III is marked by a sense of collective vulnerability, a collective experience of the physiology of shame, as the community reflects on how things got worse. This moment is the fulcrum of the conference, the point at which the general tone is poised to shift from negative to positive. By asking

those most directly affected what they would like to see come from the conference, the facilitator initiates the next stage.

Stage IV is marked by interest and then by relief, as plans for the future are developed.

Collective painting of the picture generates an experience of connected feeling and results in connected learning. We would argue that learning takes place on many levels: the most powerful of which is neither individual nor collective, but connected. Connected means that there is an understanding-beyond-cognition which can happen only when feelings are shared, thereby allowing individuals to be open to relating to themselves and others in a way that was not possible before. It is not initially an easy process in which to engage. Each participant takes a risk when sharing and when connecting, since these strategies leave us vulnerable. But our experience across classes, genders, and cultures suggests that this process, with remarkable consistency, brings about a sense of satisfaction, excitement, and a sense of renewal in those who participate.

Once together, participants feel the community become more than the sum of its parts. The motivational transition underlying this process goes a long way to explain this phenomenon. Participants typically move from the more distancing and toxic negative emotions (contempt/anger/fear), through the less distancing negative emotions (sadness and shame), and finally to positive feelings (joy and interest) about oneself and others.

For example, participants often arrive at a conference full of contempt, rage and/or terror. The associated motivations are those of distance. The contemptuous person wants to keep the offensive other as far away as possible. The terrified person withdraws so as to avoid the dangerous other. As these feelings are given a safe room for expression, however, the transformation of affect begins.

The feelings of the conference often then move to disgust, surprise, or tears of sadness. Participants are often surprised at hearing how others have been affected. After the initial bursts of hard feelings, tears begin to flow. Already we are feeling the possibility of cooperation.

At this point, those who have caused the harm may feel the weight of what they have done and realize the consequences of their actions. Shame arises from a genuine inner sense that others have been harmed. Many others have been harmed. And sometimes there is also the sense that one's self-respect has been damaged. Tomkins (1962/1963) asserted that shame is triggered in the context of a positive bond; and there has been a perceived barrier to that bond. A person feeling shame will seek to restore that bond. Thus, the emergence of shame during a conference signals an openness to repair, to reconnection, and to healing. It is also at this point that others in the conference may realize that they, too, all share responsibility in all aspects of this event. This shift in the conference has been elegantly characterized by a

Canadian colleague, Marie Fitzgerald, as being a state of "collective vulnerability." Participants all feel a sense of responsibility in making things right with each other and in their community.

The final phase is marked with feelings of relief, joy, and interest, as participants move toward one another, psychologically and literally, as they dissolve the circle and share food and conversation with one another.

This theoretical model helps explain the empirical evidence that, when used in education, justice, and neighborhood settings, community conferencing:

- minimizes the likelihood of harmful behavior being repeated
- maximizes the sense among all participants that justice was done
- maximizes the number of relationships either created or strengthened as a result of the intervention (Moore with Forsythe 1995; Sherman and Strang 1996-1999; Chatterjee 1998).

This is a process that appears to truly build social capital—in that networks of relationships are created, repaired, and brought to bear on building a better community. Much of the discussion in restorative justice as well as many of the now-popular school curriculums teaching nonviolence is based on teaching people skills for how to treat each other "more nicely." We have collectively recognized the need to learn how to build healthy relationships. For instance, one popular and well-researched intervention (Greenberg et al., 1995) has five conceptual domains: self-control, emotional understanding, positive self-esteem, relationships, and interpersonal problem-solving skills. The experience of community conferences address all these issues making them a real and experiential means of building these skills. Learning by doing is effective; learning by doing and feeling is optimal.

The forces behind the power of the conferencing process are at once biological, emotional, social, political, cultural, and spiritual. Emotional attachments and a sense of belonging are vital to our survival. Without an understanding that we depend on each other for our safety, growth, and advancement, we will be destined to harm each other with our greed, anger, and isolation. The skills needed to get along with each other used to be woven into the fabric of daily life in villages, communities, and families. This is no longer so evident. Our society tends to teach our children less about getting along with each other than it teaches about how to compete with or to "safely" avoid each other. Conferencing offers a powerful way to bring us back to the teaching of cooperation. And the beauty of it is that the process accommodates novices and elders alike. The only requirement is that people show up.

When they do show up, they find themselves moving from the negative emotions associated with conflict to the positive emotions associated with cooperation. One more community is transformed for the better.

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REPAIRING COMMUNITIES THROUGH RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Questions

1. What advantage does community conferencing have over litigation?

2. Does conflict transformation actually solve problems or just bypass them?

3. Conflict transformation can be described as: "First getting to peace, then getting to yes." What might be the ramifications of trying to get to "yes" before you get to "peace"? In what instances would you want to make sure you get to "peace" before you try to get to "yes"?

4. Does the re-identification of the conflict from an individual to a specific community change the focus of responsibility?

5. How would the acceptance of Tomkins' theory of emotions as the primary source of human motivation impact our current criminal justice system?

6. Explain that if emotions are a necessary part of our biology, a person can be held accountable for his or her behavior.