
Editor's Note

Negotiation Journal

Finley Peter Dunne said that the job of journalists is to “comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.” We are an academic journal, not a newspaper, so it might be a bit of a stretch to apply his adage here. Nevertheless, our commitment is to advance the theory and practice of negotiation, which, in its highest form, can mean contributing to the resolution of costly disputes and promoting peace. So we hope that, over the years, we have offered some indirect comfort to people locked in conflict.

From time to time we have also afflicted the comfortable, especially by challenging conventional wisdom and questioning common assumptions within our own field. For example, David Metcalfe’s article in this issue, “The Protest Game,” reminds us that parties in some disputes — in this case a prolonged battle between extremist animal rights activists and a life sciences firm — will be ideologically opposed to any settlement. Using game theoretic analysis, he examines the strategies of the protesters to target not just the firm in question, but its business partners and investors, and explores why their strategies worked for some targets and not others. Finally, he explores how firms could change the game to diminish the power of extremist protesters.

Then Mark Young’s “Sharks, Saints, and Samurai” takes on the assumption that ethics must be a drag on negotiating power. He examines three seemingly different contexts — Nelson Mandela in South Africa, a supply contract with Pizza Hut, and privatization of electricity in East Germany — to illustrate the power and impact of “doing the right thing” for its own sake.

In turn, Marianella Sclavi offers simultaneously a serious look at humor in negotiation and a humorous look at solemnity in her article, “The Role of Play and Humor in Creative Conflict Management.” Humor, in the sense that she uses the term, is connected to openness and curiosity. It requires a willingness to understand that no matter how irrational or hostile other people’s positions may be, their attitudes rest on underlying assumptions or frames that make sense to them. When feelings are strong, real agreement may not be possible unless the parties both understand *and* respect one another’s perspective.

Negotiation Journal has always been resolute in its commitment to marry theory and practice — although it sometimes seems as though theorists and practitioners would prefer a divorce. In this issue’s column, Noah Susskind and Lawrence Susskind describe their efforts to bridge the

theory-practice gap by sponsoring a series of dinner meetings where theorists discuss their research with practitioners and the practitioners explore its real-world implications.

Rory Brady contributes a thoughtful essay on the transition from conflict to peace in his review of *Reconciliation in Divided Societies* by Erin Daly and Jeremy Sarkin. He describes how peacemakers must walk a precarious path by acknowledging past abuses and protecting against their recurrence, yet also look forward to rebuilding relationships between former adversaries. Brady cites reconciliation in Northern Ireland as an encouraging and instructive example.

John Hammond gives two thumbs way up in his review of a more general text, *Negotiation Genius* by Deepak Malhotra and Max Bazerman. He applauds this new book for enriching familiar negotiation theory with new insights from ongoing psychological and behavioral research. It includes, for example, chapters on blind spots in negotiation, confronting lies, and negotiating from weakness. Malhotra and Bazerman may not have set out to afflict the comfortable — their open affable tone suggests otherwise — but their new book will provoke old negotiation hands to take a fresh look at the process.

Michael Wheeler