

Workshop Final Report

**COMMUNICATION, CULTURE, PSYCHOLOGY: APPROACHES TO
UNDERSTANDING VIOLENT CONFLICT**

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The Workshop entitled, “Communication, Culture, Psychology: Approaches to Understanding Violent Conflict,” met as scheduled on March 25, 2008. All participants seemed to agree that it was fruitful. All eight papers on the agenda were written and circulated before the workshop. All eight authors presented their work, and all six discussants provided thoughtful responses. Plans for joint publication of the papers are moving forward.

The main lineup of papers was remarkably stable: all eight of the originally proposed paper-writers remained on board throughout all preparations and through the session itself. The papers as submitted to me in the weeks before the workshop were:

Sean Aday, “On the Opening and Closing of Framing Windows: The Relative Power of Elites and Events to Shape Public Opinion on the Use of Force”

Mikhail A. Alexseev, “‘Defended Nationhood’ and Ethnoreligious Violence in Russia”

Marie-Eve Desrosiers, “Communicating Group Solidarity: Fostering Intercommunal Violence”

Kelly M. Greenhill (with John M. Fulwider and David A. Weaver, not present at workshop), “The Power of Pictures? Evidence from the Case of Abu Ghraib”

Stuart J. Kaufman, “Symbols, Frames and Networks: Studying Ethnic War in the Philippines”

Neophytos Loizides, “Trapped in Nationalism? Elite Framing and Conflict Escalation in Southeast Europe”

Omar Shahabudin McDoom, “The Micro-politics of Fear: Measuring Civilian Radicalization in War-time”

Marc Howard Ross, “Narratives and Ritual Enactments in Ethnic Conflict Escalation and Mitigation”

The workshop itself was divided into three sessions. The first session was a panel entitled, “Frames and Communication,” featuring presentation of the papers by Aday, Greenhill et al., Loizides and McDoom. Sherry R. Lowrance of the University of Georgia and Landon E.

Hancock of George Mason University/Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution served as discussants. To try to facilitate in-depth discussion of each paper, we allowed discussants' comments and general discussion immediately after each paper was presented, allowing about 30-35 minutes total for each paper.

The second session, a panel entitled, "Myths, Symbols and Memory," featured presentations of the papers by Alexseev, Desrosiers, Kaufman and Ross. We followed the same procedure as the previous panel, with discussion of each paper immediately following presentation of that paper. Howard Adelman of York University and Uriel Abulof of Princeton University/Woodrow Wilson School of Public Affairs served as discussants.

The final session, entitled "Theory and Methodology: Connections Beyond Divides?" was designed as a roundtable and wrap-up session devoted to discussing theoretical and empirical questions across papers and across the two earlier sessions. Kaufman chaired this session, which featured comments by Sumit Ganguly of Indiana University and R. William Ayres of Elizabethtown College as lead discussants. Ayres noted that the central issue of the papers was culture, with the central questions about when and where violence is normative. Ganguly noted that given this emphasis, the papers gave little explicit attention to institutions. He also encouraged the authors to address more specifically issues about how to mitigate conflict. I presented a chart showing how the papers related to each other: in my view, they focus on different steps in what is essentially the same causal chain that leads to violent identity conflict.

The final session also included discussion about how the participants might be able to collaborate further. Authors were particularly interested in pursuing the possibility of a special issue of a journal. Several journals were proposed, but the leading candidates that emerged were *Political Communication*, *Political Psychology*, and *Security Studies*. In follow-up conversations held in small groups during the ISA convention, authors agreed that to make the joint publication a more coherent one, all the papers would be revised to use concepts from framing theory as a point of reference. After the conference, I circulated a number of prominent articles on framing theory to serve as references for these revisions.

Before, during and after the conference, I contacted journal editors to inquire about their interest in pursuing a special issue, circulating a letter of proposal to all three journals listed above. Due to the preference of her co-authors for quick publication, Greenhill chose not to publish her work as part of the group, but all seven of the other authors were included in the proposal. Among the three journals, *Political Psychology* showed the most interest, requesting detailed a précis from each author explaining the paper and its use of framing theory. We submitted all seven précis in late June, and were informed that we would receive a response after an editors' meeting in late July. We remain confident that we will succeed in publishing our work together, if not in *Political Psychology* then in one of several alternative outlets we have identified.

Budget Information

The approved budget breakdown was as follows:

Lodging = \$1,460 (($\182.48×8)
Per diems = \$1,200 (($\$75 \times 2 \times 8$)
Honoraria = \$2,240 ($\280×8)
Room rental = \$100

Total approved budget = \$5,000

Actual expenses approved for payment or reimbursement were slightly different, as per diems were lower than anticipated, so honoraria were increased in compensation. These amounts were:

Lodging = \$1777.50

Overage due to approval of two nights' hotel stay for two non-North American participants

Per diems = \$223.04

Honoraria = \$2880 ($\360×8)

Excess saved from per diems applied to honoraria

Participant Desrosier's honorarium applied as reimbursement for hotel accommodations at her request

Room rental = \$100

Total \$4980.54