



Editorial

Delma Sweeney

This is the first issue of the “new look” Journal of Mediation and Applied Conflict Analysis. The logo designed by Patrick Kelleher represents an ancient stone (the stone of divisions), a twenty-foot-tall, 30 ton fissured and fragmenting limestone boulder at Uisneach, in County Westmeath. While there are four provinces in Ireland today, a fifth province or kingdom existed at Uisneach in ancient Ireland. This area was also regarded as Ireland’s sacred center and the stone was understood to be a gateway to another world. Members of the Irish four provinces traditionally came to this place to resolve their differences and unite their divisions, which makes our logo a creative and dynamic representation of the journal’s mediation and conflict intervention objective.

We are indebted to Professor Robert Galavan for his work in creating the new journal format and providing a new platform for the journal, which remains an Edward M Kennedy Institute, Maynooth University, production.

The articles in this issue of the journal cover a wide range of conflict intervention approaches and demonstrate the reflective, thoughtful and energetic exploration of their work by practitioners in the field. Whatling explores approaches to working with high conflict, a challenging practice for many mediators. During a conflict, defensive decision-making reinforces high conflict, so that the mediator must do as much as possible to defuse this defensiveness in order to assist the parties in making their own decisions. As well as offering many practice principles for a constructive mediation conversation, Whatling urges practitioners to be mindful and hold a constant internal reflexive dialogue. These, he holds, are crucial in working with those in high conflict.

Rockwell and Modell outline how conflict coaching enabled a community mediation programme to offer a service when it was not possible to bring both parties into mediation or when one of the parties was seeking a better way to address a dispute. They outline the process delivered in training and provide the assessment of the results of the service from both the mediator/coach and client perspective. The article demonstrates that “*conflict coaching is a viable conflict management process that could be integrated into any community mediation centre’s menu of services*”.

Certain types of conflicts arise repeatedly out of recurring patterns of interaction embedded in the culture of a community. Sweetman and English demonstrate how repetitive conflicts result in predictable responses. Presenting conflicts may not occur in isolation but may form part of a systemic (reproduced) conflict. They argue that practitioners need to analyse the nature of conflicts in which they are engaged and ‘develop systemic consciousness’ in order to promote real change in the management of conflict. This article, while grounded in theory, has a practice focus and provides principles that will guide practice and has theoretical implications for both scholars and practitioners.



Conflict appears to be a common characteristic of congregations in every denomination. Puls reviews approaches to resolving congregational conflicts, as another form of organizational conflict, while integrating biblical references for a scripture based approach to forgiveness and reconciliation. He outlines a restorative justice model focusing on interpersonal forgiveness and reconciliation based on Christian scripture, clinical studies, and facilitative best practices. His article shows how the restorative model opens a window of opportunity for parties to each find cathartic release and relational repair.

Ireland's Mediation Bill, aims to "*promote mediation as a viable, effective and efficient alternative to court proceedings thereby reducing legal costs, speeding up the resolution of disputes and relieving the stress involved in court proceedings*" (Shatter, 2012). Moore considers the principles of voluntariness and impartiality/ neutrality in the context of the Bill and compares this with regulation in England and Italy. She also reviews challenges that could exist for mediation in Ireland arising from legislation.

The final section of this issue of the journal is devoted to "Reflection and Review," a heading under which Bennett reflects on his experience in the role of workplace mediator. He examines the role of an internal mediator, their expectations, first experiences, approaches to the role and the future. Bennett develops themes identified in the evaluative study of internal mediators by Broughton et al, 2014. Some of his conclusions echo the content of the article by Sweetman and English in this issue of the journal when he highlights the limitations of working with conflicts within the wider system and culture of an organisation. He concludes that, "*A major advance would be, therefore, to steer that whole workplace environment towards a more conciliatory approach*".

The authors in this issue of the journal rise to the challenge of meeting the objective of the journal which is for practitioner knowledge and practice wisdom to enrich the field. They each contribute to the development of mediation and conflict intervention theory, building a growing base of knowledge for practice.