



Editorial

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Editor

This edition of JMACA includes six examinations of conflict intervention in vastly different areas of practice. JMACA's mission is to publish articles that bring theory to practice. The adage that "there is nothing more practical than a good theory" holds very true in the field of conflict intervention. Practice theory is a theory of how social beings make and transform the world in which they live. The dynamic interaction between a system of ideas intended to explain something and the experience of the application of these ideas in the world, underpins the development of good practice. This interactive process enables the examination of conflict intervention knowledge, the purpose of interventions and builds learning, facilitating the development of the profession. From studies relating to workplace mediation, to the application of a systemic approach to conflict theory, an evaluation of a peer mediation programme for Irish Travellers in prison, an examination of the nature of radicalisation in Eastern Africa, and the role of the European Union in conflict resolution, the articles in this journal issue contain theory and practice knowledge across a wide and stimulating range of applications.

Siobhan Healy-Cullen examines the subjective nature of bullying in the workplace. In her study of Irish teachers, she finds that they understand that factors such as perception and personal resilience can influence what is and is not regarded as bullying. This research highlights the complexity of the way in which we experience abuse and counterbalances the common practice of demonising "the bully". Further research is needed to unpack the nature of interactions in bullying scenarios and this will prove to be delicate work, as the object of such studies is not to blame the victim or abuser but to clarify for all concerned, the general terms of what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in the workplace. These parameters need to be understood in order to guide human resource consultants when they make referrals to mediation.

The subject matter of **Roger Dwan's** study, conflict in the small business sector, has received little research attention. The findings of his research are based on interviews with managers in these enterprises, examining how they manage conflict. He finds that there is a knowledge gap in relation to how leaders in SMEs can engage positively with conflict. From his review of the literature, Dwan recommends that a contingency approach to conflict intervention is the most effective approach for this sector. This method considers "the needs of the self, others and the wider ecosystem". He reflects that managers do not naturally know how to engage with conflict in this fashion and need coaching in order to be able to do so. Dwan then sets themes, drawn from his research, which conflict engagement specialists can incorporate into their coaching for business managers.



Larry Fong outlines the precepts of cognitive systemic mediation practice in his article, 'New Paradigms in Mediation Thinking About Our Thinking'. Boscolo of the Milan School of Family Therapy, (Boscolo, Cecchin, Hoffman, & Penn, 1987) influenced Larry Fong's and John Haynes' systemic approach to mediation (Haynes, Haynes, & Fong, 2004). Both Haynes' and Fong's international teaching have had a significant influence on mediation practice, particularly in the field of family mediation. However, these concepts can be effectively applied to many conflict intervention practices. Fong has kindly agreed to the re-publication of his original article in this journal.

Tanya Lawlor's article describes the evaluation of an innovative peer mediation initiative delivered to Irish Travellers in prison. This pilot programme in Castlerea prison, County Roscommon, Ireland, shows how a marginalised ethnic group were empowered to manage their own conflicts in a prison setting. Statements from participants illustrate their positive experience, as does the high programme completion rate.

Fr Padraig Devine's examination of the nature and causes of radicalisation is the focus of his article, 'Radicalisation and Extremism in Eastern Africa: Dynamics and Drivers'. His definition of key terms such as radicalisation and fundamentalism, tolerance, extremism and terrorism provide the basis for his application of these definitions in a global context. His peace-making work in the Shalom Center for Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation in Kenya gives him first-hand experience of these concepts in action, and a particularly clear view of their consequences.

He explores the factors that contribute to radicalisation. These include underdevelopment and poverty, a youth population bulge and unemployment, weak state structures and discriminatory law enforcement, religion-based justification of violence, identity crises, misleading media, globalisation, easy access to weapons and sources of funding. The author makes practical suggestions providing ways to counter these factors through various approaches.

The final article is a speech by former Finnish President and Nobel Prize winner **Martti Ahtisaari** on 'The Role of the European Union in Conflict Resolution'. He holds that the EU is as important today in fostering co-operation between the EU member states as in the past and that it still plays a central role in preventing conflict. He refers to the role played by the EU in fostering peace in Ireland. He highlights that eight of the 10 most peaceful countries worldwide are European and cites the values on which the EU is based.

Nevertheless, the world is changing and many Europeans see the EU as irrelevant. According to Ahtisaari, the EU must guard against complacency if it is to maintain peace in Europe.

We need to continue to remember, he says, why the EU was created after the Second World War, especially in the current climate which has seen a rise in nationalism and growing isolationist sentiments across Europe. He argues that governments need to figure out how to build a union that is more responsive to citizens' concerns in order to stem the move towards nationalism. He also says that the EU must shoulder the responsibility of offering conflict resolution internationally with, "the capacities, expertise and resources to support conflict resolution if there is political will to do so." He gives examples from his own international experience as a peace-maker to illustrate how this can be done.



Boscolo, L., Cecchin, G., Hoffman, L., & Penn, P. (1987). *Milan Systemic Family therapy. Conversation in theory and practice*. New York: Basic Books.

Haynes, J., Haynes, G., & Fong, *Mediation: Positive Conflict Management*, (2004) Albany, State University of New York Press.