APPENDIX 1

‘CULTURE, VALUES AND RESPECT IN TRAINING

The workshop culture

The workshop style of learning, which is largely participatory, elicitive and experiential, runs counter to most cultures and represents an 'alternative' approach to education. In its informal, egalitarian style and ethos, it is a model of the values and the kinds of process embodied in 'alternative' approaches to conflict. Participants for whom this kind of learning is new are often unsettled, occasionally resistant, to begin with; but usually enthusiastic by the end. Their participation is voluntary (except when it is part of a longer course, or required by employers - in which case the workshop constitutes a counter-hierarchical experience arising from a hierarchical context - which can create some interesting dynamics!).

The very process of bringing things into awareness, of naming and problematising (which is also the process of my research), is culturally laden. It is closely related to the attitude to conflict which informs this whole field of approaches to it: an attitude which constructs conflict not as an evil to be overcome, hidden or otherwise avoided, but as simply a part of life which is particularly related to difference and change, which in turn are to be valued. What matters is that conflict should be recognised and dealt with constructively: that is, in such a way as to minimise its destructive potential and maximise the chances that it will have positive outcomes. This entails bringing the conflict into the open in order that it can be addressed.

The workshop process embodies this attitude to conflict in valuing openness in expressing differences; bringing into awareness and naming things more often left in the realm of unexpressed feelings and tacit positions. Although these working assumptions about conflict, which are mirrored in the workshop process, are foreign to some cultures, I have not found participants from any culture I have worked with unwilling participants or, by the end of the workshop, critical of its fundamental framing and approach. It is, of course, quite possible that some are reserving judgement, or keeping silent out of politeness, but it has not been my impression that any were feigning goodwill in their participation. Furthermore, workshops are

brief events, and participants are free, in the end, to take anything they find useful and leave the rest.

While the values and style of this kind of workshop embody in themselves all kinds of cultural challenge, they also, if they are offered in a spirit which is consonant with the approach which they represent, constitute the greatest protection against cultural disrespect or arrogance, since they make space for the valuing of different viewpoints, experiences and insights, and model respect and recognition. And through this form of exchange, I am constantly enriched and changed.

Challenging cultural norms

Hierarchical approaches in general, and attitudes to gender in particular, have constituted the most challenging issue for me in my cross-cultural work - as I believe they would if I were working largely within my own mainstream culture in the UK. Through the workshop process itself, I am able to bring into question, or counteract in small ways, tendencies and statements which support domination, by pointing out what is happening when it occurs within the group. I can create spaces in which timid voices can be heard, and spaces to try out new ways of thinking and behaving. This for me is a way of maintaining my own integrity and respecting my own values, the most fundamental of which is the equal valuing of all human beings. I do not want that value to lead me into insensitive or arrogant behaviour, or to attempt to impose my views on others - which would in any case be a fruitless endeavour. On the other hand, I have continuing difficulties with the good sense of my own conclusions, seeing, as I do, that oppression by gender is the red thread of the transcultural culture of domination which I see as being the cause of untold present suffering and degradation, and in great and urgent need of transformation.

While gender-related norms and behaviours have represented the most constant challenge to my values, attitudes to identity which are strongly focused on ethnicity also sit uneasily with a more broadly humanistic point of view. During the party political campaigning for UK elections in the earlier part of 1997, with all its 'banal nationalism' (Billig 1995) and worse, I suddenly felt that I had, in my frequent work with nationalist groups in post-communist countries, been suppressing my own dislike and mistrust of nationalism. I had suppressed it out of respect for members of those groups as people, and because I respected the reasons why they had turned to nationalism: the identity vacuum they found themselves in; the political and economic chaos of which they had been victims; their need for an understanding of who they were: for self-respect. I was also aware of the way the communist regimes had used and abused nationality issues for their own purposes, laying the ground for nationalist movements by those very measures designed to control them. Nationalism in these circumstances is a way of fighting back psychologically, of affirming oneself as a person, and at the same time feeling the support of a heightened sense of belonging. But it is also the tool of demagogues, wielded for their own power, and can lead to new injustice and new victims - as, for instance, many Russians in post-communist states, for instance, could witness.

The hurts of the past distort the role of belonging, encouraging dependence on hostility for a sense of well-being, reliance on victimhood for a sense of dignity and strength. This syndrome is present also in South-North relationships - was at work, for instance, in the Harare workshop - and in racist and anti-racist movements. It is sometimes present also in gender relations. Maybe there is a time when such responses are inevitable - even a necessary stage to be gone through; but I want to believe they can in time be transcended, once the underlying needs of identity and meaning are met, and that truly tolerant, mutually affirming relationships can be forged.

Is it possible to have identification without rejection, belonging without imprisonment and exclusion? I have a mental image of a magnetic centre, which represents the things which holds a group together: a sense of shared identity, values and perspectives which draws and provides anchorage for those grouped around it, so that there is no need for an outer boundary to hold them in, which would limit their coming and going and tend to exclude others.

My approach has been to try to bring these questions into awareness; to offer processes for participants to recognise that their identities are multiple and complex, and to examine their attitudes and assumptions in relation to their own espoused values, considering their impact on others; so providing the opportunity for both affirmation and adjustment. The use of exercises which enable participants to put themselves in the shoes of others, to see a situation through different eyes, helps to keep the boundaries of belonging permeable, to bring alive the knowledge of shared belonging to the human race; to bring into play, implicitly, the fundamental value which is present in the fabric of all the religions and cultures I know about - that we should do as we would be done by. In work I have done since I wrote my major accounts, in Abkhazia and Croatia, I have realised that to enable an empathic shift in people's thinking is something important to achieve; and at the same time I have been left with the knowledge that I simply do not share the enthusiasm of some participants for the nation state as a means of expressing the dignity of peoples. Those who see it as vital have their own understanding and experience of history, and are entitled to their view. I want to understand and respect their purposes and motivations, at the same time as helping them to examine and clarify them, and to look at the values behind them.

While gender and ethnic identity have constituted important issues in workshops I have facilitated, the widely noted difference between the South and East on the one hand, and North and West on the other, in terms of emphasis on collective needs and rights and those of the individual, has not, in practice, seemed to present much of a problem. Both ANV and CR (with the exception of some of the more individually focused versions of ADR) are concerned with action at the socio-political level, as well as the rights and responsibilities of individual actors - so that this dichotomy is not felt. That is not to say that there is no possibility of argument along these lines; only that I have not experienced it. On occasions when tradition and collective 'need' to affirm cultural identity have been adduced to justify what by others is regarded as a violation of human rights (as in the case of female circumcision), the argument has taken place between different members of the same cultural group.

I have noticed how little 'body language' has featured in my records and reflections. That may be in part because I have not encountered any of the more important cultural differences in my work. I give it not much more than a passing mention when I am

running sessions on communication - for instance (in Geneva) to warn against the blanket assumption that to 'maintain eye contact' is a necessary sign of attention; or that touching is or is not reassuring or offensive. It is my experience that attitudes are communicated in ways more numerous and subtle than we can be aware of or control, and that more or less deliberate forms of expression, by word or other sign, will be effective if they are further expressions of those attitudes. I doubt how well we can fake respect, or disguise the lack of it. Equally, I think the danger of causing real offence through some cultural blunder is not as great as we sometimes fear; witness the forgiveness for my toasting blunder in Abkhazia. Certainly subtle differences, for instance in the frequency with which courtesy expressions like 'please' or 'thank you' are used, or degrees of bluntness, can contribute to the creation of 'false' impressions or misunderstandings; but such subtleties of style and interpretation are a matter of personality as well as culture, and we manage them regularly by drawing on wider indicators, such as other aspects of a person's behaviour.

I do not wish to suggest that cultural norms in matters such as dress, body contact, eating, drinking or smoking should be ignored; only that if one shows a *will* to respect customs, no offence is likely to be given by inadvertent mistakes. I have come to the conclusion that communication is more robust - as well as more precarious and incomplete - than one might rationally expect.

Working across languages brings its own difficulties, and at the same time serves as an important reminder of the differences that lie behind language. It calls for extra time, clear speaking, practical care and, above all, acknowledgement. I try never to take for granted the efforts of others to communicate with me in English, but to recognise them explicitly and with thanks.

Respect and the 'missionary' problem

I believe that attitude (and by attitude I mean something profound - not superficial posture) is the key to showing respect, rather than detailed knowledge of different cultures and customs. It is perhaps also the key to the 'missionary' dilemma. How do I and others like me square our claims not to wish to impose our views and approaches on

others, with the fact of our travelling to faraway - sometimes even a little dangerous and uncomfortable - places, to engage people in strange processes and present them with new-fangled ideas? For we do present, even while we elicit. We present ourselves, our way of seeing things, our attitudes and our agenda. And although we (or those who employ us) may take care to work with local partners, and run workshops at their invitation, we are willing, if not eager, to be asked and make ourselves available. In some cases the organisations I work for have made themselves known to 'local partners' in the first place, letting them know they had something they might find useful. As a freelancer I am not involved in self-advertisement, often responding to requests direct from organisations local to the proposed workshop; but sometimes I work for organisations based in London or elsewhere in western Europe. If dialogue with local partners is instigated from the outside, I believe respect requires that it should be done tentatively, and on the basis of indications that there is a need which could be met in some way by the kind of workshop being offered. If there is no shortage of local resources, this is unlikely to be the case, unless having someone from outside the situation is important per se. If training workshops seem to be useful, contributing to the development of local training capacities would seem to be important.

To me there seems to be all the difference in the world between imposing and offering. I think I really do not wish to impose; not even, on better days, to persuade; but I do have a sense of mission. I am a missionary for opportunity. I want people, whatever their culture, to have a bit more of an option about how to address some of the hardest issues in their lives; more of a sense that there are options. Above all, I want them to find, or to experience more fully, that there are choices to be made - even in the worst of circumstances. If in wanting those things I lose sight of my own blindness, or assume some kind of superiority, or forget that I have in most ways had a privileged and easy life and have everything still to learn, then I have forgotten respect - as I am sure I sometimes do. But I do not believe that the mission itself is disrespectful. The values that I carry with me, of inclusiveness and respect, my longing to reduce suffering and to promote co-responsibility, are values and motivations which I share with participants. They are what has brought us together.

Violence and nonviolence

The place of violence and nonviolence in addressing injustice is one of the most sensitive and contested issues within most contexts of perceived oppression and violent conflict. Sometimes the fact that people resort to violence is a sign that civilising values have been overwhelmed by other forces; but sometimes it results from an overriding commitment to some value which those who are fighting have a passionate desire to uphold. If alternatives to violence are under discussion, the presentation of the alternative approach needs to be done with sensitivity, nonjudgmentally, and with humility. This is especially important when the presenter is someone from the dominant world culture, on the dominant side of the world economy, an inheritor of the benefits which were established from the spoils of colonialism, and a speaker of the language of colonialism, which has now colonised most of the world. As a matter of fact, if not of choice, those of us in the UK who are 'white' and middle class bear the legacy of colonialism, and benefit from its current forms. If we are not mindful of this, we will be reminded. And whereas I see it as my task in a workshop to work within the initial frame of exploring nonviolent approaches, I do not want that to prevent participants from challenging that frame. At the same time I realise that in choosing to facilitate the workshops I do, I am following my own values and convictions. I would not be willing to facilitate workshops for devising military strategies, though I would not question the right of others to do so.

Different aspects and levels of respect; **respect as a 'spiritual' matter**

Sometimes all or most participants have a religious frame for their deepest understandings and values. Sometimes they do not; but they will have some base line against which they are able to evaluate different elements and options in their circumstances. The concept of respect contains within it competing elements which have to be held, as it were, in dialogue with each other - like the dialogue between Mercy, Truth, Peace and Justice in the Lederach exercise. Maybe the different forms of respect are quite close to those four values, and might be expressed as compassion or care, honesty, tolerance and justice (for which I can find no more appropriate synonym). Whatever the words, I want to reflect in the content of my workshops the complex and competing demands of respect, and to avoid simplistic formulae which ignore major aspects of participants' experience. I am confirmed in the position I took in Chapter Two

in asserting that one aspect of the complexity of thinking and acting in relation to conflict is the need to embrace attention both to the role of individual behaviour and to collective dynamics and geopolitical structures.

I am also confirmed in thinking that it is unrealistic, rather than realistic, to think that only practical, political considerations can and should be included in problem-solving processes. Throughout my work with people in conflict, it has been evident that the world of emotions is a powerful one: probably far more powerful than the world of reason. If hatred and fear remain unabated, a problem-solving process will be impossible to conduct. Moreover, the need for dignity is a powerful need. Respect, as in recognition of common humanity, not only accords a degree of dignity to the other, and a recognition of needs; it also limits the fear which comes from demonising (while by no means removing realistic fear, based on actual experience). It is also the only guideline I can hold on to in trying to honour the dignity and sensitivity of participants who are still hurt by colonialism, past and present, while at the same time not apologising for who I am and what I have learnt.

Honour and dignity, and the sense of well-being in the world with which they are associated, can be understood as fundamental human needs. Attention to them in workshops, like attention to participants' physical needs, can, I think communicate respect in a way which goes deeper than words. This is something I have so often tried to express in these pages, I fear without success. Perhaps, too, my evidence is inadequate. But I still cannot ignore it. I believe that deep and genuine respect will be felt, as will the lack of it. Such respect is nothing to do with liking or agreeing with, but perhaps can be described in terms of taking seriously and caring for in a very fundamental way. Such respect is not easy, as the whole business of responding constructively to conflict is not easy.
But it brings its own joy, or love, at moments of recognition - the more so when it is difficult because of some personal antipathy or disagreement.

Since human dynamics of this kind are so important, I believe that training needs to recognise this level of human being and interacting, if only tacitly, and to include work to develop imaginative understanding, emotional awareness and interpersonal skills, as well as analytical and strategic thinking with a practical focus.'

NOTE

I did not discuss in this piece the question of inspiration and its importance (or unimportance). However, it remains as an issue for me. A colleague recently showed me a list that had been compiled within a CR organisation of the books which had been most important to its staff and board members. The great majority of the titles were not of academic works but the writings of idealists, such as Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, poets like Wilfred Owen, and Buddhist and Christian writers from the anti-war and nonviolence movements.