

**Conflict Sensitivity and Religious Associations:  
An Action Research Journey in Southeast Asia**

Michelle G. Garred, B.A., M.P.A, M.A.

*This thesis is submitted in fulfillment of the requirement  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Peace Studies.*

Lancaster University

June 2011

## **Abstract**

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The associational sector has gained recent prominence, and scholars increasingly recognize the dualistic potential of civil society and social capital to promote either peace or violence. However, research to date gives little attention to the large proportion of associations that influence conflict unintentionally, as an externality produced during the pursuit of other goals. This emergent cluster of theory, which centers on the work of Robert Putnam and Ashutosh Varshney, tends to generalize the nature and causes of such externalities in ways that overlook associational complexity and dynamism. Therefore this thesis explores the applicability of conflict sensitivity, an organizational planning approach that originated in the humanitarian aid sector, for understanding and improving the social impact of religious associations in conflict-vulnerable multifaith societies. The author undertook action research with two local interfaith associations in Mindanao and Singapore to test the usage of the 'Do No Harm' conflict sensitivity framework among religious audiences in settings of ethno-religious conflict. More than 160 Protestant, Roman Catholic and Muslim leaders contributed empirically through participatory social analysis, surveys and interviews. The study finds that 'Do No Harm' holds relevance and usefulness for religious associations, yet it requires conceptual and practical adaptation of its impact analysis components. Further, while the data support the importance in existing theory of bridging or intercommunal associational structures, there is strong evidence that individual mindsets and intentional human agency are equally central in shaping associational impact. Further, the public prominence of religion in Southeast Asia contrasts with Western-influenced liberal democratic assumptions, exposing a 'religion gap' in existing associational theory. Religious culture is shown to be a major influence shaping the formation and incipient change of group identities through associational life. Thus it is argued that wherever religion plays a public role, it should be consistently integrated into studies of associational social impact.

## Declaration

I certify that this thesis is my own work and has not been previously submitted for the award of a higher degree at any university.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, I explore how religious organizations, as part of the associational sector, interact with the dynamics of socio-political conflict, and how the social impact of those organizations might be improved. Such questions were unfashionable in Western circles during the era of secularization theory (Durkheim 1915, Weber 1930), yet never lost their significance in settings where religion plays a vital role in the public sphere. The current scholarly and public discourse reveals a growing unease about “uncivil society” (Keane 1998, Kopecký and Mudde 2003, Boyd 2004, Beittinger-Lee 2009) in general, and the divisive aspects of religion in particular. Alagappa, writing on civil society in Asia, has stated that “the rise of religious fundamentalism is of grave political concern” (2004a: 7). At the same time, there is compelling evidence of constructive contributions by religious actors towards peace (Appleby 2000, Abu-Nimer 2003, Coward and Smith 2004). The critical dilemma, then, is how associational theory and practice might be developed in ways that minimize the former, while encouraging the latter.

This thesis responds to that dilemma by empirically probing the potential applicability of conflict sensitivity theory and practice to the work of religious associations. The concept finds its genesis in my own practitioner experience in South and Southeast Asia, during which I observed that ad-hoc experiments in introducing religious actors to conflict sensitivity, an organizational planning approach originating in the humanitarian and development assistance sector, appeared to be associated with manifestations of individual and associational change in relation to



other religious groups. I therefore hypothesized that conflict sensitivity might be relevant and useful for improving the social impact of religious associations in multi-faith conflict-vulnerable settings, and I set out to rigorously field-test that possibility through action research in collaboration with practitioners in Mindanao, Philippines and in Singapore.

Further, because conflict sensitivity practice is centered on practitioners' own analysis of the socio-political context and their influence within it, I applied the data generated through conflict sensitivity testing to expand the theoretical understanding of how religion works within the associational sector to influence the dynamics of conflict and peace. The accounts of participating religious actors emphasize personal growth and change, striking a somewhat different tone than the heavy emphasis on organizational structure that characterizes much of current associational theory (Putnam 2000, Varshney 2002). This study therefore juxtaposes associational structure with other nonstructural variables, including religious cultures, to examine the relative weight of their influence in determining associational social impact, and the mechanisms of their mutual interaction. The aim is to contribute towards the expansion of existing theory, so that it explains not only what kind of associational structures promote socio-political cohesion, but also how those structures come into being and produce desirable effects, and how human actors may play a role in cultivating such outcomes. The focus of the thesis is not on application, but the project is intended to produce findings that are applicable, both to the creation of new practitioner approaches, and to the development of theory that offers sound guidance for action in response to real-world problems.

## **Religion, Conflict and the Associational Sector**

This inquiry is situated at the nexus of three key theoretical strands on religion, conflict and the associational sector. In the post-Cold War era, the public expression of religion is increasingly recognized as an important element of national and human security (Wellman Jr. 2007b, James 2007a, Juergensmeyer 2009). The growing attention paid to “ethno-national” (Connor 1994) civil wars has revealed the prominence of religion as a contributing factor in many such conflicts (Kaldor 1999: 76-86, Harff and Gurr 2004: 31-2, Fox 2004). Further, religion has returned to the Western public sphere in the form of the global debate over terrorism and counter-terrorism, often perceived as an enduring conflict between cultural “civilizations” that are framed primarily around their adherence to either Islamic or Judeo-Christian faiths (Huntington 1996). Such trends have led to numerous calls for greater incorporation of religion in the study of international relations and the practice of diplomacy (Johnston and Sampson 1994, Johnston 2003, Seiple and Hoover 2004, Fox and Sandler 2004).

During the same era, there has been an unprecedented increase in the influence of civil society, which is generally understood as a realm or sector of associational citizen action falling outside of the household and the state, and usually also outside the market (Morris 2000, Kocka 2004: 69, Edwards 2009: 20). Western-style liberal democratization emphasizes civil society as an efficient provider of public services, an influence on the formation of participating individuals, and a vehicle for engaging citizens on policy issues (Fung 2003), often as a counterweight to the state. Such democratization trends have given rise to what Salamon (1994: 109)

describes as a “global associational revolution,” indicating a proliferation of civil society organizations and networks at local, national and international levels. Nonetheless, efforts to apply the civil society concept in non-Western settings indicate that local civic associations pre-date current democratization patterns, and are not necessarily liberal or modern in orientation (Hann 1996, Kasfir 1998, Orvis 2001, Kaviraj 2001). This study therefore adopts the broader and less normative term “associations” (Rossteutscher 2005a) to describe a cluster of closely related concepts including civil society, social capital as the relational networks and norms (Putnam 2000: 19) that indwell civil society, and the “family resemblance” (Muukkonen 2009) that unites them.

The trends described above have converged to produce a pivotal interplay between the associational sector, religion and conflict. The contribution of non-state actors, including religious actors, to conflict prevention has become a prominent theme of peace research and activism (Gidron et al. 2002c, Rasmussen 2003, Kaldor 2007, Brewer 2010). At the same time, it is increasingly recognized that social mobilization is not necessarily an inherent ‘good.’ There is a growing body of literature that explores the dual nature of the associational sector as a force that can either promote or retard liberal democratic norms in general (Ndegwa 1996, Rossteutscher 2005a, Anderson 2010) and the prevention of conflict and violence in particular (Colletta and Cullen 2000, Putnam 2000, Varshney 2002, Cox 2009). Nevertheless religion has until very recently been excluded or neglected in associational theory (Juergensmeyer 2005, James 2007a, Muukkonen 2009), a trend attributable in large part to Westernized paradigms that frame religion as a private matter purportedly declining in influence (Casanova 1994, Marty 1997). Thus the

understanding of how faith influences the dualistic potential of associational social impacts remains underdeveloped in comparison to religion's importance.

These challenges are global in nature, yet particularly prominent in Southeast Asia, where ethnic conflict is widespread, and major world religions including Buddhism, Islam and Christianity form a vital aspect of civic and political life. The region's extensive ethnic diversity is often highly politicized, because colonial and post-colonial state formation processes have established multiethnic polities whose centralized nature strains majority-minority relations. Transmigration policies have relocated members of majority groups into minority-held zones, while development policies have often left minority zones exploited of natural resources and marginalized from economic and political power (Kingsbury 2005, Duncan 2008). Importantly, such ethno-political tensions often take on a religious tone, due to a strong demographic correlation between ethnicity and religion (Goh 2005: 13, Kumar and Siddique 2008). These dynamics typify an 'ethnic conflict' as one in which the lines of division are based on variables that are identity-based, such as race, religion, language, or other distinguishing characteristics (Horowitz 2000, Kanbur et al. 2010). I therefore use the terms 'ethnic conflict' and 'identity-based conflict' interchangeably, and I apply the term 'ethno-religious' where appropriate to emphasize the religious aspects of ethnic identity. Nonetheless, ethnic identity itself is not necessarily the primary point of contention. Southeast Asian ethnic conflicts are typically rooted in the political and economic struggles described above, which may in fact influence how identity is perceived and developed (Brown 1994).

Civic associations have long been active in Southeast Asia, although the current 'civil society' concept and terminology did not appear until the early 1990s

(Lee 2004: 10, Hasan et al. 2008). Civil society's overt involvement in formal politics is generally increasing, linked to regional trends towards democratization (Alagappa 2004c), yet the nature of political involvement varies widely and remains fragile where governments retain strong central control. In contrast to Western-influenced secular expectations, the religious sector forms a very prominent sub-category of the Southeast Asian associational realm. Associations are often structured along ethno-religious lines (Lee 2004: 11, Mulder 1996: 192, Alagappa 2004b: 465), which tends to politicize civic activity even in the absence of formal political engagement (Orjuela 2003). Actors in ethno-political conflict naturally seek out religious associations as a vehicle of support for their aims (Hadiwinata 2007), and religious associations in turn influence the ideology and actions of the conflicting parties. These regional dynamics, in place for at least half a century, have been further strained by global tensions in the aftermath of the attacks of September 11, 2001, and the subsequent framing of Southeast Asia as a "second front" in the "Global War on Terror" (Gershman 2002).

Even a cursory review of regional current events serves to colorfully illustrate the linkages between religion, conflict and peace in Southeast Asia. Buddhist monks played a prominent role in the most recent citizen uprising against the government of Myanmar/Burma (Vatikiotis 2007). During 2010, Indonesian authorities continued their anti-terrorism campaign through a series of high-profile arrests including the prominent Muslim cleric Abu Bakar Ba'asyir (Vaswani 2010). Some of Thailand's anti-government protestors quietly incorporated spiritualized blood rituals into their Bangkok pro-democracy demonstrations (England 2010). Malaysia's judiciary

considered whether Roman Catholics should be allowed to use the word 'Allah,' due to concerns that such verbiage might be motivated by a proselytizing intent to convert Muslims (BBC News 2010). Finally, the ongoing prominence of the interfaith Bishops-Ulama Conference in the Mindanao peace process was evidenced by their organization of a mass consultation of citizens, seeking grassroots opinions in order to inform negotiations between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (Mindanews 2010a). Much of this religio-political activity takes place within and around the associational realm.

### **Areas of Inquiry**

Associational practitioners are keenly aware of the local expressions of these regional trends, and many are concerned about how to equip religious associations to pursue their various mandates in ways that promote, or at least do not damage, intergroup cohesion. Humanitarian and development assistance workers have quietly but persistently suggested a partial solution in the 'conflict sensitivity' approach (Anderson 1999, International Alert et al. 2004a, Paffenholz and Reychler 2007, Bush 2009). Conflict sensitivity, an organizational planning approach originally developed in the aid sector, posits that every action an organization takes, even in seemingly unrelated pursuits such as relief distribution, health care or economic development, can have an impact on the surrounding climate of conflict and peace. This impact may be either positive (promoting peace) or negative (exacerbating conflict). Conflict sensitivity uses an array of context analysis methodologies and applies the findings to inform the organization's strategic and operational planning.

Additionally, a number of practitioners, including my former colleagues in the non-governmental organization World Vision International, have found that conflict sensitivity sometimes promotes significant changes in the values and behaviors of participating individuals (CDA Collaborative Learning Projects 2001, Barbolet et al. 2005b, Garred 2006a).

For World Vision in South and Southeast Asia, many of those individual changes were related to how religiously-motivated local actors interpreted and publicly acted upon their Christian and Muslim faith (Riak 2006, Sihotang and Silalahi 2006). Further, in a regional series of conflict sensitivity workshops,<sup>1</sup> participating Christian aid workers often suggested that the same training should be provided to nearby churches. Both World Vision Development Foundation Philippines (Presbitero-Carrillo 2004) and World Vision Indonesia<sup>2</sup> have begun de facto experiments with conflict sensitivity training for religious leaders. Religious organizations often choose to engage in disaster response (Özerdem and Jacoby 2006), so several other faith-based humanitarian agencies have also inquired about how conflict sensitivity training might be made available to their partners in local religious service organizations and communities of worship.<sup>3</sup> This appeared to be a reasonable course of action, because conflict sensitivity had already proven adaptable across both emergency response and community development programs, in settings of both manifest and latent conflict (Mitchell 1981: 49-51, Bush 1998, Garred 2006a).

Further, conflict sensitivity had also been expanded with some success to the

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<sup>1</sup> I facilitated numerous workshops in the Philippines, Indonesia, Cambodia, India, Sri Lanka and Nepal, from 2002 to 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Terry Silalahi, phone interview by author, Jakarta, Indonesia, 28 Nov. 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Marshall Wallace, CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, e-mail message to author, 24 Oct. 2007. Allen Harder, Independent Consultant, e-mail message to author, 5 Nov. 2007.

international business sector (Williams 2008, Hettiarachchi et al. 2009, Zandvliet and Anderson 2009). Thus the idea of introducing conflict sensitivity to the religious sector appeared to hold potential for improving the social impact of religious programs and services.

This study's first level of inquiry sets out to explore, in a much more extensive and rigorous manner, the possibility of conflict sensitivity usage within the religious sector. Applicability is defined as a function of both relevance and usefulness. This applicability was field-tested in collaboration with two local agencies, the Davao Ministerial Interfaith of Mindanao, Philippines, and the Harmony Centre at An-Nahdhah of Singapore. Critical scrutiny was directed at the conflict sensitivity approach itself, not at the participating associational actors, who were partners in the testing effort. Together we provided conflict sensitivity training for religious actors, using a particularly influential framework known as 'Do No Harm' (DNH; Anderson 1999), and then collected and analyzed data on the participants' DNH usage and uptake over time. The Mindanao project was significantly larger in scope, due to the greater DNH experience and interest of the partner agency. The Singapore project provided a valuable point of comparison and contrast, because both contexts are affected by similar patterns of ethno-religious relations that are common to the region, yet there are significant differences in their levels of physical violence and economic development, and in the roles and functions of their respective associational sectors. Both sites featured significant numbers of Christian (Roman Catholic and Protestant) and Muslim participants, illuminating the experiences of those groups in relation to prominent regional issues such as religious exclusivism and proselytism. On the whole, the findings indicate a strong perception of conflict



sensitivity's usefulness among religious actors, particularly for purposes of individual growth that influences collective behavior. There is a need to adapt DNH impact analysis patterns to better reflect the uniqueness of the religious sector and to elicit themes of latent tension and structural violence (Galtung 1969), meaning forms of 'violence' that result not from physical attack but from systemic inequality and marginalization. The data collected during conflict sensitivity testing have become a rich source to inform this project's second level of inquiry.

The second level of inquiry addresses certain imbalances, tensions and gaps in existing associational theory by exploring the relationship between the conflict sensitivity testing project and the relevant academic literature. In other words, how does the localized conflict sensitivity research inform our broader understanding of associational social impact? In building from the first level of inquiry toward the second, I not only employ the same data set derived from the contributions of Mindanowan and Singaporean religious actors, but I also carry forward the conceptual underpinnings of conflict sensitivity itself as a form of social theory. Conflict sensitivity arose from practitioner experience and field-based data, so its explanations of how associations interact with the dynamics of conflict and peace come forth in the spirit of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Conflict sensitivity theory can be usefully juxtaposed against the theory developed in more academic settings. I draw primarily on the interdisciplinary social sciences, particularly political science and sociology due to their strong interest in associational studies. Importantly, while there is a substantial body of literature on associations and social conflict (Gidron et al. 2002a, Rasmussen 2003, Kaldor 2007, Brewer 2010), the vast majority of that research is dedicated to the relatively small proportion of

associations whose primary mandate lies in areas such as peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and reconciliation. Gidron et al. (2002a: 3) have usefully termed such entities as “peace and conflict resolution organizations” or “PCROs.”

Against this backdrop, the introduction of conflict sensitivity theory refocuses the conceptual lens by pointing to associations whose primary mandate is *not* conflict-related. Such associations are focused on innumerable other purposes, with their range limited only by the human imagination. Their impact on peace and conflict is not central to their mission; rather, it is an “externality” (Morris 2000: 27-8). Conflict sensitivity theory posits that regardless of the nature of an association’s mandate, the central issue is how its decisions and actions interact with the surrounding context. If that context is characterized by socio-political conflict, then associational activities will interact with conflict dynamics in either positive or negative ways. A classic example, surprising in its time but now widely acknowledged, was the effect of post-genocide humanitarian aid to Rwanda in exacerbating and prolonging violence, both internally and across the border with Zaire (now Congo) (Eriksson 1997, Baaré et al. 1999). Conflict sensitivity’s viewpoint holds great significance for Peace Studies, because it brings into view a very wide swathe of the associational sector. Students of peace can no longer limit their attention to PCROs, but must now consider the influence of all types of associational entities on the trajectory of social conflict.

Adapting the terminology of Gidron et al. (2002a) I refer to these non-conflict-focused associations as ‘non-Peace and Conflict Resolution Organizations’ or, for the sake of brevity, ‘nPCROs.’ This term serves as apt description of the study’s unique, conflict sensitivity-inspired point of departure for considering the associational

sector. Nonetheless, it must be recognized that the distinction between PCROs and nPCROs cannot be drawn in absolute terms. There is a zone of overlap representing organizations which have a secondary, and sometimes implicit, focus on peacebuilding. Their primary focus lies elsewhere, perhaps in community development or education, even as they bring conflicting groups together or promote peaceful values during the process of implementation. Some authors (e.g. Cochrane and Dunn 2002b) consider such organizations to be PCROs. I categorize such organizations as nPCROs, in order to maintain alignment with, and maximize the usefulness of, conflict sensitivity as a conceptual viewpoint. When analyzing this type of nPCRO, the level of intentionality with which they pursue their secondary focus on peace becomes a very significant issue, apparent even in the development of this study's two partner agencies over time.

Along with PCROs, I also exclude from my analysis any associations that intentionally pursue physical violence. White supremacist organizations in the West are a case in point, as are Indonesia's Islam-based Laskar Jihad (Hadiwinata 2007) and Christian-based Ambonese militias (Adam et al. 2007). Admittedly there are 'gray areas' here, because violence is sometimes deployed in the pursuit of justice, and the distinctions between justice and injustice, or between justified and unjustified violence, may depend greatly on the observer's social positioning. Even so, the point is that conflict sensitivity, while not intended to dampen the pursuit of justice, is designed to address organizations that have either good or neutral intentions with regard to social cohesion. The mobilization of citizens for purposes that are intentionally violent is an important issue, but it lies outside the scope of this study.

Upon using conflict sensitivity theory to refocus the analytical lens from PCROs to nPCROs, one finds that the existing pool of relevant theory shrinks considerably. Academic works that address the influence of nPCROs on intergroup conflict, comprising this project's 'core literature,' pursue a relatively new line of inquiry and are few in number. The central reference points of this body of literature are found in selected works of Robert Putnam (2000, 2002, Putnam and Feldstein 2003) and Ashutosh Varshney (2001, 2002). Putnam's research on social capital in the United States and other industrialized democracies popularized an influential distinction between "bridging" and "bonding" social capital. Civic groups whose membership aligns with major social cleavages are said to bond members of the same identity group together. On the other hand, groups whose membership includes people on both sides of the divide are said to have a desirable bridging effect. Varshney developed similar themes in his research on Hindu-Muslim relations in India, concluding that civic linkages that are "intercommunal" (i.e. including both Hindus and Muslims) are key in withstanding provocations that could otherwise lead to violence.

Putnam and Varshney portray a strong optimism about the potential of bridging or intercommunal associations to enhance social cohesion. Such optimism is challenged in more skeptical works by authors Uvin (1998) and Cochrane (2005), who argue that in some cases, the contextual pressures of deeply divided societies are likely to produce associational sectors that are divisive rather than intercommunal. Another cluster of works occupies a sort of middle ground by exploring the nuances of the dualistic associational potential for both positive and negative impacts, and considering the conditions that influence such outcomes. Those moderate works

include writings by Pickering (2006, 2007), Weisinger and Salipante (2005, 2007), Jha (2009), MacLean (2004), Molenaers (2003, 2005, 2006), Karner and Parker (2008), Titeca and Vervisch (2008) and Pinchotti and Verwimp (2007). Despite the growing number of moderate works, the writings of Putnam and Varshney retain the greatest influence, and the body of literature on the conflict impacts of nPCROs is still framed and dominated by their concepts of bridging and intercommunality.

Certain exceptions notwithstanding, the core literature as a body leans toward generalizing the nature of conflict impact as either predominantly good or bad on a sector-wide basis, and the causes of conflict impact as attributable to associational structure. In contrast, conflict sensitivity's complex view of causation calls for analytical balance, because it emphasizes the interaction of multiple determinants of impact, both organizational and contextual in origin, resulting in mixed positive and negative outcomes. Further, the existing academic theory often portrays associational structures as static, and leaves unaddressed the question of how social impact might be improved, whereas conflict sensitivity emphasizes the possibility of human action leading to change. In contrast, while the current study does find strong empirical support for the significance of intercommunal associational structures, the data also reveal an equally important emphasis on 'mindsets,' meaning the perceptions, values, beliefs, and attitudes of individual associational participants and members.

This emphasis on the role of the individual foregrounds the issue of human agency, particularly the intentionality of purpose and human capacity that is required for individuals, working together, to transcend divisive contextual pressures in order to establish intercommunal forms of association. In deeply divided societies, such engagement is often counter-cultural in nature, requiring a change in

people's mindsets. This study's findings indicate that individual mindsets and associational structures influence each other in mutual ways over time, lending themselves to the use of cyclical or spiraling model to depict the multicausal determinants of associational conflict impacts. In this way, the study contributes to associational theory a significantly more complex and dynamic understanding of how associational impacts on peace and conflict come about, and how they might be improved.

Finally, once factors other than associational structure are squarely in view, it becomes apparent that religion, so prominent in the Southeast Asian public sphere, is surprisingly absent from the bulk of the literature on the conflict impacts of nPCROs. The Southeast Asian setting demonstrates the limitations of secular assumptions by illuminating not only the public role of religious institutions, but also the oft-neglected intangible realm of religious culture (Wood 1999). In this context, religion is a powerful shaper of mindsets and a motivator towards agency, due in large part to its ambivalent potential for promoting either peace or violence (Appleby 2000), and its influence on the development of ethno-religious group identity (Tajfel and Turner 1986) as shaped and constructed by common people (Karner 2007). Importantly, the social science-based core literature on nPCROs cannot explain the religious content of these empirical findings, drawing attention to the 'religion gap' at the heart of the existing associational theory. There are indications of relevant theory in the work of theologians (Volf 1996, Katongole 2005), suggesting the desirability of consistently integrating religious studies into interdisciplinary associational research.

## **Action Research Approach**

The methodological approach of this study must be established at the outset, for its uniqueness has shaped both the fieldwork and the structure of the thesis. This chapter has already made it clear that the study finds its origins in practitioner experience. It must also be stated that the study's purpose is to contribute to the development of theory that is applicable to addressing human needs. It is often assumed in the social sciences that the overriding purpose of research is to "explain social phenomena" (Little 1991: 8). In contrast, I argue that while explanation is indeed necessary, it is not an adequate response to a world affected with high levels of human suffering, often due to human-made causes. The notion of 'knowledge for knowledge's sake' should give way to the application of knowledge for the pursuit of improved human well-being. Where the phenomena being addressed represent real-world problems, my research stance is not one of scientific detachment, but rather one of exploring knowledge that has the potential to contribute to constructive change.

This study's practice-based origins and change-oriented objectives make action research a natural methodological choice. Action research, though rarely employed in the field of Peace Studies (Reychler 2006: 9-10), is intended to encompass concerns of both theory and practice, engaging both the researcher and the affected populations directly in the midst of the phenomena being studied. The basic elements of the action research approach are captured in a seminal definition by Rapoport:

Action research aims to contribute both to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to the goals of social science by joint collaboration within a mutually accepted ethical framework. To the aims of contributing to the practice concerns of people and to the goals of social science, we add a third aim, to develop the self-help competencies of people facing problems (1970: 499).

While accurate, such foundational definitions do not fully convey the increasingly broad and rapidly evolving range of approaches involved in action research. Within that range of approaches, it is necessary to clarify the nature of the action research employed in this study, and its implications for the research design. First and foremost, at the epistemological level, it is necessary to engage the question of whether action research is simply a methodology for implementing applied research (as argued in Spjelkavik 1999), or whether it is a distinctive paradigm requiring the development of its own underlying philosophy. Minimalist approaches to action research can involve legitimately employing action as a data collection technique within a more traditional research paradigm. However, I hold that when fully developed and followed to its logical conclusion, an action research project operates on the basis of a unique and distinctive epistemology (de Cock 1994, Schön 1995, Chaudhary 1997, Greenwood and Levin 2007). This represents a departure from the academic mainstream, so I detail here the philosophical foundations of the full-fledged research approach.

The ontological underpinnings of action research embrace a concept of reality that is notably broad, contrasting with positivism in that it encompasses both the tangible and the intangible (Blum 1955: 311) in a holistic and integrated manner akin to general systems theory (Greenwood and Levin 2007: 57-9). Action research embraces the importance of varying perceptions about a knowable reality, and the



complex causation of social phenomena (Aguinis 1993: 354), giving it some natural affinity to critical realism (Sayer 2000, Burgoyne 2009). Correspondingly, in terms of epistemology, the range of concepts and methods used to gain knowledge about reality is broad and diverse. Action research is interdisciplinary in nature and, while it emphasizes the use of a multiplicity of qualitative methods, some quantitative techniques are also employed where appropriate.

In seeking to gain knowledge about reality, action research rejects the rationalist distinction between thought and action, implying a linkage to the pragmatist philosophy of John Dewey (Greenwood and Levin 2007: 59-62). The thought-action linkage also traces back to social psychologist Kurt Lewin, an originator of the twentieth century industrial democracy movement, who is often popularly quoted as saying that “the best way to understand something is to try to change it” (in Greenwood and Levin 2007: 18, see also Rebach and Bruhn 2001: ix). In action research, thought and action are inextricably linked together in the same moment of time, marking an arguable distinction from the traditional notion of applied research, in which thought is understood to precede action. Because of this unity of thought and action, action research is multiphase in nature, built around integrated cycles of data gathering, reflection and action. The findings of each phase inform the design of the next phase, such that research design becomes an evolving process, rather than a one-time event (Stringer 1999: 17-20, Susman and Evered 1978, Aguinis 1993: 361). This experience has been provocatively described as “designing the plane while flying it” (Herr and Anderson 2005: 69).

In addition to unifying thought and action, action research also rejects the traditional scientific notion of the incompatibility of facts and values in defining both

the research purpose and the research process. In terms of purpose, action research emphasizes meeting human needs, and thus it is “consciously directed toward the implementation of certain values” (Blum 1955: 310), and is often oriented toward the future (Susman and Evered 1978, de Cock 1994: 372). With regard to process, there is a distinctive emphasis on the participation of the people within the research context in the act of research itself (de Cock 1994, Schön 1995, Fals Borda 2001, Greenwood and Levin 2007). While the types and levels of participation vary widely, action research nonetheless features a discernible unifying emphasis on furthering some form of empowerment. Foundational thinker Fals Borda states: “It is obvious that these aims go beyond the academic traditions which have emphasised value neutrality and a positivist objectivity as prerequisites for ‘serious science’” (1987: 35).

Due to the distinctive epistemology of action research, there is a lively debate around how this approach relates to the traditional scientific method. Authors such as Greenwood and Levin (2007) argue that action research closely embodies the scientific method, because it values the empirical and is quasi-experimental in nature. Other authors view action research as a sharp critique of the shortcomings of positivism (Susman and Evered 1978). My own stance aligns with that of Schön (1995), who is critical of the idea that scientists must choose between rigor and relevance, arguing instead that the academic concept of rigor itself needs to be redefined. While action research is commonly used to test theory and hypotheses, Schön (1995: 382-7) goes one step further by arguing that action research generates new knowledge that should be recognized within academic practice.

The use of a full-fledged action research approach implies certain distinctives in the resulting thesis project. I take as my overarching standard of action research

validity the challenge that findings must be “worth believing enough to act on” (Greenwood and Levin 2007: 67). The fieldwork was highly participatory and multiphase in nature, beginning with pilot phase interviews designed to elicit the input of Southeast Asian practitioners, and to support the selection of research sites and partners for conflict sensitivity testing. The Mindanao partnership, being larger in scope and length, included significantly more action research cycles than the Singapore effort. Even so, the core research questions and data-collection methods were consistent across both locations. I facilitated the process of action research design and implementation, ensuring that my need for thesis-related data was met, while the overlapping practitioner objectives of the project were defined primarily by the local partners. The thesis and the practitioner aims were treated as two separate and parallel projects, both drawing on the same pools of data (Zuber-Skerritt and Perry 2002, Davis 2004).

This thesis document itself also differs from tradition in several important ways. First, to a large extent, the structure of the thesis reflects the chronology of what actually took place in the action research process (Davis 2004, Fisher and Phelps 2006). For example, contextual background on the Philippines and Singapore does not appear until Chapter Four, which describes when and how those sites were selected as part of the action research methodology. Further, my consideration of the relevant literature is concentrated but not confined in the early chapters (Davis 2004, Fisher and Phelps 2006). For example, in Chapter Six, my assessment of conflict sensitivity’s overall applicability is influenced by emergent conflict sensitivity literature that was not available at the time of project design (as reflected in Chapter Two). In Chapter Seven, I deepen the consideration of some religiously-oriented

sources briefly introduced in Chapter Three, as I consider how to address the religion-related gap made apparent in existing associational theory by the action research findings. This illustrates action research's iterative use and development of existing theory as "data driven and responsive" (Dick 2002a: 167). Finally, I have written myself and my partners into the narrative, reflecting the fact that we were central actors in an active research process (Fisher and Phelps 2006). I use first and third person verbs where appropriate, seeking to honestly disclose our responsibility for the interventions undertaken, without unduly overstating our influence.

## **Thesis Overview**

The chapters of the thesis are chiasmic or concentric in arrangement, with the action research fieldwork at the pivotal center. As such, Chapters Two and Three precede the fieldwork by reviewing the relevant conceptual debates and establishing conceptual frames<sup>4</sup> to guide the inquiry. Chapter Two addresses the study's first-level inquiry on the applicability (relevance and usefulness) of conflict sensitivity in the religious sector, establishing the central research questions as follows: Is there a need for conflict sensitivity? To what extent, and in what ways, is conflict sensitivity being used, or not used, and why? What are the implications for enhancing practitioner capacity?

Chapter Three addresses the study's second level of inquiry, considering the dissonance between existing civil society theory and the realities of ethno-political conflict and associational dynamics in Southeast Asia, and substantiating the decision

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<sup>4</sup> Throughout the thesis, I use the term 'frame' when referring to conceptual matters, to maintain a distinction from the 'frameworks' used in conflict sensitivity practice.

to use broad, inclusive associational terminology. Next, the chapter analyzes the imbalances, tensions and gaps in the emergent body of theory that comprises this project's core literature on the nature and determinants of conflict impact among nPCROs. The second-level research questions are established as follows: Are the conflict impacts of associational activity attributable to associational structural or to non-structural factors, and what is the relationship between the two? Does the socio-political context shape the association, or can the association also influence its context? Among the potential non-structural factors, what is the role of religion in shaping an association's social impact?

Chapter Four addresses the action research fieldwork carried out to investigate both levels of research inquiry. I begin by clarifying my own approach to 'collaborative action research,' and by establishing the standard of validity as 'credibility with a purpose' (Greenwood and Levin 2007: 67), since these represent contested areas in the methodological literature. I then describe the action research process undertaken in Mindanao and Singapore, emphasizing the multiphase nature of the process, and the ways in which the preliminary findings of each phase contributed to the design of the next. I give particular attention to questions of participation as they influence insider and outsider roles in both conflict sensitivity and action research practice, establishing this as a central theme of researcher reflexivity.

Chapters Five and Six together respond to the first-level research inquiry on the applicability of conflict sensitivity to religious audiences. Chapter Five describes the DNH usage and uptake patterns found in the data, built around a tri-fold frame for investigating how DNH is conceptualized, personalized and operationalized

(CDA Collaborative Learning Projects 2001). This chapter represents a preliminary analysis carried out jointly with partner agencies, within the structure of the original research design. Chapter Six builds on that analysis to develop my own overall assessment of conflict sensitivity's applicability to the religious sector, based primarily on the empirical data, but also informed by emergent developments in interagency conflict sensitivity practice, which were not available at the time of Chapter Two's project design. The empirical findings presented in Chapters Five and Six, in addition to addressing the applicability of conflict sensitivity, also provide a window into religious associational life in Southeast Asia to fuel the analysis of the subsequent chapters.

Chapters Seven and Eight respond to the second-level research inquiry on the implications of the current study for existing associational theory, with particular attention to the nature and determinants of conflict impact among nPCROs. Chapter Seven applies the empirical findings to illuminate the importance of individual human mindsets and intentional human agency, and the ways in which they interact cyclically with associational structure to either enable or limit the promotion of peace through intercommunality. Chapter Eight focuses on religion as one very important mindset factor that is neglected in the literature, yet particularly prominent in shaping associational conflict impacts in Mindanao and Singapore. I explore religious culture as a central source of identity in ethno-religious conflict, and as subject to gradual change based on the choices made by religious actors. A deeper consideration of selected Christian theological literature explains and illuminates the empirical findings in ways that the project's core literature cannot, thus

demonstrating the depth of the 'religion gap' caused by Westernized secularist assumptions.

Chapter Nine concludes the thesis with a synthesis of the study's findings and their generalizability, and a reflective assessment of insider and outsider roles throughout the action research process. This conclusion also highlights several common threads that run throughout the thesis as arguments towards theoretical integration, including the consistent, interdisciplinary inclusion of religious matters in studies of the associational sector, the framing of civil society in terms that are trans-cultural rather than Western, and the linkage of thought with action as pursued in this project's two-level action research inquiry.

Pertaining to the distinction between the first level of inquiry (on conflict sensitivity) and the second (on associational theory), it is tempting to label the former as practice and the latter as theory. Indeed, it is true that the content of the former originates with practitioners, while the latter originates in the academy. Nonetheless, I will argue that theory is present at both levels, because both practitioners and academics use theory. While practitioners seldom discuss theory, their efforts are almost always guided by implicit theories of social change, or theories-in-use (Argyris and Schön 1996: 13). In the case of conflict sensitivity, experience-based theory has been rendered explicit. By juxtaposing academic theory with practitioner theory, both are challenged and enriched, leading to conceptual developments that are holistic in nature and well-suited for productive application to real-world problems.

## CHAPTER TWO: CONFLICT SENSITIVITY IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

*No people do so much harm as those who go about doing good.*  
- Rev. Mandell Creighton (1913: 501)

This chapter elaborates the conceptual underpinnings of the current study's first level of inquiry, which focuses on exploring the applicability of the conflict sensitivity approach to the religious associational sector. Conflict sensitivity is born and grounded in practitioner experience, so I draw on International Alert et al. for their influential definition as follows:

This means the ability of your organisation to: understand the context in which you operate; understand the interaction between your intervention and the context; and act upon the understanding of this interaction, in order to avoid negative impacts and maximise positive impacts (2004c: 1).

Conflict sensitivity comes in many forms, but it consistently emphasizes context analysis followed by recommendations for organizational planning on the basis of that analysis. This approach is practiced in settings of both manifest and latent conflict. The analysis can be conducted before, during or after the program in question takes place, and is intended to be repeated in order to capture ongoing changes in the operating context.

Within this chapter, the first section considers the history of conflict sensitivity as a practitioner phenomenon, but one that features significant theoretical content. The next section deepens the analysis by considering the academic critiques of conflict sensitivity, together with their implications for the current project. Finally, recent adaptations for new audiences are considered, followed by the development of



the conceptual frame to be used in testing the applicability of conflict sensitivity to religious associations. Throughout the chapter, a broad view of the conflict sensitivity field is punctuated by specific references to Do No Harm (DNH), as the tool selected for use in the current project.

## **A History of Conflict Sensitivity**

The history of conflict sensitivity is a complex one, because it originated in three parallel streams, representing the emergency relief branch of the aid industry, the development assistance branch of the aid industry, and the emerging peacebuilding sector. Each stream was spearheaded by scholar-practitioners in North America and Europe, who surfaced initial conceptual publications in the late 1990s, followed by refinement and testing of analytical tools. It was not until 1999-2000 that these streams began to publicly converge, and not until 2003-2004 that it became increasingly commonplace to refer to them under the collective term 'conflict sensitivity.' For the sake of clarity, this thesis will use the term 'conflict sensitivity' to refer to both early and recent developments that describe the field as a whole.

**The emergency relief stream: Do No Harm.**<sup>5</sup> The relief stream of conflict sensitivity was spearheaded by Mary B. Anderson of the CDA Collaborative Learning Projects,<sup>6</sup> based in Cambridge, USA. This was a collective process, and Anderson's facilitative role reflected the broad-based concern that had emerged among humanitarian actors over the changing relationships between aid and conflict in the 'new wars' of the early 1990s. Early efforts by Minear and Weiss (1993: 290), as

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<sup>5</sup> 'Do No Harm' is alternatively called 'Local Capacities for Peace.' I prefer 'Do No Harm' as the current interagency standard, but I defer where necessary to participant usage.

<sup>6</sup> Formerly known as the Collaborative for Development Action.

well as the World Conference on Religion and Peace's Mohonk Criteria for Humanitarian Assistance in Complex Emergencies (Ebersole 1995), framed the issues in terms of moral ambiguity, with particular reference to conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa and the Balkans. They sought to develop general guiding principles that included, but were not conceptually based on, analysis of the local context.

This simmering concern was brought to a crisis by the experiences of humanitarian agencies during the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Despite meeting service delivery goals, aid directly exacerbated conflict when refugee camps were used by the perpetrators of genocide as a base for "overt rearming and reorganization" (Eriksson 1997: 8, Baaré et al. 1999, Fox 2001). Further, the entire humanitarian aid operation was seen as a cover for the lack of timely intervention by the international community. "In effect, humanitarian action substituted for political action" (Eriksson 1997: 8, see also Terry 2002). Subsequent research also pointed out that pre-genocide development aid had been instrumental in reinforcing social cleavages (Uvin 1998). Yet it was the *genocidaires* in the refugee camps that captured the public attention, and this helped galvanize humanitarian practitioners toward action.

Post-Rwanda publications reveal a conceptual shift, as authors moved beyond the concept of moral ambiguity, becoming insistent that aid can directly impact the dynamics of conflict, in negative ways and possibly also in positive ways. Prendergast observed that: "Aid sustains conflict in three major ways: aid can be used directly as an instrument of war; aid can be indirectly integrated into the dynamics of conflict; and aid can exacerbate the root causes of war and insecurity" (1996: 17). Anderson (1996) took this a step further by launching an interagency inquiry to

uncover how such impacts manifested themselves in field operations, and what patterns might be discerned.

Anderson's Do No Harm Project, a collaborative effort of NGOs and government donors, began with fifteen case studies, documenting preliminary lessons in the booklet *Do No Harm: Supporting Local Capacities for Peace Through Aid* (1996). The second phase involved twenty-three feedback workshops, in which aid workers responded to the preliminary lessons in order to refine them. This led to the finalization of a DNH analytical framework<sup>7</sup> as documented in the book *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace – or War* (1999). The third phase focused on implementation, with 12 organizations integrating DNH into selected site operations, resulting in a users' manual called *Options for Aid in Conflict: Lessons from Field Experience* (2000). A DNH mainstreaming phase began in 2001, marked by extensive use and innovation in NGO field operations. In 2006, CDA commenced a series of reflective case studies to draw on NGO experience, consolidating emerging learnings in order to fuel ongoing deliberation amongst practitioners (e.g. CDA Collaborative Learning Projects 2009a, Goddard 2009, CDA Collaborative Learning Projects 2010).

The major contribution of the DNH Project has been to crystallize the notion of recognizing and taking responsibility for unintended negative impacts. That is, a project that succeeds in delivering emergency relief might nonetheless have a significant negative affect in terms of exacerbating conflict. Thus the DNH Project makes reference to the medical Hippocratic Oath in promoting the concept of 'do no harm.' The DNH process first features context analysis, followed by project impact analysis. The context analysis identifies both dividing and connecting factors, across

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<sup>7</sup> See Appendix B for the DNH Framework.

five broad categories. The project impact analysis then considers how the project affects those Dividers and Connectors, through the twin mechanisms of Resource Transfers (referring to the provision of goods and services) and Implicit Ethical Messages (referring to the ethos communicated by project implementers). If the project strengthens Dividers or weakens Connectors, this is considered negative impact. Equally important though less emphasized, if the project strengthens Connectors or weakens Dividers, this is considered positive impact.

**The development assistance stream: Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA).** Parallel to the DNH Project, Kenneth Bush was simultaneously spearheading a similar effort within the development aid sector, initially under the auspices of Canada's International Development Research Centre. While there is no 'master narrative' comparable to that of the Rwanda genocide, the community development sector followed a similar trajectory. Bush's *A Measure of Peace* (1998) was exploratory in nature, setting out a rationale for PCIA, and describing a range of issues to be considered in development of a PCIA tool. His subsequent *Hands-On PCIA* (2003) proposed the tool itself, concurrent with testing taking place in Mindanao through the Canada-Philippines Local Government Support Programme. Most recently, *Aid for Peace* (2009) has updated PCIA for use in the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland.

Bush's PCIA work contributed to thinking in the field by emphasizing that peacebuilding is an impact, rather than an activity. This implies that any development project, e.g. health, education, etc., can be planned and implemented in such a way that it promotes peace. Bush's PCIA process begins with a risk and opportunity assessment of how contextual factors may help or hinder

implementation of the project, followed by an assessment of how the project may impact the context in the areas of conflict management capabilities, militarized violence and human security, political structures and processes, economic structures and processes, and social empowerment. Throughout the process, Bush foregrounds the role of communities and grassroots actors, and strongly advocates empowerment. The development stream has been further influenced by analysts such as Gaigals (2001) and Leonhardt (2002).

**The peacebuilding stream: Conflict Impact Assessment System (CIAS).** As the peacebuilding sector expanded and professionalized in the early 1990s, practitioners became increasingly aware that not all peacebuilding initiatives met their stated objectives, and many observers began to advocate the evaluation of peacebuilding programs. Additionally, awareness of unintended negative impacts began to surface, possibly influenced by the early work of Anderson (1996). Luc Reyhler was one of the first to raise this issue among peace scholars and practitioners, via an exploratory conference paper (1996). This was followed by a progression of methodology development efforts, with the Conflict Impact Assessment System first presented in 1998 (Reyhler 1998), and in ongoing development through 2003 (Reyhler 2003).

Reyhler's work was significantly different from the work of Anderson and Bush. CIAS is an ambitious comprehensive methodology, containing multiple tools, and it is the first such effort aimed to addressing the program, sector and policy levels. While all conflict sensitivity tools contain theory, CIAS is distinctively theory-driven, with theoretical constructs derived from peace and conflict research providing the frameworks for analysis. CIAS is highly complex and, unlike DNH and

PCIA, it assumes that the primary analysts will be peace and conflict specialists (Reychler 2003: 30), rather than aid generalists with some peace-related training. In subsequent developments, Reychler partnered with Thania Paffenholz, and CIAS became a foundation for their Aid for Peace Approach (2007).

Figure 2.1 highlights the important distinctions between early conflict sensitivity work in the emergency relief, community development and peacebuilding streams. Certain characteristics such as specificity of purpose, and level of analysis, are highly relevant in terms of distinguishing between the broader range of conflict sensitivity methodologies and tools that have now become available. Such factors must be considered when selecting or adapting a conflict sensitivity tool for a given task, in order to capitalize on the tool's strengths, as well as recognize and mitigate its limitations.

**Figure 2.1: Early Conflict Sensitivity Streams - Points of Comparison<sup>8</sup>**

	<b>Do No Harm</b> (Anderson 1996, 1999, 2000)	<b>Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment</b> (Bush 1998, 2003, Bush 2009)	<b>Conflict Impact Assessment System</b> (Reychler 1996, 1998, 2003)
<b>Contextual Starting Point</b>	<b>Emergency relief aid</b> in contexts of physically violent conflict.	<b>Development assistance</b> , with strong links to peacebuilding, in contexts that are conflict-vulnerable.	<b>Peacebuilding</b> , with strong links to relief and development aid, in contexts that are conflict-vulnerable.
<b>Purpose</b>	Assess impact of project on context. Minimalist – avoid exacerbating conflict. Expanded - contribute to peace.	Assess impact of context on project, and project on context.	Assess impact of context on project, and project on context.
<b>Tool Development</b>	Inductive; extensive field-testing through international network.	Deductive; limited field-testing; grassroots oriented.	Deductive; limited field-testing.
<b>Scope</b>	Program level.	Program level.	Program, sectoral and policy levels.
<b>Major Contribution</b>	Introduced the notion of recognizing and taking responsibility for unintended negative impacts.	Introduced the notion of peacebuilding as an impact, rather than an activity.	Explicitly incorporates existing peace and conflict theory into CIA process.
<b>Strengths</b>	Extensive field-testing. Usable by non-specialists.	Ethics of empowerment.	Comprehensive, systematic.
<b>Limitations</b>	Analyzes only two actor groups at a time. Analysis of structural justice issues is not explicit.	Delay between 1998 and 2003 in tool dissemination. Limited testing.	Requires specialist-level expertise.
<b>Later Developments</b>	Widely used and adapted among relief and development NGOs. Relevant to latent conflict settings.	PCIA became a widely-used umbrella concept and term, referring to a variety of related tools.	Limited practitioner use. Foundation of later Aid for Peace Approach (Paffenholz and Reychler 2007).

<sup>8</sup> For other matrixed comparisons, see Leonhardt (2000, 2002) and International Alert (2004).

**Convergence and proliferation.** In approximately 2000, there was a discernible shift as both practitioners and academics began to view the three formerly distinct conflict sensitivity streams as a closely related group (see for example Leonhardt 2000). This was due in part to conceptual convergences in the interagency operating context, as intentional linkages between relief, development and peacebuilding were considered increasingly desirable under the concept of 'developmental relief' (Mancino et al. 2001, Campanaro et al. 2002). The developmental relief concept was driven primarily by the perceptions of practitioners on how to develop more effective programs. Secondly, however, a concurrent decrease in funding levels, and shift from development to relief funding, may have encouraged development practitioners to rethink their roles in relief contexts (Leonhardt 2000: 5). 'PCIA' came to be used as an umbrella term referring to most or all of the related methodologies. Interestingly, DNH was often included in the PCIA umbrella group when it was perceived as a tool capable of promoting active peacebuilding (e.g. Leonhardt 2000: 16), yet excluded when it was perceived as a minimalist approach useful only for 'doing no harm.'

Despite the fact that conflict sensitivity methodologies converged during this phase, they did not integrate with each other, but rather proliferated widely. The existing conflict sensitivity methodologies were further developed, with Bush's PCIA and Reychler's CIAS undergoing some field-testing and refinement, and Anderson's DNH completing extensive testing and entering a mainstreaming phase. Many additional methodologies and tools were developed to suit agency-specific needs, often borrowing and adapting heavily from DNH (Leonhardt 2003: 55), as seen in the work of the Red Cross/Crescent (IFRC n.d.) and CARE (O'Brien 2001). The varying



methodologies often held differing purposes and underlying assumptions, and the terminology in use did not distinguish between them, resulting in a conceptual fuzziness that has not yet been overcome.

During this phase, the donor and multilateral discussions that had started in the late 1990s began to result in macro-level guidelines (OECD 2001, Humphreys and Varshney 2004) and assessment methodologies (USAID by Samarasinghe et al. 1999, DFID-UK by Goodhand et al. 2002, World Bank 2005). There was increased discussion of mainstreaming conflict sensitivity, by applying it throughout all project phases from planning through evaluation, and by broadening its influence over all of an agency's activities in conflict-vulnerable zones. Nonetheless, rhetoric did not always match reality, and the operational aspects of mainstreaming progressed slowly. Some NGO reports indicate a loss of momentum in applying conflict sensitivity to relief programming, even as they gained momentum in applying conflict sensitivity to community development (CDA Collaborative Learning Projects 2004a, Garred 2007). Other agencies demonstrated fatigue as they sought to integrate not only conflict sensitivity, but also gender sensitivity, environmental impact, etc, into their ongoing practices.

**Towards conflict sensitivity.** In approximately 2003 a second shift took place (Paffenholz 2005), as practitioners sought to consolidate the developments of the previous phases. The Forum on Early Warning and Early Response facilitated a six-member consortium that surveyed existing conflict sensitivity practices, tested new approaches and disseminated the combined findings for capacity building purposes. Their effort began with a newsletter (2002), and culminated in the publication of a comprehensive and influential Resource Pack (International Alert et al. 2004a). This

process was noteworthy for its harmonization of conflict sensitivity practices across the relief, development and peacebuilding streams, and for its development of North-South partnerships.

This six-member interagency consortium was responsible for proposing an important change in terminology, replacing 'PCIA' as an umbrella term with the newer 'conflict sensitivity.' Proponents of the change argued that 'PCIA' was increasingly perceived as just a set of tools and activities, and that the shift to 'conflict sensitivity' would help to cultivate a more holistic, process-based approach, undergirded by an emphasis on organizational capacity (de la Haye and Moyroud 2003, Barbolet et al. 2005a). The term 'conflict sensitivity' has since been adopted by many practitioners. However the debate continues, with some including Bush (2005) dismissing such re-naming efforts as market-oriented "branding" rather than substantive change. As of 2009, the earlier interagency consortium had been subsumed by a new Conflict Sensitivity Consortium comprised of 10 UK-based international NGOs, and funded by the UK government's Department for International Development (CARE International UK 2009).

**Current practitioner debates.** The central issues of the current phase are identified in two written debates organized by the Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management (Austin et al. 2003, Bloomfield et al. 2005). The two publications indicate an increased emphasis on linking peace program evaluation to the conflict impact assessment of aid programs. Such impact is increasingly framed at the macro level, raising questions around how localized activities can impact "peace writ large" (Anderson and Olson 2003). This has led to calls for clarifying underlying theories about the nature of conflict and change

(Church and Shouldice 2003), as well as elevating planning and impact evaluation to the strategic, interagency level (Smith 2004). These worthy but ambitious goals often run counter to organizational reality, with many NGOs being demonstrably slow to mainstream conflict sensitivity in field operations (Lange 2004), even as their grassroots partners become increasingly active in using simple conflict sensitivity tools. "Many practitioners have found the academically- or conceptually-laden assessment methodologies impractically complicated and too burdensome to implement given shortages of staff, time and money" (Schmelzle 2005: 8).

Issues of politics and power disparity are very much present, and the debates have grown increasingly heated. To bring clarity, it is necessary to distinguish between the politics that exist in the operating context, and the politics that exist within the aid industry itself (Schmelzle 2005: 7). In the operating context, conducting a conflict sensitivity analysis does require analyzing politics at various levels, both formal and informal. Practitioners increasingly recognize that aid is political, in the sense that it influences and alters power relationships. Thus conflict sensitivity does not imply avoiding conflict or change, but rather understanding the likely impact of one's actions, and making responsible, ethical choices. For the same reasons, most practitioners agree on the need to 'triangulate' conflict sensitivity analysis by including a diversity of relevant opinions and sources, representing all perspectives on a given situation.

Regarding politics in the aid industry, Bush argues strongly that conflict sensitivity should emphasize processes that empower communities vis-à-vis the more powerful aid industry actors. Drawing significantly on work done in Mindanao, he judges the effectiveness of PCIA on the basis of its usefulness to

grassroots actors: "The central – and fundamentally political – questions here are: Useful for whom? Useful for what? Whose interests are being served (or not)?" (Bush 2005: 4). Indeed, conflict sensitivity practice should be decisively centered around the practical needs of the user, with a special emphasis on the user who holds limited power within the aid system. Nonetheless, the need for empowerment in aid goes well beyond the practice of conflict sensitivity, and must be addressed at the industry-wide level. "Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment, as a set of tools and a space for reflective encounter, will be overburdened by the demand that it should act as catalyst for such deep social change" (Schmelzle 2005: 6).

Problematic power disparities in aid are further exposed in the practitioner debates on the extent to which conflict sensitivity should be tool-driven and standardized. The history of conflict sensitivity's development is often, as in this thesis, framed around the development and refinement of analytical, technical 'tools.' Frameworks dominate, yet Neufeldt (2007) argues regarding peacebuilding project design and impact assessment that not all users are natural "logical frameworkers" who appreciate linear thinking, causes and effects. Some, by nature of personality or culture, work more effectively as "complex circlers," focusing on relationships, processes and responsiveness to opportunity. Neufeldt parallels this distinction to the difference between positivism and interpretivism, and cautions that 'circlers' approach offers valuable insights that should be preserved. Operationally, this distinction highlights the risk that Westernized NGO culture tends to privilege 'frameworker' thinking, while local partners may be silenced as 'circlers.'

Some technically-oriented analysts decry the proliferation of conflict sensitivity methodologies and practices, advocating standardization of tools.

Hoffman, for example, advocates the interagency adoption of a set of broadly applicable indicators, drawn from both theory and practice (Hoffman 2003). While parsimonious, these standardized approaches ignore the extent to which operating contexts are dynamic and unique, and organizational actors differ in their mandates, objectives and capacities. Bush links standardized indicators to disempowerment, stating that they reinforce “the asymmetrical power relationships between Northern-driven initiatives and evaluations on the one hand, and those Southern communities on which they are ‘implemented’” (Bush 2005: 2). Indeed, the utility of the user may be better served by letting “a thousand flowers bloom” (Barbolet et al. 2005b: 2).

**The use of DNH in this study.** Among the many conflict sensitivity tools available, DNH has been selected for this project because it is the tool that has been most widely tested, used and adapted (Leonhardt 2003: 55), having proven adaptable across a very broad range of organizational and operational contexts, and particularly amenable to uptake at local levels (International Alert et al. 2004b: 28, Garred 2006b). DNH as a minimalist approach which emphasizes ‘doing no harm’ may be well suited to religious associations which are under no normative obligation to expand their work into active peacebuilding. At the same time, all tools have limitations and it is important to highlight those most relevant to this project.

De la Haye and Denayer, while affirming DNH’s field-based origins, accuse DNH of lacking “a fully developed theoretical framework” (2003: 51). Their criticism is not elaborated, but it likely points to the simplicity of the DNH framework’s context analysis elements. First, DNH’s identification of Dividers and Connectors, and their analysis across five categories, can be shallow if done with haste or limited skill. The terminology of Dividers and Connectors includes no reference to social

justice issues. Perceptions of injustice are often identified during the analysis of Dividers, particularly in latent conflict contexts (Garred 2006a). However, justice is not explicitly mentioned in the DNH framework, so facilitators are obliged to clarify that DNH is not meant to promote peace at the expense of justice, but rather to promote a just peace. In terms of human rights, Anderson acknowledges that while DNH can facilitate a preliminary identification of human rights issues, “there are other, better, tools” for deepening human rights analysis (Anderson n.d.).

Second, DNH context analysis is considered to be particularly locally-focused, making its best contribution at the micro level. Many practitioners restrict DNH to usage at the program level (Leonhardt 2003, Lowrey 2006), rather than using it to analyze sector-wide or interagency impact. Anderson herself has only occasionally sought to apply DNH at the national level, and acknowledges that DNH has not been applied to the international context, or “the ways international assistance can and does directly interact with these macrolevel forces” (Anderson 1999: 146). This contributes to the charge that DNH has failed “to develop a broader political perspective” (Leonhardt 2002: 41).

Nonetheless, the simplicity of DNH’s context analysis elements is a double-edged sword. It is the simplicity of the Dividers and Connectors concepts that make them very amenable to grassroots uptake. Dividers and Connectors are also influential in terms of personal transformation, contributing to what local-level practitioners have called a “new mindset,” “new worldview” or “paradigm shift” (Garred 2006a: 23). Further, there are situations, such as the first phase of a rapid-onset emergency response, when a fast and practical context analysis is precisely

what generalist practitioners need. In limited-capacity environments, a context analysis framework must be light and user-friendly if it is to have any practical value.

At the same time, a DNH context assessment conducted by a skilled analyst can become relatively sophisticated. Dividers become an entry point for incorporating virtually any external body of theory on the causes of conflict, while Connectors serve as an entry point for considering theory on sources of peace. CDA training practices also make provision for deepening the Dividers and Connectors analysis through secondary characteristics, such as internally- versus externally-influenced, broad versus narrow, and new versus old (CDA Collaborative Learning Projects n.d.-b). As a result, even local analyses should in principle be able to detect small-scale issues that reflect and are linked to broader international and global trends. Such approaches can significantly broaden the DNH frame of context analysis, but they require additional skill on the part of the facilitator or analyst.

While DNH has theoretical limitations in terms of context analysis, it is relatively rich in the theory of project impact, or how aid interventions impact conflict. The core impact mechanisms are identified as Resource Transfers and Implicit Ethical Messages, and further elaborated through the recognition of five and seven patterns, respectively.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless this contribution often goes unrecognized as form of theory. Conflict sensitivity renders explicit a complex set of practitioner theories-in-use (Argyris and Schön 1996: 13). As such, the different conflict sensitivity approaches put forth theoretical content which is generated and tested in practitioner experience, and which therefore resonates in interesting ways with the collaborative action research methodology used in the current study (Fischer and Wils 2003: 7). In

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<sup>9</sup> These patterns are discussed in detail in Chapter Six.

DNH, the field-based nature of Anderson's theory development process is particularly striking, bringing forth learnings in the spirit of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Some observers may wish to see academic peace theory deductively applied to practice, but Donald Schön argues that this kind of thinking "needs to be turned on its head. We should think about practice as a setting not only for the application of knowledge but for its generation" (1995: 382).

### **Academic Criticism of Conflict Sensitivity**

The self-reflections of conflict sensitivity practitioners have been highlighted above in the form of ongoing debates within the field. In contrast, this section addresses criticism from an academic perspective,<sup>10</sup> including Professor Mark Duffield and Joanna Macrae of the Overseas Development Institute as the most influential voices. Such criticism relates primarily to the emergency relief stream of conflict sensitivity, and follows that relief stream through its various stages of evolution, with particular emphasis on its convergence with the community development and peacebuilding streams. In early stages, the views of academics and practitioners were comparable, yet they become increasingly polarized over time, with little evidence of dialog or agreement, at least until after the US invasion of Iraq. Assessing such academic criticisms, together with the countervailing arguments of conflict sensitivity practitioners, assists in laying bare some of the theoretical assumptions underlying conflict sensitivity, and in identifying implications for the current action research project.

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<sup>10</sup> The terms 'practitioner' and 'academic' are imperfect, because there is a significant overlap of roles among key conflict sensitivity figures. Nonetheless the terms do convey the essence of two distinct and significantly polarized opinions, as noted by Fischer and Wils (2003: 7).



**The Evolution of Conflict Sensitivity Criticism.** In the early 1990s, academics responded to concerns about the interaction between emergency relief and 'new wars' in nearly the same way practitioners did. They highlighted the proposition that aid could exacerbate conflict, and called for a re-examination of aid program planning. Duffield, Macrae and Zwi (1994: 231) even recommended a form of conflict impact assessment: "Greater emphasis must be placed on developing tools to monitor and evaluate the impact of relief assistance on the evolution of conflict." Similar recommendations were reprised in later publications (Macrae 2001: 171, Duffield 2001b: 259-62). However even in early stages, academic commentary placed slightly more emphasis on macro-level and social justice issues than did the work of practitioners. Central themes included the need for international attention to human rights violations, and concern over the emerging politicization of aid as a tool of the powerful donor states (Duffield et al. 1994, Duffield and Prendergast 1994). The Rwanda genocide became a pivotal turning point, given the widespread consensus that aid had substituted for political action (Eriksson 1997, Terry 2002). Criticism increased, with Macrae calling for a return to traditional humanitarian principles (Macrae 1998), and Duffield directly questioning the ability of NGOs to right themselves (Duffield 1997).

Beginning in approximately 2000, the academic criticisms escalated again, as analysts perceived a change in the strategy of donor states following the 'humanitarian interventions' in Kosovo (1999) and Afghanistan (both before and after the 2001 US invasion). The donors' emerging 'coherence policy' demanded a growing alignment between political and humanitarian objectives such that, according to Macrae and Leader, "humanitarian action has become the primary form of political

action, rather than merely a substitute for it" (2001: 290). Meanwhile the concept of developmental-relief had evolved into the 'new humanitarianism,' which incorporated not only peacebuilding, but also human rights and a range of other non-traditional sectors. Such expanded relief programs were criticized as ill-suited to the contextual constraints of complex political emergencies (Macrae 2001).

Perhaps more seriously, NGOs under the new humanitarianism were accused of being co-opted by donor governments into a political project of globalizing liberal governance, while using aid as one mechanism to control and compensate the impoverished peripheral zones that were increasingly perceived as security risks. Related concerns included social impact assessments as a step towards aid conditionality, and the blurring of the civilian/military interface (Duffield 2001a, Duffield 2001b, Duffield et al. 2001). David Rieff raised the stakes by bringing similar issues to the attention of the general public with *A Bed for the Night: Humanitarianism in Crisis* (2002). Thomas Weiss (2000) was a quieter dissenting voice, arguing that the trend toward humanitarian intervention indicated that humanitarian concepts had successfully influenced state policy toward positive ends, rather than state policy co-opting humanitarianism.

The concerns over humanitarian intervention took on a new aspect, and reached a new level, with the escalation of the US Global War on Terror, particularly the 2003 invasion of Iraq. To the extent that NGOs responded to humanitarian needs created by the military invasion of donor governments, it appeared that co-optation had reached an unprecedented level. Practitioners and academics began to recover some common ground, as scholar-practitioners argued that humanitarianism had reached a pivotal turning point requiring urgent attention (see for example Donini et

al. 2004). Anderson raised the subject of government donor policy in Iraq at an interagency DNH consultation in November 2004, but the participating NGO representatives arrived at no agreed course of action (CDA Collaborative Learning Projects 2004a). Just a few weeks later, the Indian Ocean tsunami catapulted the major NGOs into their largest emergency response in history, which sidelined their introspection regarding Iraq (Garred 2007), with the tsunami response itself becoming a major focus of conflict sensitivity scrutiny (de Silva 2009, Waizenegger and Hyndman 2010). The co-optation discussion currently persists unresolved as the Global War on Terror continues (Zwitter 2008), and academic interest in conflict sensitivity issues continues apace (Clarke 2006, Goodhand 2006, Hoffman and Weiss 2006, de Waal 2010).

**Criticism focused on DNH.** In the work of authors such as Duffield and Macrae, the general criticism of conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding in aid contexts is very often illustrated with specific references to DNH and Anderson, because DNH is the form of conflict sensitivity considered “extremely influential” (Duffield 2001b: 128) within the relief stream. When Duffield and Macrae criticize DNH, they criticize it as linked to and representative of the growth of the developmental relief and new humanitarianism agendas. This notion refers to an expanded interpretation of DNH, in which an aid project can actively help to promote peace. However, Duffield and Macrae generally do not criticize the minimalist interpretation of DNH, which aims only to prevent an aid project from exacerbating existing conflict. The authors themselves have occasionally clarified their criticism. Duffield has drawn a distinction between what he calls the “minimalist” and “maximalist” positions in humanitarian action, citing DNH as a primary illustration of the “minimalist”

position (Duffield 2001b: 94, see also Weiss 1999: 3). Macrae acknowledges that the trend toward conflict impact assessment of aid programs, and the trend toward integration of development concepts into aid programs, were originally two separate and distinct strands, which later became “entwined” (Macrae and Leader 2001: 295). The minimalist interpretation of DNH corresponds to what Macrae has elsewhere accepted as a “conflict-neutral” approach (Macrae 1998: 13).

As a practitioner, Anderson makes it clear that both the minimalist and expanded interpretations are an intentional part of DNH, as evident in the title of the core publication (*Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace – Or War*, 1999), and in the dual name of the tool (‘Do No Harm’ / ‘Local Capacities for Peace’). Additionally, other projects by Anderson and her staff demonstrate a leaning toward relief-development linkages (Anderson and Woodrow 1989) and towards active peacebuilding (Anderson and Olson 2003, Goddard 2009). Nonetheless Anderson herself has clarified that she views the minimalist interpretation of DNH as the primary purpose of the tool. As a case in point, the interagency effort that was previously called the ‘Local Capacities for Peace Project’ (see for example Anderson 2000) is now called the ‘Do No Harm Project’ (CDA Collaborative Learning Projects n.d.-a).

Such terminology differences may appear small, but the distinction between avoiding the exacerbation of conflict and actively contributing to its resolution has pivotal implications for the type of contribution that conflict sensitivity claims to make, and for the operational planning of the agencies involved. NGOs often highlight this distinction by framing their efforts as either a minimalist “working in conflict” or an expanded “working on conflict” (Woodrow and Chigas 2009: 9).

Advocates of the expanded position may criticize DNH for its minimalist approach, stating that aid must make a positive contribution toward peace (Weiss 1999, Uvin 2002). Despite these important distinctions, practitioners indicate that the minimalist and expanded approaches are closely linked. DNH has often been used as a foundational entry-point into peacebuilding, particularly at the local level (Ruth-Heffelbower 2002, Garred 2006a, Goddard 2009). With regard to the current project, the aim is a minimalist one, seeking primarily to minimize unintended negative impacts, rather than to pursue active peacebuilding. Even so, some spontaneous expressions of peacebuilding may emerge, and they will not be actively discouraged.

**The core issue: social justice.** The academic debate on conflict sensitivity is a highly complex one, marked by the tension between micro- and macro-level perspectives. The overarching concern of academic critics is the macro-level trend in humanitarian action and its relationship to politics. Sørensen (2006) points out that Duffield and other critics, while advancing a wide array of arguments, are all writing in essence about the potentially negative effects, particularly for the poor, of the globalization of the liberal agenda and the role of humanitarian aid within that system. The critics point out that conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding practitioners tend to locate the causes of conflict within a state, while ignoring and thus perpetuating the external macro-structural causes, some of which are rooted in the international aid system itself (Duffield 2001b). In principle, this systemic bias could be addressed by applying conflict sensitivity at the macro level, analyzing the “aid system as a whole” (Leonhardt 2002: 41). Indeed, the recent emphasis on conflict-sensitive bilateral assistance to fragile states (e.g. OECD 2010) has significantly

broadened the scope of analysis, but it has not yet resulted in any systemic attempt to grapple with the negative impacts of the global aid architecture.

The academic criticisms of conflict sensitivity advance an essential concern on behalf of the disempowered, yet it must be pointed out that such criticism originates far away from the operationally-focused perspective of many conflict sensitivity users. Among large NGOs, many practitioners persist in using conflict sensitivity at the micro level, not necessarily because they are ignorant of macro-politics, or captive to the inertia of the humanitarian aid system, but also because they implicitly value the local as profoundly unique and worthy of analysis. Among community-based organizations, grassroots participants may share Duffield's concern for the question of justice, without sharing his enthusiasm for macro-analysis (see for example Bush 2009). With this in mind, micro- and macro-analyses can be seen as complementary. Local dynamics should not be subsumed in the discussion of global meta-narratives, but micro-analysis should be informed by an understanding of the macro, and a willingness to question one's own alignment with the prevailing structures of power. Ultimately, agencies must have the freedom to conduct analysis at a level that is relevant to the scope their operational influence, in order to exercise responsibility for their own impacts at that level.

Further, while the academic criticisms reflect very justifiable concerns about the aid sector, the terms of that debate do not necessarily apply to other sectors. The current project aims to move conflict sensitivity into the religious sector, so the shortcomings of the aid system itself are not of immediate concern. Nonetheless, it is essential to hold open the questions of social justice at every level, including the question of how conflict sensitivity methodology, which originated in the aid sector,

relates to the forces of globalization. The religious sector may also feature macro-level dynamics that take on disempowering manifestations at the local level. With specific regard to DNH, a concern for social justice raises again the limitations of this particular tool. The simplicity of DNH's context analysis elements, while making the tool easily usable at the grassroots level, may simultaneously dispose the tool to analytical gaps. The lack of any explicit mention of injustice in the identification of Dividers, and the localized focus of analysis, may result in overlooking questions of structural violence (Galtung 1969). These DNH limitations are often overcome in the hands of skilled facilitators, but they may pose a daunting challenge to the novice. Thus the treatment of social justice issues will require vigilance throughout the course of the project.

### **Conflict Sensitivity Adaptations**

Conflict sensitivity's influence has expanded rapidly in its first decade of existence, and practices have been extensively adapted both inside and outside the humanitarian aid sector. It is instructive to survey the important adaptations, in terms of both content and process, and to consider their implications for the current project's effort to introduce conflict sensitivity to new audiences in the religious associational sector.

**Adaptations within the humanitarian aid sector.** Within the aid sector, DNH has been the most widely adapted tool. Numerous aid agencies have adapted DNH concepts to their own institutional contexts. Additionally, DNH usage has expanded from the emergency relief sector to the development assistance sector, with a number

of NGOs experiencing this shift. World Vision International has tested and documented how the basic DNH analytical framework proves equally useful in community development contexts (Garred 2006b), with adaptations as follows.

When shifting from a relief to a development context, the DNH framework's context analysis elements, consisting of Dividers and Connectors across a range of sub-categories, remain very consistent. The breadth and simplicity of these concepts makes them highly adaptable. However, these same elements must often be presented and perceived in a fresh light, because community development contexts are likely to feature latent conflict, in which relationships appear "smooth on the surface but in turmoil beneath" (Tolibas-Nuñez 1997: 84). DNH trainers must often increase explanatory discussion and reflection time to help development practitioners recognize that conflict is present in their context, even in the absence of physical violence (Garred 2006a).

In contrast to the context analysis elements, the DNH framework's project impact analysis elements change more substantively when shifting from relief to development. Resource Transfers and Implicit Ethical Messages remain the two primary mechanisms through which aid impacts conflict, but there are changes in emphasis and expression. In Resource Transfers, the sub-categories manifest themselves in different ways. For example, the theft of resources for war-making purposes is common in relief projects, but in development projects it is more common to see diversion of aid through corruption or politicization to benefit members of favored groups. Unequal distribution of material resources may exacerbate tensions in relief projects, but in development projects the contested resources are more likely to include capacity-building opportunities and decision-



making power. When considering Implicit Ethical Messages, the 'intangibles' are more readily acknowledged as a core project component in development than in relief. DNH relief literature discusses only negative Implicit Ethical Messages, whereas development workers often point out that such messages can also impact in positive ways (Garred 2006a).

The shift towards using DNH in development contexts can also bring a greater emphasis on participation of local-level actors. While DNH was originally used in relief contexts by staff of large NGOs, development that is truly participatory requires the active involvement of community members and local partners in DNH. Participatory learning and action methods have been used to gather community member input in context analysis. Community-based organizations, who are often the primary program planners and implementers, have proven adept at using the core concepts of DNH to influence program design and implementation (Garred 2006a). Conflict sensitivity work at the grassroots level is gradually increasing, and some expressions of conflict sensitivity have emphasized the importance of Southern participation and ownership (see for example Bush 2005, International Alert et al. 2004a).

In addition to the shift of DNH from relief to development, there is also a broader ongoing expansion of conflict sensitivity practice to various specialized sub-sectors within the humanitarian aid community. Sectoral and integrated interagency conflict sensitivity analyses are becoming more common given the increasing emphasis on the macro level. The International Development Research Centre has published a book on conflict sensitivity concepts pertaining to natural resource management (Buckles 1999). Barbolet et al. have proposed the application of conflict

sensitivity to programs on democratization and on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants, which are intended to build peace, but can unintentionally exacerbate conflict (2005a). Simon Mason advocates for conflict-sensitive research methodology, particularly in the form of “explorative expert interviews” (2003).

**Adaptations in the business sector.** While adaptations within the humanitarian aid sector have been significant, the most unexpected expansion has come in the form of conflict sensitivity uptake within the business sector. This movement began in the 1990s with rising concern over the relationship of business interests to the ‘new wars,’ particularly in transnational resource extraction industries. Prominent conflict sensitivity practitioners have sought to marry the growing awareness of business impacts with conflict sensitivity learnings from the humanitarian aid sector. CDA Collaborative Learning Projects launched a ‘Corporate Engagement Project’ (CDA Collaborative Learning Projects 2008b, Zandvliet and Anderson 2009). International Alert advocates for conflict sensitivity uptake, and provides business actors with tools, resources and capacity building (International Alert 2005, Hettiarachchi et al. 2009). The UN Global Compact, which presents itself as a voluntary international corporate social responsibility initiative, has adopted conflict prevention as one of its issues (Williams 2008, Rasche and Kell 2010) and produced its own guide to conflict impact assessment and risk management (Gossen et al. 2002). Each of these efforts follows the basic conflict sensitivity model of conducting context analysis, and then developing recommendations for organizational planning, in order to avoid negative impacts and maximize positive impacts.

Despite the similarities, the argument supporting conflict sensitivity in the corporate sector follows a different line of reasoning than in the humanitarian aid sector, reflecting the differing reasons for their existence. In approaching the humanitarian community, a conflict sensitivity advocate moves directly to point out the possibility of doing unintentional harm to a community, which, if true, would counteract the humanitarian's primary purpose. However the same argument is unlikely to persuade many in the corporate sector. As Zandvliet observes: "It is unlikely that many corporate managers would read a chapter titled *The Role of Business in Conflict Transformation*" (2005: 1). Thus a conflict sensitivity advocate tends to approach the business community first by recognizing the high cost of conflict to business operations, since conflict detracts from the profit-making mission. Subsequently, the advocate then raises the issue of how business practices can unintentionally exacerbate conflict. Unlike DNH, nearly all conflict analysis methodologies in the corporate sector emphasize two-way impacts, from context to project, and from project to context.

Conflict sensitivity in the corporate sector involves compliance issues which are not currently present to any significant extent in the humanitarian aid sector. For humanitarian organizations the minimalist approach is to 'do no harm,' but corporations have an even more foundational starting point, which is compliance with the applicable legal requirements at local, national and international levels (International Alert 2005: 10). Thus advocates of conflict sensitivity appeal not only to the corporations themselves, but also to policy-making and regulatory bodies. International Alert has presented the case to Northern governments both directly (Banfield et al. 2003) and through the OECD Development Assistance Committee's

Conflict, Peace and Development Co-Operation Network (International Alert 2004).

The UN Global Compact, approaching the same issue from a corporate perspective, commissioned a review of how public policy actors might support the private sector's conflict sensitivity efforts, and this also turns to compliance themes in decriing the lack of "clear and enforceable rules of the game" (Ballentine and Haufler 2005: 53).

Conflict sensitivity's context analysis in the corporate sector is similar in methodology to that of the humanitarian aid sector, but it is less intensively emphasized. Conflict risk and impact assessments are of course recommended, but they are also supplemented by other efforts such as stakeholder engagement strategies, revenue transparency and commodity certification initiatives (Ballentine and Haufler 2005: 23). There is less tendency to insist on context-specific strategies, and more readiness to propose broadly applicable patterns and recommendations (International Alert 2005, Zandvliet and Anderson 2009). Further, there is less emphasis on internal organizational capacity building, and a greater reliance on using external analysts. Presumably the corporate audience has less patience for social analysis than does the humanitarian community, and a greater demand for fixed solutions, but there is no hard evidence to indicate how this preference impacts conflict sensitivity effectiveness.

Project impact analysis patterns are subject to more substantive changes than context analysis patterns when shifting from the humanitarian to the corporate sector. The conflict impacts of corporate social investment projects may be similar to those of aid projects, but otherwise the divergent organizational purposes and activities of businesses naturally generate very different social impact patterns. Some

consistently troublesome issues include recruitment, selection and compensation of staff, compensation of residents affected by business operations, security enforcement, human rights, corruption, and relations with indigenous people groups (International Alert 2005, Zandvliet and Anderson 2009).

**Implications for the current project.** This brief review of previous conflict sensitivity adaptations within and outside of the humanitarian aid sector suggests several factors that may become relevant in the current effort to introduce conflict sensitivity to religious associations. First, it is possible to modify the point of entry in advocating conflict sensitivity, or to adjust the relative emphasis placed on the various conflict sensitivity elements, in order to appeal to the special interests of a given practitioner audience. Second, the level of complexity and sophistication in conflict sensitivity analysis must be adjusted to fit the available capacity of a given practitioner audience, particularly if the goal is for the practitioners themselves to give sustainable leadership to conflict sensitivity efforts. Finally, project impact analysis patterns and elements are likely to require contextualization or adaptation when conflict sensitivity applied to new types of organizations. In contrast, the context analysis patterns and elements are more likely to remain constant.

## **Assessing the Applicability of Conflict Sensitivity to Religious**

### **Associations**

In order to determine whether conflict sensitivity is applicable to religious associations, and if so to what extent, it is necessary to establish at the outset a conceptual frame. Such a frame must be broad enough to accommodate the iterative

learning cycles that take place during an action research process, and flexible enough to respond to the innovations of practitioner partners. This study seeks to examine both the relevance and the usefulness of conflict sensitivity to religious associations, through examination of the following questions.

**Is there a need for conflict sensitivity?** This pertains to relevance.

Throughout its brief history, conflict sensitivity has been taken up in response to the problem of well-meaning activities that generate unintended negative impacts on a context of conflict. To determine whether there is a need for conflict sensitivity as a partial solution, it is necessary to first establish the existence of a problem. Key questions include the following: Is there a social conflict, whether manifest or latent? Does the intervention in question sometimes exacerbate this social conflict? If so, is such negative impact significant enough, at least at the local level, to merit practitioner attention?

These questions must be asked from the perspective of both insiders and outsiders, because most negative impacts are unintentional, which renders them difficult for insiders to see. Thus it is possible that conflict sensitivity may be very much needed in a given situation, but not acknowledged or utilized by insiders, if awareness levels are low. It is equally possible that insiders might already recognize and manage conflict sensitivity issues in ways that go unrecognized by outsiders.

**To what extent, and in what ways, is conflict sensitivity being used? Or not used? Why?** One indication of both relevance and usefulness is the actual uptake of conflict sensitivity by religious associational actors. The interagency DNH Project, in its mainstreaming phase, determined that there are three interrelated elements involved in DNH uptake: conceptualization, personalization and operationalization

(CDA Collaborative Learning Projects 2001). International Alert further breaks mainstreaming processes into five components: commitment and motivation, organizational culture, capacity building, accountability, and external relationships (Lange 2004).

Both evaluative frames are normally used to inform and assess the effectiveness of an organization's conflict sensitivity efforts. The DNH Project's frame is more amenable to adjustment for the current purpose of assessing the applicability of the conflict sensitivity approach itself. This requires asking not only to what extent conflict sensitivity is being taken up, but perhaps more importantly, in what ways conflict sensitivity is being taken up, or not taken up, and why? Additionally, the DNH Project's frame elements of conceptualization, personalization and operationalization are meaningful to practitioner partners, and can potentially be used as 'hooks' on which other research questions might hang. Thus the DNH Project's approach will be adopted for use in the current project.

Conceptualization takes place at the individual level, through the recognition that well-meaning activities may have unintended negative impacts in a conflicted context. This awareness may first appear in a sudden flash of recognition, but individuals typically need repeated exposure to conflict sensitivity concepts in order to fully develop this awareness as a paradigm or lens for project planning (Garred 2006a). Within a group, awareness typically increases over time, such that there may be no awareness at the time conflict sensitivity is introduced, followed by progressively increasing levels of awareness as the process continues.

Personalization also takes place at the individual level, through the recognition that one's own actions or one's own organization may be responsible for

unintentionally exacerbating conflict. DNH has been found to contribute to individual change, with some participants adopting a more inclusive viewpoint (Riak 2006, Sihotang and Silalahi 2006) and spontaneously applying DNH insights not only to their own role in the organization, but also to their interpersonal and familial relationships (Garred 2006a). Other conflict sensitivity tools have the potential for a similar affect. Barbolet et al. report that community members trained in conflict sensitivity often react

first, with dismay at their own role in perpetuating violence through inadvertently supporting the structures of violence. Second, with excitement and empowerment as they understand that changing their own behaviour, and encouraging their friends and neighbours to do the same, will support peace and undermine violence (2005a: 5).

Operationalization takes place at the organizational level, when conflict sensitivity insights are applied to project operations, or to the broader development of organizational policy and ethos. Organizational application is the ultimate goal of conflict sensitivity, yet this does not take place until a significant number of individuals within the organization have experienced conceptualization and personalization. Allen Harder (2006) invokes here the concept of “critical mass” in applying Everett Rogers’ (1995) innovation diffusion theory to conflict sensitivity uptake. Additionally, the speed of uptake depends on a variety of other factors, such as the disposition of leadership towards conflict sensitivity, the nature of organizational decision-making structures and processes, and the complexity of the operating environment.

Conflict sensitivity requires time and effort, so practitioners generally operationalize it only when it meets a “felt need” (Harder 2006: 86) by helping them



to do their job better or meet their goals. Therefore if conflict sensitivity is consistently used by religious associations, this likely indicates that it is both relevant and useful. Lack of uptake may imply that conflict sensitivity is not useful in its current form, but does not necessarily imply that it is not relevant, due to the potential awareness gap described above. Further, even if conflict sensitivity is viewed by many as useful in its current form, it may not be operationalized if organizational leaders, operating systems or incentive structures do not support it. Thus, while operationalization is the ultimate goal of conflict sensitivity, conceptualization and personalization can also be taken as interim indications of relevance and usefulness, as they are precursors to operationalization, and all three elements are mutually reinforcing.

In all aspects of DNH uptake – conceptualization, personalization and operationalization – this study requires an analysis of the types of situations in which conflict sensitivity is applied. This will illuminate the contexts in which conflict sensitivity is seen as relevant and useful, and provide a greater understanding of both the organizations and their operating environments. Thus it will be of interest to identify the realms in which religious practitioners most often apply conflict sensitivity, whether it be to their own life, their community of worship within church, mosque or temple, or to the broader community at large. Also significant is the question of whether religious actors adopt the minimalist interpretation of conflict sensitivity, with its emphasis on ‘doing no harm’ while implementing nPCRO projects, or whether they also demonstrate an interest in expanding into active peacebuilding. Finally, it will be important to note whether the project participants identify unintended negative impacts as coming mostly through the transfer of

tangible resources, or whether there is also a significant emphasis on intangible impacts.

**What are the implications for enhancing practitioner capacity?** This analysis of conflict sensitivity's applicability in the religious sector should naturally help to inform future capacity building efforts. Such practically-oriented conclusions are a major focus of the practitioner aspect of the action research effort, while receiving much briefer treatment in the academic thesis. Nonetheless, it will be important to identify which specific aspects of conflict sensitivity prove to be most relevant and useful, and which least. Accordingly, certain aspects might be expanded, modified or discarded. Further, it will be essential to try to distinguish which of these findings are true of conflict sensitivity in general, and which are specific only to the DNH tool. If certain limitations make the DNH tool unsuitable, then it could be adapted or replaced based on the complementary strengths available in other conflict sensitivity tools. Finally, applicability to the religious sector in one or two locations does not necessarily imply applicability to the religious sector everywhere. One must assess the extent to which these findings are generalizable across contexts, as a guide to potential future capacity building efforts in other locations.

### **Conclusion: Evaluative Stance**

The current project seeks to address the social impacts of religious associations operating in multifaith conflict-vulnerable contexts through field-testing the conflict sensitivity approach. The focus is on a minimalist form of conflict sensitivity, which aims to understand how religious projects and activities impact

existing communal tensions, in order to mitigate any unintended negative impacts. This project draws on the history of previous conflict sensitivity adaptations in the humanitarian aid and business sectors, and selects the DNH framework as the particular conflict sensitivity tool to be tested. The relevance and usefulness of conflict sensitivity within the religious sector will be examined through a focus on how religious actors conceptualize, personalize and operationalize the DNH tool.

An operational experiment of this type naturally requires a critical evaluative stance, and it is necessary to be clear about what is being evaluated. This project focuses on assessing the applicability of the conflict sensitivity approach itself to a new audience, not on judging the efforts or effectiveness of the participating practitioners and agencies. Further, the project requires a form of evaluation that is utilization-focused, with an emphasis on exploring innovative forms of conflict sensitivity that may be of near-term use to religious actors (Patton 1997).

Correspondingly, this form of evaluation is highly participatory, as befitting the collaborative action research approach detailed in Chapter Four. Before proceeding to methodology, however, the next chapter must address the essential question of how conflict sensitivity testing can inform not only practitioner usage, but also the development of academic theory on religious associations and the various factors that influence their peace and conflict impacts.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATIONS IN SOUTHEAST ASIAN CONTEXT**

*Can we, I asked, do a social science of the pain, suffering,  
loss and death experienced in ethnic or communal conflict?*  
- Ashutosh Varshney (2002, xiv)

This chapter provides the conceptual backdrop for the study's second level of inquiry, that which considers how the data collected during conflict sensitivity testing serve to inform existing associational theory. Recent theoretical developments reveal a post-Cold War surge of optimism regarding the liberal democratizing role of the associational sector, in its various forms including civil society and social capital (for example, Putnam 1993, Gellner 1994, Salamon 1994, Keane 2003). However, on the heels of such enthusiasm has come a wave of disenchantment, with numerous analysts observing that associational impacts are not uniformly positive (Ndegwa 1996, Portes 1998, Halpern 2005: 22-25, Rossteutscher 2005b, Field 2008: 79-100, Warren 2008, Ghosh 2009, Graeff 2009). It is increasingly recognized that social mobilization can either promote or retard liberal democracy, depending on the prevailing social conditions and the nature of the association. The increasingly shrill criticisms of humanitarian aid NGOs, as discussed in the previous chapter, provide an example of how this wave of disenchantment has manifested itself in a particular sub-sector of the associational realm (Duffield 1997, Maren 1997, Rieff 2002).

Recent democratization theory has also included an explicit emphasis on peace (Rasmussen 2003), thus giving rise to a cluster of literature that focused on the relationship between the associational sector, conflict and peace (Gidron et al. 2002b, Kaldor 2007, Brewer 2010). Most of that cluster examines the impact of associations

that *intentionally* set out to promote peace or, less commonly, those that *intentionally* set out to pursue goals that lead to violence. However, the sub-cluster of theory that addresses *unintentional* associational impacts is smaller still, and emergent in nature. My thesis informs that sub-cluster by examining the conflict impacts of non-peace and conflict resolution organizations, or nPCROs, as associations whose primary mandate lies in areas other than peace and conflict resolution, such that their influence on peace or conflict can be considered an “externality” (Morris 2000: 27-8, Putnam and Feldstein 2003: 269, Curini 2007). In contexts vulnerable to tensions between identity groups, such externalities may produce either positive or negative impact on the prevailing climate of conflict and peace (Colletta and Cullen 2000, Cox 2009).

The work of Robert Putnam (2000) on bridging and bonding social capital, and Ashutosh Varshney (2002) on intercommunal linkages in civil society, serve as central theoretical points of reference. The core body of research available to date, contributed by Putnam, Varshney and other researchers commenting on the issues they raise (including Uvin 1998, Weisinger and Salipante 2005, Cochrane 2005, Pickering 2006), has surfaced important insights yet it generalizes the nature and causes of associational conflict impact in ways that overlook the complexity and dynamism of the associational sector. This debate often presents itself as a disagreement on the extent to which associational impact can be considered broadly positive, or broadly negative. Structural determinants of impact are heavily emphasized, particularly the question of whether or not an association’s membership composition is homogenous or heterogeneous in relation to the major identity group cleavages in the broader socio-political context. While structures are undeniably

important, the emphasis on associational structure can lead to overlooking important non-structural determinants of impact. Further, a number of related questions require exploration, including the degree to which associational actors can transcend the contextual pressures of a deeply divided society in order to become agents of change, and the role of religion in shaping associational conflict impacts.

Before further engaging Putnam, Varshney and their interlocutors on associational conflict impacts, this chapter first locates the study in the Southeast Asian socio-political context, which features several critical regional trends that must be clarified in contrast to Western-influenced concepts of democratization. Next, I examine the theories of Putnam, Varshney and others on the nature and causes of associational conflict impact by nPCROs. I critically engage the arguments found within this emergent literary sub-cluster by comparing them to conflict sensitivity theory as an alternative approach to social impact analysis. Finally, with a view to addressing the imbalances, tensions and gaps found in the current body of theory, I identify the key research questions that guide my empirical efforts in Mindanao and Singapore. Throughout the chapter, I maintain that view the theory building should result in theory that is credible enough to influence practitioner action in policy and practice. Application is not the purpose of this chapter but good theory, when applied should lead logically to sound and effective decision-making.

### **Ethno-politics, Religion and the Associational Sector in Southeast Asia**

This section provides a brief and selective framing of ethno-politics, religion and the associational sector in the region, emphasizing those aspects that make

Southeast Asia unique. In Southeast Asia, the prominence of religion in the public sphere, the prevalence of ethnicity- and religion-based associations, and the wide range of associational stances vis-à-vis the state, all challenge the Westernized assumptions that underlay much of the current theory on associational conflict impacts. Both concepts and terminology must be broadened in order to adequately grasp the dynamics of associational conflict impacts in Southeast Asia.

**Southeast Asia as a region.** At the outset, the location of the current study within Southeast Asia requires critical conceptual framing. Southeast Asia is generally considered to be the region that lies between India and China, and has been heavily influenced by both of those civilizations. The region is commonly described as containing ten states: Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR; Laos), Cambodia, Thailand, Viet Nam (Vietnam), Myanmar (Burma), Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines. The inclusion of the eleventh state of Timor Leste (East Timor), which became independent in 2002, is surprisingly inconsistent (e.g. King 2008: xvii includes Timor Leste, but Kumar and Siddique 2008: 9 do not). The definition of the region's boundaries has also been erratic: Sri Lanka was sporadically included in decades past (Anderson 1998: 6), and the Philippines was questioned until the 1960s (Osborne 2010: 5). The current regional configuration of states is mapped in Figure 3.1 below.

**Figure 3.1: Map of Contemporary Southeast Asia**



Source: Perry-Castañeda Map Collection, University of Texas Libraries, 2003

Map notwithstanding, the very designation of Southeast Asia as a region is a recent concept that originated largely in the West. The area was vaguely referred to as “further India” or “Indo-China” (Reid 1993: 3) until World War II, when the Allies created a South-east Asia Command in opposition to the Japanese (Leifer 1998: 227). Scholars therefore recognize Southeast Asia as an “imagined reality” (Anderson 1998: 6). Nonetheless, without denying the constructed nature of the region, some theorists



argue that the diverse societies of Southeast Asia share important elements of culture (e.g. Wolters 1999) and history (e.g. Reid 1993: 3-6, Reid 1999). Modern manifestations of that shared history include colonization by the Spanish, British, Dutch, French, Portuguese and Americans; Japanese occupation during World War II; intense communist and anti-communist activity plus great power interest during the Cold War; and a post-Cold War emphasis on economic development, which was hampered by the Asian financial crisis of 1997.<sup>11</sup> The regional concept has been taken up by the member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN, formed in 1967). In fact, Acharya (2009: 29-30) argues that the formation of ASEAN has played a major role in the development of regional consciousness, and ASEAN itself has articulated strategic objectives aimed at “building ASEAN identity” (ASEAN 2009: 20-23).

The current project does not focus on Southeast Asian Studies per se, but it does seek to locate itself with reference to certain regional trends on religion, conflict and the associational sector. Therefore the lingering tensions in this academic field must be taken into account. Southeast Asian Studies still tend to be dominated by Western voices (Heryanto 2007) and perspectives (Lieberman 2003: 9). Historical research in the region has leaned heavily towards rulers and their polities, giving less attention to agency among peripheral communities (Chutintharānon and Baker 2002). In contrast, this project’s critical examination of Westernized associational theory, together with its foregrounding of local perspectives through action research, makes a modest contribution towards understanding the region on its own terms.

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<sup>11</sup> Thailand is the only Southeast Asian state that was not colonized by European powers, nor was it occupied by the Japanese.

**Ethnicity, Religion and Conflict.** The challenges of identity-based ethno-political conflict are global in nature, yet particularly prominent in Southeast Asia. Furnivall (1956) originally coined the notion of “plural society” within this region, and Kumar and Siddique (2008: 7) describe the region’s states as “defined by their constant imperative to cope with diversity.” This imperative involves addressing varying types and degrees of intergroup conflict, including a number of civil wars that rank among “the most intractable in the world” (Derouen et al. 2009). Such dynamics are rooted in the post-colonial governance trends that brought multiple ethnic groups together under the modern sovereign state. The state borders defined through colonial competition were mismatched to the traditional geographic distribution of ethnic groups, yet those borders were reified at the time of independence. As a result, all Southeast Asian states are multiethnic, and many ethnic groups in the region now find themselves divided by one or more interstate borders. The sheer number of ethnic groups, and the complex relations between them, lend a horizontal dimension to ethno-political conflict in the region.

At the same time, state-society relations are highly ethnicized, bringing a vertical element to the analysis. In the pre-colonial era, rugged geographic barriers kept the centers of political influence relatively small and fractured (Hefner 2007), and a ruler’s authority dissipated towards loose territorial edges. Wolters (1999) notably compares this early political formation to a mandala. In contrast, authority in the newly independent states was assumed to be uniform throughout their territory, thus creating tension between the center and the periphery (Kingsbury 2005). Center and periphery very often represented different ethnicities, with ruling elites hailing from a powerful ethnic group at the center, and less powerful groups occupying the

geographic and political margins (Duncan 2008). Thus the political realm is dominated by an ongoing effort to define relations between the “majority” and the “minorities” (Pfaff-Czarnecka and Rajasingham-Senanayake 1999). Economic development policies have often benefited the majority at the expense of minorities, through resource extraction, land use legislation, and/or transmigration of majority populations into peripheral minority-held zones (Kingsbury 2005, Duncan 2008). States are often ambiguous in their projection of the ‘nation,’ framing it sometimes on the basis of inclusive citizenship, and other times on shared ethnicity and culture (Brown 1994: 261). As a result, secessionist movements dot the region, and ethnic mobilization is consistently viewed by ruling majorities as a threat to the integrity of states (Snitwongse and Thompson 2005). Autonomy proposals in various forms are a frequent focus of policy discussion (Ferrer 2001).

Importantly, these ethno-political tensions frequently take on a religious tone. The root causes of conflict are often political and economic, but religion overlays them as a highly secondary influential factor (Mulder 2003: 220, Fox 2004, Cady and Simon 2007: 16). This linkage stems from the strong demographic correlation between ethnicity and religion throughout the region (Goh 2005: 13, Kumar and Siddique 2008), which takes on added salience when ethnicity and religion are conflated in the public imagination. At the time of independence, governing regimes were often tied to a particular ethno-religious group, making the relationship between government and religion one of the most hotly debated policy issues (Kumar and Siddique 2008: 15-6). Buddhism is statistically prevalent among majority groups in mainland Southeast Asia (including Myanmar, Thailand, Viet Nam, Lao PDR and Cambodia) plus Singapore, while Islam and Christianity fill the same niche in the other

archipelagic states (Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam, Timor Leste and the Philippines). Minority groups are often affiliated with the other major world religions including Hinduism, or with local indigenous beliefs. As a result, relationships between ethno-religious groups are frequently marked by stark “horizontal inequalities” (Humphreys and Varshney 2004: 13, Stewart 2008). Religion may be more easily radicalized where religious differences overlap with socio-economic gaps (Adam et al. 2007: 979), and more likely exclusivist where followers have internalized a minority consciousness (Eck 1993: 176).

At this juncture, a half-century after independence, the expectations of the secularization thesis (Durkheim 1915, Weber 1930) have not come to pass (Norris and Inglehart 2004). Casanova’s (1994) analysis indicates that while modernization does indeed result in religion becoming structurally differentiated from society’s other political and cultural spheres, religion does not necessarily decline in influence or become private. In Southeast Asia, religion is neither private nor apolitical, and “Western secularism has not been a viable option” (Kumar and Siddique 2008: 16). Further, religious relations in Southeast Asia are currently in a state of flux. The regional religious culture has historically been tolerant of differing beliefs, absorbing Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity in successive waves, and placing a priority on communal harmony (McCloud 1995, Mulder 1996: 7-15). Nevertheless, Southeast Asia has been deeply impacted by the global post-Cold War trend towards increased identity-based conflict, and the region has seen a revival and expansion of religious activity (Mulder 2003: 165-74, Kumar and Siddique 2008: 7-37). The attacks of September 11, 2001, and the Western framing of Southeast Asia as a “second front” in the “Global War on Terror” (Gershman 2002, see also Acharya and Acharya 2007),

have further intensified local intergroup tensions as well as anti-American sentiment (Kumar and Siddique 2008: 27). Within Islam, there is a vigorous intrafaith debate over how that faith's teachings relate to the modern nation-state (Hefner 2007, Kadir 2007, Alagappa 2004a). Some local associational activists warn against adopting a "clash of civilizations" paradigm (Huntington 1996), fearing that an otherwise avoidable 'clash' may become a self-fulfilling prophecy.<sup>12</sup>

Southeast Asia's ethno-political cleavages and their religious implications are very present in the associational realm, which often organizes itself along ethnic and religious lines (Lee 2004: 11, Mulder 1996: 192, Alagappa 2004b: 465). In the global literature, this phenomenon is known as "homophily" (Lazarsfeld and Merton 1954), affirming the popular observation that "birds of a feather flock together" (de Souza Briggs 2003: 4, Putnam and Feldstein 2003: 3). While the term 'homophily' refers primarily to relational networks (e.g. McPherson et al. 2001, Lin 2002: 29-40), it also has powerful implications for the influence of relational networks in associational development (e.g. Weare et al. 2009). Where ethno-religious divisions are highly politicized, homophily can lead to the politicization of associational activity, even in the absence of formal political engagement (Orjuela 2003). The literature on associational homophily and ethno-politicization in Africa is expansive (e.g. Ndegwa 1996, Kasfir 1998, Uvin 1998: 173-79, Orvis 2001, Longman 2009), and despite local uniqueness many of those insights are relevant to Southeast Asia. Further, in Southeast Asia the religious sector itself represents a prominent sub-category of the associational realm, with Mulder going so far as to state that "the most lively scene of

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<sup>12</sup> Informal discussion during 'Moving Forward: Building an ASEAN People's Agenda; Third ASEAN plus Civil Society Conference,' held at the Peninsula Excelsior Hotel, Singapore, 2-4 Nov. 2007.

association is the religious field" (2003: 232). Religion often exerts a powerful influence over public opinion, and conflict actors may seek out religious associations as a vehicle of support for their aims (Hadiwinata 2007). In this sense, "everyday" ethnicity and religion is political (Karner 2007), because it enables the groups to "cohere sufficiently ... to participate in struggles for resources" (Clarke 1998: 6).

**The Nature of Civil Society.** The Southeast Asian associational sector described above does not fit neatly with current 'civil society' theory, much of which has been heavily influenced by Western thought (Hann and Dunn 1996, Kaviraj and Khilnani 2001). If civil society is viewed simply as the realm of interpersonal association falling outside of the household and the state, and usually also falling outside the market realm (Morris 2000, Kocka 2004: 69), then civil society has existed in Southeast Asia since pre-modern times (Lee 2004: 10, Hasan et al. 2008). However, with reference to post-Cold War thought, "if one equates civil society with the prevailing Western form, then one will conclude that it largely does not exist outside of the Western world" (Lee 2004: 8). Prominent differences in Southeast Asia include the place of ethnicity- and religion-based associations, and the relationship of civil society to the state.

First, the prominence of ethnicity and religion in associational life is met with several obstacles in current civil society theory. The Western emphasis on citizen agency leads to a focus on "some meaningful degree of voluntary participation, either in the operation or management of the organization's affairs" (Salamon and Anheier 1997: 34). In contrast, ethnicity is often 'ascriptive,' so belonging to a local ethnic association may be viewed as automatic than voluntary. Religion, too, may be considered ascriptive where it is closely linked to ethnicity (Horowitz 2000, Kanbur et

al. 2010). It is questionable whether Asian ethnicity and religion are completely non-voluntary (Varshney 2002: 42), as evidenced by the prominence of religious conversion issues in the region (Jones 2009), yet ascription does hold importance. Further, associations formed on the basis of ethnicity are often informally structured, whereas Western-influenced theorists often insist on some form of institutional existence (Cohen and Arato 1992: x, Anheier and Salamon 1998: 20). Ethnic- and religious-based associations may focus narrowly on the wellbeing of their own members, contradicting the expectation of Cohen and Arato that “modern civil society is based on egalitarian principles and universal inclusion” (1992: 19). Westernized theory has also been deeply influenced by the notion that civil society should be secular, which I examine later in this chapter.

Second, current democratization theory often emphasizes a primary function of civil society as working as a counterbalance or oppositional force toward the state (Tocqueville 1966, Edwards 2009: 15). Theorists of this persuasion often argue that associations that do not challenge the state do not constitute a true civil society. In its benign form, this line of reasoning leads simply to a normative questioning of the motivation or effectiveness of associations that do not challenge the state (e.g. Ndegwa 1996). In its more problematic form, such reasoning leads to the exclusion of non-confirming associations from the analysis of civil society. For example, in examining churches in Rwanda and Burundi, Timothy Longman considers churches as part of civil society only when they or their members challenge the state in areas of democratization, human rights, and intergroup tolerance (Longman 2005: 95). In contrast, theorists adopting a more contextually relative stance use the example of Singapore to point out that even if civil society does not

directly challenge the state, it may engage in subtle contestation and passive resistance (Chong 2005), and it can significantly influence public discourse (Lyons and Gomez 2005). Further, some analysts do acknowledge that consistently opposing the state is not the only role for civil society. Social capital development can be a valid contribution to democratization (Putnam 1993: 93, Varshney 2002: xi, Pekkanen 2004), as can issue-based advocacy (Clarke 1998: 49-50) and the facilitation of public action (Jobert and Kohler-Koch 2008).

In Southeast Asia, associational activity has long focused on service provision, but associations have not often formally challenged the state (Lee 2004). Civil society's involvement in politics is generally increasing, but the nature of political involvement varies widely, and it remains fragile where governments retain strong central control. Critics often point to an empty symbolism of democratic institutions, which they call "procedural democracy" (Mulder 1996: 187) or "gestural politics" (Lee 2005), while decrying the absence of an underlying ethos of citizen participation and responsive government. Such differences are often traced to a divergence in worldviews, with pro-Western voices contending that Asian cultures lack a fundamental respect for individual equality and human rights (Mulder 1996). Asian authorities counter by arguing that "Asian values" emphasize collective harmony over individual freedom, leading to forms of democracy that are unique yet appropriate for the region (Lee 2004, Alagappa 2004a). Such trends are generally regional in nature, yet the availability of 'political space' does vary, with Singapore among the most restricted, and the Philippines exhibiting a relatively high degree of civil society empowerment.



The obvious difficulty with these contested terms is that when civil society theories are driven by a normative emphasis on democratization, they may encourage observers to see only what they want to see, and to overlook empirical evidence that points in other directions. This modern, Westernized bias toward associations that are voluntary, secular, and challenge the state serves to exclude much of the activity that is actually taking place in the associational realm, particularly in non-Western settings (Ndegwa 1996, Hann 1996, Kasfir 1998, Morris 2000, Orvis 2001, Varshney 2002, Lee 2004). In approaching Southeast Asia, I argue with Kasfir that it is necessary "to open up the notion of civil society by not insisting that it explain democratic reform and instead using civil society to gain a wider understanding of particular societies and their relationship to their states" (1998: 3).

**Religious Associations, Broadly Defined.** I began the current study by using 'civil society' terminology. I sought to avoid the Westernized biases described above by defining civil society in a broad, inclusive manner that was descriptive rather than normative. This approach was reasonably effective in academic circles, but it failed to facilitate accurate communication with practitioners 'on the ground' in Singapore and Mindanao. After consulting colleagues in both locations, and re-considering the literature, I later changed the terminology to reflect the broader and less value-laden language of 'religious associations' or 'religious organizations.' The action research process of exploring these definitional issues has revealed key insights about the nature of religious associations in the region, as briefly described below.

In Singapore, several of my pilot phase interviews and participant observation discussions began awkwardly, because I asked about 'religious civil society organizations.' Some participants articulated a conceptual disconnect,

indicating that they doubted the existence of any significant civil society in Singapore, because the relevant organizations were not politically engaged. In one case, when I mentioned civil society in Singapore, a young Muslim interfaith activist bluntly replied: “What ‘civil society’?”<sup>13</sup> The literature, similarly, reflects Singapore as a strong state that exercises active management of the public space, based on the rhetoric of concern for the tiny country’s economic and political survival. It is widely believed that “Singapore does not have that crucial space necessary for free debate and discussion” (Singh 2007: 117). Thus citizen groupings are strongly discouraged from addressing politics, and broaching a subject that is ‘out of bounds’ may result in legal action. ‘Out of bounds’ refers to topics that are sensitive enough to disrupt public peace and order, yet the boundaries are notably ambiguous, and subject to interpretation by the long-time ruling People’s Action Party (Lyons 2005: 214). Even so, it is clear that the ‘out of bounds’ markers preclude publicly addressing any issues that might inflame religious tensions, with their close links to interethnic politics (Parliament of Singapore 1990, Tan 2008, Tham 2008b).

The past decade has seen increasing talk of liberalization in the Singaporean public sphere, yet critics argue that these changes are more symbolic than substantive (Lee 2005). The term ‘civil society’ is gradually inching its way into public dialog (see for example Tham 2008a, Straits Times 2008), but it is still rare and likely to be understood as implying risky political engagement. During the pilot interviews, an Anglican theology professor advised me that, “‘civil society’ sounds like it refers to

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<sup>13</sup> Informal discussion during ‘Islam and the Arts’ event, held at the Singapore Arab Association, organized by the Department of Malay Studies, National University of Singapore, 3 Nov. 2007.

politics,” so it is better to say “community service organizations.”<sup>14</sup> If I had continued to use the term ‘civil society’ in the Singaporean context, the assumption of political engagement would have undermined local understanding of the very conflict sensitivity concept that I was seeking to test: namely, that religious associations can impact conflict even in the absence of direct political engagement. Thus ‘community service organizations’ became my usual terminology in Singapore.

In the Philippines, ‘civil society’ terminology is more commonly used among academics and some activists (e.g. Ferrer 2005b) so the wording of my pilot interview questions did not provoke any immediate problem. However, after encountering the terminology difficulties in Singapore, I began to inquire also in the Philippines. It became clear that local opinions among project participants are very mixed on whether the term ‘civil society’ applies to churches and mosques. One participant stated a clear yes,<sup>15</sup> and another a clear no.<sup>16</sup> Four religious leaders indicated that they were not clear on the meaning of the term ‘civil society,’<sup>17</sup> and one religious humanitarian aid worker remarked that the term was most commonly used in the faraway capital city of Manila.<sup>18</sup> Several participants indicated a revealing link between the definition of civil society and an organization’s stance toward politics. “If you use a strict definition, the church is part of civil society, but the common person does not see it that way” . . . the term ‘civil society’ carries “the idea of battling

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<sup>14</sup> Prt. S #3, pilot interview by author, Singapore, 9 Apr. 2007.

<sup>15</sup> Prt. MI #57, field notes, Davao City, Philippines, 9 July 2008. (Note: All subsequent footnoted references to Davao City, Philippines, are abbreviated as ‘Davao.’)

<sup>16</sup> Prt. MI #2, field notes, Davao, 28 Aug. 2008.

<sup>17</sup> Prt. MI #28, field notes, Davao, 11 Sep. 2008. Prt. MI # 106, field notes, Davao, 17 Sep. 2008. Prt. MI #85, field notes, Davao, 17 Sep. 2008. Prt. MI #77, field notes, Davao, 28 Aug. 2008.

<sup>18</sup> Prt MI #52, field notes, Davao, 28 Aug. 2008.

the government.”<sup>19</sup> Given this obvious lack of shared meaning, using the term ‘civil society’ is not conducive to clear communication in the Mindanao religious sector, nor is it conducive to the action research ethic of grounding theoretical concepts in the lived experience of participants (Bradbury and Reason 2001: 451).

In seeking to resolve what constitutes ‘civil society’ as opposed to other types of citizen bodies, Muukkonen (2009) points out that attempts at categorization tend to become value-laden and culture-bound. Rather than categorizing, Muukkonen borrows from Wittgenstein (1953) to advocate the simple recognition that citizen bodies which are similar in many, but not all, of their characteristics do share a “family resemblance.” The notion of ‘associations’ can be used as a broad term encompassing the various concepts (Rossteutscher 2005a) that fall within this family. Further, ‘associations’ is sometimes used almost interchangeably with civil society (Kaufman 1999, Özerdem and Jacoby 2006, Edwards 2009), yet it is usefully less normative and more inclusive. Associational terminology helps to avoid Western-influenced assumptions such as organizational opposition to the state and participant voluntarism. Thus from the pilot phase onward, I used the broader term ‘religious associations,’ which I converted in the field to ‘religious organizations.’

While I use the term ‘associations’ to refer to the entire family of concepts in question, I give more emphasis to some than others. Civil society and social capital are at the center of this analysis. Their theoretical influence is expansive, and it is pivotal to the debate of the conflict impacts of nPCROs (Putnam 2000, Varshney 2002). I also draw accordingly on works that address the closely related nonprofit, voluntary, nongovernmental or third sector, and social network theory to the extent

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

that it intersects with the study of social capital in associational life. I give significantly less attention to communitarianism (Bellah et al. 1986) and associative democracy (Hirst and Bader 2001), as normative expressions of how some influential thinkers would like the associational sector to present itself in particular contexts. Thus the next section on associational conflict impacts examines the relevant literature primarily through the contributions of civil society and social capital theorists.

### **The Nature and Determinants of Associational Conflict Impacts**

Having established several relevant uniquenesses of the Southeast Asia region, this section now returns to Putnam, Varshney, and the cluster of other works that address the nature and determinants of conflict impacts by associational nPCROs in settings of intergroup conflict. This cluster comprises the project's 'core literature,' which ranges widely in terms of discipline, methodology, and level of influence, but is united by its substantive contribution to the theme in question, and its tendency to draw on Putnam and/or Varshney. I define this 'core' in terms of works rather than authors, focusing primarily on those works that address the theme in question, and drawing selectively on other works by the same authors to aid interpretation and analysis. I survey the range of arguments within this small and emerging body of theory, and then examine these arguments by comparing them to the conflict sensitivity theory as an alternative frame for social impact analysis. Based on this critique, I identify the central research questions that guide my empirical efforts in Mindanao and Singapore.

**The Centrality of Putnam and Varshney.** Robert Putnam (1993, 2000, 2002, Putnam and Feldstein 2003) focuses on social capital, positioning it as essential to liberal democratic culture and governance, and arguing that its decline is a matter for serious concern. Social capital is defined as a cumulative pattern of linkages between individuals, i.e. "social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" (2000: 19). Putnam often emphasizes social capital as a characteristic of a community, which is a departure from the definitions advanced by sociologists Bourdieu (1986) and Coleman (1988), who see social capital as the capacity of individuals to secure resources within a social network (Portes 1998, see also Esser 2008, Weber 2009). Social capital's emphasis on relational interconnectedness distinguishes it from civil society's more formally defined, activity-oriented groups. Social capital is arguably broader than civil society, and more likely to include references to workplaces and political parties. Nonetheless there is much conceptual overlap, with civil society often implied to produce social capital (Putnam 2000). In earlier years, Putnam was sometimes accused of conflating the sources of social capital with its outcomes (Portes 1998), but in more recent work he has distanced himself from such circular reasoning (Putnam 2004a: 668).

The relationship between social capital and identity-based conflict is one of several important sub-themes in Putnam's work, never receiving the primary emphasis, but progressing notably from one work to the next. In *Bowling Alone* (2000), a macro-statistical analysis of social capital trends in the USA, Putnam popularized the concepts of bridging and bonding social capital, originally credited to Gittel and Vidal (1998). Citizen networks whose membership includes people on both sides of a prominent social cleavage are said to have a desirable bridging effect. On the other

hand, networks whose membership aligns with such social cleavages are said to bond members of the same identity group together, which may have an adverse exclusionary effect towards outsiders. Social capital interacts with various forms of group identity (e.g. race, religion, gender, class), so a given associational activity may bridge along some aspects of identity and bond along others. *Bowling Alone* gives particular attention to black-white race relations in the USA, while the organizational case studies in *Better Together* (Putnam and Feldstein 2003) broaden the purview to consider other US-based aspects of race, national origin and religion. *Democracies in Flux* (2002) considers the trajectory of social capital in industrial democracies over the past fifty years, surfacing a central concern for the unequal distribution of social capital resources. Very recently, *American Grace* (Putnam and Campbell 2010) and *The Age of Obama* (Clark et al. 2010) have included some analysis of social capital in their issue-focused analyses of religion in the United States, and race in the United States and Britain, respectively.

Pertinent to bridging and bonding, political scientist Ashutosh Varshney (2001, 2002) has developed similar themes in greater focus and depth in his research on Hindu-Muslim relations in India. Varshney's work is less broadly influential than Putnam's, but is seminal due to its conceptual depth and empirical rigor. His extensive research effort featured both quantitative and qualitative components, structured around innovative paired comparisons between cities/towns that are riot-prone, and those that are not. In *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life* (2002), Varshney concludes that civic linkages that are intercommunal (i.e. crossing identity lines to include both Hindus and Muslims) are key in withstanding the "exogenous shocks" that could otherwise provoke violence in the form of riots. Such provocations

include, but are not limited to, the politically-motivated manipulation of identity by politicians and supporting parties. Informal relational linkages serve this purpose effectively in rural areas, but urban contexts requires formal organization in order to solidify relationships, and to clearly express a resolve towards unity during times of communal tension. Varshney rests this analysis upon a broad concept of civil society, which includes the market sector, and avoids Westernized restrictions by including associations that are informal, formed on the basis of ascriptive identity and not necessarily opposed to the state (2002: 296).

Importantly, these works of Putnam and Varshney are limited in their generalizability across contexts. Putnam's works on social capital are limited to industrial democracies, primarily in the USA and Europe. While he assumes broad relevance, he makes no serious claims to universality. Varshney examines riots to the exclusion of other forms of conflict and violence, inviting the possibility that considering a broader range of conflict behavior might result in different findings. More importantly, Varshney acknowledges that intercommunal associational linkages may be difficult to form in the absence of pre-existing interaction between identity groups. He briefly speculates that his findings may not apply to contexts where the civic sphere has long been segregated, such as black-white relations in the USA (2001: 393), and even caste conflict within India itself (2002: 300). Varshney obviously sees caste conflict as significant, for he concludes that its preeminence is a key factor limiting Hindu-Muslim violence in the city of Calicut (2002: 122). However, Varshney's overall work on ethnic conflict tends to de-emphasize caste conflict, perhaps because he has reasoned that religious nationalist conflict is a greater threat to cohesion at the national level (1998, 2002: 58). The questionable



responsiveness of caste conflict to Varshney's intercommunal associational 'cure' serves to underscore the limitations of Varshney's argument.

Despite the fact that Putnam's and Varshney's arguments are rooted in particular contexts, other authors do make extensive international application of their findings, as elaborated in the sections that follow. I, too, make consistent use of their terms 'intercommunal' (Varshney) and 'bridging' (Putnam) to describe associational structures that are heterogeneous in relation to the major identity-based cleavages in a particular context. While there are other related terms used in the literature, 'intercommunal' and 'bridging' are particularly useful because they accurately reflect the influence of Varshney and Putnam, and they are relatively self-evident in meaning. I minimize use of the terms 'heterogeneous,' which lacks a clear reference to identity-based social cleavages, and 'interethnic,' which can be easily, misinterpreted in narrow, racial terms that overlook religion, language, etc. as other relevant aspects of identity.

**A Spark for Broader Debate.** Varshney and Putnam are known for their optimism about the beneficial effects of intercommunal or bridging associational forms in divided societies. The possibility of negative effects is not denied, but it is consistently de-emphasized. For example, Varshney does acknowledge at the outset that not all manifestations of civil society foster peace, since Indian civil society includes some politically-linked ethno-religious extremist organizations (2002: x). He also briefly mentions that intracommunal engagement, which brings together people of the same identity groups, carries the potential to contribute to violence (2002: 12). Nonetheless, the rest of the book is devoted to considering the peace-promoting potential of intercommunal networks, in either their presence or their absence.

Varshney does not consider in any depth the possibility of negative externalities created by associations that are otherwise well-intentioned.

Putnam's optimism is characteristic, yet it does appear to have been tempered somewhat over time. An early work, *Making Democracy Work* (Putnam 1993), "virtually ignores the possibility that social capital might have adverse effects on society" (McLean et al. 2002: 7), and is accused of advancing a concept of civil society that neglects constructive political conflict (Mouritsen 2003). In the subsequent *Bowling Alone* (2000: 350-366), Putnam did acknowledge the potential exclusionary effects of bonding social capital towards outsiders, which he refers to as "the dark side of social capital." However, despite devoting one full chapter to this theme, such divisive side-effects receive little attention in the book's broader argument and recommendations. Putnam (2000: 23-4) attributes this gap to a dearth of data capable of distinguishing bridging from bonding social capital (a challenge addressed by Coffé and Geys 2007), but it is also plausible that Putnam's urgent concern for reinvigorating social capital has relegated negative externalities to a lower priority concern. Critics of *Bowling Alone* have argued that the exclusionary aspects of bonding social capital are more pernicious than Putnam admits (Leonard 2004), and that his analysis of social capital minimizes the need for justice and equality among disadvantaged groups (Snyder 2002, Arneil 2006, Hero 2007). Three years later, *Better Together* gave further attention to the exclusionary aspects of bonding social capital, and also considered the complexities of building social capital in order to empower disadvantaged groups (Putnam and Feldstein 2003: 206-24, 241-68). The authors state: "In short, the concept of social capital is not treacly sweet but has a certain tartness" (Putnam and Feldstein 2003: 3). Even so, the emphasis remains on the positive, and

Putnam's subsequent papers (e.g. 2004b, 2007) give little attention to social capital's divisive side effects.

The optimistic thrust of theorists such as Putnam and Varshney has prompted a lively response among other scholars who address the conflict impacts of nPCROs. Uvin (1998: 163-79) and Cochrane (2005), writing on civil society in pre-genocide Rwanda and in Northern Ireland, respectively, make a major contribution to the debate by arguing against excessive optimism. Both argue that in divided societies, the associational realm is itself highly divisive, because it reflects the socio-political cleavages of the surrounding environment. These particular works are intended as context-specific arguments against unbounded optimism, so they do not necessarily reflect the tone of the authors' broader bodies of work. In fact, Uvin's other writings portray a more balanced consideration of the associational potential for both positive and negative impact (Uvin 1999a, Unsworth and Uvin 2002, Uvin 2002). Cochrane has written in other works of the neutral and even positive contributions of Northern Irish PCROs, if not nPCROs, to peacebuilding (Cochrane and Dunn 2002a, Cochrane and Dunn 2002b). Nonetheless, those more skeptical works do elaborate an important argument, in that they hold out little hope for overcoming exclusionary side-effects in deeply divided societies. The problem is not that intercommunal associations are not pivotal, but rather that they are unlikely to exist in any significant form, because the probability of their existence is a function of the level of identity group polarization in the surrounding socio-political context. Interestingly, Varshney might agree with this analysis, for deeply polarized societies constitute the exception to his otherwise optimistic argument (2002: 290-5).

Between the optimistic and the skeptical works there is a cluster of moderate works whose position on the nature of conflict impacts might be characterized as: “It depends.” Pickering on Bosnia (2006, 2007), and Weisinger and Salipante on the USA (2005, 2007), both adopt a positive-leaning stance, in that they emphasize the development of bridging social capital to counteract social divisions. These works acknowledge the exclusionary side-effects of bonding social capital, but they do not consider how to avoid them, focusing instead on the development of social capital of a more beneficial form. Among those devoting more attention to negative impacts are Jha (2009) on community organizing in India, MacLean (2004) on associational life in West Africa, Molenaers (2003, 2005, 2006) on associations and social networks in Nicaragua, and Pinchotti and Verwimp (2007) on social capital in Rwanda. All four of these works caution against the strong optimism of theorists such as Putnam and Varshney. However, rather than simply shifting to a negative stance, they give balanced attention to both overcoming exclusionary side-effects and developing beneficial ones. Giving roughly equal attention to the positive and the negative are Titeca and Vervisch (2008) on community-based associations in Uganda, and Karner and Parker (2008) on social capital among ethno-religious minorities in urban Birmingham. Moderate works that position associations as capable of dualistic impact are more likely to assess impact at the organizational level, avoiding the sector-wide generalizations found in the writings of Varshney (2002), Uvin (1998) and Cochrane (2005).

In this debate on the nature of conflict impacts among nPCROs, the moderate works move beyond optimism and skepticism into nuance, demonstrating that associational conflict impacts may be both positive and negative, and that they are

subject to change. However, it is the simplified extremes of the argument that garner more attention among both academics and practitioners, and generate more responses in the ongoing debate. In bibliographic research, the number of citations to the optimistic works of Putnam and Varshney effectively dwarf the number of references accorded to other authors. Thus the current understanding and usage of this body of theory remains somewhat unbalanced, and continues to generalize the nature of conflict impacts in ways that overlook the complexity and dynamism of associational realm. With this in mind, the following section probes more deeply three pivotal questions arising from the current body of theory. I adopt as a critical lens the conflict sensitivity approach elaborated in the previous chapter, specifically its causation analysis elements, as a unifying meta-theory which has potential to lend greater complexity and balance to social impact analysis.

**Determinants of Impact: Structural and Non-Structural.** In the debate on the conflict impacts of nPCROs, both the optimistic and the skeptical works tend to emphasize a single determinant of impact, namely the structure of the association or associational sector. The key question is the degree to which membership and participation are heterogeneous, or intercommunal, in relation to the major identity-based social cleavages in a particular setting. For example, Cochrane's skeptical work (2005) acknowledges non-structural psychological factors when he argues that the primary driver of mono-communal civil society structure is the prevailing shared definition of the concept of "community." Nevertheless, he positions intercommunal structure (or lack thereof) as the most immediate, and therefore the most prominent, determinant of associational impact on intergroup relations. Likewise Putnam in his optimism considers relational factors such as norms and trustworthiness in his

definition of social capital (2000: 19), but he does not link such 'soft factors' to his exploration of bridging and bonding. Putnam even writes briefly about the bridging/bonding distinction in relation to group identity formation, but he positions associational structure as cause, and group identity formation as effect (2000: 23), in a causal analysis directly criticized by Cote and Erickson (2009: 1665).

Also leaning toward the optimistic, Varshney's position on this issue is focused on associational structure, yet complex in that he positions associational structure as proximate while exploring underlying causes that are less structural in nature. In *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life*, Varshney includes an analysis of the competing "master narratives" that inform Indian identity, shape mass politics, and thereby determine the structure of the associational sector. Secular nationalism and religious nationalism are particularly influential, with caste concerns also playing a localized role (2002: 55-86). Varshney argues that the structure of the associational sector was established in the 1920s when Gandhi first mobilized citizens into mass politics, an effort shaped by pre-existing patterns of ascriptive identity. Varshney describes the origins of those pre-existing cleavages as "political." In fact, his analysis encompasses population demography, politics and economics, yet it leans consistently towards the structural, with limited reference to any 'soft factors' such as culture or psychology (2002: 119-148).

Secondary analysis notwithstanding, in relation to his argument on civil society's conflict impacts, Varshney consistently places his primary emphasis on intercommunal structures, as set forth in the opening statement of *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life*:

In this book, I seek to establish an integral link between the structure of civil society on one hand and ethnic, or communal, violence on the other. To be more precise, the focus is on the *intercommunal*, not *intra*communal, networks of civic life, which bring different communities together (2002:3).

The main thrust of his argument follows the structural thread, with nonstructural factors positioned as a supporting theme. Importantly, when other authors cite and respond to Varshney, they refer overwhelmingly to his findings on intercommunal associational structures. His insights on nonstructural determinants of impact are not reflected in the broader debate, contributing to imbalance in the literature.

In contrast, the authors whose works fall into the moderate category tend to affirm the importance of intercommunal associational structure, but go well beyond it by elaborating other, non-structural determinants of impact. Molenaers states forthrightly that “both attitudes and structures thus form the two main components within the social capital debate” (2005: 153), which aligns with the emerging consensus in the broader social capital literature (e.g. Adler and Kwon 2002: 23). All of the moderate works move in some way beyond the structure and quantity of intergroup linkages, and point also to the *quality* of intergroup linkages. Values and norms are emphasized, including tolerance and pluralism (Jha 2009), trust, equality, and reciprocity (Molenaers 2005), and cooperation and interdependence (Pickering 2006). Also important are the characteristics of the participating individuals, with Weisinger and Salipante (2005) foregrounding motivation and cross-cultural skills, and Jha (2009) highlighting the need for ongoing critical self-reflection by the organizers on issues of identity and power.

Importantly, MacLean (2004: 594) positions organizational functioning as a central factor facilitating relational connections between individuals, scrutinizing

such variables as the association's size, goals, effectiveness, and decision-making processes. In emphasizing the nature of organizational participation, she contrasts her own findings with Varshney's as follows:

While also emphasizing the preventive role of civic networks in mitigating communal violence, Varshney highlights the heterogeneity of associational membership in stimulating cross-cutting social ties across Hindu and Muslim communities. In contrast, this research reveals that a heterogeneous membership does not guarantee a growth in cross-group understanding or cooperation; instead, it is the parameters of participation encouraged within the association and corresponding community political institutions that matter most critically. Essentially, while Varshney emphasizes the interaction of different identities, this study problematizes the nature of the interaction itself (2004: 591).

Further, intercommunality as advocated by Varshney and in the earlier works of Putnam (2000) is primarily a characteristic of horizontal intergroup linkages, but a number of the moderate works bring vertical elements into the analysis. Pinchotti and Verwimp (2007) draw on Woolcock's (1998)<sup>20</sup> identification of state-society relations as a form of social capital to argue that in Rwanda, the bridging networks between Hutu and Tutsi were unable to withstand the bonding networks among the Hutu, because of the latter's powerful internal hierarchy. Similarly, MacLean (2004) and Molenaers (2005) build on horizontal structural analysis to probe how an association and its members are vertically linked into structures of patron-client relations at the macro level. MacLean provides a particularly troubling account of intercommunal cocoa producer networks in Côte d'Ivoire which are ethnically heterogeneous in horizontal membership, yet nonetheless contribute to ethnic

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<sup>20</sup> Woolcock (1998) uses the term 'linking' to describe vertical social capital, and his terminology has been influential. However I avoid the term 'linking' in this thesis, due to the potential for confusion between 'bridging social capital' and 'linking social capital.'



polarization because they reinforce vertical patronage networks that are built on narrow ethnic identities. Titeca and Vervisch (2008) contribute a similar analysis focused on the role of 'gatekeepers' within community-based organizations in Uganda, but they conclude that in-country vertical linkages are not uniformly negative; they may positively impact associational operations, intergroup relations and democracy if balanced with horizontal forms of social capital.

Finally, Pickering (2006, 2007) adopts a unique approach to analyzing the architecture of intercommunal structures, echoing Granovetter's (1973) influential distinction between "strong" and "weak ties" to argue that social networks that foster acquaintance-based weak ties are surprisingly more effective in improving intergroup relations than networks that emphasize deeper relationships. Pickering's use of social network theory often gives her works a unique positioning in relation to others in this project's core literature. Associations are not her primary focus, but rather one among many possible expressions of social network development. She places significant emphasis on individuals as actors, including such elements as identity formation and personal choice to benefit personal interests.

If viewed as a group, the moderate works imply that intercommunal associational structure is often a necessary condition for positive impact on intergroup relations, but it is rarely sufficient. Despite the fact that the moderates consider a broad range of determinants, including non-structural causes, they are still limited to considering a limited number of variables in any given analysis, and such variables are limited in their generalizability across contexts. The moderates' contributions remain a fragmented collection of disparate insights, which has thus far failed to present a unified conceptual alternative that is compelling enough to shift

the crux of the debate away from the structure-centered extremes. As a result, within the emerging debate on the conflict impacts of nPCROs, the over-emphasis on structure risks distorting the understanding of how associations actually function. When applied to policy and practice, this line of reasoning becomes problematic, because it leads one to assume that the way to improve associational impact is to simply change associational structure.

The inadequacy of this notion is underscored through comparison to a seminal theory emerging from a distinct but related stream of research. Gordon Allport's classic work *The Nature of Prejudice* (Allport [1954] 1979) speaks to group identity formation, and the mindsets that define in- and out-groups, themes also addressed by Varshney (2002: 60-72), Putnam (2000: 23), Pickering (2007: 51-74), Cochrane (2005) and Jha (2009). Allport originated the 'contact hypothesis,' arguing that interpersonal contact between members of estranged ethnic groups could alter the mindsets that lead to social conflict in the form of prejudice and discrimination. The logic appears structural on its surface, yet Allport painstakingly surveys the non-structural conditions under which such contact is beneficial in the American context of his time, noting that some forms of contact may in fact increase prejudice if not wisely designed. His conclusions lack parsimony, but their nuanced complexity rings true to the real world:

Prejudice . . . may be reduced by equal status contact between majority and minority groups in the pursuit of common goals. The effect is greatly enhanced if this contact is sanctioned by institutional supports (i.e. by law, custom, or local atmosphere), and provided it is of a sort that leads to the perception of common interests and common humanity between members of the two groups ([1954] 1979: 281).

A comparison to conflict sensitivity theory further highlights the inadequacy of the search for single determinants of impact within the debate on associational conflict impacts. Conflict sensitivity's dual emphasis on context analysis and organizational project analysis establishes, by definition, a paradigm that embraces multiple causes, both structural and non-structural in nature, and prompts an examination of the relationships between them. Further, conflict sensitivity does not limit the number of variables that an analyst may consider, but instead establishes an analysis process that consistently raises the question of which contextual or organizational factors most influence impact on intergroup relations in any given place and time. Any number of theories on the causes of intergroup conflict may be used within this broader analytical frame, making conflict sensitivity a form of meta-theory.

It is necessary, then, to move beyond the search for single determinants of associational conflict impact. In this debate, the moderates are no doubt correct in identifying both structural and non-structural determinants of impact. Yet there is a need to probe more deeply the dynamics of how structural and non-structural determinants interrelate with each other, and whether one might predominate in influencing the other in a particular place and time. If one's goal is to promote intercommunal associational structure, does one begin by directly manipulating the structure itself, or by addressing the non-structural factors which shape that structure and give it power? Do group identity mindsets determine associational structure, or does associational structure influence group identity? A more nuanced understanding of these dynamics is required if theory is to become sound enough to inform effective decision making in policy and practice.

**Determinants of Impact: Context and Agency.** Implicit in these deliberations on the determinants of associational conflict impacts lays the question of how much power associational actors have to shape their own social impact. This debate follows similar contours as the above-described distinction between optimism and skepticism. However opinions are more tempered, as even the optimists acknowledge the challenges associated with achieving associational intercommunal in highly polarized contexts. To a certain extent, this debate addresses the distinction between micro- and macro-level influences, and the interaction between them (Woolcock 1998, Szreter and Woolcock 2004). Thus works that emphasize associational determinants of impact are likely to analyze micro-level organizational case studies, while those who emphasize the surrounding social context often examine macro-level politics. This breadth of perspective is welcome in social conflict analysis, a field which often overlooks the micro-foundations of macro-level conflict (Varshney 2003, Verwimp et al. 2009, Justino 2009). However, at a more fundamental level, this debate is about context and agency. The key question is whether an association can have the internal intentionality and capacity to chart its own intercommunal course, or inevitably conforms to external pressures to mirror local socio-political cleavages.

Among the optimists, Putnam's early work in *Bowling Alone* (2000) appears confident about the formation of effective intercommunal associational structures, and he therefore gives very little attention to the conditions required to bring such progressive organizations into being. His substantive policy recommendations on the development of social capital imply an assumption that human agency can influence social systems. With regard to the specific challenges of creating intercommunal

structures, *Bowling Alone* acknowledges only that “to build bridging social capital requires that we transcend our social and political and professional identities to connect with people unlike ourselves” (2000: 411) However, in the subsequent *Better Together*, Putnam’s confidence appears somewhat tempered, as he points out that bridging social capital is harder to develop, and therefore requires special attention. He establishes the development of bridging social capital as one of the book’s loose themes, concluding that promising practices include an intentional focus on secondary identity elements that bond, and a focus on arts and story-telling (Putnam and Feldstein 2003: 280-3). In the end, Putnam implies that developing intercommunal associational structures is possible, but it is not easy.

Similarly, Varshney’s emphasis on the positive impacts of intercommunal linkages implies confidence in the power of associational agency. Nonetheless his views are more nuanced than they initially appear, and his confidence is perhaps even more tempered than Putnam’s. Secondary to his immediate emphasis on associational structure, Varshney also explores the ways in which contextual political dynamics shape identity group cleavages, and states that where such cleavages run deeper, intercommunal associations are more difficult to form (2002: 17). He describes a feedback loop in which associational structure and political structure mutually influence each other. For example, he concludes his paired comparison of Calicut and Aligarh by stating that: “Civic life and electoral politics have fed into each other in both cities, in a violent direction in Aligarh, and toward peace in Calicut” (2002: 150). Further, Varshney’s distinction between contexts that are moderately polarized and contexts that have been deeply polarized over the long term, and his exclusion of the latter from his argument, is a nod to the powerful

influence of contextual pressures. In these ways, Varshney interrogates his own implied belief in associational agency, but then comes full circle to affirm it, stating that “small acts of human agency have a role of their own in the creation of integrative civic links” (2002: 295).

In contrast, the more skeptical works of Cochrane (2005) and Uvin (1998: 161-79) firmly position the surrounding socio-political context as the determining factor, arguing that a divided society will almost automatically produce a divisive associational realm. In this view, the associational sector is a product of its own environment, mirroring local socio-political cleavages, and then forming monocommunal structures that in turn further reinforce such cleavages. Cochrane describes a Northern Ireland in which civil society development within the Nationalist (predominantly Catholic) community arose to meet needs neglected by the UK state, with which the community was in conflict. Civil society later expanded in the Unionist (predominantly Protestant) community, but along a structurally separate path, such that “in political, social and cultural terms, there are two communities rather than one” (Cochrane 2005: 52). Civil society actors work to serve ‘the community,’ but the implicit definition of community is a narrow one, including only the members of one’s own identity group. Cochrane briefly acknowledges some factors that make some associations more prone to contextual pressures than others (e.g. micro-level community orientation, state funding, membership or staff containing paramilitary veterans) (2005: 53), but he does not consider any conditions that might enable associations to transcend divisive social pressures.

Similarly, Uvin describes how Rwanda’s Hutu-Tutsi divisions and systemic structural violence were reflected and reinforced through associational structures in

the years preceding the genocide. Uvin does allow that NGOs might “promote pluralism and tolerance” if they intentionally seek to do so, and are granted sufficient “political space” by the government, but these conditions did not obtain in pre-genocide Rwanda (1998: 168). A few NGOs did begin to challenge political space constraints shortly before the genocide, but these efforts proved too little, too late (1998: 176). Importantly, neither Cochrane nor Uvin claim that intercommunal associational forms are impossible, but they do imply that the key variable in determining this possibility is the degree of polarization in the surrounding socio-political context. The sobering implication is that the societies with the greatest need for intercommunal associational links are the least likely to have them, regardless of the efforts of associational actors.

Again, the moderate works occupy a sort of middle ground in this debate. Several acknowledge the considerable challenges to forming intercommunal associational structures in polarized contexts, yet they do not rule out agency. Titeca and Vervisch analyze case studies that include subtle examples of agency, yet they ultimately lean towards the power of context, pointing out that “the larger context in which CBOs operate has a profound impact on their internal dynamics. This stands in stark contrast with much of the reasoning of the social capital literature, which seems to assume that CBOs operate within a vacuum” (2008: 2217). Further, a subsequent article by Vervisch and Titeca (2010) links the power of context directly to the difficulties of developing bridging social capital. Pinchotti and Verwimp lament the polarizing influence of vertical Hutu networks in Rwanda as a “co-optation” of social capital (2007: 13), but they do not claim this to be a generalizable trend.

Pickering points out that not only were many of Bosnia’s local associations mono-

ethnic, but they were also connected at the macro level to extreme nationalist parties which actively worked against local efforts at inclusion (2006: 84). MacLean (2004, see also 2010) highlights the ways in which local associations in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire both reflect and reinforce broader patterns of state-society relations. Even so, both Pickering and MacLean seek to identify the characteristics that position associations for intercommunal linkage, implying a clear belief in the possibility of organizational agency.

In other moderate core works, after acknowledging the challenges of contextual pressures, the authors go on to explicitly argue that agency can make a difference under certain conditions. They examine in detail the nature of those conditions required for associations to transcend the divisions in the surrounding socio-political context, or to overcome homophily, and how those conditions might be achieved. Weisinger and Salipante find that intercommunal structure alone may not be sufficient to improve and sustain intergroup relationships if the participants lack motivation and ability, or “cross-cultural competence and shared destiny experiences” (2005: 45), so they recommend interim skill building based on monocommunal cells, linked together in a diverse federation (see also Putnam and Feldstein 2003: 275-9). In their focus on individual motivation and ability, Weisinger and Salipante clearly imply an emphasis on change, particularly individual change as a prerequisite to change the organizational level. ‘Motivation’ implies intentionality of purpose in bridging intergroup divisions, and ‘ability’ comprises the capacity of an individual or organization to bring this to pass. Jha argues not only for enhancing the intentionality and capacity of associational actors through contextual awareness raising and critical reflection, but he also encourages those associational actors to



identify and support peace-promoting agents of change among members of the local community (2009: 314).

The context-agency debate is not limited to this project's core literature on the conflict impacts of nPCROs, but rather it is an important theme of the broader literature on democratization and associations. Fennema and Tillie assert the power of context, stating that "civic engagement is not in itself democratic but within democratic governance it tends to become so" (2005: 223). Similarly Rossteutscher (2002) and Korkut (2005) position association as a reflection of the surrounding political culture, rather than being one of its sources. In contrast, Wollebaek and Per Selle (2005: 197) maintain that even in the face of contextual pressures, voluntary organizations retain some capacity to catalyze social change. Similarly Bellah et al. focus their seminal analysis on nonstructural factors such as human culture and mores, in order to illuminate the possibility of agency and change:

It makes sense to study the mores not because they are powerful - in the short run, at least, power belongs to the political and economic structures - but for two other reasons. A study of the mores gives us insight into the state of society, its coherence, and its long-term viability. Secondly, it is in the sphere of the mores, and the climates of opinion they express, that we are apt to discern incipient changes of vision - those new flights of the social imagination that may indicate where society is heading (1986: 275).

These literary debates reveal that the context-agency debate is too often framed in unnecessarily dichotomous terms. Conflict sensitivity theory is helpful in this regard, because its emphasis on multiple causality implies that impact is not usually caused by either one variable or the other, but by complex combinations of variables in a given place and time. Specifically, conflict sensitivity insists on a two-part process, analyzing both the nature of local intergroup relations (pointing to

context), and the characteristics and activities of associational actors (pointing to agency). Neither context nor agency alone can cause impact; rather, impact is caused by the dynamic interaction between the two forces. Nonetheless, the role of associational factors is foregrounded because the conflict sensitivity paradigm is designed for their use, to inform their planning and their actions.

The context-agency debate can be further informed by comparing certain constructivist views of ethnicity with essentialism and instrumentalism.

Constructivist theories posit the engagement of human society in defining the meaning of ethnic categories and the boundaries and interactions between them.

While some constructivist approaches emphasize the role of external powers such as colonial rulers, other varieties position the role of ethnic group members themselves as equally central in shaping identity (e.g. Barth 1969). As Karner (2007: 22) points out, the latter approach emphasizes agency and change among common people. Such approaches are also compatible with social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1986), which views group categorization as a necessary cognitive process that people use in order to position themselves in a complex world. The potential for conflict arises when the mental act of categorizing produces bias toward out-groups. Further, if dissatisfied with the self-image provided by one's in-group, a person may seek to join a different group, or to "make their existing group more positively distinct" (Tajfel and Turner 1986: 16) through social competition.

On the other hand, essentialism holds that ascribed identity is either defined or experienced as primordial and unchanging (a view often attributed to Geertz 1973, van den Berghe 1979). Instrumentalism foregrounds the use or manipulation of ethnicity for purposes of self-interest, particularly by political elites (e.g. Cohen 1969).

Both essentialism and instrumentalism position the power to shape ethnic identity as lying within the context, but beyond the reach the ethnic group members themselves. Though essentialism is currently out of vogue, each of these theoretical positions can hold complementary explanatory value in addressing different aspects of ethnicity and intergroup relations (Varshney 2002: 27-39, Karner 2007: 23). Without limiting myself to one position, I would argue that the adoption of a constructivist lens emphasizing the agency of common people holds significant potential for enriching the theoretical content of the core literature on the conflict impacts of nPCROs.

Unfortunately, within this core literature, the tension between context and agency remains largely implicit. While many researchers wrestle indirectly with these issues in their analysis of a particular associational sector, the *unintentional* nature of such impacts appears to prevent most authors from raising the question explicitly. Only Varshney explicitly analyzes, albeit briefly, the question of agency in a way that hints at broader theoretical implications (2002: 295). It is necessary to probe more deeply the interaction between associational agency and divisive pressures in the surrounding social context, and to consider the conditions under which an association might successfully transcend homophily to become an influential agent of change and unity.

**Determinants of Impact: The Role of Religion.** Among the non-structural factors de-emphasized in the emergent literature on the conflict impacts of nPCROs, there is a notable lack of attention to the religious themes so prominent in Southeast Asia, particularly the intangible aspects of religion. In approaching religious themes, the previous distinction between optimistic, skeptical and moderate positions no longer applies. Instead, the extent to which religion is engaged within the core

literature varies along a spectrum, with only one work (Karner and Parker 2008) addressing religious intangibles in a direct and substantive manner.

Beginning where religion is de-emphasized, Molenaers on Nicaragua (2005) and Pinchotti and Verwimp on Rwanda (2007) do not mention religion as having any contemporary relevance to conflict dynamics in the contexts they study. Conflict sensitivity theory challenges such notions by urging a deep context-based analysis of the factors affecting intergroup relations in a particular place and time. Indeed, other analyses of the Rwandan context in particular surface the prominent role of the Catholic Church in local civil society and in the dynamics of genocide (Uvin 1998, Colletta and Cullen 2000, Katongole 2005, Longman 2009).

Among the core works giving more consideration to religion, Uvin (1998: 163-79), Cochrane (2005), MacLean (2004), Weisinger and Salipante (2005) all mention Christian churches as having significant influence on intergroup relations in the contexts that they study. However, their accounts address primarily the institutional aspects of churches, and do not consider the intangible beliefs, values and behaviors that such churches foster (Wood 1999). For example, Uvin positions the Catholic church as the largest non-state actor in Rwandan (Uvin 1998: 166), and describes how it failed to transcend the socio-political cleavages leading to genocide. He elaborates this by focusing on the church's ethnicized staffing patterns and faltering peace advocacy efforts (Uvin 1998: 173). However the psychological analysis found in Uvin's other works on Rwandan violence (Uvin 1997, Uvin 1999b) is not extended to the realm of religion, and he makes no mention of how religious teachings addressed, or failed to address, the growing ethnic divide. Importantly, all of these works lean toward negative assessments of impact. Weisinger, MacLean and Cochrane portray

churches as a source of identity reinforcement or bonding social capital within a particular identity group. Nevertheless, Cochrane does credit churches with advocating for peace processes in the form of Northern Ireland's Good Friday Agreement (2005: 55).

Several of the core works give useful attention to religious intangibles, but with only limited linkage to questions of associational conflict impact. For example, Pickering (2007: 144-5) considers briefly the divisive rhetoric being taught by the Serbian Orthodox Church to have significant influence on majority Serbs, but she does not relate this directly to her primary minority-focused analysis or her consideration of associational life. Jha (2009) laments the expansion of Hindu nationalist ideologies in India, but does not explicitly consider how religious beliefs affect the efforts of community organizers to develop plurality in public space. Titeca and Vervisch foreground religious actors in two of their three case studies and, while they do offer the important conclusion that the "religious role acts as a strong basis of power and legitimacy" (2008: 2217) reinforcing unequal distributions of power within associations, they do not comment on how such power dynamics influence associational intercommunalities.

Perhaps most surprising is that Varshney, while addressing both religion's institutional and its intangible aspects, positions their influence on associational structure and conflict impact as far from central. This is striking given his focus on Indian sub-groups that are identified primarily in religious terms, i.e. 'Hindus' and 'Muslims.' *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life* (2002) positions political discourse, not religiously-influenced thought, as the key factor shaping associational structure and conflict impact. When he probes the "competing national imaginations" (2002: 3) that

underlay socio-political cleavages, he assigns religion a very minimal role in shaping Hindu and Muslim identities. He describes Hindu nationalism as “religious nationalism, not religious fundamentalism” (2002: 70). In other works on the sub-continental region, Varshney similarly treats religion-based “master narratives” as less influential than their politically-defined counterparts (Herwitz and Varshney 2008: 68), and religious identities as ascriptive (Varshney 1991, Varshney 1993b, Varshney 1993a). Varshney does acknowledge that “religious and ethnic associations combine ascription and choice” (2002: 42), yet he chooses to emphasize the ascriptive aspects, positioning religion primarily as an identity maker, rather than a source of relevant public values.

Varshney appears to lean toward the normative, seeing the idealized Indian public sphere as secular in keeping with the Indian constitution, and perhaps implicitly in contrast to the religiously-oriented ideology of Hindu nationalism (Stuligross and Varshney 2002). Yet Varshney’s own work contains numerous indications of important religious influences on politics and associational life. He acknowledges that Indian Islam (2002: 67, 134) and Hinduism (2002: 70) contain various differing sub-strains, motivating religious leaders and believers towards very different political stances. He describes how Mahatma Gandhi once attempted to use a religious interfaith approach to mobilize Indians for nonviolent resistance, and how this effort later backfired, leading to Hindu-Muslim violence (2002: 134-5). Varshney states repeatedly that aggressive proselytism was an important feature of intergroup conflict in some of his city-based case studies (2002: 5, 7). Further, events ‘on the ground’ show that serious violence is not limited to Hindus and Muslims; violence between Hindus and Christians is also increasingly prominent, with links to caste

conflict (Sengupta 2008). Thus it is questionable whether religion should be overlooked as an influential force within Indian ethno-politics.

Varshney's de-emphasis of religion does not extend throughout his entire body of work, as evidenced by an article (2003) on the micro-foundations of identity-based nationalistic conflict. In that writing, Varshney argues that the willingness of individuals to incur the risk and costs of joining nationalistic resistance movements cannot be explained on the basis of rational choice alone unless, drawing on Weber (1978), rationality is conceived to include both instrumentality and values-driven behavior. He positions religion as the traditional source of human ideas about right and wrong, with culture substituting this role in agnostic families or societies. This article succeeds *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life* (2002), so the reader might posit a progression of thought, with the article analyzing the microfoundations of the broader civil society patterns described in the book. However, Varshney himself draws no explicit connection between the two concepts. Further, Varshney's most recent publications on collective violence in Indonesia (Varshney et al. 2004, Varshney 2008, Varshney 2010) evidence a return to a macro-statistical approach that positions religion primarily as an identity marker. Christian-Muslim violence is noted as a primary pattern, but there is no consideration of the religious content of the conflict, other than brief references to the changing relationship between the government and the institutions of Islam.

Putnam, too, has downplayed until very recently the influence of religion in relation to intergroup bridging and bonding. *Bowling Alone* analyzed the American context as a highly religious one, stating that "America is one of the most religiously observant countries in the contemporary world" (2000: 65), and that "faith

communities in which people worship together are arguably the single most important repository of social capital in America" (2000: 68). Putnam does highlight an important duality in the impact of American churches, positioning churches as major contributors to social movements that advanced intergroup equality (2000: 408-10), yet also claiming that "proselytizing religions are better at creating bonding social capital than bridging social capital" (2000: 410). Nonetheless Smidt (2003) criticized *Bowling Alone* specifically for its lack of depth on religious matters. Not until 2010 did Putnam further explore religion's dualistic potential in *American Grace*, positioning faith as a factor that can bond across troublesome ethnic divides, yet evidences increasing polarization between the religious and the secularly inclined. In this work, Putnam acknowledges both the institutional and intangible aspects of religion's relationship to politics, describing in detail how church sermons influence values on public policy issues, and how church members self-select into certain congregations on the basis of such values such that their internal discussion becomes a self-reinforcing "echo chamber" (Putnam and Campbell 2010: 419-42).

Among this project's core literature, Karner and Parker stand out as focusing on religion in a particularly direct and substantive manner. Studying social capital in a predominantly Muslim community in the U.K. they conclude that "religiously grounded social capital" (2008: 519) is a defining feature of local society. Religion plays a pivotal role in both facilitating the development of social networks, which can be considered an institutional function, and in providing motivation and meaning for community activists, a clear example of religion's intangibles. Though not exclusively focused on intercommunal engagement, bridging is clearly in view, between Muslim immigrants of differing cultural backgrounds, and also between Muslim immigrants



and Christian immigrants. The work of Karner and Parker is linked to an increasing focus in the literature on social capital among migrants (Sanders 2002, Putnam 2009, Coole 2009), some of which draws attention to the resulting increase in religious diversity in Europe and the USA (Furbey et al. 2006, Allen 2010). Even so, the faith focus remains relatively rare, so Karner and Parker position their religiously-oriented findings as an exception within the field of social capital and community cohesion, calling for increased research to reflect the contemporary importance of such themes (2008: 520).

Importantly, the significant 'religion gap' seen in this project's core literature is not necessarily representative of the broader literature on associations and democratization. In that literature, the treatment of religion has been inconsistent due to the influence of secularization theory (Durkheim 1915, Weber 1930). Despite evidence in Western European history that early civil society concepts were informed by religion (Trentmann 2004, Weber 2009, Muukkonen 2009), civil society's twentieth century return to prominence was linked solidly to the liberal democratic paradigm with its secularist assumptions. Religion was normatively understood as a private matter, with its influence removed not only from the state, but from the other public spheres of market and associational sector (Marty 1997). The resulting neglect of religion has led Muukkonen to claim that "the relation of civil society to religions is almost terra incognita in civil society studies" (2009: 689).

Even where the omission of religion has not been complete, theory has been irresolute. In some cases the inclusion of religious institutions has been conditional, as seen in the reasoning of Sirat and Abdullah (2008) that urban mosques in Malaysia can be considered as "civic spaces," or public spaces conducive to nurturing civil

society, only when they practice inclusion and provide a broad platform for civic engagement that reaches beyond their own members. Other scholars have appeared to waver. For example, Salamon and Anheier at one point (1995: 14-15) included religious service organizations, but excluded communities of worship, in their analysis of the nonprofit sector. Three years later (Anheier and Salamon 1998), religion in both forms was squarely included in their analysis; churches are also present in the more recent work of Anheier (2005). Clarke excludes religious groups from his definition of NGOs in the Philippines (1998: 3), but later goes on to emphasize the strong influence of religion in the NGO sector (1998: 193-4).

Despite such inconsistencies, there are authors who do not hesitate to recognize religious associations in contexts where faith plays an important role in public life (Wuthnow 1999, Özerdem and Jacoby 2006, Hasan et al. 2008, Martin 2008, Jeong 2010). Significantly, there is an increasing number of works that explicitly interrogate the scholarly marginalization of religion, and argue for the consideration of religion in associational studies. Some of these works come from fields pertaining to religious studies (Simpson 2002, Smidt 2003, Fergusson 2004, Biggar and Hogan 2009). Yet similar arguments are also emerging from within the social and policy sciences, intentionally including religion in relation to civil society (Juergensmeyer 2005, James 2007a, Bush 2007, Dinham 2009, Dinham et al. 2009), social capital (Candland 2001, Furbey et al. 2006, Maloney and Rossteutscher 2007, Magee 2008) and voluntary associations (de Hart and Dekker 2005). Helen James (2007b: 3) sees this change as affecting not only the positioning of religion, but also the other non-Western associational forms discussed earlier in this chapter: "Increasingly, the influence of value systems, informal networks of association and friendship, kinship

groups, communities of interest derived from ethnicity or shared religious cultures are seen to have valid roles in constituting 'civil society.'"

This increasing attention to religion also includes a growing consideration of religious culture. Some studies encompass both the institutional and intangible aspects of religion. For example, Lockhart (2005), writing on community-based poverty reduction programs in America, concludes that faith-based programs contribute to social capital in distinctive ways through both their church-structured support for social linkages, and their use of religious values to emphasize relationship and bridge divisions of race and class. Others writing on such themes de-emphasize institutional aspects to focus directly on religion's culture. Wood, writing on faith-based political organizing in impoverished American communities, positions cultural strategy as neglected but central, arguing that "religious culture matters because it is taken seriously by large numbers of people - and thus orients their lives either toward or away from political engagement and the habits of the heart than can sustain it" (1999: 329, see also Wood 2002). A classic Filipino example of this phenomenon is Iletto's identification of the *pasyon*, or localized versions of Roman Catholic Holy Week readings and rituals, as a key source of ideas fueling nineteenth century revolutionary movements (1979). Importantly, Candland (2001: 129) and Blanchard et al. (2008) remark that researchers' neglect of religion has been particularly notable in the area of religious beliefs and motivations. Wood's use of the term 'religious culture' is fitting, if culture is taken to refer to the learned, shared patterns of beliefs, values and behaviors within a particular group (Bennett 1998: 3), including those interactively defined elements of "group style" that influence social identity formation (Eliasoph and Lichterman 2003).

Looking beyond the writings on democratization and associations, there is also a substantial cluster of works that explore the interaction of religion and conflict, with little or no direct reference to the associational sector. A number of influential works probe the relationships between religion and violence (Juergensmeyer 2000, Wellman Jr. 2007b), and argue for greater recognition of the importance of religion in international affairs, including policy formation and diplomacy, particularly on the part of the USA (Johnston and Sampson 1994, Huntington 1996, Johnston 2003, Seiple and Hoover 2004, Fox and Sandler 2004). Other works probe the subtleties of how different religious expressions influence believers' views on intergroup relations (Bradley 2009, Yukich 2010) and on politics (Funk 2007, Wald et al. 2005, Brown 2009). Scholar-practitioners writing from within the major world religions have identified numerous concepts and values within those traditions that support peacebuilding (for example, on Islam Abu-Nimer 2003, on Christianity Lederach 1999, on Buddhism Thich Nhat Hanh 2003, on Judaism Gopin 2004).

Perhaps most relevant to the current inquiry are writings that explore the dualistic potential of religion as force for either violence or peace, and the factors that make a difference in determining religion's impact. Appleby (2000) calls religion "ambivalent," arguing that both violence and peacemaking are equally valid expressions, from a religious standpoint, of how people respond to the sacred, and that all world religions are subject to internal contestation among their adherents. Other authors cast religion's dualistic potential in a more normative light, framing positive impact on intergroup relations as an expression of religion's highest potential (e.g. Cox and Ikeda 2009), and negative impact as a result of religion's capitulation to political pressures (Longman 2005: 83). Christian theologians Volf

(1996) and Katongole (2005) propose that a pivotal determinant of impact in settings of identity-based conflict is Christianity's influence, or lack thereof, over how people perceive their own identity and the identities of others. Importantly, both Volf and Katongole are claiming a religious influence that has not necessarily been tested and proven to the satisfaction of social science. Glock (2009), for example, states that sociologists of religion have yet to determine the generalizable role of religion in influencing prejudice. Nonetheless, this literature from the field of religious studies does speak directly to the issue of unintended social impacts among religious associations.

Unfortunately, the associational and religious literatures run parallel to each other, with the linkages being inconsistent at best, and lacking particularly within this project's core literature on the conflict impacts of nPCROs. Following the urging of conflict sensitivity theory to examine the local context on its own terms, and returning to the Southeast Asian dynamics explored earlier in this chapter, it becomes clear that the conceptual separation of religion from the associational sector is particularly inadequate when applied to this socio-cultural region. The role of Southeast Asian religion is neither private nor apolitical, and it cannot be well understood using theoretical models that keep matters of faith artificially separated from the functioning of the associational sector. Indeed, "in social contexts steeped in religious faith and practice - and the global trend in this regard is up, not down - social theory can only illuminate democratic life if it understands the complex interplay of religion and political culture in society" (Wood 1999: 329).

## **Conclusion: Emergent Research Questions and Directions**

The small, emergent body of theory on the peace and conflict impacts of nPCROs tends to generalize the nature and determinants of social impact in ways that overlook the complexity and dynamism of the associational sector. In this literary sub-cluster, the current state of knowledge stands in contrast to the axiom widely accredited to action research pioneer Kurt Lewin: “Nothing is as practical as a good theory” (Greenwood and Levin 2007: 18, see also Maibach and Parrott 1995: vii). Generalizable theory is essential, yet generalizations are of questionable value when they logically lead to poor decision making in policy and practice. Following the optimistic works of Putnam and Varshney contributes to the assumption that intercommunal associational structure is a cure for all identity-based social conflict, and that associations should simply be ‘made intercommunal’ regardless of other variables. Following the skeptical path evident in certain works of Uvin and Cochrane, leads to overlooking the possibility of positive impact, and to inaction within the associational sector. Further, there is nothing in this theoretical sub-cluster that creates space for understanding the political importance of public religion in a context such as Southeast Asia.

The current study aims to contribute to the development of theory that is sound enough to be applicable in policy and practice. In considering the determinants of conflict impact among nPCROs, the current theoretical generalizations need to be probed for accuracy, and for enhanced understanding of the conditions under which they are applicable, or even potentially changeable. Thus the empirical data emerging from field-based conflict sensitivity testing among

religious actors in Southeast Asia can be further examined to inform associational theory in accordance with three key questions. First, are the conflict impacts of associational activity attributable to structural or non-structural determinants? What is the relationship between the two? Second, does the socio-political context shape the association, or can the association influence its context? What conditions, if any, might allow an association to transcend divisive social pressures in order to become an agent of unity? Third, among the potential non-structural factors, what is the role of religion in shaping an association's social impact? These three research questions are closely interrelated, because the literature's marginalization of religion reflects the overall emphasis on structural determinants of impact, and contributes to overlooking those cultural aspects of religion which shape individuals as bearers of group identity and potential agents of change.

Further, these research questions both reflect and inform the use of the conflict sensitivity paradigm as a meta-theory for approaching applicable social impact analysis. Conflict sensitivity theory was developed through the grounded experience of practitioners, yet its approach to causation supports a much improved understanding of the complexities of the associational sector. Conflict sensitivity theory embraces the dualistic potential of associational social impacts, and embraces multiple causation, recognizing both tangible and intangible factors, holding context in tension with agency, and examining the fluid interaction between those forces. In epistemological terms, conflict sensitivity theory is very compatible with the critical realist paradigm, which eschews constant conjunction between variables, and aims instead to identify causal mechanisms, along with the contextual conditions and other co-existing mechanisms which influence them. In other words, the course of

events is not fixed and “the same mechanism can produce different outcomes according to context” (Sayer 2000: 15). These ‘mechanisms’ may represent human activities and interventions, thus suggesting an actor-centered approach, and underscoring the relevance of the action research methodology detailed in the next chapter.



## CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

*For the scientific method can teach us nothing beyond how facts are related to, and conditioned by, each other... Yet it is equally clear that knowledge of what is does not open the door directly to what should be...*  
- Albert Einstein ([1954] 1994: 45)

An action research approach is particularly appropriate for the practitioner-centered task of exploring the applicability of conflict sensitivity in the religious sector. I argued in Chapter One that true action research is distinct from the more common positivist, interpretivist and emancipatory approaches, requiring the articulation of a unique epistemology (de Cock 1994, Schön 1995, Chaudhary 1997). Action research epistemology affirms the inseparability of thought and action (de Cock 1994, Greenwood and Levin 2007: 18), and the compatibility of facts with future-oriented values (Blum 1955: 310, Susman and Evered 1978: 328). The process is emergent and multiphase in nature, built around cycles of data gathering, reflection and action, with the intention of periodically questioning one's underlying conceptual assumptions as the research progresses (Aguinis 1993: 361, Stringer 1999: 17-20). Finally, action research is eclectic, drawing on a wide variety of disciplines, and accepting both qualitative and quantitative methods, in hopes of rendering a holistic picture of reality.

Given such a departure from tradition, this chapter requires significant detail to put forth the action research methodology that was used to test conflict sensitivity in partnership with religious associations in Mindanao and Singapore between 2007 and 2009. In both sites, I provided DNH training to religious actors, encouraged DNH application, and then evaluated the results. Data were collected through

participatory analysis workshops, surveys, semi-structured interviews, and participant observation, followed by analysis through modified forms of coding. In addition to informing an assessment of conflict sensitivity's applicability in the religious sector, these same data are used to inform associational theory on the conflict impacts of nPCROs, organizations whose primary aims focus on areas other than peace and conflict resolution.

In this chapter, I first discuss the particular type of action research methodology used in this project, along with criteria for assessing its validity. I then narrate the data collection and analysis processes undertaken in the field, beginning with the pilot phase and site selection, and continuing to the data collection efforts in Mindanao and Singapore. Throughout the chapter, conceptual concerns are linked to practitioner action, because both are central to the significance of the findings. I write in the first person where appropriate to disclose the interventionist nature of the research effort (Fisher and Phelps 2006). The focus here is on methodology, yet selected findings are previewed where necessary to describe the rationale for the decisions shaping subsequent action research cycles (Dick 2000).

### **'Collaborative Action Research' and its Validity**

At the outset, it must be stated that my action research effort encompassed two closely interrelated projects. I have intentionally distinguished between the thesis project and the practitioner project (Zuber-Skerritt and Perry 2002, Davis 2004). The two projects had different outcomes, with the thesis project aiming at academic writing, and the practitioner project aiming to enhance partner capacity while

developing tools for other religious practitioners. Both projects shared the same research questions on the applicability of conflict sensitivity (Chapter Two), but only the thesis project built on this to consider theoretical applications on the nature of religious associations in Southeast Asia (Chapter Three).

**Action Research as ‘Collaborative.’** The literature reveals a complex debate around how action research should be named and practiced. I would argue with Greenwood and Levin (2007: 13-34) that the fundamental distinction arises from the differences between the Northern Action Research tradition and the Southern Participatory Action Research tradition. Northern Action Research evolved out of the twentieth century’s industrial democracy movement, as influenced by Kurt Lewin (1946). The Northern approach centered around management-led problem solving, including theories of organizational change, as typified by ‘action science’ (Argyris et al. 1985) and ‘organizational learning’ (Argyris and Schön 1996). In contrast, Southern Participatory Action Research has used community-based research with the emancipatory aim of changing socio-political power structures (Tandon 2005: 222). The 1970s brought Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* ([1970] 1990), plus other social experiments in Latin America and India. Subsequent developments included the launch of the International Council for Adult Education, and the uptake of participatory practice by development actors. In sum, the key word describing the Northern tradition is ‘action,’ while the key word for its Southern counterpart is ‘participatory’ (Fals Borda 2001).

In the early 1990s, the Northern and Southern traditions began to cross-fertilize, leading to an enriching interpenetration of concepts, but not to definitional clarity. Northern writers now use ‘participation’ to refer to democratic reform within

institutions, whereas Southern writers use to term to point to a broader level of socio-political liberation (Bray et al. 2000). In some cases, Northern writers use participatory language but feature content that is only minimally participatory by Southern standards (for example Whyte 1991). Thus questions of participation remain fundamental in determining the nature of any action research effort. Brown (2005) argues that both Northern and Southern action research are legitimately useful, and that researchers should select between them in light of the research context.

Extending Brown's logic, I clarify the nature of my action research project by examining the purpose and level of participation. In the thesis project participation is primarily a means to an end, but in the practitioner project participation becomes an end in itself. Robust participation implies participation in all research phases, from conceptualization of the research through dissemination (McTaggart 1997: 28, Tandon 1988), but my study began with limited participation during the conceptual stage. Adopting Herr and Anderson's "continuum of positionality" (2005: 31), I have continually shifted the locus of decision-making as the project progressed, from shifting along the spectrum towards shared control, and in certain instances insider-control. Thus in order to highlight my priority on participation, but without undermining the Southern tradition through overuse of the term 'participatory,' I opt to call my approach 'collaborative action research.'

**Validity as 'Credibility with a Purpose.'** If action research is built upon a unique epistemology, this implies that some aspects of validity will also be distinct, because "researchers cannot use positivist methods for assessing the scientific merits of action research" (de Cock 1994: 374). Schön (1995) argues that the choice between

“rigor” and “relevance” is a false dichotomy, and that rigor itself must be redefined to include practical social relevance. Bradbury and Reason similarly argue for “broadening the bandwidth of validity” in action research (2001). Nonetheless, there is no set of criteria broadly accepted for assessing action research validity, so I draw here on selected influential works as they pertain to my own collaborative action research approach.

Greenwood and Levin provide an overarching standard of validity in their notion of credibility with a purpose. The central question in action research is: Is it believable enough to act upon? “Only knowledge generated and tested in practice” is considered to meet this standard (Greenwood and Levin 2007: 67). Credibility has both “internal” and “external” audiences. Internal credibility<sup>21</sup> refers to believability among the research participants themselves, as assessed on their own terms, making participant concerns central to validity rather than consigning them to the realm of ethics. External credibility refers to people who did not participate in the research process, including the academy and the general public. Building on the standard of credibility with a purpose, multiple dimensions of validity raised by other authors can contribute towards criteria development. I synthesize such criteria below, along with brief comments on how such matters are addressed within my own project.

*Appropriate theories and concepts.* Bradbury and Reason emphasize the “integrity” of the conceptual frame undergirding the research effort (2001: 451). This includes some traditional notions of construct validity, such as appropriate selection and application of theory. In action research, Bradbury and Reason urge that the

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<sup>21</sup> ‘Internal credibility’ should not be confused with the traditional term ‘internal validity,’ which refers to the logic linking data and conclusions, and is more closely related here to ‘believable conclusions.’

standard be expanded to promote the integration of theory and practice, in ways that reflect the lived experience of the research participants. As described in the previous chapters, my project actively tests conflict sensitivity theory to determine whether or not it is relevant to religious audiences, and my exploration of the Western-influenced concepts of associational theory is significantly modified by the socio-political realities of Southeast Asia. Further, because the study of Southeast Asia as a region has often been conceptualized and dominated by Westerners (Heryanto 2007), I make a strong effort to incorporate Asian theorists.

*Appropriate process design.* Process design can refer to basic “methodological appropriateness,” including the question of whether the data-gathering techniques align with the research questions and the context (Bradbury and Reason 2001: 452). This dimension also refers to the emergent nature of action research, which as innovated by Lewin should emphasize “a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of a cycle of planning, action and fact-finding about the result of the action” (1946: 206). Wherever possible this should result in “double loop learning” (Argyris et al. 1985) in which findings spiral back to revisit the underlying assumptions of the conceptual frame. My project is built on cycles of training, application, and analysis which, at the Mindanao site, this did result in a significant questioning of assumptions, as elaborated in Chapters Five and Six.

*Believable data.* This dimension refers to the question of whether the data gathered are both consistent and convincing, relating closely to the traditional issue of reliability. However action researchers also propose some alternative means of verifying the data. For example, Stringer (1999: 176-7) advocates the use of “member checking,” in which participants verify the accuracy of what is recorded, and the

maintenance of an explicit “audit trail” which allows the external audience to trace out the path of data collection and analysis, even referring where appropriate to the raw data. My project emphasizes triangulation of both sources (ethnically and religiously diverse participants representing various agencies and locations, many of whom were tracked over time) and methods (including surveys, interviews and participatory social analysis). I have also used different forms of member checking, as appropriate to local conditions at each site.

*Believable conclusions.* All research paradigms require the researcher to provide adequate evidence to support his or her conclusions. Some forms of action research place a major emphasis on the logic chain between data and conclusions (e.g. Argyris et al. 1985: 57, Greenwood and Levin 2007: 68). My own project uses a coding approach, modified for structured use by a participatory group, in order to identify common themes and patterns. I conducted the first level of analysis with practitioner partners in the field during each research cycle. I later critically re-examined our shared conclusions before building on them for my own theoretical applications. However, in considering the applicability of conflict sensitivity, I do not substitute my own opinion for that of the insiders. This stance echoes McTaggart, who argues that in participatory action research, academic partners may develop knowledge, yet “the practical decisions about what counts as a sustainable move toward improvement must always belong to the workers” (1997: 36).

*Minimized bias.* Bias can negatively affect all three of the above dimensions of validity. Action research does not assume researcher objectivity, because it promotes values relating to human empowerment. The typical approach to managing bias is to “articulate to the best of our ability these perspectives or biases and build a critical

reflexivity into the research process” (Herr and Anderson 2005: 61). The use of a research team can help to identify sources of individual bias, as can regular input from an external “critical friend” (Herr and Anderson 2005: 60-61). I minimize bias primarily through use of a local research team, and secondarily through periodic consultations with knowledgeable outsiders, and personal reflexivity as documented in field notes. I also compare my findings with the emergent experiences of humanitarian aid workers worldwide and Christian leaders using DNH in Indonesia, to further sharpen the development of findings.

*Useful local outcomes.* Given the emphasis of action research on meeting human needs, one important criterion of validity is: Did the project in fact meet the local need that it set out to address? This criteria has been variously termed “outcome validity” (Herr and Anderson 2005: 55), “workability” (Greenwood and Levin 2007: 68), and “reflexive-practical outcome” (Bradbury and Reason 2001: 451). If the project outcome is not useful locally, then it cannot be legitimately abstracted or applied to other contexts. In my own project, local outcomes cannot be assumed, because the applicability of conflict sensitivity is in fact the proposition being tested. However, the project’s practitioner-oriented objectives were designed to meet the goals of the partner agency in each location. During the project, I transferred knowledge and skill through training at both sites, and through support for the local publication of the partner agency’s lessons learned in Mindanao. The project also gave considerable attention to avoiding harmful outcomes, through exercising caution in raising and discussing sensitive socio-political issues.

*Transformative significance.* The question here is: Will the project result in any change in the worldview or self-view of the people involved? Bradbury and Reason



call this “quality as engaging in significant work” (2001: 452), and highlight the potential for participants to move beyond problem-solving towards questions of a deeper or more emancipatory nature. The extension of DNH to religious actors is, if it proves successful, emancipatory in nature in that it helps practitioners overcome socially destructive beliefs and practices (Bhaskar 1986: 169-211). Numerous researchers emphasize the potential for transformation of not only the participants but also the researchers (McTaggart 1997: 40, Herr and Anderson 2005: 56). Though my own transformation lies beyond the scope of this thesis, I did experience significant growth and change researcher committed to collaboration, and as an American Caucasian Protestant engaging sensitive issues of religion and social conflict in Southeast Asia.

*Collaborative process.* Traditional research paradigms include ethical norms that warn against the researcher using his or her power in ways that exploit the participants. Action research affirms this norm, and goes further by emphasizing the participation and empowerment of research participants in the act of research itself, as elaborated above. Bradbury and Reason call this “quality as relational praxis” (2001: 451), posing questions such as: Was participation maximized to the highest degree possible and appropriate in this project? If empowerment was minimal at the beginning, did it increase throughout the project? Herr and Anderson call this “democratic validity” (2005: 56), and consider it a fundamental social justice requirement. My own project has moved as far along the “continuum of positionality” (Herr and Anderson 2005: 31) as local conditions permit, without claiming to reach the highest levels of participation in the Southern tradition of Participatory Action Research. The roles and responsibilities of all parties were

mutually negotiated and, at the Mindanao site, documented in a formal memorandum.

### **Pilot Phase Consultations and Site Selection**

This section describes the pilot phase inquiry undertaken to shape the action research design. The pilot consisted of nineteen semi-structured consultative interviews of over sixty associational leaders, supplemented by participant observation, between February and May of 2007. At the conceptual level, this pilot inquiry was driven by two questions: Is the conflict sensitivity concept relevant, from both 'outsider' and 'insider' perspectives? How should conflict sensitivity be presented and tested within the religious associational sector in Southeast Asia? In terms of the operational arrangements required to support the conceptual inquiry, the pilot phase also had the objective of identifying appropriate sites and partner agencies for action research.

I sought two testing sites, with certain key differences between them, in order to ensure that the findings on conflict sensitivity's applicability to religious associations would provide a preliminary indication of generalizability. The original DNH Project set a high standard by grounding its research in numerous locations around the world, and then comparing multi-site findings over time in order to identify aid-conflict interaction patterns that transcend local history and culture (CDA Collaborative Learning Projects 2004b). Fuller-Rowell (2009: 376) similarly affirms that the comparisons made possible by multi-site inquiry can enhance action research outcomes. I opted for a two-site comparison because a more expansive

inquiry would have exceeded the scope of my thesis project. Additionally, it was preferable that one of those research locations feature latent conflict. Aid sector findings demonstrate that practitioners are often slower to recognize the relevance of DNH where conflict is latent rather than manifest (Garred 2006a: 16-17), particularly if they also perceive that the society in question has achieved a significant level of economic and social 'development.' If the same pattern held true in the religious sector, this would have important implications for conflict sensitivity usage and adaptations.

The partner agencies that I sought should ideally be religious associations with minimal linkages to humanitarian aid or peacebuilding, thus ensuring that they represented the religious sector in which conflict sensitivity was to be tested. Multifaith networks would provide access to a variety of faith traditions, and ensure project momentum even if one partner dropped out. However, these ideal preferences were not the only factors influencing partner selection; the project was also confronted with pivotal questions of research access. There were multiple factors that might discourage potential partners from participating, including the likelihood that DNH testing would raise issues that are ethnically, religiously and politically sensitive (see Hyland 2009), and the fact that practitioners who are new to DNH often do not see its relevance until *after* they have experienced it in a workshop or project application setting (Garred 2006a: 31).

Moreover, access in the Southeast Asian cultural context was mediated through relationships, reputation and trust. Partner contacts could be formed only through professional networking and face-to-face communication (see Cunningham 2008: 382), made possible by the fact that I was based in the region until early 2009.

Language would be a related barrier in this linguistically diverse region, because collaborative research on complex socio-political issues requires highly nuanced communication. If language was not shared, then translators would need to be widely available, highly skilled and equipped with a basic understanding of the conflict sensitivity subject matter. In action research, such access considerations demand a degree of flexibility and creativity, which must be exercised within the boundaries permitted by the conceptual goals and parameters of the project.

At the outset of the pilot phase, I sought advice at the regional level from four senior humanitarian aid practitioners experienced in conflict sensitivity practice involving religious issues, three of whom were Asians. I began by identifying four countries that featured strong multifaith involvement in the associational sector, and in which I had strong contacts: the Philippines, Indonesia, Cambodia and Singapore. I started with university contacts in Singapore, and with faith-based humanitarian aid workers elsewhere, using a snowballing process (e.g. Kahan and Al-Tamimi 2009, Sulaiman-Hill and Thompson 2011) to target multifaith associational leaders and clergy. Phone interviews proved useful only in cases of previously established relationships. Indonesia posed logistical challenges given its tight visa restrictions. The interviewees and potential partners were most responsive in Mindanao and Singapore which, perhaps unsurprisingly, were the locations in which I possessed the strongest networks of professional relationships with English-speaking practitioners.

At the same time, the emergent pilot phase data made it clear that Mindanao and Singapore offered a particularly rich conceptual pairing. Mindanao is better known as a conflict 'hot spot,' but Singapore makes a compelling comparator because of the vast differences between the two contexts. Mindanao and Singapore can be

envisioned as occupying opposing ends of a metaphorical Southeast Asian spectrum on the key variables of importance to this project. Mindanao is a physically violent civil war zone, while Singapore features subtle but significant intergroup tensions (Chua 2003, Narayanan 2004). Singapore is an 'Asian tiger' economy with a 2010 Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.846, compared to the Philippines' 0.638 (UNDP 2011), a composite score which obscures significant variations within that large country. In 2009, seven out of the ten lowest scoring Philippine provinces were found in the southern region of Mindanao; the lowest HDI was 0.301 in Sulu, off the southwestern coast of Mindanao island (UNDP Philippines 2009). This juxtaposition ensures the desired comparison between manifest versus latent conflict settings, and societies perceived as 'developing' versus 'developed,' for the conflict sensitivity testing purposes described above.

Further, the associational sector of the Philippines is unusually strong and influential by Southeast Asian standards (Lee 2004: 21), while its Singaporean counterpart is known for being nascent and heavily regulated, an ideal case for exploring how civil society exercises influence in ways other than directly confronting the state (Chong 2005, Lyons and Gomez 2005). In this comparison, the shared regional phenomenon of public religion as an overlay upon colonially-shaped ethno-political conflict is refracted through two very different associational experiences, thus broadening the understanding of how religion functions as a force within the Southeast Asian associational sector. For these reasons I narrowed my focus as the pilot phase progressed, with the result that eleven interviews were conducted on site in Mindanao, five on site in Singapore, and only three by phone or e-mail to Cambodia and Indonesia.

**Mindanao pilot findings.** In Mindanao, local culture makes it common for interviewees to appear in groups, so only four interviews were conducted individually, plus seven in pairs or groups. The participants included religious leaders and influential religious peace practitioners, hailing from Davao City (the primary island hub), as well as North Cotabato, South Cotabato, Sarangani and Zamboanga Provinces. I intentionally sought to meet with the Davao Ministerial Interfaith, Inc., as the only known interfaith group consistently using DNH, and I attended their 2007 regional conference in Zamboanga City. Throughout the Mindanao pilot phase, only four of the participants were Muslims, due to limitations in accessibility and scheduling. The other participants were split approximately evenly between Catholics and Protestants (Evangelicals).<sup>22</sup>

In the pilot phase findings, three broad themes emerged in Mindanao. First, among religious associations, one frequent determinant of impact is the level of inclusivity or exclusivity in the selection of participants and beneficiaries. For example, in relief operations for conflict evacuees, many churches object to assisting Muslims, in effect saying, “Why help those people? They created their own problem.”<sup>23</sup> Thus a key question is whether the organization exists only to serve its own identity group, or to serve all. Exclusivity tends to exacerbate tensions between ethnic and religious groups, while inclusive selection tends to break down social barriers. As a second theme, there is great sensitivity around proselytism, and the suspicion that service agencies, particularly Evangelical agencies, intend to use social

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<sup>22</sup> In Mindanao, many Protestant Christians, including the Protestant research participants, prefer to be called ‘Evangelicals.’ I use the terms interchangeably only when referencing Mindanao.

<sup>23</sup> Prt. MI #62, pilot interview by author, North Cotabato, Philippines, 22 Apr. 2007.

action as a means of conversion. Thus even if an organization is inclusive in its beneficiary selection, community members may wonder what is its underlying motivation. The perceived or actual existence of a conversion motive, particularly if not disclosed, again tends to exacerbate tensions.

The exclusion and proselytism themes make conflict sensitivity relevant from the outsider perspective, and they echo important themes found in the regional academic (Lee 2004, Goh 2005) and aid sector literature (Garred 2006b). Tension and exclusivism between religious groups is also apparent in the literature on the Philippines as a whole. Owing to the Spanish colonialism of the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, the Philippines is over eighty percent Roman Catholic (Yamamoto 2007: 204), unique in a region where the only other majority Christian country is Timor Leste. In recent decades, triggered to some extent by American colonialism between 1898 and 1946,<sup>24</sup> the conversion-oriented growth of Protestant Evangelicalism has resulted in significant Catholic-Protestant tension, even as related renewal movements challenge the Catholic Church from within (Suico 2004, Kessler and Rüländ 2006, Barry 2006: 172). For the most part, the national Protestant-Catholic cleavage lacks any significant overlap with ethnicity. On the other hand, in the Mindanao region, where the Philippines' four percent Muslim minority (Yamamoto 2007: 204)<sup>25</sup> is concentrated, those Catholic-Protestant tensions are often

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<sup>24</sup> American rule catalyzed Protestant missions, often led by the establishment of religious service organizations such as the YMCA (Clarke, 1998, 54-55). Nonetheless, unlike the Spaniards, the American colonialists held neutral policies towards religious conversion. In relation to the Bangsamoro, American policy was assimilationist in nature, yet tolerant towards Islam (Amoroso, 2003, 142).

<sup>25</sup> Current demographic breakdown by religion is not prominent among government-published statistics, so I cautiously draw estimates from secondary sources.

overshadowed by Muslim-Christian conflict and issues pertaining to Lumads (indigenous peoples), with those cleavages running along predictable ethnic lines.

In a third pilot phase theme, arising from the insider perspective, many interviewees in Mindanao recognized how humanitarian aid can unintentionally exacerbate conflict, and they observed that the same phenomenon can occur in church activities. They often mentioned that when negative impact does occur, it is usually unintentional. Participants familiar with conflict sensitivity directly affirmed its usefulness in meeting such challenges. Participants unfamiliar with conflict sensitivity consistently pointed out that a lack of understanding of social context, particularly as perceived by ethnic and religious groups other than one's own, can lead to mistakes that worsen the existing conflict. Thus from an insider perspective, conflict sensitivity's emphasis on context analysis could help to meet a perceived need. Interestingly, both media (Arevalo 2007, Mindanews 2010b) and academic sources (Soriano 2006, Lee 2008) indicate a high citizen awareness in Mindanao of themes relating to conflict sensitivity, even where people do not recall having been explicitly informed about formal conflict sensitivity frameworks.

This local recognition of conflict sensitivity as relevant is likely bolstered by the obvious nature of social conflict in Mindanao.<sup>26</sup> The territorial inclusion of Mindanao in the Philippines polity has long been contested (Amoroso 2003, Mastura 2006). Government resettlement schemes in the 1920s and 1950s moved settlers from the northern and central Philippines into the south, making the migrants

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<sup>26</sup> The thesis text provides sufficient contextual background to situate and interpret the current research inquiry. However it must be acknowledged that conflict dynamics in Mindanao are exceptionally complex and protracted, meriting their own in-depth study. Appendix A contains further analysis of the context of Mindanao.



(predominantly Christian) numerically, politically and economically dominant over the local *Bangsamoro*<sup>27</sup> (predominantly Muslim) and *Lumads* (who practice indigenous beliefs or Christianity). Armed conflict escalated under Marcos in the late 1960s, including the recruitment of citizen paramilitaries organized along ethno-religious lines (Gomez Jr. 2000: 156-74), and then peaked in the 1970s. A 1996 peace agreement between the government and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) is now faltering in its implementation via the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao. Negotiations are ongoing with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, foundering often over the coverage and governance mechanisms for expanded autonomy (Ferrer 1999, Santos 2005: 23). The peace talks are facilitated by Malaysia, reflecting the extent to which regional trends are intertwined with events in Mindanao (Tan 2003b, Wadi 2003). The presence of US troops in support of the government's anti-insurgency campaigns, is highly controversial (Jubair 2007: 67-9). Other complicating factors include clan conflict (Concepcion et al. 2003) and nationwide communist insurgency. The most recent flare-up left nearly one million people internally displaced in Mindanao in August 2008 (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre 2009: 4), leaving the population in no doubt about the relevance of mitigating violent conflict.

At the same time, with regard to action research process, pilot phase interviewees cautioned that the religious associational sector in Mindanao is large and highly capable. Peace tools are widely available, and the role of Americans is often suspect. Thus action research efforts should be conducted in collaboration with a team of local resource people, interfaith in composition, who would guide and

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<sup>27</sup> The term *Bangsamoro* means 'Moro nation.' The Spanish applied the term *Moros* in a pejorative sense, but Mindanowan Muslims later adopted the name as neutral or positive in their own usage.

represent the local aspects of the project. The project should have the support of central religious hierarchies, yet seek to go beyond the usual circle of religious peace workshop participants, in order to reach religious leaders who have not yet been exposed. Likewise, conflict sensitivity testing should emphasize the 'do no harm' aspect of the tool, which distinguishes it from the other peace tools in order to meet a unique need. Finally, as practitioners, several interviewees expressed their expectation to receive the project results in a usable form. In the words of one activist: "We need this, because we don't have time to write."<sup>28</sup>

The literature similarly affirms Filipino civil society as uniquely large and strong, and as having made significant contributions to democratization (Lee 2004: 21) through expanded political participation (Clarke 1998: 206). Some speculate that Filipino civil society derives vibrancy from American colonial encouragement (Clarke 1998: 193) and from a cultural emphasis on active citizenship (Mulder 2003: 82, 191, 204) that is less prominent elsewhere in the region. In terms of historical forces, the current civil society sector emerged from the protest movements of the Marcos era (Franco 2004, Sobritchea 2004), a turning point in the personal stories of several Mindanowan pilot interviewees. Religion played a central role, as seen in the influence of Roman Catholic institutions (Carroll 2004) and theology (Astorga 2006) in galvanizing the 'People Power' ouster of Marcos. Nonetheless, the dynamism of Filipino civil society does not necessarily imply effectiveness in the eyes of all observers. Though generally left-leaning (Ferrer 1997: 1), Filipino civil society shows evidence of internal class conflict (Franco 2004: 127) and ideological cleavage vis-à-vis the communist insurgency (Bück 2007: 106-10). Lee (2004: 21) highlights a lack of

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<sup>28</sup> Prt. MG#3, pilot interview by author, Davao, 23 Apr. 2007.

impact on economic disparities and corrupt governance. Civil society activity is less prominent in Bangsamoro communities (Bück 2007: 116), and does not necessarily resonate with Bangsamoro perceptions of citizenship in a contested state (Guialal 1997, Mastura 2001). Rood (2004: 23) characterizes the overall state of the civil society sector as “much energy and intelligence in the context of disappointing macro-level results.”

As a result of the Mindanao pilot consultations, I formed a partnership with the Davao Ministerial Interfaith Inc. (DMI) of Davao City. DMI is comprised of approximately fifty religious leaders from the Roman Catholic, Evangelical Protestant and Muslim communities who collaborate on a voluntary basis to support community-based social action. The organization meeting in 2002, aiming to provide the faith-related component of a holistic development program managed by the local people’s organization Unity for Progress,<sup>29</sup> and funded by the international NGO World Vision. In early days, DMI’s priorities were defined by its partners, with a goal of integrating multifaith spiritual nurture and life skills into community development programming. There was also an equally important goal of fostering collaboration between religious leaders of different faiths. Currently, DMI continues to work with its original partners, but it has also taken on more autonomy in planning its projects, and in establishing its own sustainable organizational systems. DMI mentors sister interfaith groups in nearby Sarangani, Zamboanga, Agusan del Sur and South Cotabato Provinces.

World Vision began providing DMI with DNH training and mentoring in 2003. DMI has been using DNH consistently since that time, making the organization

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<sup>29</sup> The name in Visayan is *Hugpong sa Kalambuan - Dabaw Inc.*

a pioneer of DNH uptake by religious leaders,<sup>30</sup> and giving them a natural interest in the action research project. Importantly, DMI's mandate as described above is not fully separate from humanitarian aid and peacebuilding. Nevertheless, DMI is a secondary network for religious leaders whose primary commitment is to their own churches and mosques, thus tapping into large pools of practitioners and projects whose objectives are primarily religious, and largely unrelated to humanitarian aid and peacebuilding. Thus while DMI itself may not be a 'pure' nPCRO (non-peace and conflict resolution organization), it provides a substantial window into the world of religious nPCROs in the Mindanao context. DMI was accustomed to calling Do No Harm by its alternate title of Local Capacities for Peace (LCP), so I too was obliged to adopt the LCP terminology for local use, despite some loss of the conceptual uniqueness of avoiding harm.

**Singapore pilot findings.** These seven individual interviews included academics and religious leaders active in interfaith affairs, including three Muslims (ethnically Malay), two Catholics and two Protestants (all ethnically Chinese). Supplementary participant observation events included two interfaith events hosted by Muslims and one by Buddhists, in addition to numerous events within my own Anglican church. The dearth of Buddhist/Taoists (largely from the majority Chinese ethnic group) and ethnic Indians (which include Hindus and Christians among other minority faiths) was a significant gap, because my initial access was via contact persons concerned with the prominent issue of relations between Malay Muslims and Chinese Christians.

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<sup>30</sup> DMI's history with DNH is detailed in Chapter Five.

As in Mindanao, the themes of exclusion and proselytism were prominent in the Singapore associational sector. Membership is often separated by race and religion, resulting in organizations that are largely mono-faith and mono-ethnic. However, there has been a trend towards increased interfaith activity since the attacks of 11 September 2001, due to the government's anti-terrorism efforts which rely in part on community-based resilience strategies. In terms of beneficiary selection, most religious associations serve adherents of their own faiths, with some well-known exceptions in the Buddhist and Christian communities. The Asian tsunami marked a significant point of change, because it provoked an interfaith response in which funds were raised for beneficiaries regardless of their ethnic or religious background. The promotion of religious conversion and the suspicion of a conversion agenda are prominent sources of tension in community service. Protestants are most frequently associated with proselytism, as an outgrowth in part of Singapore's history of Christian engagement in the social service sectors. However, the Muslim community also has within it elements that promote conversion.

Again, these pilot phase findings on exclusion and proselytism were reflective of themes encountered in the literature. The overlap and conflation between ethnicity and religion remains strong, with only Christianity having an extensive reach into more than one ethnic group (Chinese and Indians) (Tong 2008, Tham 2008b). Most authors laud Singapore's high levels of public tolerance between Chinese, Malay, Indian and other ethnic groups, yet some also point to a lack of meaningful interaction and deeper integration between them (e.g. Singh 2007). Among religious-based associations, the emergence of unconditional service across ethnic and religious lines still appears to be the exception rather than the rule. Many

Christian community service agencies present themselves in largely secular terms, yet retain a strong, underlying evangelism motive in their service to people of other faiths (Mathews 2008). Mansor and Ibrahim (2008) argue that Muslim service organizations are surprisingly open to serving beneficiaries of other faiths, yet their supporting data undercut somewhat their claims. They cite two organizations that serve between thirty and forty percent non-Muslim beneficiaries, and another that reserves ten percent of its budget for non-Muslims – yet the overall Singaporean population is up to eighty-five percent non-Muslim (Tong 2008: 37). Importantly, these trends in the religious community service sector make conflict sensitivity decidedly relevant from the perspective of an outside observer.

Nonetheless, from an insider perspective, many Singaporean pilot phase participants did not see a clear and immediate relevance in conflict sensitivity, owing to their different views on the nature of social conflict and the role of the associational sector. Most citizens have no perception of ‘conflict’ in Singapore, because conflict is seen as being associated with violence. In the words of one pilot interview participant: “social cohesion is an unchallenged supposition.”<sup>31</sup> Even so, a few participating leaders in interfaith activity did acknowledge the existence of intergroup tensions, and all pilot participants spoke of the importance of preserving and promoting “social harmony.” Further, the use of ‘civil society’ terminology confused the participants, because that term is perceived to imply a political stance vis-à-vis the government, as discussed in Chapter Three.

These findings, too, reflect the role and influence of Singaporean public policy, as elaborated in the literature. Religion is considered part of the associational

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<sup>31</sup> Prt. S #3, pilot interview by author, Singapore, 9 Apr. 2007.

sector (Tan 2008: 69), and is subject to all the usual government restrictions applied to that sector. Further, religion is subject to additional scrutiny because of its potential to inflame ethnic politics. The public is kept consistently aware of previous ethno-religious riots involving the Malay community (e.g. Conceicao 2007), and their added weight given Singapore's location in a Malay-dominated archipelago (Narayanan 2004). Thus the protection of ethno-religious harmony is driven by an abiding concern for national "survival" (Tham 2008b: 19). Government policy is firmly secular, extending a freedom of religious belief, though not necessarily freedom of religious action (Tan 2008). The state intervenes in situations believed to threaten Singapore's tolerance and order, using such means as mandatory registration of all associations addressing religion, criminal codes permitting preventative detention, and policies like the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act of 1990, which was enacted to curtail aggressive proselytism, primarily by evangelical Christians (Lai 2008, Tan 2008). Nonetheless, certain aspects of religion have been "co-opted" (Narayanan 2004, Tan 2008: 41) as a source of morality, good citizenship and social capital, and as a means of influencing the development of minority religions, particularly Islam. Currently, areas of major government scrutiny and intervention include prevention of and resilience to Islamist terror attacks in the global wake of the September 11 incident, and ongoing control of proselytism (Tan 2008: 58).

In the end, despite the dissonance around 'conflict' and 'civil society' terminology, there was a widely-perceived need among pilot participants to expand the interfaith agenda beyond the limited level of dialog between religious leaders, so conflict sensitivity was seen as a potential way of expanding the interfaith agenda into the religious community service sector. Community service organizations are

often small, with limited staff capacity and limited budgets. Therefore conflict sensitivity tools would need to be 'light' – quickly learned and easily applied. The role of Americans is less sensitive here than in many other surrounding countries, particularly for foreigners with academic affiliations.

Following the pilot phase, I identified a local partner agency in Singapore. The Harmony Centre at An-Nahdhah (a centrally located mosque) was launched in 2006 by the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS). MUIS is quasi-governmental, an expression of the Asian state-guided civil society model (Lee 2004, Chong 2005, Read and Pekkanen 2009), and even an example of what Narayanan (2004) might call the government co-optation of Malay Muslim institutions. Thus Harmony Centre is well-funded and well-publicized, with a rapidly expanding influence. The Centre's mandate is to promote a greater understanding of Islam in multifaith Singapore, and to serve as a prominent venue for interfaith events. Thus, the Harmony Centre is actually an extension of government, but the vast majority of the participants it convenes are representatives of the associational sector. Also, like DMI in Mindanao, the Harmony Centre's mandate does include the promotion of peace, but as a network hub it draws representatives from religious associations with a wide range of missions, including numerous nPCROs that are exclusively spiritual in nature. The process design for both Singapore and Mindanao is described in the sections that follow.



## Action Research Process Design

The action research efforts undertaken in Mindanao and Singapore in 2008 and early 2009 were designed to produce two parallel bodies of data that could be compared using the conceptual frames developed in Chapters Two and Three. The research questions were held in common across sites, along with the phased action research approach and activities, and the basic methods of data collection and analysis. Both partner agencies were mainly engaged with the first level inquiry on the applicability of conflict sensitivity to religious associations. The second level inquiry on the implications for associational theory, while not hidden, pertained mainly to secondary knowledge developed by myself as the academic partner (McTaggart 1997: 36)

The project's phased approach was based on the reflection-action-data gathering-reflection cycles that are central to action research. At both sites, I provided DNH training to religious actors, encouraged DNH application, collected data on participant perceptions and usage patterns, and then examined the results over the short and, where possible, longer term. At both sites, the methods of data collection were surveys, semi-structured interviews of both individuals and (focus) groups, participatory analysis workshops, and participant observation documented in field notes.<sup>32</sup> The participatory analysis workshops yielded written documentation of participants' own DNH analysis examples, in either framework or prose formats. In some workshops, there was also a supplementary audio or video recording, or a collective public documentation of the entire event. While the data collection instruments consistently interrogated the same research questions using the same

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<sup>32</sup> See Appendix C for a summary of data collection activities.

basic design, they were not identical across place and time. Some instruments were improved over time, applying the learnings of one research cycle to the design of the next.

The data collected represent a total of 161 participants, including 143 in Mindanao and 18 in Singapore. Their religious composition is summarized in Figure 4.1 below. At least 63 of the participants were female, including some of the major contributors, largely because the project was not limited to the clergy but also involved religious lay leaders and activists. Some of the participants were also resource people in this project, meaning those within the partner agency who shared responsibility for project planning or training delivery.

**Figure 4.1: Religious Composition of Participant Groups**

	Religion	Number of Participants	Percentage of Participants	Comment on Ethnicity
<b>Mindanao</b>	Islam	14	9.8%	Predominantly Bangsamoro
	Christianity – Roman Catholic	48	33.6%	Predominantly migrant
	Christianity – Protestant/Evangelical	76	53.1%	Predominantly migrant, plus 9 Lumad, and 2 international
	Indigenous Beliefs	1	0.7%	Lumad
	Other (Seventh Day Adventist, Mormon)	2	1.4%	Migrant and Lumad
	Unknown	2	1.4%	Unknown
			<b>143</b>	<b>100 %</b>
<b>Singapore</b>	Islam	12	66.7%	Predominantly Malay
	Christianity – Roman Catholic	2	11.1%	Chinese and immigrant
	Christianity – Protestant	3	16.7%	Chinese and immigrant
	Other (non-affiliated)	1	5.5%	Chinese
			<b>18</b>	<b>100%</b>

Many participants contributed more than once, and the multiplicity of data sources aided in capturing diverse aspects of their experience over time. The surveys provided a broad profile of the participant group's characteristics and their experience with DNH, adding a minimal quantitative component within an otherwise qualitative study. Early survey results were used to inform the design of subsequent action research cycles, and surveys in Mindanao were also used to select individuals for interviews. Those interviews permitted in-depth discussion of complex themes and stories that could only be elicited through interactive probing. DNH frameworks and other physical workshop outputs were often discussed verbally within the context of a workshop discussion, so the accompanying event documentation became a critical aid to data interpretation. In many cases, surveys could be combined with interviews and participatory workshop outputs to yield a well-rounded picture of the learning process of a particular individual.

Despite the consistency in high-level design, there were also significant differences across the two sites. The Mindanao project was much larger in scope and duration, because DMI's five years of DNH experience made them eager to take on a larger task, and uniquely capable of providing data on DNH usage in individual and organizational practice over time. Further, the Mindanao project involved a significantly higher level of local empowerment and control than the Singapore project, due to the emphasis on empowerment in Mindanowan civil society, and the sensitivity of my own role as an educated American outsider. Therefore the following sub-sections detail separately the key aspects of each action research cycle in Mindanao and then in Singapore.

**Mindanao Process Design.** As identified during the pilot phase, the Davao Ministerial Interfaith Inc. (DMI) was the primary partner agency, with core research activities running from late 2007 to late 2008. During the preparation phase, I co-led with World Vision staff a Training of Trainers (ToT) to equip thirteen interfaith members as DNH trainers.<sup>33</sup> This was the first known DNH ToT targeted specifically for religious leaders. The content was the same as ToTs held in humanitarian aid settings, so that the new trainers themselves could contribute to any subsequent contextualization of DNH for the religious sector. Though the ToT was primarily a preparation phase, data were collected during practice training workshops.

Following the ToT, DMI commissioned a six-member research team<sup>34</sup> and one special advisor to partner with me during the project. We held a two-day research team consultation on average every six weeks, corresponding to my visits from Singapore. The research team members were unpaid volunteers, as per DMI's usual operating procedures. We pursued win-win outcomes to benefit each partner, with DMI benefiting from DNH capacity building, technical support for local publication of their findings, and organizational growth in areas of administration and finance. The team defined their practitioner-oriented goal as "to build on DMI's pioneering LCP experience by researching how religious leaders and organizations can use LCP, in order to share LCP with other religious leaders in South Central

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<sup>33</sup> The new DNH trainers included 3 Muslims, 7 migrant Protestants, 1 Lumad Protestant and 2 migrant Catholics. Seven were from DMI, and six from DMI's sister interfaith groups in the southern Mindanao region.

<sup>34</sup> The research team consisted of 1 Muslim, 2 migrant Catholics, and 3 migrant Protestants.

Mindanao and possibly other contexts.”<sup>35</sup> DMI was already committed to the ongoing use of DNH, whereas my own stance was necessarily more critical, a difference managed through careful negotiation of roles as described below. After setting the overarching goals and methods in place, the detailed design was updated on a cycle-by-cycle basis, with the learnings of each cycle informing the next. When decision points arose between cycles, I outlined the options, and then the DMI research team decided on the focus of their inquiry during the next cycle.

Roles and responsibilities were carefully negotiated through a memorandum of agreement.<sup>36</sup> The memorandum itself was incrementally developed over a period of almost one year, and team consultations included regular ‘check-ups’ on the status of the partnership, reflecting the importance and delicacy of building the participatory relationship (Arieli et al. 2009, Wicks and Reason 2009). I was responsible for providing capacity building (using resources such as Shallwani and Mohammed 2007) and for designing and facilitating the research process, subject to research team agreement. The team was responsible for organizing contacts and logistics, and collecting and analyzing data as part of the facilitated team process. Regarding informed consent, the team agreed that “all participants will be informed in an appropriate way about the research, and will have opportunity to give (or decline) consent for use of their information”<sup>37</sup> This information took the form of verbal announcements, brief written explanations on all project documents, and an

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<sup>35</sup> Memorandum of Agreement: DNH/LCP for Multifaith Religious Leaders and Organizations, Davao, initial version 11 June 2007, final version signed 23 May 2008. See Appendix H for the text of the memorandum.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

additional handout describing research parameters and points of contact. We acknowledged all participants via a collective list of names, while avoiding the attribution of comments to identifiable individuals. Identity protection was essential in view of the potential risks faced by participants in their own communities. We opted not to request consent signatures, because the research team felt strongly that such signatures could be misunderstood in the Mindanao context as either an offer of payment, or an intention to use the signature for fraudulent purposes.<sup>38</sup> All data collected were jointly 'owned' by DMI and me, but for security reasons only the research team leader and myself were allowed to manage the physical documents. All activities were conducted in mixed English and Visayan languages, unless otherwise noted.

*Action Research Cycle One: Within DMI.* The first cycle of inquiry was focused on exploring DMI's own usage of DNH, at both individual and organizational levels, from the time of first DNH exposure (2003) to the present (early 2008). Throughout this phase, we sought to explore the strengths and limitations of DNH as a tool for religious actors, and to identify any ways in which DNH might need to be contextualized for religious audiences.

To elicit the perceptions and experiences of individual DMI members trained in DNH, we used written surveys and semi-structured interviews. The surveys gathered simple quantitative ratings of the relevance and usefulness of the DNH tool, and asked open-ended questions about tool usage. A short-form version of the survey was incorporated into DNH workshop evaluations, while a longer survey including application questions was administered to people who had been trained

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<sup>38</sup> Research team consultation notes, Davao, 14, 15, and 21 Jan. 2008.

one month to four years in the past. After analyzing the survey results, the research team selected twelve DMI members for follow-up interviews. Eight of these were selected because they appeared to be using DNH in significant ways, while the other four were selected because it appeared that they might *not* be doing so. This was an effort to seek out nonconforming viewpoints, but in fact the only DMI member that the research team had perceived as truly unenthusiastic about DNH declined to be interviewed, and none of the other interview participants voiced dissatisfaction with the tool. Nine of the twelve targeted interviews of DMI members were successfully completed by research team members. I supplemented this effort by interviewing the research team members themselves, plus two World Vision staff members who had trained DMI members.

Finally, to examine DMI's usage of DNH at the organizational level, we conducted an in-depth DNH analysis of DMI's Neighborhood<sup>39</sup> Intergenerational Care Group project. The Care Groups are intended to bring a holistic element to the community development process by providing multifaith spiritual nurture, relationship building and practical mutual assistance. Three of DMI's DNH trainers facilitated participatory analyses of each Care Group's weekly gatherings, involving the Care Group leaders and in some cases the members. In January 2008, twenty-five Care Group leaders gathered for a day-long DNH Forum in order to present their learnings and identify together the common themes across groups.

Cycle One concluded with a team analysis of all available data to date, in order to identify implications for DMI's own organizational planning, and use the findings to shape the focus of the next research cycle. A central conclusion of Cycle

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<sup>39</sup> DMI uses here the Visayan term for a small neighborhood, which is *purok*.

One was that the aspect of DNH that differs the most in the religious sector, as opposed to the humanitarian aid sector, is the patterns of impact analysis that describe specifically how project activities impact on intergroup relations. Thus DNH impact patterns require contextualization for the religious sector, and this became our focus during Cycle Two.

*Action Research Cycle Two: Beyond DMI.* The second research cycle in Mindanao collected one hundred DNH impact analysis examples (from fifty projects). We aimed to observe the patterns in the body of examples, and compare them to the patterns found in the original DNH framework, to determine how DNH might need to be contextualized for the religious sector. In terms of my own theoretical work, Cycle Two provided the rich examples needed to examine the non-structural factors influencing social impact. We broadened the scope of inquiry to explore DNH usage by religious actors outside of DMI, and set targets to ensure a balance of examples across ethnic and religious groups. Participants in Cycle Two included DMI's sister interfaith organizations in Sarangani, South Cotabato, Agusan del Sur, and Zamboanga Provinces, whose members had been previously trained in DNH, as well as six external organizations in Davao City, for whom DNH was new. Impact analysis examples were gathered through semi-structured interviews and participatory analysis workshops.

The interviews were particularly useful in the case of sister interfaith members who had been previously trained in DNH. Thus we attended the organizations' 2008 regional interfaith conference, held in Sarangani Province, in order to interview delegates gathered from the various geographic zones. As in the previous cycle, we administered thirty long-form surveys to the conference



participants, and then selected for follow-up interviews eleven participants who appeared to have examples ready to share. From those interviews we drew both written notes and DNH analytical frameworks.

The participatory analysis workshops on impact analysis required an intermediate level of DNH knowledge. In the case of DMI's sister interfaith organizations, we gathered fifteen previously trained participants for a 2.5 day August 2008 workshop in Davao City. We provided DNH refresher training, and then focused on deeper understanding of impact analysis patterns, with participants analyzing and sharing examples from their own experience. Outputs were documented in the form of DNH analytical frameworks plus notes from explanatory conversations with the participants who developed the frameworks. We also audio recorded the post-workshop debriefs among the facilitators, in which we explained to each other everything we had heard from the participants about their DNH frameworks, thus deepening our understanding of the resulting data.

An identical impact analysis workshop was held for external agencies in Davao City, since their urban context differed from the provincial settings of the sister interfaith members. However, these external agencies needed basic DNH orientation, so we provided a two-day orientation for seventeen participants in July 2008, and then invited them back for the intermediate impact analysis workshop in August 2008. This workshop was successful in terms of quality data collection, but data quantity targets were missed. At this time in August 2008, armed conflict in Mindanao had escalated to its worst level since 2003, disrupting participants from attending workshops. As a result the proportion of impact analysis examples drawn from external agencies, and from Muslims in urban Davao City, was lower than

anticipated. This limitation did not hinder the identification of significant patterns in the data, but the research team did recognize that more external examples would be needed before making claims to generalizability.

I facilitated the research team's joint analysis of the data, using a simplified version of coding to identify common themes, adapted for team usage as inspired by the structured group processes of Bob Dick (2002b). Data were analyzed in chunks, as they became available, with each round of analysis following a consistent process. First, the team reviewed the data to re-familiarize themselves with the content, and then summarized the data in a wall-sized matrix. Second, the team examined the data matrix in order to identify common themes. Third, I facilitated a team discussion on interpretation of the common themes, to consider for example: 'What is the meaning of this common theme? Why does it appear? Do we accept it at face value, or do we need to dig deeper to understand what might be influencing the research participants? How does this common theme link back to our original research questions?' Finally, at the end of the cycle, we consolidated the findings and again considered how these findings addressed our research questions, as well as the design of our next steps. The research team deliberations themselves also became valuable sources of data, so I photographed all visual meeting outputs and made a number of audio recordings.

*Documentation and Dissemination of Findings.* This follow-up phase encompasses January 2009 to the present, and focuses on writing and publication of DMI's research learnings for local practitioners. The publication goal had been generally defined at project inception, and revisited with increasing specificity based on emerging data at the end of each research cycle. Completed in March 2010, the

booklet *Transformed Together: A Journey with Local Capacities for Peace* aims to reach “religious leaders of all faiths across the Philippines, who are now learning or have already learned LCP,” in order “to encourage and assist religious leaders to use LCP, and to use it more transformationally and more effectively”.<sup>40</sup> The research team opted to publish the booklet in English, given the divergence of languages used among the target audience. I was the primary writer, but the research team reviewed and discussed the text extensively, and they established a writing sub-team to give substantive guidance on shaping of appropriate terminology and examples. The key positioning and editorial decisions were taken by DMI, and DMI was credited with primary authorship. DMI is currently using *Transformed Together* in its DNH workshops for religious leaders in Mindanao, and in World Vision Area Development Programs around the Philippines.

**Singapore Process Design.** Prior to this action research project, conflict sensitivity in Singapore was known only among the very small circles of international humanitarian agency staff based there, primarily World Vision staff, most of whom were foreigners. There was no awareness of conflict sensitivity in the religious sector, so DNH testing proceeded on a small scale and incremental pace in Singapore, as compared to Mindanao. However, unlike Mindanao, the Singapore project provided an opportunity to observe how religious actors interact with DNH from the point of inception, such that practitioner goals and research goals were fully aligned. Further, the Singapore project permitted comparative testing of DNH in an alternative social context, one marked by a highly developed economy, emergent civil society, and latent intergroup tensions largely ignored in public discourse. Thus,

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<sup>40</sup> DMI publication planning worksheet, Davao, Jan. 2009.

while significantly more narrow in scope, the Singapore findings provide a valuable point of comparison and contrast for the findings from Mindanao. Following the pilot phase, Singapore data collection activities spanned from early 2008 to early 2009, with event funding provided by the partner agency Harmony Centre at An-Nahdhah.

*Preparation and Positioning.* From the outset, the Harmony Centre was interested in hosting a DNH introductory pilot workshop, by which they meant a first effort to introduce DNH to local participants, to determine whether they might find the tool useful. Even so, it required multiple meetings over eleven months before the first pilot workshop came to pass. Harmony Centre paid staff had a vision for DNH usefulness in the religious community service sector, including the idea of using DNH to expand interfaith engagement from the religious leaders' sector into the broader realm of religious community service, as well as a nascent idea of the significance of unintended impact on intergroup relations. Yet it required some time to determine how best to identify and attract a voluntary audience for the pilot workshop.

Indeed, the first audience approached by the Harmony Centre, a prominent multiethnic network of community service groups, declined the invitation stating simply that "the training may not be entirely applicable to our core target groups."<sup>41</sup> From an outsider's perspective, DNH would have been highly relevant to this group, though it would not have been a strong match for the action research project because it was not religiously-based. Drawing on past experience with humanitarian aid workers, I assured the Harmony Centre that it was not unusual for participants to

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<sup>41</sup> Network director, e-mail message to author, 8 Aug. 2007.

overlook the value of DNH based upon a brief written or verbal introduction, yet the same participants commonly find DNH very useful after attending a live workshop.

We also continuously discussed concerns of how to manage discussion of the themes of exclusion and proselytism during any upcoming DNH workshops, since these themes are racially and religiously charged, and therefore among those discussions most closely regulated by government (Lee 2005). Through this series of meetings, we redefined the audience together, and titled the proposed workshop as 'Promoting Social Harmony through Community Service: An Introduction to Do No Harm / Local Capacities for Peace' Such positioning avoids the notion of overt social conflict and the use of 'civil society' terminology, thus aligning with the Singaporean outlook comprehended during the pilot phase. Issues of intergroup tensions were gradually surfaced during the subsequent DNH workshops, but 'civil society' terminology was not used again at the Singapore site.

In addition to planning DNH pilot workshops through the Harmony Centre, I became part of their central group of interfaith practitioners, which was a rich source of participant observation involving over fifteen public events and ongoing relational networking from early 2007 to early 2009. This allowed for significant observation on the applicability of DNH in the Singaporean religious sector, despite the limited number of overt data collection activities.

*Do No Harm Workshops.* After nearly one year of planning, the Harmony Centre hosted a DNH pilot workshop in March 2008, to introduce the tool to twelve Muslim and Christian leaders of religious community service organizations. Participants of other religious groups were invited, and some confirmed their participation, but did not attend. The workshop was one day only, as appropriate for

a first-time exposure workshop. At a pragmatic level, the one-day schedule was also suitable for the participants' busy schedule, and for me as the sole trainer on a topic that should preferably be team-taught. The brevity of this type of workshop is in contrast to the practitioner skills workshops which are typically offered over a two or three day period. Nonetheless, all core concepts of DNH were introduced using standard methodology, and were discussed by participants, albeit in less depth. The day ended with a roundtable discussion on the relevance, usefulness and potential future uses of DNH in Singapore.

During the March 2008 pilot workshop, data were collected through small and large group discussion outputs recorded on display charts, and evaluation surveys administered at day's end. Evaluation surveys used a standard Harmony Centre format, and were thus different from the surveys administered in Mindanao, yet they yielded comparable data in terms of participants' ratings of the DNH tool. Most importantly, data were collected through an all-day video recording, which captured extensive participant interaction, including some detailed examples needed for analysis of patterns of unintended social impacts. Video recording was made possible due to funding support from the Harmony Centre and, because it was an invaluable source of data, I opted to use it despite the fact that no parallel technology was available in Mindanao.

Negotiating informed consent of Singaporean participants to discuss issues of racial and religious relations is always delicate, and the use of videotape made it even more complex. In preparation discussions with Harmony Centre staff, we had opted to include a statement describing our research objectives on all workshop invitations and agendas, but not to request their individual signatures as this might provoke

unnecessary anxiety about how the data would be used. Instead, we opened the issue up for discussion at the beginning of the workshop, explaining the purpose of the research and the participant protection guidelines, and allowing participants to decide as a group if they were comfortable with the videotape. The participants did agree to turn the cameras on, provided that we not attribute comments to individuals by name, and add the proviso that participants' comments represent only themselves, not the religious institutions or ethnic groups from which they come, as a practical form of 'member checking' (Stringer 1999: 176-7).

Following the March 2008 workshop, feedback from participants and staff was strongly positive regarding the relevance and usefulness of the DNH tool, with many expressions of interest in further practitioner skills training and even Training of Trainers. Nonetheless, over six months passed before any formal follow-up plans were established. In November 2008, one of the pilot workshop participants<sup>42</sup> invited me to provide a twenty-five minute DNH overview to participants of a longer interfaith series that she was facilitating through the Harmony Centre. The invitation was a useful indicator of interest in DNH, and indeed the facilitator has a clearly-developed vision of how to put DNH to use in future expansions of interfaith work in Singapore. However on this occasion, the time available was not enough to support a clear introduction of DNH, and fewer than half of the participants appeared in the subsequent discussion to have grasped an accurate idea of the purpose of the tool. When I began preparing to leave Singapore in early 2009, the Harmony Centre requested that we conduct another exposure workshop for new participants before my departure. Thus the second DNH exposure workshop was

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<sup>42</sup> This refers to prt. S #12.

held in January 2009, comprising twelve Buddhist, Sikh, Muslim and Christian community service workers.

*Follow-Up Interviews.* Also in January 2009, I held a three-hour 'reunion' (focus group interview) at the Harmony Centre for participants of the March 2008 workshop. Four out of the original twelve participants attended, all Muslims. The object of the interview was to probe participants' post-training perceptions of the purpose, relevance and usefulness of the DNH tool, and to learn how they had put it to use. I used a semi-structured interview protocol with questions parallel to the Mindanao interviews. This interview was held ten months after the original event, with no intervening follow-up, so memories were a bit strained. Six months' interval would have been ideal, but I opted to work the follow-up interviews through the Harmony Centre due to their important convening power, and Harmony Centre scheduling was not available until shortly before my departure from Singapore. Christian workshop participants had been unavailable to attend the group interview due to scheduling conflicts. I therefore sought repeatedly to re-interview two Christian participants who had communicated strong support for the use of DNH by Singaporean religious actors, and was eventually able to speak with one of them in May 2010.

**Ensuring external credibility.** Given the highly participatory nature of this project, external audiences may require additional information on the steps taken to minimize any potential sources of potential bias or distortion. I was responsible for designing and facilitating the action research process, but it remains important to examine the advantages and disadvantages of team-based data collection and analysis, including the complexities of language, in Mindanao. Further, the influence



of my own identity as a researcher merits exploration in both Mindanao and Singapore.

Team-based data collection provided a number of advantages in Mindanao. The DMI research team knew how to phrase questions in locally relevant ways and in the appropriate languages.<sup>43</sup> Linguistic capacity is important because Mindanao is a poly-lingual society<sup>44</sup> in which ethno-linguistic minorities are often politically marginalized. All team members spoke variants of the primary regional language of Visayan (or Cebuano), as well as English. Several also spoke additional languages such as Filipino (a Tagalog-based national language), and Maranao (used by one of the prominent Bangsamoro groups). Surveys were presented in Visayan and English, and participants could respond in either of those languages, or in the local language of their choice. Most interviews were conducted in a bilingual combination of English and Visayan. In the one interview where the participant spoke only a local language not available within the research team (Ilonggo),<sup>45</sup> the team recruited an additional DNH-trained interfaith group member to assist with translation. The research team's involvement in data collection also prepared them for analysis, by giving them a deep understanding of how the data had originated.

The primary disadvantage of team-based data collection proved to be a lack of depth in the interview data during Cycle One. We had given much attention to

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<sup>43</sup> In contrast, the Singapore project which was conducted only in English. While English is rightfully considered the *lingua franca* among Singaporean speakers of Mandarin, Malay and Tamil, the omission of other languages risks excluding small but potentially significant pockets of citizens with limited education.

<sup>44</sup> Language and dialect classification systems vary widely. A conservative estimate is that twenty distinct languages are spoken in Mindanao, while a more extensive calculation yields more than fifty (Larousse 2001: 17).

<sup>45</sup> Prt. MI #87, interview by author of regional sister agencies, Sarangani, Philippines, 8 July 2008, translated.

the need for consistency across interviewers, by developing the interview questions together, and using a standard documentation protocol, including guidelines for distinguishing between direct quotes and paraphrases. However several research team members found it difficult to interactively probe the interviewee for deeper information, and they preferred verbal interaction to written note-taking. As a result, the Cycle One interview notes served to indicate clear trends in DNH usage, but did not yield detailed examples. Those interviews were not audio recorded, because our Visayan-speaking personnel did not have time for transcription. Therefore when planning Cycle Two, we opted to rely only on the stronger interviewers within the team, and to significantly increase the proportion of interviews that I myself conducted and audio recorded. By the end of Cycle Two, I had personally led over fifty percent<sup>46</sup> of the interviews conducted during the DMI partnership, significantly increasing the depth of documentation.

Written interview and survey data often required translation prior to analysis. The translations were carried out by two skilled individuals, namely the research team leader and a former manager of Unity for Progress, supported by a limited level of mutual cross-checking. The translators' first language was Visayan, and they also understand a substantial proportion of several other local languages when presented in written form. Where the translators were unable to discern meaning, they marked it as unclear, rather than guessing. Our data analysis included not only the translated written data, but also the participants' graphical DNH frameworks and quantitative

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<sup>46</sup> This figure does not include the Mindanao pilot phase interviews, of which I conducted one hundred percent.

usefulness ratings, whose non-linguistic elements helped to triangulate our interpretations.

During data analysis, the team's mix of religious and ethnic backgrounds provided the advantage of built-in triangulation, and their local knowledge enabled us to identify meaningful data inconsistencies that I would have missed. To preserve objectivity in the identification of common themes, the team members color-coded themes arising directly from the data as orange, and ideas emerging from their own minds as yellow. The greatest disadvantage of team-based analysis was that approximately half of the research team members were still learning advanced DNH skills. This problem was largely self-correcting, because the team members who were stronger in DNH tended to guide group analysis. Nonetheless, I often had to reconsider the significance of themes identified by the research team, to inquire whether those themes had been shaped by the team's own learning process. This reality complicates data interpretation, yet it also speaks directly to the applicability of DNH, by illustrating the incremental nature of DNH learning, and illuminating how religious leaders understand DNH on their own terms.

In terms of my identity as a researcher, the significant factors included both my individual characteristics and my previous affiliation with World Vision, and both types of factors influenced my efforts to establish participant trust and minimize bias in Mindanao and Singapore. In terms of participant trust, I inquired about my presence as an American Protestant to the pilot-phase interviewees, and also to four senior Asia-based conflict sensitivity practitioners.<sup>47</sup> Their input informed my early

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<sup>47</sup> These four senior practitioners included citizens of Indonesia, Cambodia and Sri Lanka, as well as one Canadian with years of extensive experience in Indonesia. Terry Silalahi of

decisions to pursue multi-faith (not Christian) agencies as local partners, and to ensure an empowering process in Mindanao, where the role of Americans is particularly sensitive due to the US colonial past and military presence, and the capacity of the local associational sector is particularly strong. Being female was both a disadvantage and an advantage, making me appear less authoritative in settings where religious leadership was a male-dominated field, but simultaneously making me a less threatening audience for the discussion of highly sensitive issues.

My identity as a former staff member of World Vision influenced the way that some participants interacted with me. Some Protestant participants appeared notably favorable towards World Vision, as a Christian agency with Protestant roots. On the other hand, a few Protestant participants in Mindanao expressed concern over past rumors of World Vision linkages to covert American political interests in the 1980s.<sup>48</sup> Some Muslim participants appeared to wonder if I might be biased against them or their faith. One Singaporean Muslim openly shared with me his perception that non-Christians might suspect World Vision as an organization of being motivated by proselytism.<sup>49</sup> On another occasion, a Mindanowan ustadz invited me to sit down after a workshop in order to tell me that he appreciated my work because he could see in my actions that I was working for Muslims and not just for Christians, as an “instrument of peace.”<sup>50</sup> This conversation was very encouraging, but it is important to note that the expression of trust did not come quickly. In fact, the ustadz and I had

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Indonesia and Allen Harder of Canada continued to provide input at key points throughout the project, thus becoming “critical friends” (Herr and Anderson 2005: 60-61) who are cited elsewhere in this thesis.

<sup>48</sup> Prt. MG #2, pilot interview by author, North Cotabato, Philippines, 22 Apr. 2007.

<sup>49</sup> Prt. S #7, follow-up interview by author, Singapore, 9 Jan. 2009.

<sup>50</sup> Prt. MI #100, field notes, Davao, 21 Aug. 2008.

already worked together during two previous intensive workshops, indicating that it takes time to overcome identity-based perceptions by building inter-personal trust.

With regard to minimizing bias, perhaps the most significant aspect of my own identity as a researcher was my previous World Vision work on conflict sensitivity and DNH, and the possibility that this experience might predispose favorable findings. Partnering with DMI, as a World Vision affiliate agency already engaged in DNH practice, could further compound this risk. Indeed, it was necessary to begin with a working hypothesis that conflict sensitivity might be applicable to the religious associational sector, in order to put that possibility to the test. On the other hand, the fact that DMI research team members were unpaid precluded any material motivation towards bias. We defined our roles in a way that permitted each partner to draw independent conclusions if necessary, so I was not obligated to take at face value the enthusiasm of DMI participants. Instead, expressions of enthusiasm were triangulated with DMI members' concrete examples of DNH usage, and my own participant observations of practitioner behavior during more than sixteen weeks of intensive on-site interaction.

External triangulation came via the non-DMI participants who were not previously familiar with conflict sensitivity or DNH, including all of the participants in Singapore, and many of the pilot phase interviewees and external partner agency participants in Mindanao. Before project inception, I discussed with a conflict sensitivity expert from International Alert<sup>51</sup> my conceptual framework for evaluating conflict sensitivity's applicability, which helped to mitigate any unjustified bias on my part towards DNH in relation to other conflict sensitivity tools. Finally, after

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<sup>51</sup> Adam Barbolet, International Alert, e-mail message to author, 28 Oct.2007.

project completion I compared my own emergent interpretations of the Mindanao data with relevant external findings emerging simultaneously from the humanitarian aid sector and from Indonesia. In the end, both DMI and I identified certain difficulties that changed our critical evaluation of conflict sensitivity and DNH, and significantly re-shaped our views on the future usage of those approaches, as elaborated in Chapters Five and Six.

### **Conclusion: A Comment on Researcher Reflexivity**

Building on the unique action research epistemology previously elaborated in Chapter One, this methodology chapter has served to narrow the broad field of action research towards the specifics of the collaborative action research approach used in this project, and has established validity criteria based on the standard of credibility with a purpose (Greenwood and Levin 2007: 67), both external and internal. I have narrated the cyclical data collection and analysis processes used in partnership with local interfaith agencies in both Mindanao and Singapore. The Mindanao project was significantly larger in scope, due to the greater experience and interest of the partner agency, yet both were focused around a common conceptual frame, and employed very similar methods of data collection and analysis.

This chapter, like those that precede it, has consistently linked research concerns to practitioner action. Thus it is appropriate at this point to underscore the importance of insider and outsider roles as this project's central theme of researcher reflexivity. I, as an external research facilitator, have placed myself at the crux of the debate on the nature of insider participation and empowerment in action research,

which is central not only to research ethics but to the credibility of the findings.

Further, the question of insider and outsider roles is central to the conflict sensitivity inquiry itself, since social positioning influences one's assessment of the applicability of conflict sensitivity in various socio-political and organizational settings. As described in Chapter Two, the key questions of empowerment in conflict sensitivity practice are closely linked to the definition of insider and outsider roles. With that in mind, I have argued that debates in conflict sensitivity practice should generally be resolved in favor of the practical needs of the local user, and that testing of the Do No Harm framework should be accompanied by special attention to issues of social justice, even where this may implicate powerful external partners. These themes and their interrelationships will be woven throughout the chapters that follow, with special attention to how they influence the research findings and their potential application.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: USAGE AND UPTAKE OF 'DO NO HARM' AMONG RELIGIOUS ACTORS**

*The program actually gave me a paradigm shift  
when I first saw the framework.*  
- Singaporean action research participant<sup>52</sup>

This chapter analyzes the empirical findings on DNH usage and uptake by religious associational actors participating in collaborative action research in Mindanao and Singapore, using the collaborative action research methodology elaborated in Chapter Four. These findings respond to the research questions elaborated in Chapter Two on conflict sensitivity's usefulness: To what extent, and how, is conflict sensitivity being used? Or not used? Why? Patterns and trends in conflict sensitivity usage are explored according to the tri-part frame for analyzing Do No Harm (DNH) uptake: conceptualization, personalization and operationalization (CDA Collaborative Learning Projects 2001). The data indicates that participants perceive DNH as very useful, particularly for change and growth among individuals, but to a lesser extent for formal analysis of organizational conflict impacts.

In each section, I begin with Mindanao as the primary research case. I identify prominent themes in the data provided by 143 participating religious actors, as jointly identified and analyzed with the research team. Where necessary, I distinguish the Mindanao research team's voice from my own, in order to maintain credibility among both internal and external audiences (Greenwood and Levin 2007: 67). I then compare and contrast the secondary findings emerging from Singapore,

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<sup>52</sup> Prt. S #17, plenary discussion, DNH workshop, Singapore, 15 Mar. 2008, video recording.



based on the data provided by eighteen religious actors, which I analyzed largely alone. I consider where appropriate the relevant data limitations, particularly the nature of participant self-reporting. All participants were somewhat self-selected due to their varying degrees of willingness to engage in interfaith events. While their stories have been triangulated through alternative narratives and participant observation, self-reporting nonetheless influences the findings. Further, attribution of change to DNH is imprecise, because participants in both locations have participated in other trainings that shape their views on intergroup relations.

This chapter is limited to the analysis of data provided directly by participants, and the interpretation of such data in light of the conflict sensitivity literature existing at the time of project design. In contrast, the next chapter elaborates my own analysis of the action research findings in light of subsequent developments in the conflict sensitivity literature, and analyzes additional empirical data which point to areas of potential dissonance between conflict sensitivity and the work of religious actors. Chapter Five and Chapter Six together then lay the foundation for Chapters Seven and Eight, in which I draw out the implications for existing associational theory, particularly the relationship between structural and non-structural determinants of associational conflict impact, and the roles of human agency and religious cultures in shaping such impact.

### **Key Themes of Participants' 'Do No Harm' Analyses**

Conflict sensitivity analysis begins with analysis of the dynamics of conflict and peace in a given organization's operating context, and then proceeds to examine

the workings of that organization's intervention, in order to identify its potential social impacts (International Alert et al. 2004a). Therefore in considering the findings of the current study, it is necessary to begin by identifying what sorts of themes commonly arose when participating religious actors applied the DNH framework (Anderson 1999) to their own contexts. Such themes begin to paint a picture of the prominent conflict sensitivity issues found in each setting, and ways in which they are perceived by religious actors, as a foundation for subsequent analysis.

**Participants' Context Analyses.** In Mindanao, the participants' DNH analyses of the social context illustrate a widespread recognition of deep, pervasive divisions along ethnic and religious lines. The ethnic divisions were found primarily between the three main people clusters: Migrants, Bangsamoro and Lumads.

Correspondingly, the religious divisions were found primarily between Roman Catholic Christians, Protestant/Evangelical Christians, Muslims and persons holding indigenous beliefs. However, significant secondary divisions were also noted between the various denominations of Protestants.<sup>53</sup> These findings closely reflect both my own pilot study and the general consensus among Mindanao analysts external to the project (Taco-Borja et al. 1998, Fianza 1999, Soriano 2006).

Like numerous external analysts (Ferrer 2005a, Franco and Borrás Jr 2007), some of the project participants, and all of the research team members, emphasized that while the primary lines of division are ethnic and religious, "the underlying conflict is due to historical governance and land disputes."<sup>54</sup> This was underscored by common themes found in the participants' DNH analysis of intergroup Dividers and

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<sup>53</sup> Summary of Learnings from Action Research Cycle One, Davao, 29 May 2008, 1.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

Connectors. The key Dividers, or sources of tension, included disputes over land ownership and usage, and differing perceptions of historical events, including the processes of large-scale religious conversion. Key Connectors included the common experience of suffering during natural disasters, the *bayanihan* spirit of people working together in sad and difficult times, and shared respect for certain political and religious institutions.<sup>55</sup> Context analysis themes are summarized in Figure 5.1 below.

As the action research process progressed, the research team slowly recognized another theme in the data, pointing to divisions along socio-economic lines. The participant data contain consistent references to the poor as distinguished from the rich, or to the gap between people who have access to resources and people who do not.<sup>56</sup> Interestingly, while poverty is a prominent issue in Mindanao, such intra-group socio-economic divisions were not noted in my pilot study, most likely because the pilot interview questions placed more overt emphasis on interfaith relations. The external literature does point to the prevalence of socio-economic gaps in the Philippines (Franco 2004: 21, Lee 2004), and to a linkage between socio-economic gaps and ethnicity in Mindanao, such that the Bangsamoro and Lumads tend to be marginalized (Concepcion et al. 2003: e.g.). However the action research participants referred most explicitly to socio-economic splits among communities that are ethnically homogenous, particularly at the local level.

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>56</sup> Consolidated Analysis from Action Research Cycle Two, Davao, 6 Dec. 2008, 12.

**Figure 5.1: DNH Context Analysis Themes in Mindanao<sup>57</sup>**

<b>Common Dividers between Groups</b>	<b>Common Connectors between Groups</b>
Attitudes of discrimination and exclusion towards those who are different (ethnically, religiously, or socio-economically)	Common experience of suffering in natural calamities
Different religious beliefs and practices (including worship styles, cross symbol, food restrictions, styles of dress)	<i>Bayanihan</i> spirit: people working together in sad and difficult times
Backbiting/ <i>tsismis</i> <sup>58</sup> among neighbors	Shared children's facilities (day care, school), when all groups feel equally served
Different historical perceptions and experiences, including the history of large-scale religious conversions.	Other shared facilities (health center, <i>barangay</i> <sup>59</sup> hall), when all groups feel equally served
Land ownership and land usage	Celebrating together in particular occasions (wake, wedding, fiesta, <i>barangay</i> festival day, eating together), when all groups feel equally included
Corruption/bias in local government	Shared respect for the local government leaders and protocols, especially the <i>barangay</i> level
Localized youth riots, especially along ethnic/religious lines	Shared respect for the role of religious leaders and institutions
	Sports, especially among men and boys from different ethnic, religious or socio-economic groups, when available

**Participants' project impact analyses.** The participants' own examples of project impact analysis in Mindanao point strongly towards exclusion as a pivotal issue in the religious sector. Often the central determinant of project impact is the question of whether people are excluded from membership, service or relationship on the basis of ethnicity, religion or socio-economic status, or whether they are included despite these differences. The prevailing mindset leans toward separation,

<sup>57</sup> Summary of Learnings from Action Research Cycle One, Davao, 29 May 2008, 1. Consolidated Analysis from Action Research Cycle Two, Davao, 6 Dec. 2008.

<sup>58</sup> *Tsismis* is a local term for 'gossip' in the Philippines.

<sup>59</sup> A *barangay* is a neighborhood and a key unit of local governance in the Philippines.

and “different religious groups are divided automatically.”<sup>60</sup> Inclusive attitudes and practices therefore tend towards being counter-cultural. Further, the issue of proselytism is prominent, with many Christian migrants implicitly pitching religious conversion as path towards inclusion in their own groups. These findings strongly confirm the pilot phase insights, as well as previous case studies on DNH applications in Southeast Asia (Riak 2006, Sihotang and Silalahi 2006). Further, there is a resonance here with the findings of Nan (2009), who distinguishes between social capital that promotes violence and that which promotes peace on the basis of whether networks are inclusive or exclusive.

The research team’s analysis strongly confirmed the occurrence within the Mindanao data of the two primary conflict impact mechanisms found in the original DNH framework. The first, Resource Transfers, refer to impacts resulting from the provision of goods and services. The second, Implicit Ethical Messages, refer to impacts resulting from the ethos communicated through the actions of project implementers. However, there were significant differences between the impact analyses of religious actors and those found in the original aid-focused DNH framework. Implicit Ethical Messages appeared more frequently in the religious sector, indicating that religious actors place more emphasis on the intangible and the spiritual, even when involved in delivering material services to the community. Further, in the religious sector, it is difficult to distinguish a project implementer from the service that s/he provides. Team members explained: “The religious worker

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<sup>60</sup> Analysis board posting, research team consultation, Davao, 15-16 Oct. 2008.

is the aid.”<sup>61</sup> This interconnection challenges certain assumptions inherent in the original DNH framework, namely that aid is a distinct ‘package’ being introduced by ‘outsiders’ to the local context (Anderson 1999).

Most importantly, in comparison to the original DNH framework, the action research findings evidence a number of new impact patterns that point to the spiritualized nature of a religious leader’s work and its relationship to questions of social exclusion. This confirms my speculation in Chapter Two that impact patterns would be the DNH component most likely to change, based on previous DNH adaptations across sectors (Garred 2006b, Hettiarachchi et al. 2009, Williams 2008, Zandvliet and Anderson 2009). These new impact patterns richly illustrate the distinctive aspects of conflict sensitivity in the religious sector, and illuminate the role of religious associations in Mindanao. As such, these impact patterns are analyzed more deeply in Chapter Six.

**Comparative Findings from Singapore.** In Singapore workshop discussions of DNH social context analysis, three distinct types of intergroup division quickly surfaced: ethnic<sup>62</sup> divisions, religious divisions which overlap ethnic divisions, and socio-economic divisions. Discussion of ethnic divisions focused on the Chinese (predominantly Buddhist/Taoist and Christian), the Malays (predominantly Muslim) and the Tamils (predominantly Hindu and Christian). However divisions between Singapore-born Chinese and foreign-born Chinese also figured in the discussion.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Analysis board postings, research team consultation notes, Davao, 2-3 Apr. 2008. ‘Aid’ here refers to the middle column of the DNH framework, which represents analysis of a project and its impact on conflict. In training religious actors, the term ‘activities’ or ‘services’ is often substituted for ‘aid.’

<sup>62</sup> In Singapore, ethnic groups are more commonly referred to as ‘racial groups’ or ‘races.’

<sup>63</sup> DNH workshop, Singapore, 15 Mar. 2008, event videotape.

When asked to identify some sources of tension and connection between these groups, participant discussion turned largely to the role of government policy and programs, ranging from education and language policy to support for neighborhood block parties. This strong leaning among the participants affirms the state-centric themes so prominent in the literature on the Singaporean polity and civil society (see for example Lee 2005, Tan 2008).

The concept of project impact analysis prompted further discussion on government actions, and the unintended consequences that often arise due to the complexity of the social context. For example, education opportunities that seek to benefit all ethnic and religious groups on the basis of meritocracy can at the same time unintentionally alienate the more privileged from the less privileged socio-economic groups.<sup>64</sup> As the workshop progressed, government-centered examples gave way to more discussion of unintentional project impacts in the religious community service sector, including mutual concerns between both Christians and Muslims over proselytism and conversion.

As in the case of Mindanao, these findings affirm the key social divisions and issues identified during the Singapore pilot study, and add a somewhat unexpected emphasis on socio-economic divisions. Importantly, religion and class are not unrelated, with Malay communities considered to be disproportionately affected by income and educational disparities. Further, among the majority Chinese ethnic group, Chinese Christians tend to be younger and better educated, with higher income, as compared to Chinese Taoists who are older, less educated, and occupy a

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<sup>64</sup> Prt. small group #2, project impact analysis poster, DNH workshop, Singapore, 15 Mar. 2008.

lower socio-economic bracket (Tong 2008: 28, 50). Numerous participant examples of DNH impact analysis pertained to projects and services that exacerbate tensions along socio-economic lines.

The definitional challenges encountered during the pilot study with regard to 'conflict' and 'civil society' did not appear to be problematic during the workshop. I had shifted 'conflict' terminology to 'promoting social harmony,' and 'religious civil society' language to 'religious community service.'<sup>65</sup> Case studies and examples given during the workshop were drawn from latent conflict settings. During the workshop itself, participants did not hesitate to apply the DNH concepts to their own context, as elaborated below.

### **Conceptualization of 'Do No Harm'**

This section includes the only quantitative data considered in this study, namely the simple participant ratings of DNH usefulness, together with qualitative findings on how participants perceive the purpose of the DNH tool.

**DNH Usefulness Ratings.** Many of the research participants directly communicated their views on the usefulness of DNH through survey ratings (see Figure 5.2). Both long- and short-form surveys probed participants' levels of disagreement or agreement on DNH usefulness in their personal lives, inside their own churches/mosques, and in the surrounding community. These simple ratings were designed to be indicative of broad usage trends, and to inform pending decisions on the more complex qualitative aspects of the action research process.

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<sup>65</sup> The complete workshop title was 'Promoting Social Harmony through Community Service: An Introduction to Do No Harm / Local Capacities for Peace.'



In these survey ratings, the most striking finding is simply that participants view DNH as being highly useful. All of the mean ratings fall consistently between four (indicating that participants agree with a given statement of DNH usefulness) and five (indicating that participants strongly agree with the same). DMI as an agency is known to be enthusiastic about DNH, so survey questions were framed to elicit personal opinion. On the long-form survey, participants were encouraged: “Please feel free to answer honestly, in your local dialect and/or in English.”<sup>66</sup> It is possible that DMI’s pre-existing commitment to DNH may have skewed the ratings slightly upwards, yet these are matched by equally strong ratings from Singapore. Further, the lower ratings from South Cotabato (So. Cot.) Province indicate that some participants were uninhibited in communicating negative feelings about DNH.

In other notable patterns, the participants rate DNH’s usefulness in their personal life at approximately the same level as church/mosque and community applications. There is no observable difference in usefulness ratings between DMI members (Cycle One) and participants from other agencies (Cycle Two), despite DMI’s pioneering role in DNH uptake. However, there is a possible linkage between the number of times participants have been trained and their usefulness ratings, with the mean ratings from first-time participant groups falling at 4.4 or below, and the mean ratings from participant groups that include repeaters falling at 4.5 or above. If so, this would indicate that perceptions of usefulness increase slightly with repeated DNH exposure.

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<sup>66</sup> Long-form survey for religious leaders previously trained in DNH.

**Figure 5.2: Mindanao Participant Ratings on DNH Usefulness**

	Cycle One		Cycle Two			
	DMI members	DMI Care Group Leaders	Sister Agency members So. Cot.	Sister Agency regional leaders	Sister Agency regional members	External agencies Davao
	n=20	n=19	n=21	n=8	n=30	n=14
	t=1.7	t=1*	t=1*	t=1.5	t=1.1	t=1*
1. LF: LCP is useful for helping me understand the context of the area where I am working.	4.6		4.4			
2. LF/SF: LCP is useful in my personal life.	4.5	4.6	4.3	4.6	4.5	4.3
3a. LF: LCP is useful inside my church or mosque.	4.5		4.7			
3b. SF: LCP is useful inside my own organization/ church/ mosque.	4.3		4.1	4.5		4.6
4a. LF: LCP is useful in relationships between churches or mosques (of the same faith).	4.5		4.9			
4b. LF: LCP is useful in relationships between churches and mosques (of different faiths).	4.5		4.8			
5a. LF: LCP is useful when working in the community.	4.6		4.7			
5b. SF: LCP is useful outside my own organization/ church/ mosque (for example, with other religious or civic groups in the community).	4.3		4.1	4.4**		4.4
<b>Mean</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>4.4</b>
Numerical scale: 1=I strongly disagree. 2=I disagree. 3=I neither disagree nor agree. 4=I agree. 5=I strongly agree.						
Participants: n=number of respondents. t=mean number of times trained (*indicates an estimate)						
**indicates more than 15% blank responses, due to 8 responding participants not yet trained.						

**Perceptions on the Purpose of DNH.** While the usefulness ratings described above generally affirmed the applicability of conflict sensitivity, our findings on subsequent questions began to challenge our assumptions. Near the beginning of long-form surveys and all interviews, participants were asked to comment on their understanding of the purpose of DNH. Responses varied widely, and many were not consistent with the originally intended purpose of the DNH tool. Only thirty percent of long-form surveys,<sup>67</sup> and eight percent of interviews,<sup>68</sup> show participants describing DNH purpose in a way that clearly indicates analysis of the impact of a project or activity on intergroup conflict. More than half of those responses considered ‘orthodox’ came from DNH trainers, who would naturally be more likely to align themselves with the originally intended purpose of the tool. Further, several long-form survey respondents articulated general dissonance in understanding the framework, for example: “no such problem that could be seen in applying LCP framework as long as it is being understood”<sup>69</sup> These findings led to much lively discussion among the research team, with Cycle One findings concluding that “DNH is seen as useful, but not fully understood.”<sup>70</sup>

Two primary ‘unorthodox’ uses of DNH are evident in the data, including the use of DNH for peacebuilding purposes, and the selective use of certain DNH components. With regard to peacebuilding, frequent comments describing the

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<sup>67</sup> The total number of long-form surveys referenced is 28. (Interviews of members of regional sister interfaith groups are not included).

<sup>68</sup> The total number of interviews referenced is 24. (Interviews of research team members are not included).

<sup>69</sup> Prt. MI #5, long-form survey of DMI, Davao, Jan. 2008.

<sup>70</sup> Summary of Learnings from Action Research Cycle One, Davao, 29 May 2008, 5.

purpose of DNH as “how to solve a conflict”<sup>71</sup> demonstrate that many participants perceive DNH as a tool for direct, explicit peace work, including conflict resolution and collaborative problem solving. Some participants go so far as to claim that the purpose of DNH is “to show the root cause of conflict clearly; to understand the causes of conflict; to give remedies on how to solve the conflict in a peaceful manner.”<sup>72</sup> At first, the research team attributed this peacebuilding linkage to conceptual mixing the *Culture of Peace*, the other core training module provided consistently to DMI members. However it soon became apparent that the same pattern was evident even among the few participants who had not been trained in *Culture of Peace*. Such findings imply that efforts by external facilitators to introduce DNH as a ‘minimalist’ form of conflict sensitivity (Duffield 2001b) will not remain minimalist if grassroots users see in DNH an expanded foundation for active peacebuilding (Ruth-Heffelbower 2002, Garred 2006a: 25-6, Goddard 2009).

In a second ‘unorthodox’ usage of DNH, the data show a pattern of participants selectively using certain DNH concepts, rather than systematically using the entire DNH framework. There is a deep emphasis on the context analysis components of Dividers and Connectors. At times, Dividers and Connectors alone are in focus, and they have a powerful influence on shaping participants’ thinking, as in: the purpose of DNH is simply for “understanding the context of tension/dividers and connectors.”<sup>73</sup> In other cases, the understanding of Dividers and Connectors is used to identify implications for future action, while bypassing the analysis of the

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<sup>71</sup> Prt. MI #93, long-form survey of DMI, Davao, Jan. 2008, punctuation added.

<sup>72</sup> Prt. MI #35, long-form survey of regional sister agencies, Sarangani, Philippines, 8 July 2008, translated, punctuation added.

<sup>73</sup> Prt. MI #38, long-form survey of DMI, Davao, Jan. 2008, translated.

impact of currently existing activities. For example, one participant stated that the purpose of DNH is to “increase the connectors, decrease the dividers.”<sup>74</sup> Another explained in greater detail that the purpose of DNH is “to know the realities of the presence of dividers and connectors in the community that may contribute to promotion of peace in local place.”<sup>75</sup>

The research team attributed this selective use of the DNH framework to inadequate DNH learning, emphasizing a need for ongoing ‘refresher’ trainings and mentoring, including coaching in project impact analysis. Indeed, there is strong evidence in the data for repeated exposure, with one typical participant comment being paraphrased as follows: I have been trained three times. The first two times “my mind did not understand.” The third time was “more interesting,” and “my mind already opened.” I understood “not only LCP, but also Do No Harm.”<sup>76</sup> The importance of repeated exposures is affirmed by DNH experience in the humanitarian aid sector (Garred 2006a: 30). Nonetheless, this dissonance in usage patterns points also to the debate on the role of ‘tools’ in conflict sensitivity, and particularly to Neufeldt’s (2007) style distinction between ‘frameworkers’ and ‘circlers.’ Neufeldt is addressing impact assessment for peacebuilding projects, rather than the work of nPCROs whose primary focus lies elsewhere. Even so, her observations, in light of the current findings, suggest that it is possible for DNH to

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<sup>74</sup> Prt. MI #57, long-form survey of DMI, Davao, Jan. 2008, translated.

<sup>75</sup> Prt. MI #80, long-form survey of DMI, Davao, Jan. 2008. (Note: Participant quotes have not been edited for ‘errors’ in grammar or punctuation, except where noted as necessary to ensure the readers’ understanding).

<sup>76</sup> Prt. MI #30, interview by author of regional sister agencies, Sarangani, Philippines, 10 July 2008, translated.

be conceptualized in different ways by different users, and that 'circling' may be relatively more common at the grassroots level.

Despite the wide variation in perceptions on the purpose of the DNH, participants continue to demonstrate high levels of enthusiasm. They often request further training opportunities and urge expanded DNH usage. They incorporate key DNH terms (especially Dividers and Connectors) into their vocabulary immediately after receiving training. Further, when asked if they had talked about DNH to people outside of DMI and its sister agencies, fifty-two percent of long-form survey respondents indicated that they had done so more than 'occasionally.' A number of participants have taken the initiative to train others shortly after participating in their first DNH workshop, despite not having participated in the Training of Trainers.<sup>77</sup>

**Comparative Findings from Singapore.** As in Mindanao, Singapore workshop participants responded to DNH with enthusiasm. In evaluation surveys, ninety-two percent of respondents ranked the workshop content as "very useful" in general, while seventy-five percent saw DNH as "very useful" in their interfaith work. Participants perceived the tool as very versatile, making numerous comments such as: "DNH can be used for any project, and any relationship."<sup>78</sup> One prominent participant has collaborated with the Harmony Centre in developing an emerging vision for a Singapore-based interfaith training hub, including DNH as part of the core curriculum.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Prt. MI #66, long-form survey of DMI, Davao, Jan. 2008. Prt. MI #30, long-form survey and interview of regional sister agencies, Davao, 8 and 10 July 2008.

<sup>78</sup> Prt. S #11, plenary discussion, DNH workshop, Singapore, 15 Mar. 2008, video recording.

<sup>79</sup> Prt. S #12, field notes, 6 Mar. 2008.

However, Singapore findings differed significantly from Mindanao findings in terms of how participants perceived the primary purpose of the DNH tool. Singaporean workshop participants immediately picked up the idea of DNH as “tools for analyzing projects.”<sup>80</sup> Typical comments included the following: “it’s common sense, but also formalized in a way that you can analyze your project, that’s really very helpful.”<sup>81</sup> Correspondingly, there were fewer comments that isolated context analysis to the exclusion of the rest of the DNH framework. Discussion of context was directly linked to analysis of unintended social impact, including the negative impacts less openly acknowledged in Mindanao. “Your good intentions might actually translate into something that can become negative, and might actually disrupt the way the community works, rather than aiding.”<sup>82</sup> For this reason, some participants emphasized the importance of advance analysis and planning, e.g. “planning B4 framing any schemes.”<sup>83</sup>

Nonetheless, ten months later,<sup>84</sup> four Malay Muslim participants who attended a follow-up group interview did not describe DNH as a tool for detailed project impact analysis. They had received no interim DNH exposure since the original workshop, despite the fact that the original participants had requested more training, stating “I’m sure we only got the tip of the iceberg here.”<sup>85</sup> Thus follow-up interview participants confessed with some trepidation that they did not remember much about the particulars of DNH. They described DNH primarily as a broad

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<sup>80</sup> Anonymous evaluation #5, DNH workshop, Singapore, 15 Mar. 2008.

<sup>81</sup> Prt. S #11, plenary discussion, DNH workshop, Singapore, 15 Mar. 2008, video recording.

<sup>82</sup> Prt. S #14, plenary discussion, DNH workshop, Singapore, 15 Mar. 2008, video recording.

<sup>83</sup> Discussion board posting, DNH workshop, Singapore, 15 Mar. 2008

<sup>84</sup> Six months would have been a preferable interval, but timing was subject to Harmony Centre availability.

<sup>85</sup> Anonymous evaluation #12, DNH workshop, Singapore, 15 Mar. 2008.

concept, rather than a planning tool. They cited several ways in which the risk of unintended negative impacts on other people had influenced their own thinking, in ways that included but also went far beyond the DNH concern for intergroup conflict impacts. For example, one Muslim prison chaplain expressed concern about high recidivism rates, and wondered if his own religious counseling might be doing harm to the inmates.<sup>86</sup>

That same participant also offered a piercing anecdote that illuminates the conceptual confusion caused by the tool's two names. He stated that he had read my edited book, *A Shared Future: Local Capacities for Peace in Community Development*, published by World Vision International (2006b). His understanding was the World Vision had originated DNH but, because non-Christians were suspicious that World Vision might be motivated by proselytism, World Vision had later changed the name of the tool to LCP. This participant's limited understanding of DNH had become entwined with the local intergroup tensions, highlighting in particular the local sensitivities around religious conversion.<sup>87</sup>

### **Personalization of 'Do No Harm'**

I explained above how research participants rated application to one's personal life as a primary aspect of DNH 'usefulness,' despite the fact that personal development was not the originally intended purpose of the tool. That simple quantitative rating was strongly underscored by participants' subsequent examples describing how they have used DNH. The findings indicate that DNH has been used

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<sup>86</sup> Prt. S #7, follow-up interview by author, Singapore, 9 Jan. 2009.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.



extensively for personal growth purposes, significantly influencing the beliefs, values and behaviors of participants. The same phenomenon has been observed among humanitarian aid and development workers (CDA Collaborative Learning Projects 2001, Barbolet et al. 2005a, Garred 2006a: 23-4), yet it appears to receive even greater emphasis among religious actors. Further, among religious actors, this process is seen as a type of spiritual transformation, deeply entwined with their own spirituality and their formation as a spiritual guide to others.

Long-form survey participants were asked if they had “observed any significant changes” since they began using DNH. Eighty-one percent<sup>88</sup> of those respondents said yes.<sup>89</sup> The vast majority of those who said yes described changes of a personal nature, primarily in themselves, and sometimes within DMI and its sister agencies. Some participants articulated a far-reaching shift in mindset, such as “LCP transformed my mind . . . and changed my perspective”<sup>90</sup> and “It became my lifestyle.”<sup>91</sup> Others emphasized the deeply personal nature of the process, for example locating the change “in my very self and in my personhood, especially in my family.”<sup>92</sup> Only twenty percent of those participants who had observed changes since using DNH described those changes as relating to their organizations or projects.

This section draws primarily on survey and interviews to outline the key themes that further elaborate how participants have applied DNH to their own lives,

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<sup>88</sup> The total number of long-form surveys referenced here is 58.

<sup>89</sup> The remaining eleven respondents left the question blank, but most of these were among the very small cluster of participants not yet trained in DNH. Nobody answered this question in the negative.

<sup>90</sup> Prt. MI #142, pilot interview of DMI by author, Davao, 20 Apr. 2007.

<sup>91</sup> Prt. MI #57, long-form survey of DMI, Davao, Jan. 2008, translated.

<sup>92</sup> Prt. MI #46, long-form survey of regional sister agencies, Sarangani, Philippines, 8 July 2008, translated.

and to shaping their individual roles within a broader organization or community. The themes are closely interrelated, and therefore their identification is somewhat fluid. I myself have delineated and named the themes below, based closely on the research team's deliberations at three points in the action research process.<sup>93</sup>

**Awareness of context and impact.** The increased awareness of intergroup cleavages, Dividers and Connectors in one's own social context is perhaps the most frequently reported aspect of DNH personalization among the participants. For one resident of South Cotabato Province, the purpose of DNH is "to know the difference between the tribes (B'laan) and the Christians."<sup>94</sup> Contextual awareness is often linked to an increased awareness of the impact of one's actions, e.g. "You should know the impact/effect of your religious activities to your constituents, group, members."<sup>95</sup> As a result, participants describe a heightened level of sensitivity and caution in approaching their activities in a community. "In giving something I make sure it will not contribute more conflict."<sup>96</sup> In a departure from the 'orthodox' understanding of DNH (Anderson 1999: 23-36), some participants also refer to themselves as becoming a Connector or Divider, for example: "I have become watchful about my words, not to be a divider. For example, I do not say that the natives are dirty and lazy. Not to hurt or discriminate any tribe."<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Summary of Learnings from Action Research Cycle One, Davao, 29 May 2008. Research team consultation, Davao, 14-15, 17 Jan. 2009. Research team consultation, Davao, 22-23 Apr. 2009.

<sup>94</sup> Prt. MI #26, interview by author of regional sister agencies, Sarangani, Philippines, 10 July 2008, translated.

<sup>95</sup> Prt. MI #8, long-form survey of DMI, Davao, Jan. 2008.

<sup>96</sup> Prt. MI #25, long-form survey of leaders of regional sister agencies, Davao, 12-13 Mar. 2008, translated.

<sup>97</sup> Prt. MI #59, interview by author of regional sister agencies, Sarangani, Philippines, 10 July 2008, translated.

One research team member interprets the significance of this change for religious actors as follows: “Previously, the social context was not our priority. LCP showed us that we need to be aware of our social context.”<sup>98</sup> This increased awareness of context and impact develops relatively quickly upon undergoing DNH training, and it appears to precede the other aspects of personal change identified below. Barbolet et al. (2005a: 5) report similar results using conflict sensitivity frameworks other than DNH.

**Catalyst for forming intergroup relationships.** The action research participants frequently illustrate DNH usage by pointing to the formation of interethnic and interfaith relationships that did not previously exist. Many participants emphasize that they themselves have taken the initiative to establish such relationships, marking a change in their own behavior. One participant describes the changes in himself as follows: “Before, I do not fellowship with other faiths/religion. I am not equal in my dealings with people . . . (Now) equal approach to people and above all, see to it that connectors will prevail . . .”<sup>99</sup> Another describes the changes she has observed in her church congregation: “One of our church young people invited a group of Muslim ladies. We welcome them. The barrier was broken between our church and the mosque through LCP.”<sup>100</sup>

Importantly, some participants go on to make a specific chronological linkage between such actions and their first exposure to DNH. One Protestant pastor had been serving in a South Cotabato Province church for several years, before

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<sup>98</sup> Prt. MI #85, quoted in DMI’s *Transformed Together* (2010: 29).

<sup>99</sup> Prt. MI #100, long-form survey of leaders of regional sister agencies, Davao, 12-13 Mar. 2008, translated.

<sup>100</sup> Prt. MI #66, long-form survey of DMI, Davao, Jan. 2008.

participating in his first DNH training in February 2008. By April 2008, he had invited Catholic neighbors to lunch, in an effort to overcome a tension-filled relational “gap.” He talked with them about cross-participation of children in church services, which he recognized as a source of “doubts and rumors” regarding potential conversions. He states that he took these actions to follow up what he learned in the DNH workshop.<sup>101</sup>

**Shift from exclusive to inclusive mindsets.** DNH training prompts religious actors to recognize systemic patterns of discrimination and separation as significant Dividers in the Mindanao context. Such discrimination is seen as uncomfortably incompatible with the ideals of equal dignity, respect and human rights for all, which are increasingly promoted in Mindanao. In an effort to avoid worsening systemic discrimination, participants begin to question and adjust their own cultural beliefs and values towards people of different backgrounds. For example: “I respect them who they are that every human being has dignity and honor.”<sup>102</sup> Further, these changes in mindset contribute to changes in day-to-day behavior: “For example, if there are people who asked for help, strangers or not, relatives or not, we help. If in need, poor or rich, the same approach.”<sup>103</sup> A similar shift from exclusive to inclusive mindsets has previously been observed in other DNH applications in Mindanao and Indonesia (Riak 2006, Sihotang and Silalahi 2006), yet the religious actors in the current study often describe the shift in more spiritual terms.

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<sup>101</sup> Prt. MI #87, interview by author of regional sister agencies, Sarangani, Philippines, 8 July 2008, translated.

<sup>102</sup> Prt. MI #28, long-form survey of DMI, Davao, Jan. 2008.

<sup>103</sup> Prt. MI #100, long-form survey of leaders of regional sister agencies, Davao, 12-13 Mar. 2008, translated.

Further, as mindsets become more inclusive, research participants have begun to recognize in their own religious teachings an implicit principle that one should not mix with people who have beliefs that are different, and therefore probably inferior. Thus one Protestant pastor confesses that his own denomination is a “very separatist religion,”<sup>104</sup> and another explains that increasingly, “emotionally I could accept different opinion, ideas, status, etc.”<sup>105</sup> The emergence of an inclusive outlook is iteratively linked to the increased intergroup relationships identified above. One pastor describes the growing relational links as follows: “I have a good friend, a Muslim brother, for both of us to have a good relationship, we show respect, share ways of worship, prayer and beliefs; avoid criticizing each other.”<sup>106</sup> These findings on the centrality of human mindsets challenge the associational literature’s current emphasis on associational structures as the primary determinants of conflict impact, and these theoretical implications are examined in detail in Chapter Seven.

**DNH as compatible with one’s own faith.** For religious actors in Mindanao, the development of inclusive mindsets is a religious issue, interpreted in spiritual terms. In the words of one Evangelical pastor: “One tool that the Spirit of God is using is LCP.”<sup>107</sup> The issue of religious inclusivity is not integral to DNH itself, but rather it arises when DNH is applied to the religio-cultural context of Mindanao. Participants experience these changes without abandoning their primary religious commitments. One Protestant pastor explains: “Before, I was so critical and many

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<sup>104</sup> Prt. MI #59, interview by author of regional sister agencies, Sarangani, Philippines, 20 July 2008, translated.

<sup>105</sup> Prt. MI #67, long-form survey of DMI, Davao, Jan. 2008.

<sup>106</sup> Prt. MI #30, long-form survey of leaders of regional sister agencies, Davao, 12-13 Mar. 2008, translated.

<sup>107</sup> Prt. MI #85, quoted in DMI’s *Transformed Together* (2010: 29).

times did not want to be in the presence of other religious leaders in our place – LCP had given me the perspective on how to have fellowship and work with other religious leaders w/o compromising my personal faith to my God.”<sup>108</sup> Many feel that DNH and interfaith engagement are making them better followers of their own faiths. “I am now open to different religion. I am now a better Christian because of LCP.”<sup>109</sup> Further, participants also seek to share DNH within their own communities of worship, for example, “in my congregation I have shared some significance points about LCP.”<sup>110</sup> These findings speak directly into the ‘religion gap’ evident in current associational theory, so the religious aspects of mindset change are analyzed more fully in Chapter Eight.

**Personal character and leadership development.** Changes made in relation to people of other ethnic and religious groups tend to be highly visible manifestations of DNH personalization. However, participants also describe less visible changes in terms of their own personal character and the ways in which they exercise their leadership roles. Participants’ increased consciousness of social divisions is applied to the small-scale divisions that can exist within a relatively homogenous church, mosque or neighborhood setting. In the words of one Evangelical pastor: “Realities in the church is the same like context in the community.”<sup>111</sup> Another participant states that he uses DNH as an individual “peacemaker to my church as a pastor.”<sup>112</sup>

Participants desire to model harmonious relationships, so they begin to avoid behaviors that might exacerbate Dividers, and increase behaviors that enhance

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<sup>108</sup> Prt. MI #80, long-form survey of DMI, Davao, Jan. 2008.

<sup>109</sup> Prt. MI #39 long-form survey of DMI, Davao, Jan. 2008.

<sup>110</sup> Prt. MI #80, long-form survey of DMI, Davao, Jan. 2008.

<sup>111</sup> Prt. MI #38, interview by research team of DMI, Davao, 13 Feb. 2008.

<sup>112</sup> Prt. MI #61, interview by research team of DMI, Davao, 18 Feb. 2008.

Connectors. Thus one participant has changed her style of interaction: “I know now how to be humble, how to understand and to let others understand. And the people I worked with see this in me.”<sup>113</sup> Another has changed his approach to management: “The way I manage the mosque, we did not build good rapport. But now we have a better relationship.”<sup>114</sup> Further, religious leaders expect that their own growth and development will eventually influence others. One participant stated: “In one interfaith occasion, all leaders from different religion were present in that occasion – showing unity. The community, seeing us, had hopes in their heart that peace is possible.”<sup>115</sup>

On the whole, the Mindanao data provide strong evidence of significant change among individuals. The change is incremental, and not everyone experiences it at the same level. Indeed, one participant commented frankly: “the change was not that great.”<sup>116</sup> Nonetheless DNH appears to be seen as relevant by people in various stages of a shift towards inclusivity, and to move them further in the same direction. Notably, these changes cannot be attributed exclusively to DNH, for most participants have also been trained in the Culture of Peace, and shaped by the experience of participating in interfaith activities and relationships. However DNH personalization has made a major contribution, as evidenced by consistent references to DNH concepts such as Dividers, Connectors and Impact in participants’ stories of personal change.

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<sup>113</sup> Prt. MI #7, long-form survey of DMI, Davao, Jan. 2008, translated.

<sup>114</sup> Prt. MI #46, interview by research team of regional sister agencies, Sarangani, Philippines, 8 July 2008, translated.

<sup>115</sup> Prt. MI #80, interview by research team of DMI, Davao, 15 Feb. 2008.

<sup>116</sup> Prt. MI #40, interview by research team of regional sister agencies, Sarangani, Philippines, 10 July 2008, translated.

**Comparative findings from Singapore.** As in Mindanao, participants indicated a clear and immediate application of DNH to their personal lives and individual roles within the community. Key themes similar to those encountered in Mindanao were the usage of DNH in relationships, the recognition of unintended negative impacts, and the importance of personal growth. The Singapore data also include a distinct yet related theme on managing how one's own intentions will be perceived by others. Participants in Singapore were notably quick to identify and analyze such themes appearing in their own discussions. However, most participants had only one exposure to DNH, so the data do not indicate any deepening of DNH personalization over time, as it does in Mindanao.

The primary theme identified and labeled by the participants themselves was their application of DNH to relationships, not only between the major ethno-religious groups but also among close friends and family.<sup>117</sup> Discussion board postings on this theme referenced specific behaviors such as “be a good listener” and “maintain & control emotions.”<sup>118</sup> At the conclusion of this discussion, one participant observed that “the relationship part is huge!”<sup>119</sup> Others commented on how the DNH workshop had contributed to relationship building among the participants themselves. The probing nature of DNH analysis had prompted a deeper-than-usual discussion on ethno-religious relations in Singapore, and the participants shared examples that were meaningful to each other. A Chinese Protestant participant explained: “We have many things to get off our chests.”<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Discussion board posting, DNH workshop, Singapore, 15 Mar. 2008.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Prt. S #12, plenary discussion, DNH workshop, Singapore, 15 Mar. 2008, video recording.



Another important theme identified by the participants themselves was a concept which they termed “managing perceptions.”<sup>121</sup> There was an emphasis on the awareness of one’s own personal intentions, and how they might be perceived, or misperceived by others. “For me, managing perception is very important. It reminds me of this quotation: ‘We tend to judge ourselves based on our intentions, but we judge others based on their actions.’ . . . This tool is a life skill kind of thing”<sup>122</sup> The participants use of terminology shows that these insights were inspired by the DNH impact mechanism of Implicit Ethical Messages, for example “be aware of your intention: implicit & explicit” and “making (the) implicit explicit.”<sup>123</sup>

Recognition of potential unintended negative impacts was a closely related theme, not labeled by participants, yet clearly present in the data. Discussion board postings on this theme included the following:<sup>124</sup> “Your individual actions do affect a group (community);” “understand unintended consequences of good decisions;” and “not harming others at any cost.” Underlying each of these themes was a cross-cutting emphasis on growth in one’s own communication and thought processes, which included notions of openness to new ideas, such as “listening more than talking,” and “have an open mind when sharing.”<sup>125</sup> Further, this was undergirded by an emphasis on self-critique, as in “self-reflection and personal evaluation,” and “pursue the whole truth, not my observations.”<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Discussion board posting, DNH workshop, Singapore, 15 Mar. 2008.

<sup>122</sup> Prt. S #16, plenary discussion, DNH workshop, Singapore, 15 Mar. 2008, video recording.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

Finally, as in Mindanao, several participants articulated how DNH contributed to changes in overall mindset. Importantly, the participants invented the phrase “DNA of DNH”<sup>127</sup> to refer to the core concepts of DNH and the way in which they can shape one’s thinking. “Now that I have learned the DNH and the DNA thing . . . it has encouraged me and given me a lot of ideas on how to improvise in working environment with social relations”<sup>128</sup> It is striking to note that the mindset shift was evident after only one day of DNH exposure training.

In the follow-up group interview one year later, personalization patterns were not detectable, due to the limited number of participants (four Malay Muslims). One participant commented on “better relationships” between people of ethnic groups and generations, yet found it easier to use DNH in her own home. “I use DNH in my family, with siblings. But in my community work, it would be difficult to use DNH, because I don’t know enough about each person’s background. I am afraid of what might be the impact of my proposal; I am trying to get immune to that fear.”<sup>129</sup> Another indicated that he had been considering the relationship between DNH and his own religious convictions. His recommendation for future DNH training was that “there must be a common denomination – such as the scriptures – some things cannot be re-designed!”<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Prt. S #10, plenary discussion, DNH workshop, Singapore, 15 Mar. 2008, video recording.

<sup>128</sup> Prt. S #13, plenary discussion, DNH workshop, Singapore, 15 Mar. 2008, video recording.

<sup>129</sup> Prt. S #8, follow-up interview by author, Singapore, 9 Jan. 2009.

<sup>130</sup> Prt. S #7, follow-up interview by author, Singapore, 9 Jan. 2009.

## **Operationalization of ‘Do No Harm’**

The ‘operationalization’ of DNH refers to the active application of the framework in organizational planning and implementation of activities. This is the originally intended purpose of the tool yet, in the aid sector, successful operationalization has been found to depend upon the nature of prior DNH conceptualization and personalization among the participating individuals (CDA Collaborative Learning Projects 2001). Where individual implementers are concerned, there is naturally some conceptual overlap between personalization and operationalization. Thus I distinguish DNH application to a person’s own role from DNH application that directly affects actions taken by a broader organization, even if that organization is unaware that DNH is being used.

**Operationalization of DNH within DMI as an agency.** The formation and development of DMI itself is an example of ongoing DNH operationalization. First, the precursor to DMI was an island-wide network of religious leaders partnering with World Vision Development Foundation. World Vision has strong historical ties to Protestantism, and most members of the original religious leaders’ network were Evangelicals. However, from the late 1990s onward, this network was gradually expanded to include Roman Catholic and Muslim representatives, influenced in part by DNH dissemination among World Vision personnel.<sup>131</sup> Second, World Vision began providing DNH training to DMI members in 2003, during DMI’s formative stages. DNH influenced DMI’s vision from the beginning, such that: “Though we began with a majority Evangelical membership, LCP analysis of our multifaith context continually challenges us to seek out more Catholic and Muslim members”

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<sup>131</sup> Herminegilda Presbitero-Carrillo, interview by author, 17 Jan. 2008, Davao.

(Davao Ministerial Interfaith Inc. 2010: 19). DMI founders established an enduring requirement that all new members must undergo DNH training. In the early years, when DNH training was delayed due to limited trainer availability, prospective DMI members were often obliged simply to wait.

As DMI developed, its members applied DNH to explore how to conduct organizational activities in ways that include and avoid offending participants of all religious backgrounds. The research team describes the influence of DNH on key organizational activities as follows:

Our activities must not create tension and exclusivity so we apply LCP to our DMI activities in many ways:

- We build relationships upon the things that connect us, such as our faith in Almighty God / Allah, service for the common good of all people, desire for justice and peace, and the joy of sharing meals together.
- We respect each other's doctrine, so we do not debate about doctrinal issues in order to avoid divisive perceptions of proselytism and exclusivity. At the same time, we are willing to share information about our beliefs for mutual learning.
- Each member contributes according to his/her beliefs. For example, if a Catholic leads prayer, s/he leads it in a Catholic way. All DMI members accept this, knowing that a different religious group will have opportunity to lead prayer the next time.
- We try to be sensitive in choosing songs and text during spiritual reflections. Some Christians do not appreciate fast, active worship songs, and some Muslims do not use music at all, so we respect each other's preferences.
- When we eat together, the choices of food being served must be acceptable to all, not including any pork because it is forbidden for Muslims.
- We try to select meeting venues that are neutral because they are common to the public, not affiliated with any particular religious group.
- When we teach seminars, the content is reviewed to ensure that it is appropriate for interfaith audiences. The seminars are co-led by mixed teams of Catholics, Evangelicals and/or Muslims.

- Incoming DMI members must undergo both LCP and Culture of Peace training to help them prepare their minds and hearts for interfaith fellowship (Davao Ministerial Interfaith Inc. 2010: 19-20).<sup>132</sup>

DNH also influenced the foundational concepts underlying DMI's flagship project, the Neighborhood Intergenerational Care Group. These Care Groups were formed in order to integrate spiritual nurture into the community development programs of partner agency Unity for Progress. The members meet weekly for learning about "God-centered" development<sup>133</sup> and mutual relational support, and they also conduct holistic *bayanihan*<sup>134</sup> activities to address practical community needs. This group concept was originally inspired by the Protestant practice of conducting Bible study in home based cell-groups. However, applying DNH concepts, the DMI Chair realized that the cell group idea would be perceived as catering only to Evangelicals, or as seeking to convert others, thus repelling non-Protestant participants and reinforcing the religious separation. He also perceived generational gaps in the neighborhoods between youth and elders, which he desired to bridge. Thus the DMI Chair shaped the Care Group model to include people of all religions and age groups, in formats that support their own faith traditions, and without pressuring them towards religious conversion.<sup>135</sup> At the time of the action research project, there were seven established Care Groups.

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<sup>132</sup> I assisted DMI by drafting the cited publication, *Transformed Together*, reflecting the research team's conclusions and detailed editorial guidance. This portion of text was considered so sensitive that the research team reviewed it several times, and shaped the wording with great precision.

<sup>133</sup> DMI *Purok* (Neighborhood) Intergenerational Care Group Primer, Volume 1, Davao, n.d.

<sup>134</sup> *Bayanihan* is the Visayan term for people working together in sad and difficult times.

<sup>135</sup> Prt. MI #57, interview by author of project resource persons, Davao, 24 Oct. 2008, audio recording.

Most of the Care Groups were launched by Evangelical members of DMI, but through adapting their spiritual reflection practices and sharing communication and leadership with people of other faiths, they have gradually made significant progress towards integration of Protestants with Roman Catholics and practitioners of other Christian-leaning faiths. For example, the Care Group in the Marapangi neighborhood of Davao City is now over eighty percent Roman Catholic.<sup>136</sup> The two Care Groups meeting in the Dumoy neighborhood contain significant numbers from the Iglesia ni Kristo, a Filipino church viewed as heretical by many local Protestants. The Evangelical leader of the Dumoy groups explains his approach as follows: “For me, LCP is good for me to communicate . . . to remove some barriers . . . many times, even Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ asked me what is my technique to work in that area, because many of my PIGCG<sup>137</sup> members come from the Iglesia ni Kristo . . . I focus on building relationships . . .”<sup>138</sup>

Despite this significant progress in creating religiously mixed structures, DMI members acknowledge that they have not yet met all of their goals, as there are no Muslim Care Group members. The research team consultation at the conclusion of Cycle One provided an opportunity for team members to discuss in some depth the issue of Muslim participation in the Care Groups.<sup>139</sup> The research team explained that Muslim participation would require Muslim Care Group leaders, since the public suspicions associated with Protestant group leaders could not be fully overcome.

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<sup>136</sup> Prt. MG #35, interview by author of Care Group members, Davao, 22. Sep. 2008, audio recording.

<sup>137</sup> *Purok* (Neighborhood) Intergenerational Care Group.

<sup>138</sup> Prt. MG #36, interview by author of Care Group members, Davao, 10 Oct. 2008, audio recording. The name of the Pastor has been removed to protect identity.

<sup>139</sup> Research team consultation notes, Davao, 2-3 Apr. 2008.

“Pastor’ leading P-IGCG gave negative impact due to general history of conversion.”<sup>140</sup> Muslim Care Group leaders would of course need to be drawn from Muslim DMI members, whose numbers were still very limited. While DMI’s Board combines Evangelical, Roman Catholic and Muslim leadership, their fifty-strong membership consists of approximately sixty percent Protestant, thirty-five percent Catholic and only five percent Muslim<sup>141</sup> (Davao Ministerial Interfaith Inc. 2010: 20).

Further, the team discussed openly the sensitive fact that Care Group participation patterns were based upon previous beneficiary selection decisions made by Unity for Progress. Perceptions differed as to how many Muslim children were actually sponsored by the Unity for Progress as a Protestant-affiliated agency. The Muslim team member believed that there were no Muslim sponsored children. The Evangelical and Catholic team members believed that Muslim children were sponsored wherever they were living in the targeted neighborhoods. However, Muslim neighborhoods are often separated from Christian neighborhoods and, despite queries, it was not known how many Muslim neighborhoods were served by Unify for Progress. Christian members pointed out that DMI’s intention was to open the first Muslim Care Group soon, in a particular Muslim neighborhood of Davao City.

Finally, the research team also noted that although Care Group facilitation materials had become significantly more ecumenical, they were still largely Bible-based. “The module is Christianized.”<sup>142</sup> The Care Group practice of seeking

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<sup>140</sup> Analysis board posting, research team consultation notes, Davao, 2-3 Apr. 2008, 4.

<sup>141</sup> Approximately 20% of DMI members are Lumads (indigenous persons), and their religious affiliation is either Protestant or Roman Catholic.

<sup>142</sup> Analysis board posting, research team consultation notes, Davao, 2-3 Apr. 2008, 4.

endorsement from key neighborhood leaders had advanced further among Roman Catholic and secular leaders than among Muslim community leaders, leaving significant room for doubt among Muslims about the intention of the Care Group. In a revealing joke, the Muslim research team member asked: “What does PIGCG mean?” He was unfamiliar with the acronym PIGCG for *Purok* Intergenerational Care Group, and pointed out that PIGCG would sound to Muslims like ‘PIG Care Group,’ making it obviously unattractive because pork is forbidden for Muslims.<sup>143</sup> The research team identified action items to address these Muslim participation issues,<sup>144</sup> but by the end of 2008 no progress had been made due to Care Group funding cuts.

These DMI experiences suggest a number of complexities in operationalizing DNH. The success in fostering collaboration between Catholic and Protestant groups, and redefining the stance of both towards Muslims, are significant achievements that are counter-cultural in nature. These changes are attributable largely, but not exclusively, to the use of DNH. Yet conflict-sensitive change relating to DMI’s ethos and core operations is clearly a process ongoing over time. Further, the effort to increase Muslim participation in the Care Groups has encountered a number of organizational barriers, including membership composition, funding restrictions and shortfalls, competing priorities and limited time in an organization comprised of busy volunteers. This reality illuminates well the increasing insistence among some conflict sensitivity researchers on the importance of overall organizational capacity and leadership (De la Haye and Moyroud 2003, Barbolet et al. 2005b), over and above the analytical skill of individual workers.

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<sup>143</sup> Field notes, 11 Apr. 2008.

<sup>144</sup> Research team consultation notes, Davao, 2-3 Apr. 2008.



### **Operationalization of DNH through DMI members' own organizations.**

DMI trains its members in DNH not only to prepare them for participation in the interfaith network, but also with hope that DMI members will 'operationalize' DNH through their own churches, mosques or other religious organizations. Such applications are particularly important in addressing this study's central inquiry on the social impacts of nPCROs, as associations whose mandates are not conflict-focused, because DMI members' own organizations are more purely non-conflict-focused. Therefore in considering DNH operationalization, the research team was looking for explicit applications of DNH in the planning of non-DMI projects and services. However, the data revealed that participants' operationalization of DNH on those particular terms was actually somewhat unusual.

In action research Cycle One, surveys and interviews revealed that DMI members were indeed using DNH through their own religious organizations, but this effort was focused within the organization itself, rather than on outward-looking in relation to the community. Even though DNH usefulness ratings were approximately equal across personal, church/mosque and community applications, examples of actual DNH application leaned strongly toward the internal. Further, DMI members' usage of DNH often focused not on formal project planning, but on their own formation and decision-making as leaders, and their resulting influence on others.<sup>145</sup> Only sixteen percent of DMI survey respondents, and forty-four percent of DMI interview respondents, provided clear examples of using DNH to plan organizational projects. Most of these were DNH trainers or research team members. In contrast, most participant examples focused on applying DNH in their own organization by

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<sup>145</sup> Summary of Learnings from Action Research Cycle One, Davao, 29 May 2008.

changing themselves as leaders, and thirty percent further described teaching others to pursue the same type of change. Further, at least forty-four percent of interviewees mentioned the difficulty of operationalizing DNH when there were no other DNH practitioners within their organization, suggesting a lack of ‘critical mass’ (Rogers 1995, Harder 2006). While affirming the individual progress that such findings represent, the research team also suggested that DNH operationalization could be expanded at the organizational level through ‘refresher’ training and mentoring of DMI members, and DNH introductory training for the members within their churches and mosques.

In Cycle Two findings, the DNH usage patterns of DMI’s sister agencies around southern Mindanao<sup>146</sup> paralleled those of DMI’s own members, emphasizing application to the role of the individual religious leader. However, the Cycle Two effort to gather examples of project impact analysis resulted in another significant surprise to the research team. Eleven sister agency participants were selected for interviews because their surveys appeared to indicate that they had examples to share. Nonetheless, when asked directly for examples of project impact analysis, a central issue emphasized during DNH training, the great majority of interview participants was unable to answer. Approximately half did share examples of how DNH had helped them to identify an opportunity to improve the impact of their activities on intergroup relationships, so they had taken action to address it. The interviewers were able, through intense conversational probing, to uncover and

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<sup>146</sup> External partner agencies in Davao City were also included in Cycle Two, but they were given the short-form survey. Their additional data was captured in workshop plenary discussions and DNH frameworks.

document a form of impact analysis woven, largely unconsciously, through these narratives.

Further, most of the project impact analysis examples derived from Cycle Two interviews were framed in terms of positive impact on conflict, rather than negative impact. In some cases, the religious actor simply observed an immediate opportunity for positive action through supporting Connectors or undermining Dividers. For example, an Evangelical pastor who also serves as a neighborhood council member<sup>147</sup> in Sarangani Province described how DNH shaped his ideas for organizing community recovery in the wake of rice field flooding. He worked through the traditional community leaders to mobilize residents for mutual help work brigades,<sup>148</sup> because he recognized the traditional leaders as Connectors who commanded respect and convening power. Further, the work brigades successfully brought together common laborers with higher status community members, bridging a relational tension that existed in the community due to economic disparity.<sup>149</sup> This example reveals no analysis of the impact of one's own current projects and services, but rather an awareness of how existing Connectors and Dividers could interact with future plans, with the impacts viewed by the implementer as positive.

In other cases, participating religious actors described their positive impact in ways that implied a critique of one's own current or past activities. For example, the afore-mentioned Protestant pastor from South Cotabato Province described how he applied DNH insights in inviting Catholic neighbors to lunch, in an effort to

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<sup>147</sup> The term in Visayan is *barangay kagawad*.

<sup>148</sup> The term in Visayan is *bayanihan*.

<sup>149</sup> Prt. MI #56, interview by author of regional sister agencies, Sarangani, Philippines, 10 July 2008.

overcome a tension-filled relational “gap.” He talked with the Catholics about cross-participation of children in church services, which he recognized as a source of “doubts and rumors” regarding potential conversions.<sup>150</sup> This action implied an unspoken recognition that he himself had been at least partially responsible for the gap in relationships and communication. In DNH analysis, this could be considered a negative impact, reinforcing the pervasive pattern of religious exclusivism and separatism prominent in Mindanao. However, I was initially the only one who saw such examples as implying an unintended negative impact. The research team leader, herself a Roman Catholic, did not see it this way, possibly pointing to an important difference in our own perspectives.<sup>151</sup>

By the end of Cycle Two, the research team had formulated a well-developed explanation of why the research participants emphasized positive impacts and rarely recognized the negative. This phenomenon was attributed to the lack of conceptual emphasis on DNH as a tool for project impact analysis, combined with the time required for progressive DNH personalization, which often demands the capacity to recognize deep Dividers from the perspective of identity groups that are opposed to one’s own. Further, the DMI members of the research team saw within their own professional culture a tendency to focus on the positive, which they recognized as contrasting with the culture of results-oriented self-critique common among aid workers. In *Transformed Together*, the research team described this paradigm as follows:

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<sup>150</sup> Prt. MI #87, interview by author of regional sister agencies, Sarangani, Philippines, 8 July 2008, translated.

<sup>151</sup> Research team consultation notes, Davao, 13-14 Aug. 2008.

There are many reasons why we as religious leaders might find it difficult to recognize unintended negative impact. We in the religious sector naturally tend to:

- Focus on the positive.
- Focus on spiritual realities, rather than on the social, political and economic context of the community we are serving.
- Judge our work based on our motives and intentions, rather than on outcomes.
- Give our very best, investing our heart and soul in all that we do, making it painful to acknowledge any negative impact.
- Believe that our relationship to Almighty God / Allah, or our role as religious leaders, prevents us from making serious mistakes (Davao Ministerial Interfaith Inc. 2010: 60).

Significantly, the research team also observed that many participants self-critiques appeared to be limited in depth, stating that “sometimes we don’t agree with their analysis.”<sup>152</sup> The Catholic members of the research team pointed out that the aforementioned Evangelical pastor in South Cotabato Province had focused on improving his relationships with Catholic neighbors, but had not articulated any consideration of whether or not his church was in fact seeking to convert the Catholic children, a common practice in Mindanao which often exacerbates tensions owing to the long history of large-scale politically-influenced conversions.

A similar example of limited self-critique came from another Protestant pastor in South Cotabato Province, who responded to a conflict between his church and another neighboring Protestant congregation by inviting the pastor to attend DNH training, which “opened his mind,” and led to improved mutual communication such that “we do not mind that problem already.”<sup>153</sup> However, the inviting pastor did not waver in his analysis of the underlying source of tension, which was the disputed

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Prt. MI #30, interview by author of regional sister agencies, Sarangani, Philippines, 10 July 2008.

ownership of the land on which the other church stood. He simply stated that the land belonged to his own denomination, even though the other church could not recognize or accept this reality.<sup>154</sup>

Perhaps most concerning was the example of a Christian lay leader,<sup>155</sup> from a migrant ethnic group, who also serves as a member of his local neighborhood council. In his context analysis, he describes his community as being characterized by tension between majority migrants and minority Lumads. The primary source of tension is the history of settlers acquiring local lands through means considered legal under national law, but foreign and highly questionable to the Lumads. Some Lumads came to this neighborhood council member to ask for help in getting their lands back. He applied his DNH understanding in formulating his response, paraphrased as follows:

I explained to the Lumads in a nice way that it's no longer possible, because the lands now legally belong to the migrants. Also I explained that the government has a program to give lands to the tribes, but it will not be the original land, it will be the land where they are now located in the hills. Before LCP, I would have become angry with them, but now I know how to "talk to them in a nice manner." Now the Lumads accept it more, it's more OK.<sup>156</sup>

This land dispute described by this neighborhood council member mirrors the broader trends considered to be root causes of conflict across Mindanao. Further, as a local leader in religion and politics, and a member of the dominant migrant ethnic group, this council member applied his DNH analysis from a position of considerable

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> The local term is *Lay Cooperator* or *Layco*.

<sup>156</sup> Prt. MI #26, interview by author of regional sister agencies, Sarangani, Philippines, 10 July 2008, translated. Ethnic group names removed, to protect participant identity.

power. The research team expressed deep concern that DNH was apparently being used to smooth intergroup communications in lieu of addressing the underlying issues of the dispossession and marginalization of Lumad and Bangsamoro communities. Such findings point directly to a key limitation of the DNH tool as elaborated in Chapter Two, namely that DNH's local focus and lack of explicit reference to social justice issues may result in DNH users overlooking the existence of structural violence (Galtung 1969). The team concluded that in addition to coaching on project impact analysis, DNH should be paired with the 'Culture of Peace' or another source of instruction on macro-level historical dynamics, to develop awareness of root causes of conflict. Further, they suggest facilitated opportunities for DNH learners of different identity groups to discuss context analysis together, to begin to understand Dividers from the perspective of 'the other.'

**Comparative Findings from Singapore.** In Singapore, despite the fact that the participants' first DNH discussions were focused on the role of government, a subsequent brainstorm on potential future uses of DNH shifted the discussion into the religious sector. Participants envisioned a broad range of ideas for operationalizing DNH, which they had not yet had opportunity to implement. Muslim participants envisioned using DNH to plan activities within their own mosques, such as to help "create mosque friendly atmosphere" and to inform "mosque fundraising." The entire group hoped to use DNH to further interfaith engagement, both to "present the need for interfaith engagement" and to inform the planning of the encounters themselves, including youth interfaith events. Similarly, it was agreed that DNH could be used within the interfaith bodies that already exist, such as Singapore's Inter-Religious Organization, Inter-Racial Confidence Circles,

and even the Harmony Centre which hosted the DNH pilot training.<sup>157</sup> The application of DNH to the Harmony Centre sparked an immediate impromptu impact analysis, which is examined in Chapter Six.

In terms of religious community services (an approximate parallel to DMI's community development activities), participants envisioned using DNH for planning "in helping the needy – DNH (is) important as their problems are multifold and sensitive." This comment was meant to encompass both services offered inside Singapore and international service efforts led by Singaporean agencies. Other related applications included organizational development, such as "visioning/values exercises with boards" and "volunteer welfare organisation: to examine their relationship with community."<sup>158</sup>

One year later, in the follow-up focus group discussion, one individual described how she had applied the DNH concept, broadly defined, to activity planning within the mosque. Another described having applied the DNH concept to analyze the design of the prison chaplaincy program in which he was serving. None of the four participants present reported DNH usage beyond the individual level. The same participants offered further recommendations on future use of DNH in Singapore, again underscoring envisioned applications in both the religious and government sectors. The focus group participants also mentioned several difficulties in using DNH. One participant emphasized that DNH tool works well only when the user is not biased. The user must set aside the personal, and "should not impose their

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<sup>157</sup> Discussion board postings, DNH workshop, Singapore, 15 Mar. 2008.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.



(own) values . . . So the tool may not be useful if it involves fanatics.”<sup>159</sup> This caveat parallels the Mindanao findings on limited self-critique among some DNH practitioners, and persistence in analyzing social divisions from the perspective of one’s own identity group. Another pointed out, again paralleling Mindanao, that operationalizing DNH at the organizational level requires more than one person to be trained in DNH, so they can work on it together.<sup>160</sup>

Most recently, fascinating insights were offered by a Protestant training participant who was not available at the time of the follow-up focus group discussion.<sup>161</sup> She reflected on DNH applicability from her own perspective as a central interfaith leader in Singapore. She herself had found DNH very useful, and the central concept of unintended negative impact on conflict had significantly influenced her thinking, although she did not use the full framework. She shared her surprise and frustration at seeing little DNH usage among participants exposed to DNH, punctuated by colorful expressions such as “I just cannot understand why they can’t see its relevance” and “I can’t believe he didn’t get it!” She attributed the limited DNH uptake to two causes. First, she emphasized a lack of capacity-building follow-up, stating that “the participants were not able to carry it back to their organizations,” and the pilot workshop was not soon followed by other DNH events. Harmony Centre discussion of additional training was very positive in tone, but staff members were busy, so plans proceeded slowly. They did request a subsequent DNH exposure workshop in January 2009, which I provided immediately before leaving Singapore. Limited follow-up is a known obstacle to conflict sensitivity uptake in the aid sector

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<sup>159</sup> Prt. S #7, follow-up interview by author, Singapore, 9 Jan. 2009.

<sup>160</sup> Prt. S #6, follow-up interview by author, Singapore, 9 Jan. 2009.

<sup>161</sup> Prt. S #12, follow-up interview by author, Seattle, USA, 21 May 2010, audio recording.

(Lange 2004) and in the Mindanao data, so in this respect the Singapore data simply provide further confirmation.

This interviewee's<sup>162</sup> second attributed cause of limited DNH uptake was significantly more unique. She pointed strongly to the question of how participants perceive the relevance of DNH in Singapore's latent conflict setting. "The tool I think is a useful thing. The only issue is how do you present it to societies that believe they are relatively tolerant and harmonious? That for me has always been the issue, how to present it contextually." She made no reference to the careful contextualization steps already taken in consultation with the Harmony Centre, including framing the workshop around resilience as 'Promoting Social Harmony through Community Service,' indicating that such steps were perhaps insufficient. Recognition of subtle conflict has been a recognized challenge in the humanitarian aid sector, but it can usually be addressed by incorporating models for latent conflict or structural violence into the training (Garred 2006a: 16-17). Nonetheless, the consistency with which this theme has arisen, from the pilot phase through the post-training follow-up, points to the uniqueness of Singaporean culture's active promotion of a peaceful and tolerant self-view.<sup>163</sup> The interviewee points to the need to reconsider the capacity building point of entry.

### **Conclusion: The Value of Cross-Site Comparison**

The use of two research sites is essential to this project, for in order to probe the broad applicability of conflict sensitivity to the religious sector, one must begin to

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> This issue is further analyzed in Chapter Seven.

ascertain whether the approach is relevant and useful in a variety of contexts.

Mindanao and Singapore, while both influenced by similar regional trends in ethno-religious conflict, present sharp differences in their levels of physical violence and economic development, and the role of their associational sectors. Indeed, while DNH has been enthusiastically received in both contexts, the conflict sensitivity testing findings do differ significantly.

DNH is being used extensively and productively among religious actors in Mindanao, but not necessarily for the project impact analysis purposes originally intended, due in part to a complex combination of cultural factors influencing cognitive style. DMI remains enthusiastic about DNH and plans to continue promoting DNH uptake, while working to address the concerns and adaptations indicated by the action research findings. The recommendations of the research team center on increased DNH capacity building, follow-up and mentoring. Nevertheless, when faced with the intensive training required to produce skilled DNH practitioners, and to encourage active DNH application at the level of organizational planning, the DMI has begun to grapple with the reality that effective dissemination will not be fast. Even DNH, as one of the simplest conflict sensitivity tools available, can become difficult to implement, “given shortages of staff, time and money” (Schmelzle 2005).

In contrast, DNH project impact analysis is quickly grasped and appreciated by religious actors in Singapore. This finding suggests that the cognitive dissonance seen in Mindanao in relation to the analytical and planning-oriented underpinnings of DNH may pertain more to mainstream Mindanowan culture, or to the style difference between ‘frameworkers’ and ‘circlers’ (Neufeldt 2007), than to the

professional culture found within the religious sector. However, despite the quick conceptual grasp of Singaporean participants, the DNH framework is being used sparingly there, due to conflicted perceptions about its relevance in a setting of latent conflict and restricted associational influence, as well as limited capacity building follow-up. The relatively small scope of the Singaporean testing effort reflects the difficulty of gaining a sustained audience for conflict sensitivity in Singapore, and the importance of contextualizing conflict sensitivity to the 'felt needs' of a given practitioner audience, as well as sustained exposure over time. In effect, while the Singapore testing process alone would not be sufficient for drawing conclusions on conflict sensitivity applicability, it provides an essential cross-check to aid in interpreting Mindanao findings. The weight of the facilitation effort is a common theme across the two testing sites, as further considered in my Chapter Seven analysis on the overall applicability of conflict sensitivity to religious associations.

## **CHAPTER SIX: THE APPLICABILITY OF CONFLICT SENSITIVITY TO RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATIONS**

*The best way to understand something is to try to change it.*  
- Popularly attributed to action research pioneer Kurt Lewin  
(Greenwood and Levin 2007: 18)

This chapter builds on the empirical action research findings described in Chapter Five to consider the answers to the project's first level of research questions regarding conflict sensitivity: Is conflict sensitivity applicable (relevant and useful) in helping religious associations to improve their social impact in multifaith conflict-vulnerable contexts? If so, to what extent, and in what ways? While Chapter Five was focused on the analysis of participant data, this chapter represents my own assessment of the findings, independent of the conclusion of Mindanowan and Singaporean partners. Central to this chapter is the question of how conflict sensitivity differs in the religious sector as compared to the aid sector. To that end, the chapter considers emergent conflict sensitivity literature and external data from both sectors, not available at the time of action research design, which necessarily influences my own conclusions.

In considering the relevance and usefulness of conflict sensitivity for religious associations, my conclusion is a qualified 'yes.' The participating religious actors clearly see conflict sensitivity as very useful, even though some in Singapore perceived conflict sensitivity as less pressing in urgency due to the latent and often unrecognized nature of Singapore's social cleavages. In both locations, the action research data link conflict sensitivity uptake to an increased awareness of the social context, including intergroup conflict, and the idea that one's own activities might

interact with this social context. Among individuals, there has been noteworthy change in beliefs, values and behaviors, marking a spiritualized shift from exclusiveness to inclusiveness. Among organizations, despite various delays and inconsistencies, the Mindanao data reveal a progressive adjustment of associational practices, including the development of the intercommunal structures so lauded in the associational literature (Putnam 2000, Varshney 2002).

As anticipated in Chapter Two, the introduction of conflict sensitivity to the new religious audience requires some adaptation of the conceptual levels of complexity and points of entry. More surprisingly, three areas of dissonance have surfaced, all of which constrain the identification and rectification of unintended negative impacts on conflict. These areas of dissonance arise in both the broad concepts of conflict sensitivity and the specific features of the Do No Harm (Anderson 1999) framework selected for testing. I examine here the de-emphasis of the practice of project impact analysis, the influence of religious beliefs regarding unintentional harm, and the risk of overlooking structural violence (Galtung 1969). These three areas of dissonance give rise to several dilemmas in determining how to best adapt conflict sensitivity approaches to equip practitioners in the religious sector.

Finally, there is strong evidence that project impact analysis patterns are unique in the religious sector as compared to the humanitarian aid sector, and must be re-identified through field-based research. This, too, was anticipated in Chapter Two. Thus I return now to the empirical data to analyze in greater detail the preliminary patterns identified, primarily in Mindanao, and supplemented by comparison from Singapore. Such impact patterns have far-reaching socio-political

significance, which underscores the importance of practitioners conducting and applying accurate project impact analyses. Further, these findings contribute significantly to what will be a longer process of identifying religious sector impact patterns through field-based research in multiple contexts, and lay a rich foundation for the theoretical implications to be elaborated in Chapters Seven and Eight on the associational conflict impacts of nPCROs (non-peace and conflict resolution organizations).

### **The Practice of Project Impact Analysis**

In the humanitarian aid sector, the original primary purpose of the DNH framework was to analyze the impact of a particular project or activity on the surrounding context of intergroup relationships. Thus it is striking that in Mindanao, the participating religious actors rarely conceptualize or utilize DNH as a tool for project impact analysis. Instead, they tend to associate DNH with the broader concept of avoiding unintentional harm, usually to intergroup relations, but sometimes to other aspects of community life. DNH's context analysis components (Dividers and Connectors) are used more frequently than its impact analysis components, and the widespread use of DNH for personal growth and peacebuilding purposes obscures DNH's more minimalist (Duffield 2001b: 94) function of identifying and avoiding unintended negative impact. In Singapore, participants were quicker to conceptualize DNH as a tool for project impact analysis, yet follow-up mentoring was not possible, and post-training follow-up interviews revealed that few participants were applying DNH project impact analysis in their work.

This lack of project impact analysis could be seen as a potential indicator of mismatch between conflict sensitivity and the religious sector. At the same time, it was previously known that repeated DNH exposure improves the consistency and accuracy of uptake (CDA Collaborative Learning Projects 2001, Garred 2006a), so one might deduce that the answer lies in more capacity building. Importantly CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, the originator of DNH, began in early 2009 to disseminate the findings from a series of field-based case studies on DNH usage. CDA's findings were released just as my own action research fieldwork was concluding, so they informed neither my project design nor my consultations with field-based partners. Nonetheless, CDA has provided some rather dramatic updates regarding DNH usage patterns in the aid sector. The CDA findings help to discern which aspects of my own findings reflect conflict sensitivity issues that are unique to the religious sector, as opposed to issues common to all conflict sensitivity practitioners.

First, CDA found that a significant percentage of people exposed to DNH do not actually use the tool (CDA Collaborative Learning Projects 2009b). To a greater extent than was previously appreciated, it is now clear that repeated training and mentoring is required to bring practitioners to the point of operationalizing DNH (Garred and Goddard 2010)<sup>164</sup>. This prompts the question of whether the DNH tool or the training methods might be revised to support more efficient uptake. CDA also appears to be giving more attention to issues of overall organizational capacity to support operational mainstreaming of conflict sensitivity (Doughty 2008: 17), akin to

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<sup>164</sup> I served as a consultant on CDA's reflective case study in Mindanao in 2010. This case study came late in a multicountry series, so it also reflects the emerging learnings from other contexts.



the approach advocated by Barbolet et al. (2005b, see also De la Haye and Moyroud 2003). Significantly, these CDA findings indicate that general delays and inconsistencies in operational uptake are not unique to the religious sector, while at the same time affirming the relative usability of DNH for local and grassroots practitioners (CDA Collaborative Learning Projects 2008a).

Second, CDA found that explicit project impact analysis was surprisingly rare in the aid sector, as it was in my own religious sector data. A similar ambiguity regarding the purpose of DNH (CDA Collaborative Learning Projects 2009a), and the frequent use of the tool for peacebuilding purposes (Goddard 2009), have been commonly found among aid sector practitioners. Further, CDA's findings illustrate very clearly that some people use DNH as the originally intended analytical 'tool,' but many others use DNH as a 'lens' (CDA Collaborative Learning Projects 2008a, Garred and Goddard 2010). Neufeldt's (2007) typology of 'frameworker' and 'circler' users in peace and conflict impact analysis resonates closely here. Such differences in usage are often linked to personality or culture, in addition to varied levels of training and practice. In a revealing bit of humor, one Mindanowan female pastor expressed strong enthusiasm for DNH, yet her husband pointed out that "every time you go to that seminar, you get a headache."<sup>165</sup> She is, in all likelihood, a 'circler' rather than a 'frameworker.' Importantly, both 'circler' and 'frameworker' styles can be effective in improving social impact (Neufeldt 2007, CDA Collaborative Learning Projects 2008a).

Finally, CDA findings indicate that many more people use DNH's context analysis components (Dividers and Connectors) than its project impact analysis

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<sup>165</sup> Field notes, 25 Aug. 2008.

components. In focusing on Dividers and Connectors, the rest of the analysis often becomes implicit. It is rarely articulated and almost never written, yet it may be present in the practitioner's thinking, leading to effective program design decisions (CDA Collaborative Learning Projects 2008a). The strong emphasis on Dividers and Connectors was also very present in the Mindanao data. Again, these emerging usage patterns suggest that the de-emphasis of DNH project impact analysis is not necessarily unique to the religious sector. To a certain extent, the CDA findings alleviate the need to grapple with the lack of project impact analysis as a potential indicator of mismatch between conflict sensitivity and the religious sector.

CDA prioritizes the preferences of the end user when emphasizing that there are multiple ways to make effective use of DNH. Specifically, emerging CDA documents propose that DNH training could focus primarily on Dividers and Connectors (CDA Collaborative Learning Projects 2008a), and they propose an alternative DNH framework that de-emphasizes the details of project impact analysis (CDA Collaborative Learning Projects 2010). If such changes serve to support 'circlers' equally with 'frameworkers,' and if both types of users reach the stage of DNH operationalization, then the new training approaches hold much promise. If, however, such changes encourage practitioners to remain content with DNH conceptualization and personalization, without moving on to operationalization, then the de-emphasis of project impact analysis may come at a very high cost. DMI's research team leader expressed the dilemma as follows: "At first, I used LCP only for my individual transformation, not really in planning. I didn't find out what were the

impacts of my actions. It's good to use LCP for our personal transformation, but we shouldn't stop there. We should analyze our impact."<sup>166</sup>

## **Religious Culture and Unintended Negative Impact**

Closely related to the question of project impact analysis are the Mindanao findings indicating some reluctance in identifying unintended negative impact on intergroup relations. To be sure, when participants recognize that their actions might have undesirable side effects, this realization significantly influences mindsets and actions. Yet for many participating religious actors, the recognition of unintended negative impact was slow and/or limited in comparison to aid sector practitioners. Unintended negative impact sometimes went unidentified, and was often framed differently as an opportunity for change to achieve positive impact.<sup>167</sup>

The DMI research team attributed this dissonance largely to differences between the professional culture of the aid sector, from whence conflict sensitivity arose, and the religious sector. Indeed, the intense scrutiny faced by international aid organizations from the 1990s onwards (see for example Maren 1997) has made many aid professionals highly conscious of unintended consequences of all kinds. On the other hand, Mindanowan religious actors were found to be more focused on the positive than the negative, more on spiritual practices than on the surrounding socio-political context, and more on religious motives rather than service outcomes (Davao Ministerial Interfaith Inc. 2010: 60).<sup>168</sup> Similarly, the aid sector also fosters a culture of

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<sup>166</sup> Prt. MI #39, quoted in DMI's *Transformed Together* (2010: 59).

<sup>167</sup> Research team consultation notes, Davao, 13-14 Aug. 2008.

<sup>168</sup> I drafted *Transformed Together*, reflecting the research team's conclusions and detailed editorial guidance.

analysis and planning, which is not necessarily a priority for religious leaders in Mindanao. One key DMI leader has observed that it is a “challenge to integrate the LCP framework, because most of religious leaders are not oriented in planning and evaluation.”<sup>169</sup>

Even for religious actors who grasp the concept of unintended negative impact on intergroup relations, certain religious beliefs may prevent these actors from applying the concept to their own work. The DMI research team noted a tendency to “believe that our relationship to Almighty God / Allah, or our role as religious leaders, prevents us from making serious mistakes” (Davao Ministerial Interfaith Inc. 2010: 60). The research team understood this belief to exist among both Christians and Muslims. In subsequent research, a Roman Catholic DMI member commented on her first DNH training as follows (Garred and Goddard 2010: 13): “I felt confused about Dividers and Connectors and Impacts. When your intentions are good, isn’t it always a good impact? I believed that the Lord would straighten any crooked lines I made. I will do my best, but God will take care of the rest. Maybe negative impacts were part of God’s plan.” However after repeated training, this member later became an active DNH user.

A similar reluctance to consider error has also been found in experimental conflict sensitivity work conducted within the religious sector in Indonesia, approximately concurrent with the collaborative action research process in Mindanao. World Vision Indonesia has worked with academic partners to develop a

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<sup>169</sup> Prt. MI #57, interview by author of project resource persons, Davao, 24 Oct. 2008, audio recording.

series of pilot trainings framed around the paradigm of 'inclusiveness.'<sup>170</sup> The focus on inclusion obviously parallels the prominent themes of inclusion and exclusion that emerged from Mindanao and Singapore as central to social impact in the religious sector. However in this case, the effort did not include Muslims, because the initial effort to facilitate engagement between Roman Catholic and Protestant Christians of various denominations was considered sufficient challenge for early phases. DNH formed only part of the curriculum, which was broadened to include other social impact issues and tools. Importantly, one of the difficulties encountered in using DNH was hesitancy in grasping unintended negative impact. In the experience of a lead facilitator, some participants held implicitly to the idea that "they are church leaders, they cannot be wrong."<sup>171</sup> Further, when the facilitator lacked status in their eyes, due to being female or not being an ordained member of the clergy, it was even more difficult to encourage participants to consider unintended negative impacts.

In addition to reluctance to consider error, there are indications that some types of religious beliefs imply that certain truth claims must naturally engender conflict. In the current study, this belief was found most commonly among Protestant Evangelical Christians. One Mindanowan pastor has embraced DNH but he still wonders: "Can peace be maintained if wickedness will continue to grow?"<sup>172</sup> More pointedly, a Singaporean lay leader in my own Anglican church responded to stories of my interfaith work with a blunt question about evangelism: "Whilst I subscribe to living peacefully among all men regardless of race, language or religion,

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<sup>170</sup> Terry Silalahi, phone interview by author, Jakarta, Indonesia, 28 Nov. 2008. Terry is a former peacebuilding coordinator of World Vision Indonesia. Her comments represent her own views, not necessarily those of other participants.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Prt. MI #80, long-form survey of DMI members, Davao, Jan. 2008.

how do we reconcile that with God's Great Commission<sup>173</sup> to make disciples of all nations?"<sup>174</sup> Again, when I conducted an April 2010 DNH training in Germany, an Evangelical Protestant missionary became visibly agitated and stated: "Jesus said that he did not come to bring peace, but a sword."<sup>175</sup> Some people don't accept Him, and that will result in conflict. So sometimes isn't it necessary for us to 'do harm?'"<sup>176</sup> Thus some religious actors would argue that if one believes in universal truths, then it may not be right to sacrifice those truths for the sake of peace. Religious DNH practitioners therefore ground conflict sensitivity in scriptural reflection, providing their co-religionists with a scriptural rationale for the practice.<sup>177</sup>

Where religion overlaps or conflates with the identity of groups in conflict, as in Mindanao, Singapore and much of Southeast Asia, religious beliefs that obscure unintended negative impact may indeed do significant harm to intergroup relations. Religious culture, specifically the learned, shared patterns of beliefs, values and behaviors within a particular group (Bennett 1998: 3), may be a significant determinant of conflict impact. The dissonance between DNH and religious culture, far from indicating a mismatch, may be a strong indicator that the concept of unintended negative impact is relevant within the religious sector.

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<sup>173</sup> In Evangelical Christian discourse, 'the Great Commission' refers to New Testament teachings on sharing one's faith with others, particularly as expressed in Matthew 28:18-20. In Singapore, the Anglican Church leans towards an Evangelical interpretation of this passage.

<sup>174</sup> Field notes, 19 Mar. 2008.

<sup>175</sup> The scriptural reference here is to Matthew 10:34-36.

<sup>176</sup> Field notes, 14 Apr. 2010.

<sup>177</sup> Terry Silalahi, phone interview by author, Jakarta, Indonesia, 28 Nov. 2008. The importance of scriptural justification is also reflected in the use of biblical and qur'anic quotes in DMI's *Transformed Together* (2010).

## Structural Violence and Unintended Negative Impact

In Chapter Two, my analysis of the conflict sensitivity literature surfaced a key question about the place of social justice in the DNH framework. Issues of injustice would be expected to appear in a DNH context analysis of Dividers, which are framed broadly across categories that include attitudes, social systems, and historical experiences.<sup>178</sup> However, DNH does not explicitly use 'justice' terminology, and its emphasis on harmonious relationships is sometimes misinterpreted as a call to avoid raising contentious issues. This muted stance on justice issues contrasts with the conflict sensitivity work of Bush, who strongly foregrounds both justice and empowerment (2005, 2009). Further, DNH context analysis is primarily local, thus it may overlook macro-political issues of structural injustice (Leonhardt 2002: 146, Duffield 2001a, Macrae and Leader 2001). On the other hand, the recognized strengths of DNH include its adaptability (Leonhardt 2003: 55) and amenability to uptake by local actors (Garred 2006b, International Alert et al. 2004b: 28). I argued that social justice concerns must be seriously examined, yet this must be done in a way that considers the practical needs of the conflict sensitivity user. Local users should have the freedom to pitch the analysis at their own level of operational and ethical responsibility, without being burdened by external expectations. This, too, is an important form of empowerment.

The action research findings demonstrate that the concern regarding the place of social justice in DNH usage is indeed justified. This issue manifests itself in the data in at least two ethically troubling ways. First, in terms of common themes across

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<sup>178</sup> The complete list of 'dividers' categories in the original DNH framework is as follows: 1) Systems and Institutions; 2) Attitudes and Actions; 3) Values and Interests; 4) Different Experiences; and 5) Symbols and Occasions.

all participant DNH analyses, the findings of exclusion along ethnic and religious lines were quicker to emerge than the findings of exclusion along socio-economic lines. The former appeared quickly in the pilot study, while the latter emerged only through detailed data analysis. To the extent that socio-economic gaps overlap ethno-religious lines of identity, those socio-economic gaps were never completely overlooked. Yet the persistence with which the socio-economic theme eventually emerged prompts the question of whether it was initially obscured either by the DNH framework itself, or by the way in which that framework was being used by myself and/or project participants.

Secondly, among DNH analyses conducted by individuals, the Mindanao data reveal that participants vary widely in their willingness and ability to direct critical scrutiny towards the positioning or actions of their own ethno-religious identity group. DNH may be applied to interpersonal communications before it is applied to the deeper issues of systemic injustice. Thus the aforementioned story<sup>179</sup> of the ethnically dominant migrant neighborhood council member / Christian lay leader who informed his indigenous constituents that they could not recover their previously owned lands, yet took care to verbalize this statement “in a nice manner,”<sup>180</sup> is now seen by the research team as an iconic example of dissonance in DNH usage. The team attributes this phenomenon largely to newer DNH users with insufficient training, mentoring and practice over time. Their conclusion bears some weight, for the research team itself, whose members have experienced significantly more DNH mentoring than other participants, shows evidence of a much stronger

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<sup>179</sup> See Chapter Five.

<sup>180</sup> Prt. MI #26, interview by author of regional sister agencies, Sarangani, Philippines, 10 July 2008, translated.



capacity to identify deep Dividers associated with their own ethno-religious groups (Davao Ministerial Interfaith Inc. 2010: 56-65).

Solid research team conclusions notwithstanding, it is useful to probe more deeply the factors that contribute to the phenomenon of limited self-critique. Where local participants are 'insiders' conducting a DNH analysis of their own context, it requires mental and emotional effort to recognize the divisive aspects of one's own ethno-religious identity. In other words, it is not easy to overcome one's 'blind spots.' Those blind spots are likely to persist in contexts of latent conflict, where many citizens are unaware of the subtle divisions that exist in their communities. Where physical violence is not present, as in Singapore and some parts of Mindanao, structural violence (Galtung 1969) can be difficult to recognize, particularly if one's own identity group is aligned with the perpetrators. Importantly, 'orthodox' DNH practice originally assumed that DNH users would be international NGOs, implying a high percentage of expatriate staff. CDA acknowledges that expatriates may have blind spots (CDA Collaborative Learning Projects 2008a), but CDA has not often warned of the blind spots that may exist among locals.

Indeed, the warning was voiced most clearly by the Singaporean participant who cautioned that DNH users "should not impose their (own) values . . . So the tool may not be useful if it involves fanatics."<sup>181</sup> While the term 'fanatic' likely applies only to an extremely small and inflexible minority, the data do demonstrate that limited capacity for self-critique can prevent a DNH user from identifying unintended negative impact on conflict. Blind spots can prevent the recognition that one's services are causing harm. Further, DNH usage patterns that consistently deal

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<sup>181</sup> Prt. S #7, follow-up interview by author, Singapore, 9 Jan. 2009.

lightly with issues of structural violence may unintentionally legitimize and reinforce this shallow analysis in the minds of the DNH users and their partners. This phenomenon recalls the argument that an emphasis on bridging social capital maybe insufficient where certain groups are suffering oppression (Arneil 2006). Thus the important question is how to assist DNH users to ensure that the mindset shift prompted by DNH remains progressive and ongoing, even to the point of critiquing one's own ethno-religious heritage and its implications for current power structures.

### **Dilemmas in Practitioner Capacity Building**

The combined weight of the areas of dissonance explored above, all of which constrain the identification of unintended negative impacts on conflict, prompts one to consider afresh whether conflict sensitivity is in fact relevant and useful to the religious sector. My conclusion is a qualified yes. In both Mindanao and Singapore, conflict sensitivity testing brought about a significant increase in religious actors' awareness of the possibility of doing harm to intergroup relationships, amounting to a unique 'mindset shift' that no other known approach, indigenous or external has been able to produce. The fact that this awareness remains incomplete and inconsistent is not unique to the religious sector, and does not necessarily mean that the work should be stopped. The significant gains achieved, reinforced by the enthusiasm of the project participants themselves, indicate that conflict sensitivity work should proceed, supported by a concerted effort to address areas of shortcomings.

The obvious question, then, is specifically how to address the shortcomings. Replacing DNH with another framework is not particularly promising, since consistency of operationalization has been a persistent challenge across the broad gamut of conflict sensitivity approaches (Lange 2004). This project's findings underscore DNH's unique grassroots usability, and significant contributions to individual development, both of which would likely be compromised in switching to a different tool. Conflict sensitivity approaches are amenable to adaptation and re-combination, so it appears promising to retain those aspects of the DNH framework that have proven advantageous, while contextualizing and adapting those aspects that are problematic. The primary areas requiring attention are social justice content and capacity building methodologies, with attention to the importance of religious cultures.

With regard to social justice content, the DNH Dividers analysis does create an implicit 'space' for the identification of power imbalances and such issues can be drawn out in detail by a skilled facilitator. Participant perspectives do usually deepen over time, and DNH users can be encouraged to alternate perspectives through consulting 'the other' during DNH analysis, and through supplementary training such as the Culture of Peace. Such considerations do require broadening somewhat the scope of analysis, perhaps from the micro-level to the meso-level, though not necessarily to the global level advocated by Duffield (2001b). Unfortunately, these solutions require a great deal of training input and capacity, which may not always be available. As an alternative partial solution, the DNH framework itself could be adjusted to elicit a more explicit consideration of structural violence issues. It is possible to add a new category of Dividers, perhaps simply entitled 'injustice,' or by

drawing on Bush (2009) to highlight political and economic structures and issues of empowerment. This would provide practitioners with an initial nudge towards identifying structural violence issues, even in the absence of prompting by a facilitator.

There are complex ethical issues involved in expanding the place of social justice within DNH. The vast majority of the participants finds the context analysis components of DNH both simple and useful, and has not expressed any interest in changing them. Pushing such participants to consider social justice problems, in which their own ethno-religious groups may be complicit, can realistically be expected to cause psychological discomfort. The requirements of social justice and the preferences of the grassroots conflict sensitivity user, two principles which are central to reflexive practice in relation to insider and outsider roles, appear to conflict with each other in the field. Further, the politics of conflict sensitivity issues in the community are often distinct from the politics of conflict sensitivity process among project planners (Schmelzle 2005: 7). Action research strongly encourages work that transforms the self-view and worldview of the people involved (McTaggart 1997: 40, Bradbury and Reason 2001: 452), and ethical delicacy is a recognized aspect of any process of consciousness-raising (Blum 1955: 312, Cannella and Perez 2009: 179). However, I as the research facilitator am an outsider, not only in terms of occupational role, but in terms of cultural background. My own country, the USA, contributes to the conflict in ways that many Mindanowans consider unfavorable (Jubair 2007: 67-9). Thus it is preferable for these justice issues to be raised with local participants by DMI's own trainers. As of this writing, the emergent idea of

modifying the original DNH framework to include justice issues has not yet been discussed with the research team, so this remains an essential next step.

With regard to capacity building methodologies, the Mindanao research team has addressed the findings on incomplete project impact analysis by recommending training-driven solutions, including repeated training and mentoring, coupled with adapted methodologies that balance the DNH emphasis on negative impact with positive examples more appealing in the religious sector. These recommendations are backed by solid evidence, and yet they point also to practical dilemmas. Most obviously, even after equipping a pool of DNH trainers within DMI, skill and availability varies widely among the trainers. Such varied ToT results are not unusual in the humanitarian aid sector, or in the Indonesia-based training in inclusive paradigms.<sup>182</sup> There are not enough skilled trainers available to meet capacity building needs, and DMI still struggles to obtain training funds on a workshop-by-workshop basis. Therefore it seems unlikely that DNH practice will soon become sustainable within DMI's networks in the absence of continued investment from World Vision. Similarly, the Singapore pilot phase findings indicated that religious community service organizations are small with limited capacity, so conflict sensitivity tools must be quickly learned and easily applied.

Further, current DNH training methodologies were derived from the humanitarian aid sector, and still place a corresponding emphasis on the development of analytical skill, for the purpose of formal programmatic planning. Empirical results toward this end have faltered. On the other hand, shifts in participant mindset, including increased awareness of the social context and the

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<sup>182</sup> Terry Silalahi, phone interview by author, Jakarta, Indonesia, 28 Nov. 2008.

possibility of unintended negative impacts, have been among the most encouraging results of conflict sensitivity testing. For religious actors who are more focused on spiritual development than community-based service delivery, training for mindset shift may be more effective than training for analytical skill. Training for mindset shift may also incur lower costs, because it requires shorter workshops, although it does not eliminate the need for follow-up and mentoring. Training approaches could be adjusted accordingly, depending on the professional profile and cognitive style of a given participant group, in effect allowing the numerous 'circlers' to learn in the way that best meets their needs, without precluding the option of additional training for any 'frameworkers' who are interested in more rigorous applications (Neufeldt 2007). Such changes would require testing, to ensure that the new capacity building approaches support the participants' capacity to carry out project impact analysis implicitly, without allowing project impact analysis to fall into disuse. In effect, this means training for mindset shift followed by operationalization.

Importantly, this idea of training for mindset shift plus operationalization has been influenced by the recent learnings from CDA and World Vision Indonesia, so it differs significantly from the recommendations of the DMI research team itself. The team has identified shortcomings to be addressed in DNH practice. In fact, the team's recognition of the unexpected findings on incomplete project impact analysis, and their subsequent actions to feed these concerns back into the community of participants (Davao Ministerial Interfaith Inc. 2010: 57-65), represent a solid example of "double loop learning" (Argyris et al. 1985). Nonetheless, the team has not yet considered a major change in training approach as a means of addressing this challenge. To maintain the project's strong internal credibility, "the practical

decisions about what counts as a sustainable move towards improvement” (McTaggart 1997: 36) – at least in the context of Mindanao – must be made by the insiders. This implies that another face-to-face consultation with the research team is warranted, to discuss with them the emergent learnings from CDA and other sources, and support them in drawing their own conclusions.

Lest this appear to be a simple case of tension between insider and outsider roles, it is noteworthy to point out that the current position of the research team does not necessarily represent wisdom indigenous to the local religious sector. In reality, DMI was trained and mentored in DNH by humanitarian aid workers, using approaches and methodologies derived in the humanitarian aid sector. The DMI trainers who gained greatest proficiency appear, not surprisingly, to be ‘frameworkers’ by nature, implying that perhaps ‘circlers’ (Neufeldt 2007) have fared less well under this system. This observation, too, will no doubt be of interest to the research team, as its members continue to consider what it means to adapt DNH to fit the unique strengths and requirements of religious culture. Future capacity building planning could benefit from the understanding that

by using methods or processes that are scientific, verbal, logical and linear, we have to be aware that we are opting for one system of meaning, power, and culture, and not another. By opening our set of methods or processes, we may contribute to shifting meaning, power and culture (Schmelzle 2005: 7).

### **Patterns in Project Impact Analysis**

As previously elaborated, the question of inclusion versus exclusion is the essential pivotal theme of religious sector conflict impact in Mindanao, and is also prominent in Singapore and across Southeast Asian. In both Mindanao and

Singapore, the lines of exclusion are ethnically, religiously and socio-economically defined. The decisions of religious associations regarding whether or not to include 'the other' in membership, service or relationship, and if so on what terms, are critical determinants of how a given project or activity will affect intergroup relationships. Closely related to exclusion is the prominent issue of religious proselytism, a long-standing sensitivity in both Mindanao and Singapore, which often colors both the actions undertaken by religious associations, and the ways in which the public interprets those actions. Mindanao-based religious associations are more likely to engage directly in politics, while their Singaporean counterparts are limited by the prevailing legal restrictions to more subtle and indirect forms of influence. Even so, the issues in play are notably similar in both contexts, and are illustrative of Southeast Asian regional trends.

Based on the fifty-nine DNH frameworks collected in Mindanao, which yielded more than 100 examples of project impact analysis, it is clear that the patterns through which associational projects and services impact on conflict differ significantly in the religious sector, as compared to the humanitarian aid sector in which conflict sensitivity originated. At the broadest level, the two primary impact mechanisms found in the original DNH framework are indeed present in the religious sector. The first, Resource Transfers, refer to conflict impacts resulting from the provision of goods and services both material (e.g. food, clothing) and non-material (e.g. education, leadership opportunities). The second, Implicit Ethical Messages, refer to conflict impacts resulting from the ethos communicated through actions and interactions of project implementers. In the Mindanao religious sector data, Implicit Ethical Messages appeared much more frequently than Resource



Transfers, suggesting a religious sector emphasis on the intangible over the tangible, and on the interpersonal over the material. In contrast, Implicit Ethical Messages usually receive secondary emphasis in the humanitarian aid sector.

At a detailed level, the research team noted in its preliminary Cycle One review of participant project impact analyses some patterns that appeared foreign to the original DNH framework. In an example of spiraling action research practice (Susman and Evered 1978), the research team chose to re-focus the second research cycle on gathering more examples of project impact analysis, in order to analyze the patterns. As a result, the team determined that several of the impact patterns found in the original DNH framework were not common in the Mindanao religious sector. Likewise, we identified a number of new impact patterns not found in the original DNH framework, pointing to the spiritualized nature of a religious leader's work, and the role of religion in a Mindanowan community. We also identified a new type of impact mechanism, called Magnifier Effects, which we considered to be distinct from Resource Transfers and Implicit Ethical Messages. Figure 6.1 below contains a comparison of impact patterns found in the Mindanao data versus the original DNH framework. Importantly, this preliminary identification of new patterns of project impact is an example of emergent theory being generated through action research (Schön 1995: 382).

**Figure 6.1: DNH Conflict Impact Patterns in Mindanao**

<b>Impact Mechanism</b>	<b>Impact Pattern</b>	<b>Original DNH Framework (patterns in aid sector)</b>	<b>Action Research Findings (patterns in Mindanao religious sector)</b>
<b>Resource Transfers</b>			
	Theft (or Diversion)	X	
	Distribution Effects	X	X
	Market Effects	X	
	Substitution Effects	X	
	Legitimization Effects	X	X
<b>Implicit Ethical Messages</b>			
	Arms and Power	X	
	Disrespect, Mistrust & Competition	X	X
	Different Values for Different Lives	X	
	Impunity	X	
	Powerlessness	X	
	Belligerence, Tension and Suspicion	X	
	Publicity	X	
	Different Perspectives on Material Aid		X
	Using Aid for Purposes of Persuasion		X
	Blaming the Other Group		X
	Spiritual Transformation		X
<b>Magnifier Effects</b>			
	Clarity of Intentions		X
	A Religious Leader has Authority		X
	'Washing my Hands' of Social Impact		X

In interpreting the above table, where patterns from the original DNH framework remain unmarked, this does not imply that they do not exist in the Mindanao religious sector, but only that they were not common in the action research data.<sup>183</sup> Due to the limitations in data collection among Muslims and Lumads, particularly in the more remote areas of Mindanao, these patterns should be seen as indicative, but not authoritative, in describing conflict impact in the Mindanao religious sector. Nonetheless, the data certainly speak to the existence of unintended negative impacts, the relevance of conflict sensitivity for religious actors, and the uniqueness of conflict impact patterns in the religious sector. Further, the preliminary impact patterns identified serve to richly illuminate the role of religious associations, and their influence on peace and conflict trends. Each Mindanao pattern is analyzed below in detail, including both examples of unintended negative impact and positive change, followed by a brief comparison with the data emerging from Singapore. In Chapter Seven, these preliminary project impact patterns, as a source of emergent theory derived from action research (Schön 1995: 382), are applied to both inform and challenge the existing body of theory on the ambivalent impacts of religious nPCROs on ethnic conflict.

**Resource Transfers.** In the original DNH framework, *Distribution Effects* refer to the impact of transferring resources, both material and non-material, in quantities that are perceived to be unequal or unfair, particularly where such discrepancies

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<sup>183</sup> The research team analyzed three factors to determine which impact patterns were common in the data: 1) Direct participant voting on the relevance of the original DNH Resource Transfers and Implicit Ethical Messages during two advanced DNH workshops held in Aug. 2008. 2) Team analysis and categorization of the project impact examples found in the participants' DNH frameworks. 3) Team observation of participant discourse during DNH workshops and assessments, with subsequent team deliberations captured in discussion notes and/or audio recordings.

overlap the existing lines of conflict (Anderson 1999: 46). Unequal benefit may be justified by humanitarian criteria, such as targeting the people in most need, while nevertheless damaging intergroup relationships. In the Mindanao religious sector, Distribution Effects manifest themselves particularly prominently in the exclusion of beneficiaries and members along ethno-religious lines, in an ingrained pattern of relational 'homophily' (Lazarsfeld and Merton 1954). Portes and Landolt further refer to the practice of "granting resources to others out of solidarity with members of the same territorial, ethnic or religious community" as "bounded solidarity" (2000: 533, see also Chaturvedi 2009). The local manifestation of this pattern, through which religious associations tend to "give the benefits to people that we perceive are similar to ourselves" (Davao Ministerial Interfaith Inc. 2010: 32), is profoundly structural in nature, affirming the problematic significance of monocommunity in associational structure (Putnam 2000, Varshney 2002). Molenaers (2005) has highlighted similar concerns, although exclusion from benefit in her Nicaragua-based study runs largely along lines of political affiliation.

In terms of projects involving material aid, a clear example of unintended negative impact comes from an Evangelical community development agency that serves Lumads in the semi-rural areas surrounding Davao City. In one village comprised of approximately eighty-five families of converted Lumads, seventy of those families attend the local Evangelical church, while fifteen families attend the newer Seventh Day Adventist church. Religion is a significant cleavage in the village, with the two groups divided over grassroots politics and differing beliefs on pork consumption during public events. In the agency-supported banana-growing cooperative, three out of eighteen member families are Adventists, but there are no

Adventists represented on the governing board of officers. The agency staff members are all Evangelicals. When the staff members bring food and other project materials into the community, they store those goods with the help of Evangelical church members in the home of the Evangelical pastor. This unequal distribution of resources, and of the power to influence resource allocation decisions, leads to the perception that the agency favors Evangelicals. Upon learning DNH, two agency staff realized that this unconscious bias was likely exacerbating the existing tensions between Evangelicals and Adventists. They began to envision new ways to publicly affirm the participation and feedback of the minority Adventist families, without violating the right of the cooperative members to elect their own officers.<sup>184</sup>

The negative impacts of unequal resource allocation are widespread across Mindanao, but religious actors who become conscious of this pattern may choose to challenge and change it. One of the DMI research team members, an Islamic religious teacher and part-time chaplain to Muslim detainees in the Davao City Jail, described his effort to organize medical professionals to offer voluntary clinic services inside the jail. Recognizing the initiative of the Muslim chaplain, the jail authorities offered to prioritize Muslim detainees for medical services. The chaplain declined, recognizing that such preferential treatment would exacerbate the already significant tensions between Muslim, Catholic and Evangelical detainees. Instead, he insisted that medical assistance be offered equally to all. He arranged to have the temporary clinic placed inside the Catholic chapel, and he staffed the clinic with Christian doctors, to make it clear that detainees of all faith backgrounds were

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<sup>184</sup> Prt. MG #26, DNH framework created during introductory DNH workshop for external participants, Davao, 16-17 July 2008. Supplemented with audio recorded analysis by DNH trainer Herminegilda Presbitero-Carrillo, Davao, 18 July 2008.

welcome. This story is told often by DMI members,<sup>185</sup> indicating that they see it as highly significant.

In terms of activities that do not involve material aid, such as the provision of spiritual and educational services, the dominant concern of action research participants is how to overcome the prevailing pattern of separation and exclusion. Religious actors who come to view this pattern as negative may seek to change it, by ensuring that all relevant groups are invited to and represented at a given event. This emphasis on inclusion counters the cultural pattern of exclusion, and it also reflects the cultural prominence of protocol, role/status recognition, and emphasis on interpersonal relationships.<sup>186</sup> A Lumad Evangelical pastor described in detail how he sent invitation letters for an ecumenical interchurch Bible study in South Cotabato Province, resulting in a group comprised of twenty percent Catholic, ten percent Seventh Day Adventist, and seventy percent Evangelical. He describes how “it increase the connectors coz they relay the message that this foundation is open to every religious sector . . . everyone is invited but they are not obliged to attend . . . everyone is invited to participate and make dialogue.”<sup>187</sup> Nonetheless the positive emphasis on inclusion did not guarantee the absence of other unintended negative impacts, for a significant dispute did arise among the Bible study participants when a film shown about Jesus Christ conflicted with the theology of the Adventist participants. The structural integration of associational efforts must be complemented by the quality of the relationships developed among the participants.

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<sup>185</sup> Team discussion, research team consultation, Davao, 15 Jan. 2009, audio recording.

<sup>186</sup> Consolidated Analysis from Action Research Cycle Two, Davao, 6 Dec. 2008.

<sup>187</sup> Prt. MI #56, DNH framework created during advanced DNH workshop for internal participants, Davao, 19-21 Aug. 2008, translated and assisted by a DNH trainer and research team member.

Further, when efforts at inclusion fail, the resulting impact can be negative. An Adventist lay leader in Agusan del Sur Province explains how he intended to invite the elders of a Lumad group, still practicing their indigenous faith, to a seminar at his church. However the invitation did not reach them. The Christian invitees received the invitation directly from the church, but the Lumads' invitation was entrusted to a local politician, a candidate for an upcoming barangay council election. That candidate gave the invitation away to a different party, in order to boost his own electoral popularity. As a result, the relationship between Adventists and Lumads remained at best unchanged, and at worse strained.<sup>188</sup> Further, the Adventist church inadvertently contributed to dishonest election practices, an impact illustrative of the Legitimization Effects pattern described below.

In the original DNH framework, *Legitimization Effects* refer to the social impact of aid agencies' collaboration with local leaders, including both governmental and non-governmental actors (such as para-militaries or warlords) (Anderson 1999: 50). Recognition of local leaders is often viewed as a public endorsement, which can be positive if the role of the local leader is conducive to peace and justice, but negative if he or she uses authority in ways that exacerbate conflict. Molenaers similarly demonstrates how resources channeled through local leaders are likely to reinforce, rather than challenge, existing patterns of inequity (Molenaers 2005: 155). Legitimization Effects appear consistently in the Mindanao data, illustrating the intensive and complex interactions between religious and political actors and institutions in that setting. Further, the analysis of Legitimization Effects also points

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<sup>188</sup> Prt. MI #25, DNH framework created during advanced DNH workshop for internal participants, Davao, 19-21 Aug. 2008. Supplemented with event documentation of small and large group discussions on the same topic.

to a degree of overlap between religious and political roles. At least five of the project participants<sup>189</sup> themselves contested a local election, held an office, or were married to an office holder, during the course of the project.

Legitimization Effects are apparent in the above example of the banana-growing cooperative supported by an Evangelical community development agency. This Lumad community is divided between Evangelicals and Adventists. In the recent past, tensions resulted when the Sitio<sup>190</sup> Leader (an elected local government executive) gave permission for outside Adventist missionaries to construct an Adventist church inside the village without consulting the Sitio Council, which was comprised of the Evangelical pastor and several of his Evangelical church members. The Sitio Leader later became a member of the new Adventist church. Thus the religious cleavage now parallels a political conflict, and the agency's bias towards Evangelicals now implies an endorsement of one of the parties to political conflict. Further, when agency staff members visit the community, they stay in the home of the Evangelical pastor (and Sitio Council member). The staff are not allowed to stay in the home of the Sitio Leader (and Adventist church member), despite the fact that it is centrally located at the entrance to the village. This agency management decision is security-based, because the Sitio Leader is considered to be a drunkard. The close

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<sup>189</sup> The five known to occupy these roles include M-I #56, M-I #26, M-I #40, M-I #8, and one Muslim 'Sultan' attending the DNH workshop of 28-29 Nov. 2008. The actual number is probably significantly higher. Roman Catholic priests in active service are not permitted to contest elections, but Catholic lay leaders may do so, along with Evangelical and Muslim leaders.

<sup>190</sup> The *sitio* is the smallest unit of local governance in the Philippines.



collaboration of the agency staff strongly endorses the Evangelical pastor, and in so doing it also publicly endorses the Sitio Council in its conflict with the Sitio Leader.<sup>191</sup>

On the whole, Mindanao religious actors considered local governance, and their own engagement with it, to be a conflict sensitivity issue of primary importance. In their framework examples, many participants considered local government leaders to be actual or potential Connectors, thus implying that religious actors should consult or 'tap' the local leaders in order to strengthen peace.<sup>192</sup> Cooperation with local leaders is also considered a key to 'protocol,' the unwritten rules of respectful engagement in community affairs, further contributing to stability and order.<sup>193</sup> By the same logic, failing to 'tap' local leaders is considered to undermine valuable Connectors. For example, a Visayan Catholic lay leader commenting on educational support to Lumad children identified several positive social impacts, yet lamented the fact that he had not consulted the Barangay Captain, a man known to be "fair in all his dealings between Lumad and Visaya."<sup>194</sup> Importantly, less prominent in the participant examples, but consistently present in the discourse at action research events, was a concern over power abuse by local officials. The DMI Chair has emphasized that religious leaders must support local authorities, but must not tolerate evil or corruption, and must not be afraid of confrontation. He urges his

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<sup>191</sup> Prt. MG #26, DNH framework created during introductory DNH workshop for external participants, Davao, 16-17 July 2008. Supplemented with audio recorded analysis by DNH trainer Herminegilda Presibitero-Carrillo, Davao, 18 July 2008.

<sup>192</sup> Consolidated Analysis from Action Research Cycle Two, Davao, 6 Dec. 2008, 13.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>194</sup> Prt. MI #81, DNH framework created during introductory DNH workshop for external participants, Davao, 16-17 July 2008, translated and assisted by a DNH trainer and research team member.

colleagues to strengthen Connectors by upholding the law of the land, even where it conflicts with the practice of local government leaders.<sup>195</sup>

**Implicit Ethical Messages.** The work of religious leaders emphasizes ethical teaching, delivered intentionally and explicitly. When religious leaders learn DNH, much self-discovery revolves around the impact of ethical messages sent unintentionally and implicitly, through unconscious words and actions that position one's own identity group vis-à-vis 'the other.' The pattern of *Disrespect, Mistrust and Competition*, found in the original DNH framework (Anderson 1999: 56), was particularly prominent in the Mindanao action research data. This phenomenon is driven by widespread, unspoken beliefs that "it's hard for groups with different beliefs to work together" (Davao Ministerial Interfaith Inc. 2010: 36), and that one should not mix with people who have religious beliefs that are different and probably inferior. *Disrespect, Mistrust and Competition* describes the human attitudes and behaviors that complement the structurally-oriented Distribution Effects described above, such that structural and non-structural elements work together to create a far-reaching system of ethno-religious separation and exclusion. This finding echoes the comments of external analysts regarding "sectarian tendencies" (Ferrer 1997: 8) in civil society and intense competition among Filipino NGOs (Clarke 1998: 209). When religious actors come to view this pattern as negative, and seek to change it, they consistently advocate change in both resource distribution patterns and behaviors.

When the prominence of *Disrespect, Mistrust and Competition* became apparent in the data, the research team discussed how to break down more

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<sup>195</sup> Prt. MI #57, event documentation of DNH Training of Trainers, Davao, 19 Oct. 2007.

specifically the perceptions that fuel exclusion between each dyad within Mindanao's complex multigroup society. First, between Muslims and Christians, the team articulated fears and mistrust borne of historical conflict dynamics, with Muslims anticipating exploitation and oppression from Christians, and Christians anticipating violence from Muslims. Muslims simultaneously anticipate that Christians, both Catholic and Evangelical, will seek to convert them to Christianity. Secondly, between Catholic and Evangelical Christians, the team articulated strong mutual feelings of superiority based on religious beliefs and practices. Evangelicals also have a strong feeling of 'being right,' pertaining mainly to their 'born again' doctrines of individual salvation, while Catholics anticipate a corresponding pressure to convert. Finally, among Evangelicals the research team observed a thriving competition between Evangelical denominations and churches, undergirded by feelings of superiority in the details of religious belief and practice, and by the drive to increase the number of church participants and members.<sup>196</sup>

Given the prominence of the conversion issue, an example is useful in illustrating the dynamics encountered by DMI in the field. The DMI Care Group<sup>197</sup> that meets in the Marapangi neighborhood in the periphery of Davao City has made significant progress in integrating Evangelicals and Catholics. Like other DMI Care Groups, this effort was launched by Evangelical pastors, but the majority of the community members were Catholics. The suspicion of a conversion agenda was strong, and overcoming this obstacle required significant time, effort and openness to change on both sides. One of the original Evangelical leaders explains how the

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<sup>196</sup> Consolidated Analysis from Action Research Cycle Two, Davao, 6 Dec. 2008, 4.

<sup>197</sup> Further background on the DMI Care Groups can be found in Chapter Five.

process started: “There is a tension, because they are Catholic, and the one who gave their Bible Study is a pastor. So they could not understand, why like this, and why like that. In their mind, we will have to bring them in our church.”<sup>198</sup> A Catholic member concurs: “Before they can’t understand . . . Because at the first place, the pastor is the one who made the Bible study, they might be converted to their own church, because some of the members are Catholic. Now they understand that even if we have different religion or denomination, still Bible study is continuing.”<sup>199</sup>

When asked how such change was achieved, Care Group members describe a process based on implicit DNH thinking, without articulating any formal project impact analysis. Their strategy included elements of developing shared leadership, flexibility in religious practice, and building on spiritual common ground. An early step was to respect local ‘protocol’ by making a courtesy call to the Catholic Parish Priest, to explain the purpose of the Care Group, and clarify the Group’s intention to respect and uphold the different faith backgrounds of its members. Care Group leaders coordinated their activity plans with the Parish Priest and Council of Elders, and the resulting public approval of these Catholic leaders made it possible for Catholic community members to consider attending the Care Group. Soon, the original Evangelical leaders joined together with a Catholic lay leader<sup>200</sup> who became the Group convener, and partnered with the Evangelicals in visiting Care Group members in their homes. This visibly unique leadership team drew the attention of

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<sup>198</sup> Prt. MI #22, interview by author of Care Group members (MG #35), Davao, 22. Sep. 2008, audio recording.

<sup>199</sup> Prt. MI #106, interview by author of Care Group members (MG #35), Davao, 22. Sep. 2008, audio recording.

<sup>200</sup> *Pangulo sa liturhiya* or PSL.

local Catholics. “They changed their paradigm . . . If even the pastors and the PSL are for peace and are going together, how much more for them.”<sup>201</sup>

In its early stages, the Marapangi Care Group also featured an Evangelical-style time of singing and personal testimonies called ‘worship.’ However some Catholic participants were uncomfortable with the style of this activity, and Group discussion revealed that the term ‘worship’ did not fully reflect the conversational nature of what was taking place. The Group worked together to find a term acceptable to both Catholics and Evangelicals, and decided to change the name of this activity to ‘group sharing.’ Similarly, prayer for the practical needs of Group members, conducted in a mutually acceptable format, is described as a feature that attracts both Catholic and Evangelical members. PIGCG Marapangi is now over eighty percent Catholic, and also includes a few families from alternative churches, such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses, Iglesia ni Kristo and Seventh Day Adventists. Despite this success in Marapangi, it is important to reiterate that there is no Muslim participation in the DMI Care Groups, due in large part to the perception that Care Groups are a venue for encouraging conversion to Christianity. In fact, the Marapangi group attributes part of its success to building on shared aspects of Christian identity (“We have the same Christ, why not to join together?”),<sup>202</sup> and on the biblical scriptures shared by Catholics and Evangelicals, a strategy unlikely to appeal to Muslims. DMI is working towards including Muslims in the Care Groups,

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<sup>201</sup> Prt. MI #3, interview by author of Care Group members (MG #35), Davao, 22. Sep. 2008, audio recording.

<sup>202</sup> Prt. MI #106, interview by author of Care Group members (MG #35), Davao, 22. Sep. 2008, audio recording.

but progress is admittedly slow.<sup>203</sup> Disrespect, mistrust and competition run deep between Evangelicals and Catholics in Mindanao, but even more deeply between Christians and Muslims.

In a closely related pattern, the action research data also point to the importance of *Implicit Ethical Messages involving Material Aid*. Many religious actors in Mindanao, including the members of DMI, are involved in aid work. Some distributions are organized through churches or mosques, or through faith-based aid agencies formally linked to those religious institutions. External aid agencies, both secular and faith-based, also seek to partner with religious leaders due to their high levels of community influence. Religious actors often see material aid in spiritual terms, as a holistic part of a process of spiritual transformation. One Catholic lay leader explains: "It's not only the physical essence of the aid, but also it imparts a message, a religious message, God's message."<sup>204</sup> On the other hand, beneficiary community members may be focused on the material donation itself as a way of meeting their practical needs. In some cases, these differing perceptions cause religious leaders to overlook implementation details that impact the relationships within a community, such as failing to ensure that the quantity and targeting of aid is sufficient to avoid competition amongst beneficiaries, bringing about negative Distribution Effects as described above.<sup>205</sup>

Perhaps more seriously, the aid is sometimes given with the implicit expectation that the recipients will listen to the donors' teachings, or consider

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<sup>203</sup> Summary of Learnings from Action Research Cycle One, Davao, 29 May 2008, 1-2.

<sup>204</sup> Prt. MI #106, research team consultation, Davao, 15-16 Oct. 2008.

<sup>205</sup> DMI has set this aspect apart as a distinct Implicit Ethical Message, entitled 'Different Perspectives on Material Aid,' in order to emphasize the issue for purposes of practitioner capacity building.

converting to the donors' religion or denomination. Such incentive to convert is not limited to the realm of perception. There is a long history of religious pressure in the Philippines (McKenna 1998: 82, Gomez Jr. 2000: 18, Tan 2003a: 5), and the practice of linking aid to conversion, though decreased in recent years, does still exist.

Awareness of conflict impact does not fully resolve the issue, because religious convictions are strong. For example, an Evangelical church from Davao City visited a Lumad village in Davao del Sur Province to donate goods, in partnership with the Evangelical church located in that village. "It was our intention really to conversion. And we are just using the tools, the *ukay-ukay*,<sup>206</sup> food, and whatever that we have brought over there, in order for those people, the Lumads there, whom we do not know, will come to receive us because of those things."<sup>207</sup> The visiting church was aware of the history of abuse of aid, so they did not impose any obligations on the beneficiaries. Nonetheless, "through the good work that we are presenting to the people, we are trying to tell them that we are Christian. That way, indirectly, they will search: 'What is Christianity?' So, maybe we will come again and have a teaching or a seminar."<sup>208</sup> Many of the Lumad villagers were not pleased as the quantity of aid was considered insufficient. Further, existing tensions between the local Evangelical church and other village residents were intensified over the issue of proselytism. Such material incentives to conversion are currently attributed mainly to Evangelicals, but also broadly attributed to Catholics until the mid-twentieth century, and occasionally to Muslims. Where aid is conditional, the conditions are usually religious, but may also point to the involvement of religious actors in political

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<sup>206</sup> Used clothing.

<sup>207</sup> Prt. MI #85, research team consultation, Davao, 15 Jan. 2009, audio recording.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

vote buying.<sup>209</sup> This behavior contributes to the broader atmosphere of exclusion by communicating, in effect, that the price of inclusion is to change one's identity. DMI seeks to counter this trend by encouraging religious leaders to be clear and transparent about their own motivations when giving aid, and establish a clear separation between a material gift and a spiritual message (Davao Ministerial Interfaith Inc. 2010: 44).

The spiritualization of material ministries points also to the emphasis among religious actors on the pursuit of *Spiritual Transformation*. Mindanao participants demonstrate a clear and consistent belief that spiritual activities, such as preaching, teaching, and prayer can impact individuals in ways that change their relational positioning vis-à-vis other people and other social groups. There is an emphasis on values formation, both explicit and implicit, drawing on Christian and Islamic scriptures to promote the concept that one's quality of relationship to God is directly linked to the nature of his or her relationships with fellow human beings. For instance, a DMI Care Group meeting in a coastal neighborhood of peri-urban Davao City is concerned about socio-economic cleavages, especially land conflicts between the poor and the wealthy. The Care Group leaders have attempted to impact this reality by teaching patience, humility and justice. Care Group members feel that after several years of teaching, "the weekly gathering has decreased discrimination against the poor in the area."<sup>210</sup> In other cases, prayer and worship activities that facilitate contact with the divine are believed to mold personal character. Islamic Eid-al-Adha and Eid-al-Fitr celebrations are said to enhance Connectors among Muslims:

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<sup>209</sup> Team discussion, research team consultation, Davao, 15 Jan. 2009, audio recording.

<sup>210</sup> Prt. MG #34, interview by author of Care Group members, Davao, 19 Sep. 2008, audio recording.



“Because of the spiritual sanctity of the activity, no matter what the conflicts are, we can still unite because of that activity.”<sup>211</sup>

As an Implicit Ethical Message, Spiritual Transformation is difficult to conceptualize and categorize. Some religious actors may feel that it is actually a Resource Transfer, because they consider spiritual power to be a resource. On the other hand, non-religious audiences may be skeptical about whether religious ritual has any sort of verifiable impact on intergroup relations. In any case, the data indicate that many people in the Mindanao context do believe in and pursue spiritual transformation, and that this worldview influences their actions. Their actions, in turn, do have verifiable impacts on the surrounding context. An obvious case in point is the process of individual and collective change within DMI itself, and the fact that DMI members consider this transformation to be spiritual in nature. Whether viewed as a perception or as a reality, spiritual transformation does have a real impact on the dynamics of peace and conflict.

Of course, if the impact of spiritual transformation activities is deemed to be real, then it follows that such impact can be either positive or negative.<sup>212</sup> Further, it can be difficult for religious actors themselves to accurately assess how their spiritual transformation activities impact on conflict, and there is evidence of a persistent undercurrent of wishful thinking. DMI has noted that religious leaders often expect character change to occur quickly, when in fact it may take a lifetime. Individual transformation cannot effect community-wide change if local power brokers choose not to participate (Davao Ministerial Interfaith Inc. 2010: 46). Finally, questionable

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<sup>211</sup> Prt. MI #70, DNH framework created during advanced DNH workshop for external participants, Davao, 27-28 Aug. 2008, translated.

<sup>212</sup> Team discussion, research team consultation, Davao, 15 Jan. 2009, audio recording.

social analysis can lead to false hopes. One beginning DNH learner has described how he envisions his Evangelical home Bible study reducing criminality, and conflict between criminals and law-abiding citizens, through the promotion of spiritual conversion and Christian values. However there is no specific effort in place to attract participants who are at risk for criminality, and no evidence that the Bible study is penetrating criminal networks.<sup>213</sup> No doubt the Bible study does have a social impact, but it may be significantly different than what this Evangelical lay leader hopes for.

In terms of the negative conflict impacts of religious activity, another pattern identified is *Blaming the Other Group*. Blaming implies holding 'the other' responsible for the prevailing state of conflict, without taking responsibility for destructive actions taken by one's own group. Among the participating Mindanowan religious actors, blame toward 'the other' is spiritualized, at least by Christians (both Catholics and Evangelicals) toward Muslims. Christians, fearing both local history and the global discourse on terrorism, tend to believe that Muslims are violent and "treacherous"<sup>214</sup> (as also noted in Gowing 1964: 12, Presbitero-Carrillo 2004: 2) and attribute these presumed traits to Islamic culture and religion. For example, Christians in informal conversation may endorse the idea of peace training for Muslims in a way that implies that Muslims need such training more than Christians do. During one meeting, I observed an Evangelical delegate who said that "the Muslims have a different approach, to kill all the Christians."<sup>215</sup> This comment was followed by casual banter on the use of suicide attacks, held while the Muslim

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<sup>213</sup> Prt. #77, DNH Framework and discussion, Introductory DNH Workshop, Davao, 16-17 July 2008.

<sup>214</sup> Prt. MI #14, DNH Framework, DNH Assessment Forum, Davao, 14 Jan. 2008.

<sup>215</sup> Field notes, 4 Dec. 2008.

delegates were out of the room. DMI has become more aware of this Implicit Ethical Message through action research, and is beginning to educate Christian leaders on the risks of stereotyping Muslims (Davao Ministerial Interfaith Inc. 2010: 47). In contrast, the Muslim member of the research team feels that this implicit belief is not held or communicated in the same way by Muslims. He states that Muslims may distrust Christians, but they do not tend to hold Christian people or their beliefs directly responsible for the conflict. Rather, Muslims are more likely to blame the Philippine government and the media, as affirmed by both the action research data<sup>216</sup> and external analysts (Tolibas-Nuñez 1997: 49, 79-80, Mastura 2006: 8).

**Magnifier Effects.** The research team analysis discerned the presence of certain project impact patterns that do not function in isolation, but rather intensify a conflict impact that is already taking place. Such dynamics make a positive impact more positive, and a negative impact more negative. We chose to call these patterns ‘Magnifier Effects,’ adding a new type of impact mechanism not found in the original DNH framework. DNH experts would differ on how these patterns should be categorized, yet their true significance lies in the illumination of the conflict impact dynamics of Mindanowan religious associations. The below descriptions of Magnifier Effects are brief, because they refer to concepts that are interwoven throughout this and the surrounding chapters.

First, *Clarity of Intentions* refers to a recurring problem of ambiguity or misperception in the way that beneficiaries and members of the general public interpret the motivations behind religious community services. Due to the history of ethno-religious exclusivity and proselytism in community service, the public often

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<sup>216</sup> Prt. MI #8, research team consultation, Davao, 15 Jan. 2008, audio recording.

assumes such intentions even where they do not exist, thus worsening tensions between local ethnic and religious groups. Religious institutions that purposefully clarify their intentions, for both their own members and the general public, can significantly improve their conflict impact. One church in Davao City pursues such clarity by communicating both in conversation and in written project agreements that their long-term support program for poor urban children carries no obligation of church membership.<sup>217</sup> The fact that this is necessary serves to underscore the degree to which the Mindanowan religious associational sector has been beholden to exclusive values, beliefs and practices.

Action research data also highlight the importance of the *Authority of the Religious Leader* in influencing conflict impact. When an ordained religious leader, such as a pastor, priest, nun, imam or ustadz is the implementer of a particular activity, the social impact of that activity is magnified. In Mindanao, when a religious leader is serving members of his/her own religious group, the followers have a tendency to view the religious leader as “credible, trustworthy and influential” (Davao Ministerial Interfaith Inc. 2010: 51). Further, followers often assume that the religious leader has divine authority, “like a representative of God.”<sup>218</sup> Thus when the religious leader reveals his or her own stance towards ‘the other,’ the followers are likely to absorb similar views. In contrast, when a religious leader approaches people of other religious groups, they are likely to view that leader as embodying past experiences of negativity and conflict, thus fearing violence, proselytism or exploitation for material gain. It must be acknowledged that that this research team

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<sup>217</sup> Prt MI #85, research team consultation, Davao, 15 Jan. 2009, audio recording.

<sup>218</sup> Consolidated Analysis from Action Research Cycle Two, Davao, 6 Dec. 2008, 1.

analysis represents a self-assessment by religious leaders of their own status. Even so, it aligns with themes in the available literature (Mabunga 1997, Torres 1997), and with the observable signs of the respect afforded to religious leaders in the Mindanowan context, such as the prominence of the Bishops-Ulama Forum in the Mindanowan peace process (Palm-Dalupan 2005). The impact of the religious leader would likely be less authoritative in cultural contexts that feature less religiosity.

I described in Chapter Five how some project participants were reluctant to consider the possibility that their work could worsen social tensions, due to the assumption that they as religious leaders were unlikely to err, or the belief that universal religious truths necessarily engender conflict. The final Magnifier Effect further addresses that theme, by highlighting some beliefs about God that lead to *Washing the Hands of Social Impact*. 'Washing the hands' is used as a common idiom for declining responsibility for one's actions, and attributing responsibility instead to another party, in this case, God. Religious leaders often focus more on the divine call to serve than they do on the surrounding social context, assuming that the circumstances and outcomes are God's responsibility. "Sometimes we believe that if we have good intentions, God will prevent or fix any unintended negative impacts that might result from our efforts. We often say 'I have done my best, so God will do the rest,' or 'I cannot influence those events that are beyond my control'" (Davao Ministerial Interfaith Inc. 2010: 54). DMI, while acknowledging some truth in those statements, has begun to use these action research findings in urging their fellow religious leaders to avoid extremes by practicing responsible planning.

**Comparative Findings from Singapore.** Examples of project impact were much fewer in Singapore than Mindanao, due to the lower number of participants

and their lack of prior DNH experience. Nevertheless, as in Mindanao, the examples surfaced during the one-day introductory workshop reveal the prominence of Distribution Effects and Disrespect, Mistrust and Competition, both relating to the pivotal question of exclusion versus inclusion. For example, Disrespect is seen in a neighborhood block party that does not serve any *halal* food, thus implicitly disregarding Muslims, or a 'mother tongue' language preservation campaign that reminds people to 'speak Mandarin,' implicitly ignoring Singaporeans who are ethnically Malay or Tamil, not Chinese.<sup>219</sup> Distribution Effects are seen in a scholarship program that makes awards based on merit, in which children from privileged families are much more likely to qualify, thereby retaining the socio-economic advantage in the next generation.<sup>220</sup> Further, the aforementioned emphasis placed by Singaporean participants on misperceived intentions clearly relates to the Clarity of Intentions Magnifier Effect discovered in Mindanao, although the underlying impacts being magnified are likely to differ. Importantly, all of the above examples were inspired by government programs, suggesting an initial reluctance on the part of participants to recognize that one's own associational activities could also have unintended negative impacts. This phenomenon displays some similarity to *Washing the Hands of Social Impact*, but responsibility is attributed to the government, as the body deemed responsible for ensuring social cohesion in Singapore, rather than to God as in Mindanao. Participant examples did become more focused on

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<sup>219</sup> Prt. small group A, project impact analysis poster, DNH workshop, Singapore, 15 Mar. 2008.

<sup>220</sup> Prt. small group B, project impact analysis poster, DNH workshop, Singapore, 15 Mar. 2008.

religious associations as the workshop continued, but the associations in view were largely funded and guided by the government.

As a case in point, the workshop participants began spontaneously conducted an impromptu DNH analysis of the event's host agency, the Harmony Centre at An-Nahdhah. They identified several unintended impacts of the Harmony Centre's interfaith activities, voicing the perception that Harmony Centre efforts were important and successful, but were reaching only a limited and rather elite audience. All Harmony Centre activities are conducted in English, which is Singapore's common language for bridging across ethnic groups, but is not always understood by the less educated and the elderly. Further, participants were acutely aware that many non-Muslim people, particularly conservative Protestant Christians, did not feel comfortable attending events at Harmony Centre, because it is located in the same building as a mosque. One suggested that: "The Harmony Centre should be freed from any attachment to any particular religion, so that people from any races, any religion, can come freely without feeling . . . uh . . . the sensitivities . . ." <sup>221</sup> Other participants countered that removing the Harmony Centre from the mosque would damage its core ethos, but a similar purpose could be achieved by organizing a network through which other religious communities could host similar interfaith events in their own facilities. Finally, participants intimated that the Harmony Centre's rapid government-supported rise to prominence, with a high level of attendant media coverage, had created tensions and jealousies with other pre-existing entities in the Muslim community. Harmony Centre staff welcomed these insights to help inform future planning.

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<sup>221</sup> Prt. S #7, plenary discussion, DNH workshop, Singapore, 15 Mar. 2008, video recording.

Importantly, in terms of the environment currently facing Islamic religious associations in Singapore, the intra-Muslim tensions mentioned above parallel another participant example. One small group of workshop participants explored the impact of a recent policy change in an island-wide Islamic benevolence fund, which expanded from supporting only Muslims to accepting applications from Singaporeans of all backgrounds. The change was well received by other groups, improving interethnic and interfaith relations, yet it created role confusion and tension within the Muslim community itself.<sup>222</sup> In fact, the Malay Muslim community in Singapore has gone to great lengths since the attacks of September 11, 2001, and the related local terror arrests, to allay suspicion and mistrust among other ethnic groups (Tan 2008: 60), particularly the majority Chinese. Some of these efforts are undertaken partially in response to government encouragement, via the government's stake in the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS). Action research data indicate that the post-September 11 associational effort to improve outward interfaith relations is exerting some strain upon intrafaith ties, and shifting the landscape of internal cohesion among Malay Muslims.

### **Conclusion: Beyond Associational Structure**

The range of impact patterns identified in the action research data, including Resource Transfers, Implicit Ethical Messages and Magnifier Effects, illustrate that the activities of religious associations have a broad influence on the trajectory of intergroup relations. This evidence of conflict impact, coupled with the strong

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<sup>222</sup> Prt. small group C, project impact analysis poster, DNH workshop, Singapore, 15 Mar. 2008.



affirmation of participating religious actors, indicates that the core concept of conflict sensitivity is highly relevant to this new audience. Further, the far-reaching socio-political implications of these conflict impacts illustrate the importance of facing squarely the challenges to the usefulness of the tools, in order to obtain accurate project impact analysis, followed by operationalization of the learnings. The DNH framework can be extensively adapted to foreground issues of structural injustice, and to identify clearly the impact patterns that are unique to the religious sector. Capacity building methodologies can be changed to de-emphasize formal impact analysis among audiences that are unlikely to use it, and to focus instead on mindset shift and implicit impact analysis, followed by operationalization. Follow-up training and mentoring will continue to be necessary, albeit in different and potentially lighter forms.

In light of the conflict impact patterns in the empirical data, the emphasis of Putnam (2000) and Varshney (2002) on intercommunal structures as the sole determinants of conflict impact would appear oversimplified. Indeed, in the Mindanao religious sector, the Distribution Effects are profoundly structural in nature, as they reinforce a system of separation and exclusion along ethnic, religious and socio-economic lines. Nonetheless, in terms of social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1986), the unequal distribution of resources would appear to be a clear example of in-group favoritism. Further, those distribution effects are shaped by and entwined non-structural patterns of impact, such as Disrespect, Mistrust and Competition, which reify boundaries through the promotion of one's own group at the expense of others. Even the language used by the research team to describe the mutual disrespect between Evangelical and Catholics – i.e. “feelings of superiority”

(Davao Ministerial Interfaith Inc. 2010: 40) - resonates with Tajfel and Turner's description of social one-ups-manship. Ultimately, when religious actors recognize and seek to change systemic exclusion in the associational sector, they do so by addressing both structural and non-structural factors, exhibiting in the process a level of human agency that is not considered in the current body of structure-centric theories. For these reasons, Chapters Eight and Nine apply my empirical findings to inform and challenge existing theory on the ambivalent impacts by religious nPCROs in contexts of identity-based conflict.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: RE-THEORIZING THE DETERMINANTS OF CONFLICT IMPACT**

*If conflict begins in the minds of men,  
that is where solutions should first be aimed.*  
- Rosalita Tolibas-Nuñez (1997: 89),  
former mayor of General Santos City, Mindanao

This chapter begins to apply the empirical data collected among religious associations in Mindanao and Singapore to address the study's second level of inquiry: How do the findings arising from conflict sensitivity testing inform existing associational theory? As elaborated in Chapter Three, Robert Putnam (2000, 2002, Putnam and Feldstein 2003) and Ashutosh Varshney (2001, 2002) stand at the center of the theoretical debate informed by this study, which engages the nature and causes of conflict impacts by nPCROs, or associations whose mission is not directly focused on issues of peace and conflict resolution. For such associations, impact on conflict is an externality (Morris 2000: 27-8), created unintentionally and often unconsciously in the process of pursuing their other goals. The body of theory on this topic is small but expanding, reflecting a growing recognition that associational impact on social cohesion goes far beyond the small subset of associations that are concerned primarily with matters of conflict and peace.

Within this project's core literature, Putnam and Varshney identify heterogeneous associational structure, in which participation crosses key lines of social division, as the primary determinant of associational impact in settings of intergroup conflict. Both scholars have expressed strong optimism about the potential of such intercommunal structures to enhance social cohesion in societies

divided along lines of ethnicity or identity. Such optimism is challenged in works by Uvin (1998) and Cochrane (2005), who point to recent cases in which the associational sector itself was so deeply divided in its structure, and divisive in its effects, that it provokes significant skepticism about intercommunality. Another cluster of works, including Pickering (2006, 2007), Weisinger and Salipante (2005, 2007), Jha (2009), MacLean (2004), Molenaers (2003, 2005, 2006), Karner and Parker (2008), Titeca and Vervisch (2008) and Pinchotti and Verwimp (2007), explore both positive and negative associational impacts, and consider the conditions that influence such outcomes. These moderate works provide valuable nuance, but they have not yet reshaped the predominantly structural terms of debate as framed by the optimism of Putnam and Varshney and the skepticism that they provoke.

The current study, by providing a localized examination of two interfaith network agencies and their individual members in settings of ethno-religious conflict, speaks to the imbalance in the core literature by contributing evidence that the nature and determinants of associational conflict impact are complex, and they are dynamic. In contrast to the uniformity that is implied in much of the literature, the data from Mindanao and Singapore depict a multifaceted web of conflict impacts that vary across organization, activity, and time, resulting in a simultaneous mixture of the positive and the negative. It is true that both partner agencies were formed as a response to predominant local patterns of separation and exclusion along ethno-religious lines. In other words, practitioners perceived that certain aspects of the associational sector were reflecting and contributing to the surrounding climate of ethno-religious division in negative ways, very similar to what Uvin and Cochrane describe. However, the formation of the Davao Ministerial Interfaith (DMI) in

Mindanao, the Harmony Centre in Singapore, and other interethnic, interfaith associations like them, has begun to establish positive impacts of the type envisioned by Putnam and Varshney. As works-in-progress, the impact of these organizations is promising, but mixed. Further, when individual network members apply conflict sensitivity analysis to their own churches, mosques and religious service organizations, they identify, despite some instances of 'wishful thinking,' a combination of positive and negative influences on conflict. Such mixed impacts can arise within the same association, and even within the same project, at the same time. It is the recognition of this dualistic potential that enables practitioners to develop ideas for improvement, working for change at the level and scope of their own influence.

These findings do not contradict the project's core literature on the conflict impacts of nPCROs, but they do reveal the existing theory in this relatively new body of theory to be emergent and incomplete. "In the spirit of cumulative inquiry" (Varshney 2002: 24), I draw on the Mindanao and Singapore data to suggest specific ways in which the determinants of conflict impact could be elaborated with greater nuance and accuracy. Pursuing conceptual nuance naturally makes theory less parsimonious. Yet parsimony of explanation should not necessarily be the theorist's ultimate aim. I argued in Chapter One that the purpose and measure of theory lies in its applicability to successfully address real human problems. This prioritization of human wellbeing implies a cautious integration of values into the social sciences. The assumed value on peace as a component of human wellbeing is implicit in much of this study's core literature. For example, Putnam has become a rather passionate public advocate for the development of social capital, while Jha (2009) and Weisinger

and Salipante (2005) actively seek to assist practitioners in fostering intercommunality. Thus without venturing too far into the actual exercise of application, I assume that my findings must be believable enough to act upon (Greenwood and Levin 2007: 67). Good theory must capture accurately the dynamics of peace and conflict in the real world, and the empirical clues as to how such dynamics might change for the better.

This chapter addresses two of the three main thematic contributions of this study to theory on the determinants of conflict impact among nPCRO. The relationship between structural and non-structural factors is central, and it leads in turn to a consideration of the place of human agency in pursuing change. The next chapter addresses the third thematic contribution, by exploring the extent to which the questions of associational structure and human agency are infused and shaped by religion in the Southeast Asian context. The majority of the data are drawn from Mindanao's DMI, because their lengthy exposure to conflict sensitivity provides the opportunity to trace the relevant dynamics over time. This is supplemented where appropriate with data from Singapore and other sources.

### **Cycles of Structure and Mindset**

This section explores more deeply the balance and interaction between structural and non-structural determinants of associational conflict impacts. The core literature as a whole displays a tendency towards monocausal explanation, with a heavy emphasis on the degree of intercommunality present in associational structure. The data from Mindanao and Singapore do indeed affirm the importance of

intercommunal associational forms. Both DMI and the Harmony Centre derive their public significance from their efforts to bring ethno-religious groups together across the lines of major social cleavage. Bridging those structural and relational gaps is the reason for the organizations' existence, so intercommunal participation is a necessary precursor to relational development, and is widely perceived by fellow citizens as the most visible indicator of progress. Organizational members and participants are well aware of this reality, as evidenced by their consistent attention to the numbers and proportions of the various ethnic and religious groups represented in every meeting, activity and process.

Nonetheless, the same organizational members give an equally consistent emphasis to factors that are decidedly non-structural in nature. The participants' experiences and their own conflict sensitivity analyses point to the influence of non-structural factors, including perceptions, values, beliefs, and attitudes, which can be collectively termed 'mindsets.' As described in Chapters Five and Six, mindset factors in the Mindanowan and Singaporean contexts of ethno-religious conflict pertain largely to identity, specifically the formation and re-formation of how the identity of one's own group is defined, and how that group relates to those perceived as 'other.' These findings on the centrality of mindset are affirmed by external analysts including Tolibas-Nuñez (1997), who argues strongly that the psychological dynamics of intergroup relations are just as important as economics and politics in the Mindanao conflict, and Bück (2007: 99, 104), who states that any solution to this conflict must include attention to its microdynamics.

Particularly strong in Mindanao is the mindset issue of exclusion along ethnic, religious, and socio-economic lines. I have noted that exclusion is a key issue around

Southeast Asia, and Uvin claims that similar exclusion affects large portions of Africa (Uvin 1998: 118). Social capital theorists have similarly cautioned that in-group bonding may have exclusionary effects on outsiders (Portes and Landolt 1996, Portes 1998, Putnam and Feldstein 2003: 206-24, 241-68). Thus the action research findings on exclusion address an issue of immense significance within the broader theoretical debate. Further, the Mindanao data portray the exclusionary mindset as inextricably linked to exclusionary associational structures. The linkages are evident in participant accounts of how associations interact with the life and decision-making of individuals, and the dynamics that take place when individuals join together in collective action. To borrow a familiar computer metaphor, there is interaction between 'hardware' (organizational structures) and 'software' (human mindsets).

In order to focus on the relationship of individual mindset to associational structure, I de-emphasize certain issues of associational functionality that are present in the data. I have already described in Chapter Five how factors such as availability of funds, member time limitations and competing priorities have influenced DMI's progress in operationalizing conflict sensitivity through furtherance of their intercommunal structure. MacLean (2004) has pointed out the significance of associational effectiveness in reaching goals, frequency and participation in meetings, and decision-making processes. International Alert has focused attention on how organizational leadership and capacity influences conflict sensitivity mainstreaming (Lange 2004, Barbolet et al. 2005a). Thus without denying the importance of such issues, I set aside most questions of associational functioning, except those that directly affect the interaction between mindset and structure.



The dual focus on 'hardware' and 'software' factors, and the relationship between them, leads naturally to the question of whether one predominates over the other in determining associational impact. In fact, this interaction appears to be cyclical, implying little value in arguing the existence of a definitive beginning or end. Even so, it is significant that DMI members begin their analysis at a different point than many of the scholars in my literary core. When surveyed as a collective research cluster, the literature emphasizes associational structure as determinative, implying that any improvement of social impact should begin with structural change. Though Putnam once framed the relative roles of structure and culture as a "chicken and egg debate" (1993: 181), he has also positioned associational structure as a cause, and individual mindset as its effect (2000: 23). Varshney positions associational structure as the primary determinant of positive social impact, however he qualifies his argument by clarifying that associational structure is the central *proximate* cause, with political factors underlying it, and a relevant influence attributed to identity-based "master narratives" (2002: 132). Cochrane hints implicitly at mindset as a cause when he explains that the polarization of civil society in Northern Ireland is driven by people's differing concepts of 'community,' yet his overall argument remains structurally-driven (2005: 60). Mindset formation is addressed by Pickering (2007: 51-84) as it relates to identity, and by Uvin (1998: 109-140) as it relates to the internalization of structural violence. However, only Jha (2009), Karner and Parker (2008), and Weisinger and Salipante (2005, 2007) position mindset factors as central and emphasize them as a causal factor explaining associational structures.

The fact that DMI members often begin their analysis with non-structural factors therefore marks a contrast with the bulk of the literature. While DMI members

may describe their organization by highlighting its interfaith composition, their frequent stories of member involvement begin with accounts of individual mindset change.<sup>223</sup> Significantly, mindset change addresses the question of how the negative impacts of exclusionary social capital might be overcome, a theme that is overlooked in the core literature's rush to develop social capital in more positive forms.

**Mindset-Structure Cycles that Enable Intercommunality.** As analyzed extensively in Chapters Five and Six, individual mindset change within DMI is closely linked to training in Do No Harm (DNH), and the Culture of Peace module which introduces diverse perspectives on the history of Mindanao. In surveys and interviews, DMI members describe an increased awareness of their own influence on the surrounding socio-political context, and a progressive shift from exclusive to inclusive mindsets. The exclusive mindset is characterized by separation and discrimination towards 'the other.' Many of the specific beliefs and behaviors that maintain exclusion are detailed in DMI's preliminary identification of the negative Implicit Ethical Messages that circulate within the Mindanowan religious sector. The inclusive mindset emphasizes acceptance and respect towards people who are different, and links to Implicit Ethical Messages that are in the process of being changed for the better. The change process often begins with a significant shift experienced during the first DNH training event, followed by an ongoing deepening of the changing mindset over time. The emergent inclusive mindset prompts members to take initiative in forming interpersonal relationships with people of

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<sup>223</sup> The positioning of mindset change early in a narrative is particularly evident in the interviews of regional sister agency participants (Sarangani Province, Philippines, July 2008), due to the open-ended nature of the first two interview questions.

differing backgrounds. A chronological causal link between training and relationship formation is almost always implied, and sometimes forthrightly stated.<sup>224</sup>

Similarly, at the collective level, the 2003 participation of DMI founders in DNH training is credited with contributing the organization's launch during that same calendar year. DMI's policy requiring DNH and Culture of Peace training for all new members provides further evidence of their belief that the process of bridging ethno-religious gaps must start with individual change. This policy was encouraged by the staff of World Vision Development Foundation, and adopted by the leadership of DMI. The policy is so firm that, despite DMI's desire to grow in membership, during times when DNH and Culture of Peace trainers were not available to conduct workshops, the prospective new members were simply obliged to wait. In this way, the DMI case study implies a sequence of change in individual mindset, followed by a change in behavior, and then contributing to the formation of organizational structures. Like Weisinger and Salipante (2005: 45-6), DMI's leaders view individual cross-cultural motivation and skill as a prerequisite to successful intercommunal bridging. This logic relates also to theories that position education as a key success factor in reducing intolerance (see for example Helliwell and Putnam 2007, Cote and Erickson 2009), with the caveat that DMI's efforts represent vocational learning rather than formal classroom education.

While DMI members tend to view individual mindset change as a prerequisite to the development of intercommunal structures, the DMI case also reveals a flow of causation in the opposite direction, through which their

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<sup>224</sup> Prt. MI #87, interview by author of regional sister agencies, Sarangani, Philippines, 8 July 2008.

organizational structure both enables and limits member mindset development. In terms of enabling factors, the simple fact that the DMI brings people of different religious groups into proximity with each other has far-reaching influence. For many of the Christian leaders, the Muslim leaders present within DMI and its sister agencies represent their first Muslim friends. Muslim leaders are more likely to have had previous contact with Christians, given the Christians' much larger numbers, yet this did not necessarily mean contact with other leaders, nor was it necessarily a positive experience. Thus it is common to see interfaith members smile with pride and pleasure when they explain "I have a good friend, a Muslim brother..."<sup>225</sup> As Blau and Schwartz (1984) emphasize, bridging relationships can only form where different social groups have the opportunity for consistent contact.

Nonetheless, while contact with the 'other' is clearly necessary, it is not automatically sufficient to maximize organizational intercommunalism and positive impact on conflict. Diverse representation does not necessarily guarantee pluralism based on mutual respect (Weisinger and Salipante 2005). Allport ([1954] 1979: 261-84), the originator of the contact hypothesis, posited that intergroup contact would reduce prejudice, if and only if it was conducted in a manner that featured equal status between groups and cooperation in pursuit of common goals. The reduction of prejudice would be further enhanced if such intergroup activity was sanctioned by local institutions or atmosphere. Subsequent research has largely affirmed this hypothesis, with the important caveat that the requisite success factors may be more numerous than those originally identified by Allport, and may vary somewhat

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<sup>225</sup> Prt. MI #30, long-form survey of regional sister agencies, Sarangani, Philippines, 8 July 2008, translated.

according to context (Pettigrew and Tropp 2005, Kenworthy et al. 2005). Putnam, too, has supported this qualified version of the contact hypothesis (Putnam and Campbell 2010: 526-34, Clark et al. 2010: 75). Within the contact opportunities that the DMI structure provides, relationship development processes can be observed, many of which correspond to the intergroup contact success factors identified by post-Allport researchers, and are reflected in some of this study's core literature. These findings speak into the debate on the determinants of positive conflict impacts among nPCROs, by suggesting that intercommunal associational structures can exist and promote peace in divided societies only when accompanied and supported by non-structural processes of change in human mindsets and relationships.

Most obviously, DMI's focus on jointly facilitating community development activities provides an overarching common goal, and a series of tasks that require interdependent cooperation among Catholic, Evangelical and Muslim members (Allport [1954] 1979). The ongoing nature of the effort provides for "sustained, periodic interactions" (Weisinger and Jr. 2007: 169, see also Pickering 2007: 111-138), and the development of an important sense of shared space (Putnam and Feldstein 2003, Jha 2009: 291). The shared space is first and foremost relational, because DMI does not have its own building, but the three local hotels that host DMI functions have also come to represent to members a symbolic space for interfaith interaction. At the deeper level of identity formation, DMI members intentionally emphasize their shared belief in God and their common role as religious leaders as the basis for shared, overarching identity (Putnam and Feldstein 2003: 279-82, Weisinger and Jr. 2007), which also implicitly helps to equalize status among members (Allport [1954] 1979, Weisinger and Jr. 2007, Pickering 2007). At the same time, each component

religious group within DMI firmly maintains its own distinctions, thus posing no threat of ignoring the salience of their differences (Kenworthy et al. 2005).

Social network theory's insights on 'weak ties' (Granovetter 1973, Pickering 2006, Pickering 2007) also describe DMI's contact opportunities, but only in part. The more active members meet frequently for DMI events, as described above. Yet those of differing faiths rarely meet together outside of DMI functions, except to honor important life passages such as the death of a family member. Thus their interaction is deeply meaningful, yet often sustained by a single strand of associational connectedness. This reality reflects the importance and fragility of "weak ties," which link people from different identity groups, as distinct from the "strong ties" and multistranded connections that form more easily among people of similar backgrounds. However, in social network theory, social capital is often defined as "the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures" (Portes 1998: 6). Social capital, in this Bourdieu-inspired view, is about gaining access to resources that enhance one's own security and socio-economic well-being (Bourdieu 1986, see also Anthias 2007). Weak ties are desirable because they expand one's network connections, making it possible to access resources not available within one's own identity group.

Importantly, there is no evidence of this type of motivation within DMI. Instead, DMI members are motivated by a genuine desire to address needs in the community, often bearing the cost of disapproval from conservative co-religionists who oppose interfaith action. The motivation of DMI members is better reflected in Karner and Parker's (2008) identification of religion as a motivation for social engagement, and Putnam's (2002: 11) description of service-oriented associations as

generating “outward looking social capital.” Bruni, too, points to a form of reciprocity that is both altruistic and unconditional (2008). These DMI findings highlight a subtle distinction between social network theory and other variations of the social capital concept, significant because differing individual motivations may result in very different decisions about whether and how to engage with people of other identity groups.

When DMI members have the contact opportunity to become familiar with individuals of differing backgrounds, their disposition towards ‘the other’ often undergoes a process of change. Group-based stereotypes are weakened when members get to know each other as unique individuals, who cannot be wholly defined by their religious label (Kenworthy et al. 2005). The growing levels of trust, combined with sustained interaction over time, also permit contentious issues to be opened for discussion and potential re-evaluation. For example, DMI’s Muslim members, when invited to share from their own tradition, often take the opportunity to explain to Christian colleagues that most streams of Islamic teaching do not support terrorism, and that the Qur’an contains much guidance toward peace. When disputed issues arise, the occasion sometimes permits clarification and correction of one’s own position. For example, the following discussion took place within the DMI research team, while clarifying DMI’s approach to doctrinal disagreements for their practitioner publication. The significance of this exchange lies in the fact that an extremely sensitive issue was discussed with openness and good humor, based on the camaraderie that had developed over time within the team.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> Team discussion, research team consultation, Davao, 15 Jan. 2009, audio recording. This exchange involved Prt. MI #39, MI # 85, and MI #93.

Michelle: "What do we mean when we say 'doctrinal issues?'"  
 Catholic member: "Church doctrines, traditions . . . "  
 Evangelical member A: "I do believe when we say doctrinal issues, (it means) the difference between someone else's religious belief. We do not talk on the same issues; we talk on the different issues. Let's say, like the Catholics, they are serving, or having, idols – "  
 Catholic member (smiling): "Oye, it's not!"  
 (Team laughter)  
 Catholic member (smiling): "It's not! We are not serving idols!"  
 (Team laughter)  
 Other evangelical member B: "Sister, be careful, you (should) listen, you should not debate . . . "  
 Catholic member (smiling): "It's not, I did not debate!"  
 Evangelical member A: "For the evangelicals, we usually focus on no picture, no picture<sup>227</sup> . . . "

Similarly, among DMI's core leaders, the Christians have demonstrated sufficient respect for Islamic dietary restrictions by consistently foregoing pork during interfaith functions that the Muslim Vice-Chair no longer objects to pork being eaten discretely in his presence, provided that it does not appear on his own plate. DMI's overall ban on pork remains firmly in place, but the Vice-Chair's elective loosening of his own pork preferences reflects an increasing depth of mutual understanding with particular Christian individuals. Again, the significance of these exchanges is that they could not have taken place in the absence of consistent contact over time, as mediated through the existence and activities of DMI. The associations' intercommunal structure provides opportunity for relationship development and dispositional change, contributing to the mindset shift which is so central to the DMI narrative. The mindset shift, in turn, prompts actions that further encourage intercommunality, forming a cycle that moves in a positive direction. This cyclical interaction between associational structure and human mindsets stands in contrast to

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<sup>227</sup> Meaning 'no religious images.'



the structure-focused imbalance present in the core body of literature on the conflict impacts of nPCROs.

**Mindset-Structure Cycles that Limit Intercommunality.** The above examples are encouraging, yet if the cyclical interaction of associational structures with human mindsets can serve to support intercommunality, it can also serve to limit intercommunality. A negative cycle can slow or block progress towards intergroup bridging. Such limiting dynamics are visible in various aspects of the DMI case, and particularly poignant when considering the question of Muslim participation in DMI and its sister interfaith organizations.

Geographic location and demography are structural factors that play a significant role in shaping structures of opportunity (Blau and Schwartz 1984), with the obvious macro-level observation being that the significant presence of Muslims in Mindanao makes Christian-Muslim engagement more important, and more feasible, than in other parts of the Philippines. However, at a more localized level, location and demographics can also pose limitations. While DMI and its sister agencies all appear to be equally motivated towards interfaith engagement, they have thus far obtained differing results. DMI has a lower proportion of Muslims among its members, because Davao City has a more modest Muslim population than certain areas in South Cotabato, Sarangani and Zamboanga Provinces, where the sister interfaith organizations are based. At the same time, DMI is generally considered more mature than its sister agencies in terms of interfaith capacity and ethos, due largely to the fact that their urban Davao City location has provided consistent proximity to the World Vision Development Foundation regional office, which has

housed DMI's original trainers and mentors. The sister interfaith networks are in outlying areas, so mentoring support is limited to periodic visits.

Despite the importance of location and demography, which would appear to lie beyond an association's control, an over-emphasis on these factors can obscure important organizational decisions, which are shaped by human mindsets. DMI and its sister interfaith networks still work primarily in the geographic areas chosen by World Vision, as their mentor and ongoing partner. While World Vision works in many multiethnic areas, they currently have no long-term development programs in Mindanao's predominantly Muslim provinces such as Maguindanao or Lanao.<sup>228</sup> Therefore, DMI has no sister interfaith associations, nor formal linkages to other related bodies, in those Muslim-dominated zones. Further, within Davao City, DMI drew its first members from the neighborhoods targeted for long-term development programming through local partner Unity for Progress and funding partner World Vision. DMI has subsequently expanded its membership to draw from other areas of the city, but its flagship project of Neighborhood Intergenerational Care Groups, still operates only in neighborhoods served by Unity for Progress and World Vision. While demographic statistics are not available, it is generally recognized among everyone involved that those areas do not include many neighborhoods that are predominantly Muslim. World Vision in the Philippines has extensively expanded its engagement with Muslims over the past decade, yet geographic expansion into Muslim zones is still subject to constraints of organizational policy, logistics and

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<sup>228</sup> World Vision made a concerted effort in the early 2000s to launch a long-term development program, with peacebuilding components in Maguindanao, but this program was later discontinued.

funding. To transcend this cycle, DMI may require not only an independent source of funding, but also a consistent effort towards recruitment of Muslims.

Discussion on how to increase Muslim participation has in fact been ongoing for several years, but the proportional involvement of Muslims in DMI has not yet changed significantly. This stasis appears to be perpetuated by differing perceptions between DMI's Christians and Muslims regarding the nature of the obstacles to Muslim participation, and how such obstacles might be overcome. In addressing these challenges, DMI's Christians, both Catholic and Protestant, refer often to the way that interfaith engagement is viewed and regulated by the leadership of the Muslim hierarchy. Christians make occasional but persistent allusions to the belief that certain Muslim leaders who are not comfortable with interfaith engagement may forbid their followers to attend interfaith events, including DMI's DNH training.<sup>229</sup> More concretely, there are frequent references to how Muslim leaders are selected for public representation, even at endorsed interfaith events, in limited numbers. This is a potential case of vertical social capital ties constraining horizontal bridging (Pinchotti and Verwimp 2007), and of the intrafaith dissonance that often holds back interfaith practitioners from all religious traditions (Eck 1993). As one Catholic DMI member explained:

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<sup>229</sup> Field notes, 17 July 2008. Christian participants also experience pressure from co-religionists, but the command structure is perceived to function differently, through preaching and advising rather than direct order.

In our membership of the Muslims in DMI, we had difficulty on inviting new members because when imams and ustadz will know that there is already on one or two Muslim leaders in the organization, they will refrain themselves from attending. . . That's their ruling, I think . . . We approached their (top leader) one time and asked him of membership in the DMI of Muslim leaders, he said that "Oh, (Leader A) is there? (Leader B) is there? I could recommend . . . "So you see, there is this recommendation of membership, so it must be coming from their leader.<sup>230</sup>

Additionally, in addressing the Care Groups, some DMI leaders recognize that despite the intention to welcome members of all ethno-religious backgrounds, the Care Group modules and group activities are "Christianized."<sup>231</sup> As elaborated in Chapter Five, the Care Groups were launched with a heavy Evangelical influence. Key operational aspects such as worship practices and leadership selection have been adapted to the satisfaction of Catholic members, leading to a vibrant Catholic-Protestant mix among the members. However, in terms of attracting Muslim members, some promising changes have been identified through DNH analysis, but not yet implemented. The DMI Chair describes the stillborn effort to launch the first Muslim-area Care Group in terms of paradigms of the mind, touching first on his perception of how Muslim hierarchy affects participation, and secondly on the issue of Christian persistence in Evangelical practices:

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<sup>230</sup> Prt. MI #39, interview by author of DMI, Davao, 31 Mar. 2008, audio recording. The names of the Muslim leaders mentioned have been removed to protect their identity.

<sup>231</sup> Analysis board posting, research team consultation notes, Davao, 2-3 Apr. 2008, 4.

(It was) supposed to be in (neighborhood) with Pastor \_\_\_\_\_. Because when we conducted Effective Parenthood seminar there . . . some Muslims said “Pastor, when will you come back here in our place?” Because they are very happy with the seminar. So that’s why I said to Pastor \_\_\_\_: “Open the Muslim area.” But until now, maybe, he did not open in that purok. Maybe because of the views in the community, it’s hard. It’s hard . . . the paradigm shift of our Muslim leaders, because they are more on hierarchy . . . and also the issue the system of their worship, it’s different. . . DMI members are instructed how to contextualize the worship, they are more on evangelical approach . . . That’s also a problem, it takes time. The struggle of adapting, change the paradigm . . . it takes time.<sup>232</sup>

The pastor who was asked to open the Muslim-area Care Group has shared his own analysis of another Care Group that he successfully launched and led in the Christian neighborhood immediately adjacent to the Muslim area in question. In a group interview together with several of that Care Group’s Christian members, he described the obstacles to Muslim participation in terms of both mindset and structure. First, when asked about DNH analysis of the Care Group effort, he responded that: “The fear of conversion . . . the weekly gathering, Muslims fear that they will be converted because of this activity . . . It’s mostly Christians attending, so they fear that they will be converted to Christianity.”<sup>233</sup> The pastor then went on to explain that there had previously been one Muslim member, but she quit when her child withdrew for unknown reasons from the child sponsorship program, which is a primary mechanism for World Vision funding. The Care Group is intended to be open to all regardless of sponsorship status, but in this case, “The majority of the PIGCG participants are sponsored families.”<sup>234</sup> At the time of the interview, there

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<sup>232</sup> Prt. MI #57, interview by author of DMI, Davao, 24 Oct. 2008, audio recording. The names of the neighborhood and the pastor in question have been removed to protect their identity.

<sup>233</sup> Prt. MG #33, interview by author of DMI Care Groups, Davao, 12 Sep. 2008, audio recorded, translated.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

were 16 sponsored families living in the Muslim area, and 90 sponsored families living in the Christian area immediately adjacent to it.<sup>235</sup> Again, the Care Group had used DNH to identify a number of promising options for establishing Muslim participation in this context, but those options had not yet been tried. These accounts demonstrate that DMI's Christian members sometimes recognize the 'software' of human mindsets, including lingering tendencies towards exclusivism and proselytism, as factors limiting progress towards the intercommunal participation of Muslims. These local actors portray the determinants of intercommunality as multicausal and dynamic, in contrast to the heavy 'hardware' emphasis on associational structure that is found in the core literature.

The perspective of Muslim community members regarding the Care Groups is more difficult to ascertain, precisely because of the lack of Muslim participation in that program. However, one Muslim DMI member has provided his own analysis of the Care Group situation, which for him had become a matter of personal concern. He shared in informal conversation that until very recently, he had thought that the Care Group purpose was about Christian doctrine, implying a perceived risk of pressure towards conversion. However, he had recently been told that such was not the case, so his own opinions were changing. He increasingly felt that it would be a good idea to have Muslim Care Group members and Muslim sponsored children.<sup>236</sup> His observation implies a perception that Muslims had previously been excluded from both the Care Group and the underlying development program and its funding mechanisms. While this Muslim leader's comments echo certain aspects of the

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid. The relative population size of each neighborhood is not known.

<sup>236</sup> Prt. MI #8, field notes, 11 Apr. 2008.

Evangelicals' own self-critique, there are subtle differences. DMI's Evangelicals attribute the blockage in Muslim participation to both hierarchy by Muslims and exclusive practices by the Care Group's Evangelicals, whereas Muslims appear to attribute the blockage to Evangelical exclusivism alone. The attribution of the problem to Muslim hierarchy may prevent DMI's Evangelicals from maximizing their own efforts to make Muslims feel welcome. Thus a complex interaction of mindset with associational structure has served to limit Muslim participation in the DMI Care Groups.

Finally, returning again to the pastor implementing the Care Group in question, in addition to his transparent description of the above factors discouraging Muslim participation, his comments reveal that he himself lives near the neighborhood in question, making him an 'insider' to the Christian-Muslim tensions in that place. He describes the ethno-religious tensions in an industrial plant located in the Care Group neighborhood as a case of a Muslim contractor favoring Muslim workers over their harder-working Christian colleagues. He then goes on to describe how a Christian-Muslim riot in the 1980s or 1990s resulted in a number of injuries, with one of his own children among the wounded.<sup>237</sup> As explored in Chapter Five, it is understandably challenging for such 'insiders' to overcome their own 'blind spots.' Implementer biases, too, become aspects of mindset that can hamper the effort to develop intercommunal associational structures.

To the extent that it is possible to objectively analyze the relative importance of the obstacles hindering Muslim participation in DMI, it is no doubt the case that

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<sup>237</sup> Prt. MG #33, interview by author of DMI Care Groups, Davao, 12 Sep. 2008, audio recorded, translated.

both Muslims and Christians perceive a great deal of truth. Their mindsets on this critical issue are not mutually exclusive, but neither do they appear to align. Christians give relatively more weight to the cultural practices of representation within the Muslim hierarchy, while Muslims focus on the issues of programmatic inclusion and religious proselytism. To a certain extent, each group may delay action while focusing on the shortcomings of the other. However it may be the Christians, as those holding majority power within Mindanowan society and within DMI, who are called upon to take the initiative in further transforming their own mindsets, deepening what Jha calls “their critical reflection on the self” (Jha 2009: 316) in relation to socio-political power structures of which they are a part. The national context reminds us that Christians, particularly Catholics, represent the central power of majority, while Muslims are a marginalized minority. Tolibas-Nuñez (1997) argues from survey data that Christians’ biases run more deeply than those of Muslims in Mindanao, which is particularly meaningful when linked to Karner’s (2007) portrayal of identity construction by ethnic group members as inextricably linked to the exercise of power. Thus the power disparity between Christians and Muslims likely contributes to both the need for, and the complexity of achieving, a mindset shift towards inclusivity.

**Theorizing in Cycles.** The DMI case study suggests that while intercommunal associational structure is necessary for improved associational impact in divided societies, it is not sufficient. DMI’s existence is indeed defined by its desirable intercommunal structure, but its existence within Mindanao’s deeply divided associational sector has been made possible through changes taking place among individuals. Without the mindset shift towards inclusion, DMI would not



exist, and would not progress towards its goals. Conflict sensitivity training has been employed as a starting point towards transformation, and it has promoted intercommunality to the extent that it resets the participants' 'software.' At the same time, progress towards greater intercommunality, particularly in terms of increased Muslim participation, has been partially blocked by mindsets that retain the legacy of exclusive thinking.

The Singapore data, too, point to the power of mindsets, particularly the assumption that Singaporean society is peaceful, and that the government will maintain that peace. A Protestant interfaith activist shares her own reflection on how these perceptions keep mainstream religious actors away from interfaith engagement:

Actually I don't think any of them are concerned with social harmony . . . Because it's not their business. Because it's the business of government, and the rule of law. And I think that they believe that they are all harmonious and tolerant, so what are you talking about? How can my actions affect social harmony?... I think there is this kind of mindset that's like that . . . We don't want to talk about religion, so that's the other big 'elephant' in the room, because it's dangerous . . . We are not talking about the less violent things that are happening under the water, because we are looking at the top and saying, "Well, since our independence we have been, you know, since after 1967, or whatever, we are fine" . . . The tragedy of it is that we are a very educated society . . . But yet the more educated is blind. We have these blind spots now to the fractures within the society . . . We don't want to recognize that we are racist, in our thinking and in our stereotypes . . . So, that kind, there's all this denial stuff, you know?<sup>238</sup>

Clearly, the prevalence of such human 'software' underscores the importance of mindsets. Thus theories that consider organizational structure as a primary determinant of conflict impact must not overlook the key intangible elements that

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<sup>238</sup> Prt. S #12, follow-up interview by author, Seattle, USA, 21 May 2010, audio recording.

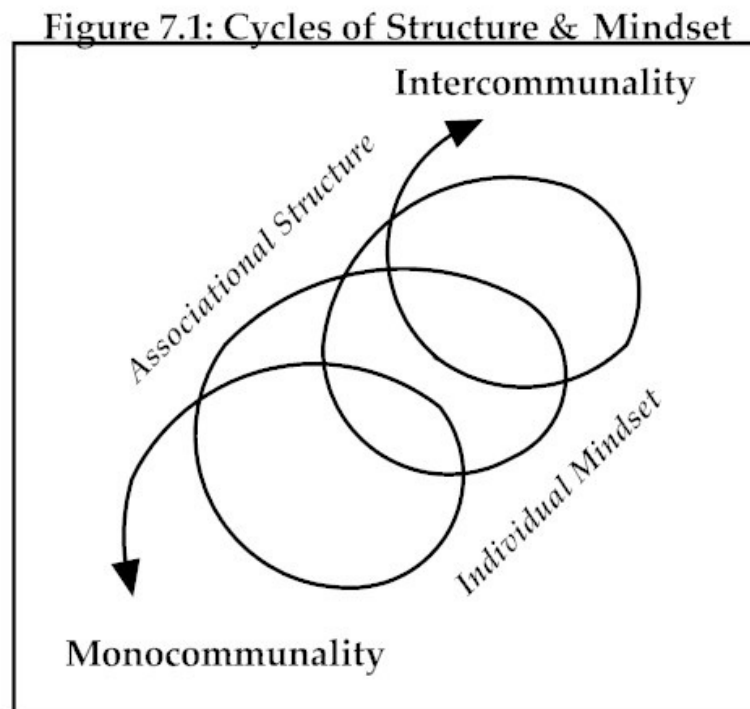
give those structures power. Decades ago, Lazarsfeld and Merton (1954: 25) argued against an overemphasis on structural patterns in the study of friendship formation across identity groups, stating that “the observed patterns can in turn be conceived as the resultants of social interaction, as process, rather than product.” Nonetheless, it would not be useful to shift the theoretical pendulum completely from structure to non-structural factors, because both are essential explanatory elements. Instead, it is necessary to consider multiple causal factors and the interaction between them. Cote and Erickson (2009: 1673), in addressing the effects of social capital on intolerance, describe the complexity of causation follows: “Each kind of factor . . . may have real but indirect effects through one or both of the others.”

Complex causation of associational conflict impact is a theme thus far underdeveloped in the emergent body of core literature on the conflict impacts of nPCROs. Only Weisinger and Salipante (2005, 2007) position as central the interaction between structure and mindset. They view intercommunality as highly desirable, but their grounded theory investigation of Girl Scouts USA demonstrates that true intercommunality cannot be sustained without motivation and ability (drawing on Adler and Kwon 2002) among the participants. Weisinger and Salipante develop, and subsequently test, methods for helping participants to acquire the human ‘software’ necessary for successful intergroup bridging. Some of those methods, in turn, emphasize intercommunally structured learning opportunities as a necessary condition for the development of individual motivation and ability. Weisinger and Salipante are among the most application-oriented researchers in the core cluster, so it is perhaps not surprising that they push for the development of theory that can directly inform practice.

Positioned somewhat differently, Varshney does offer a complex analysis of causation, but he pitches this analysis at a broader level, focusing not on the interaction between individual mindset and associational structure, but on the interaction between associational structure and local politics. He concludes that “civic life and electoral politics have fed into each other in both cities, in a violent direction in Aligarh, and toward peace in Calicut” (2002: 150). He also links electoral politics to the development of identity-based “master narratives” (Varshney 2002: 132), yet he describes these electoral forces as rooted in demographic, political and economic structures, with limited reference to any ‘software’ factors such as culture or psychology (2002: 119-148). Interestingly, MacLean (2010) has provided a comparable account of how macro-level state formation shapes reciprocity among grassroots citizens, which in turn influences patterns of political behavior. Such analyses are relevant and complementary to the Mindanao findings, yet distinct in that only the Mindanao study illuminates the role of ‘soft’ individual mindsets in the development of intercommunal associational structures. Similarly, Putnam offers a noteworthy description of social capital as progressing in path-dependent “vicious” and “virtuous” cycles (Putnam and Feldstein 2003: 287), a useful lens for grappling with complex causation, but he does not make any overt linkage of this concept to the development of bridging social capital.

Thus within the core literature as a whole, there is a need for greater balance and interactivity in examining the ‘hardware’ and the ‘software’ involved in shaping the conflict impacts of nPCROs. As a challenge to models that simply emphasize the importance of intercommunal associational structures, the action research data demonstrate that associational structures and individual human mindsets influence

each other in a cyclical fashion. Such cycles may move either toward intercommunality or away from it. Both realities can occur simultaneously within the same association, just as DMI's intentional development of inclusive mindsets through DNH training leads the organization towards intercommunality, while the incomplete reflection of Evangelical members on their own power simultaneously sustains a partial blockage of increased Muslim participation. Adding the dimension of time to this cycle yields a spiral-shaped model, indicative of continuous evolution and change in progress, as seen in Figure 7.1 below.



### **Human Agency, Intentionality and Associational Change**

The conceptualization of this spiral-shaped model emphasizing change over time leads naturally to considering the influence of individuals and groups in taking action towards intercommunality. We are thus forced to grapple with the role of human agency in effecting change. Within the core literature on the determinants of

conflict impact among nPCROs, the action research findings challenge the extremes of the debate. Most researchers tend to give predominant emphasis either to human agency or socio-political context, thus setting up a conceptual tension between the two forces. Putnam (2000, Putnam and Feldstein 2003) and Varshney (2002) both tend towards a tempered confidence in agency, implying that it is within the power of human beings to form intercommunal associational structures. Jha (2009) and Weisinger and Salipante (2005, 2007) imply a strong belief in agency via their discussions of how individual practitioners might be capacitated for action. On the other hand, Uvin and Cochrane argue that a divisive socio-political context leads to monocommunity of associational structure and action (Uvin 1998, Cochrane 2005). Both mention certain conditions under which negative effects might be mitigated, but such considerations are brief. Uvin and Cochrane do not state that intercommunal associational forms are impossible, but they do imply that the central variable determining this possibility is the degree of polarization in the surrounding socio-political context.

In contrast, the action research findings reinforce the importance of both context and agency, and their mutual interaction, again suggesting the need for theories that can accommodate multiple causation and sensitivity to the possibility of change. In Mindanao and Singapore, contextual pressures yield a powerful influence, and the associational sector has long been deeply divided along ethno-religious lines. At first glance, the pervasive nature of such divisions might appear to prove the skeptics right. Nonetheless, upon closer examination, both DMI and the Harmony Centre provide clear examples of practitioners taking action to challenge the socio-political division of the surrounding context. These religious actors are making

intentional counter-cultural decisions to promote inclusion. One cannot deny that DMI and the Harmony Centre exist, against the odds, which calls into question the proposition that contextual pressures must always dictate an organization's course of action. One can, however, debate the significance of their level of influence within the broader context. The question of macro-level impact, while obviously important, should not be permitted to obscure the significance of local-level patterns, so I consider associational existence separately from associational impact below. With local developments kept solidly in view, the action research data point towards the theoretical significance of individual actors.

**The Existence of Intercommunal Associational Structures.** DMI and the Harmony Centre exist in spite of polarization in the surrounding socio-political context and, while relatively few in number, they are not alone. In Mindanao, in particular, the growing vibrancy of other intercommunal associations, including the regional Bishops-Ulama Conference, demonstrates a degree of movement toward change in the associational sector. The emergence of the Tri-People ethos (as recognized by Palm-Dalupan 2005: 251) has given a conceptual support and public sanction for efforts at inclusivity. The increasing visibility of intercommunal associations, and of public support for their efforts, encourages more practitioners to follow a similar path. The launch of DMI was made possible by earlier changes within its mentor agency World Vision, and DMI is subsequently expanding and replicating its influence among other religious actors in Davao City. Thus the DMI case suggests an interactive mutual influence between context and agency, not unlike the mindset-structure cycles explored in the previous section.

The development of intercommunal associational structures is difficult, fragile and usually slow. The fact that both DMI and the Harmony Centre are ‘works in progress,’ with their outcomes not yet guaranteed, points naturally to the question of what conditions would be most conducive to their effectiveness. In fact, for theory to hold any applicable relevance, it must address more broadly the conditions that contribute to the development of intercommunal associations that can successfully transcend societal divisions. The core literature addresses this question rather sparingly and sporadically, but themes can be identified around the degree of polarization (Varshney 2002, Cochrane 2005), the availability of ‘political space’ (Uvin 1998: 168), the intentionality of the association toward intercommunalism (Uvin 1998: 168), the level of formality with which the association is organized (Varshney 2002), the quality of organizational functioning (MacLean 2004, Pickering 2006), the motivation and capacity of the participants (Weisinger and Jr. 2007, Weisinger and Salipante 2005, Jha 2009), and the identification of outstanding champions for change (Jha 2009). Amongst this preliminary list of conditions for achieving intercommunalism, what emerges as most central to the Mindanao and Singapore is the issue of intentionality.

For both DMI and the Harmony Centre, the intentionality in choosing, and then persisting in, a path toward intercommunalism has indeed proven essential. Both organizations are pursuing a counter-cultural strategy that meets with resistance. Much of this resistance does come from the divisive pressure of the surrounding socio-political context. However this contextual influence does not necessarily manifest itself in the ways that might be predicted based on the existing literature. Mindanao’s degree of polarization has arguably been comparable to some other

contexts that authors despair of, such as Unionist-Nationalist relations in Northern Ireland (Cochrane 2005) and black-white relations the United States (Varshney 2002: 299). Without any doubt, Mindanao has been significantly more polarized than Singapore. Yet in some respects, DMI has made greater progress than the Harmony Centre towards intercommunality. DMI of course has a longer history, so it is difficult to make a direct comparison. Nonetheless, DMI has a committed core of diverse members who implement voluntary activities together on a regular basis, and their influence in the community is slowly but steadily expanding. The consistent core of the Harmony Centre is limited to three paid staff and one or two highly committed external volunteers. Though significantly influential, the Harmony Centre's participant pool draws consistently on the same loose network of individuals who have an open mind toward interfaith engagement, while a deeper reach into other segments of the community has thus far been elusive.<sup>239</sup> Further, the Mindanowan associational sector as a whole has arguably made more progress toward intercommunality than its Singaporean counterpart. Thus the degree of contextual socio-political polarization, while certainly wielding a formidable influence, cannot be the sole determinant of associational intercommunality. There must be other factors at play.

In terms of other contextual constraints, 'political space' appears to be a more significant limiting factor for Singaporean participants. All interfaith initiatives are closely monitored by the government, to ensure that the desired pursuit of religious harmony, does not veer into the closely related politics of race (Tan 2008). The Singaporean restrictions contrast sharply with government policy in the Philippines,

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<sup>239</sup> Plenary discussion, DNH workshop, Singapore, 15 Mar. 2008, video recording.



which has often afforded the Catholic Church more freedom than many of its secular civil society counterparts, particularly under Marcos' martial law (Barry 2006: 157, Bück 2007: 106). Across Singapore, participants in interfaith activities feel compelled to engage in continuous self-censorship, which contributes to the common feeling that current interfaith dialog efforts are shallow.<sup>240</sup> Further, the common perception that social harmony is first and foremost a government responsibility appears to limit the pool of interested participants and their levels of commitment to progressive interfaith activity. Would-be activists in Singapore often content themselves with a service-delivery role, a phenomenon also noted by Uvin with regard to the limited political space of pre-genocide Rwanda (Uvin 1998: 172-9) .

Further, for Singaporean Muslims, participation is always situated within the government-defined agenda of interfaith activities as a tool for resilience against the divisive effects of any potential Islamist terror attack. Muslims who choose to participate in interfaith activities appear to accept this resilience agenda, with varying degrees of discomfort. Resentment of the resilience agenda may also prevent some Muslims from participating at all, but this remains a point of speculation, because participants would be naturally reluctant to comment on this issue. Importantly, Singaporean government policy does not prohibit interfaith engagement; in fact, such intercommunal associational forms are encouraged. Even so the legal and conceptual constraints on the nature of interfaith activities do limit some forms of participation, and discourage some potential activists. In other words, the limited scope and shape of available political space hinders individual and associational intentionality.

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<sup>240</sup> Field notes, 2 Dec. 2008.

Organizational functioning also relates closely to an association's degree of intentionality in developing intercommunal structures. In the case of DMI, operationalizing conflict sensitivity has been roughly equivalent to increasing the intercommunality of membership. As analyzed in Chapter Five, important organizational variables have included the role of leadership in visioning and championing intercommunal change, the functionality of decision-making mechanisms in making intercommunality a priority, and the consistency of follow-up to ensure that such decisions get implemented. When such organizational variables have functioned well, intercommunality has advanced; when these organizational variables have faltered, progress toward intercommunality has slowed. Intentionality here does not refer to nebulous positive feelings, or to a one-time affirmation of intercommunality as a laudable goal, but rather to a persistent, action-oriented prioritization of intercommunality over time, in spite of contextual pressures, competing tasks and limited resources. Such organizational factors are de-emphasized here, in order to devote greater attention to the interaction between structure and mindset, but their importance is well elaborated in the conflict sensitivity literature (e.g. Lange 2004).

Paradoxically, this emerging emphasis on intentionality aligns to some extent with the argument of Uvin regarding Rwanda, that intercommunal associations are unlikely to exist in a deeply divided society, unless they acquire both intentionality and political space (1998: 168). The data suggest that the more polarized the context of intergroup relations, and the less available the political space, the more intentionality is required. What distinguishes my perspective from Uvin's is primarily the matter of emphasis. I would argue that within the core literature on the

conflict impacts of nPCROs, the exercise of associational agency is worthy of much greater attention, because such associations do in fact have the potential to challenge the divisive pressures of the surrounding socio-political context. Importantly, the act of intentionally choosing intercommunality may lead associations towards the promotion of peace as a part of their mandate, thus moving away from the pure definition of a non-peace and conflict resolution organization (nPCRO). Their primary purpose would probably remain unchanged, but the effort to contribute to peace through intentional intergroup collaboration would become an important secondary emphasis, which may or may not be explicitly articulated. The practice of conflict sensitivity would appear to catalyze this type of associational change, because it encourages mindful, purposive action. In the words of one Singaporean participant, “you become aware of the consequence of your actions, and then you make a conscious decision whether you are going for it or not.”<sup>241</sup> Thus it may become necessary to further refine the conceptual frame by making a distinction between nPCROs that become intentional about intercommunality, and those that do not.

**The Influence of Intercommunal Associational Structures.** While the existence of DMI and the Harmony Centre cannot be denied, their level of influence on the socio-political context is of course debatable. In comparison to macro-level assessments of ethno-political division in the associational sector (e.g. Uvin 1998, Varshney 2002, Cochrane 2005), the changes that DMI and the Harmony Centre demonstrate are localized in nature. Some scholar-practitioners leading the development of conflict sensitivity theory have likewise questioned the significance

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<sup>241</sup> Prt. S #12, follow-up interview by author, Seattle, USA, 21 May 2010, audio recording.

of localized change. Anderson and Olson (2003) point out that change among individuals or small groups will not add up to “peace writ large,” unless it reaches the socio-political level by involving either more people or key people capable of effecting political change. Writing on local civil society in Rwanda, Unsworth and Uvin (2002: 2) caution that

much of this is worthwhile . . . But it has high administrative costs; it is difficult to move from local level empowerment to collective action which would have an impact on the national policy process; and it often has overly ambitious higher level objectives, aspiring to achieve significant macro-level aims – democracy, civil society, through actions that are disproportionately small (2002: 2).

In this regard, it must be noted that while DMI and the Harmony Centre are localized, they are not limited to the grassroots level. Significant numbers of their participants and members do operate at the grassroots level, but by coming together in a city-wide network, they acquire broader scope and potential influence. Even the participating grassroots members are, in fact, leaders, who exercise moral authority over numerous followers in churches, mosques and service organizations. In effect, they are mobilizing the power of vertical forms of social capital (Woolcock 1998) to influence their constituents. Further, the Harmony Centre is government-supported, making it a proverbial ‘big fish in a small pond,’ and many of DMI’s members serve in the city government’s unique chaplaincy program. Both DMI and the Harmony Centre can be considered mid-level networks, strategically positioned in the sense pointed out by Lederach (1997: 41-2), having linkages and exercising influence at both the micro and macro levels. Further, these networks function in ways that illustrate the linkage of homogenous groups to other differing homogenous groups, a

topic of considerable interest among social network theorists (Frank and Yasumoto 1998, Burt 2004, Baldassarri and Diani 2007).

To the extent that 'peace writ large' is considered desirable, it is important to recognize the diversity of forms in which such macro-level impact might manifest itself. There is often a tendency to assume that impact on government policy-making is the primary indicator of associational impact. Unsworth and Uvin (2002: 2) lean this direction in the aforementioned quote ("...collective action which would have an impact on the national policy process..."). This assumption must be critically weighed against the proposition that associations can impact peace and conflict in many ways, including but not limited to shaping public policy. For example, Gidron et al. (2002b) in examining the efficacy of peace and conflict resolution organizations, do give central emphasis to their impact on formal peace negotiations and processes. However the authors also consider how associations influence intergroup relations at the cultural level, including changing public perceptions and opinions about the conflict, and introducing new norms, activities and skills for citizen engagement. Varshney (2002: 9-10) similarly argues that associations have their impact not through shaping policy, but through building intergroup horizontal networks among citizens that can resist the polarizing effects of "exogenous shocks." Thus, while the importance of macro-level policy influence cannot be underestimated, it is too narrow a criterion to capture the various forms and levels of associational impact.

*Re-thinking the Individual.* Associations are made up of individuals, and intentionality with an organization is naturally rooted in its members. The empirical data gathered through action research, as examined through the lenses of conflict sensitivity and associational theory, point towards the significance of individual

thought and behavior. Voluntary associations typically do not display the needed discipline to pursue intercommunalism, especially in contexts that model and reward monocommunity, unless the people within those associations are committed and capable.

In conceptual terms, a macro-level perspective would often see the individual as the smallest possible entity in the social context, so diminutive that his or her actions rarely become significant at the broader level. Alternatively, it is also possible to view the individual as a component unit that has potential to combine with others to create social patterns and trends. In this view, the individual is a core building block of collective action, and therefore worthy of researcher attention. This perspective is taken by theorists who consider individual identity formation as a contributing factor in the macro-level dynamics of ethnic conflict (see for example Brown 1994: 7-19, Paribatra and Samudavaniya 1984: 33). Similarly, Ramakrishna (2007) has called for more attention to factors of religious psychology in identity-based conflict, and Hann (1996) has encouraged a greater focus on interpersonal interaction between individuals.

Within much of this project's core literature, the simplified emphasis on associational structure tends to obscure the role of the practitioner. Pickering is an exception in that she foregrounds individual decision making, albeit by private citizens, only some of whom are participants in associational life (2007). Varshney, too, has argued for an understanding of conflict's 'microfoundations,' and has explored the individual-level perspective in his writing on the impulse toward risk-taking among ethnic partisans (2003), but he has not linked these insights to his research on civil society structures. Jha (2009) and Weisinger and Salipante (2005,

2007) come closer to addressing this linkage in their exploration of individual capability for intergroup interaction. The practitioners of DMI and the Harmony Centre clearly agree with the importance of individual capacity, and they place a large emphasis on the provision of training services. Perhaps even more relevant for deeply divided contexts is Weisinger and Salipante's emphasis on individual 'motivation,' pointing squarely to the issues of personal commitment and intentionality. What good would it do to train a voluntary participant, thus increasing their capacity, to pursue a costly course of action towards which they are indifferent, or even opposed?

The action research findings serve well to illuminate this issue because conflict sensitivity, while originally intended primarily for organizational capacity building, has been seen to have profound effects on individual motivation. The DMI case study points to the pivotal importance of both awareness-raising and mindset shift. Awareness-raising refers to the process of individuals within an association becoming conscious of how their actions impact the surrounding context, and conscious in particular of the significance of intercommunality or monocommunality. Such consciousness-raising is particularly important among nPCROs, which make up the bulk of the associational sector, because these actors by definition focus their attention on matters other than conflict and peace. The painful fact is that negative conflict impacts can be unintentional, but positive impacts usually require awareness leading to purposive intentionality.

The related shift from exclusive to inclusive mindsets has been extensively analyzed above, but in relation to divisive contextual pressures there is one more important point to be made. Mindset shift has been necessary among DMI members

precisely because those individuals had previously internalized the polarized and structurally violent paradigms (Uvin 1998) around which Mindanowan society is organized. The identity-based cleavages and structural violence (Galtung 1969) that shape Mindanao's socio-political reality have been, to varying extents, reflected and reinforced in the minds of the research participants. In the case of DMI members, it has been necessary to challenge those divisive structures within the minds of individuals, before those individuals could choose to join others in challenging the manifestations of division at the community level. It is likely that the more polarized the socio-political context, the more necessary and challenging the mindset work required to bring individuals to the point of choosing intentional intergroup engagement.

Importantly, we again encounter here a distinction between intentional linking behaviors and social network theory. Pickering, in her Bosnia-based study of minority engagement in intergroup networks, concludes that the best sites for creating bridging social capital are those in which the diversity is unintentional, such as integrated workplaces, because participants have minimal freedom of choice regarding their interaction partners (2007: 113). In this case, social capital is seen as a means to access personal security and socio-economic well-being (Portes 1998: 6). People are not motivated by a desire for intergroup engagement so, given the choice, many would opt to avoid it. Situations of limited choice thus become a favorable circumstance for bringing different groups together. Without disputing the validity of such findings among people who are motivated by personal needs, the current action research findings point in a very different direction. The focus here is on



people who become favorably and intentionally disposed towards intergroup engagement, often through a process of mindset change.

Thus the issue of personal motivation becomes prominent, and calls for greater theoretical attention within the core literature on the conflict impacts of nPCROs. Individuals are indeed small units of action but, if theory is to be usefully applied to real-world problems, it must include within its view the small seeds that carry the potential for broader change, and it must help to identify the conditions that enable those seeds to grow. The perceptions, values, beliefs, and attitudes of associational members do matter, for “it is in the sphere of the mores, and the climates of opinion they express, that we are apt to discern incipient changes of vision” (Bellah et al. 1986: 275).

### **Conclusion: Structural ‘Hardware’ Requires Mindset ‘Software’**

This study’s in-depth examination of two local intercommunal network agencies in Mindanao and Singapore has illuminated several under-theorized aspects of the determinants of the conflict impact among nPCROs in settings of ethnic conflict. Moving beyond the simple distinction between intercommunal and monocommunal associational structures, I have identified several factors that influence how such intercommunal associations come into being, and how they continue to develop. These factors include human mindsets and human agency, both of which are nonstructural in nature, thereby challenging the structural emphasis in the emergent core literature on this theme, as centered around Putnam (2000) and Varshney (2002).

This foregrounding of non-structural factors does not imply that the non-structural should become the sole focal point in theorizing the determinants of conflict impact among nPCROs. On the contrary, the non-structural or 'software' factors need to be considered in tandem with the structural or 'hardware' factors. This would enable the relevant theories on the determinants of conflict impact to accommodate multiple causation, interaction between sources of causation, and sensitivity to the possibility of change. In effect, this is an argument favoring theoretical nuance over parsimony, if such nuance is needed to provide social explanations that are believable enough to act upon (Greenwood and Levin 2007: 67) in policy and practice.

To the extent that the current core literature, taken as a body, points to the assumption that the conflict impacts of nPCROs can be improved simply by making them structurally intercommunal, then this theory is misleading in its incompleteness. I suggest that such theory could be re-conceptualized as a cycle of mutual influence between associational structure and individual mindsets. This cycle can create momentum either towards intercommunality or away from it, with the possibility of both phenomena occurring simultaneously within the same association. Adding the dimension of time to this cycle yields a spiral-shaped model, indicative of change in progress. Such change may originate with either the structure of an association, or the mindsets of its members.

The findings elaborated in this chapter have responded to two of my three research questions on the determinants of associational conflict impacts among nPCROs. The theme of the third research question, on the role and influence of religion, has also been implicitly present throughout this chapter, because the

empirical data are thoroughly infused with references to religion. For religious actors in Mindanao and Singapore, the mindset factors that influence both associational structure and human agency are in fact deeply religious in nature. Further, given the extensive influence of religion in the public square in Southeast Asia, the factors that shape the behavior of religious leaders and activists hold much significance for the associational sector in that region. Thus the next chapter provides an explicit analysis of the religious content and meaning of this project's findings, as a further contribution to the development of associational theory.

## CHAPTER EIGHT: RELIGIOUS CULTURE, IDENTITY, AND CHANGE

*To doubt God's existence would be to doubt one's own self-awareness,  
and consequently everything else.*

- Jose Rizal, Filipino nationalist leader (Bonoan 1994: 58)

This chapter continues application of the empirical data from Mindanao and Singapore to address the study's second level of research inquiry: How do the findings arising from conflict sensitivity testing inform existing associational theory? The preceding chapter established the mutual cyclical influence between intercommunal associational structures and human mindsets, and the role of human agency in pursuing change. This chapter explores the extent to which both of those themes have been shaped by the central role of religion, particularly religion's mindset-influencing yet oft-neglected cultural intangibles (Wood 1999, Blanchard et al. 2008). While this chapter draws significantly on Chapter Seven, it represents a somewhat stronger critique of this project's core literature on the social impacts of associations whose primary mandate is *not* conflict-related, or nPCROs. The non-structural determinants of impact elaborated in the previous chapter are acknowledged in current associational theory, despite the need for a greater balance and emphasis in future research. However the role of religion as an important non-structural determinant of impact is more conspicuously absent in the existing body of theory, suggesting a 'religion gap' in need of more urgent scholarly attention.

Admittedly the role of religion in associational life is context-driven, and in this sense the religious content of this chapter is uniquely reflective of the Southeast Asian setting. Nonetheless, religion's political prominence is not limited to Southeast

Asia. Other regions of significance include Africa and the United States and, as Wood points out, “the global trend in this regard is up, not down” (1999: 329). Thus it is concerning that religion receives very little attention within this project’s core literature, despite the fact that nPCROs actually comprise the bulk of the associational sector. As detailed in Chapter Three, perhaps the most surprising near-omission of religious intangibles comes from Varshney, in his extensive research on conflict between religiously-defined ethnic groups in both India (2002) and Indonesia (2010). Putnam’s treatment of religious culture (2000, 2002, Putnam and Feldstein 2003) was for many years limited and sporadic, until his recent expansive publication on the divisive and unifying factors in American religion (Putnam and Campbell 2010). Some of the other core works do address religion, but they either limit their analysis to religious institutions as opposed to religious intangibles (Uvin 1998, MacLean 2004, Cochrane 2005, Weisinger and Salipante 2005), or they do not link religious intangibles as major contributors to associational conflict impact (Pickering 2007, Titeca and Vervisch 2008, Jha 2009). Only Karner and Parker (2008) position religious culture as central, finding religious beliefs to be a key motivation for engagement in progressive change, including the development of both bridging and bonding social capital.

Looking beyond the conflict impacts of nPCROs, the broader literature on associations and democratization shows a consideration of religion that is growing but very inconsistent. Research employing civil society concepts demonstrates perhaps the most problematic neglect of religion (Muukkonen 2009: 689), due in large part to Western-influenced assumptions that modernization will relegate religion to the private sphere (Casanova 1994). In response to this theoretical gap, my findings

strongly reinforce the recommendation of Karner and Parker that "discussions about ethnicity, social capital and community cohesion need to engage with religion as a resource for making sense of complex experiences and attachments" (2008: 520).

This chapter, after briefly considering the institutional aspects of religious impact, devotes greater attention to religious cultures, including empirical findings on such matters as religious compromise, proselytism and theological resources for peace. Each of these themes is shown to contribute to group identity development, and to be subject to change. These elements of religious culture are examined with emphasis on the relatively extensive changes taking place among the Mindanowan participants, and supplemented by the insights of participants from Singapore. Due to the composition of the participant group, Protestant and Evangelical experiences are more strongly represented than those of Catholics or Muslims, and the experiences of Buddhists and other non-monotheistic faiths important in Southeast Asia are not addressed. Therefore without claiming an even-handed coverage of the region, this project's empirical evidence provides a revealing look at certain prominent conflict-related themes, including the particularly contentious issue of proselytism. Finally, in light of the core literature's relative silence on the religious themes so prominent in the data, I return to iteratively deepen the consideration of the religious studies and theological literature that was briefly mentioned in Chapter Three (Davis 2004: 157, Fisher and Phelps 2006: 156-8). This selective sampling of theological literature demonstrates how the explanatory power of associational theory could be greatly enhanced through linkage and integration with religious studies, particularly with reference to religiously-influenced societies such as those found in Southeast Asia.

## The Influence of Religious Institutions

The overall emphasis in this chapter is on religious culture, because of its underrepresentation in the existing literature (Wood 1999, Blanchard et al. 2008). Nevertheless, before proceeding to culture, it must be acknowledged that the more familiar theme of religious institutions does indeed play a significant role in shaping the overall conflict dynamics, and the social impacts of religious associations, in Mindanao and Singapore. Religious institutions can and do influence politics, though the scope and mechanisms differ significantly across contexts. In the Philippines, the Roman Catholic Church regularly issues influential policy statements on peace processes, mining regulations, etc. Further, some of the larger non-Catholic denominations, and Catholic organizations operating outside the Church hierarchy, exercise an overt influence in electoral politics. Media coverage of the 2010 presidential election reports numerous endorsement-seeking meetings between political candidates and leaders of mega-churches (for example Legaspi 2010). A Catholic interviewee described his own observations as follows:

It is true that there is a clear link. You can tell it during election time . . . The politicians try to get to the leader of huge denominations. .. because they know that when they get the vote of the leader, then the leader says that this is the line-up of politicians we are going to vote for . . . and they do, we call it block voting, especially in the Iglesia ni Kristo for example . . . The Iglesia ni Kristo in the national politics really is a crucial block or group of people . . . because they have around three or five or six million . . . A politician really can get support, and everybody knows it.<sup>242</sup>

In Singapore, religious institutions are legally barred from attempting to influence politics, and encouraged to focus on a limited service-delivery role. The

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<sup>242</sup> Bonifacio Belonio, interview by author, Davao, 21 July 2008, audio recording.

government does seek feedback from religious leaders on certain policy issues such as bio-ethics and casino expansion, but many religious actors privately question the extent to which such feedback is used in decision-making. Even so, religious actors provoke the government into action whenever they overstep the 'out-of-bounds' markers in ways that might inflame ethno-religious tensions. Further, as a Protestant interfaith activist has observed, religious associations influence social policy in subtle, indirect ways through the placement of their members in government roles. Chinese Protestants, in particular, are considered influential despite their religious minority status. For example, the Boy's Brigade, a children's club known for its evangelistic content, has been approved by the Ministry of Education to operate in schools. A Catholic educator reportedly voiced his frustration by saying: "This must have been done by one of the Christians in the ministry, and then they slipped it in."<sup>243</sup> Though probably catalyzed by an individual, this legal decision served to institutionalize the Boy's Brigade in the public square, and to expand the church's assigned service delivery role in order to serve its own purposes.

Further, religious doctrines bolstered by formal high-level endorsement can significantly shape interactions between local associational actors, as seen in the Roman Catholic Church's Vatican II statements which delineated a more affirming and multifaceted relationship between Christianity and other religions (e.g. Pope Paul VI 1965). In Singapore, three of the five pilot interviewees pointed to Vatican II as having prompted a pivotal conceptual shift in how local Catholics engage

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<sup>243</sup> Prt. S #12, follow-up interview by author, Seattle, USA, May 21 2010, audio recording. In this case, 'Christians' refers to Protestants, particularly Evangelical Protestants.



interfaith relations.<sup>244</sup> One of them, a Muslim interfaith activist, commented that he found Catholics much easier to work with than Protestants, precisely because of the reforms initiated by Vatican II.<sup>245</sup> The literature also indicates that Vatican II had a significant impact in the Philippines on the Catholic Church's teachings on interfaith engagement (Abubakar 1997, Larousse 2001), but the Filipino participants did not mention it during the action research.

Given the dynamics described above, there is no doubt that religion's institutional aspects wield much influence in the Mindanowan and Singaporean public spheres. Yet even institutional actions are often mediated through the mindsets and resulting decisions of small groups and individual followers. The teachings of Vatican II would have no local influence if not adopted by grassroots actors. Denominational block voting would not be possible in the absence of a mindset that assumes strong compliance with pastoral directives. These mindset factors, illustrative of religious cultures, receive scant consideration in the core literature, so I give ample attention below to elaborating the themes and examples identified in the action research data.

### **The Influence of Religious Cultures**

Despite the neglect of religious culture in the associational literature (Wood 1999, Blanchard et al. 2008), it is a dominant theme in the empirical data emerging from Mindanao and Singapore. 'Culture' here refers to the learned and shared patterns of beliefs, values and behaviors within a particular group (Bennett 1998). In

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<sup>244</sup>244 Prt. S #5, pilot interview by author, Singapore, 15 May 2007. Prt. S #1, pilot interview by author, Singapore, 29 Mar. 2007. Prt. S #2, pilot interview by author, Singapore, 4 Apr. 2007.

<sup>245</sup> Prt. S #1, pilot interview by author, Singapore, 29 Mar. 2007.

this study certain aspects of religious culture have been laid bare to a greater extent than originally anticipated, owing to a somewhat unforeseen resonance between conflict sensitivity and religion, as experienced by the participating religious actors. First, it appears that conflict sensitivity's emphasis on dualistic social impacts, which may be either positive or negative, provides religious actors with a way to conceptualize and verbalize what they already know about religion's potential for both help and harm. In other words, conflict sensitivity helps religious actors to confront religion's "Janus face" (Casanova 1994: 4). This dualistic religious potential is also reflected in the literature, perhaps most notably in the work of Appleby (2000), who calls all religions "ambivalent," meaning that the concept of the sacred itself embodies "the authority to kill and to heal, to unleash savagery, or to bless humankind with healing and wholeness" (2000: 29). Similarly, Juergensmayer (2000) sees within religion a cosmic warfare between order and chaos. When conflict sensitivity raises awareness of religion's ambivalent impacts, this new consciousness taps into a deep well of religious ethics around personal responsibility and individual change, in the context of one's duty to help others. Conflict sensitivity has become a way of unlocking religious change among individuals, who form the building blocks of associations, and influence the intercommunality or monocommunality of their structures.

Among the participating religious actors, several interrelated elements of religious culture have undergone change, including the fear of compromising one's faith, the practice of proselytism, and the discovery of theological resources for peace. Each of these elements has shaped the pivotal question of whether associational functioning is exclusive or inclusive of the diversity present in a given community.

Further, each of these elements relates closely to the theme of identity, meaning the ways in which each ethno-religious group defines itself vis-à-vis other groups. The centrality of identity in this study was well expressed by a Singaporean participant who stated that a prominent barrier to local interfaith engagement is that “they fear losing their identity to the other.”<sup>246</sup>

Alagappa has stated that identity formation is one of civil society’s basic functions (2004b: 53), and this thesis has referred at various points to the question of social identity development and intergroup boundaries (Tajfel and Turner 1986). Indeed, I have defined ‘ethnic conflict’ as referring to conflict based in group identity (Horowitz 2000, Kanbur et al. 2010), so it should come as no surprise that where religious affiliation overlaps with ethnicity, religion can play a role in identity formation. Marty (1997: 14) further claims that intense forms of religion are more useful for identity formation. Nonetheless, religion has often been treated as a simple ‘identity marker,’ with little attention given to religious content and meaning (Ganiel and Dixon 2008: 422). The empirical data call such assumptions into question by illuminating Southeast Asian contexts in which religion has indeed been an identity marker in ethnic conflicts over governance and resources, yet religion has also acquired over time a political significance of its own that reaches far beyond the confines of the identity-marker role. The data, in fact, align with the argument of Wellman that religion interacts with politics and violence largely through its identity-shaping power, and that it “creates symbolic and social boundaries that include and exclude” (2007a: 5). For these reasons, the religious themes in the data merit a deeper look in relation to identity, ambivalence and change.

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<sup>246</sup> Prt. S #12, follow-up interview by author, Seattle, USA, 21 May 2010, audio recording.

*Compromise.* As elaborated in Chapter Five, different religious beliefs are often assumed in Mindanao to be a natural cause for separation. Among members of DMI, the shift towards inclusive mindsets has involved questioning the implicit notion that one should not mix with people whose beliefs are different, and therefore probably inferior. Conflict sensitivity and Culture of Peace training have prompted DMI members to recognize the divisive effects of such notions within Mindanowan communities. Thus, without abandoning their own religious convictions, they have begun to de-link religious belief from their criteria for entering interpersonal relationships. They have made a conscious decision to build on their commonalities and, to a significant extent, set aside religious doctrine as an area in which it is acceptable to 'agree to disagree.' Thus one participant explains that he uses conflict sensitivity as an aid "...to stand where we are, no discussion of belief; let a humankind prevail from the heart as human."<sup>247</sup> Another participant states that: "We give importance to our commonalities, to what is common to our beliefs and practice."<sup>248</sup>

The significance of this shift is highlighted by the fact that it is particularly difficult for Evangelicals in Mindanao, due to the fear of 'compromising' their own faith commitment. It is commonly perceived that being in relationship with a person implies that you approve of his or her religious beliefs, unless the primary purpose of the relationship is evangelism. Evangelical members of the research team feel that concerns of religious compromise are the primary barrier for their co-religionists in accepting the interfaith content of DMI's publication, and in considering the

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<sup>247</sup> Prt. MI #67, long-form survey of DMI, Davao, Jan. 2008.

<sup>248</sup> Prt. MI #28, long-form survey of DMI, Davao, Jan. 2008, punctuation added.

possibility of interfaith relationships in their own lives. One pastor states that “We are really afraid of the word ‘compromising’ our faith.”<sup>249</sup> Another elaborates as follows:

It’s the idea of compromising their faith. It will give us the idea that we need to compromise our faith in order to join with the other groups. That idea is really to be questioned for most religious leaders. So let’s be careful how to really present LCP in that way, without compromising the faith.<sup>250</sup>

Over time, the Evangelicals in DMI have developed important alternative ways of conceptualizing, and avoiding, religious compromise. In the process of building relationships with people of other faiths, they continue to articulate their own unchanged identity. One pastor explains that: “Personally, I could mingle now with ease with people from different religions. I could make friends now with Muslims & Catholics by letting them know that I am still an ‘Assemblies of God.’”<sup>251</sup> Further, it is understood within DMI that each member still holds to the universal truth claims of his or her own faith. They advocate inclusivity in relationships and in service, but not necessarily in matters of doctrine, particularly doctrines of personal salvation.<sup>252</sup> Thus each member continues to believe that his or her own faith represents the highest truth, and they would be very happy if others decided to embrace it. However, they respect the others’ right to chose. They view others as whole people, rather than just souls in need of salvation, and as people with whom they have many other characteristics and goals in common. Further, they use conflict

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<sup>249</sup> Prt. MI #93, during research team consultation, Davao, 17 Jan. 2009, audio recording.

<sup>250</sup> Prt. MI #85, during research team consultation, Davao, 17 Jan. 2009, audio recording.

<sup>251</sup> Prt. MI #85, long-form survey of DMI, Davao, Jan. 2008.

<sup>252</sup> Team discussion, research team consultation, Davao, 17 Jan. 2009, audio recording.

sensitivity as a catalyst to identify and reform the pervasively negative religious impact patterns identified in Chapter Six, such as *Disrespect, Mistrust and Competition*.

The data suggest that DMI members are actively engaged in re-shaping the boundaries between religious groups. The exclusive mindsets among Mindanowan religious actors can be seen as a manifestation of group efforts at positive self-differentiation (Tajfel and Turner 1986). Proselytism in particular differentiates through distinctions in doctrine and worship – i.e. defining oneself in opposition to what one is *not* - and self-elevates by positioning the adoption of one's own practices as the standard of acceptability. With this in mind, the shift towards inclusive mindsets is an example of how religiously-influenced boundaries can be changed, in effect re-constructed through the agency of common people. Importantly, the boundaries are not being erased, an approach which DMI members would find unacceptable (as in Ganiel and Dixon 2008: 428), but the contour and nature of the boundaries is being significantly re-defined.

Such findings appear to reinforce the work of Yukich (2010), who indicates that some inclusive religious groups manage the tension between boundaries and inclusion by developing their boundaries at the level of abstract conceptualization, while practicing inclusion in their concrete interpersonal interactions. DMI members have also begun to distinguish boundaries and inclusion along different planes. Whereas DMI's Evangelicals previously held up doctrinal standards of shared belief as a broad criterion for acceptability, they now distinguish between social and spiritual aspects of acceptability. In the social realm, shared beliefs are no longer the criterion for acceptability among humans; instead, welcoming friendships with people of other religions is now viewed as a vibrant expression of one's faith. On the

other hand, most of DMI's Evangelicals have not re-evaluated their standards of spiritual acceptability. Specific doctrinal beliefs are still seen as the as the key to relationship with God, or salvation. A powerful catalyst for this redefinition of boundaries appears to be ongoing interpersonal relationships with persons of other faiths, in what Yukich considers a manifestation of Buber's (1958) classic "I-Thou" encounter.

Thus without compromising their core religious commitments, DMI's Evangelicals have adopted a stance that is more conducive to intercommunal association. Compromise as an issue of religious identity pertains particularly to Evangelicals. However, if the fear of compromise is the primary barrier for Evangelicals in considering interfaith engagement, then a corresponding barrier for non-Evangelicals, particularly Muslims, is the avoidance of religious proselytism. In Mindanao, the research team judged proselytism to be the *primary* concern of Muslims in relating to Christian religious groups.<sup>253</sup>

*Proselytism.* As emphasized from the pilot phase findings onwards, the phenomenon of religious proselytism is an important determinant of social impact among religious associations in Mindanao and Singapore. 'Proselytism' implies communication of a religious salvation message in ways that are aggressive, manipulative or forceful. This is a difficult term to use with precision, because the distinction is vague between proselytism and other forms of religious communication. The communicators themselves rarely use this term, with the identification of 'proselytism' often being subject to the views of recipients and observers. Nonetheless, the perceptions of aggression, manipulation and force are

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<sup>253</sup> Prt. MI #8, during research team consultation, Davao, 17 Jan. 2009, audio recording.

what make this phenomenon problematic for intergroup relations in Southeast Asia, so I use the term, with caution, where it is needed.

Any religion can engage in proselytism, and the monotheistic faiths are considered particularly prone to such activity. During the Spanish colonial era in the Philippines, the primary source of conversion, including pressurized conversion, was the Roman Catholic Church. Further, in the Mindanao action research, one participant described a current situation in which Muslims oblige Christians intermarried with Muslims to convert to Islam.<sup>254</sup> Singaporean interviewees have mentioned forthright Islamic efforts at “telling of the beauty of Islam” during the 1970s and 1980s Da’wah movement and renewal.<sup>255</sup> The Da’wah movement had similar ripple effects in Mindanao, including an increased public observance of conservative Muslim approaches to food, dress, etc. (Vitug and Gloria 2000: 172-3). Proselytism-related activities continue in the present within some Singaporean Islamic community service organizations, albeit in a more subtle manner (Mansor and Ibrahim 2008: 466). However, despite the engagement of multiple faith groups in encouraging religious conversion, in the current context of Mindanao and Singapore, the greatest proselytizing force is found among Protestant Christians who are Evangelical in their orientation.

For Evangelicals, their proselytizing efforts stem from a strong biblically-inspired belief in universal truth, a salvation message centering on one’s ‘personal relationship with Jesus Christ,’ and in their own responsibility to share this message with others as an expression of caring. Further, for many Evangelicals, their beliefs

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<sup>254</sup> Prt. MI #1, DNH framework created during advanced DNH workshop, Davao, 19-21 Aug. 2008.

<sup>255</sup> Prt. S #1, pilot interview by author, Singapore, 29 Mar. 2007.



about their own spiritual salvation, and their relationship to others who either share or do not share those beliefs, are central to their own identity. The overlap between religious and ethnic identities brings proselytism into the public square. Among the target audience, proselytizing activity often triggers anxiety and resistance, due to the historical linkage between conflict and religious conversion in the Southeast Asian region. As Putnam has observed, “proselytizing religions are better at creating bonding social capital than bridging social capital” (Putnam 2000: 410).

In the Philippines, conversion is the primary reason for the somewhat counter-intuitive cleavage between Protestant and Catholic Christians. When Spanish colonialism gave way to American colonialism at the turn of the twentieth century, this opened the door for large numbers of American and American-inspired Evangelical missionaries. The Catholic Church has been steadily losing members as the Evangelical churches expand. Though both churches are drawn from the same ethnic groups (migrant Visayans and indigenous Lumads), Catholics perceive Evangelicals as very aggressive and closed-minded in their doctrine, while Evangelicals see Catholics as not being ‘real Christians.’<sup>256</sup>

In Singapore, proselytism by Chinese Evangelicals continues to be such a potent inflamer of ethnic and religious tensions that the Prime Minister periodically issues strong public warnings. In his 2009 National Day speech, “racial and religious harmony” was one of the four primary topics addressed. He commented on proselytism as follows:

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<sup>256</sup> Bonifacio Belonio, interview by author, Davao, 21 July 2008, audio recording.

Aggressive preaching or proselytisation. You push your own religion on others, and cause nuisance and offence. You have read in the papers recently, one couple who surreptitiously distributed Christian tracts which were offensive to other faiths, not just to non-Christians but even to Catholics because they said Catholics are not Christians. They were charged and sentenced to jail. But there are less extreme cases too which can cause problems. For example, we hear from time to time complaints of groups trying to convert very ill patients in our hospitals who do not want to be converted and who do not want to have the private difficult moments in their lives intruded upon. But sometimes it happens. So aggressive preaching is one problem (Lee 2009).

During DNH testing and application in Mindanao, some of the underlying mindset factors relating to Evangelical proselytism were undergoing change, and therefore they became more visible than usual, and a subject of frequent conversation. The core religious beliefs of DMI's Evangelical actors, centered on their message of salvation, remain unchanged. The vast majority have not decreased their evangelism, which they view as a God-given responsibility. However, there is evidence for an ongoing Evangelical re-interpretation of how one's faith should be lived out in community with others. As described above, many Evangelicals using DNH have de-linked perceived salvation status from their implicit criteria for entering into some types of relationships. Such Evangelicals are now willing to enter into a collegial relationship or friendship with an 'unbeliever,' for purposes that are not solely defined by evangelism. Close associations such as intermarriage would still be frowned upon, but many other aspects of public life can be shared.

Further, Evangelicals have begun to use DNH to revise and contextualize the way they conduct evangelism, with a view towards both mitigating tensions within the target communities, and making their spiritual message more attractive to their audience. This indicates a shift away from the implicit belief that public truth claims

must naturally engender conflict. A Catholic DMI leader tells the story of an Evangelical pastor who used DNH to modify his strategy for planting Evangelical churches among Catholics:

When you go to the community, and you're a pastor and you are starting a church planting there's really this rejection. But he said that: "I'm not going to stop my church planting . . .that's still my ministry . . . but now I am more careful . . . I should know the connectors and dividers of that community, and my church planting strategy should be redesigned to fit the connectors and the dividers, (to have a) good impact on that."<sup>257</sup>

The Catholic who shared this example viewed it through the lens of her interfaith experience. She interpreted it as positive, because the pastor was seeking to behave respectfully and avoid stirring up conflict. Nonetheless, the evangelism continued, a fact that might remain displeasing to other Catholics, as well as Muslims.

DMI's Evangelicals themselves underscore the same theme of using DNH to contextualize their evangelism, thus making it more effective within a given socio-cultural context. Some refer to the New Testament scripture that says: "To the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews...To those who are without law, as without law ... that I might win those who are without law ... I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."<sup>258</sup> Others share their own experiences of contextualization, as illustrated in the quotes below:

The motive of persuasion, to conversion, it's mostly behind all religious activities. Mostly. Even if we will not accept it or not. It's really there. For me as Evangelical, it's always the motive of persuasion, to conversion. We just want to have an option that it will not be threatening.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> Prt. MI #39, interview by author of DMI, Davao, 31 Mar. 2008, audio recording.

<sup>258</sup> I Corinthians 9:20-22, New King James Version. Mentioned twice during research team consultation, Davao, 17 Jan. 2009, audio recording.

<sup>259</sup> Prt. MI #93, during research team consultation, Davao, 15 Jan. 2009, audio recording.

For me I want to share the example of life for being LCP in my area, different people & different culture only to establish a good relationship and understand their attitudes in order to win them.<sup>260</sup>

Perhaps most significantly, some of the Evangelicals using DNH have begun to adapt their understanding of the message of evangelism itself. DMI's Catholics also empathize with this effort, based on the Christian beliefs and experiences that they hold in common with Evangelicals. However, this change is not yet widespread. It is being advocated among the DMI leadership, research team, and some other members who are particularly committed and experienced in their DNH uptake. The DMI Chair has described refining the concept of conversion through emphasizing the inclination of the heart towards Christ more than particular doctrines and external rituals. Practices such as baptism would still be strongly encouraged, but they become voluntary and subsequent, rather than rigid entry points for salvation. Further, the entire process is mediated through an emphasis on interpersonal relationship:

Also the mindset of conversion needs to refine . . . the first conversion is the heart, and if their heart is fully convinced, then they will volunteer their self to . . . for example, the water baptism. In traditional way, the teaching of water baptism is part of salvation. So, if we will impose that immediately, it's very hard to accept. So, that's why in their community . . . we will first pick up our relationship, and then they will see our deeds, not only in our words. I think that's Jesus' principle. Trust must be built.<sup>261</sup>

When the DMI research team was preparing its practitioner publication, the word 'conversion,' which is very commonly used in the Mindanowan religious

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<sup>260</sup> Prt. MI #10, long-form survey of DMI, Davao, Jan. 2008, translated. The phrase 'win them' refers to the winning new believers to the Evangelical faith.

<sup>261</sup> Prt. MI #57, interview by author of DMI, Davao, 24 Oct. 2008, audio recording.

sector, was correspondingly prominent in the draft text. However, this word was considered so sensitive that, if used indiscriminately, it would likely alienate the non-Evangelical audience. Thus the team distinguished the different meanings of ‘conversion,’ and then eliminated that word from the text. The first meaning of ‘conversion’ was re-phrased as “spiritual transformation,” meaning the improvement of one’s relationship to God (e.g. Davao Ministerial Interfaith Inc. 2010: 44-7).<sup>262</sup> This aspiration is held in common by Evangelicals, Catholics and Muslims in Mindanao. It is the focal point of the ministry effort of all DMI members, a stance for which they do not apologize. Importantly, spiritual transformation differs significantly from the second meaning of ‘conversion,’ which was re-phrased as “a change of religious affiliation” (Davao Ministerial Interfaith Inc. 2010: 29-55). This change of religious affiliation implied pressure and manipulation imposed by people of other identity groups, accompanied by anxiety or anger in the recipient.

DMI has distanced itself from this practice of publicly advocating changes in religious affiliation, emphasizing that while people can and do change their religious affiliation, their personal choices must be respected, and such issues should not be the focal point when undertaking interfaith engagement for purposes of the common good. The distinctions being made are immensely significant, because they challenge the mainstream Mindanowan assumption that improving one’s relationship to God is equivalent to affiliating oneself to a particular religious group and sometimes even to a particular sub-group or denomination. This explicit exploration of the concepts and motivations behind religious proselytism serves to strongly reinforce the influence of

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<sup>262</sup> I drafted *Transformed Together*, reflecting the research team’s conclusions and detailed editorial guidance.

mindsets, particularly religious mindsets, in shaping individual identity and associational social impact. Further, this intentional change of belief systems is clearly an exercise of human agency, of choosing between alternative theological interpretations, as further elaborated in the next sub-section.

*Theological resources for peace.* Finally, interwoven in the above-described changes in religious culture, as well as the earlier findings on DNH uptake, there is a consistent theme of religious actors drawing upon peace-promoting resources found within their own scriptures. In DMI circles, Muslim leaders share qur'anic verses on peace, and statements from Islamic teachers that denounce indiscriminate violence. Catholic and Evangelical leaders weave into their theology such biblical themes as Christ as a model of inclusion, or believers' call from God to serve as "ambassadors of reconciliation."<sup>263</sup> Such thinking is reinforced by the Do No Harm framework's concept of 'local capacities for peace', which encourages religious actors to look inwards towards the discovery of the peace-promoting teachings and practices that they already possess (see also Furbey et al. 2006: 8)

Significantly, the use of peace themes in the participants' theology in many cases represents a change of self-identity, either in terms of a departure from what the individual in question previously thought, or a departure from their co-religionists' mainstream. For example, one DMI member shared during the pilot consultations: "My denomination is separatist, but based on the Bible I see Matthew 5:9, 'Blessed are the peacemakers.' After attending the LCP and fellowshiping other

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<sup>263</sup> Prt. MI #57, interview by author of DMI, Davao, 24 Oct. 2008, audio recording. The biblical reference is drawn from 2 Corinthians 5:18-20.

religious groups it opened my mind. I found it is religion is not to debate but to share."<sup>264</sup>

That same participant, when later interviewed individually, provided the interviewer with a copy of his own biblical theology of peace, because he viewed it as closely linked to DNH. He described how he had an emergent interest in themes of peace, and after learning DNH he had broadened their application. "Before LCP, I already have some application about concepts of peace. Application of peace was just offering solution (biblical perspectives) of peace to exclusive members of my church. Now, with LCP, I share to all, basically all kinds of people as long as they are open to peace."<sup>265</sup>

The limited awareness of peace themes in mainstream Mindanowan religious circles is underscored by DMI's recognition that their promotion of peace must be pointedly based in scripture, or else religious actors will not accept it. Thus biblical and qur'anic scripture references were interspersed throughout DMI's practitioner publication (Davao Ministerial Interfaith Inc. 2010). Within DMI circles, the members take turns using a 'reflection' time at the beginning of each meeting to further explore scriptural peace themes, and teach them to each other. DMI members carry such themes into the teachings presented to their own followers in the churches, mosques and religious service organizations that they lead.

Further, the increasing awareness of peace themes in scriptures is often accompanied by recognition of how scriptural resources can be used to promote conflict, through either unconscious error or intentional provocation:

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<sup>264</sup> Prt. MI #80, pilot interview by author of DMI, Davao, 20 Apr. 2007.

<sup>265</sup> Prt. MI #80, interview by research team of DMI, Davao, 15 Feb. 2008. The interviewee's theology of peace features biblical references such as Isaiah 9:6, Matthew 5:9, and John 14:27.

Preaching must be careful, not to deliver increased tension. The message of reconciliation must be properly delivered. Not to condemn people but to lead them into reconciliation. Reconciliation message, to reconcile the people, is very important. Because we can preach, but the dangerous of our preaching, is our preaching can divide . . . without the contextualization of the scripture. The verses in the Qur'an or the Bible, how can you contextualize it? ... And then we can also use the Bible to discriminate others, no?<sup>266</sup>

This DMI pattern of increasing awareness of theological alternatives, followed by selection among them, strongly reinforces the concept of religious ambivalence and the role of human agency in religious decision-making. As highlighted by Appleby (2000), there is much theological pluralism and disagreement within many faiths on matters pertaining to violence and exclusion. If and when religious actors recognize the ambivalence within their own faith traditions, and become aware of the theological alternatives, they must, in effect, choose whether to maintain the status quo or to embrace change. DMI's experience further illustrates the extent to which such changes are selective, meaning that some aspects of religious culture may change significantly, while others remain largely intact. Theological changes are not necessarily uniform from one DMI member or one interfaith network node to another, thus underscoring the importance of the intentional decision-making taking place at both individual and associational levels. While globalization has increased the variety of intrafaith interpretations available to believers (Appleby 2009), religious leaders still play a key role in informing their theological choices (Appleby 2000: 31), particularly in Mindanowan communities that are geographically, culturally or linguistically isolated. DMI's religious leaders are acutely aware of the power they wield, as seen in their identification of numerous conflict impact patterns

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<sup>266</sup> Prt. MI #57, interview by author of DMI, Davao, 24 Oct. 2008, audio recording.



pertaining to the authority of the religious leader.<sup>267</sup> Thus DMI members have not only begun to incorporate peace-promoting theologies when they teach their own followers, but have also become particularly conscious of the behavior that they model in public, multifaith settings. “When we go to the community, we should not bring our doctrine with us, but bring the peace there, bring what is for the common good there.”<sup>268</sup>

The deep reflection of DMI’s religious leaders on their own understanding of scripture, and on the nature of their interaction with people who believe differently, indicates that they themselves view religious culture as an important determinant of associational conflict impact. There is strong evidence that religious culture is not static but constantly evolving, shaped in part by human decision-making and agency. Such changes in religious beliefs, values and behaviors, while probably not sufficient in and of themselves to effect broad change, can interact cyclically with associational structures in ways that help to shape society’s patterns of ethno-political relations, either for good or for ill. Nonetheless, while recognized by religiously-oriented researchers such as Appleby (2000) , factors of religious culture are largely absent in this project’s core literature on the conflict impacts of nPCROs. While possibly tenable in secularized societies, the neglect of religious cultures and institutions as a political force is not sound in relation to Southeast Asia, or other societies in which religion plays a prominent role in the public sphere.

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<sup>267</sup> These patterns are elaborated in Chapter Six.

<sup>268</sup> Prt. MI #39, interview by author of DMI, Davao, 31 Mar. 2008, audio recording.

## **Addressing the 'Religion Gap'**

In light of the prominence of religion in Mindanowan and Singaporean associational life, it is striking that the bulk of the core literature cannot explain the central religious aspects of this study's empirical findings. Only Karner and Parker (2008), along with the most recent work of Putnam (2010: 419-42), have given substantial attention to religious culture as a factor that motivates and shapes associational engagement. The data make it clear that there is a 'religion gap' at the heart of this project's core literature. For this reason, I now reach beyond the social sciences to consider more deeply the religious studies and theological literature that was mentioned briefly in Chapter Three, for a selective exploration of how such literature may help to address this 'religion gap' in the existing body of theory on the conflict impacts of nPCROs. This iterative use of the literature is characteristic of action research, and helps to ensure that theory development is continuously responsive to emergent data (Davis 2004: 157, Fisher and Phelps 2006: 156-8).

In view of the empirically-driven themes of religious ambivalence, identity and change, it is particularly relevant to consider the contributions of theologians who write from a religious 'insider' perspective. Illustrative examples include Croatian Protestant scholar Miroslav Volf (1996) and Ugandan Catholic priest Emanuel Katongole (2005), both of whom were provoked by civil wars in their own regions to reflect on religion and identity, particularly the question of how Christianity influenced social identity through boundary development and boundary change. Both lament the Church's failure to challenge the divisive conceptions of identity that contributed to violence.

Without directly invoking social identity theory, Volf acknowledges that the Church's accommodation to local culture can cause or exacerbate social conflict, and then goes on to develop an in-depth theology of faith-based identity formation. Katongole describes as pivotal the ways in which the Catholic Church, as one of the largest and most influential non-state actors in Rwanda, both accepted and propagated the colonially-defined distinction between Hutu and Tutsi. Interestingly, within this project's core literature, Uvin (1998) supports to some extent Katongole's analysis, but Pinchotti and Verwimp (2007) differ markedly by writing about social capital in Rwanda with only minimal mention of the Church. Katongole writes,

Looking back at the history of Rwanda, it is striking to see how the church could name the injustice of the colonial system without fundamentally questioning its power to determine who people are . . . Once this imagination and identity had fomented, Christianity made little difference in Rwanda. Christianity seemed little more than an add-on—an inconsequential relish that did not radically affect peoples' so-called natural identities (2009: 33).

Volf and Katongole dare to raise such controversial issues because they have developed theologies of how Christianity can and should work differently. Volf (1996) centers his thought around the crucifixion of Christ as an act of divine reconciliation, and Katongole (2005) focuses on the Eucharist as a shared sacrament referring to that same crucifixion. Building on the hope of spiritual transformation, both authors emphasize that in order to set aside the identity categories defined by mainstream society, a person needs to embrace an alternative spiritual identity that transcends the old paradigms. This does not mean that one ceases to belong to a certain ethnic group, but that one's self-understanding as a person of faith becomes the primary source of identity and positioning vis-à-vis others. Assuming that one's

faith contains teachings that expressly value persons of all ethnic groups, as DMI members have encountered in their own discovery of the biblical and qur'anic theologies of peace, then the faith-based identity can promote inclusion. The development of this transcendent identity must be accompanied by a degree of intentional detachment from the surrounding culture, which Volf calls "distance" (1996: 35-56), and Katongole describes as being "located outside or at the margins of the dominant political imagination" (2005: 82).

The process of establishing a critical distance from the religious culture that one has been taught, and drawing on one's faith to construct an alternative, more inclusive identity, is clearly visible among the action research participants in Mindanao. Yet there remains the persistent question of how religiously-influenced boundaries are changed when the groups in question represent different faith traditions, as they do in Mindanao. Katongole's Eucharist-based concept emphasizes unity within the Body of Christ (2005: 87), meaning Christians, and thus leaning implicitly toward majority Christian contexts like that of Rwanda. He does point out that the minority Muslim community in Rwanda was admirably able to transcend the tensions between Hutu and Tutsi, but he does not address how his notion of unity applies to Christian-Muslim relations. On the other hand, Volf's theological model focuses more on the stance of the individual Christian toward others, whether inclusive or exclusive, leaving open the possibility of interfaith engagement. Interfaith issues are not emphasized in his seminal *Exclusion and Embrace* (1996), but Volf has been visibly active in the scholarly interfaith exchange catalyzed by *A Common Word between Us and You* (Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought

2007). Thus Volf's approach appears more relevant to engagement in multifaith contexts.

Woven throughout this discussion on identity reconstruction and boundary change there is an implicit thread of logic supporting the significance of human agency. To state that a person in a deeply divided society can choose to change their identity is to argue that he or she, if equipped and empowered, is capable of transcending the pressures of a divisive social context. The Mindanao data are particularly rich in examples of DMI members re-evaluating the implicit belief that affirming universal truth requires a conflicted relationship with people who believe otherwise, thus marking a theological shift from exclusivism to inclusivism (Eck 1993). This change has led them to engage 'the other' on relational terms, with intentionality and sometimes at significant personal cost. It is significant that Volf positions his own inquiry as a contribution to understanding the role of the individual. "Instead of reflecting on what kind of society we ought to create in order to accommodate individual or communal heterogeneity, I will explore *what kinds of selves we need to be* in order to live in harmony with others" (Volf 1996: 20-1). Volf does not deny that the surrounding context is important, for "social arrangements condition social agents; and social agents fashion social arrangements" (1996: 22). Nonetheless, he sees the contribution of theology as pertaining primarily to agency. This suggests that religion's natural focus on human development and moral responsibility serve to illuminate agency, and that the inconsistency of the agency theme in this project's core literature may be due in part to its neglect of religion as a major influence in the associational sector.

These selective samples of religious literature serve to explain and amplify the meaning of the action research findings in ways that the secular-leaning literature on nPCROs clearly does not. Wherever religion influences identity-based conflict, religious culture must be considered as one of the key forces shaping the conflict impacts of nPCROs. Admittedly, some level of insight can be obtained by simply using the two bodies of theory alongside each other, and transposing important concepts back and forth between them. However, given the extensive influence of religion in many conflicted societies around the world, it would be preferable if such linkages did not depend on the initiative of the user. An integrated theory should include religion in associational theory in a way that cannot be overlooked or bracketed out, and would explain more adequately the mechanisms by which religious associations impact conflict through their influence on individual mindsets, including individual identity formation. Perhaps most importantly, an integrated theory would help address the pivotal and much-neglected question of how the social impact of religious associations might be improved, and how desirable intercommunal structures might come into being in the most deeply divided societies.

### **Conclusion: Religion as Central to Associational Theory**

Regarding the role of religion, the action research data make it clear that religion, in both its institutional and intangible aspects, is critically important as a determinant of associational conflict impact in Mindanao and Singapore. Focusing on the neglected realm of religious culture, the analysis has shown that religious beliefs,

values and behaviors are a central component of mindset formation. Among the action research participants in this study, the religious themes of compromise, proselytism and theological resources for peace are closely intertwined with the shaping of individual identity, a phenomenon which directly influences a person's willingness and ability to form intercommunal associational structures. Proselytism further directly shapes conflict impact on its own terms, because a perceived intent to proselytize can quickly inflame ethno-religious tensions. Proselytism and the fear of religious compromise have been illuminated from a largely Evangelical perspective, due to the high proportion of Evangelicals among the Mindanao participants. It is significant that the bulk of the reported mindset shift has taken place among DMI's Evangelical members, because Evangelicals are often portrayed as particularly intransigent toward out-groups. The empirical data assert, along with Ganiel and Dixon, that even conservative Evangelicals can change, thus suggesting the utility of further research on how religious actors can transform their identities (2008: 432).

This evidence of change further underscores the relevance of human choice and agency in the face of divisive contextual pressures, as established in the previous chapter, and deepens the understanding of what such agency may mean for religious actors. Exposure to conflict sensitivity brings to the fore an awareness of religion's ambivalent effects on conflict and violence (Appleby 2000), and religion's related encouragement towards responsibility for personal ethics. Weisinger and Salipante (2005) have argued that individual motivation is important for achieving associational intercommunalism. The empirical data, affirming Karner and Parker (2008), clearly show religion as one such source of motivation for interfaith engagement. Religious motivation can exert influence even in divided contexts where

such engagement is counter-cultural, coming at the cost of uncomfortable personal dissonance and disapproval from co-religionists. In the words of Karner: "Such exercises of human agency are particularly revealing and important when they involve ethical choices that recognize the other's needs and, in the process, override self-interest" (2007: 168). Without denying that personal gain can also be a relevant source of motivation, this study's findings suggest that religious convictions can in some cases prompt people to act for the common good, again distinguishing these findings from the self-interest assumptions underlying much of social network theory (as seen in Pickering 2007).

Finally, the Southeast Asian setting has brought religious culture to the fore in a manner that exposes a 'religion gap' in much of the associational literature. This gap is relevant only to settings in which religion plays a significant role in the public sphere, yet such settings are in fact quite numerous. This project's core literature on the conflict impacts of nPCROs cannot explain the prominent religious themes seen in the empirical data, yet selected theological writings serve to interpret and amplify the action research findings in ways that are highly applicable to real-world problems. Given the increasing recognition of religion's influence in the associational sector, a much more consistent integration of religious content would be desirable in the field of associational studies.



## **CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE IMPLICATIONS**

*Confronted with a problem as complex as racism, we cannot afford to let ourselves be constrained by the boundaries of specific disciplines.*

- Philomena Essed (1991: 1)

This chapter synthesizes the contribution of the action research study towards the understanding of how the religious associational sector influences the dynamics of peace and conflict. Building on the influential work of Robert Putnam (2000, 2002, Putnam and Feldstein 2003) and Ashutosh Varshney (2001, 2002) with its immensely important yet somewhat simplified emphasis on intercommunal associational structures, the current study has suggested a more complex and dynamic understanding of how associational impacts on peace and conflict come about, and how they might be improved. The key findings are summarized below, together with an assessment of their generalizability to other socio-political contexts. On the basis of these findings, I consider the broader contributions of this thesis towards theoretical integration, reaffirming an inclusive non-Western definition of civil society, pointing towards an interdisciplinary integration of religion into the associational literature, and building on conflict sensitivity and action research to enhance linkages between theory and practice. I conclude with a brief reflection on the methodology of collaborative action research, underscoring my intent to work towards theory that not only stands up firmly under academic analysis, but also demonstrates applicability to real-world problems by being believable enough into act upon (Greenwood and Levin 2007: 67).

## Summary of Findings and Generalizability

This study has explored both conceptually and empirically how associations interact with social conflict. Within a rather expansive field of theory, the positioning of this study has been unique in several ways. First, the study has taken conflict sensitivity theory (International Alert et al. 2004a, Bush 2009, Anderson 1999, Paffenholz and Reychler 2007), originally developed as a programmatic planning tool for the humanitarian aid sector, as the point of departure for exploring several important themes that are underdeveloped in the literature. This positioning underscores the growing recognition that associational impacts are not uniformly positive, and some impacts may in fact be negative. Further, while this study has narrowed its focus to conflict impacts, its scope has not been limited to conflict-focused associations. On the contrary, associations whose mandates do not focus primarily on either peace or conflict, which I have termed non-peace and conflict resolution organizations (non-PCROs, adapted from Gidron et al. 2002c), may generate significant externalities (Morris 2000: 27-8) in the form of unintended impacts on conflict. The existing peace-themed literature gravitates toward peace-focused associations, but I have argued that nPCROs, whose far greater numbers make up the bulk of the associational sector, also influence peace and conflict in ways that must not be taken lightly. Situating this study in Southeast Asia has allowed for the exploration of nPCRO conflict impacts in contexts characterized by identity-based ethno-political conflict, where the parameters of the associational sector, and the role of religion within it, differ from Western-influenced liberal democratic expectations.

To investigate these themes, I have carried out two parallel action research projects, the larger in partnership with the Davao Ministerial Interfaith (DMI) of Mindanao, Philippines, and the smaller with the Harmony Centre at An-Nahdhah of Singapore. The Singapore data have provided an essential comparative cross-check to aid in interpreting the Mindanao findings, particularly in light of the significant differences in their levels of physical violence and economic development, and the nature of associational life across the two sites. At this point in time, neither agency can be considered a 'pure' example of a non-peace and conflict resolution organization. In fact, both agencies have their roots as nPCROs in the religious sector, comprised of religious leaders and activists who focus their work on traditional matters of faith. However, their increasing awareness of the externalities of religious activities, particularly their potential for exacerbating ethno-religious tensions, has led over time to a measure of intentional engagement with peacebuilding concerns. Whereas 'pure' nPCROs would probably have been reluctant to participate in this study, DMI and the Harmony Centre still have more than enough members whose primary work is *not* peacebuilding to indicate the rich potential of this line of inquiry.

The action research in Mindanao and Singapore was designed to yield data supporting a two-level research inquiry. At the first level, I conducted field-testing to investigate the need observed by both practitioners (Garred 2006b) and researchers (Hadiwinata 2007) to address the pivotal and sometimes unhelpful role of religious associations in Southeast Asian settings of ethno-religious conflict. I have explored the promising yet largely untried approach of applying conflict sensitivity theory and practice within the religious associational sector. The central questions here have

been: Is conflict sensitivity applicable (relevant and useful) in helping religious associations to improve their social impact in multifaith conflict-vulnerable contexts? More specifically, is there a need for conflict sensitivity? To what extent, and how, is conflict sensitivity being used, or not used, and why? What are the implications for enhancing practitioner capacity? In analyzing the relevance and usefulness of conflict sensitivity for religious associations, my conclusion is a qualified 'yes,' pertaining not only to Mindanao and Singapore, but also to other contexts.

In terms of relevance, conflict sensitivity analysis has laid bare numerous patterns of unintended negative impact, as well as some patterns through which religious activities can contribute positively to social cohesion. Such dynamics are likely to be present wherever religion is an aspect of prevailing social tensions and religious associations are active in the public sphere. This socio-political reality, combined with the fact that conflict sensitivity analysis is elicitive rather than presumptive or prescriptive, implies that the conflict sensitivity approach is broadly applicable within the worldwide religious sector. Importantly, however, the predominant issues identified through conflict sensitivity analysis will vary across socio-political contexts. Around Southeast Asia, ethno-religious exclusion and proselytism are prominent issues, but some societies experience such issues more intensely than others. In other regions, the predominant issues may be quite different, such as possibly the use of religious ideology to justify nationalist violence in the Balkans, or to fuel partisan 'culture wars' in the United States. Further, outsiders tend to recognize such dynamics as relevant more quickly than insiders. Insiders usually receive the conflict sensitivity concept with enthusiasm, but the pace of recognition of specific problematic issues varies depending on the extent to which

social tensions are publicly acknowledged, and the degree to which one's own identity group is implicated in causing unintentional harm. For this reason, facilitation techniques and ethical considerations may vary across socio-political contexts.

With regard to conflict sensitivity's usefulness, the organizational planning benefits of this approach are significant, as its developers originally intended. However those organizational benefits are also dependent on investments in capacity building and management over time. What actually makes conflict sensitivity consistently useful, particularly the Do No Harm (DNH; Anderson 1999) framework used in field testing, is its capacity to catalyze progressive change among individuals. Action research participants showed a remarkable tendency towards changed mindsets, including an increased awareness of their own influence on the social context, and a shift towards inclusive perceptions, values, beliefs, and attitudes. These individual changes are relatively easy to achieve, and contain the potential seeds of future programmatic and organizational change. Importantly, some dissonance has been seen in participants' use of DNH for the identification of unintended negative impacts, including the de-emphasis of formal impact analysis, the influence of religious beliefs regarding unintentional harm, and the risk of overlooking structural violence (Galtung 1969). Such weaknesses could be improved by adjusting the DNH framework to foreground issues of injustice, and by adapting capacity building methodologies to support informality in project impact analysis and consistency in DNH application. While Greenwood and Levin (2007: 66) advise caution in generalizing the findings of action research, it is evident that very similar DNH usage patterns have been observed in the humanitarian aid sector (Garred

2006b, CDA Collaborative Learning Projects 2008a, CDA Collaborative Learning Projects 2009a, CDA Collaborative Learning Projects 2009b), and those aid sector patterns were global in their distribution. Thus it is reasonable to propose that my conclusions on DNH in the religious sector are also broadly generalizable to other contexts in which religion plays a prominent role in public life.

Perhaps most significantly, the DNH project impact analysis mechanisms that describe the specific patterns through which associational activities influence social conflict differ significantly from the humanitarian aid sector to the religious sector. In the religious sector, those patterns tend comparatively toward the intangible, highlighting the influence of religious cultures and beliefs, and the pivotal role of religious leaders. The Mindanao action research has made a significant start towards contextualizing these patterns for the religious sector, resulting in emergent findings that are already being applied by local practitioners, and informing academic theory on the determinants of religious associations' conflict impacts, as discussed below. Nevertheless, data have been drawn thus far primarily from Christians and Muslims in significant swathes of Mindanao and in Singapore. More research is needed among other Southeast Asian religions, including Buddhism and other non-monotheistic faiths whose religious cultures may differ in important ways, in addition to research in other geographic regions, to ensure that the impact patterns identified will accurately reflect the experiences of the international religious sector.

Building on the conflict sensitivity analysis, the second level of my research inquiry has approached theory development in more traditional ways, by responding to some important tensions, imbalances and gaps in the existing theory on the conflict impacts of nPCROs. Over the past decade, the works of Putnam (2000, 2002,

Putnam and Feldstein 2003) and Varshney (2001, 2002) have elevated the understanding of the importance of associational structure, particularly the heterogeneity or homogeneity of their composition in relation to the major cleavages between identity groups in a given society. Their optimism about the potential of intercommunal structures has generated a range of responses from other researchers in this project's 'core literature' on the conflict impacts of nPCROs, many of whom suggest the need for greater theoretical nuance (including MacLean 2004, Molenaers 2005, Weisinger and Salipante 2005, Pickering 2006). Nonetheless, Putnam's and Varshney's structural focus on intercommunalism has been highly influential, and it remains thus far the defining emphasis of this emergent line of inquiry. The emphasis on intercommunalism is often associated with a macro-level effort to assess associational impact on a sector-wide basis, diagnosing it as either broadly positive or broadly negative, on the basis of mono-causal explanations.

The contribution of these structurally-focused generalizations has been to establish a much-needed appreciation of the dualistic potential of associations in settings of identity-based conflict. However, in terms of applicability, such generalizations become misleading when they encourage the assumption that conflict impacts can be improved by simply 'making associations intercommunal.' As a contribution towards further theoretical development, I have pitched my inquiry at a more localized level, to pursue a nuanced understanding of the causes and processes through which associational conflict impact actually comes about, and how such impact might be changed or improved. In this light I have explored three interrelated sets of questions: First, are the conflict impacts of associational activity attributable to structural or non-structural determinants? What is the relationship

between the two? Secondly, does the socio-political context shape the association, or can the association influence its context? What conditions, if any might allow an association to transcend divisive social pressures in order to become an agent of unity? Thirdly, among the potential non-structural determinants of impact, what is the role of religion in shaping an association's effects on conflict? The first two sets of questions lead to conclusions that are believed to be broadly generalizable to other contexts of identity-based conflict, while the third question on religion pertains to societies where religion holds importance in the public sphere.

Regarding the relationship between structural and non-structural determinants of impact, the nature of the mindset shifts among action research participants, and the ways in which those changing individuals shape the conflict impacts of their organizations, are clearly non-structural. Thus it is evident that a singular focus on associational structure as the sole determinant of impact is likely to miss the mark. Intercommunal structures are indeed very significant in settings of identity-based conflict. However, the existence of intercommunal structures is predicated on the willingness and ability of individual participants to engage with 'the other.' Further, one of the primary ways that such intercommunal structures promote social cohesion is through facilitating the relational contact opportunities that help to shape individuals, and their roles within the association and the broader society. For this reason, I have proposed replacing the implicitly mono-causal focus on structure with an alternative theoretical model that illustrates the interaction between associational structure and individual mindsets. Individual mindsets influence (and are influenced by) collective behavior, which in turn shape (and are shaped by) associational structure. The interaction between associational structure



and individual mindset can therefore be depicted as a cycle, which has the potential to move either towards or away from intercommunality. This cycle is a dynamic one, with its movement open-ended and spiraling to highlight the nature of change over time. This model<sup>269</sup> assists in capturing complexity and nuance among the determinants of associational conflict impacts, which may render theory less parsimonious, but more relevant in application to real-world problems.

The proposed theoretical model of a structure-mindset cycle brings squarely into focus the role of the individual, and the research questions on the exercise of human agency. There is a tension in the core literature between context and agency, which manifests itself in a difference of opinion on how easily people in deeply conflicted societies can overcome the divisive pressures of the social context that surrounds them, in order to form intercommunal associational structures. The cases of DMI and the Harmony Centre both demonstrate associations making choices to progress towards intercommunality, albeit slowly, counter-culturally and against the odds. Their experience suggests that the forces of context and agency, far from being an either/or dichotomy, are both important and mutually influence each other. Among the various factors and conditions that might contribute to success, what stands out in these cases is intentionality, at both individual and organizational levels. The deep identity-based divisions in Mindanao and Singapore have their own inertia, which people can redirect only through deliberate and persistent choices to act in ways that engage 'the other.' Individual consciousness-raising and mindset shift can become a catalyst for such choices, possibly leading to collective action amongst like-minded colleagues, and ultimately to associational change. Whilst

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<sup>269</sup> See Figure 7.1.

acknowledging the vast distance between localized actions and large-scale impact, these findings point to intentional human agency as a necessary starting point. In the words of Karner (2007: 166): “We are capable of reflection and resistance, of solidarity with the ‘other’ and of cultural innovation.”

The preceding analyses of the importance of human mindsets and agency, as seen through the experiences of interfaith actors in Mindanao and Singapore, have been thoroughly infused and permeated with religious meaning. Indeed, one cannot understand the trajectory of DMI and the Harmony Centre towards intercommunal structures without engaging the role and influence of religion. In these contexts of ethno-religious conflict, religious culture is a major source informing the development of group identities and their resulting influence on individuals. Religiously-informed boundaries have a dualistic potential to either exclude or include, as Allport ([1954] 1979: 444) states succinctly: “The role of religion is paradoxical. It makes prejudice and it unmakes prejudice.” The empirical data are particularly rich in examples from Protestant Evangelical Christianity, and as such they illustrate important manifestations of identity development as it relates to the fear of compromising one’s religious commitments, the pursuit and avoidance of the proselytism practices so sensitive in the region, and the discovery of theological resources promoting peace. In each of these areas, it is evident that religion’s potential is ambivalent (Appleby 2000), and that some religious actors are making choices for change. Specifically, where those actors had previously held religious perceptions, beliefs and values that promoted exclusion, they are becoming aware of, and incrementally choosing to embrace, alternative religious ideas that value

inclusion. Such changes are selective, and the conservative actors in this study choose theological alternatives that they feel are compatible with their own faith traditions.

In sum, the empirical data affirm that “most religions are multivoiced; their doctrines could be and have been interpreted in ways that permit, if not encourage, political action for the cause of democracy” (Cheng and Brown 2006: 5). However, with the notable exception of the work of Karner and Parker (2008), those religious voices are not heard in the core literature on nPCRO social impact, and they are heard only inconsistently in the broader body of theory on associations and democratization. In fact, the literature that best explains and illuminates the religious content of the action research findings comes not from the social sciences, but from a selective sampling of the work of theologians. Both Volf (1996) and Katongole (2005) examine the question of how Christianity influences social identity through boundary construction and boundary change, in settings of identity-based conflict. The strong relevance of their analysis to the realities of DMI and the Harmony Centre serves to underscore the problematic nature of the ‘religion gap’ found in this project’s core literature on the conflict impacts of nPCROs. Indeed, the problem of theoretical disconnectedness has been a common theme throughout this thesis project, as briefly highlighted below.

### **Towards Theoretical Integration**

The prominence of religion in this study, and indeed in Southeast Asian associational life, stands in sharp contrast to the past predictions of secularization theory that religion would become a private matter (Casanova 1994). The root causes

of conflict in the region are often political and economic struggles defined along ethnic lines, but the demographic overlap of religion with ethnicity has made religion a highly influential secondary factor (Fox 2004). An increasing number of Western social scientists are recognizing the linkages between religion and civil society (Juergensmeyer 2005, James 2007a, Dinham 2009), and the discourse currently reflects a state of flux as old assumptions are disproved and religion gradually moves closer to the academic mainstream. This process of collective re-thinking could be greatly helped by consistently positioning religious institutions and cultures as a part of the civil society or associational sector, and by pursuing interdisciplinarity in interpreting ethno-religious phenomena. Interestingly, Varshney with Kanbur et al. (2010) has recently pointed out how interdisciplinarity could aid in understanding conflict that is identity-based, including religious aspects of identity. Nonetheless, their call for interdisciplinarity refers only to better communication within the social sciences; it does not extend to other relevant fields such as religious studies.

On the basis of the current study, I would argue that wherever religion plays a prominent role in the public sphere, religious studies should be integrated with associational theory, including theories of civil society, social capital and all other concepts united by the associational “family resemblance” (Rossteutscher 2005a, Muukkonen 2009). Admittedly, some level of insight can be obtained by simply holding associational theory and religious theory alongside each other, and transposing key concepts back and forth between them. However, given the extensive influence of religion in many conflicted societies, it would be preferable if such linkages did not depend on the initiative of the user. An integrated theory would include religion in a way that cannot be overlooked, and would explain more

adequately the mechanisms by which religious associations impact conflict through their influence on individual mindsets. Perhaps most importantly, an integrated theory would help address the pivotal and much-neglected question of how the social impact of religious associations might be improved, and how desirable intercommunal structures might come into being in the most deeply divided societies. Wherever religion influences identity-based conflict, religious culture must be considered as one of the forces shaping the conflict impacts of nPCROs.

The positioning of religion is foremost in this study, yet it is inextricably linked to the broader question of how the associational sector is defined. 'Civil society,' as a dominant concept within the broader realm of associational theory, is particularly problematic to define. My decision to define civil society broadly, moving away from Western-influenced definitions that exclude ethnic- and religious-based organizations (Orvis 2001, Varshney 2002, Lee 2004), has proved essential for examining the extensive ethno-religious dynamics at play in the associational sectors of both Mindanao and Singapore. Further, it has been equally essential not to limit the notion of civil society to organizations that position themselves as a counterweight to the state (Hann 1996, Kasfir 1998). Such limitations would have excluded the Harmony Centre which, like many Singaporean associations, is state-guided and state-funded (Lee 2004, Lyons and Gomez 2005), yet extends its impact through associational activists and organizations. Further, in both Mindanao and Singapore, a focus on opposition toward government would have overlooked the numerous other ways in which associations impact politics and the public sphere (Unsworth and Uvin 2002: 8). In the end, the use of a narrow Westernized definition of civil society would have bracketed out most of the critical findings of this study. I

therefore add my voice to the growing minority of associational researchers who argue that "the point is to start with the context as it actually is, not with preconceived ideas which derive from a very different (Western) context" (Unsworth and Uvin 2002: 3).

It is fitting that such field-driven challenges to theory should take center stage within an action research study, given the focus of action research on linking theory and practice, and integrating thought with action. In this study, I have drawn on conflict sensitivity as a form of practitioner-derived theory, to critique the simplified causation analysis that undergirds the current understanding of nPCRO conflict impact in much of the theoretical core literature. Conflict sensitivity's complex view of causation permits the analyst to examine multiple determinants of impact, including non-structural determinants, without neglecting the importance of intercommunal associational structures. Conflict sensitivity also emphasizes the dynamic possibility of human action leading to change, in contrast to the typical view of associational structure as static, thereby opening up the question of how social impact might be improved. This juxtaposition of practitioner-derived theory with academic theory has resulted in a more balanced and nuanced assessment of social impact among nPCROs, making this body of theory a more believable guide for decision-making and action. Further, this study has employed action research not only to inform existing theory, but in some instances to develop new theory, as seen in the emergent conflict impact patterns identified in Chapter Six. This line of argument makes a modest contribution towards turning the traditional scientific method "on its head" (Schön 1995: 382).

Given such methodological advantages, it is surprising that action research, despite its gains in the fields of education and management, is uncommon in the social sciences, and conspicuously absent in Peace Studies. A need has been recognized by leaders in the field, as Galtung has pointed out the researcher's unfortunate choice between "the world of books" and "the world of reality" (1985: 143), and Alger has lamented that "much that has been learned is rarely applied" (2006: 3, see also Alger 2000). Reychler has called for a broadening of research practice, expanding the possibilities beyond the well-known empirical-analytical and interpretive methodologies, to include also what he calls "participatory peace action research" (2006: 9-10). I would echo Reychler to argue that Peace Studies, as a field founded to further the understanding of pressing real-world problems, greatly needs the linkages to practice that action research can provide. Embracing action research methodology would move the entire field progressively closer to the change-oriented standard of credibility with a purpose (Greenwood and Levin 2007: 67).

### **Collaborative Action Research and Internal Credibility**

As previously discussed, credibility has both external and internal dimensions. A lack of attention to internal credibility compromises the human integrity of the research agenda, as highlighted in Galtung's (1975) provocative framing of traditional social science methodologies as 'structural violence' towards the people being researched. Thus while the bulk of this thesis has been devoted to establishing credibility among external academic audiences, it is appropriate to close by returning briefly to the point at which I started. This research was inspired by and

conducted with practitioners, using the methodology of collaborative action research, so quality and ethics demand an assessment of internal credibility from the perspective of participants and partners. I cannot speak on behalf of those individuals, but I do offer my own brief comments on how the project has addressed the more participant-oriented dimensions of validity developed in Chapter Four.

A foundational emphasis on *appropriate theories and concepts* (adapted from Bradbury and Reason 2001: p. 451) implies the development of a conceptual frame that reflects the lived experience of the participants. First and foremost, the conflict sensitivity testing effort has served to illuminate several concepts pertaining to impact analysis in the humanitarian aid sector that can be adapted for greater relevance to the work of religious actors. At a broader level, even as it was important for this study to establish an inclusive concept of civil society, it paradoxically became equally important to leave the term 'civil society' behind. The Westernized connotations of this term, and the ways in which Southeast Asian practitioners respond to those connotations, render conflicted and inconsistent meanings 'on the ground.' Many Singaporeans are of the opinion that 'civil society' does not exist in their country, because citizen groupings are not permitted to oppose the state. On the other hand, 'community service organizations' are considered common, and Singaporean practitioners respond to this alternative terminology by openly sharing their experiences. In Mindanao, the term 'civil society' is unknown to many at the grassroots level, and its implication of confrontation toward the state leaves religious actors uncertain about whether or not this term applies to churches and mosques. Thus the shift towards broader terminology – 'organizations' in the field, and 'associations' in the academy – has provided this study with a foundation for



analyzing “what *is*,” rather than what Western-influenced theorists believe “*ought to be*” (Hann 1996: 18). Further, the use of associational terminology has also helped to unify the closely related but fragmented theories on civil society and social capital (Rossteutscher 2005a), and expose unnecessary assumptions about favorable linkages between the associational sector and liberal democratization (Ndegwa 1996, Portes 1998).

Another dimension of action research validity, *transformative significance* (adapted from McTaggart 1997: 40, Bradbury and Reason 2001: 452, Herr and Anderson 2005: 56), points to the desirability of progressive change in the worldviews and self-views of everyone involved. At the most obvious level, the changes experienced by religious leaders and activists exposed to conflict sensitivity clearly evidence this sort of change, which DMI members have referred to as “spiritual transformation” (Davao Ministerial Interfaith Inc. 2010), and I have called a shift in mindset. At a deeper level, the discovery in Mindanao of problems with DNH project impact analysis exemplifies how action research’s multiphase spiraling process can result in the re-examination of a study’s underlying assumptions (Argyris et al. 1985, Herr and Anderson 2005: 55), which is an important component of *appropriate process design*. The DMI research team members and trainers entered the project with very positive perceptions and optimistic expectations of DNH, and a strong desire to expand DNH usage to others. The slow, iterative unearthing of missing or biased impact analyses appeared as a troubling surprise, and a mystery to be solved. Once the research team developed an understanding of the reasons for such difficulties, they began to incorporate into their training certain exhortations and caveats (see Davao Ministerial Interfaith Inc. 2010: 57-65), and they slowed the

pace of expansion to accommodate more post-training follow-up and mentoring. Finally, while my personal reflections lie beyond the scope of this thesis, it must be said that this project has transformed my own experience of identity and power, as an external facilitator privileged to witness local struggle and change, and as an American citizen facing the US colonial legacy and ongoing military presence in Mindanao. The emphasis on Protestant Evangelical Christianity, while representing a demographic minority in Southeast Asia, is perhaps appropriate for a foreign Protestant researcher, allowing me to grapple reflexively with the influence of my own co-religionists before treading the ethically delicate terrain of analyzing others.

*Collaborative process* has been of the utmost importance throughout the study, holding numerous implications for insider and outsider roles. In Singapore, this collaboration took primarily the form of mutual negotiation and agreement with the staff of the Harmony Centre at each phase of the project. In Mindanao, where the action research partnership was more extensive, and the involvement of outsiders more sensitive, the process was marked by progressive, intentional movement along the “continuum of positionality” (Herr and Anderson 2005: 31). That is, despite the fact that I initiated and facilitated the action research effort, DMI has taken on increasing ownership throughout the process. Action research design decisions were made jointly. The research team has been responsible for deciding how to position the project among local participants, and how to interpret and apply the findings to inform DMI policy and practice. Where post-project possibilities arise with regard to adding an explicit treatment of structural violence issues to the original DNH framework, or training for mindset development rather than analytical capacity, I elect to return to DMI to jointly discuss those decisions.

Finally, DMI has also been responsible for determining how to disseminate their findings to other Filipino religious leaders through the publication *Transformed Together* (2010). At this point in time, *useful local outcomes* (adapted from Herr and Anderson 2005: 55, Greenwood and Levin 2007: 68, Bradbury and Reason 2001: 451) are taking place with little or no support from me, such as an expansion of DNH capacity building to include multifaith detainees inside the Davao City Jail, and Evangelical leaders enrolled in the emergent 'Miracle Training Institute.' Three of the DMI members trained as DNH trainers have recently gone on to become master trainers, developing new cadres of facilitators. We are also beginning to communicate action research learnings to the international audience, including the practitioners who originally inspired the application of DNH to the religious sector. Wherever possible, DMI and I will take those steps together.

## **Appendix A: A Brief Analysis of Conflict in Mindanao**

The people of Mindanao are closely related to the surrounding peoples of Southeast Asia and the Pacific, and their history reflects a strong continuity of regional linkages. The pre-colonial economy was based on localized fishing and agriculture, plus some regional trade linkages with the Chinese; traditional spiritual practices were animist. The arrival of Sunni Islam in Southeast Asia is believed to have come about relatively peacefully, through the arrival of Arab-Muslim traders and religious teachers. In the islands now known as the Philippines, Islamic influence reached as far north as Manila, but the strongest sultanate governments were found on the southern island of Mindanao (e.g. the Sultanate of Maguindanao) and on other nearby islands within the Mindanao region (e.g. the Sultanate of Sulu). The indigenous groups that chose to convert to Islam eventually became known as the Bangsamoro.<sup>270</sup> Those who retained traditional animist beliefs began to move away from the sultanates and into more isolated geographic areas; those groups are now referred to as Lumads, or Indigenous Peoples.<sup>271</sup>

The Spanish claimed the Philippine islands in 1521, just a few decades after the *reconquista* of Spain from the North African Moors, an experience that had disposed the Spanish towards Christian-Muslim conflict. Spanish colonialism was marked not only by political and economic control, but also by an overt goal of converting the population to Roman Catholic Christianity. The sultanates resisted

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<sup>270</sup> The term *Bangsamoro* means 'Moro nation.' The Spanish originally applied the term *Moros* in a pejorative sense, based on their antipathy towards North African Moors. Nonetheless, Mindanowan Muslims have adopted the term *Moros* as neutral or positive in their own usage.

<sup>271</sup> The Lumads are comprised of eighteen distinct ethno-linguistic groups, and the Bangsamoro of thirteen such groups (Taco-Borja et al. 1998).

and, even after three centuries of combat and negotiation, the southern territories were still under dispute when Spain ceded the Philippine islands to the United States in 1898 as a result of the Spanish-American war. The Americans came closer than the Spaniards to subduing the Bangsamoro, through both military means and civil administration. Bangsamoro resistance to US rule was strong, but their vision of independence did not include integration into a Philippines polity. In the 1920s and 1930s, Bangsamoro leaders issued several declarations requesting that their territories not be included in a future Philippines state, even if this meant accepting an extension of interim US rule (Lingga 2007, see also Majul 1988: 899).

Beginning in the 1920s, US-inspired resettlement policies granted homesteads to encourage migration from the northern and central regions (particularly the Visayas) towards the south, with the goal of developing and further subduing resource-rich Mindanao. Within a few decades, the predominantly Christian migrants became demographically, politically and economically dominant, while the Bangsamoro and Lumads were increasingly marginalized from the land. Following Japanese occupation and World War II, the Philippines gained full independence in 1946. Mindanao was included in the new Philippines state, and the resettlement policies continued. By the late 1960s, local clashes were emerging between Bangsamoro and migrant militias. The 1968 Jabitah Massacre further inflamed public opinion among the Bangsamoro. In this incident, more than twenty Moro military recruits, in training for a Philippine invasion of the disputed Malaysia-held territory of Sabah, were allegedly executed by fellow members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. In 1972, shortly after President Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law to combat nationwide unrest and an emergent communist movement, the Moro

National Liberation Front (MNLF), led by Nur Misuari, emerged to consolidate the Moro rebellion in Mindanao.

Peace talks under Marcos resulted in the 1976 Tripoli Agreement, the first in a series of autonomy pacts that appeared promising but proved difficult to put into effect. By 1977, divisions were apparent in the MNLF leadership, and Salamat Hashim initiated a breakaway faction that eventually became the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Cyclical clashes and negotiations continued between the government and the MNLF until the 'final' Manila Agreement of 1996. The Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) was established in 1989 to include the provinces of Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Tawi-Tawi, Sulu; in 2001 Basilan Province and the Islamic City of Marawi were added. ARMM implementation processes have been contested, and talks continue under the auspices of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference.

Most MNLF units laid down their weapons in 1996, but cyclical armed conflict and negotiation continued between the MILF and the government, including a key ceasefire in 1997 followed by peaks of violence in 2000 and 2003. The most recent flare-up, following a failed agreement on expanded autonomy, left nearly one million people displaced in August 2008 (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre 2009: 4). The MILF is thought to draw more deeply on Islamist ideologies than did the MNLF, and to foster linkages with Abu-Sayyaf (a local militant-cum-crime organization), Jemaah Islamiyah (a regional network with pan-Islamist aspirations for archipelagic Southeast Asia), and Al-Qaeda. Such perceptions have drawn the attention and controversial military presence of the US as part of its 'Global War on Terror.' Intermittent peace talks continue with facilitation assistance from Malaysia,

and ceasefire monitoring by both local and international teams of civilians. The points of contention center on the geographic boundaries and governance mechanisms for future autonomous areas, and on the constitutionality of self-government. Other complicating factors include widespread poverty (UNDP Philippines 2009), splintering Bangsamoro leadership, violent clan conflict or *rido*,<sup>272</sup> extrajudicial killings (e.g. Human Rights Watch 2009), and the perception of poor governance and Manila-linked cronyism in the ARMM, contributing to the 2009 election-related massacre of over 50 civilians. The current phase of peace talks commenced in February 2011 in Kuala Lumpur.

In addition to insurgencies among the Bangsamoro, Mindanao is strongly impacted by the forty-year-old nationwide conflict between the government and the New People's Army (NPA), the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). The NPA is particularly active in the provinces surrounding Davao City, and in the Caraga region to the north. Protesting the opening of Mindanao to multinational corporations in mining, agriculture and logging, and the resulting marginalization of local 'peasants,' most NPA operations are based in the remote mountainous areas occupied by Lumads. The NPA does not challenge the territorial integrity of the Philippines as the Bangsamoro-based insurgencies do, yet some in government consider the NPA to be a greater threat (International Crisis Group 2011: 1). Peace talks between the government and the National Democratic Front, the coalition which represents the NPA and CPP in public negotiations, resumed in early February 2011, with facilitation by Norway.

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<sup>272</sup> Clan conflict presents an important local security risk in many settings around the Philippines, but it is currently particularly prominent in the southern provinces, and within the ARMM.

**Appendix B:**  
**The 'Do No Harm' Framework**  
(Mary B. Anderson, 1999)

*This diagram has been removed due to Copyright restrictions.*



## Appendix C: Summary of Data Collected

### **Pilot Phase Interviews**

*February – May 2007*

1. Participant #03,<sup>273</sup> by phone from Singapore to Cambodia, 22 February 2007, notes.
2. S1, Singapore, 29 March 2007, notes.
3. S2, Singapore, 4 April 2007, notes.
4. S3, Singapore, 9 April 2007, notes.
5. O1, by phone from Singapore to Cambodia, 9 April 2007, notes.
6. S4, Singapore, 11 April 2007, notes.
7. MI-63, Davao City, Mindanao,<sup>274</sup> 18 April 2007, notes.
8. MI-73, Davao, 20 April 2007, notes.
9. MG-1, Davao, 20 April 2007, notes.
10. MI-62, Pikit, North Cotabato, Mindanao, 22 April 2007, notes.
11. MG-2, Midsayap, North Cotabato, Mindanao, 22 April 2007, notes.
12. MG-3, Davao, 23 April 2007, notes.
13. MI-57, Davao, 23 April 2007, notes.
14. MG04, Davao, 24 April 2007, notes.
15. S5, Singapore, 15 May 2007, notes.
16. O2, by email from Singapore to Indonesia, 21 May 2007, notes.
17. MG-5, Zamboanga City, Mindanao, 22 May 2007, notes.
18. MG-6, Zamboanga City, Mindanao, 22 May 2007, notes.
19. MG-7, Zamboanga City, Mindanao, 23 May 2007, notes.

### **Mindanao Action Research, in partnership the Davao Ministerial Interfaith, Inc.**

*Preparation Phase (October – December 2007)*

1. Training of Trainers in DNH, Davao, 15-19 October and 26-30 November 2007, meeting documentation and DNH frameworks (7). (Including MG-7, MG-8, MG-9, MG-10, MG-11, MG-12, MG-13).

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<sup>273</sup> Participant numbers include the following abbreviations: S=Singapore; MI=Mindanao individual; MG=Mindanao group; O=other location. Participant identities are protected to ensure their security. A detailed participant list is provided in a Special Appendix, available only to thesis examiners.

<sup>274</sup> Hereafter abbreviated as 'Davao.'

*Action Research Cycle One – DNH Usage within DMI (January – May 2008)*<sup>275</sup>

2. DMI members' long-form survey (20), Davao, administered by research team<sup>276</sup> in January 2008.
3. DMI members' interviews (9) by research team:
  - a. MI-38, Davao, 13 February 2008, notes.
  - b. MI-5, Davao, 15 February 2008, notes.
  - c. MI-80, Davao, 15 February 2008, notes.
  - d. MI-22, Davao, 16 February 2008, notes.
  - e. MI-101, Davao, 17 February 2008, notes.
  - f. MI-61, Davao, 18 February 2008, notes.
  - g. MI-93, Davao, 18 February 2008, notes.
  - h. MI-28, Davao, 19 February 2008, notes.
  - i. MI-7, Davao, 22 February 2008, notes.
4. DMI Care Group DNH Assessment Forum, Davao, 24 January 2008, meeting documentation and DNH frameworks (6). (Including MG-14, MG-15, MG-16, MG-17, MG-18, MG-19, MG-20).
5. DMI Care Group Movers (leaders) DNH Workshop, Davao, 25-26 March 2008, meeting documentation, short-form workshop evaluation surveys (19) and DNH frameworks (4). (Including MG-20, MG-21, MG22, MG23).
6. Interviews of DMI Care Groups (4)
  - a. MG-33, Davao, 12 September 2008, notes and audio recording.
  - b. MG-34, Davao, 19 September 2008, notes and audio recording.
  - c. MG-35, Davao, 22 September 2008, notes and audio recording.
  - d. MG-36, Davao, 10 October 2008, notes and audio recording.
7. Interviews of Project Resource People (DMI research team) (5):
  - a. MI-106, Davao, 1 March 2008, notes and audio recording.
  - b. MI-39, Davao, 31 March 2008, notes and audio recording.
  - c. MI-85, Davao, 25 May 2008, notes and audio recording.
  - d. MI-8, Davao, 26 May 2008, notes and audio recording.
  - e. MI-57, Davao, 24 October 2008, notes and audio recording.
8. Interviews of World Vision staff involved in training DMI members (2):
  - a. Herminegilda Presbitero-Carrillo, Davao, 17 January 2008, notes.
  - b. Bonifacio Belonio, Davao, 21 July 2008, audio recording.

*Action Research Cycle Two – DNH Usage beyond DMI (June – October 2008)*

9. Regional Sister Agency Leaders' Long-form Surveys (8), Davao, administered by research team on 12-13 March 2008.
10. Regional Sister Agency Members' Long-form Surveys (30), Isla Parrilla, Sarangani, Mindanao, 8 July 2008.
11. Regional Sister Agency Members' Interviews (11):
  - a. MI-46, Isla Parrilla, Sarangani, Mindanao, by research team 8 July 2008, notes and DNH framework.

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<sup>275</sup> Some data collection activities that pertained conceptually to Cycle One (DNH usage within DMI) were conducted within the timeframe generally pertaining to Cycle Two. Thus there is some chronological overlap.

<sup>276</sup> All data collection activities were conducted by author unless otherwise noted.

- b. MI-30, Isla Parrilla, Sarangani, Mindanao, 10 July 2008, notes.
  - c. MI-50, Isla Parrilla, Sarangani, Mindanao, 9 July 2008, notes
  - d. MI-83, Isla Parrilla, Sarangani, Mindanao, by research team 10 July 2008, notes.
  - e. MI-26, Isla Parrilla, Sarangani, Mindanao, 10 July 2008, notes.
  - f. MI-56, Isla Parrilla, Sarangani, Mindanao, by research team 10 July 2008, notes and DNH framework.
  - g. MI-87, Isla Parrilla, Sarangani, Mindanao, 8 July 2008, notes and DNH framework.
  - h. MI-40, Isla Parrilla, Sarangani, Mindanao, by research team 10 July 2008, notes and DNH framework.
  - i. MI-59, Isla Parrilla, Sarangani, Mindanao, 10 July 2008, notes and DNH framework.
  - j. MI-1, Isla Parrilla, Sarangani, Mindanao, by research team 9 July 2008, notes and DNH framework.
  - k. MI-88, Isla Parrilla, Sarangani, Mindanao, by research team 10 July 2008, notes and personal writings of interviewee.
12. Regional Sister Agency DNH Workshop, Surallah, South Cotabato, Mindanao, 11-12 February 2008, short-form workshop evaluation surveys (21) administered by research team.
  13. External Agency DNH Workshop, Davao, 16-17 July 2008, short-form workshop survey evaluation (14), audio recording of trainers' debrief, and DNH frameworks (5). (Including MI-81, MG-24, MG-25, MG-26, MG-27).
  14. DMI & Regional Sister Agency Advanced DNH Workshop (on Resource Transfers & Implicit Ethical Messages), Davao, 19-21 August 2008, event documentation, audio recording of trainers' debrief, DNH frameworks (19), and notes on discussions with framework contributors. (Including MG-29, MG-30, MG-31, MG-32, MI-26, MI-7, MI-104, MI-94, MI-25, MI-30, MI-61, MI-22, MI-10, MI-56, MI-4, MI-85, MI-I, MI-8, MI-100).
  15. External Agency Advanced DNH Workshop (on Resource Transfers & Implicit Ethical Messages), Davao, 27-28 August 2008, audio recording of trainers' debrief, DNH frameworks (8), notes on discussion with framework contributors. (Including MI-70, MI-37, MI-52, MI-77, MI-2, MI-92, MI-106, MI-54).

*Research Team Consultations as follows:*

16. Davao, 22 October 2007, meeting documentation.
17. Davao, 3 December 2007, meeting documentation.
18. Davao, 14-15, 21 January 2008, meeting documentation.
19. Davao, 26-27 February 2008, meeting documentation.
20. Davao, 2-3 April 2008, meeting documentation.
21. Davao, 22-23, 25 May 2008, meeting documentation.
22. Davao, 3-4 July 2008, meeting documentation and DNH frameworks (4).
23. Davao, 13-14 August 2008, meeting documentation.
24. Davao, 17-18 September 2008, meeting documentation and audio recording.
25. Davao, 15-16, 23 October 2008, meeting documentation and audio recording.
26. Davao, 14-15, 17 January 2009, meeting documentation and audio recording.
27. Davao, 22-23 April 2009, meeting documentation.

## **Singapore Action Research, in partnership with the Harmony Centre at An-Nahdhah**

1. One-day DNH Workshop, Singapore, small group poster outputs, workshop evaluation surveys (short-form), and all-day video recording, 15 March 2008. (Included S-6, S-7, S-8, S-9, S-10, S-11, S-12, S-13, S-14, S-15, S-16, S-17, S-18).
2. Follow-up interview, Singapore, 9 January 2009, meeting documentation. (Included S-6, S-7, S-8, S-9).
3. Follow-up interview, Seattle, USA, 21 May 2010, notes and audio recording. (Included S-12).

## **Other Interviews**

1. 04, by phone from Singapore to Indonesia, 28 November 2008, notes.

**Appendix D:<sup>277</sup>**  
**Question Protocol for Pilot Phase Interviews**  
**(semi-structured; all sites)**

1. What kind of civil society organizations are most common in your area?
  - Community service, advocacy, education, communities of worship, etc?
  - Are any of them faith-based or religious in nature? Which ones?
  - Has the size/influence of the religious civil society organizations changed over time? How?
2. How would you describe relations between religious groups in your area?
  - Positive aspects? Negative aspects?
  - Local, national, international in origin?
  - Attitudes, behaviors, structures?
  - Do you feel the relationships are getting better, or getting worse? Why?
3. Do interfaith tensions ever make it difficult for the religious civil society organizations to operate?
  - If so, how? Would you feel comfortable sharing an example? (It is not necessary to give the name of the organization).
  - If not, what do you think could be done to maintain this existing operational harmony? Are there any factors which might disrupt this harmony in the future?
4. Do the religious civil society organizations ever influence the interfaith tensions?
  - If so, how? Would you feel comfortable sharing an example? (It is not necessary to give the name of the organization).
  - If not, why not? Is it because the religious civil society organizations are not interested in influencing such issues? Or would some of them wish to influence if they could?
  - When tensions flare, do the organizations ever get taken by surprise?
5. Do you think that it would help religious civil society organizations to have a simple tool for systematically analyzing their own context?
  - For analyzing how their interventions interact with the context?
  - For planning how their interventions might have a more positive impact on the context?
6. What types of organizations are most likely to find such tools useful?
  - Organizations working in a particular sector? If so, why?
  - Organizations working in particular geographic area? If so, why?
  - Organizations with particular types of religious beliefs and practices? If so, why?
  - Conversely, if certain types of organizations are not likely to find such tools useful, why?

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<sup>277</sup> For thesis purposes, the content of Appendices C-G has been reformatted as follows: spacing has been reduced, local language translations have been removed, and 'Local Capacities for Peace' (LCP) terminology has been standardized to 'Do No Harm' (DNH). Additional data collection instruments are available upon request.

7. Do you know of any organizations that might be interested in testing such tools?
- Would it be appropriate to contact them for discussion?
8. If you were planning to test such new tools in a (given type of) organization, how would you do it?
- What kind of people would be the most appropriate trainers?
  - What would be the most appropriate role for foreigners in contributing to this process?  
What would be the most useful role for me as a foreigner to adopt?
  - What kind of training techniques would be the most appropriate?

## Appendix E: Long-Form Survey Questions (Mindanao)

1. How did you first come to know about DNH?
2. How many times have you attended a DNH training event? (Check only one answer: 0, 1, 2, 3 or more times).
  - If you have attended a DNH training event, who was the trainer? Approximate date?
3. Please refer to the DNH framework (provided). In your opinion, what is the purpose of DNH?

For questions 4-9 below, please share your opinions about the usefulness of DNH.

- Check only one answer: 5=I strongly disagree; 4=I disagree; 3=I neither disagree nor agree; 2=I agree; 1=I strongly agree.
  - Can you share an example of how you have used DNH in this way?
4. DNH is useful for helping me understand the context of the area where I am working.
  5. DNH is useful in my personal life.
  6. DNH is useful inside my own church or mosque.
  7. DNH is useful in improving relationships between churches or mosques (of the same faith).
  8. DNH is useful in improving relationships between churches and mosques (of different faiths).
  9. DNH is useful when working in the community.
10. Have you observed any significant changes since you began using DNH?
    - If yes, please describe one of the changes that you have observed.
  11. In your daily activities, how many times have you talked to people outside DMI/Mindanao II Interfaith<sup>278</sup> about DNH, from the time you attended DNH training until now?
    - What was the people's response?
  12. Have you encountered any difficulties in using DNH?
    - If yes, please describe your difficulties.
  13. Do you want any further clarification about DNH?
    - If yes, please write your question here.
  14. Any recommendation for how DMI and Mindanao II Interfaith should use DNH in the future?
    - If yes, please write your recommendation here.

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<sup>278</sup> 'Mindanao II' refers to DMI's sister interfaith agencies in Southern Mindanao.

**Appendix F:**  
**Question Protocol for Cycle One Interviews**  
**(semi-structured; Mindanao)**

1. Based on what you have learned about DNH, what do you think is its purpose?
2. Could you share with me an example of have applied DNH in your own individual capacity (as a church/mosque leader, lay leader, parent, or person, etc.)?
  - Can you tell me more about the context of this example? Who where the people involved? When did it take place?
  - Specifically, what changes did you make as a result of your DNH understanding/analysis?
  - What was the impact of those changes?
  - Were you aware of some DNH principles in the past, even before attending DNH training? If so, how has DNH training influenced your understanding of these principles?
3. Could you share with me an example of how you have applied DNH in planning organizational services or projects?
  - Can you tell me more about the context of this example? Who where the organizations/people involved? When did it take place?
  - Specifically, what changes did you make as a result of your DNH understanding/analysis?
  - What was the impact of those changes?
4. Have you encountered any problems or difficulties in using DNH? Could you please describe?
  - Where did you experience problems in using DNH? (family, church/mosque, associates/friends, community, others, etc.)
  - What was the nature of the problems? (unclear terminology, it is difficult to conduct DNH analysis, not enough time, forget about DNH, others, etc.)
  - Have other religious leaders encountered the same type of problems in using DNH? If so, can you tell me more about it?
5. Do you think that any aspect of DNH should be adapted, to make it easier for religious leaders to understand and apply?
  - For any aspects that you feel should be changed . . . what is your suggested alternative? Why?
  - What kinds of perceptions / concerns might prevent a religious leader from understanding and applying DNH?
6. Do you have any recommendations/ideas for how religious leaders could use DNH in the future?
  - Can you tell me more about why you make this recommendation?
  - If religious leaders follow your recommendation, what do you think will be the future impact?



**Appendix G:**  
**Question Protocol for Cycle Two Interviews**  
**(semi-structured; Mindanao)**

1. Based on what you have learned about DNH, what do you think is its purpose?
2. Could you share with me an example of how you use or apply DNH?
  - Can you tell me more about the context of this example? Who where the people involved? When does it take place?
  - Specifically, what changes did you make or experience as a result of your DNH understanding?
  - What is the impact of those changes?
3. As I mentioned, we are doing action research in order to share DNH with other religious leaders. We would like to collect many, many examples of how religious projects and services impact on the relationships between social groups, both positively and negatively. Have you seen or experienced any examples that you could share with me?
  - Can you tell me more about the context of this example? When and where did it take place?
  - Who are the social groups involved?
  - What are the Dividers and Connectors between these social groups?
  - What was the purpose/nature of the religious project or service?
  - How did the religious project or service impact on the intergroup relationships (the Dividers and Connectors)?
  - Which aspect (detail) of the project/service has caused the impact on conflict? If more than one aspect causes the impact . . . which aspect do you think is the most important? Which aspect is the root that influences all the others?
  - Do you have any ideas for how to do the project or service differently, in order to improve impact on relationships?
4. Do you have any recommendations/ideas for how we as religious leaders could use DNH in the future?
  - Do you have any suggestions on how we should share DNH to other religious leaders?
  - Do you think that any aspect of DNH should be adapted, to make it easier for religious leaders to apply?
5. If we need further insights from your experience when we prepare our DNH publication for religious leaders, can we call on you again?

## **Appendix H:**

# **Memorandum of Agreement with Davao Ministerial Interfaith**

*Signed 23 May 2008 by: Davao Ministerial Interfaith, Inc. (DMI), Michelle Garred, Hugpong sa Kalambuan-Dabaw (HKDI), World Vision Development Foundation (WVDF).*

### **Purpose**

To build on DMI's pioneering DNH experience by researching how religious leaders and organizations can use DNH, in order to share DNH with other religious leaders in South Central Mindanao and possibly other contexts.

1. Undertake collaborative action research on the use of DNH by religious leaders and organizations.
2. Document and disseminate the lessons learned for both practitioner and academic audiences.
3. Equip and support up to 13 members of Davao Ministerial Interfaith Inc (DMI) as new DNH trainers.
4. Provide an opportunity for DMI to grow in areas of organizational capacity, networking and exposure, and/or establishing a financial track record.

### **Partners and Responsibilities**

1. The main project partners are:
  - Davao Ministerial Interfaith, Inc. (DMI) [with the support of its partner organizations Hugpong sa Kalambuan-Dabaw (HKDI) and World Vision Development Foundation]
  - Michelle Garred, PhD Research Student (Richardson Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, Lancaster University, UK) and Independent Consultant.
2. DMI has appointed an DNH Core Team to work consistently throughout the project, including: Sister Joan Castro (Team Leader), Brother Salvador Veloso, Pastor Ereberto Gopo, Ustadz Ahmad Ampuan, Pastora Shirley Papio, Pastor Rueland Badoy, and Pastor Alan Richa. DNH Core Team agreements are as follows:
  - Each Core Team member will commit 2 days per month, preferably Thursday/Friday of the third week of the month. (There may be an additional commitment for DNH Trainers).
  - If a Core Team member experiences a schedule conflict, s/he will prioritize the number one schedule first. S/he will inform the internal Team Leader as soon as possible, for emergency cases only.
  - In case of 2 consecutive unexplained absences, the internal Team Leader must talk to the Core Team member for the commitment to continue.
3. Michelle Garred will visit approximately 8-10 times during FY08, at mutually agreed times. She may also make a follow-up visit during FY09 if this is appropriate and helpful.
4. Michelle Garred will keep DMI fully informed about parallel action research activities in other locations, such as Singapore.

## Sample Research Phases & Activities

1. Training of Trainers in DNH
  - Master trainers included Hermie Carrillo, Ruel Fegarido & Michelle Garred
  - The new trainers were equipped to train the standard interagency DNH module, which they themselves will contextualize during the course of this project.
  - The new trainers delivered a 2-day DNH workshop during Mindanao Week of Peace.
  - Participants' sharing examples of DNH applications in their own contexts were captured in event documentation.
2. Action Research Phase 1: DNH usage within DMI
  - DNH assessment with 6 *Purok* (Neighborhood) Intergenerational Care Groups, followed by an intergroup forum for discussion of learnings.
  - Learning evaluation on previous DNH training in DMI: written survey of all DMI members, followed by selected in-depth interviews.
3. Action Research Phase 2: DNH usage beyond DMI
  - Proposed: DNH training in 4 ADPs and/or local religious bodies with event documentation and written survey of participants. Followed by selected in-depth interviews and possibly DNH assessment with partner organizations.
  - Proposed: Written surveys and in-depth interviews among members of the Mindanao II Interfaith Network.
  - Proposed: Consultation among new DNH trainers to identify emerging learning and provide ongoing mentoring / technical support.
4. Identification of Lessons Learned
5. Action Research Phase 3: Dissemination and Testing of Lessons Learned
  - Proposed: Preliminary documentation of Lessons Learned by December 2008.
  - Proposed: Testing and feedback in DNH training contexts January – June 2008.
  - Proposed: Documentation finalized and published by September 2008.
  - Core Team composition and agreements can be revised as needed, as Phase 3 Core Team workload is anticipated to be significantly lighter than Phase 2.

## Documents and Publications

1. Lessons learned publication for practitioner audiences:
  - The publication will focus on contextualizing the DNH Framework's Resource Transfers and Implicit Ethical Messages for use by religious leaders and religious organizations.
  - DMI will be the primary author and decision maker on this publication. This implies that in case of any differences of opinion on the content, DMI has the right of decision. Michelle Garred will contribute time for writing and technical assistance.
  - The estimated completion date is end of calendar year 2008.
2. PhD thesis for academic audiences:
  - Michelle Garred will be the primary author and decision maker on this document. This implies that in case of any differences of opinion on the content, Michelle Garred has the right of decision. DMI will provide consultation on identifying lessons learned.
  - The estimated completion date is late 2009.
3. Regarding other publication opportunities, it is generally agreed that authorship and decision making rights will be shared. The details will be mutually decided on a case-by-case basis.

## **Financial Arrangements**

HKDI has agreed to fund the DNH ToT and DNH training for P-IGCG Movers through the FY08 budget of Area Development Program Davao.

- As of this writing, DMI is also requesting HKDI to consider allocating a temporary workspace to DMI for duration of the DNH Project.
1. WVDF has agreed to provide technical support in DNH, organizational development and/or financial services coordination.
    - As of this writing, DMI is also requesting WVDF to consider FY09 funding support for the Lessons learned publication for practitioner audiences.
  2. Michelle Garred has agreed to contribute in PHP 22,000 in research funds for DNH Core Team meetings and fora between October 2007 – January 2008. Michelle Garred agrees to take responsibility for her own travel costs. She also agrees to search for grant opportunities to provide supplementary funds.
    - For example, the Peace and Justice Studies Association has awarded a Grassroots Grant in the amount of \$US 750 in 2008.
    - As of this writing, other applications currently in progress include the International Peace Research Association Foundation and the Religious Research Association.
  3. External grant funds may be either granted directly to DMI or sub-granted through HKDI, depending on donor requirements. Grant fund allocation will be mutually agreed between DMI, HKDI and Michelle Garred, in alignment with the donor guidelines. HKDI will support development of DMI accounting and financial management skills through capacity building and oversight (periodic audit).
  4. It is understood that availability of funds will affect the types of activities planned during the course of the project, and might also affect estimated completion dates.

## **Research Ethics**

1. All participants will be informed in an appropriate way about the research, and will have opportunity to give (or decline) consent for use of their information. All participants will be acknowledged in project reports (unless they request to remain anonymous). However they will not be quoted by name (unless by special agreement).
2. DNH Core Team members, and possibly also DMI DNH Trainers, will be considered 'researchers' rather than 'participants.' Thus in project reports they may be quoted by name (unless they request not to be).
3. The information collected will be accessible for verification and analysis by all project partners. DMI has rights to any information collected by Michelle Garred, and Michelle Garred has rights to any information collected by DMI, during this project.
4. The interpretation of data and the identification of lessons learned will be a collaborative process open to all project partners.
5. Michelle Garred's use of information is also subject to review by Lancaster University's Ethics Committee.
6. This project is designed as a 'win-win,' meaning it will be mutually beneficial for all partners. The collaborative process will be reviewed periodically by the Core Team. Also, all partners are encouraged voice questions / opinions for open discussion at any time.

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