
UNIT 9 FIELDWORK/ETHNOGRAPHY

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9.1 INTRODUCTION

Research is systematic investigation of a phenomenon done for the purpose of establishing facts and reaching new conclusions. One can conduct research either in the laboratory (as is done in the sciences) or in the library or in the natural human setting. Social science researches are conducted either in the library or by studying human beings or by combining both the methods.

Human beings can be studied either in their real life situations or away from their real settings. When the researcher studies human beings away from their natural spaces, in some other environment, the setting becomes artificial. Human beings are not at ease in such artificial conditions and their behaviour here does not remain natural and normal. They are not their normal self as they do not feel comfortable either physically or psychologically. This affects the data collection process, which in turn affects the outcome of the research. Thus studying human beings in their natural environment is essential. Fieldwork and ethnography help us to do just that.

Aims and Objectives

After going through this Unit, you will

- Become familiar with the meaning and purpose of fieldwork and ethnography;
- Know the characteristics of ethnography;

- Understand the methods of data collection and analysis in ethnography; and
- Recognise and be aware of the problems, issues and dilemmas one may face in the field while doing ethnography.

9.2 UNDERSTANDING FIELDWORK: DEFINITION AND BASIC ELEMENTS

The term ‘fieldwork’ comprises of two words – ‘field’ and ‘work’. ‘Field’ means the social world of study or the community of human beings who are being studied. So the work that is carried out to study something in the natural environment where it occurs (such as an event or a culture) or that it inhabits (such as community of human beings) is referred to as fieldwork. Fieldwork is one of the oldest forms of human inquiry or research practice. It essentially engages with “the worlds of others” with the aim of studying them at close quarters. It is concerned with research on some aspect of human behaviour in its everyday context.

The basic elements of fieldwork are studying the situation first-hand, reflecting on them and interpreting them. Ancient scholars like Thucydides of Greece and Sima Qian of China followed these principles of fieldwork. Fieldwork is conducted in natural conditions with the aim of gaining first-hand knowledge of the situation. The researcher enters the field to observe and study human interaction directly. Taking field notes is an important aspect of fieldwork. Field notes are the researcher’s record of his observations, experiences and reflections in the field. These field notes, when accumulated over a period of time, form the core of the written account of the study.

Fieldwork is a sensitive process as it concerns studying human beings in their natural settings. The quality of relationship that is established between the researcher or the investigator and the respondents or the participants and the way in which that relationship grows over time is the key to the success of the process of fieldwork.

9.3 UNDERSTANDING ETHNOGRAPHY: DEFINITION AND PURPOSE

Ethnography involves fieldwork. It is the written account of a particular culture. The term was originally used by anthropologists, who consider fieldwork a key part of their discipline. However, now this method is used in other social sciences such as sociology and conflict studies as well. The main aim of the ethnographer is to describe the culture or way of life such as values, beliefs and practices of a particular group from within. This is done by understanding and communicating *what* the events are or what is going on, and *how* the members of the group ‘interpret’ and ‘understand’ that event or what is going on. In order to do this, the researcher needs to understand not only his or her own culture but also the culture of the group s/he is studying.

The purpose of ethnography is not to test what we know or think we know about a culture. Its main purpose is to explore cultural knowledge. Exploring here would mean first ‘understanding’ and ‘discovering’ the culture, then ‘describing’ it and then finally ‘interpreting’ it. Secondly, ethnography describes a culture from the point of view of its participants. This is the insider’s or native point of view, which is referred to as *emic* perspective. The other perspective is the *etic* i.e. the outsider’s point of view. In ethnography, the researcher must try to understand the world from the insider’s point of

view so as to discover how they see the world and ascribe meaning to it. In this sense, ethnography can then be used as a tool to discover the worldview of others.

Ethnography can be useful in several situations. It can be used as a method to gather research material or to gain an entry point for irrigation or water project or to establish relationship when one is a guest or an outsider in a particular context. Ethnography can also be used by third party interveners for facilitating or mediating in a conflict. Ethnography will help the third party to understand the worldviews of the two parties as conflicts are not just located in the material or social world but also in the symbolic world where worldviews are formed. This will help look into the structural causes of individual and group behaviours as well as be useful in understanding how meaning, symbols and norms contribute to the making and enactment of individual and group behaviours. Parties can also use ethnography to understand each other's perspectives without the help of a third party.

9.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF ETHNOGRAPHY

Ethnography is a unique research method in several ways. There are three fundamental and interrelated presuppositions in ethnography:

- Data is not just gathered but created by human effort, thus how information is collected will eventually affect the content of data;
- Researchers are complex creatures and their perception is shaped not just by the context in which they find themselves but also the level of comfort and discomfort they experience in that context; and
- The researcher and research participants both affect the quality and content of data.

Interpretation is an important feature of ethnography and the above presuppositions are based on the premise that human life is about interpretation.

Secondly, ethnography is implicitly 'comparative' as while studying another culture the ethnographer needs a reference point to understand the values, beliefs and practices and that reference point most of the time is their own culture. The ethnographer interacts with other cultures and tries to know about their ways of life. This makes them value their own culture. Thus, eventually the ethnographer ends up comparing the culture they are studying with their own culture. Thirdly, this comparison may sometimes make the ethnographer reach the conclusion that their culture is superior. This attitude of superiority about one's own culture is referred to as 'ethnocentrism'. Field researchers however consciously reject the attitude of ethnocentrism and instead embrace 'cultural relativism'. This is based on the premise that there is a rationale or logic behind each society's or cultural groups' values, beliefs and practices and thus no culture is superior or better than another one. Every social group is distinct and in order to explore this distinction, researchers must engage with the group on its own ground. Thus the goal of the ethnographer is to make an effort to understand each culture's logic, rationale and distinctness.

Next, ethnographic studies do not have a hypothesis, which makes it different from most other social science research methodologies that are based on hypothesis. The aim of ethnography is not to test a hypothesis as having one would mean that the researcher has preconceived notions, biases and stereotypes about the culture s/he is studying. In fact, the researcher should go into a culture with no baggage and an empty mind and discover

both the question and the answer from the participants, so as to understand the situation from the emic perspective. Further, ethnographers arrive at middle-range grounded theories. These are placed between inductive (reaching conclusion based on observation) and deductive (based on logical or reasonable conclusion drawn from available information) theories. Besides, ethnographers do not try to collect all and every bit of empirical data and describe them. Instead, they interpret data frequently inaccessible through other methodological means and complement data collected through surveys, experiments or other techniques. This interpretation can lead to new concepts and theories. Additionally, ethnography relies on both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Ethnographic methods recognise the importance of multiple worldviews and avoid generalisation. The researcher here seeks to unravel cultures and social settings that are generally hidden or difficult to locate. Another important feature of ethnography is the intensity of the relationship between the ethnographer and the field, especially the ethnographer and his/her informants or participants who are part of the social setting that is being studied by the ethnographer. While doing ethnographic study, the researcher spends and lives for extended periods in the field with the people s/he is trying to understand. This results in the formation of intense relationships. Here the ethnographer must adapt to the rules, codes and expectation of the locals. This will be helpful in gaining trust of the people.

9.5 ETHNOGRAPHY: METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Fieldwork is central to ethnography. Though primarily observation, especially participant observation, is synonymous with ethnography, there are other methods through which data can be collected as well such as interviews, document analysis and surveys.

9.5.1 Ethnographic Interviews

Ethnographic interviews are normally conducted in unstructured and in-depth format, which generally takes the form of leisurely conversations. What distinguishes it 'procedurally' from other in-depth interviews is the rapport that is established between the researcher and the participant which is a result of the long-term contact between them. Both invest a lot of time in the interviews and there is a kind of openness between them. Thus the relationship between the researcher and the participant is an even one; nobody has an upper hand here. The questions posed by the researcher are honest, genuine and of inquisitive type as the intention is to learn from the informant rather than impose one's views on them. Here, the researcher starts with broad open-ended questions and then poses questions on specific categories identified by the informant in the answer to the open-ended questions. The questions should not be framed in a way that directs the answers down a particular road that is defined by the ethnographer's worldview. One should thus be careful of simply asking "why" as this pre-supposes certain assumptions. The ethnographer should as far as possible use the words of the informant to "reflect back" their ideas and when in doubt, s/he should always check the meaning of a word being used, rather than assuming its meaning. The ethnographer should consider speaking to people in the places where they normally pass their days such as in the market place or in the field etc. Ethnographic interviews are 'analytically' different from other types of interviews as they focus on cultural meanings. The researcher here tries to understand not just the cultural practices and beliefs but also the meaning behind those.

9.5.2 Document Analysis

Document analysis is another method of data collection in ethnography. Here texts produced by the cultural or social group that is being studied is examined. This is useful in understanding their reality. Depending on the cultural group that is being studied, the researcher can examine and analyse local newspapers, local television channels, local radio broadcasts, local art and poetry, journals and diaries etc.

9.5.3 Survey

Survey is a systematic study of a community or a group or an institution done with the aim of analysing the problem or the issue or an event. A survey is done by developing a questionnaire that is presented to a sample of respondents. The questions may be either open-ended or closed-ended. The sample can be drawn either carefully to represent a truly random selection of cases or it can be less formally organised. In some ethnographic researches, a survey done with the help of a questionnaire might be a good option to reach out to as many members of a particular cultural group as possible.

9.5.4 Observation

Observation as a method of data collection has been used from time immemorial. It has three key elements – an event or a situation, an observational plan and a concern for reliability and validity. Observational plan refers to what will be observed – content or frequency or duration.

Reliability and validity are two major concerns with regard to data. Data collection is considered reliable if the researcher gets the same data when a measurement is repeated under the same conditions. But it is not possible to get an exact repetition of a measurement when one is working with human beings as the respondent's situation is most likely to have changed in different ways with the change in timing. However, while using standardised methods of data collection, it is useful to get some assurance with regard to reliability. One possible way of doing this is to have two observers while using structured observation. Another way could be to use alternative versions of questions and if the researcher gets the same answers in both the versions then s/he can consider that data to be reliable. Also, the researcher should always provide detailed descriptions of the context in which they made their observations.

Validity is a problem in almost all social science research methods. It refers to whether or not something actually measures what it claims to measure. One structured way to determine validity in observations is to construct a quantitative or qualitative categorical list either before or after the event. This list could contain questions like what people were doing or what happened immediately prior to and after the event. If the researcher draws this list before the event, s/he could use it to search for specific sorts of instances; if done afterwards, it could be used to identify and describe the categories observed by the researcher.

There are two different perspectives about observation: *a priori* and *a posteriori*. These are essentially concerned with whether, observation leads to knowledge or knowledge leads to observation. Karl Popper opines that human perspective on any situation or event is shaped partly by inheritance and partly by experience. This *a priori* knowledge guides observation or the way human beings view any situation (knowledge leads to observation). John Dewey on the other hand believed in *a posteriori* knowledge. This emphasised that all research arises out of actual life, i.e. observation of the event (observation leads to knowledge).

Observation involves varying nature and extent of involvement or participation by the observer. Raymond Gold, in his article 'Roles in sociological field observations', published in the journal *Social Forces* in 1958, proposed four different roles to the observer. They range from participant to non-participant.

The complete participant observer: Here the researcher becomes a fully fledged member of the group under study and is fully involved in the group's activities. The purpose of the observation is hidden.

The participant as observer: Here both the participants and researcher are aware that the participants are being observed. There is full disclosure about the observation.

The observer as participant: Here involvement with participants is deliberately kept to a minimum. There is only partial disclosure.

The complete observer: Here observers are not noticeable and not exposed to any social contact – they observe in a very public place. The purpose of the observation is kept completely hidden.

Most field workers find themselves working back and forth throughout their data collection along a continuum of roles, primarily between the middle two, but occasionally slipping into one of the complete role positions. These roles, whether hidden or open, have advantages and disadvantages. Concealed roles give access to the researcher to fields that would otherwise be closed such as those that are considered either immoral or illegal or both e.g. drug trafficking. However, hidden roles have been criticised on ethical and moral grounds and are referred to as 'unethical research'.

9.5.4.1 Participant Observation

The primary technique used in ethnographic research is 'participant observation', which usually involves living and spending extended periods with the people and group one is studying. However, the researcher can also engage in non-participant observation techniques in order to generate more structured observations.

Research that requires some extent of social participation by the researcher to document or record the course of ongoing events is known as participant observation. Here the researcher observes things by participating in the events. Participant observation essentially involves three simultaneous processes: *participating* in as many activities as possible in a particular cultural setting, *observing* what is going on, and *interpreting* what the researcher has participated in and observed. Participation is the key aspect here as the field researcher learns from the act of participation – the researcher gradually becomes a familiar fixture in people's lives and the people start accepting and giving access to him/her in their lives. On the other hand, the participants are likely to slowly abandon impression management (showing their best behaviour, which may not be their normal and natural behaviour, in front of outsiders) and start behaving in normal and natural ways. This facilitates more and more learning for the field researcher especially about the gray areas between ideals, beliefs and practices.

Participant observation is usually done over a long period of time, which may involve not just months but even years. Since the researcher spends a long period of time in the field interacting with the informants in their real life setting, this ensures both depth and breadth in the research findings.

The emphasis on culture makes ethnography different from other participant observation studies. Some research methodology scholars view ethnography as the category of participant observation that focuses on culture. Yet there are others who view participant observation as an ethnographic technique. However, one views this, one common thing between ethnography and participant observation is that they both developed as means of studying and documenting the lives of those who are presumed to be different from those either funding or conducting the study.

9.5.4.2 Observation: Recording and Analysis

Recording of observation and their analysis is dependent on the observation role taken by the researcher. The kind of observational role that the researcher chooses—from complete participation to complete observer—will determine the approach s/he takes when recording and analysing information. Approaches to recording information and analysing them ranges from unstructured to semi-structured to completely structured observations.

Ethnographers generally collect data in the form of field notes. However, field notes cannot be taken in situations where the researcher is a complete participant as here the method of observation is concealed. In this case, the researcher will have to record his/her observations after the event. On the other hand, taking field notes openly and during the process of observation is not a problem at all when the researcher is a complete observer as the participants are very much aware about being observed.

Unstructured observations are made when there is little information about a topic and the researcher does not know its *a priori* dimensions. Most complete participant studies are unstructured as here the researcher does not start off with preconceived ideas and notions about what they want to observe. Researchers have no checklists or charts, but use diaries, journals and notes after each event. These notes are reviewed and analysed to determine repeating themes that in turn become topics for further exploration.

Semi-structured observations are made when only some aspects of the topic or situation are known. The researcher specifies the dimensions of the topic based on the information sources, discussions with participants and critical reflection on the situation at hand. Structured observations can be made when a lot is known about a topic or situation. Here the researcher is very clear about what they want to observe.

Observation need not be only a qualitative exercise; researchers can make use of quantitative observational plans to record their observations as well. These consist of: recording duration of certain behaviours, recording frequency of certain behaviours, making particular observations at predetermined intervals, and making particular observations continuously. One or more of these observational plans can be used by the researcher in a given context. Duration is used to record wanted or unwanted behaviours. Frequency counts denote each time a behaviour occurs. Interval recording involves checking for the presence or absence of certain behaviour at regular intervals or times. Continuous recording involves noting all behaviour during each specified observation session. Finally, depending on the situation and what the researcher wants to observe within it, s/he will need to either adapt these methods of recording or devise new ones. In case the researcher devises a new method, it must be carefully tested at a small level and then refined for suitable usage.

Recording of observations involves three steps:

- First of all, the researcher needs to determine *what* s/he is going to observe – the frequency or the content or the duration.
- Secondly, the researcher needs to decide *how* s/he is going to record and analyse his/her observations – complete participant or complete observer, unstructured observation or completely structured observation, qualitative or quantitative information.
- Finally, the researcher needs to determine how s/he is going to *sample*.

A sample is a selection or part of the total group which is relevant to the study or to the observation. This is especially needed as it is not possible for the researcher to observe or survey each and every individual concerned with the research. In such a scenario, sampling is the best alternative where the researcher can be selective about the people s/he wants to include in their study. Once the context to be observed is finalised along with the purpose of the observation, the researcher needs to determine a representative range of situations that are relevant to the observation: the quantity, the quality, male perspective, female perspective etc. Sample should then be drawn based on these parameters.

Appreciation lies at the heart of ethnographic analysis. It utilises categories made up of description, interviews, documents or visual presentation as examples and signs of appreciation. The observer interprets the beliefs and practices of the culture and the meaning behind them from the description s/he has gathered. This interpretation can sometimes lead to theory building.

9.6 ETHNOGRAPHY: PROBLEMS, ISSUES AND DILEMMAS

Doing an ethnographic research is an enriching exercise; however, there are problems and dilemmas in it as well. The researcher needs to be aware of and be mentally prepared to negotiate these.

The validity of the observation can be challenged if there are sampling mistakes and observational errors. Sampling mistakes can be a result of insufficient range of samples or insufficient sample size. Therefore, the researcher needs to have a sufficient number of samples. But it is imperative to know that just having an adequate sample size is no guarantee of validity.

Observational errors consist of two considerations. First, the act of observation changes the action or thing being observed. When one human being studies other humans in a social context, they affect the research environment. The presence of the observer, unless hidden, will make the people conscious and have an effect on them. The data is thus influenced by the presence of the researcher and does not remain objective. This is known as observer's paradox. The observer needs to be present in order to record observations but the data gets influenced by their very presence, thus the paradox. Secondly, other observer errors can emerge from several issues such as the observer assigning the same rating to people even when there are distinct differences between different people; the observer may rate people in the middle of the scale so as to avoid making difficult decisions; the observer continues to rate people favourably in subsequent performances after having formed an initial favourable impression; and the observer forgets

information. To avoid the last error, the researcher must record observation immediately after it has occurred if it is not possible for them to do it during the process.

The next problem is related to the observer's paradox. When the researcher, who is a stranger or an outsider, asks questions, participants tend to respond in either of the two ways: they give ideal answers which do not conform to their normal practices, and they act and behave in ways that are different from how they would behave if they were not in the presence of an outsider i.e. the researcher. Thus in the presence of the researcher, the participants try to put their best foot forward or give a good impression. This is known as impression management.

The researcher must choose the field site for ethnography very carefully. They should spend some time at the site and carry out a preliminary research at a small scale to see if things will work out at the site or not. If people are completely opposed to the ethnographic research, then the researcher must have an alternative site in mind. Also the researcher must seek permission from the community leaders and local authorities to carry out their research.

Gaining entry into the lives of the participants and building trust and rapport with them is not an easy task. The initial phase is a frustrating and confusing one wherein the researcher tries to gain acceptance by the participants. It is more so difficult when the researcher is doing a study on illegal activities. Here the researcher has to find ways and means by which they will get accepted by the participants and yet not participate in the illegal activity. In the process of establishing trust, the researcher needs to be aware of the power imbalances in the community, the power imbalances between them and the participants and the local cultural rules and the rules of reciprocity.

How much does one get involved in and participate in the lives of the participants one is observing, is a major dilemma in all fieldwork generally and in ethnography specifically. It becomes a major ethical issue especially when the researcher is studying criminal and illegal activities. In comparison to other social science research methods, ethnographic research requires the most intense involvement with the participants. This can lead to complications and may even have emotional repercussions for the researcher. When ethnographers totally adopt, the culture of the researched, they are accused of 'going native', or becoming one of the researched group. This is so because the ethnographer gives up the role of the researcher here and forgets the research work at hand. Ethnography requires some objectivity and the ability to observe and examine things from some distance. But emotional involvement leads to the development of the feeling of empathy for the participants. In such a situation it will be difficult for the researcher to maintain objectivity and evaluate things critically. This will have a bearing on the data collected. Besides, maintaining objectivity, the researcher also needs to arrive at some conclusion regarding the morality of observing other people as their presence places certain demands on the participants. What right does the researcher have to intrude into other people's lives and spaces and observe them closely? After a point, the researcher's presence can be resented by the community and their questions can annoy the participants. The researcher must guard against homogenising the views and perspectives of a cultural group. Even within the group, there might be different opinions or multiple worldviews and that need to be recognised as well. Finally, ethnography is a solo enterprise, which can after a while get very uninteresting. The researcher needs to make a sincere effort to maintain and sustain interest in the process.

9.7 SUMMARY

Fieldwork gives a window into different unknown and hidden social worlds. Ethnography is a field-based research that derives meaning from social and cultural lives. It is based on the assumption that personal engagement with the participant is the key to understanding a particular culture or social setting. Ethnography is based on the emic perspective, is comparative, relies on both qualitative and quantitative methods and does not have a hypothesis. Observation- particularly participant observation- is the method used for collecting data in ethnographic research. However, data can be collected through other methods as well such as ethnographic interviews and document analysis. There are four different observer roles and the recording and analysis of data depends on the kind of observer role chosen by the researcher. The researcher is an essential part of the fieldwork as s/he is the one interpreting the social world as part of his/her study. As a method, ethnography requires the intense involvement of the researcher with the participants. This makes considerable personal demands upon the researcher and leads to several ethical and other complications and dilemmas.

9.8 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Define fieldwork. What are the basic elements of fieldwork?
2. What do you understand by ethnography? Discuss its purpose.
3. Write a note on the characteristics of ethnography.
4. Discuss briefly the various methods of data collection in ethnography.
5. Write a short note on ethnographic interviews.
6. Define observation. Enumerate the four observer roles proposed by Raymond Gold.
7. The primary technique used in ethnographic research is participant observation. Elaborate on this statement.
8. How are observations recorded and analysed?
9. Discuss the problems, issues and dilemmas that one has to confront with while doing ethnography.

SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 10 CONFLICT MAPPING

Structure

10.1 Introduction

Aims and Objectives

10.2 Conflict Map: Purpose, Usage and Limitations

10.3 Basic Elements of a Conflict Map

10.4 Ways of Conflict Mapping

10.4.1 Paul Wehr

10.4.2 William W. Wilmot and Joyce L. Hocker

10.5 How to map a conflict situation?

10.6 Summary

10.7 Terminal Questions

Suggested Readings

10.1 INTRODUCTION

Conflict creates confusion, unpredictability and uncertainty. Intervention in this situation requires a clear understanding and analysis. This understanding is necessary not only for the conflict resolution practitioner but also the authorities, the stakeholders and even students of peace and conflict studies. All of them need to know – what is going on?

Conflict is a complex process having multiple elements, more so if it has multiple parties and stakeholders. Conflict can thus be analysed from various perspectives. Some scholars analyse conflict from a general or macro perspective while others take a micro approach and yet some others combine the macro and the micro perspectives. The basic or primary elements of a conflict can be helpful in creating a map which will enable one to negotiate their way through it.

Aims and Objectives

After going through this Unit, you would be able to

- Understand the purposes, usage and limitations of a conflict map;
- Become aware about the basic elements of a conflict map;
- Get familiar with the different ways in which conflict can be mapped; and
- Graphically map a conflict by using signs and conventions.

10.2 CONFLICT MAP: PURPOSE, USAGE AND LIMITATIONS

A conflict map is a visual technique that presents a conflict graphically and shows the

parties in relation to the conflict as well as to each other. It can be used to analyse both micro and macro level conflicts – international, national, social, organisational and interpersonal conflicts. Being a visual tool, it can be used for group processes as well as with people who are not formally educated. It can be drawn on a sheet of paper or a chart paper or a flip chart or even on the mud floor. The technique of conflict mapping was developed first by Paul Wehr in 1979.

It is possible to use the conflict map for various purposes in different contexts. It can guide parties, third party interveners, conflict resolution workshop participants as well as students to collect information about the conflict, reconstruct the chain of events and help in understanding the situation better. This understanding can form the basis on which strategies can be developed and actions planned. Each party can draw a map with the aim of clarifying and understanding the conflict from their own perspective or it can be done jointly by two or more parties to understand each other's perspective. Parties to a conflict mostly have different perspectives and viewpoints about the conflict. In such a situation, when the parties draw their own conflict map, it can show differences in perception. Also it helps them to move a step back and make sense out of the complex and confusing process of conflict. A third party can draw a conflict map to use it as a point of starting a discussion among the parties to which things can be added or deleted as per the inputs of the parties. The conflict map thus is a flexible tool that can be modified depending on the conflict parties, the task at hand and the intervention goal.

Conflict maps help in the overall analysis of a conflict. It clearly shows the relationship between the parties and also clarifies the distribution of power among the parties. It aids in seeing where allies or potential allies are. Conflict mapping facilitates the identification of openings for intervention and entry points for action. Mapping can also help in making an informed decision about whether the intervention should continue. It also helps in evaluating what has already been done in the conflict. Conflict maps can thus be used either early in the process to just understand and analyse the conflict or later to identify possible entry points for intervention or to build strategies.

Conflicts change over time. Therefore, conflict analysis cannot be a one-time exercise; it must be an ongoing process, representative of the changing situation. A conflict map is limited to the time period and is representative of the time in which it is made—it only gives a snapshot of the current situation—and cannot possibly make all the aspects of the conflict visible. The map will show things differently if it is drawn either before or later during the conflict process. Besides, it depicts the relationship between the parties but is unable to analyse the causes of conflict. Moreover, the map is always drawn from some perspective, so it is critical to remember who is drawing the map and not just what elements and how they have been placed on the map. Thus a map drawn by a student of peace and conflict studies may be very different from the one done by a party to the conflict, depending on the amount of information the students have at any given point of time. Thus, Mapping on its own cannot provide all the answers; it only gives partial insight into the nature of a conflict.

10.3 BASIC ELEMENTS OF A CONFLICT MAP

Conflicts have multiple elements. Each conflict is unique having its own distinguishing features. However, some elements are common to all conflicts. Understanding these common or basic elements of a conflict is essential for constructing a conflict map.

Each conflict has a *history*—how the conflict started, what was its origin, how the conflict evolved, what were the major events in the course of its evolution—these need to be understood. Secondly, conflicts do not emerge in a vacuum. They take place in a *context* or a setting. It is essential to know and be aware of the physical and organisational settings of a conflict.

Thirdly, conflict takes place between groups or individuals, i.e. the *parties*. The primary or main parties are those who are directly opposed to one another, are directly involved in the conflict and are indulging in conflict aggravating behaviour. On the other hand, there might be groups and individuals who have a stake in the conflict—whose lives would be impacted by the outcome of the conflict but who have no direct stake in its outcome—are referred to as secondary parties. Besides, there can be third parties as well. These are conciliators, mediators or conflict resolution professionals who intervene in the conflict with the aim of facilitating resolution. Fourthly, conflicts take place in a *relationship*. The main and secondary parties and the stakeholders in a conflict can have different kinds of relationships between them – alliances, close contacts, broken relationships, confrontation, intermittent links etc. The relationship between the parties must be represented in a conflict map.

Fifthly, a conflict cannot take place without *issues* or factors and points of disagreement. It is thus essential to answer the question as to why does a particular conflict exist? Although, there may be several issues in a given conflict, the key ones need to be pointed out. *Contrasting values* can be one such issue. It must however be noted that these values can be different for different parties either in reality or it might just be a *belief* or a perception. Next, each conflict arises because of some root *causes* and as the conflict progresses, depending on what action is taken, it leads to certain *consequences*. Sometimes it is hard to distinguish between the causes and the consequences. So in a given conflict, there are likely to be some issues which can be seen as both the causes and the effects of the conflict e.g. scarcity of food can be a cause of conflict between two groups but that scarcity may itself be a consequence of normal agricultural activities getting disrupted by the ongoing violence.

Additionally, *goals* are an important aspect of conflict. A goal is an objective of a conflict, which is acknowledged as such by the parties. This may be a *position* that the parties take publicly to make others see and hear. Besides, there are interests involved in conflicts as well. *Interests* are something we really want; these are the motivating factors for the parties. However, satisfaction of *needs* is at the core of resolution of conflicts. Interests and positions can be negotiated but needs are non-negotiable, something we must have e.g. water. In the process of analysing a conflict, it is important to distinguish between what the parties ‘say’ they want (positions or goals), what they ‘really’ want (interests) and what they ‘must’ have (needs). Also, different parties may have different goals and interests.

Further, each conflict has its own *dynamics*. Things constantly change and move in a conflict and thus conflict is a dynamic process. It might seem that there is a deadlock between the parties but the aspects of the context of the conflict keep changing. Mapping too is a dynamic process as it reflects a particular point in a changing context and points towards action.

Finally, conflicts have some purpose or positive consequences for those who are involved in it – these are the *functions* of a conflict. The purpose could be to direct attention to

social injustices that need to be addressed or to promote much needed change in social systems and organisations or at a micro level just to release tension or pent up feelings.

10.4 WAYS OF CONFLICT MAPPING

There is no standard way of mapping a conflict; it can be done in various ways depending on the purpose of the analysis. Here two ways of mapping a conflict have been presented. These have been devised by Paul Wehr and William W. Wilmot and Joyce L. Hocker. Certain elements are common to both these maps but they also have some distinguishing features. They can be used either in combination or can be altered to take care of specific situations.

10.4.1 Paul Wehr

Paul Wehr provided the technique of conflict mapping in his book *Conflict Regulation* written in 1979. According to Wehr, conflict mapping is the “first step in intervening to manage a particular conflict. It gives both the intervener and the conflict parties a clearer understanding of the origins, nature, dynamics, and possibilities for resolution of the conflict.” The main elements of his conflict map are as follows:

Summary Description: This is a maximum one-page description of the conflict.

Conflict history: It describes the origins and major events in the process of evolution of the conflict and its context. It is necessary to distinguish between the context and the relationship among the parties which led to the conflict.

Conflict context: It relates to the scope and character of setting in which the conflict takes place such as geographical boundaries, political structure, etc.

Conflict parties: It includes the units who are directly or indirectly involved in the conflict and have some stake in its outcome. Wehr divides the conflict parties into three kinds – primary, secondary and interested third parties.

Primary parties are those whose goals are or they perceive them to be incompatible. These parties interact directly in pursuit of their respective goals.

Secondary parties are those who are not directly involved in the conflict but who have an indirect stake in the outcome of the conflict. As the conflict moves forward, there is a likelihood that primary parties may become secondary and vice-versa.

Interested third parties are those who have an interest in successfully resolving the conflict.

In addition, it is essential to know the nature of power relations between or among the parties i.e. whether it is symmetrical or asymmetrical, the leadership of the parties, the main goals of the parties, and what is the potential for forming coalitions among them.

Issues: Conflicts develop around one or more issues. These are points of disagreement that emerge from or lead to a decision. They need to be resolved. Issues can be classified into the following on the basis of how they were generated: facts-based, values-based, interests-based and non-realistic. One or a combination of the above issues may be the source of a conflict.

Facts-based issues are concerned with disagreements over ‘what is’. This happens because parties either perceive it like that or it is their judgment.

Values-based issues relate to disagreements over ‘what should be’ as a determinant of a policy decision or a relationship or other sources of conflict.

Interests-based issues are disagreements over ‘who will get what’ when distribution of scarce resources such as economic benefits or power take place.

The origin of *non-realistic issues* does not lie in incompatible perceptions, interests or values. It is rather concerned with the style of interaction of the parties, the quality of their communication or physical discomfort in their immediate physical setting.

Dynamics: The dynamics of a conflict may not always be predictable because there are constant changes taking place in it but they need to be reversed for either regulating a conflict or resolving it. Some of the dynamics are: precipitating events; issue emergence, transformation, proliferation; polarisation; spiralling; and stereotyping and mirror-imaging.

Precipitating events are those that signal the surfacing of the dispute.

Issue emergence, transformation, proliferation are indicative of how issues can change with the progress of the conflict. It is likely that specific issues will become generalised or single issues may multiply into many or impersonal disagreements can turn into interpersonal conflicts.

Polarization occurs when parties seek internal consistency, try to collate with allies and their leaders make an effort to consolidate their positions. This can either lead to greater intensity or to simplification and thus resolution of the conflict.

Spiralling refers to the patterns of escalation or de-escalation of a conflict. There is a likelihood that each party will try to increase or escalate the level of hostility and damage to the other side, which in turn will result in a corresponding increase from the opponent. In the case of de-escalatory spirals, opposing sides may make reciprocal efforts to incrementally reduce the levels of hostility in their interaction.

The process of *stereotyping and mirror-imaging* refers to parties perceiving themselves (self) as ‘good’, having superior qualities while at the same time perceiving or seeing the other party (not-self or mirror-opposite) as ‘bad’ or even ‘evil’, someone who is greedy, aggressive and less than human. This leads to rigid positioning, miscommunication and misinterpretation, which results in the ‘Us versus Them’ syndrome.

Alternative routes to solution(s) of the problem(s): In a given conflict situation, depending on the context, there can be several different ways of resolving a conflict – structural changes, policy changes, behavioural changes, etc. These and other options should be made visible, not just to the parties but also to those who are interested in intervening in the conflict, so that they can suggest new alternatives or a combination of those already identified.

Conflict regulation potential: These refer to the resources, which may be used for limiting, managing or resolving a conflict. Each conflict contains such resources. These resources can be noted on the conflict map. Some of the resources are internal limiting factors, external limiting factors, interested or neutral third parties, and techniques of conflict management.

Internal limiting factors refer to the values and interests that the conflicting parties have in common. It could also include the cross-pressures of multiple commitments of parties.

External limiting factors could mean either a higher authority who can intervene in the conflict or force the parties to agree to a settlement or an intermediary who is from outside the conflict.

Interested or neutral third parties are people who are trusted by all the parties to the conflict and who are in a position to either facilitate communication or do mediation or locate financial resource to take care of problems of scarcity.

The *techniques of conflict management* could range from negotiation to conciliation to facilitation to mediation to breaking down a large conflict into several small manageable conflicts (referred to as ‘fractionating’) so that they can be easily resolved.

Using the map: The map is best used as the initial step in conflict intervention. It helps in forming an informed judgment especially about whether the intervention should continue. If the intervener decides to continue with the intervention, the map can make the conflict seem less complex, making resolution possible. It also helps the parties to take a step back and reflect on the whole conflict process. Finally, the map works for the lay man as well for it simplifies the complex, mysterious and cumbersome process of conflict, making it comprehensible.

10.4.2 William W. Wilmot and Joyce L. Hocker

Wilmot and Hocker devised a guide to focus on several components of conflicts. It comprises of a series of questions. Although Wilmot and Hocker’s device is more of a guide rather than a map, the aim is similar to that of the map: to analyse and understand the nature and dynamics of a conflict. The guide helps to bring into focus specific aspects of the conflict: the orientation to the conflict, the nature of conflict, interests and goals, power, styles of conflict, assessment, personal intervention, and attempted solutions.

This guide is best used in its entirety as then the interplay of conflict elements gets highlighted. For intractable and long-term conflicts, this guide can be of help in assessing the situation. In some other scenario, users might just pick relevant questions from each section of the guide and leave the rest. This can be done either in a facilitated or guided discussion, or as a reflective exercise or in writing. The guide can also be used to construct interviews or a questionnaire that will reveal the dynamics of the conflict. It can thus be used in a variety of contexts but it should be modified as per the task at hand.

Orientation to the conflict

What attitudes toward conflict do participants seem to hold?

Do they perceive conflict as positive, negative, or neutral? How can you tell?

What metaphoric images do conflict participants use? What metaphors might you use to describe the conflict?

What is the cultural background of the participants? What is the cultural context in which the conflict takes place?

How might gender roles, limitations, and expectation be operating in this conflict?

Nature of the conflict:

What are the “triggering events” (immediate causes) that brought the conflict to everyone’s attention?

What is the historical context (underlying causes) of the conflict with regard to 1) the ongoing relationship between the parties and 2) other, external events within which the conflict is embedded?

Do parties have assumptions about conflict that are distinguishable by their choices of conflict metaphors, patterns of behaviour, or clear expressions of their attitudes about conflict?

Conflict elements:

How is the struggle being expressed by each party?

What are the perceived incompatible goals?

What are the perceived scarce resources?

In what ways are the parties interdependent? How are they interfering with one another? How are they cooperating to keep the conflict in motion?

Has the conflict fluctuated between productive and destructive phases? If so, which elements were transformed during the productive cycles? Which elements might be transformed by creative solutions to the conflict?

Interests and goals:

How do the parties clarify their goals? Do they phrase them in individualistic or system terms?

What does each party think the other's goals are? Are they similar or dissimilar to the perceptions of self-goals?

How have the goals been altered from the beginning of the conflict to the present? In what ways are the prospective (these are identified *beforehand*), transactive (these are expressed *during* the conflict), and retrospective (these are expressed *after* the conflict episodes have occurred) goals similar or dissimilar?

What are the content, relational, identity, and process goals? (Content goals relate to the question "*What* does each person want?" These are verifiable, objective issues that people talk about. Relational goals relate to the question "*Who* are we in relationship to each other during our interaction?" These are about parties' influences on each other and define "how each party wants to be treated by the other and the amount of interdependence they desire." Identity or face-saving goals relate to the question "*Who am I* in this interaction?" These have "to do with the needs of people to present themselves positively in interactions and to be treated with approval and respect." Process goals relate to the question "*What communication process* will be used?" They "refer to parties' interests in how the interaction is conducted." The content, relational, identity, and process goals are altogether referred to as CRIP goals.)

How do the CRIP goals overlap with one another?

Which goals seem to be primary at different stages of the conflict?

Are the conflict parties "specializing" in one type or the other? (Parties tend to highlight or "specialize" in only one type of goal and limit themselves to it.)

Are the identity and relational issues the “drivers” of the conflict? (Identity and relational issues is the core but they lie beneath the content and process issues.)

Are any of the goals emerging in different forms? (Goals are likely to emerge in a different form e.g. content goals can surface as relational, identity or procedural goals.)

Is there “shape shifting” of the goals over time in the conflict? (Goals do not stay static; they shift and undergo changes before, during and after the conflict.) How do they change during the prospective, transactive, and retrospective phases?

Power:

What attitudes about their own and the other’s power does each party have? Do they talk openly about power, or is it not discussed?

What do the parties see as their dependency and the other’s dependencies on one another? As an external observer, can you classify some dependencies that they do not list?

What power currencies (particular resources that are valued or needed by others) do the parties see themselves and the other possessing?

From an external perspective, what power currencies of which the participants are not aware seem to be operating?

In what ways do the parties disagree on the balance of power between them? Do they underestimate their own or the other’s influence?

What impact does each party’s assessment of power have on subsequent choices in the conflict?

What evidence of destructive “power balancing” occurs? (When individuals or groups block the exercise of power by another it is destructive while when they exercise appropriate power and let others do the same, it is constructive.)

In what ways do observers of the conflict agree and disagree with the parties’ assessments of their power?

What are some unused sources of power that are present?

Styles of conflict (“Conflict styles are patterned responses, or clusters of behaviour, that people use in conflict.”):

What individual styles (avoidance, accommodation, competition, collaboration, and compromise) did each party use?

How did the individual styles change during the course of the conflict?

How did the parties perceive the other’s style?

In what way did a party’s style reinforce the choices the other party made as the conflict progressed?

Were the style choices primarily symmetrical or complementary?

From an external perspective, what were the advantages and disadvantages of each style within the particular conflict?

Can the overall system be characterised as having a predominant style? What do the participants say about the relationship as a whole?

Do the participants appear to strategise about their conflict choices or remain spontaneous?

How does each party view the other's strategising?

What are the tactical options used by both parties? ("Tactics are individual moves people make to carry out their general approach", such as threat.)

Do the tactical options classify primarily into avoidance, competition, or collaborative tactics?

How are the participant's tactics mutually impacting on the other's choices? How are the tactics interlocking to push the conflict through phases of escalation, maintenance, and reduction?

Assessment:

What rules of repetitive patterns characterise the conflict? ("All conflicts follow patterns, predictable actions of communication and response." Mostly these are circular as it is difficult to pinpoint where the pattern started.)

What triangles and microevents best characterize the conflict? ("When people perceive that they are the lower-power party in a two-person conflict, their typical response is to try to form a coalition with another person who can bolster their power." The third person becomes part of the conflict and thus the triangle. "Microevents are observable, recurring patterns of behaviour that can be analyzed for underlying conflict structure.")

How destructive is the tone of the conflict?

Personal Intervention:

What options for change do the parties perceive?

What philosophy of conflict characterises the system?

What techniques for self-regulation or system-regulation have been used thus far? Which might be used productively by the system?

How might anger be managed more productively?

Attempted solutions:

What options have been explored for managing the conflict?

Have attempted solutions become part of the problem?

Have third parties been brought into the conflict? If so, what roles did they play and what was the impact of their involvement?

Is this conflict a repetitive one, with attempted solutions providing temporary change, but with the overall pattern remaining unchanged? If so, what is that overall pattern?

Can you identify categories of attempted solutions that have not been tried?

10.5 HOW TO MAP A CONFLICT SITUATION?

In order to map a conflict situation, one needs to decide *what* one wants to map, *when* and from what *point of view*. If one tries to map the whole conflict in detail, it will be a time-consuming exercise. Moreover, the result will be large and complex, which will not be helpful. One thus needs to choose a particular moment in a specific situation so that the scope of the mapping exercise is not too wide. It is also advisable to do several maps of the same situation from different viewpoints, especially for students of peace and conflict studies. While doing so, one can ask the question, how different parties could see the same situation differently.

One can be guided by the following questions while doing the mapping:

What are the main parties of this conflict?

What other parties (should include marginalised groups and external parties as well) are involved or connected in some way to the conflict?

What are the relationships between the main and other parties? Are there alliances, close contacts, broken relationship or confrontation between them?

Why does the conflict exist? What is the incompatibility? (These relate to the issues between the parties in the conflict.)

What are the views of the parties in the conflict? (This can indicate the position of the conflicting parties.)

Mapping should be geared towards creating new vistas and possibilities as it is a dynamic exercise. These questions can be helpful in doing so:

What can be done?

Who can best do it?

When is the best moment?

What is needed before and what should be done after?

If the map is being done by an intervening organisation or agency (say a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) or an international organisation), then it is necessary that they put themselves on the map as they are now part of the situation. Moreover, how the intervening organisation is perceived by others can have either positive effect, in that it can open up opportunities and possibilities for working with the parties, or lead to negative consequences, in that the parties can refrain from cooperating with it.

In mapping, certain signs or conventions are used. However, one need not stick to them but can invent their own signs. Given below are some ideas for signs that can be used in mapping:

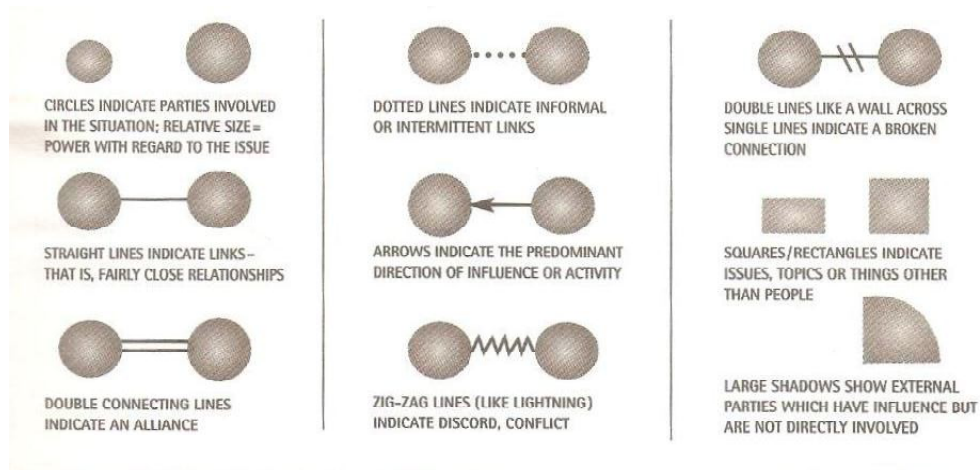
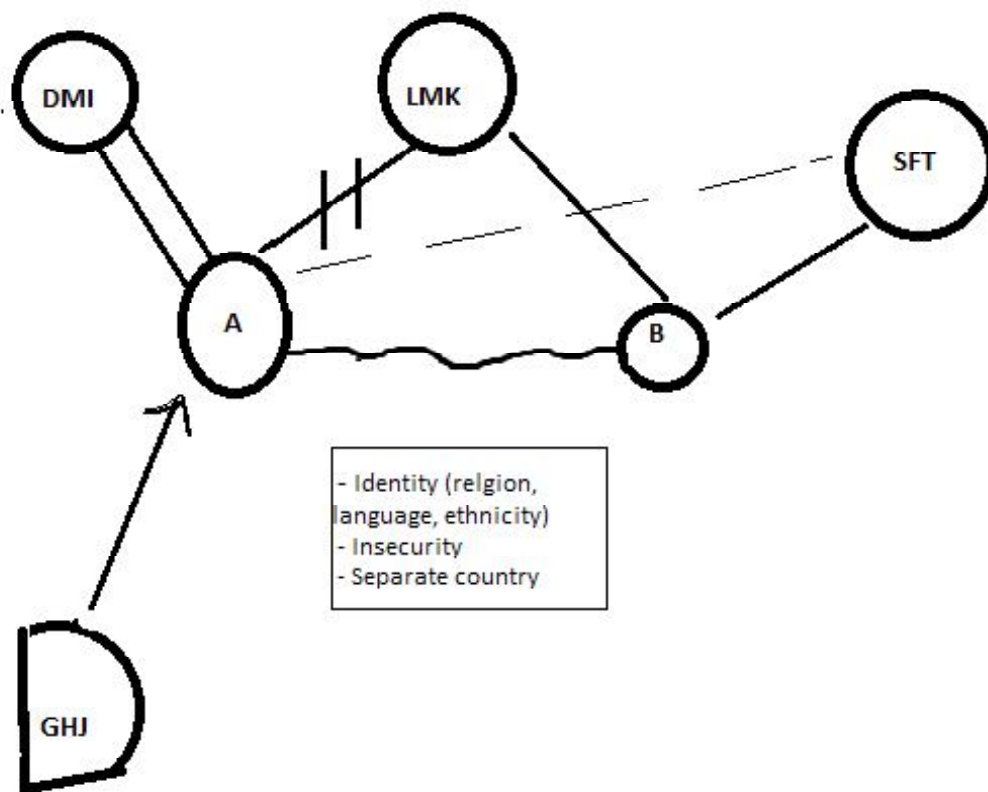


Figure 1: Mapping Conventions

Source: Simon Fisher et al, *Working with Conflict: Skills & Strategies for Conflict* (New York: Zed Books & Responding to Conflict, 2000).

An imaginary conflict situation is described below and a conflict map drawn by using the conventions given above so as to illustrate how to go about mapping a conflict situation.

'A' and 'B' communities have been in conflict for the past twenty-five years in the country 'XYZ'. 'B' is in a minority but enjoys good terms with the neighbouring country 'SFT' as they both belong to the same ethnic group. 'A' belongs to a different ethnic group from 'B', but is dominant in terms of numbers and also occupies power at the centre. 'B' wants to create an independent country by splitting country XYZ. Their contention is that 'A' does not give them the liberty and freedom to practice their language, religion, customs and traditions. 'A' dreads the day when 'B' will be successful in breaking the country and taking away their holy land and resources. This feeling makes 'A' insecure. They thus try to strike back at 'B' with all the resources they have; in fact they invest a lot of money in buying arms and ammunitions from country 'DMI' with which it has a military and strategic alliance. 'B' fears a complete annihilation of their community in genocide like situation and thus built an armed cadre and indulges in guerrilla warfare against 'A', striking at will and killing several people. Country 'GHJ' is ready to invest a lot of money in country 'XYZ' if 'A' and 'B' manage to resolve the conflict amicably. In fact, it is the major donor partner of country 'XYZ' and thus exercises a lot of influence on it. Country 'LMK' tried to mediate between 'A' and 'B' as it enjoyed the goodwill of both the parties for it did not have any selfish stakes in the conflict but burnt its finger in the process and is really displeased with 'A'. 'A' has nothing personal against its neighbour 'SFT' but because of the history of its conflict with 'B', 'A' only has informal links with 'SFT'.



10.6 SUMMARY

Conflicts are complex and confusing both to the participants as well as outsiders. There are multiple elements operating in any given conflict situation. Understanding the dynamics and being able to analyse the elements of the conflict is the first step towards resolution. For this purpose, a conflict map which presents the conflict graphically and shows its main elements can be created. It gives a structured analysis of the conflict at a given point of time. The conflict map provides a snapshot or a quick picture of the conflict and is thus indicative rather than comprehensive. Some of the main elements which must be represented on the conflict map are the parties – major, minor as well as third and external parties, the relationships between them, their relative power, the issues between them, and their interests and goals. There is no standard way of mapping a conflict. Depending on the context and the elements present, one can creatively use signs and conventions to map a conflict. Mapping is a dynamic process which must point towards possibilities, opportunities and action.

10.7 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. What are the purposes, usages and limitations of a conflict map?
2. Discuss the basic elements of a conflict map.
3. Both conflict and mapping are a dynamic process. Elaborate.
4. Describe in detail the main elements of the conflict map as given by Paul Wehr.
5. What are the specific aspects of conflict that the Wilmot & Hocker conflict assessment guide helps to bring into focus? List the main questions of the guide.

6. What are some of the things one must bear in mind while doing a conflict map?
7. Draw a conflict map replete with signs and conventions for a local or grassroots level conflict that you are either a part of or see around you.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Hugh Miall, Oliver Ramsbotham & Tom Woodhouse., *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1999.

Paul Wehr., *Conflict Regulation*, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 1979

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Paul Wehr., "Conflict Mapping", in Guy Burgess & Heidi Burgess (eds.), *Beyond Intractability*, Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado, Boulder, 2006, http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/conflict_mapping/

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UNIT 11 NARRATIVES/ STORY TELLING

Structure

11.1 Introduction

Aims and Objectives

11.2 Understanding Narratives and Stories

11.3 Narrative Analysis: Definition, Origin and Features

11.4 Narrative Analysis Approach with respect to Conflict Situations

11.4.1 Tools for Analysis

11.4.2 Narrative Theories

11.4.3 Decisions regarding Data Collection

11.4.4 Practicalities of Data Collection & Data Analysis

11.4.5 Understanding the Interviewee's Perception: Questions for the Researcher

11.4.6 Coding

11.4.7 Methods of Narrative Analysis

11.5 Summary

11.6 Terminal Questions

Suggested Readings

11.1 INTRODUCTION

Human beings are inherently storytellers. We tell stories all the time. We give meaning to our lives through the stories we tell. One just needs to touch the right pulse or strike the right chord to get stories out of others. This is true of the field of conflict resolution as well. If we want to understand and address why people choose violence, what are the causes of conflict, why people are traumatised etc., we can make use of the story telling technique to get at the root of the problem. When a party narrates his/her story about a conflict, it is his/her version of reality, which may be in contradiction to the other party. Thus the job of the conflict resolution expert here is to find out the overlapping parts of the story and separate the truth from the fiction. This process will allow the expert to bring the disputing parties to a stage where they can at least hear and understand each other's stories and hopefully the worldviews. Storytelling can thus be a powerful tool for conflict resolution.

Aims and Objectives

After going through this Unit, you will be able to understand

- The meaning of narratives and narrative analysis;
- The features of narrative analysis; and
- The approach, theories and methods of narrative analysis.

11.2 UNDERSTANDING NARRATIVES AND STORIES

Nations, governments, societies, organisations, communities and individuals construct stories or narratives. Narratives refer “to a family of approaches to diverse kinds of texts, which have in common a storied form.” Narratives are a phenomenon as well as a method. They have sequence and consequence – events are selected, organised, connected, evaluated and made meaningful, keeping the audience in mind. They may often take the form of a moral message. Narrative accounts are characterised by:

- An element of transformation i.e. change over time;
- Action and characters, which may be real or fictional; and
- Plot line.

Narratives can be viewed as a social product, as a form of social interaction as well as an interpretive device. It is a social product, produced by people in the context of specific social, historical and cultural locations. It is a form of social interaction as people tell stories about narratives. People represent themselves and their worlds, to themselves and to others, through narratives, making it an interpretive device.

Although the terms ‘narratives’ and ‘stories’ are generally used interchangeably, there is difference between the two. ‘Story’ is used to describe what the actor tells and the ‘narrative’ is the researcher’s account. “Storytelling interprets the world and experience in it. Narratives are storied ways of knowing and communicating.”

11.3 NARRATIVE ANALYSIS: DEFINITION, ORIGIN AND FEATURES

Narrative analysis is an in-depth analysis of a chronologically told story. Here the focus is on how elements are sequenced, why some elements are evaluated differently from others, how the past shapes perceptions of the present, how the present shapes perceptions of the past, and how both shape perceptions of the future. Narrative analysis focuses on “the ways in which people make and use stories to interpret the world.” It is best used for exploration of ethical, moral and cultural ambiguities.

The study of narratives originally began with the study of languages. Later narratives were studied as a part of poetics and semantics. Research interest in narratives emerged from several contemporary movements wherein there was a shift in the social sciences away from positivism and the master narratives of theory e.g. Marxism, emancipation efforts of women etc. However, in recent times there is a lot of interest in narratives, especially in the post-modern and feminist studies as well as in conflict analysis and resolution. With the development of computer software, analysing narratives today is far easier than it was earlier.

Narrative analysis has several features. It is a flexible approach which can be used with both written and oral communications in different settings. It initially addresses questions like what was said, who said it and to whom it was said and then goes deeper into the causes (why it was said), explanation, meaning behind it and effects of the spoken word. Moreover, it addresses and analyses nuances, innuendos, emotional and non-verbal behaviour as well. Here the informants are active participants in the process as the

researcher treats them as the experts of their stories. The methods used for narrative analysis are interpretive and reflective. Depending on the objectives of the research, the analysis can be as fine-tuned as needed.

One is likely to encounter some problems in narrative analysis. First of all, narrative analysis relies on interpretation by both – the researcher and the participant. They create meaning together, so it has to be a joint exercise. Secondly, the participant can keep on adding information to the story, thereby forcing the researcher to continue with the analysis. Thirdly, validity has a limited application here. It is applicable only within the specific narrative as that narrative is true for that specific participant. Finally, reliability usually lies only within the specialised knowledge of the participant telling the story.

Narrative analysis is used in several disciplines. However, the definitions of narratives in different disciplines vary: in social history and anthropology, narratives refer to an entire life story; in socio-linguistics, narratives refer to specific stories organised around characters, setting and plot; and in psychology and sociology, narratives encompass extended accounts of lives.

11.4 NARRATIVE ANALYSIS APPROACH WITH RESPECT TO CONFLICT SITUATIONS

Narrative analysis approach in conflict situations is composed of two categories:

- Tools for analysis; and
- Narrative theories about people and situations in conflict.

11.4.1 Tools for Analysis

Inputs with regard to comprehending narratives in conflict situations have come from myriad sources. These can be seen as considerations or tools that need to be examined in order to proceed with the analysis. There are six such considerations:

1. *Worldview model*: This can be used in two ways – for studying the narrative and for studying a person's approach to conflict. Worldviews can be used to study narratives. In 1993, Martin Cortazzi presented four models for studying narratives. They are as follows:
 - Sociological – the social context of the telling of the story;
 - Socio-linguistic – the ways in which stories arise;
 - Psychological – the process of understanding, recalling and summarizing stories; and
 - Anthropological – how the structure, function, and performance of stories vary across cultures.

These models tell us about a particular aspect of the narrative. The researcher must choose the one that best fits the objectives of the research. Sometimes, however, an interdisciplinary approach may be needed, especially in conflict resolution where it may not be possible to understand the complexities of conflicts through a single model.

Worldviews also tell us about a person's approach or orientation towards conflict.

Antaki looked into everyday talk as a window into a person's worldview. He made "two observations about explanations—that they have the power to challenge social realities, and that they seem to be implicated in changes in people's behaviour." Explanations can be given by people in two domains – the public and the private. In the public domain, people explain the event and their place in it while in the private one, they give reasons for why things happen the way they do, their feelings about what happened and how their behaviour was influenced by the event. The descriptions given in the private domain reflect the individual's worldview.

2. *Voice and position in the conflict*: Genette laid emphasis on the context of the story in terms of whether it was told in the first, second or third person. Voice can also indicate the position of the speaker: the story can be narrated by one of the characters or by someone from outside who was not part of the story. The voice theory has two implications as far as analysis is concerned: people who hear the narrative also take part in its writing and rewriting (narratives may have unintended audiences as well) and secondly, the storyteller's usage of the tense of the voice shows how closely s/he sees himself or herself to the conflict. The position of the storyteller gives hint to the researcher as to whom s/he should interview.
3. *Timing*: The party's perception of 'time' in terms of whether the story is told in past, present or future tense is crucial to the understanding of the narrative. Genette stressed on this aspect. Another aspect about timing relates to whether the story is narrated as a single event, or it is a story about the same incident over a period of time, or it is a combination of different stories over a period of time. To analyse this aspect, the researcher will have to pay attention to the order, duration and frequency of the narrative. Toolan outlines the need to look for these factors: the order in which things are told; the duration of the text, summary, and scene; the frequency with which a single story incident is told; and how long after the incident took place the story was told.
4. *Organization of the story*: According to Riessman, parts of the story are organised by their function. Bell sees stories being organised according to abstract thinking, the orientation to time and place, how the person sees the conflict evolving and the resolution of the story. Organisation of the story indicates to the researcher how the story moves through time, what the experiences of the individual are and how the teller sees his or her image in history (as an active agent or a bystander or as a victim). People also organise their stories around rules, which tell them about not just the conflict but also about the rules of the society.

Martin has given another interesting perspective with regard to organisation of the story. He says that "the reader is always looking backward as well as forward, actively restructuring the past in light of each new bit of information." This is particularly relevant for conflict narratives because, according to Martin, "We read events forward (the beginning will cause the end) and meaning backward (the end, once known, causes us to identify its beginning)." However, the researcher needs to be aware of the fact that there is no one true interpretation of historical events.

Brown and Yule talk of the organisation of stories on the basis of language. Languages can be of two types: transactional and interactional. Transactional refers to

the expression of content or substance while interactional refers to the expression of social relations and personal attitudes. The interactional language is relevant for the understanding of underlying issues in conflict. Brown and Yule have also discussed schemata or scheme as the basis of organising stories. Background knowledge about a conflict is critical for understanding it. However, it is wrong to assume that background knowledge and information will be the same for everybody especially for cross-cultural conflicts.

5. *Sensitivity to culture*: Stories and narratives emerge within a particular culture and therefore they must be understood in the context of that culture. Swearingen is of the opinion that in different cultural contexts, there are differences between what is said and what is meant, between text and interpretation, between truth and falsehood, and between history and fiction. The cultural meanings of these may not be clear when one studies narratives outside one's own culture. However, this should not dissuade the researcher from studying cross-cultural narratives. S/he should in fact make sincere efforts to understand the nuances of another culture.

Scheub views the cultural aspect in terms of experience. "Stories must be understood by the audience in terms of their common experience, the societal norms, and the external reality." When people listen to stories, they should be able to relate it to something in their past experience and to the cultural norms they are accustomed to.

Duranti's cross-cultural perspective on narratives is related to speech events. According to Duranti, narratives are situated in the cultural context of the teller. The definition of speaker and listener is also culturally defined. Therefore, the researcher must take the perspectives of the tellers of and participants in the narrative into consideration while doing the analysis. However, it should not be assumed that any community is a homogeneous one; there may be different perspectives even within one community.

6. *The method of eliciting a narrative*: The researcher should ask open-ended and broad-based questions to the respondent as this gives them the opportunity to narrate their entire story. Here the focus should be on the person-centred feature of the account and not on whether the story is an accurate one or not. Balance has to be maintained in terms of what the researcher wants to ask about and what the respondent wants to say – respondents may go off the track and say irrelevant things, thus this balance is important. Mishler is of the view that interviewee and interviewer together construct meaning during the interaction process, which is the main purpose of narrative analysis. The researcher must draw out and construct meaning during the process of the interview itself. If this is not possible, then the meaning should be extracted after the interview. This can be done with the help of carefully crafted questions and listening attentively to the answers.

11.4.2 Narrative Theories

Narrative theory owes its emergence to several disciplines and is still evolving. The telling and listening of stories is influenced by gender, race, ethnicity, age, and class. However, these are still being explored. Theories, models and frameworks are still being developed to meet the needs of researchers working in the field of peace and conflict studies. Here, we explore three theoretical underpinnings with regard to narratives:

- connections between the storyteller's truth and fiction,

- differences in what the various types of narratives tell us, and
- different things that narratives can tell us about the mind.

Narratives contain elements of truth as well as fiction. The teller of the story wants the listener to believe that the story is true. However, any sign of artificiality or things that seem out of the ordinary make the listener distrust the story. When somebody tells a story out of order, the listener feels that the story has been manipulated. The narrative must seem to be consistent to both the teller and the narrator, and then only it will appear to be true. In conflict resolution, the stories of the conflicting parties are their version of the event. If the third party disbelieves one part of the story, s/he is likely to ignore the whole story. In such situations, the researcher needs to examine the factual accounts of the story.

According to Richter, tellers of stories use ‘prolepses’ (flashbacks) and ‘analepses’ (flash-forwards) in their stories. These are used consciously and intentionally. The teller chooses to use them in order to emphasise certain parts and to convince the listener about the importance of that particular part of the story.

Different types of narratives can tell us different things about a person or a conflict. One way to observe this difference is to compare natural and artificial speech and narratives. Grimshaw distinguishes between four different types of narrative data: speech observed in natural settings, speech observed in artificial settings, elicited speech in response to direct inquiry, and historical and/or literary materials. One way of analysing narratives could be to unearth from the participants as much of “natural” speech as possible by undertaking the study from an emic or insider perspective. Speech can be observed in natural settings by interviewing the participant in the field, meeting them in their natural surroundings and letting them determine the course of the conversation.

Another method of distinguishing between narratives is to compare between the face-to-face interviews that result in real-time speech with the written text that is second-hand and which has been refined before being given to the interviewer. The latter leaves no room for observing non-verbal behaviours and emotions. Spontaneous questions from the researcher are more likely to fetch true narratives from the interviewee.

Teun A. van Dijk distinguishes between artificial and natural narratives. Artificial narratives are an art form that have a constructed nature and occur within a storytelling context such as folktale and drama. Their purpose mostly is to entertain. Natural narratives on the other hand are everyday conversation, stories that people tell each other about their personal experiences. These tend to be more factual. According to van Dijk, actions within narratives occur in two different ways: the doing is real and factual, and the interpretation of the doing is subjective. In the case of conflict narratives, the doing is in the actions of the person in the conflict. The doing can be interpreted jointly by the person in the conflict and the researcher, either during the interview or after the transcription and the coding process is complete, by rechecking with the interviewee and triangulating his or her findings.

Narratives also tell us about the human mind and its product. Chafe views narratives as a window into the content of the mind as well as its “ongoing operations”. This can provide a sneak view into human biases and their formation. Chafe opines that human mind “does not record the world, but rather creates it” as per the cultural and individual expectation. Besides, the mind also processes events that are not in line with these expectations. However, the mind needs certain basics to operate – space, time, social

context and ongoing events. Chafe observes “that different people may supply very different narratives of a physically identical input.” This is true of parties in conflict and thus has a bearing on conflict resolution.

Connections can also be made between what is said and what is meant by what is said. According to Draper, “It is widely recognized that the meanings of sentences can depend in part on the ‘context’ and that things may be left unsaid if the hearer can fill them in.” The speaker or writer is likely to leave empty spaces in the conversation, if they think that the reader or listener can fill in those details.

11.4.3 Decisions Regarding Data Collection

Researchers wishing to use narrative analysis need to make certain decisions about how to proceed with data collection. They essentially need to make these five decisions:

1. Whether to conduct multiple interviews with the same person over time or conduct one interview with each person and ask him or her to reflect forward and backward in time?
2. Should the researcher lead the conversation and ask the interviewee to address specific points and questions or should s/he let the interviewee determine the course of the discussion?
3. Should the researcher conduct narrative interview in an artificial setting or should s/he let the interviewee determine a natural setting for themselves for the interview? The researcher should weigh the advantages and disadvantages of doing so.
4. Should the researcher study what someone involved in the conflict states publicly or should s/he study things that are said privately in everyday conversation?
5. Lastly, should the researcher question the interviewee when s/he notices inconsistencies in the story or should s/he wait for the interviewee to mention those inconsistencies on their own, as an indicator of their importance?

11.4.4 Practicalities of Data Collection and Data Analysis

What method of analysis is chosen for a research project will depend on the type of information needed and the level of accuracy required. Most models argue that the research should be conducted in natural settings wherein the interviewee should be allowed to speak in his or her own language. Secondly, some link needs to be made between the narrative and the context in which it emerged. Next, some effort needs to be made to understand the worldview of the interviewee. Further, the emphasis should be on the interviewee’s interpretation of the data and not on exact recall of the data.

In narrative analysis, the researcher adopts a qualitative approach and uses semi-structured interviews. During the interviews, the researcher is more of a listener (but an attentive one) rather than a speaker. He says very little and that too with the aim of carrying forward the conversation.

Other practical suggestions with regard to data collection in narrative analysis are that the researcher should tape the narrative interview, as this will facilitate an in-depth analysis; the interview should be transcribed as accurately as possible (the degree of accuracy will depend on the researcher and the needs of the project), to allow for a deeper understanding; and the researcher should decide how much information is enough to carry

forward the research exercise and finally conclude it. Listening to the interview again and again is a crucial step which makes understanding possible. A researcher can do so at various stages: while conducting the interview, later on the tape, while transcribing it, and reading it after the transcription has been done.

Which of the two will be the unit of analysis – ‘words’ or ‘themes’, is a question that needs to be answered before the coding process. There are advantages and disadvantages of choosing one over the other. If the researcher chooses to go for ‘words’ as the unit of analysis, then s/he runs the risk of losing track of the general pattern of thought. However, the advantage is that s/he can determine “which words are common to the language of the interviewee, which words the interviewee uses to describe things, and how often these words are used in everyday conversation.” If the researcher decides to use thematic coding, s/he may lose some intricacies of the language, but may be able to gain a broader understanding of issues that are vital to the interviewee. As far as themes are concerned, they can be both inductive and deductive in narrative analysis. They will emerge first from the ‘focal point of the project’ and secondly, from the ‘issues’ that have been raised by the interviewee during the interview process.

Whatever method is used for narrative analysis, they must all go through these steps: select and organise documents, compose field notes and choose interview transcripts for examination. Narrative data is of no value on its own; it has to be interpreted in order to be meaningful.

11.4.5 Understanding the Interviewee’s Perception: Questions for the Researcher

The following conflict analysis related questions framed by Linda M. Johnston in the chapter ‘Narrative Analysis’ of the book, *Doing Research: Methods of Inquiry for Conflict Analysis* guide the researcher in understanding and studying the interviewee’s story:

1. Who are the primary and secondary parties to the conflict, and how does the interviewee situate him- or herself in the conflict?
2. What are the parties’ issues and needs?
3. How do the parties seek to resolve their conflict?
4. How do the parties link the causal and resultant factors of the conflict?
5. How do the parties explain their motivations for actions?
6. What values do the parties discuss and which values are implied by what they say?
7. How does the interviewee see the conflict situated in time and place?
8. What resources are committed toward the conflict?
9. Are there any evident turning points or critical junctures in the conflict?
10. Are there inconsistencies in the narrative and does the interviewee discuss the inconsistencies?
11. Does the narrative match behaviours observed by the researcher?

12. How does the interviewee see the conflict being resolved or what does he or she view as the best-case scenario?
13. Are there latent aspects to the conflict that have yet to erupt?
14. Are there cycles apparent in the conflict and, if so, at what stage is the conflict in now?
15. Will the interviewee's goals be met by the resolution of the conflict?

The above-mentioned questions can be used for coding the information collected from the interviewee.

11.4.6 Coding

Coding refers to translating answers into numerical values or assigning numbers to the various categories of a variable to be used in data analysis. Questions can be coded before the fieldwork or they can be coded after the fieldwork. However, as far as narrative analysis is concerned, questions are post-coded. This is so because the questions posed by the researcher to the interviewee are of open-ended type. In this case, answers to the open-ended questions are placed in different categories and then each category is assigned a code. The code categories are mutually exclusive and uni-dimensional. Coding is useful as coded data can be easily analysed with the help of computer software.

In order to make the coding process reliable, codes could be developed by a team of researchers and the coding could be done by independent coders. The coders could then compare their findings (each coder will have his or her own biases and notions depending on the cultural background, which will reflect in the codes generated by them and how they carry out the coding process), which will further facilitate deeper understanding of the narratives.

11.4.7 Methods of Narrative Analysis

The way narratives are defined (different disciplines define narratives differently) determines the method of analysis that will be used for them. Various types of methods of narrative analysis are present but their usage is dependent on the aims and objectives of the research project. However, the boundaries between the various types are not demarcated clearly and thus they can be used in combination too. The methods that will be discussed here are: thematic analysis, structural analysis, interactional analysis, performative analysis and contextual analysis.

In thematic analysis, the emphasis is on 'what' is said (content) rather than on 'how' it is said. The philosophy of a language is thus of relevance here as it helps understand the meaning of 'what' is said. Here narratives are organised by themes and illustrated through cases. This approach is useful when one has to analyse a number of cases – the researcher can look for common thematic elements in the narratives of the various participants. The context in which the narrative emerges is not an element of analysis.

In structural analysis, the focus is on the 'way' in which a story is told – the teller selects particular events in order to make a story sound real and true. However, the thematic content is also looked into. Here language is an important element of analysis. Structural analysis is not suitable for large numbers but is useful for detailed case studies and for comparing narrative accounts. Nonetheless, researchers must be wary of applying the

structural approach very strictly as it can “de-contextualise narratives by ignoring historical, interactional and institutional factors.”

Interactional analysis stresses on the process of dialogue that takes place between the teller and the listener. This approach is useful for studying relationships where the teller and listener jointly participate in conversation such as courts of law, classrooms, social service organisations, medical services etc. “In interactional analysis, attention to thematic content and narrative structure are not abandoned, but interest shifts to storytelling as a process of co-construction, where teller and listener create meaning collaboratively.” Interactional analysis looks at speech in all its complexity – pauses, breaks and other aspects of talk. However, the non-verbal gestures and gazes get lost in the transcription.

Performative analysis goes beyond the spoken word and sees storytelling as a performance – what the teller ‘does’ through language and gesture. There could be different kinds of performative approaches ranging from drama to narrative as praxis, i.e. a form of social action. The researcher can analyse different features here: the characters and their positioning in a story, the conditions of performance and the setting of the story performed, the dialogue between the characters, the response of the audience and the interpreter. This approach is applicable to studies of communication practices and identity construction.

Contextual analysis focuses on narratives as a social phenomenon that varies from context to context. Thus, data collected from different contexts will also vary. If a researcher collects data on one theme from similar kinds of respondents from different social contexts, the analysis will show differences in how they perceive things. In the same way, differences can be noticed when data is collected on one topic from the same respondents but at different points in their career. Here, contextual analysis will shed light on how the development process has changed people’s thinking and perception.

11.5 SUMMARY

Storytelling is an innate quality of human beings, which can be useful for understanding and resolving conflicts. Narratives are a social phenomenon as well as a method, which can be analysed by using different tools and theories. Narrative analysis is a flexible and in-depth approach that looks at not just ‘what’ was said but also at ‘how’ and ‘why’ it was said and what effect it had on the listener. It specifically looks into the meaning behind ‘what’ was said. Here interpretation plays a key role. The meaning is co-created with the joint participation of the researcher and the interviewee. There are several systematic methods for data analysis – thematic, structural, interactional, performative, and contextual.

11.6 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. What are narratives? Discuss its features.
2. How are narratives different from stories?
3. What is narrative analysis? Describe the context in which it emerged.
4. Explain the features of narrative analysis.
5. Illustrate the considerations that need to be examined in order to proceed with narrative analysis.

6. Explore the theoretical underpinnings with regard to narratives.
7. What decisions need to be made by the researcher before starting data collection for narrative analysis?
8. Discuss the practical aspects of data collection and data analysis in the study of narratives.
9. Define coding. How can the coding process be made more reliable in narrative analysis?
10. Discuss the methods of narrative analysis.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Daniel Druckman., *Doing Research: Methods of Inquiry for Conflict Analysis*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2005.

Victor Jupp., (ed.), *The Sage Dictionary of Social Research Methods*, London, New Delhi, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2006.

UNIT 12 DIVERSE LEVELS OF ANALYSIS

Structure

12.1 Introduction

Aims and Objectives

12.2 Understanding Analysis, Levels and the Purpose of Analysing Levels

12.3 Conflict: Levels of Analysis

12.3.1 Macro & Micro Levels

12.3.2 Individual, Societal, International & Global Levels

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12.4 Violence: Levels of Analysis

12.5 Peace: Levels of Analysis

12.6 Peace-building: Levels of Analysis

12.6.1 Levels of Actors and Their Approaches to Peace-building

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12.8 Terminal Questions

Suggested Readings

12.1 INTRODUCTION

Conflicts can take place at different levels—some can be small and take place between two individuals—while some others can be big and take place between two or more countries. Yet other level of conflict could be neither too big nor too small but in between them such as between two communities.

Scholars of peace and conflict studies have taken different approaches to analysing the levels of conflict and its related aspects as it involves a wide range of phenomena, from families to societies to nations, all having multiple elements. Some analyse it from a macro level while others take a micro approach to analysis and yet some others study conflict processes that cut across the macro and micro level and shadings in between them. The succeeding sections will deal with a general level of analysis mostly while pointing out in some places the micro levels of analysis.

Aims and Objectives

After going through this Unit, you will be able to understand

- the meaning and purpose of analysis;
- the diverse levels of analysis of conflict from multiple perspectives; and
- the levels of analysis of violence, peace and peace-building.

12.2 UNDERSTANDING ANALYSIS, LEVELS AND THE PURPOSE OF ANALYSING LEVELS

Analysis is the process of examination that leads to better understanding. Conflict analysis is a practical process of examining and understanding the reality of a conflict from a variety of perspectives. This understanding forms the basis on which strategies can be developed and actions planned.

Levels are explanatory categories or planes at which we can clarify the various phenomena. It does not necessarily mean stages as they are indicative of a hierarchy. Levels could be of different kinds: small to medium to big or individual to collective to international or intra-personal to inter-personal to inter-group to international or immediate system to intermediate system to the broader system or local to regional to national to global etc.

It is pertinent to point out here that the different levels should not be seen as strictly separate from each other for they all influence and get influenced by each other. Events taking place at a local level can have an impact on national and even the global level. On the other hand, laws and policies framed at the national level can have a bearing on the lives of people at the local level. Therefore, studying and analysing the different levels in a wholesome way is important as all the levels are systematically linked with one another and they impact each other. However, in another sense there is some difference between the various levels e.g. the issues and dynamics at the national level may be different from those at the local level. Thus it is generally not necessary to include all levels in an analysis but it is appropriate to identify the focus for the analysis – at what level is it being done?

12.3 CONFLICT: LEVELS OF ANALYSIS

Conflicts take place at various levels and thus they should be analysed at various levels as that is helpful in establishing linkages between these levels.

12.3.1 Macro & Micro Levels

Conflicts can take place either at the macro level or micro level or in between the two levels. Macro means large-scale, worldwide and broader level such as wars between two or more countries. Micro conflicts are those that take place between two individuals or between small groups.

Most scholars working in the field of peace and conflict studies too work either at the macro level or the micro level but sometimes they try to generalise back and forth between them. Lately some scholars, however, have concentrated on studying the level that falls between the macro and the micro. Conflict resolution practitioners too work either with large groups and organisations or with small groups and at the level of inter-personal relationships.

12.3.2 Individual, Societal, International & Global Levels

In 1959, Kenneth Waltz emphasised that the causes of conflict could be found at three different but interlinked levels of the social strata – the individual, the state and the international system. Other scholars expanded the three levels to include various sub-state or intra-state groups and supra-national or supra-state groups. Thus the causes and sources of conflict could be analysed at the following levels:

- The individual belief systems, instincts, personalities and psychological processes;
- The societal factors such as government, economic exchange and national ideology;
- The international system structured by power differentials, alliances and trade; and
- The global or ecological level.

The individual level consists of both intra-personal and inter-personal conflict. The factors that operate at the individual level are biological, physiological and psychological. The societal level includes organisations, which includes families, small groups, institutions, and businesses. It also includes communities, ethnic groups, and cultural groups. At the societal level, the factors that operate are political, economic, and socio-cultural. The international level includes conflicts on a national scale that provoke involvement of external national actors. These conflicts could be of a political, military, economic, or social nature. The global and ecological level focuses on conflicts that affect or damage the earth's environment. Every conflict is located in one or more of these levels. Thus, these levels of analysis not just depict where the conflict is located but also where to respond to it.

While determining the level of a conflict, contextual aspects such as geographical setting and boundaries, political and economic structures, communication patterns, decision-making entities etc. should be identified within each level. In the post-Cold War era, conflicts are of a complex nature and thus in defining the context of a conflict, it is essential to determine the political and economic structures which are most often inextricably linked. In times of conflict, extra-legal war economies operate parallel to legal economies. These war economies are created and sustained to fund political agenda and people running such economies have vested interest in keeping the conflict going on. In such a scenario, a dual political-economic intervention is a must; neither a purely political nor economic strategies to end the conflict will work. Thus both political and economic factors need to be part of the analysis as one cannot be understood without the other.

No matter at what level a conflict occurs, factors operating at each of the four explanatory levels may be impacting conflict, in varying degrees. So if the conditions of a conflict are multi-level, then efforts to deal with it or peace-building initiatives must be multi-level as well.

The realist, liberal and socialist traditions differ in their views with regard to why conflicts take place at the systemic and state levels. The realist tradition believes that states are key actors who behave rationally to advance their security (through armaments) and wealth. As per the realist paradigm, conflicts at the international level are a consequence of three inter-related features: the uneven and chaotic nature of geopolitics, the constant changes in the power of the military and the changing objectives of the states. The liberal approach is critical of the realist approach for failing to predict conflict. Peace, according to it, should rest on the twin pillars of democracy and economic cooperation (free trade). Both the realist and the liberal approach see states as rational actors pursuing their objectives. But these fail to assess as to how decisions are made. Decisions are a result of the relationship between domestic forces within the state and the leadership of the state. As per the Marxist view, those who control capital also influence political decision-making. However, this is excessively deterministic as political domination cannot be reduced to economic tendencies. An alternative perspective to this is the view that individuals engage in conflict because of their values and personalities. At the individual level policies are formulated and decisions reached on the basis of personal rationality,

worldview, prejudice and narrow-mindedness. Leaders may however, over-estimate or under-estimate the strength of the opposition.

Concentrating on just one level of analysis tends to bound it within a particular discipline, for instance, the study of states and international level falls within the realm of international relations, while the study of the individual level is confined to social psychology and the study of societal factors like government and economic exchange are dealt with within the disciplines of political science and economics respectively. However, when all the levels are introduced jointly, they highlight their respective strengths in a comparative mode. Moreover, they also highlight the fact that peace and conflict studies have borrowed from various social science disciplines.

12.3.3 Micro Issues to Systemic Concerns

Conflicts can be analysed from the point of structural component. Structures have levels and those could become the focus of analysis. Marie Dugan's model, the nested paradigm of conflict foci (see *Figure 1*), helps us to do just that. The model takes into consideration both, the immediate, narrower, micro-issues as well as the broader, systemic concerns. Normally, when conflict takes place at the micro-level, human tendency is to do firefighting at that level and focus on the immediate cause of the conflict. But Dugan advocated going beyond the 'immediate issues' and looking at the 'relationship' aspect. Further she also identified the 'broader systemic' problem.

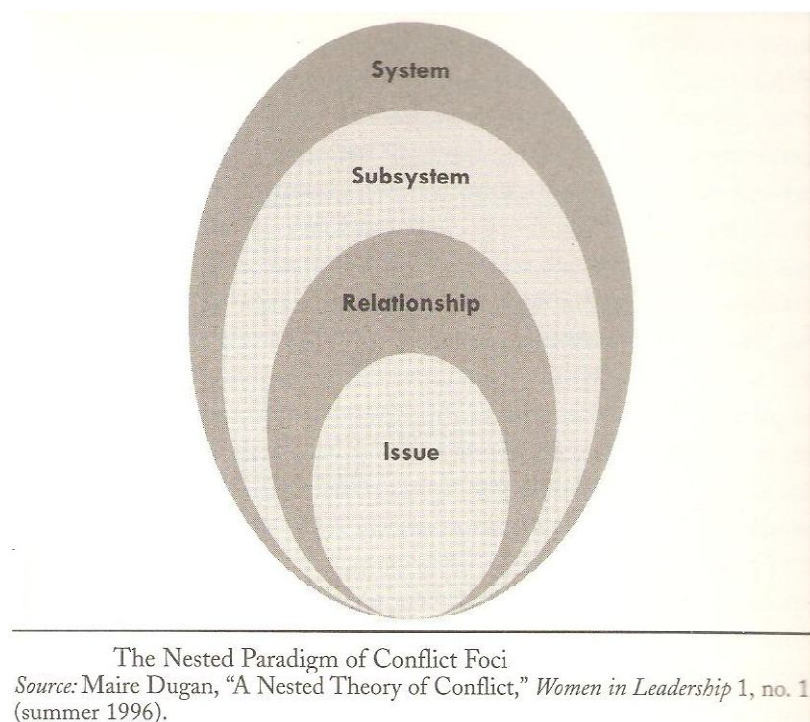


Figure 1: The Nested Paradigm

Let us try to understand this through an example. A poor person, who resides in a small town, needs a ration card. He goes to the circle office with the necessary documents and applies for the same. He does not get a ration card even after the passage of six months. He goes to the circle office to check as to why he has not received his ration card. The clerk at the circle office demands money to even check where his card is stuck. The person has no money and thus pleads for his case but his pleas fall on deaf ears. He tries his luck with the clerk a couple of more times but eventually gives up after he is publicly humiliated and rebuked. In spite of being eligible to receive benefits from the

public distribution system, he fails to avail the benefits of the same.

In the above case, the ‘immediate’ issue is the non-receipt of ration card due to corrupt practices of a clerical staff. The interaction between the circle office clerk and the poor person constitutes the ‘relationship’ realm. The poor person gives up thinking that nothing can be done as the whole society is corrupt and things will change only when the ‘system’ brings in changes in the way it functions and perpetuates corruption (through laws or other policy measures). But this is going to take time. So should he just sit until then and bide his time or is there something that can be done to deal with the immediate crisis? Marie Dugan addressed this question by introducing the ‘subsystem’ in her model.

The subsystem is an intermediate level between the immediate and the systemic level. It is “a middle-range *locus* of activity that connects the other levels in the system.” In the above example, it is possible to introduce measures at the subsystem level to counteract corruption and contain it. Here the subsystem level is the immediate system where the poor person resides, which in this case is the small town. Some strategies could be introduced at this level to check corruption. The poor man could approach some civil society groups or a non-governmental organisation with his grievances; these groups could take up the case of the poor man and rally behind him. They could seek information from the circle office by filing a Right to Information application or they could approach higher level officers with their complaint. The residents of the town could be engaged in concrete activities such as protest marches, dharnas, strikes, signature campaigns etc. Through these measures, the immediate issue of non-receipt of ration card could be brought to the forefront and dealt with while engaging in activities to address systemic corruption.

Conflicts can be manifested at different levels and thus conflict resolution strategies should also focus at all these levels. While initiating peace-building, these four levels can become the levels at which the response needs to be targeted. The nested paradigm focuses on the need to simultaneously address the immediate concerns, the relationship issues and the larger systemic issues in a conflict. The immediate issue is important but if we fail to concentrate on the structural issues, the immediate conflict will keep recurring. The subsystem is a useful site for intervention where both the micro and systemic issues can be addressed simultaneously.

12.4 VIOLENCE: LEVELS OF ANALYSIS

Violence prevents people from reaching their full human potential. Johan Galtung identified three different types of violence: structural, overt or direct or secondary, and cultural. Structural or systemic violence is caused by structures, institutions and systems that deprive people of their rights and the ability to satisfy basic human needs. Institutions, systems and policies meet some people’s needs and rights at the expense of others, thus propagating violence. Structural violence tends to threaten lives and livelihoods. It denies needs in one or more of the following areas: need for economic resources; need for safety, respect, participation; and need for identity, culture, and religious values.

Structural violence can deny needs or discriminate at three different levels: individual, communities (includes groups) and nations. At all these levels, violence could take place in one or more of the three areas: political (repression), economic (exploitation) and cultural (alienation). For example, at the individual level, the need for freedom can be repressed, the need for well-being can be exploited and the need for identity can be alienated. The same is applicable to communities and nations as well.

Overt violence refers to verbal or non-verbal direct strikes (physical and psychological) against others. This form is the most feared as it intends to cause actual harm. It is also referred to as secondary violence. Most often overt violence is a result of structural violence as it leads to shame, humiliation and despair among the victims. People who are unable to satisfy their needs and rights through constructive means end up creating a cycle of violence. Overt or secondary violence can be witnessed at three different levels: intra-personal (self), community (inter-personal, family, small groups), and national, state and international level. Alcohol and drug abuse, suicide, depression, and internalised oppression are violent acts which intend to destroy the self. Community destruction can be caused by criminal acts, inter-personal violence, domestic violence, sexual abuse, rape and genocide etc. Violence at the national and international level can take the forms of rebel movements, civil wars, coups, revolutions, terrorist acts, international wars, environmental destruction etc. States also use violence to achieve certain goals such as foreign policy objectives. Moreover, violence is institutionalised by the state in the form of prisons, military forces etc.

Structural and overt violence is often justified in the name of culture. Certain aspects of culture see some types of killing as right, some forms of violence as good, even sacred (holy war) and beautiful. This is cultural violence. One simple example of this is imposing all sorts of restrictions on girls (no going out after sunset etc.) in comparison to the boys and justifying these in the name of culture. Cultural violence is the most difficult to tackle in comparison to the other two forms as it is invisible but it is inside all of us. Cultural violence can be witnessed against the self (people may internalise cultural notions), against others, at the level of the community and at the national and international level.

12.5 PEACE: LEVELS OF ANALYSIS

Peace is often understood as the absence of war or direct violence. However, this is a negative conception of peace. The positive conception of peace focuses on the removal of not just direct violence but also structural violence. Peace can be analysed at four different levels: intra-personal, inter-personal, community, and national, international and global levels. Even though, we are here compartmentalising peace at four different levels for purposes of analysis, it is essential to emphasise that all the four levels are interdependent.

The scope of peace at the intra-personal level includes the fulfillment of physical, mental, emotional and spiritual needs, basically the right to a decent and secure life. Peace here can also mean inner calmness or harmony of the human spirit. At the inter-personal level, peace entails mutual love and respect, trust and cooperation between two individuals. Here differences of opinion are settled through the non-violent method of dialogue and people agree to disagree. Peace at the community level refers to fair treatment within the family, between groups and communities. There is no discrimination here on the basis of ethnicity, language and religion and all are free to pursue their political, economic, social and cultural rights. Moreover, thorny issues are settled at this level through dialogue rather than by taking recourse to violence.

At the national and international level, peace entails states and nations going beyond hostility and having liberty, equality and justice. It involves respect for territorial sovereignty and states not outdoing each other for survival. Here decision-making powers are not vested in just a handful of states but are evenly distributed and trade is conducted on an equal basis. At the global level, there is respect for nature and ecological security is not threatened.

12.6 PEACE-BUILDING: LEVELS OF ANALYSIS

The process of peace-building addresses the root causes of conflict and promotes short-term responses to the immediate crisis as well as long-term responses to build capacity of individuals to prevent future violence and respond creatively to situations of conflict and injustice. It includes processes such as crisis management to manage the immediate situation as well as mid and long-term efforts like peace education, non-violence training, relationship building, and restorative processes for justice and reconciliation. All these processes require a range of actors – government officials, civil society members, academia, business leaders, media people, conflict resolution professionals, non-violence trainers, trauma healers etc.

Peace-building is not concerned mainly with behaviour but tries to address the underlying context and attitudes that give rise to violent situations. It rests on the development of just social, political and economic institutions and stability at all levels of society. Peace-building is a low profile work. There are different models of peace-building but here we concentrate on one model conceived by John Paul Lederach as it points out the various levels of leadership and the corresponding peace-building approaches.

12.6.1 Levels of Actors and their Approaches to Peace-Building

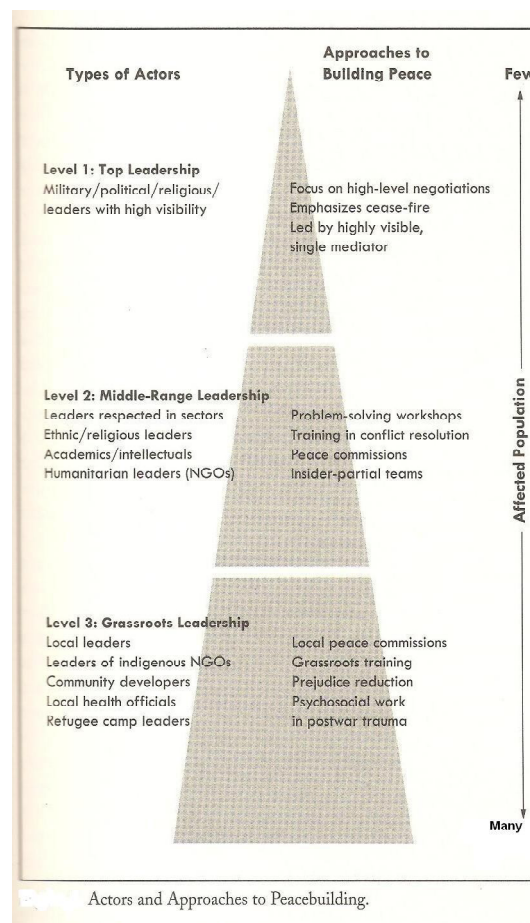


Figure 2: The Pyramid

Source: John Paul Lederach (1997), *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, p. 39

John Paul Lederach conceived the pyramid model (see *Figure 2*) which analyses peace-building at three levels. However, the model goes beyond analysis and recommends peace-building approaches that work best at the three levels. It also shows the levels at which individuals—population affected by the conflict, the conflict parties as well as the peace-builders—are located in the system.

The pyramid consists of three levels: the top-level leadership (a handful of key actors) which consists of policy makers, politicians, military people, and diplomats; the middle-range leadership which comprises of individuals representing non-governmental organisations (NGOs), educational institutions, humanitarian and relief organisations, the academia and the media; and the base or the grassroots level which represent members of indigenous NGOs, community developers, local health officials, refugee camp leaders etc. The grassroots people are the largest in number. They are directly affected by the conflict. On the left-hand side of the pyramid are the types of leaders and the sectors to which these leaders belong to. The peace-building activities that the leaders at each level may undertake (each level of leaders use different peace-building methodologies) are located on the right-hand side.

The top level leaders are highly visible. These track one leaders also enjoy high public profile because of which they get locked into positions, which constrains their manoeuvrability. There is a perception that these leaders enjoy significant power and influence but the real picture is much more complex as power is actually fractionated or divided.

The middle-level leaders may be either highly respected individuals or people occupying formal leadership positions in sectors such as education, business, agriculture or health. Secondly, these leaders may also come from networks of groups and institutions such as religious groups or humanitarian organisations. Thirdly, middle-range leaders may represent identity groups such as ethnicity or community. These leaders are known by the top-level and they also enjoy the respect and support of the grassroots and possess knowledge about its context. They are thus connected to both the grassroots and the top-level leadership but are not bound by political calculations. Leadership at this level is not necessarily based on political or military power and this gives them greater flexibility and room to manoeuvre. Besides, the middle-level leaders are not overloaded by the survival demands which afflict the grassroots people.

The grassroots represents the masses, which mostly survive on a day to day basis and feel the pinch of hatred, animosity and violence first hand especially in situations of violent conflict. The leaders at this level are people involved in different kinds of work in local communities. These leaders understand local politics as well as the fears and sufferings of the common people.

At the top-level, the approach to peace-building is “top-down”. Here the peacemakers (diplomats or third party intermediaries or government representatives) are high profile single figures, who are backed by supporting governments or international organisations like the United Nations. Their main goal is to first achieve a ceasefire which is then followed by broader political negotiations by getting the top-leaders of the conflicting parties to the table. This process may result in an agreement that will create mechanisms for transition from war to peace. Since the peacemakers at this level are highly visible people, thus the whole process is closely scrutinised by the media.

The top-down framework is based on the “trickle-down” approach to peace-building, wherein the belief is that agreements signed at the highest level and its achievements will slowly move down the pyramid and reach the grassroots. In this sense, it assumes a hierarchical and monolithic power structure where the responsibility to achieve peace rests on the representative leaders of the parties to the conflict and the other levels have no role to play in the agreement but to just wait for it to be signed. Moreover, it assumes that the agreement can be easily implemented at the grassroots level and that the people will have no problem accepting it. However, it fails to understand that most political agreements at the top-level are reached under tremendous pressure and involve lots of compromises.

The middle range plays an instrumental role in sustaining the peace-building process through the “middle-out” approach. They enjoy a critical ‘location’ in the pyramid and have the potential to create an ‘infrastructure’ that can achieve and sustain peace. At the middle-level, peace-building can comprise of problem solving workshops, conflict resolution training, and establishment of peace commissions having insider-partial teams.

Problem-solving workshops are informal, off the record interactions between adversaries at the middle-level. Here participants are unofficial representatives of the parties to the conflict. They jointly analyse the core issues of the conflict. The participants are normally track two level people who are not only close to key decision makers but also have knowledge of the conflict. The third-parties are conflict resolution experts. They convene the workshops and the parties and facilitate the interaction.

Conflict resolution trainings usually have two components – education about the patterns and dynamics of conflict and imparting analytical, communication, negotiation and mediation skills to deal with them in constructive ways. These trainings are thus geared more towards internal orientation. Such trainings may be convened by trainers for participants from conflict settings or a group may request for it.

The formation of peace commissions is another middle-range peace-building activity. Depending on the settings, these commissions can be varied in form and application: national peace commissions, region-specific peace commissions, and local commissions. These commissions can be framed around the insider-partial approach. This approach applies to third parties who are from within the conflict setting (insider). As individuals these third parties enjoy the trust and confidence of a particular party to the conflict (partial) but as a team they are balanced and perform their mediation work fairly. Thus, partiality here is not seen as a constraint or a negative thing.

The grassroots leaders follow the “bottom-up” approach to peace-building. Here, people get tired of long-drawn conflicts and develop conflict fatigue. They thus initiate efforts for change and peace at the grassroots level. The foremost challenge at the grassroots level is that of the large numbers of people. It is thus difficult to frame strategies to reach all of them. However, the bottom-up approach does try to frame strategies to touch the leaders working at the local and community level and also provide points of contact with the masses. Such approaches generally rely on elders and involve lengthy oral discussions and careful negotiations. Programmatic peace efforts can be started at the grassroots level either before or after a formal peace agreement has been put in place. These programmes work through existing networks such as churches and provide opportunity to the leaders to work at the local level on issues of peace and conflict resolution such as trauma recovery and reconciliation. Coordination among different leaders at each level and

between leaders of different levels is of prime importance in the pyramid. Without this coordination no peace-building initiative can be successful.

12.7 SUMMARY

Conflicts, violence, peace and peace-building take place at various levels. These levels are interdependent and systematically linked to each other and should thus not be seen as separate from each other. Moreover, conflict and violence may be placed in more than one level and when that is the case, the initiatives to deal with them must also be multi-level. However, in terms of analysis it helps to clearly mention the level at which conflict, violence, peace or peace-building is being analysed. Analysis leads to understanding the reality from different perspectives which are crucial for planning actions and strategies. Conflicts can take place either at the macro or micro level or in between them. The macro and micro levels can be further divided into individual, societal, international and global levels of conflict. Another way of analysing the levels of conflict is to look at the immediate issue, the relationship aspect, the subsystem and the systemic concerns. Violence could be overt, structural or cultural. It can be analysed at the level of individual, community, national and international level. Peace is a process which entails movement towards a society which is free of direct and structural violence. It can be analysed at individual, inter-personal, community, and national, international and global levels. Peace-building can be analysed in terms of the actors or leadership which operate at the top, middle and grassroots level. Each level of actor has certain strengths and weaknesses. The peace-building approaches chosen by these actors are also dependent on their location: top-level leaders go for top-down approach, middle-level leaders choose the middle-out approach and the grassroots opt for bottom-up approach. Coordination between the levels is critical for any peace-building effort. The pyramid and the nested paradigm have common features as in both, the middle-level provides the link to the other levels and it is this level which has the potential to sustain the peace-building process over the long-term.

12.8 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. What is analysis and what is the purpose of analysing levels of conflict?
2. Briefly discuss the various kinds of levels of analysis of conflict. Describe the macro and micro levels of analysis of conflicts.
3. Illustrate the individual, societal, international and global levels of analysis of conflicts.
4. Why do conflicts take place at the systemic and state levels? Enumerate the realist, liberal and socialist perspectives in this regard.
5. Discuss the levels of analysis of conflict as devised by Marie Dugan.
6. Briefly describe the different kinds of violence.
7. What are the different levels at which peace can be analysed? Elaborate on them.
8. What are the various levels of actors in the pyramid model as discussed by John Paul Lederach? Write about the weaknesses and strengths of each level.
9. Describe in detail the approaches to peace-building in the pyramid model.

SUGGESTED READINGS

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