

CONSTRUCTING NONVIOLENT ALTERNATIVES TO COLLECTIVE VIOLENCE: A SCIENTIFIC STRATEGY

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ABSTRACT: Collective violence (including terrorism, gang violence, civil war, separatist ethnic and religious conflicts, and government sponsored wars) is a central concern of the 21st century. This analysis suggests a scientific strategy for reducing such violence by constructing functionally equivalent and highly effective nonviolent collective alternatives. This general approach is the heart of most effective programs of behavior change, but has not yet been used to address terrorism and other forms of collective violence. The paper briefly traces the history of effective nonviolent action, including both strategies to confront and reduce oppression as well as strategies for defending persons, peoples, and social institutions against attack. It then turns to an examination of cultural practices on which successful nonviolent actions have relied, emphasizing a scientific analysis of the behavioral dynamics involved. Both practices directed toward opposition groups and practices that maintain the commitment and action of group members are investigated. The paper concludes with an outline of a program of research for taking these analyses to deeper and more comprehensive levels.

Key words: Science of nonviolence, collective violence, cultural analysis

Although Mahatma Gandhi repeatedly indicated that nonviolence is a science, and many contemporary nonviolent theoreticians (e.g., Nagler, 2001) agree, rigorous conceptual and empirical work elaborating such a science has until now been largely lacking. Bills to establish a Department of Peace have been introduced in the US Congress, but have not advanced. One reason for this lack of progress may be a perception that there is little rigorous science on which such a department could build, and that therefore there is little expectation of social utility. Such a science now appears possible, however, and dedicating relatively modest resources to such an effort (as compared to the enormous resources dedicated to violence-grounded strategies) may be a crucial step toward cultural advance and even human survival, given the contemporary world situation.

No claim is made here that nonviolent action can eliminate all need for military, much less police, force. A scientific perspective requires an open mind about such questions, at least methodologically. The immediate question is whether nonviolent strategic action could produce a meaningful reduction in the need for threat and violence. As will be seen below, there is substantial empirical evidence that nonviolent (and less coercive) actions can be powerful under a wide range of conditions. The intent here is to encourage scientific work that can explore the outer bounds of such action, and to suggest directions for that work based on a scientific analysis of the apparent determinants of collective violence.

Initial advances may appear primarily at the margins, so these efforts clearly need to be approached with substantial humility—but there is genuine reason for hope.

The determinants of terrorism and other forms of collective violence are explored in the other papers in this special issue (Dixon, Dymond, Rehfeldt, Roche, & Zlomke, 2003; Mattaini, 2003; Nevin, 2003; Sidman, 2003). Several important themes that emerge from those analyses are important to consider in efforts to develop a science of nonviolent action. First, violent behavior continues because it produces valued outcomes, ranging from temporary diminution of personal rage to major shifts in intercultural power dynamics. Collective violence, emerging from an interlocking matrix of social transactions within a group, is shaped and maintained in substantial part by transactional processes within the group over time, although at least for the leadership of such groups effects on the larger world are also typically involved. Al Qaeda members may become involved in violent action primarily because they have been taught to see the world in particular ways, and are encouraged by those who surround them to act in ways consistent with that worldview. An Al Qaeda leader shares those influences, but may also carefully monitor the impacts of group actions on a larger world stage, and continuously reshape collective efforts in response to those effects. Similar factors shape participation in nonviolent efforts.

Gandhi indicated that the real power of nonviolence is to create and construct; he viewed the *constructive programme*, which focused on building a healthy society that did not rely resources provided by the oppressor, as ultimately more critical and more powerful than the program of disruption for which he is often best known (Nagler, 2001; Schell, 2003). This observation is consistent with the findings of behavior science. The important work of the late Israel Goldiamond of the University of Chicago (1974/2002) clarified and explained why an emphasis on constructive, alternative strategies is potentially much more effective than efforts to simply suppress coercive and exploitative actions. Violence is functional—it provides power. Consistent with the work of Goldiamond and many other behavior scientists, reducing or eliminating collective violence is likely to require the development and dissemination of functionally equivalent individual and collective repertoires that provide alternate, more desirable, and less destructive forms of power. In this paper, I suggest that in many cases groups who experience their situation as highly aversive can be expected to forego strategies of violence only if potent nonviolent alternatives are available, and that emerging behavior science can help in the refinement of such alternative strategies.

Nonviolent action, as used here and in the growing literature on nonviolence, does not mean passivity, or taking no action in the face of threat or attack (Aspey & Epler, 2001; Nagler, 2001). The range of what is labeled nonviolent action is quite broad, from religious vigils to major social disruptions, from media-engaging “direct action” by small numbers of individuals to mass movements (Bacon, 1999; Lynd & Lynd, 1995; Tracy, 1996). Some approaches clearly work better than others under some circumstances, but careful work to determine why this is true, and therefore which actions are most likely to be effective under which circumstances, remains to be done. As stated by Aspey and Epler (2001),

“[H]istory does not yield us an answer to the best methods applicable to a new situation” (p. 59). Sharp (1973b) identified some 198 “methods” of nonviolent action, classifying them descriptively (e.g., the class of economic intervention includes techniques ranging from nonviolent land seizure to selective patronage, which involve entirely different behavioral mechanisms). The 198 methods were divided into three major classes: (1) nonviolent protest and persuasion, (2) noncooperation; and (3) nonviolent intervention. Classification is a first step in most science, and Sharp’s work makes important contributions here. Sharp also discussed the *dynamics* of nonviolent action (1973c), but that work remains generally descriptive rather than scientifically analytic. By contrast, the precision of behavior science can move beyond description to provide a *functional classification* in which approaches that rely on the same scientific mechanisms, even if they superficially appear to be very different, are classified together. The subsequent sections of this paper illustrate this approach, which is likely to be much more powerful in answering the question, “What is most likely to be useful under these particular circumstances?” In addition, it is likely that a thoroughgoing analysis will suggest additional strategies that have not yet been identified—much less attempted and refined. The absence of those strategies is likely to emerge from largely empty cells in a scientifically comprehensive classification scheme. It is hard to imagine more critical—or more challenging—work for behavior scientists.

A science of nonviolent action may not change the goals of cultural groups. Rather, such a science may provide less costly and possibly more effective strategic and tactical tools for achieving those goals. As a result, a truly potent science of nonviolent action may be experienced as threatening to some groups who currently exercise economic, military, and other forms of power that can be used coercively or exploitatively. I am concerned in this paper with reducing collective violence of all kinds, certainly including terrorism and gang violence, but also violence associated with civil wars and separatist ethnic and religious movements, as well as that legitimated by governments. A science of nonviolent action may produce radical shifts in understanding, leading to transformations in the moral acceptability of collective violent and coercive action in the context of realistic alternatives.

THE POWER OF NONVIOLENT ACTION

Can nonviolent methods produce personal and social change? Examples of complete or partial success are numerous (Database of Successful Strategies and Tactics, 2003; Schell, 2003; Sharp, 1973a, 1973b, 1973c), dating back to the Buddha and Mo Tsu of the Chou Dynasty in China (Nagler, 2001). Examples of both, as well as of complete or partial failure, are all potentially valuable for moving toward a science. Campaigns of nonviolent action for producing cultural change (as opposed to passive acceptance, an entirely different pattern) and nonviolent approaches for maintaining working relations among groups have a long but not widely known history (e.g., Aspey & Eppler, 2001; Bacon, 1999; Easwaran, 1999).

History demonstrates the potential of nonviolent strategic action. The early Christians, who generally refused military service and did not respond with violence to some of the most brutal repressive measures in all of human history, ultimately won over even the Roman Emperor (Aspey & Eppler, 2001). Long before the coming of the Europeans, the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois), torn by inter-group violence, adopted and maintained a set of personal and tribal practices for resolving issues without violence after a nonviolent campaign under the leadership of Skennenrahowi—the “Peacemaker” (Akwesasne Notes, 1978). (The drafters of the US Constitution later borrowed from the resulting Iroquois League structure to create a peaceful federation of states). Unlike other European groups, the Quakers almost universally adopted nonviolent (and generally fair) practices in their relations with indigenous peoples, and apparently almost no violence occurred between the groups (Bacon, 1999).

Relatively better known figures in the history of nonviolence include radical abolitionists like John Woolman and William Lloyd Garrison; Tolstoy; Gandhi; Martin Luther King—and Malcolm X, whose mature thought advocated nonviolence exclusively; Cesar Chavez; and Corizon Aquino, but there are other important examples whose names few may recognize. An important example is Badshah Khan, a close ally of Gandhi and a Pashtun from the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region. Khan organized and led a nonviolent army over 80,000 strong, the world’s first professional nonviolent army, as part of the ultimately successful effort to end British colonial rule in South Asia (Easwaran, 1999). This army of largely uneducated Pashtuns who had been trained all their lives in the use of violence were able to maintain a nonviolent commitment in the face of brutal repression. Gandhi described them as braver and more effective in their nonviolent action than his Indian followers, because of their lifelong training in toughness (Easwaran). Recent nonviolent efforts, many led by persons and groups whose names are largely unknown, have dramatically influenced changes in government in the Philippines, Russia and Georgia. An historical review indicates that many revolutions involved far more nonviolent activism than is often noted (Schell, 2003). In fact, the historical record generally supports the assertion that populations are never entirely without power, even in the face of violent coercion, and the recognition voiced by Gandhi and many others that ultimately the cooperation of the population is required to govern (Sharp, 1973a).

Those who have studied the history of nonviolent action have clarified a number of common misunderstandings. Gandhi’s nonviolence is often viewed as a “politics of the moral gesture,” but in fact Gandhi had no patience with symbolic posturing; rather he viewed his work as relying on the direct exercise of power (Schell, 2003, p. 129). He ultimately found himself negotiating with the British on equal terms. Another question is whether nonviolence can be used for defense, rather than just for offense. Even some scholars of nonviolence have suggested that nonviolence has little to offer when under attack from outside (e.g., Kenneth Boulding as reported by Nagler, 2001). Careful historical analysis suggests that this is not the case, however. Effective nonviolent approaches for protecting borders have so far not been developed, but there are many examples of effective

strategies for protecting populations, cultures, and institutions (Aspey & Eppler, 2001; Lampen, 2000; Nagler). The Danes managed to smuggle out nearly their entire Jewish population in 1943 while under occupation; André and Magda Trocmé and the Chambonnaise hid the local Jewish population, and helped many to escape Nazi persecution (Nagler; Aspey & Eppler). Civilian populations interposed themselves between the army and rebels in Algeria in 1962, and between student groups firing on each other in Beijing in 1968, in both cases ending the rounds of violence. The same strategy occurred in Moscow in 1991, with citizens interposing themselves between coup and government forces. Internal social movements to create Peace Zones in Colombia and the Philippines reflect a somewhat different, but also apparently promising, approach (Clements, 2000). There is also a place for external nonviolent actors in civilian defense, for example the work of peace teams (often church-affiliated) in many areas of conflict including the Middle East, and the use of protective accompaniment in Central America (Nagler, 2001). (Larger nonviolent forces have also been proposed, but not tested to any significant extent.)

There are also a number of exemplars of effective *civilian-based defense*, in which radical non-cooperation has limited or reversed the effects of attack and preserved cultures even under occupation. These include at least partially effective nonviolent actions during World War II, including the organization of Norwegian teachers against Quisling and Hitler, and efforts among the Dutch, Danes, Czechs, and others that substantially limited Nazi power (Aspey & Eppler, 2001). The limits of such methods are currently unknown, but should not be prematurely assumed. This is, rather, an important area for scientific exploration.

Nonviolent methods are not safe—as terrorist attacks or wars are not. The comparative rates of casualties, however, usually are modest as compared to those of violent alternatives. In the Gandhi's Salt *Satyagraha* campaign (commonly known from the film *Gandhi*), 2 protesters died, and 320 were hospitalized. In the deadly—but exceptional—massacre at Jalianwala Bagh, nearly 400 were killed and over 1,100 were wounded, according to the most common estimates. Imagine, however, the potential casualties that would have occurred in a full-scale war of independence against the British, who had demonstrated that they were not hesitant to turn to massive violence as required to maintain the Empire. Those at primary risk in nonviolent campaigns are those who have volunteered to place themselves in harm's way; innocent noncombatants often bear a significant portion of the burden in both terrorist actions and military campaigns. It is important to note the level of commitment required for effective nonviolent action; "human shields" who leave when they experience real threat lack the power that committed peace teams have been able to generate in conflict zones.

Nonviolent action, therefore, is not passive, nor is it designed primarily to be safe; it is designed to be powerful. Nonviolent action in serious conflicts requires courage, and the further a pattern of escalating violence has progressed, the greater may be the costs of ending it (Nagler, 2001). (The same can be said of alternatives that involve violent responses, including military and police action.) History establishes that the risk to leaders of nonviolent campaigns, in particular, can be

high. In some cases, casualties appear to be associated with poor implementation. For example, some observers indicate that the original Palestinian *intifada* was planned and initially implemented as a nonviolent campaign (Nagler). When a few young people threw a few rocks, this was at first viewed by most as a minor breach, but in fact that breach appeared to initiate an extended and escalating spiral of violent, reciprocal countercontrol.

Acts of collective violence produce reverberating effects, including damaging emotional effects on many persons not directly involved, as well as economic and intercultural shifts as demonstrated by the September 11, 2001 attacks against the US. Nonviolent action also has reverberating effects, but these effects are generally positive; the US civil rights movement, for example, spurred a wide range of social reforms focused on expanding rights and opportunities.

Nonviolent campaigns, like the efforts of organized terrorist networks and military actions, are collective efforts. Recent advances in the analysis of cultural practices that emerge from the contemporary science of behavior analysis provide tools for understanding the dynamics of such efforts. The resulting analytic strategies provide new, parsimonious, and potentially powerful tools for understanding and potentially influencing transactional processes within organized collectives, be they terrorist organizations, armies, businesses or communities (Mattaini, 2003). In the following section, this analytic framework is used to look in a modest, initial way at the dynamics of effective campaigns of collective nonviolence.

CULTURAL PRACTICES CHARACTERIZING CAMPAIGNS OF NONVIOLENT ACTION

From the perspective of contemporary behavior science, a *culture* can be defined as the network of interlocking practices maintained by the group. Those practices include simple and complex behaviors, including but not limited to what people say to each other and to themselves (e.g., values and attitudes), how people treat each other, and how they respond to being so treated. Any cultural entity, be it a school or a loose-knit terrorist network, maintains a network of interlocking practices, and initiates new members into their use. The dynamics of groups involved in nonviolent actions, like those of other organized groups, can be operationalized scientifically as practices maintained by the culture of that group. Two clusters of cultural practices are of particular interest here: those involving action directed outward toward some other group that is viewed as exercising oppressive, exploitative, or coercive power, and those directed internally that maintain the collective coherence of the group itself. Given the limited data available, the analysis that follows can only be viewed as preliminary, but suggests the potential for scientific analysis for advancing efforts to understand and strengthen nonviolent alternatives to collective violence.

Practices Directed Toward the Group Exercising Oppressive Group

Common nonviolent practices directed toward an external group or groups seen as exercising oppressive control include the following:

An emphasis on planned non-reinforcement leading to extinction. Participants in nonviolent actions of this type simply stop cooperating. Such action may include economic boycotts of public transportation systems, particular commodities, or majority-owned businesses for example. In an elegantly coordinated campaign in Savannah, Georgia, for instance, as in many other places in the South, African-American citizens had previously accepted Jim Crow restrictions and continued to pay their transit fares and patronize major businesses. As part of an organized civil rights campaign, they collectively simply stopped doing so. This strategy involves withdrawing critical reinforcers that were previously available to the oppressing group, in this case transit and business income. Practices that had “worked” for generations no longer did. As a result, the political and business leadership ultimately needed to change their own practices, to act in a different way, in order to again access the needed reinforcers. Technically this strategy involves what is called *extinction* followed by *reinforcement of alternative behavior*. Moral suasion had not been powerful enough to shift those practices, but identifying and manipulating what was important to those holding power clearly was. Other examples of this general strategy include a wide variety of boycotts, and rent strikes.

Extinction of threat and punishment by opponents. This tactic is actually a variation of extinction as described above. Members of oppressed groups often experience high rates of threat and punishment for acting in ways that are undesirable to those with greater coercive power. Extinction in this case requires continuing to take the action anyway, even as the opponent continues to threaten and punish. In Gandhi’s salt campaign, whereas threat and physical attack previously resulted in compliance with arbitrary and unjust laws, people now simply kept coming despite threat and attack. Much of the suffering that is often characteristic of non-violent action is the result of this kind of effort. When nonviolent activists continue despite punishment, the oppressor typically escalates its punishing efforts for a period; this is technically known as an *extinction burst*, and what is known about limiting such bursts could be useful in informing nonviolent campaigns. The British, for example, became increasingly violent when Gandhi’s followers refused to pull back despite threats, as in the Salt March of 1930. Ultimately, however, when such efforts were unsuccessful and produced additional costs, the British withdrew. Sit-ins and stand-ins are examples of tactics that in some cases combine the first strategy (making it impossible for the business to make money) and the second (refusing to leave even in the face of threat).

Explicit abandonment of some forms of coercive power (e.g., physical violence and verbal disrespect) regardless of the actions of other side. Effective nonviolent action is often described as requiring a commitment not to reciprocate harmful actions, to treat opponents with respect and love no matter how one is treated oneself. This is among the core practices taught by the Martin Luther King,

Jr. Center, for example (King Center, 2003). Complete abandonment of such coercive and aversive tactics in some cases may reduce countercontrol by the other side. Insulting or disrespectful words and actions may evoke aggressive actions,¹ and eliminating such establishing operations may reduce such responses from the other side. Nonviolence training often involves explicit rehearsal for refusing to reciprocate harmful actions under any circumstances. In many such efforts, a religious or spiritual commitment or other transcending rule, not to be violated under any circumstances, appears to strengthen resolve among the nonviolent group. When leading the first group of Free Speech Movement protesters into UC Berkeley's Sproul Hall in 1961, Joan Baez said, "Remember, we're not going in here angry; we're going in with love in our hearts. We're going to be nonviolent in thought, word, and deed" (Nagler, 2001, p. 220). "Facing brutalities" nonviolently (Sharp, 1973c, p. 555) is an important dimension of many of the most challenging historical campaigns. Not all nonviolent campaigns have adopted the practice of radical noncoercion in the face of escalating attacks (the expected extinction burst), but a scientific analysis suggests why such practices may be effective, particularly over the long term.

Exercise of nonviolent but aversive actions. A critical issue for the development of a science of nonviolent action is the place of nonviolent but sometimes highly aversive, usually conflict-based tactics. A large percentage of Sharp's 198 methods are of this kind. In some cases such tactics are combined with verbal practices that maximize polarization. For example, Saul Alinsky, in his day labeled "the country's leading hell-raiser" (*The Nation*, quoted in Alinsky, 1971), in his *Rules for Radicals* (1971) described his opponents as "the enemy." His "rules" included: "Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it, and polarize it" (p. 130), and "[Y]ou want to cause confusion, fear, and retreat" (p. 127). Ridicule, embarrassment, and construction of a maximally unpleasant situation (often oriented toward extensive media exposure) are mainstays of *direct action* approaches to social change (Tracy, 1996) which are clearly at the extreme end of the use of aversive tactics. (Examples of such tactics include dramatic confrontations with politicians staged by the HIV/AIDS activist group ACT-UP, demonstrations at the homes of corporate leaders, and even burning oneself alive.)

The contrast with some of the other approaches described is stark at some levels; Alinsky would have been unlikely to make Baez's statement quoted above, for example. Still, many nonviolent campaigns are designed to create discomfort of some kind; major protest marches, for example, are in part designed to establish a political situation from which policy makers may only be able to escape through policy change. Scientifically, more coercive approaches appear likely to evoke stronger countercontrolling efforts by the other side, and the practical utility of many forms of direct action has been questioned (Tracy, 1996). Still, the relative utility of actions at varying points on the continuum of aversive tactics under a variety of circumstances is a question that begs for further analysis. A subset of

¹ Technically, such words and actions serve as *establishing operations* that increase motivation to act aggressively.

actions that fit within this category are those that involve placing oneself at risk of harm (e.g., self-exposure to the elements or fasts). These actions (or inactions) are, like the other tactics discussed in the preceding paragraphs, meant to establish an aversive condition for observers with the power to make decisions. The approach is also meant to establish a sense of responsibility for the outcome to the protester (“If I act, he will live. If I do not, he will die”).

Immediate reinforcement for desired actions. A standard practice among nonviolent activists and organizers is to be ready to reciprocate immediately and positively to desired actions on the part of those exercising coercive power, to change tack immediately when the actions of the other side change. Only change that is regarded as meaningful, however, generally has been reciprocated in this way. Pragmatic conflict-oriented organizers like Alinsky typically project an uncompromising stance, but also recognize that ultimately “making the deal” (p. 59) is essential. This occurs when as much headway as seems possible has been made. In a good deal of behavioral research, however, some reinforcement is typically provided for incremental change; whether that strategy has something to offer nonviolent efforts is an example of a question yet to be addressed scientifically. Directing attention to opportunities to reinforce is very familiar to most behavior analysts. Other repertoires, like those Baez addressed above, may sometimes need to be in place to make such a shift in behavior possible. Unless this occurs, many participants may view opponents so negatively that it may be difficult to respond to them in positive ways even when their behavior changes (Sidman, 2001).

Action that evokes coercive and punitive actions by others. In some cases, nonviolent activists have acted in ways that prompt oppressors to “do their worst”¹—perhaps producing revulsion toward the coercive actions of the oppressors among the larger population, or even among leaders who have maintained personal and emotional distance from the effects of their decisions. That revulsion may increase motivation among the people at large, and perhaps segments of their leadership, to act to end the coercive actions. Taking severe coercive action may also prove aversive to some of those participating in the oppressive acts themselves. Gandhi’s campaign provides numerous examples. He and his followers defied orders, laws and regulations. Such violations were standard cues to the British authorities to take coercive and punitive action, and they did so. As the British population became increasingly aware of the violence being perpetrated by their troops (and hired mercenaries) against unarmed men, women and children, political pressure for change built (Nagler, 2001). It is also likely that continuing, for example, to club nonresisting person after nonresisting person became increasingly aversive to those doing the clubbing as well.

Presentation of occasions for positive treatment. By contrast, another sometimes effective tactic involves pairing occasions for respectful action by the oppressor with the nonviolent action. In the “People Power” campaign in the Philippines, for example, nuns were placed in the front lines of marches, since

¹ Such motivating conditions and events are additional examples of *establishing operations*.

Filipino soldiers and police were seen as unlikely to take violent action against them. Similar strategies were commonly used on college campuses during the Vietnam protests of the 1960s and early 70s, in which young women sometimes led the way when facing essentially all-male police and National Guard units. Religious and political leaders, elderly activists, and others who are seen as either particularly to be respected or particularly vulnerable often provide some protection to protesters. Protests in Chicago in the run-up to the Iraq war of 2003 provide an instructive example. In one case, a march organized by young activist groups was surrounded by far more police officers (all in full body armor) than there were marchers, and marchers were tightly contained in a relatively out of the way location. At about the same time, another march that had the support and participation of the Catholic cardinal, Episcopal archbishop, Jewish rabbis, Muslim imams, and numerous other clerics received highly respectful treatment by police in standard uniforms in a march that dramatically disrupted regular traffic flow on Michigan Avenue. The principle in these case is very simple: most people have learned throughout life to act respectfully or at least nonviolently toward members of certain groups, and this behavior may well generalize to somewhat novel situations like nonviolent demonstrations.

Internal Cultural Practices within the Nonviolent Group

Nonviolent campaigns generally also require interlocking actions among members of a group (a cultural entity); maintaining nonviolence among Badshah Khan's enormous army, for example, required a level of discipline at least as great as that needed in armies that practice violence. Nonviolent actions are often costly, at least in the short run. Certain cultural practices appear to be common in prompting, coordinating, shaping, and maintaining nonviolent practices like those listed above among the activist group, despite the response costs involved. Among these are:

Sensitivity to distant results by those in leadership positions. Many persons involved in nonviolent efforts, like those involved in collective violence, certainly care about the ultimate outcome of their efforts, but much of their energy is directed at more immediate concerns. Effective collective action, however, requires attention to distant and often complex consequences of actions taken. Major cultural change requires, therefore, that at least the leadership of the group be sensitively attuned to those aggregate outcomes (Malott, 1988), and be in a position to shift practices *within* the group that lead to more effective action directed to the outside. Leaders in the civil rights movement needed to discriminate, for example, between situations when continuing a campaign in the face of dogs, tear gas, and batons was worth the immediate human costs, and situations that called for a change in tactics. The actions of the group both internally and externally then were guided by the identified long-term effects. The interlocking relations between within-group practices and the aggregate effects of those practices have been discussed in a preliminary way by behavior scientists

(e.g., Glenn, 1991; Mattaini, 1996; Skinner, 1988). This appears to be critical work, but is still in its infancy.

The exercise of charismatic leadership. While it is not clear that every nonviolent campaign requires charismatic leadership, most examples of which we have extensive knowledge have had well-known and highly respected leaders whose followers responded to their requests and direction, although not always without struggle. Gandhi, for example, resorted more than once to hunger strikes, not to induce the British to change their policies, but rather to induce his supposed followers, Hindu and Muslim, to refrain from inter-group violence. Skennenrahowi, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Badshah Khan, Saul Alinsky, and Cesar Chavez were very different people, but apparently shared certain critical repertoires. While there is much more to learn about such leaders, a review of the lives of several suggests that they appear to (a) offer their followers hope by convincingly describing the positive outcomes collective actions will produce, (b) serve as models of people who are satisfied and made happy by “living the dream,” (c) provide powerful encouragement for taking the desired actions and excite mutual encouragement among followers, and (d) establish themselves as persons whose disapproval participants wish to avoid. The behavior of charismatic leaders, like everyone else’s, is shaped by their experiences over time; even leaders like Gandhi, who clearly had exceptional talent, had to learn to lead in highly effective ways. Relying on charismatic leadership also involves some risk. Figures with the moral stature of those mentioned above are rare, the potential for manipulation of followers cannot be dismissed, and loss of a single powerful leader in some cases has led to substantial weakening of collective campaigns. These issues suggest the critical importance of distributing the functions of leadership when possible, but the factors that support or discourage such distributed leadership have not yet been scientifically examined to any depth. A recent analysis (Lowery & Mattaini, 1999) may provide a starting point for this work, suggesting a number of practices that may encourage power-sharing within groups.

Social reinforcement. There can be little doubt that mutual support is a major variable in achieving group solidarity. It is clear that a group providing each other with powerful mutual social reinforcement may overcome significant risks and harms experienced during a campaign. Attention to the relative balance of reinforcement versus costs is clearly important. Alinsky wrote that, “a good tactic is one that your people enjoy” (1971, p. 128), and many demonstrations do produce solidarity through mutual enjoyment and encouragement. Campaigns involving greater levels of personal risk, however, require something much more powerful than enjoyment to maintain participation, and may involve very little pleasure and considerable suffering. Mutual reinforcement from leaders and peers is that much more essential in such cases. Strong personal reinforcers appear able to support commitment in situations that would almost certainly evoke escape without them. As it happens, the scientific mechanisms and principles for effective use of social reinforcement have been extensively studied and are well established (e.g., Daniels, 2000; Komaki, 1998). This work may be of particular value to groups interested in building strong commitment to nonviolent campaigns. Shared

ethnic and cultural bonds also are likely to increase the availability of social reinforcement and mutual commitment, and efforts to increase solidarity often draws on common history (including histories of oppression).

Public pledges. Pledges to abide by principles of nonviolence, to “go with love,” follow the instructions of leaders, submit to assault without retaliation, act or not to act in particular ways, have commonly been used in recent nonviolent efforts. Such pledges are likely to increase the aversiveness of actions proscribed by the pledge, and increase motivation¹ for actions consistent with the commitment made. In some cases, such pledges are relatively informal, as in requesting a collective verbal commitment to nonviolence from the group before beginning a march. In other cases, for example, in certain dramatic actions organized to protest nuclear weapons (Aspey & Eppler, 2001), or in certain civil rights movement actions, explicit individual agreement to written rules (like the *CORE Rules for Action*, Lynd & Lynd, 1995) has been required for those participating.

*Socially-mediated changes in understanding events.*² Collective shaping of new values and interpretations of events and their consequences are common in nonviolent movements, and often involve shifts that are described as spiritual in nature. For example, one of Martin Luther King’s “Six Principles of Nonviolence” is “Nonviolence holds that suffering can educate and transform” (King Center, 2003). Accepting this statement involves both a shift in how suffering is understood—as valuable and under certain circumstances to be sought rather than avoided—and a new recognition of the consequences to be expected from successful action. Long-term maintenance of programs of nonviolence, like those led by Gandhi or Cesar Chavez requires that significant numbers of participants make such shifts. By contrast, some of the single-event campaigns organized by Alinsky could rely on eliciting more immediate, emotional effects. The dialogic methods of Freire (1998) appear to be the kind of practices that can shape and maintain such socially-mediated changes. Freirian *praxis*, which is associated with liberation movements in Latin America, emphasizes processes that promote *conscientization* (consciousness-raising) among group members related to the sources and impacts of oppression through collective “reflection in action.” Participation in those processes is intended to lead to both changes in understanding, and commitment to action.

Celebration of successful events. Alinsky indicated that “If your people are not having a ball doing it, there is something wrong with the tactic” (1971, p. 128). In fact, the nonviolence literature often reports high levels of camaraderie both during and after tactical actions (Lynd & Lynd, 1995; Tracy, 1996), although clearly there are very difficult times when rejoicing is unlikely, particularly when facing violent response. Contemporary research into organizational behavior management suggests that celebrations can function as powerful collective

¹ Technically, the pledge serves as an establishing operation for action consistent with the pledge, and as an abolishing operation for violations.

² Material in this section describes shifts in what are technically known as *equivalence relations* and *rules*.

reinforcers and community-builders. This may be particularly important in situations in which the final goal sought is very distant; celebration of milestones and instrumental outcomes may be particularly important for maintaining active involvement during such periods.

CONCLUSION: A PROGRAM OF RESEARCH FOR CONSTRUCTING ALTERNATIVES TO COLLECTIVE VIOLENCE

Given the preliminary analyses outlined above, a number of high priority areas for further research emerge. Given the enormous costs of collective violence, an investment in such research may be critical, despite the risks involved in moving into what is in many ways scientifically unexplored territory. The tools required are beginning to be elaborated, and reasonable directions for initial work are becoming clear. The following appear to be among potentially useful priority areas for investigation:

1. Analyses of motivating antecedents¹ related to initiation and maintenance of collective violence within particular cultural settings. Initial work could be conducted based in examination of existing literature, but ultimately small teams of behaviorally-trained qualitative researchers, in partnership with persons deeply grounded in local culture and language, working on site are likely to be required. The questions to be answered in such work involve determining from both indigenous (insider or *emic*) and observer (usually outsider or *etic*) perspectives what conditions and events tend to evoke violent action. Given the strong biases with which most members of such teams are likely to bring to such work, careful attention to and joint training in scientific practices likely to encourage multiple perspectives and voices in a matrix of shared power will be required (Lowery & Mattaini, 1999). Note that the purpose of this kind of study would be different than looking for specific causes of particular problems and development of political responses. Rather, the suggested investigations would examine the phenomena at a deeper level, looking for potentially generalizable classes of motivating conditions and events that may be topographically different, but functionally similar, across different local situations.

2. Detailed study and analysis of historical and current examples of effective and ineffective nonviolent and violent collective actions, focused on understanding the behavioral dynamics between and within groups. The emphasis here is on identifying relationships among environmental events and conditions and the practices of the nonviolent group. For example, how did events and conditions in Savannah, GA, and the collective nonviolent actions of civil rights activists in that city lead to relatively successful outcomes with far less violence on either side than was the case in a number of other Southern—and Northern—states? A sense of

¹ Establishing operations.

mutual connection, even across groups in conflict, appears to have emerged there, and an analysis of how that occurred could be instructive. Note that the investigations proposed here differ from standard historical research, although such research can contribute immeasurably to the them. The proposed analyses would focus on the dynamics of collective nonviolence from the perspective of rigorous behavior science. (The analyses presented in this article and elsewhere in this special issue reflect preliminary efforts of this kind.) Such work will almost certainly result in the ongoing refinement of conceptual models that can better predict and ultimately shape effective nonviolent campaigns, and minimize collective violent actions.

3. *The development and testing of analytic tools for planning nonviolent efforts.* In all areas of science, efforts to study new phenomena tend to require new tools for that study. The science and the development of such tools tend to progress in tandem. Some tools and approaches for the analysis of interlocking cultural practices exist (e.g., Daniels, 2000; Komaki, 1998; Mattaini, 1996), particularly as applied to organizations. Those tools clearly are inadequate to the ultimate task of analyzing and designing practices within entire cultural fields, but they are sufficient for a beginning, and better tools and technology will certainly emerge given attention to this field of study.

4. *Small experiments in the natural environment in partnership with groups willing to test propositions supported by initial research.* While many areas of science (e.g., astronomy, ecology) can advance to a considerable extent relying on observational and interpretive study, ultimately it is usually necessary to test the findings experimentally in some way. If the initial work described above produces intriguing and promising results, it is very likely that cultural groups wishing to challenge what they experience as oppressive structures and conditions will be willing to experiment with new approaches suggested by this research. From such testing will come new questions and directions for work.

5. *Progressive dissemination of what is known to a wider public.* If there ever was an area of research in which dissemination beyond scientific audiences is essential, this is probably it. It may be justifiable to begin to publicize even quite preliminary work that could reduce loss of life and other terrible consequences associated with collective violence; certainly once such findings have been well-established, dissemination will be an ethical imperative. The program of studies required to achieve a clear understanding of both violent and nonviolent collective action will take years, of course. Still, useful findings could emerge much more quickly, and could move rapidly into application, given a cultural commitment to doing so.

There are many challenges associated with each of these steps, but it now appears possible to begin in a realistic way. It is not yet possible to say that we have the science, or the technology, to produce effective, non-violent alternatives to collective violence, but we can now say that we are coming to have the

necessary empirically-grounded theory and the methodology to make a real beginning. Some of this work will require substantial resources, but creative scholars need not wait; the program of research outlined above offers many possibilities for low-cost and potentially high-payoff investigations. As additional resources become available, more extensive and ambitious investigations will emerge.

Nonviolent options, even if well established scientifically, are not likely to be universally adopted in the short term, since reliance on violence, threat, and coercion run very deeply in contemporary cultures. Groups experiencing oppression and seeking change, however, are ultimately likely to welcome the availability of effective strategic options that also reduce suffering for their own people. Developing and disseminating such strategies therefore is likely to have a substantive impact on overall levels of collective violence, although groups relying on nonviolence would need to overcome millennia of cultural conditioning. The history of nonviolence suggests that, although it is a struggle, such conditioning can be overcome. Paradoxically, the most forceful resistance may in some cases come from the powerful, since a science of nonviolent action could shift power dynamics within and between societies in ways that are not consistent with the interests of those who currently wield greatest influence. Nonviolent power once unleashed may be unconquerable, however, and therein may lie the hope of the human species (Schell, 2003). B. F. Skinner, generally recognized as the most influential psychologist of the 20th century, believed the survival of the human race to be an open question (1976; 1988), but suggested that the science of behavior might be in a position to improve the odds. The science proposed here would be a start.

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