Researching Practitioner Skills In Conflict Resolution: Micro Decision-Making and Neuro-Linguistic Programming

Andrew Floyer Acland

Working Paper 12

**Introduction to
Micro-Decision-Making
in Conflict Resolution Practice
a working paper by
Andrew Acland**

**Introduction by Michelle LeBaron
Assistant Professor
ICAR**

As a member of an institution concerned with exploring, developing and evaluating processes for resolving conflict, it is a privilege to write an introduction to Professor Acland's paper. As a colleague who has seen his sensitivity and facility in practice, it is an honour. It is one thing to develop and present a set of ideas; it is quite another to apply them in a way that illuminates your own practice and that of others with whom you are associated. This is Andrew Acland's gift.

When Professor Acland came from the United Kingdom as a visiting fellow in 1994, he brought us a wide range of experience in diverse conflicts and a thoughtful analysis of how we are inventing ourselves as a field. His interest in the broad implications for conflict resolution practice of minute-to-minute behaviours stimulated and augmented our thinking. Professor Acland's experience as a developer of the field, an author, and a prominent practitioner contributed significantly to our pedagogy and practice.

In an effort to continue and to extend the dialogues we began, we asked him to write about his experience with Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP). NLP, a study of the relationships between cognition, language and behaviour, poses important questions for our development as practitioners, theorists and researchers.

Questions about the evolution of conflict resolution practice and theory are not new. At the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, we have developed an interdisciplinary synthesis of theory from many areas including political science, sociology, international relations, social psychology and law. Much of this work has emphasized the dynamics of large systems and how stakeholders can devise and apply processes to prevent and address conflict.

At the same time, we have long recognized that these deep-rooted conflicts involve people; conflict can neither arise nor be resolved except through individual as well as action. As intervenors in conflict, we know that the complexities of issues, communication and human dynamics make our roles challenging. In analyzing conflict and the intervention role, we have focused on a continuum of processes, not delving deeply into the dynamics of intrapsychic or even the interpersonal dimensions of these processes. We saw Professor Acland's work as important for its contribution to these areas, complementing the work of Joseph Montville, Vamik Volkan, Oscar Nudler and

Chris Mitchell on the interaction of personal conflict processing and large-scale conflict resolution.

As he acknowledges in this paper, NLP has not been widely applied to the study or practice of conflict resolution although the two studies have evolved simultaneously. NLP is only about twenty years old, an outgrowth of the combination of cognitive and behavioural psychology. It seeks to tease apart the complexity of verbal and nonverbal communication in a way that can provide cognitive and behavioural maps of the dynamics involved. To the extent that its principles provide insights into these dynamics, they have far-reaching implications for the analysis and resolution of conflict.

An example used by Professor Acland in his paper contains both the promise and the challenge of this material. He writes of the importance of analyzing language with a full awareness of the context from which the language arises. In personal conversation this means attending to sensory references (body position, breathing rate, tone of voice, etc.) when dealing with a person in a state of conflict. To do otherwise may be unconsciously interpreted as a denial of legitimate emotion. He asserts that we incorporate information and know that we are heard when our senses are engaged. And, the corollary to this proposition is, that if language is used that does not connect to the senses, people are likely to lose the feeling that they know what is being said. The seeds of truth in this statement are intuitive; poets and storytellers have known it for generations. Its implications for training and practice are significant if it helps practitioners and scholars become more effective in dialogue with each other and with those they serve.

The challenges of Neuro-Linguistic Programming for an academic community are several. Controversies continue beyond the bounds of our Institute about its empirical defensibility. Our academic lexicon is full of constructions that are far removed from sensory allusions, challenging us to examine not only our practice, but the way that we write and dialogue about conflict. Even if we take the information on a purely pragmatic level, questions of how to construct appropriate sensory references remain unanswered. Is the use of these devices so central that it should be one of the things balanced by those learning intervention skills along with all of the other process and substance concerns they are mentally holding? Given that this is only one example of many that Neuro-Linguistic Programming offers, how do scholar-practitioners know which of these are most pivotal in improving their practice?

There are many unanswered questions, as Professor Acland acknowledges. At the same time, we thought it important to add this to our Working Paper series because of the questions it poses about information sought and used in analyzing and resolving conflict. This paper reminds us that the stratification of conflict resolution practice into categories (interpersonal, intergroup, international, etc.) is artificial as is the separation of micro- and macro-interventions. The Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution was founded on the premise that it is valuable to test ideas in different domains and to let the light of each inform the other.

We print this working paper as an invitation to dialogue and to further work in the important area of raising awareness about the micro-decisions we all make in our roles as scholars and practitioners in conflict resolution.

Michelle LeBaron
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About the Author

Andrew Floyer Acland is a citizen of the United Kingdom who is an independent author, lecturer and consultant in conflict resolution. His work is wide-ranging, from developing inner city leadership teams to international conciliation in South Africa. He has authored two books and several articles and manuals on conflict resolution. He is a Master practitioner in Neuro-Linguistic Programming.

RESEARCHING PRACTITIONER SKILLS
IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION:
Micro Decision-Making and
Neuro-Linguistic Programming

Andrew Floyer Acland

Who would do good to another must do it in minute particulars

William Blake, *Jerusalem*

Preface

The purpose of this paper is to present some informal observations and reflections around the subject of *micro decision-making* using as a vehicle the blend of cognitive and behavioural psychology which goes under the forbidding name of *Neuro-Linguistic Programming* (NLP). Micro decision-making describes the minutiae of interveners' behaviour: of what interveners actually *do* moment to moment. Under this broad umbrella can be clustered choice of language, of posture and movement, of analytical focus: how interveners use - consciously or more often unconsciously - their faculties and their physiology. NLP, whose origins and approach is described later, is an appropriate vehicle for exploring the subject because it is based on close attention to human behaviour and on the details of how people influence each other.

The purpose of this preface is to explain why I think micro decision-making should be taken more seriously. Before doing that, it might be useful to place it in context by reviewing some of the challenges which conflict resolution, as a field, is facing. (I use *conflict resolution* as a term to include mediation, facilitation, problem-solving workshops, consensus-building and

generally all processes which use collaborative rather than adversarial processes,
and *interveners* to describe those who endeavour to make such processes
effective.)

The literature of conflict resolution reflects the hopes and frustrations
experienced by those who seek to practise it. Both hopes and frustrations spill
from the Holy Grail of conflict resolution: convincing others - politicians, lawyers,
diplomats, police, the population at large - that conflict can be prevented, resolved
or transformed without the current flood of blood and treasure. As the world turns,
listening fitfully at best, the temptation is to concentrate on the big ideas and seek
acceptance for them.

We have largely failed, however, to communicate with those who can most
benefit from what we know. For example, the majority of mid-career diplomats
who come on the negotiation courses I run for the British Foreign Office not only
have little knowledge of the basic principles of conflict resolution: they seem
unaware that such a field exists. I have found the same to be true of many of
those who are involved, day to day, in neutral UN or CSCE roles. There is
evidence for this in the somewhat peculiar conceptions the so-called mediators in
former Yugoslavia have had of their role: calling for air strikes against one of the
parties, for example, does not accord with my understanding of a mediator's role.

I believe there are two main reasons for the failure of communication
between those in the conflict resolution field and those who should be in it. First,
with rare exceptions we have failed to find language which dovetails with the
experience of those who need the ideas, but which is at the same time sufficiently

distinctive to signal that we have fresh ideas and approaches to offer. This poses a tricky conundrum: we need to demonstrate that we speak the language of our 'clients', while at the same time speaking our own.

Secondly, the 'technology' of conflict resolution has sometimes been difficult to disentangle from the politics out of which it has been born. I believe that too often the technical aspects of the field have been obscured by the political agendas of its advocates. Now, it may be that it is in practice impossible to separate entirely the technology from the context in which it is used, or from the political beliefs of the users: but we should perhaps try harder.

For example, I am always uneasy when conflict resolution is mixed with human rights, partly because I share John Burton's reservations about the entire concept of 'human rights', and because I know from bitter experience that it is very difficult to work with, say, an authoritarian regime if one wants simultaneously to be an advocate for human rights. This is not to say that the concept of human rights is not important, nor that one should always be willing to sup with the devil: merely that the two do not mix. Nor is it to say that conflict resolution should not have a humanitarian or human rights thrust to it - clearly it has and rightly so - but for purely practical reasons it is useful to create some space between its moral and technical aspects. The uncomfortable reality is we have to start from where the 'clients' are rather than from where we are, otherwise the metaphorical baby is liable to be lost along with the political bath water they prefer not to share with us.

Another source of frustration stems from our failure to challenge effectively the adversarial assumption: the belief that the road to resolution must invariably lead first through the dark tunnel of dispute. There will always be situations where the realities of the world dictate adversarial approaches: what major social transformation, for example, has ever come without first some struggle for recognition and justice? But if we can dent the belief that the adversarial way is the only way, then we shall be halfway home, for it is the adversarial assumption which shapes the world to which we have to respond.

Finally, the adversarial assumption gives rise to another factor which inhibits acceptance of the field: fear of conflict itself, whether derived from its perceived destructiveness, its complexities, its embarrassments, or its supposed inevitability. We have tried to address this by directing people's attention to the common dynamics and processes of conflict, the similarities between conflict in different arenas, pointing out that conflict can be positive as well as negative. We try to address conflict as a universal human problem which needs to be approached, like any other problem, with determination and a degree of detachment: separating, as Roger Fisher famously if somewhat simplistically advises in *Getting to Yes,* the people from the problem. It has not worked, perhaps because people are generally unable to make the other crucial separation - between process and content.

Finding credible language in which to talk about conflict resolution; making the technology distinctive yet accessible; mounting a credible challenge to the adversarial assumption; helping people appreciate the underlying connections between conflict in different fields and the consequent need to analyse, to understand, and to separate process and content: these are the critical tasks facing all of us in the conflict resolution field if our ideas are to find their way into the mainstream of social and political life.

These are all 'macro' issues: how can developing the 'micro' skills of practitioners contribute to resolving them? There are several reasons why I believe that filling in the micro blanks could help us to overcome the macro hurdles.

First, while it is the difference in macro approach which produces the paradigm shifts involved in conflict resolution, the macro is the culmination of many differences in micro approach. One of the purposes of this paper is to provoke some reflection on what exactly might be the micro foundations for the macro paradigm shifts, and how might these cumulative micro differences be most effectively expressed in what we do and how we do it.

Secondly, despite all the work which has been done in the field, I feel

conflict resolution has yet to identify a complete set of practices and disciplines which singly or in combination can be described as uniquely its own. It is still too easy for lawyers or diplomats to say: "but we already do this". It seems to me that we judge an expert in any field by his or her ability to make fine judgements: the skilled wine-taster, for example, can identify not only the type of grape used in the wine, and the region from which it comes, but also its vintage and perhaps even the vineyard. What are the equivalent skills in conflict resolution? What are the fine details - the micro skills - which should help to make conflict resolution distinctive as a discipline? What should our interveners be able to do with their training that the lawyer or diplomat recognises he or she is unable to do?

Next, the study of micro decision-making underlines the *designer* aspects of conflict resolution: the need for interveners to design every intervention around the specific needs and interests and values of those particular clients. Conflict resolution has come of age at a time when societies, perplexed by the explosion of diversity, may be increasingly tempted to opt for relatively easy, blanket solutions to complex problems. If this is true at the national level, it is even more so at the international, and it is appropriate that interveners working internationally are becoming ever more aware of the micro decisions inherent in cross-cultural sensitivity. As Saint-Exupéry put it so memorably: *"L'essentiel est invisible pour les yeux"*. At a time when politicians around the world are focusing on the drastic challenges posed by deep-rooted ethnic conflict a determined focus on micro decision-making, and especially on the cultural forces which shape it, is particularly appropriate. This is something which could help to move conflict resolution centre stage.

Finally, there is the question of finding the language to make the ideas of conflict resolution resonate with those whom we need to influence. The language of the intellect, of academia, is one such approach; the language of utility and successful experience is another. The language of micro decision-making complements both: it provides a link between the logic of conflict resolution, the patterns of conflict familiar to practitioners in most fields, and the personal,

everyday needs of interveners.

In summary, building a compendium of micro skills for practitioners will help to distinguish us; it will help to emphasise the approach through process rather than content; it will give us our own distinctive technical language; and leading people to use our language when they talk about conflict should help in time to break down the adversarial assumption. Quite apart from these desirable ends, I believe the micro skills discussed here are of immediate value to interveners.

There is one final point to make. Please read this paper as if it were framed within a huge question mark. Although I have tried to make it as rigorous as possible, there remain in my own thinking, and my experience with using these ideas, large areas of doubt and reservation. The main purpose of this paper is to float some ideas, provoke some debate, and encourage experimentation with micro skills so that we may be better able to gauge their significance.

The fourth reason is that a number of studies have suggested that some of NLP's basic tenets are empirically flawed: that people do not do things how NLP says they do. The empirical evidence for and against, for example, NLP's conception of *representational systems* is beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice to say that I find it *works* most of the time, and when it does not, the fault is usually in me rather than the system. However, this is hardly conclusive either way: while the jury remains out it is probably best to say, in the irritatingly enigmatic style of some NLP literature, that it can be useful to believe that NLP is 'true'. One of the things which NLP and conflict resolution have in common is the willingness to resort to metaphor when 'reality' is inadequate.

Perhaps some of the opposition to approaches such as NLP arises because they do not create concepts or methods where none existed before, but package them in a way which makes them comprehensible, and which enables new sets of tools to be developed around them. These are tools, moreover, which can be used effectively by people with comparatively little formal training. A similar process has happened with Transactional Analysis (TA).

First, many people became able to name existing internal feelings and experiences as Parent, Adult and Child because TA had provided these fluent metaphors to describe the games people play and the types of relationship which underlie them. Then the relative accessibility of these concepts paved the way to a language and a methodology, and suddenly ordinary people could talk about aspects of their behaviour and their relationships which previously had been the preserve of the professionals.

NLP, like Transactional Analysis, is a way of describing what people do or think they do when they are communicating with themselves or others. These descriptions, or 'models' to use the NLP term, describe human behaviour in ways and with a degree of detail which have facilitated the development of a range of interventions in these

In the summer of 1993, before the Norwegian-brokered peace process became public, the Centre for International Understanding (CIU) organised a private conference on the Middle East. It attracted participants from all over the Middle East, including several ambassadors. During the conference it became apparent to me, as one of the facilitation team, that the Israeli and Palestinian representatives were addressing the issues at different logical levels. For example, when the subject of local elections was raised, the Palestinians spoke about the issues in terms of their relevance to the Palestinian sense of identity and nationhood, and the values implicit for them in the holding of such elections. The Israelis responded at the levels of capability (how the results could be secured fairly), behaviour (how voters might be intimidated) and environment (the role of such elections within the wider political context).

All these points, at every level, were relevant and important for both parties to address. Problems arose when the interchanges between the respective parties addressed the issue at different levels. So, for example, the local elections' relevance to Palestinian nationhood would be countered by an Israeli point about the difficulty of safeguarding ballot boxes. An Israeli point about local economic management would be met with a Palestinian point about the need for local autonomy as a vital part of building a stable political identity. The apparent failure to respond directly to the points at issue lead to accusations of bad faith by both sides.

There is a further application of logical levels which can be useful in understanding interpersonal conflict. It is generally true to say that people get on best with those with whom they have most in common. Where there is interpersonal conflict it can be useful to describe each person - or, better still, ask them to describe themselves - in terms of who they are and what they want at each of the logical levels. This can help to identify the source of the differences between them. It may be, for example, that two people are well attuned except for differences at the level of behaviour. Once this becomes apparent, it becomes possible to work out exactly what differences are causing the rift between them.

The same process may be used to help organisations trying to resolve a conflict or if they are contemplating a merger. Looking at similarities and dissimilarities at each logical level provides a framework within which to estimate how compatible they will be. Of all NLP's analytical tools, logical levels are probably among the most useful and adaptable for the purposes of conflict resolution.

It would be wrong to conclude this section without noting some parallels with Oscar Nudler's 'world-view' or 'frame theory' of conflict which he has developed out of a cognitive approach to conflict analysis and resolution (see, for example, *ICAR Newsletter*, Spring 1995). It will be interesting to see to what extent the research being done in this area confirms or conflicts with the NLP approach.

1.4   Perceptual positions

The notion of perceptual positions in NLP is no more than a way of making explicit what is already common and instinctive practice for many interveners. The relevant NLP input may contribute to its value.

There are three perceptual positions from which all life is seen, heard and felt:

PERCEPTUAL POSITIONS

1. *First position* is that in which a person is experiencing the world exclusively from their own point of view.

2. *Second position* is when a person experiences the world from the position of the person or persons with whom he or she is interacting; and

3. *Third position* is that of a detached third party, able to observe dispassionately both first and second positions.

People move between these positions as they attempt to understand others:

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and one might argue that one of the causes of conflict is the inability of some to shift their perceptions sufficiently fluidly to understand how their actions affect others. I would go further: the inability to perform these simple but essential perceptual manoeuvres amounts to an emotional or intellectual disability. The person who is restricted to first position is likely to become a narcissist or egotist; the person perpetually in second position may make a virtue out of victimhood, or spend their life flip-flopping around the need to accommodate others; and third position is for those who prefer to be bystanders rather than participants. All perceptions are accurate but incomplete: only by moving between perceptual positions can interveners and clients alike gain sufficient understanding of the situation they are addressing.

The role of an intervener in conflict is often to help the protagonists to move freely between these positions as they review their own interests and the possibilities for resolving the situation. To stand in the shoes of your enemy can be as enlightening as it is unsettling; likewise, to step back from a conflict and observe it from a distance may alter drastically a participant's computations of cost, risk or legitimacy.

There is a refinement to this process which NLP can offer to the alert intervener. Being in any perceptual position also involves being either *associated* or *dissociated*.

An associated state is one in which a person is fully present and looking through their own eyes at events as they happen. In a dissociated state that person would be observing himself or herself doing the looking, and will appear to be slightly removed or emotionally detached from the action. When this idea is combined with perceptual positions, it means there are six possible ways in which people can participate in a situation. Each of these six ways provides a different viewpoint, a different lens and a different means by which to be involved. By observing them, and suggesting when a change of lens or involvement might be helpful, the intervener can

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facilitate new perceptions of the conflict.

The characteristics of associated and dissociated states are as follows:

ASSOCIATED AND DISSOCIATED STATES

Associated: the person appears fully engaged in the situation: leaning forward, alert, animated, breathing fairly deeply, perhaps a little flushed, using sensorily specific language and identifying their own participation through the use of the personal pronoun.

Dissociated: the person is less animated, may even be slumped down, is breathing relatively shallowly, using abstract and complex language, passive tenses and language which distances him or her from the action.

Taking these into account, the six positions and states through which people participate in conflict are as follows:

PERCEPTUAL POSITIONS AND STATES

1.   **First position, associated**: denotes passionate involvement in the issues, deep commitment, determination, and probably acceptance of the risks involved.

2.   **First position, dissociated**: identifies with the position, but capable of detachment from it: for example, the lawyer fighting for a client, but with no emotional investment in the outcome.

3.   **Second position, associated**: this is the position of empathic understanding: the person who is prepared to stand in an adversary's shoes, see what they see, hear what they hear, feel what they feel.

4.   **Second position, dissociated**: the position of sympathy and intellectual, analytical acceptance of another person's story. The omission of the emotional identification may reduce its value or even make it offensive.

5.   **Third position, associated**: a good position for a third party intervener, expressing non-partisan commitment to resolution of the situation.

6.   **Third position, dissociated**: a useful position from which adversaries and interveners can do a cold, hard analysis of the risks and costs of any action - once any emotional element has been reduced.

These are generalisations about how people are in different perceptual positions. Interveners may find it useful to review which perceptual positions, and whether they are associated or dissociated, they habitually use, and how appropriate which is at what stage in an intervention.

This formulation of perceptual positions can be particularly useful in a multi-party situation, when there will be a variety of perceptual positions and states among participants. One of the useful things to be done by an intervener in a multi-party situation is to hold all the participants in the same position at more or less the same time, and make explicit what these positions are.

If one party is firmly associated in first position, it is probably better that all the others should be too. If they are not, those who are trying to be more objective may resent the non-cooperation of those who remain firmly subjective. Similarly, the value of participants moving to an associated, third position, problem-solving approach may be negated if there are still first position frustrations to be expressed, or if they have yet to experience the second position perceptions of their adversaries.

In most situations people will move between perceptual positions, and will be associated or dissociated according to how strongly they feel about the immediate issue. The ideal, should one ever aspire to it, would probably be to move people from first, through second, to third position: and from associated to dissociated according to whether commitment or detachment would be most useful at that moment from

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that position.

1.5   Parts Analysis

NLP shares with many schools of therapy the belief that human personality is not monolithic: that every individual is made up of several *parts*, some of which may be pulling or leading him or her in quite contrary directions. An example of this is the person who, in a conflict situation, says "Part of me wants to fight this all the way; and part of me just wants to settle the whole matter and be done with it."

Such a statement is a gift to the intervener, because it describes exactly how that person perceives his or her current experience, and it invites the question "Which part wants what?", which will enable the person to reflect on their internal divisions, and encourage an objective consideration of the options open to them. Involvement in conflict tends to exacerbate people's internal divisions: it highlights the fractures suppressed in times of peace. The same is true of departments, organisations, and governments: when the going gets tough, the cracks emerge: which is why conflict can be such a positive and useful experience for an organisation, just as it can contribute to the growth and ultimately a sense of integrity for an individual.

What is to be done when the warring parts emerge?

PARTS NEGOTIATION AND INTEGRATION

1.   Make explicit and name the identity of each part, whether they are departments in an organisation or parts of an individual personality.

2.   Use the well-formedness criteria to discover what outcomes each part considers would meet its needs.

3. Use a brainstorming or similar method to generate a range of options which might meet their needs.

4. Negotiate these options among the parts. If dealing with a fractured individual, ask them to consider how each part of themselves would respond to the options available. The ability of people to do this can be quite surprising.

5. Assist the participants in this exercise to agree to whichever option is most acceptable to all or a majority of the parts. If agreement appears impossible, if an individual remains hopelessly divided over an issue, it is possible that the type of intervention is inappropriate or inopportune.

The tendency to believe that personality is monolithic probably accounts for many failures of intervention, whether in the conflict or therapeutic field. A monolithic sense of self, whether in an intervener or a therapist, can be a severe impediment to understanding conflict. It may lead a counsellor to work with the sober part of an alcoholic, for example, which is not the part which is the problem; or the mediator to work with the parts of a husband or wife which want a divorce, while overlooking the parts which would prefer the marriage to continue. Some problems need to be addressed intrapsychically before they can be resolved interpersonally.

One of the most obvious ways in which dissonant parts manifest themselves is through projection: it is as if the dissonant part attributes its behaviour to the other person in order to avoid damaging the integrity of the whole self at a moment of stress. This is one example of how apparently destructive behaviour may at some level have a positive intent. It can in fact be useful to believe that every part of a person, whatever it is doing, has a positive intent: it is trying to do something for the person. The job of the intervener may be to discover that intent, and help the person find ways of satisfying it which will be acceptable to the other parts.

The treatment of personality as monolithic becomes even more misleading when the complex issues around cultural or gender conflict arise. This is really beyond the

scope of this paper, but it is worth commenting that slotting individuals into cultural or gender boxes is as potent a source of conflict as pigeonholing them in any other way. If NLP teaches nothing else, it makes powerfully apparent that people are always more than the labels we find useful to stick on them.

Parts work, as it is known, is of immense value in a therapeutic context, working with a single individual. Can it be translated to the communal or political arena? The example which springs to mind is of running a large consensus-building exercise around the future of a certain lake in Northern England. The community appeared to be solidly polarised for and against a particular plan, and a public enquiry was due to be announced to allow debate of this single issue to be followed by a ruling on it. In the first public session it became apparent to me that the particular issue around which the warring parties had polarised was not, in fact, the only or the most important issue: it was merely the one which united two factions within the community. Standard consensus-building process tools rapidly revealed many other issues, and the fractures and different purposes within the two sides became increasingly clear.

The concept of 'parts' would not have added much of value to any experienced intervener in such circumstances; but it might have prevented any inclination towards an adversarial enquiry which could only muddy further the already muddy waters (a singularly appropriate metaphor, as it happens).

2. The Empathic Tools

This section describes understandings and tools which can enable interveners to establish greater degrees of empathy with their clients. The first, *states,* is not a tool, but understanding states is an essential precursor to establishing any degree of

empathy or *rapport* as it is usually described in NLP parlance. The final part of the section briefly looks at *anchors,* which are tools used in therapeutic practice, but which should also be understood by interveners in conflict. This section also describes the *meta-mirror*, one of NLP's most powerful exercises for increasing one's understanding of someone else.

2.1   States

NLP defines the *state* of a person as the sum of his or her physical and neurological condition at a particular moment. The exact description of a person's state will be arrived at by one or both of the following ways: first, by simply asking the client "how are you?" and continuing to ask until a reasonably detailed description is provided. Close attention should be paid to the exact language the person uses: often lay terms such as "a touch of butterflies in the stomach" can be very vivid. The asking process also enables the intervener to *calibrate* to that state: in other words, to notice what that person looks or sounds like, or how they hold themselves, when subject to their butterflies.

Every internal state has associated with it certain external indicators. Once they have been calibrated for the individual it becomes possible to monitor the effect on them of every intervention or influence thereafter. This information may be useful later when, should that precise tone of voice or physical posture reappear, it may indicate the return of the butterflies.

The second source of state description is by observation. When asked about themselves, people will often assume an expression or a posture which expresses how they feel more quickly and sometimes more accurately than their verbalisation of it. It also enables the practitioner to check for *congruence*: that what they say is replicated in what they do. Again, this also provides opportunities for calibration.

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The main physical manifestations of state to observe are breathing, posture, weight distribution, organisation of physiology, movements of limbs and upper body, skin colour and tone, and eye movements. While this degree of observation is uncommon, it is not in itself different from that used everyday to notice when someone is happy or sad. If there is no direct evidence, we tend to call such observation 'intuition' - which should be properly defined as the capacity to absorb data unconsciously *and have access to it*.

Calibration is attuning observation to subtle changes and to things noticed unconsciously, as , for example, when one gets the feeling that someone is lying. That is usually unconscious calibration: the person is not behaving in the way he or she does when telling the truth. Similarly, people often know what a close friend or partner will say before it is said: the 'yes' or 'no' which follows an invitation will usually confirm what is already known from the non-verbal response.

There are several areas of relevance for conflict resolution in the reading and calibration of states. First, calibrating a state means paying much closer attention to a person than normal. Providing this is done in a spirit of empathy rather than intrusion, this in itself will tend to be rewarded: it lays the foundations for a deeper relationship.

Second, it furnishes verbal and non-verbal information about the client's responses which may be useful later. If, for example, a client's distressed state can be discerned through skin tone or rate of breathing, should the intervener observe such a change later in the proceedings, he or she will know that a sensitive point has been touched upon. This is a skill professional gamblers have exercised for centuries.

Third, and perhaps more controversially, calibrating a client's state is an essential precursor for the intervener before an attempt is made to change it, should

that be desirable and ethically acceptable. Why should one want to change a state? Because associated with any state are certain *resources*, which determine what that person is able to do in that state. For example, the warm-up routines of athletes are designed to do more than loosen up the muscles. They put them into a state of readiness for peak performance: calling up all their resources of stamina and determination. If the current state is not the required one, then it needs to be changed: and sometimes it may be the intervener who has to facilitate this change. This brings us to *rapport.*

2.2 Rapport

Rapport is used in NLP as a technical term to describe a relationship of intense empathy: for an NLP practitioner it means becoming aligned with the client to the extent that he or she can influence the state of the client. Rapport is achieved by letting clients know in verbal and non-verbal ways that the practitioner understands them, values them, and is able to share their understanding of the world.

The verbal methods include *pacing* clients' own *beliefs* and *values*, and by using their own *predicates*, and *meta-programs* (see sections 3. and 4.) to indicate that you can share their map of the world. The best possible communication and relationship with another person means building rapport at every *logical level*.

The non-verbal methods are *matching* and *mirroring.* Matching means adopting parts of the other person's behaviour, such as their posture, while mirroring means replicating it exactly. Matching can also involve using the same pitch and tone of voice, pace of breathing, and use of gestures or limb movements. Pacing someone to establish rapport, however, involves more than just crossing your arms at the same time. It is one part of gaining entrance to their world: but it must go hand in hand with understanding what they want, and demonstrating some appreciation of the motivations and values which underlie their ambitions, and how they express them.

The process of gaining and holding rapport through the combination of verbal, non-verbal and analytical tools serves the other person as well as the intervener: reflecting people back to themselves often helps them to be clearer about what they want and where they are going.

The significance of entering people's worlds through these seemingly over-subtle non-verbal ways should not be under-estimated. It has been established (M. Argyle et al., *British Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* Vol.9, 1970, pp222-31) that in a presentation before a group of people, 55% of a speaker's impact is determined visually - by posture, gesture and eye contact; 38% tonally - by tone of voice; and only 7% by content. I have heard rumours of more recent work which suggests that the visual component is becoming ever more significant - perhaps up to 75% - as our video culture develops. This is not great news for those of us who write books or are bad at including diagrams in our work.

So rapport is the process of establishing and maintaining a relationship of mutual trust and understanding with someone, and thereby being able to generate responses from them. In short, it enables practitioners to gain influence with their clients. The dangers of such leverage are clear: the following generic example may indicate the benefits.

An intervener has persuaded Person A to change her negotiating stance. Person B, however, feels unable to make a decision either to accept or reject the new offer. This is a situation in which Person B might benefit from being in a more resourceful state: where he would feel sufficiently empowered to make an important decision.

During the early stages of the intervention, the intervener had observed that Person B spoke more firmly when sitting in an upright position and breathing slowly and from the stomach. Several hours on, B is now slumped in his chair, almost silent,

and is breathing fast and shallowly. To maintain rapport, the intervener has been carefully *pacing* B's state by adopting similar voice tones and pitch, and she has also been *matching* some of his postures and his breathing.

The intervener now tests this rapport by slowing her breathing. If B's breathing also slows, the intervener now slowly moves into a more upright posture, all the while talking to B in a gradually lower and firmer voice. If the intervener is skilful, and the rapport is good, Person B will follow her into what was formerly his more resourceful state. The intervener then poses the decision which has to be made, and he will respond from a state in which he feels empowered to respond as he chooses.

To those who would say that this amounts to manipulation of Person B, the response has to be that the purpose of manipulation would be to reduce rather than enhance B's freedom of decision. It could also be argued that the failure to ensure that B is in a resourceful state before making a decision is much more likely to result in manipulation. It should also be said that most interveners already try to establish rapport with their clients; NLP simply offers a model to do it more effectively.

There are some further aspects of rapport which it is worth interveners bearing mind. First, it is possible to disagree with someone much more radically if there is rapport with them: they can be strongly contradicted without damaging the relationship providing that rapport is maintained. There are many points in an intervention when someone may have to be confronted quite forcefully. If rapport is already well established, such a confrontation is less likely to be interpreted as a personal attack.

Secondly, interveners should be aware of rapport if only to avoid the dangers of breaking it. An evening's observation in a restaurant or at a party will confirm that matching, mirroring and pacing are entirely natural processes: people do it unconsciously all the time with those whose company they value. Once rapport is

established, the accidental breaking of it can be very damaging - partly because one or other of the parties may imagine that it has been done deliberately.

Thirdly, breaking rapport deliberately can also be useful: if, for example, a conversation needs to be terminated or switched onto a new track. It may also be useful to break rapport at one level while maintaining it another. In meetings when time is short, for example, once a range of rapport is achieved it becomes possible to cut people off by breaking superficial rapport (eg. eye contact) and moving on to a different subject without damaging the deeper rapport.

The same strategy can be used in a multi-party situation, especially when there are large numbers of people in a room and it is necessary to maintain rapport with the entire group and with individual members of it. Once rapport is established with the group as a whole, usually, for obvious reasons, by pacing beliefs and values rather than physical states, it becomes useful to establish a shallower rapport with individuals. (Establishing deep rapport with individuals in a group setting may be counter-productive: there are always some with whom it is easier to get rapport than others, and the others may perceive it as bias or favouritism.) Shallow rapport helps people feel included in the group, and also enables an intervener to cut them short without alienating them.

There is one final aspect of rapport which interveners would do well to bear in mind: rapport with oneself. Rapport with oneself is the basis of personal congruence - the alignment of who one is with what one does. If you are out of rapport with yourself, it becomes much more difficult to establish rapport with others. If, being out of rapport, you have to coerce yourself, then you will probably coerce others too.

2.3 The Meta-mirror

Some NLP exercises are powerful enough to make one wary of providing

written instructions for them: they really need to be learned in the company of an experienced practitioner who can clear up the mess if something goes wrong. The basic form of the meta-mirror exercise is not unique to NLP, but its NLP-influenced refinements make it very powerful. It is included here because its absence would mean a large hole in the paper: but this description should not be taken as a guide for actually using it. I would suggest training from a registered NLP trainer before attempting to use it.

The meta-mirror is basically a sophisticated way to put yourself in someone else's shoes and thereby understand them better. Most interveners probably do exercises during their training which in some way put them on the receiving end of what they are saying or doing and enable them to experience themselves as others do. The meta-mirror develops and refines this practice. I will explain its moves and then an example of what it can do.

THE META-MIRROR

1.   Decide your outcome for the exercise: do you just want some insight into the other person, or would you prefer to change to change the relationship in some way, or perhaps influence or stand up to them more effectively?

2.   Imagine a situation in which you might encounter the person you want to understand better. Settle into the state in which you would be when with them. Imagine how they would look and sound, and note what feelings you experience, what thoughts come to mind, and any physiological effect on you. Take several minutes to experience fully all of these.

3.   Move out of that position and 'break the state' mentally and physically.

4.   Now move to wherever you imagined the other person to be, and physically become them. Take up their physiological stance and expression and other characteristics as accurately as you can. Take as long as necessary to feel that you are as fully them as you can be: an observer who knows the person you are mirroring is a great asset, and

often will notice an almost audible *click* as you finally fit into their skin. When you have achieved this, begin to explore the person's thoughts and feelings about *you.*

This can be a very disturbing experience: often people will suddenly understand aspects of their 'mirror's' behaviour which had previously seemed inexplicable or irrational. 'Becoming the enemy' - because people usually want to do this with people they find 'difficult' - can be supremely unsettling and emotionally draining.

5.   When you have experienced all there is to experience, move out of your mirror's position and break the state. Take a moment to recover.

The process to now, when done properly, will have been extremely revealing. The next stage is to make use of whatever revelations you have had.

THE META-MIRROR continued
6.   Take up a position a little apart from where you began (see diagram). Look at the original you, and at your mirror, and explore what comes to mind. It can be useful to ask what the original you would need by way of additional resources in order to achieve any change you want; it can also be revealing to ask how old is the original you.

Still in this position, find an example of when you have had the resources you have identified and have dealt successfully with someone the way you would like to deal with your mirror, and fully take on the state which those additional resources would enable you to have.

7.   Break the state, and move to a position from which you can see the original you and the resourceful you, and swap them over. It is important to do this with determination and commitment, and do not pause to think that this not 'real', or that it is just 'head games': what else, after all is imagination - and yet it is one of the most powerful of human tools.

8.   Now move back into your mirror and find out what it is like to be faced with the new, resourceful you. You may be surprised by how the mirror instantly adapts to this new person, and an alert observer will notice physiological shifts. If the mirror's response is positive, then you

may have the answer to dealing with this person; if not, you may want to return to the resource-gaining state at stage 6 and repeat the following stages until you have found the right resources to elicit the response you want from the mirror.

9.   Finally, when you have achieved all you want, return to the position of the original you, now the resourceful you, fully integrate yourself and experience how it will be for you when next you encounter your mirror. This last part of the exercise is known as *future pacing* in NLP: it helps to anchor (see below) your new behaviour to the sight of the person you have mirrored.

MAIN META-MIRROR MOVES

1. 'Original' you   **2. 'Mirror': the other person**

3. Discovering 'resourceful'   **4. Position from which to**
   you   swap 1 & 3.

Now, many readers may doubt the value of this arcane and faintly ridiculous choreography. Let me give you an example of using it.

Not long after first learning the meta-mirror, I used it with an individual who was involved in a serious conflict with one of her subordinates. This conflict was such that it was affecting the functioning of the organisation for which they both worked. She was understandably reluctant to do the meta-mirror, but finally agreed. In the first stage, as she imagined being confronted with her subordinate, her frustration and hostility were painfully apparent. When she had to become her subordinate, her discomfort increased still further. Then there was a moment of

incredulity, and she muttered something to the effect that she reminded this person of their mother. She then went on to describe in rich detail the effect of her behaviour and why it elicited such a poor response from her subordinate: all of this leading to the understanding which had previously eluded her. The effect of this for her was quite revolutionary.

For an intervener, the meta-mirror is an elaborate process which demands time and skill, and some determination to help people use it properly. While it is always useful in a situation of one-on-one conflict, it would be interesting to experiment - using appropriate safeguards - with using it for an entire group to improve its understanding of another group.

2.4 Anchors

It is appropriate to include a note here about *anchors* because they can be powerful elements in any conflict. An anchor is basically something with which a person associates a particular state: to use a personal example, I always wear cuff-links when giving a presentation to lawyers. They have particular associations for me, and they help me to create the kind of state and use the type of language which goes down well with that particular audience.

Conflict often persists and escalates because people trigger negative anchors for each other. Interpersonally, for example, voices are potent anchors: many a marriage founders because the partners end up experiencing only the negative feelings conveyed by the sound of their partner's voice. Likewise, a skilful intervener knows that changing the pitch or pace of their speech also changes the state of their clients: a slow pace may be an anchor for sensitivity to opponents' concerns, while a faster pace may anchor the need for a more decisive approach to their own concerns.

Anchors are not confined to the auditory. Flags are potent international anchors, as well as signs and symbols, for which people are prepared to fight and die. Certain places act as anchors: churches and cathedrals anchor a receptiveness to the religious; a conference hall in which one once heard a powerful speech may prompt a shiver of recollection a decade later.

Interveners need to be aware that anchors trigger associations and therefore emotions. If a certain word, or phrase or even gesture provokes a negative response, then it should be avoided. If one party is constantly triggering negative anchors for the other, then it is up to the intervener to notice and point it out.

3. Language and Communication Tools

Language is one of the tools of NLP: indeed, NLP originated from the close study of how people use language to process and represent their experience to themselves and to others. We should also remember that language is both a major cause of conflict and our principle vehicle for its resolution. It cannot be used too mindfully. NLP has a curious aphorism regarding communication: *the meaning of any communication is the response it gets.* It places responsibility for communication firmly on the communicator, and also presupposes the need for flexibility in *how* you communicate: if the desired response is not forthcoming, do something different.

There are three NLP language tools which are potentially useful to interveners in conflict. They are *representational systems, the meta model* and *meta programs and sorting styles.*

3.1   Representational Systems

NLP says that people's thinking and remembering and communicating and experiencing has to be stored in one or more of the five human senses of sight, hearing, feeling, touch, taste and smell. These five senses provide the five *representational systems* through which experience is turned into language. People use all these systems all the time, but they tend to have preferences. An artist, for example, may tend to imagine things in pictures, whereas a musician may use sounds or a sculptor, touch.

These preferences can be apparent from the words which each of these individuals uses. The artist may use words which express a visual understanding (she may understand *clearly*, have a good *focus* etc), while the musician may express himself in terms of how things *sound.* Because we use language to code and communicate our thoughts, so the words we use reflect the way we think. Our preferred representational systems become apparent from our language and our preferred *predicates*. Examples of common predicates, and words and phrases which reflect our representational systems, are as follows:

EXAMPLES OF SENSORY-BASED WORDS AND PHRASES

Visual: look, picture, imagination, insight, scene, envision, perspective, shine, reflect, clarify, focus, illustrate, notice, outlook, show, survey; I see what you mean, I am looking at the idea, I have a hazy notion, he has a blind spot, show me what you mean, it appears to me, taking a dim view, beyond a shadow of doubt, the future looks bright.

Auditory: say, accent, rhythm, loud, tone, resonate, sound, monotonous, ring, ask, discuss, proclaim, remark, listen, ring, shout, speechless, vocal, silence, dissonant, harmonious, quiet; on the same wavelength, rings a bell, calling the tune, music to my ears, word for word, unheard of, well expressed, in a manner of speaking, loud and clear.

Kinaesthetic: touch, handle, contact, solid, warm, cold, rough, tackle, push, pressure, sensitive, stress, tangible, tension, concrete, grasp, hold, heavy, smooth; I can grasp that idea, hold on a second, a cool customer,

thick skinned, scratch the surface, I can't put my finger on it, firm foundation, heated argument.

Olfactory and gustatory: stale, bitter, taste, fresh, flavour, nosy; a fishy situation, a bitter pill, a taste for the good life, an acid comment.

Before moving on to the relevance of representational systems for interveners, it is worth noting that not all language uses representational systems. For example, it is unusual to find this sort of sensory specific language in academic texts: it is too subjective. Instead there will be many sensorily 'neutral' words such as understand, interpret, perceive.

One of the problems of sensorily neutral words is that they do not allow people to access their sensory systems. If this goes on long enough, people begin to lose any sense of what the person is really saying, and his or her audience will emerge from the lecture hall saying things like: "I couldn't quite grasp his point", or, "I didn't see what she was getting at", or "It seemed to be up in the air". There is a lesson here beyond the obvious one for any public speaker. It seems likely that people cope with non-sensory language by interpreting and coding it into language which suits their own sensory preferences even if they never so verbalise it. Different people will do this differently according to their different preferences: and this may explain some sources of conflict around meanings.

A similar process may explain the problems people have with legal language. Legal language tends to be gutted of predicates, again in the name of objectivity. It is literally de-sensitised and so de-humanised. It is probably significant that many clients emerge from mediation saying that it is more of a 'human' process than the law. This may be because mediation works in part by digging beneath the legal language and finding the human needs and interests which have been obscured, and translating them into sensory language to which people can relate.

There are a number of relevant points here. First, communication is most effective when it enables people to access their sensory systems. I have tried in writing this paper, for example, to use language which will give the reader some sense (yes!) of what NLP is and how it works by describing my personal experience of it and using examples, rather than relying on a more detached but academically more respectable style. Interveners, likewise, should be wary of slipping into the legal or academic vernacular, especially when dealing with issues which have an emotional charge. Using sensorily neutral language may be unconsciously interpreted as a denial of legitimate emotion.

Secondly, there are implications here for building rapport. Using the same predicates as the other person tells them that you construct the world the same way they do: to use the language, you will see eye to eye, be on the same wavelength, or build a solid understanding.

Thirdly, it can be useful to 'translate' from one representational system to another. If the intervener notes that one client has a visual preference, and the other an auditory preference, it may be useful to translate the language of the first person into the representational system preferred by the second. For example, the 'vision' of the architect may have to be translated into 'solid' plans for the contractor.

Fourthly, people use their representational systems in sequences, known in NLP jargon as *strategies.* So, for example, an intervener notices that Person A has a particular strategy: they start visually, then translate the visual into kinaesthetic (feelings), then into internal dialogue. When they have finished talking to themselves, they make a decision.

If Person B makes an offer to them, the intervener could pass it on by giving them a picture, asking them how it would feel, and then saying "Perhaps you should think it over?" Following their strategy makes it easier for them to understand what

themselves in internal dialogue they tend to lean their head on one side in the 'telephone' position, and repeat words under their breath. People feeling their way through the world will, on the other hand, breathe relatively deeply, speak in a lower and deeper tone than others, pausing often, and may appear generally more relaxed than others.

Representational systems and eye movements are two of the conceptions for which NLP is best known, and the controversy around them is apt to blind people to much else in NLP which is less spectacular but possibly more useful.
For a start, understanding the functioning of representational systems is one route into understanding how people create their internal maps and models of the world - which shape how they behave, act and react. This internal world is created, says NLP, through the constant interaction of our internal experience with our external or sensory experience, and behaviour only makes sense when viewed in the context of the choices generated by these models of the world. This subject is further elaborated in section 4.1.

3.2 The Meta-Model

The Meta Model was the first NLP tool. It provides a means to make language more accurate, and thereby to avoid the black holes in communication which result from the need to code complex thoughts and ideas into relatively straightforward language. Its value to interveners can be immense, because accuracy, as much as truth, is the first victim of conflict.

The Meta Model is based on the observation that the language human beings use in order to communicate with each other becomes progressively more detached

The Meta Model is a sequence of questions designed to replace deleted information, reshape what has been distorted, and make specific what has been generalised. It provides, at the very least, an important checklist for interveners in situations which are being publicly reported, and it could be used to help clients unravel whatever misperceptions arise in such a situation.

One word of caution should be mentioned to interveners thinking of using the Meta Model. These linguistic devices are universal and deeply ingrained, and challenging them can be experienced as aggressive, pedantic, and intrusive. It is essential to question them indirectly and gently, using softening phrases such as "I wonder..." or "I am curious to know how..." It should also be used in the context of well-established rapport and a pre-defined outcome: the client needs to know that their use of language is not being picked to pieces merely for the intervener's amusement.

NLP identifies the following particular bear-traps which the Meta Model questions are designed to spring:

THE META MODEL

Deletions

1.   **Unspecified nouns**: for example, the sentence "The community is outraged" is often used in the press. The Meta Model would ask *what community, who is this community*?

2.   **Unspecified verbs**: for example, following on the above example, *how is the community outraged?*

3.   **Comparisons**: often used in isolation and disguised as adverbs, such as in "The meeting went badly". The Meta Model would ask *badly compared with what?*

4.   **Judgments**: often hiding inside adverbs: "This policy is clearly wrong." *Clearly to whom? And on what grounds?*

5.   **Nominalizations**: the interesting process by which process words

are turned into nouns, and in the course of it lose their meaning. A good example is *education*. Unless one knows *who is educating whom, about what, and how,* the word is meaningless.

Nominalizations are probably the single most dangerous language pattern because they subvert meaning so insidiously and so silently. Other examples of common nominalizations are *government, respect, discipline, punishment, justice* and so on. All of them useful shorthand because we think we know what we mean by them: but these meanings are not shared.

A classic recent example has been the conflict around the concept of *federalism* in Europe. Given that all federal systems differ, the word has little meaning unless those using it indicate who devolves how much of which power to whom.

Nominalizations are generally fostered by elites, professions, sometimes even whole cultures, to give the illusion of being special, and to give an impression of emotional invulnerability - because nominalizations always depersonalize experience.

Generalizations

6.   Modal Operators of Possibility: a cumbersome term to describe words such as *can, cannot, possible, impossible.* These are words used by people to deny capability, when what they are really seeking is to avoid choice, as for example when a client says "I cannot do that" when what they mean is "I do not want to do that." The Meta Model challenge is "What would happen if you did..." or "What stops you?"

7.   Modal Operators of Necessity: this covers words such as *should, should not, ought, must* etc. They imply the existence of some set of rules or sanctions, but these are never specified, and, again, they are mechanisms for limiting choice and behaviour. Challenge by asking "Who says?" or "What would happen if you did?"

8.   Universal Quantifiers: these are the words used to generalize, such as *all, always, never, none, every.* They are potent substitutes for thought and discrimination; they encourage prejudice, narrow-mindedness and ignorance. They also have their uses: "war is always costly". They should be challenged by asking about exceptions.

Distortions

9.   **Complex Equivalence:** these are ideas or statements linked in such a way that they are taken to mean the same thing. For example, "Russians do not often smile.... they have little sense of humour."

10.   **Presuppositions:** the danger of these is well known to every defence lawyer whose client is asked "Why don't you stop beating your wife/husband?"   *Why* questions are only one way of disguising presuppositions. Others are sentences containing *since, when , if* or verbs such as *ignore, realise, or be aware*. Challenge by filling in the presupposition.

11.   **Cause and Effect:** perhaps a cultural as well as a linguistic phenomenon, this denotes the linear thinking which tends to link things causally when they should not be. For example, "The fog caused the accident". Fog cannot wrestle cars into colliding with each other. When this type of spurious cause and effect arises it is best to ask how specifically the one causes the other.

12.   **Mind Reading:** this is another potent source of conflict, and comes in two types. In the first, someone assumes they know what another person is thinking or feeling, as in "You are angry with me". The other is the mirror of the first: "You should have known how I would feel about that". In both these cases knowledge of an internal state is being presumed. The response in each case should be "How specifically do you know/could I have known..."

Using the Meta Model

The Meta Model has three major uses for interveners. First, it encourages accurate information gathering and discourages the assumption that one knows the other person's model of the world. As NLP repeats, frequently, *the map is not the territory*: the world conveyed by language is not the world itself but a representation of it. The inadequacies of language to reflect everything we mean demands that, if precise understanding is important, we take time to colour in the continents and shade in the valleys.

Secondly, the Meta Model can do much to clarify meanings by asking for more specific information and focusing on the need for linguistic precision in conflict situations. Thirdly, it challenges the rules and limitations placed on the world by linguistic devices such as universal quantifiers and modal operators. As conflict also has this effect, one of the roles of an intervener is to open up choices and areas of possibility that the clients have intentionally or unintentionally closed down through the language they use.

3.3   Meta Programs and Sorting Styles

Meta Programs

'Meta program' is the term NLP uses to denote an underlying pattern in a person's language. Identifying someone's meta programs is useful largely for building rapport with them: if you use the same meta programs when speaking to them, they will tend to assume that you understand the world the same way. From the intervener's point of view, they can also reveal significant differences in how different clients approach a mutual problem: a potent example of this will be given in a moment.

Meta programs tend to take the form of dichotomies: people either use one or the other. They may not use them consistently, but they will usually have a preference, and that is the one which interveners need to identify. Some common meta programs are:

COMMON META-PROGRAMS

Pro-active	Reactive
Moving towards	Moving away
Possibility	Necessity
External	Internal
Self	Others

Such differences of personal style and preference appear trivial; at least, so I certainly thought until confronted with the consequences. This examples relates again to the CIU conference in Malahide in 1993. My discourse analysis of the opening speeches of the conference suggested significant meta program differences between the Israeli and Palestinian representatives. Put simply, the Israelis tended to describe the political situation in the Middle East in terms of what they were trying to move away from, while the Palestinians talked specifically about what they were moving towards. The differences of language resulting from this were continual and pronounced. Less pronounced, though also noticeable, was the Israelis' tendency to use language denoting necessity, whereas the Palestinians were more inclined to look for possibility.

The first of these meta programs, the moving towards/moving away difference, was borne out when one of the Palestinians commented, during a break, that they would find the Israelis much easier to deal with "if we knew what they wanted". This remark can be interpreted in two ways. First, it is always easier to negotiate with someone who is clear about what they want (the reason for using the outcome frame and well-formedness criteria). Secondly, it is always easier to work with someone who operates the same way.

Is the use of language, for which all sorts of historical and cultural reasons can be surmised, affecting the ability of Israelis and Palestinians to negotiate with each other, or is their situation determining the language they use? As George Orwell says somewhere, "If thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought". This vivid experience of meta-programs contributing to misunderstanding convinces me of their value in any cross-cultural training.

Sorting Styles

"Seeing is believing" says the old adage. It may be more accurate to say "Believing is seeing", in that what we look for tends to be what we find. NLP suggests that people's looking is determined by their *sorting styles*: the preferences which shape *how* they look. Some common sorting styles, again expressed as dichotomies, are as follows:

COMMON SORTING STYLES

Similarities among differences	Differences among similarities
5-7 years ahead	1-1.5 years ahead
Evolutionary change	Revolutionary change
Commonalities	Differences
Things to take along	Things to leave behind
How things fit together	How things don't fit together
Maintaining the status quo	Change
Big 'chunks' (of information etc)	Small 'chunks'

These are not, of course, the only sorting styles which people use, and again one individual may not use the same style exclusively. Nor should the layout above be taken to mean that there are only two sorting styles: the columns are for the purposes of horizontal contrast rather than vertical clustering.

If close attention is paid to someone's language over a period of time, it may become evident that they habitually look, for example, for the differences between things rather than the similarities. The consequences for this can be considerable: an accountant looking for evidence of corrupt practice may be more likely to find it if she sorts by difference rather than similarity. Similarly, very few successful entrepreneurs have reactive meta programs and a sorting style which favours the status quo. Lawyers and business people usually have different preferences for 'chunk size': the lawyers prefer small chunks, details; business people find this frustrating and go for the big picture. These are, like all generalisations, only partly true.

Meta programs can be summed up as peoples' underlying preferences for a way of operating in the world, and sorting styles can be summed up as what a person prefers to pay attention to. The intervener who identifies these preferences can often explain to combatants some of the reasons for their differences. If one or the other programs and sorts by self, for example, it is quite possible that they are oblivious to the needs of the other person. On the other hand, the person who is geared to others may become oblivious of their own interests. If a married couple sort by reference to different timelines, they are likely to have different priorities and allocate their resources differently. From this it also follows that interveners need to ensure that their work reflects the sorting styles of their clients.

Meta programs and sorting styles are valuable for identifying and understanding problems for which there is no obvious cause. They require close attention to the use of language, and the ability to notice sometimes quite widely spaced patterns. A recording of exchanges can be invaluable for helping to detect these patterns. These are also useful rapport building tools: using the same programs and styles as a client is a powerful way to convey understanding of their map of the world.

4.   Latent Ideas

From the preceding sections it will probably be apparent that NLP has much to say about the intricacies of relationships between people, and the tools described so far are those which may be of direct help to interveners in developing their conflict resolution skills.

This section is less specifically about intervention, although many of its points will be relevant to conflict resolution. It is described as 'Latent Ideas' because these are ways of thinking around subjects of relevance to conflict resolution which are still in the process of development.

4.1   Beliefs

'Beliefs' here is used not in the sense of religious beliefs, though those may relate to them, but in the sense used in the fourth of the logical levels described in the first section. Beliefs form part of the inner maps people construct in order to make sense of the world, and to guide their behaviour in it. Some may indeed be based on religious principles, but others will mainly be generalisations based on early teaching or experience, cultural expectations, or derived from powerful experiences later in life. A belief can often be a decision made about a single experience which is then generalised to cover all experience. Beliefs compel people to behave in certain ways, and they also supply potent reasons for not doing things - sometimes things which the believer would otherwise want to do.

NLP says beliefs are how people preserve the generalisations that what they are doing makes sense. When people believe something, they act as if it is true, and they also use it as a powerful perceptual filter (believing is seeing) which makes it very difficult to disprove. Actions and situations are interpreted through the filter of the belief, and of course future actions tend to be planned in a way which accords with the pre-extant belief. This correlates to some extent with the placebo effect in medicine: some 15-40% of patients will respond to a drug if they believe it will work - even if it has no pharmacological effect.

Beliefs have nothing to do with truth, and they are not necessarily 'rational': their purpose is to make sense of the reality perceived by the individual who holds them. They have their own internal logic, but it is not always the logic of the everyday, and sometimes the logic is discernible only to the person for whom the belief makes sense. Beliefs, even objectively illogical ones, are constructed to be self-supporting so that they 'prove' that the world is as its holder believes it to be. For this reason beliefs usually come in systems rather than singly: the whole constellation

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of beliefs has to be found before any of its individual stars makes sense. Because beliefs come in systems they also act as very effective cognitive security blankets which filter, shape and determine matters of fundamental concern to those who hold them, and which can hold up well in the face of whatever evidence is thrown against them.

Interveners should be aware of how beliefs are held and affect people for several reasons. First, beliefs cause conflict because different people have different beliefs about what is 'real' and what is 'true'. And different parts of people (see Parts Analysis in the first section) have different beliefs in different contexts. If conflict is being caused by beliefs, they must be made explicit by asking people to clarify what lies behind their actions or their positions.

This can be quite time-consuming because many of people's most powerful beliefs are not held consciously. Participating in a cross-cultural or race awareness training is an excellent way of realising how deeply buried some highly potent beliefs can be. To bring such beliefs into consciousness it can be useful to reverse the questions and ask people what they are *not* aware of believing, to explore what they *might* be believing, to ask what beliefs draw boundaries around them, or even why they have a need for a certain belief. When beliefs do finally emerge into consciousness there can be quite profound changes in the physiology of the person: beliefs are held viscerally and often the expression of them promotes a relaxation of tension in the stomach and upper body.

Interveners should not expect, however, that talking about beliefs or challenging them will cause them to be changed: usually the holder has too heavy an investment in their beliefs to give them up quickly or willingly. The purpose of talking about them is to reveal what is belief, and what is fact and truth based on evidence. Interveners can make clear that they respect the right of a person to hold particular beliefs, and simply want to understand them in order to help that person reach a solution to their

problem which is consistent with their beliefs. In some circumstances it might be appropriate to explain that while a belief may be useful, it does impose certain limitations on a person's freedom of choice, and it is just as well to know what those limitations are. An intervener faced with an immoveable belief usually has to work with rather than against it: but first it has to be identified for what it is.

Secondly, beliefs reveal incongruencies in the way their holders operate because major beliefs affect people's sense of meaning, causes and identity. Making their beliefs explicit can produce cognitive dissonance sufficient to cause changes in policy or direction. One example of this for me was the effect of confronting Dutch Reformed Church leaders in South Africa with the un-Christian effects of the apartheid policy which they supported until the mid-1980s. The dissonance between their beliefs and their actions, and the effect of this on their sense of Christian identity, meant that either their beliefs or their actions had to change.

Thirdly, interveners should take care to notice the metaphors which people and organisations use because, beliefs being abstract, they are often expressed in the form of metaphors. Metaphors are also an effective form of expression for those who have beliefs rather than evidence: people talk about believing when they have no factually-based answers, and often they will have stronger opinions precisely because of this.

Fourthly, resistance to change, and probably to efforts towards conflict resolution too, are rooted in belief systems. When people accept change easily, it is because it is within the terms of their belief system; when they resist it, it is because accepting change would necessitate making changes also to their constellations of beliefs: and that can be a tall order. The message here for interveners is simply to appreciate that when asking an individual to change what they are doing or the position they are taking, the ramifications for that individual may be considerably more than the intervener appreciates.

For a start, before that individual can make the change, he or she may first have to be helped to believe it is possible. It may therefore be wise to discover the belief system before deciding which changes to ask for. This point perhaps also indicates the need for those in the conflict resolution field to do something which is often overlooked: challenge the widespread belief that destructive conflict is an inevitable facet of the human condition.

Finally, it can be useful for interveners to believe that people will always make the best choices they can given the beliefs and model of the world which they have, and the resources which that allows them. If a client's model of the world is limited or distorted in some way by their beliefs, then their choices will also be limited. When confronted with a client in this position, whether individual, organisation or government, one of the tasks of the intervener may be to help the client develop new beliefs which will deliver new resources and new choices. There is a perhaps overly pithy truism which NLP uses to sum up this problem. It is that people always do the best they can with the resources they have available; and that if you want them to do something different, you will have to help them find the additional resources they need. (Resources in this context might be material goods, training, fresh insights into the situation, access to information, new political structures, reserves of willpower or, for those of a religious disposition, some intuition of 'divine purpose'.)

4.2   Values

Values are increasingly regarded as an essential study for those interested in conflict resolution, and particularly for those concerned with cross-cultural communication. Values, however, tends to be a term more used than defined, and as NLP uses the term rather particularly it seems worth exploring whether the NLP usage might not be helpful to interveners.

Beliefs and values are closely allied: and while beliefs are often unconscious,

values are often unspecified and nominalized generalisations, such as wealth, justice, democracy, success, health and so on. NLP, always anxious to make the general specific, uses the term *criteria* to encourage clients to specify what they really mean when talking about values. A good example of the failure to do this, and its consequences, has been the non-debate in the United Kingdom about the political values inherent in the idea of European Union. The use of *criteria* to clarify values is immensely useful. The following process turns any vague talk of values into a concrete process which interveners can use to help clients make explicit which values underpin what they are trying to achieve. Conversely, of course, it also tends to reveal when the use of values to support an argument is specious:

USING CRITERIA TO SPECIFY VALUES

1.   **All criteria for values are context-related:** the criteria used to evaluate 'federalism' in a country such as the United States, for example, will be different from those relevant to the European context.

2.   **All criteria need to be ranged in a hierarchy.** The criteria used to describe the advantages of federalism may be the same in the United States as they are in Europe (for example, restrictions on central government), but Europeans and Americans may have very different ideas about the relative importance of each criterion. Criteria are relative to each other and have to be considered as a part of a system rather than singly.

3.   **Criteria need to be examined for the motivation behind them.** To talk about federalism makes much more sense when the significance of the issue for different people is fully appreciated. Is it to avoid a repressive central power, lay the foundations for a stable polity, or to help prevent a return to the disastrous political divisions of the past? All the above reasons may be perfectly valid reasons for wanting a federal system, but unless specified they will lead to misunderstandings, accusations of bad faith, and general confusion: which is exactly what happened to the British debate over European Union.

4.   **Criteria need to be related to outcomes, and the 'well-formedness' conditions used to test them.** Like all abstract concepts, their survival can depend on them remaining ill-defined. Until they are grounded in

sensory experience it is difficult to know what they really mean to the person using them, and how valuable they really are. It simply means asking "How would you know if federalism is what you want? What will you have to see, hear and feel to know whether or not it works for you?" Such tedious and mundane questions have to be used carefully if they are not to be dismissed as simplistic: but the answers help determine whether the criteria being used are going to be realistic.

5.   Finally, it can be useful to put a time-frame on criteria. For example, it may not be possible to know whether a federal system is 'working' for years after it is installed: because only then will it be possible to judge the constellation of factors which constitute 'working'.

Values tend to be much paraded in the world and used to justify, defend or advance all sorts of interests. Interveners can sometimes be understandably reluctant to investigate an assertion of deeply-held values: they are held to be too personal or too sacred to be subjected to proper scrutiny. Thus all sorts of rogues can hide behind this spurious camouflage much as medieval monarchs committed all sorts of atrocities while asserting as a value the divine right of kings. (Something not dissimilar has occurred in Bosnia, where the Serbs have used ancient history to justify contemporary genocide. At times their right to do both seems to have gone virtually un-challenged.) The criteria elicitation process described above provides an exploratory rather than confrontational method to find out more about any values being claimed.

Interveners should also, when faced with conflicts based on expressions of values, ask themselves "What are the beliefs which these values are being used to support?" To use a now out-dated example, for many years Afrikaners put a positive gloss on apartheid by saying it was 'God's will' that the races should live and 'develop' separately. This 'positive' value helped them to obscure, for themselves rather than others, the underlying belief first, that whites were racially superior to blacks, and secondly that the only way of maintaining the power of the minority was

through oppression of the majority.

The NLP approach to the difference between beliefs and values can be summarised as follows: values provide the motivations for action, while beliefs provide the mechanisms and the constraints. The importance of investigating both in any conflict situation cannot be over-estimated.

Perhaps one of the key questions for all interveners around the subject of values, however, is: can they be changed and, if so, how? If we could answer this conclusively, after all, we might be better equipped to dissuade nasty people from doing nasty things. Can NLP shed any light on this particularly dismal subject?

The tentative answer is 'yes' - in theory, at least, and extrapolating from experience with individuals: I have not had an appropriate opportunity to experiment with this in a larger context. The first way to influence an individual's values and motivation I have already touched on: if someone changes their internal hierarchy of values it will inevitably affect their external behaviour. So, for example, if someone expresses the wish to change some aspect of their behaviour, it can be useful to discover their current hierarchy of values, discuss how this shapes their behaviour, and agree a new value and where it should be inserted into their hierarchy. That is a bald summary of a time-consuming process which demands good rapport, sensory acuity and a sequence of questions designed to elicit detailed knowledge of how the individual is touched by the values he or she holds.

The second way of affecting the impact of values on a person is to change what NLP calls their *submodalities.* This is launching into a whole new and complex area of NLP, so what follows is a brief overview. In order to construct our working maps of the world, we build internal representations of how things are. These representations, whether they are visual or auditory or kinaesthetic, have their own form. The submodalities are what constitute the structure of this form - how the

representation is constructed. All internal representations have submodalities, and by changing the submodalities the effect of the representation is changed, and therefore the role and effect it has in the internal map.

So, to use an example from a therapeutic context, an individual might say he wishes he spent more time with his family. The NLP practitioner would elicit his values, and might discover that the money he earns is more important in his hierarchy than his family. The practitioner would then discover the submodality structure of his representation of money (perhaps a big, close, bright image of Fort Knox and an attractive someone making admiring noises about his bank balance). The client's representation of his family might be less positive for him (a small, dull image of his home, the sound of children crying). Having ascertained that the client wanted to feel about his family - crying children and all - as he previously felt about money, the practitioner would use a sequence of moves, possibly including a light trance induction, to enable the client shift the submodality structure of the home image to that of the money image - and with it all the associations and feelings he previously derived from money. Thereafter his internal representation of 'home' will be bigger, brighter and better, and he will respond to it accordingly.

The effects of this type of intervention at a personal level can be both rapid, dramatic and, according to the claims of NLP practitioners, permanent -even though nothing has been done to address the causes or the deeper issues involved in the original problem. Is it really possible to effect sustainable shifts in behaviour simply by changing how people represent the world to themselves? These must be the ultimate in micro decisions. But then, we never used to believe that the collision of sub-microscopic atomic particles could devastate cities.

Is there any way this could be used in the context of conflict resolution? It seems impossible, and yet we already do it. For example, we already use such a process when we ask people to use metaphor to describe something which they find

difficult to put into more direct language. One of the benefits of using metaphor is that the internal focus can induce a light trance state in which it is easier to access unconscious resources, and from there it is but a small step to asking after the submodality structure, and then using that when we ask them if they want to change the metaphor.

Secondly, a similar type of process is being used in what is known in the United Kingdom as 'Planning for Real', where a community, helped by professional architects and planners, will build a scale model of a new development as a means of expressing the ambitions and concerns around it. The resultant model, negotiated among them, is an external representation of their internal values: the submodality structure eloquently expressed in best balsa wood.

It could be that both metaphor and Planning for Real work so well because - unknown to us - they enable people to adjust unconsciously what NLP is trying to adjust consciously. This, like much else in this section, is pure conjecture.

4.3 Using Timelines

One of the most fascinating parts of my research into NLP concerned time, how people represent it to themselves, and what happens if you try to change that representation. This should sound less weird than it does: after all, it is arguable that we are but the sum total of all our experiences, and if our memory of those experiences can be changed, then so should their effect on us.

In the therapeutic context, a *timeline* is the client's representation of their past and future in linear form, which may be actually laid out and along which they may choose to walk in order to access particular events or memories. Whether the timeline is laid out literally or merely metaphorically, it enables the client to take up a second or third position in relation to events which trouble them. From this

perspective, and using other NLP techniques, it is possible for the practitioner to reduce or eradicate the unpleasant associations of the past, and help the client to re-remember them as useful learning experiences. Timeline journeys frequently induce deep trance states and may last for quite extended periods of time.

There seem to be major differences in the way individuals store and use their concepts of past, present and future. For example, some people, when asked to say where in relation to them physically a certain event took place, (after they have blinked at the apparent absurdity of the question and discovered, with some help, that they know), will respond and point to a place in front of them. When they have recovered from the shock of this revelation, they may say something to the effect that it is therefore hardly surprising that they feel haunted by the past whenever they try to look into the future. Likewise, someone who stacks the future in front of them, so that they can 'see' only what comes immediately next, is likely to have problems with planning future events.

NLP in fact recognises two main types of timeline, 'through time' and 'in time', and goes so far as to ascribe these to 'Western' and 'Eastern' styles of time-keeping. These are, of course, generalisations and therefore of limited value: but, if empirically tested, they might explain why some thrusting Westerners find Mediterranean or Arab countries somewhat frustrating to do business in, the characteristics of each type of timeline being as follows:

COMMON TYPES OF TIMELINE

Through Time	In Time
Western	Eastern/Mediterranean
Focus on past/future	Focus on present
Past/present/future	Time happens now
Planning, schedules	Mañana
Orderly, time-driven	Time is flexible
Memories dissociated	Memories associated

What relevance do timelines have for conflict resolution? First, any differences as fundamental as these have implications for rapport-building with someone else, especially if one of the results of the rapport is likely to be a contract with, say, time-driven constraints. Secondly, my experience of walking people through their timelines in the therapeutic context suggests that this can be a powerful way to help people let go of the past, if it is useful for them to do that. As ever, the question is, could this be used beyond the personal and therapeutic context? In a sense, a joint analysis of past history in a problem-solving workshop is not so far removed from this: it can help the parties to dissociate from their partisan perspectives and see events as part of a pattern rather than in isolation. At the very least it might be worth making the timeline for each party more explicit, and even giving it some physical reality to make the metaphor more concrete.

Thirdly, once the past has been visited and 'adjusted', it can be very useful to take a client along their timeline into the future, to envision what they wish to achieve there. Again, this is similar to any envisioning exercise, but it is rendered more powerful by the individual creating their future in a way which may have added validity for them.

Fourthly, and into the realm of speculation, it might be interesting to combine timeline and values work, especially if someone or some party seemed to be blocked from moving forward by some event in their collective history. The timeline does seem to provide a particularly potent metaphor for individuals who wish to re-visit their pasts and the influences on them, and it might well be possible to devise some variation which could be used in a group context.

4.4   Into the Unexplored

At this point my focus here changes from ideas of immediate potential use to interveners to raise some questions for future investigation which have been stimulated by my study of NLP. To explain the background to this section it is useful to know a little more about the progression of NLP.

Thus far NLP probably gives the impression of being rather cold, technical, even simplistic in its reduction of human behaviour. The founders also sometimes give the impression of treating it that way in the early days. It seems to have become more fascinating to Bandler and Grinder when they studied Milton Erickson, the hypnotherapist, at the prompting of Gregory Bateson. Grinder built a model of Erickson at work, and is subsequently reported to have said that it was the most important one that he ever did because it enabled him to work out how Erickson used trance states to enable his clients to change and adapt in the automatic and unconscious way that children do. The epistemological discoveries of NLP are becoming among its most significant contributions to the study of human communications.

The understanding and use of trance and hypnosis becomes increasingly significant as NLP training progresses, and it becomes disconcertingly apparent just how much of human life is lived in a trance or semi-trance state. 'Trance' can be defined here as an intense inward focus which has the effect of reducing a person's awareness of the external world. One thinks, for example, of the common experience of motoring several miles without subsequently having any recollection of having done so. The car stays on the road thanks to the ability of the other-than-fully-conscious mind to drive it while the conscious mind wanders elsewhere.

The question for interveners to ponder is whether an entrenched and well-rehearsed conflict may induce in some participants a trance or semi-trance state so that as soon as the pattern of conflict arises they slip into exchanges based on habitual responses. Once the pattern is engaged, it may persist even if one or the

other tries to break it, and an intervener may find it necessary to disrupt such a pattern before meaningful progress can be made. The most effective pattern-interrupt used in NLP is the Meta Model, in that one characteristic of hypnotic exchanges is the vagueness of the language used which enables each side to project onto it whatever meaning it wants.

Conversely, it seems possible that there may be circumstances in which the deliberate use of hypnotic language may have positive benefits. This is really travelling into unknown territory, and it is extrapolated from what appears to be true for people using trance in therapeutic work. Trance is useful as a therapeutic process when it becomes apparent that the resources required by an individual to achieve the behavioural change which he or she requests are not available through that person's conscious mind. The therapist then has to find a means to tap the under-used and apparently much greater resources of the unconscious. One of the ways to do this is to use what NLP has named the Milton Model, after Milton Erickson.

The Milton Model, in contrast to the Meta Model, uses deliberately vague, ambiguous and multi-layered language in order to distract the conscious mind with the search for meanings. Buried within this artfully imprecise language will be requests to the unconscious mind to search out and find ways of using neglected or hidden resources which will generate new choices for the client.

The question is whether an intervener, faced with clients who are locked into their respective corners and unable to move out of a conflictual pattern, might use the Milton Model or something like it to induce a deeper inward focus in the clients, and thereby hope to contact parts of them which might be more inclined to flexibility. It would be rash at this point to suggest that this is something interveners can or should do, but if we take the use of language in intervention seriously, then this is an aspect of it which should probably be open to consideration. Since first drafting that last paragraph I have come across a practising mediator who uses the Milton Model, though not for the purposes outlined above. He uses it as a means of helping

disempowered clients who have no pre-determined outcomes for the mediation to discover what it is they really want to achieve.

Before this whole section is totally dismissed, it is perhaps instructive to look at how such processes are already used, albeit unconsciously. The most notable of these is the courtroom, where lawyers deliberately use hypnotic devices, usually described as rhetoric and oratory, to generate state changes in juries in the hopes of influencing them. Legal drafting also encourages the use of nominalized and ambiguous language which not only induces states of distraction in the reader, but creates numerous misunderstandings and therefore excellent opportunities for earning money to untangle them.

Trance is also the favoured medium of influence in politics, religion and commerce through advertising, prosletyzing and propaganda. Audiences are invited to focus inwardly and search their minds for what moves and motivates them; while they do this, the advertiser or the minister uses carefully crafted suggestions to persuade, gull, or enthuse. Interveners
, too, already use approaches which encourage clients to reflect inwardly and processes which facilitate more profound understandings of their situation. Such are the everyday uses of trance: no need for the therapist's couch or the glinting pendulum.

It would be easy to portray this section as a covert suggestion that interveners hypnotize their clients. It is emphatically not this: so what is it? Remembering that this paper is about micro decision-making, it is no more than a suggestion that the stresses of conflict may induce trance states in some clients, that interveners should be aware of this possibility, and that they should consider whether it is more useful to disrupt or maintain that state. Whether the failure to disrupt a trance state might one day be construed as negligence is altogether another question.

Conclusion

Micro decision-making may be what sometimes makes the difference between success and failure in any intervention. Most interveners
have memories of an unfortunate phrase, an inadequately mindful question, or the sudden and incomprehensible loss of rapport with an important client. Most interveners have to learn by trial and error: and the errors can be uncomfortable and expensive.

The purpose of this paper, as set out in the Preface, has been to focus attention as much on the potential value of micro decision-making as a distinctive tool of conflict resolution as on the emergent approaches of Neuro Linguistic Programming. NLP contains ideas which can be of benefit to interveners, but it is certainly not the exclusive source of wisdom for the conscious micro decision-maker. Perhaps the most appropriate general remark to conclude this survey is that conflict resolution is *as yet only a technology in the making: but given the importance of its purpose it* would seem otiose to ignore anything which might help its advance.

There remain other points to make about NLP by way of summary. First, paying attention to the minutiae of behaviour should not be regarded as an interesting but generally superfluous activity for interveners. Just as the wine-taster needs to make finer and finer distinctions between wines before being considered an expert in his or her calling, and a doctor's expertise may lie in an acute ability to detect a false note in one of a patient's pulses, so an intervener must surely develop an increasingly sensitive ear and eye for the nuances of behaviour. It would seem appropriate, at the very least, that the study and practice of non-verbal behaviour and of language use should become an essential part of any intervener's training.

Secondly, the conflict resolution field could probably benefit from more focus

on the NLP concept of *modelling excellence*. It would mean, for example, identifying situations where all the conditions for conflict exist, but where it has been successfully averted by constructive means; or communities where stability returns surprisingly quickly in the aftermath of conflict; or when an acrimonious divorce suddenly becomes less so. In other words, the conflict resolution field, influenced as it is by the social sciences, seems to have inherited a suspicion of anything which can be regarded as exceptional or in some way elitist, as if we should relate always to what can be regarded as 'normal'. Perhaps it also encourages us to put more effort into studying failure than success. Yet escaping 'normality' and 'failure' is part of the purpose of the field: we need to model the exceptional and the successful to learn how to do it: we need to contrast the current relative success in South Africa with the current relative failure in the Middle East, and work out what *precisely* has made the crucial difference in each case. Modelling such contrasts requires noticing the small differences which accumulate into the large ones.

Finally, let me re-iterate the points made in the Preface. Conflict resolution needs a language which can pace and then lead that of its clients; we need a distinctive technology which others recognise as being so; and we need the confidence that our approach to conflict is cumulatively and comprehensively effective. The difference which makes the difference lies not only in our big ideas, but in our command of the fine details; and it is the details, as ever, which make the ultimate difference between success and failure.

Andrew Floyer Acland
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The Institute for Conflict Analysis
and Resolution
George Mason University
Fairfax
Virginia
Tel: 703 993 1300

5 Foxcote
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire
GL54 4LP
United Kingdom
Tel & Fax: 01242 820 398

Fax: 703 993 1302

Further Reading

The following books provide some insight into the depth and complexity of NLP as a subject:

The Structure of Magic 1 & 2 Richard Bandler and John Grinder, Science and Behaviour Books, 1975 and 1976

Patterns of Hypnotic Techniques of Milton H. Erickson M.D. Volumes 1 and 2. Richard Bandler, John Grinder and Judith DeLozier, Meta Publications 1975 and 1977.

Neuro-Linguistic Programming: Volume 1, The Study of the Structure of Subjective Experience Richard Bandler, John Grinder, Robert Dilts, Judith DeLozier, Meta Publications, 1980.

Applications of Neuro-Linguistic Programming Robert Dilts, Meta Publications, 1983.

Time Line Therapy and the Basis of Personality Tad James and Wyatt Woodsmall, Meta Publications, 1988.

The following are more 'popular' transcripts of workshops:

Reframing: Neuro-Linguistic Programming and the Transformation of Meaning Richard Bandler and John Grinder, Real People Press, 1982.

Frogs into Princes Richard Bandler and John Grinder, Real People Press, 1979.

Turtles All The Way Down John Grinder and Judith DeLozier, Grinder DeLozier Associates, 1987. (This almost impenetrable transcript becomes fascinating on about the fifth reading.)

Two books providing accessible overviews:

Introducing NLP Joseph O'Connor and John Seymour, Crucible, 1990.

Influencing With Integrity Genie Laborde, Syntony Publishing Co., 1984.

For an example of criticism of NLP:

see *Enhancing Human Performance* Druckman and Swets, 1988.