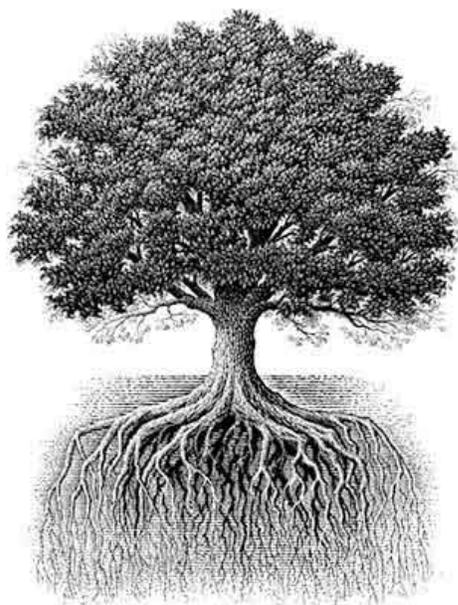


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Universal Human Capacities for Conflict Resolution:
A Search for Reliable Cross-Cultural Peacemaker Tools



*great oak strategy
rooted in differences
everyone hears it fall*

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“Humans must be equipped biologically to function effectively in many social situations without undue reliance on cognitive processes.” (ML Hoffman)

Introduction:

This paper will explore the question: *What are the universal human core capacities¹, desires, and innate abilities people in conflict possess that cross-cultural peacemakers can always count on to help parties resolve conflicts?* The purpose of answering this question is to help peacemakers develop a clear idea of how parties from different cultures can be guided through conflict resolution processes. I believe that conflict intervention strategies and processes must largely center on the parties' common core abilities to resolve conflict. Although several categories of human universals will be explored here, the focus of this literature review and research is to examine the current theories that surround the human ability to resolve conflict. Some questions have naturally emerged from this study: Do we know how to resolve conflicts at birth or is it a learned skill? Are there aspects of our innate abilities that predispose us to resolve conflicts without violence? What are those innate abilities and how can we as conflict managers use them to help keep the peace?

Building a foundation for non-violent conflict resolution in humans must focus, I believe, on our commonalities first and our differences last. Over a vast amount of time, humans have developed a tremendous natural capacity to resolve conflicts. Ignoring those abilities may slow the conflict resolution process at best, and at worse it may impede the entire process. As various cultures around the world interact at a quicker pace, and a more entrenched level than ever before, there will be an ever-increasing demand for cross-cultural conflict management and resolution systems to deal with the inherent² conflicts. There are many books, papers, and classes that focus on the differences in cultures, especially when considering how to deal with two or more cultures in conflict. Those cultural differences are important to be aware of and work with

¹ "Capacity" is a word used throughout this paper. The dictionary definition that works well for this paper is: "Innate potential for growth, development, or accomplishment; faculty. See synonyms at **ability**." (American Heritage 275)

² Meaning that a mixing of cultures may cause more conflicts than one would expect in intra-culture settings.

as even the best designed conflict resolution strategy can be undermined when the differences are not tended to. I believe, however, that the commonalities humans possess are also critical and when those common-ground natural capacities are ignored or marginalized, the strategy for helping people move beyond conflict is compromised. The final product of this paper and research will be a useful, basic exploration for cross-cultural peacemakers looking for reliable and predictable commonalities in their clients. The goal is to engage today's peacemakers³ in diverse thinking, so they can enhance their conflict resolution strategies.

Research Design:

This overall project has been broken down into three phases. This paper represents the first phase. The focus of this first-phase research is to explore the potential existence of innate universal conflict resolution abilities in humans. Through a comprehensive review of Western literature, coupled with a structured survey of selected cross-cultural peacemakers, a preliminary conclusion has been developed that shows that further, more extensive research would be valuable and should be considered. That further research and implementation of more extensive interviews/surveys makes up the phase two and three work. The methodology and approach used for this first phase is sufficient given the relevance of the information that has been explored. The collected information provides a foundation to move toward more comprehensive research.

The following list describes in some detail the three proposed research phases:

Phase 1: Explore the research question via a literature review; build research study design; preliminary survey on a very limited scale; synthesize information and report as “Woodbury Institute Capstone” paper.

³ The word “peacemaker” is used interchangeably throughout this paper with other titles like mediator, conflict manager, etc. The word is meant as a catch-all term to describe people that work with others to help resolve conflicts non-violently.

Phase 2: Re-evaluate the survey design; implement comprehensive survey/interviews; extend literature review and synthesize with collected data; produce complete paper.

Phase 3: Develop a world-wide research strategy; build funding; conduct a broad, multi-cultural literature review; design a multi-cultural research study; implement study; report in paper; build potential next steps.

I feel it is important to combine the learning and ideas gathered from today's literature with the actual experiences of as many peacemakers as possible. The survey that makes up a large portion of this research was constructed to be taken by Western mediators. The reason for this architecture was the ideal fit this group's experience represents for the scope of this project. A detailed summary of the survey for Phase 1 can be found later in this paper following a voyage into the current literature.

Current Literature:

All of the literature reviewed and life works studied here add up to an emerging view that humans have natural abilities that help them resolve conflict. Aureli, De Waal and others call this idea "Natural Conflict Resolution". "According to evolutionary theory, it is logical to expect conflict management mechanisms as natural phenomena that function in maintaining the integrity of groups and the associated benefits to each group member" (Aureli 4). Aureli concludes that his analyses "highlight once more the similarities across species, cultures, and disciplines and strengthen the perspective of conflict resolution as a natural phenomenon" (Aureli 9). This paper will examine five constructs of universal behavior that fit in directly with conflict management systems and resolution. These five behaviors have naturally emerged during my review of the literature and have consistently surfaced throughout my studies of

mediation and conflict resolution. In very broad terms, the behaviors are: reconciliation, cooperation, forgiveness, relationship value awareness, and empathy.

“Natural Conflict Resolution” is a term for a theoretical trend in peacemaking today. This theory states that not only do the fittest survive when the going gets tough in conflict situations, but that cooperation among individuals, groups, and entire societies is a natural ability and a natural reaction that works to promote long-term survival of the parties and the species in conflict (Yarn 68). In a broad sense, the natural resolution of conflicts in both humans and non-human primates has similar roots.

The importance of the nature vs. nurture (born with vs. learned) aspect of this research cannot be understated! If humans are born with one or more common capacities that help them resolve conflict, then it could follow that resolving cross-cultural conflicts should focus on and leverage this/these common capacities as a foundation for the process. Cultural differences make human existence rich and vibrant and these differences cannot be ignored, yet these differences are also what make some conflicts inevitable. Conflict resolution processes that understand the cultural differences, and rigorously use the human commonalities as a foundation for the process will, in many cases, serve parties best.

I have limited my research to Western and English language literature. I have so far found no literature reviews that focus on the idea of identifying all of the common abilities described in this paper. I have found various literature reviews and compilations of works that focus on single abilities. Frans De Waal and Filippo Aureli, for instance, focus a great deal of energy on reconciliation and relationship abilities in human and non-human primates in their book “Natural Conflict Resolution” (Aureli 3-9). Morton Deutsch, a pioneer in social psychology, has done extensive research and reviews on the idea of cooperation and the human

capacity to understand the value of cooperation. Bruce Bonta has done extensive literature reviews on the subject of peaceful (non-violent) societies and what the potential commonalities might be. I will be interested to explore beyond the Western view, as I believe that exploration will lead to additional studies which will reinforce the commonalities found so far.

Areas of thought and research that naturally collide with this project include nature vs. nurture and natural selection and evolution. A great deal of research and debate has been pursued in the area of nature vs. nurture, both on very specific human behaviors and in general terms as it relates to instincts and genetic pre-dispositions. Darwinian theories of natural selection and evolution are another area of study rich in research and directly related to the subject at hand in this review. Although this paper will naturally touch on some aspects of these ideas and theories, an overall review of the literature will not be made here.

Research on negotiating techniques has been studied at length over many years by many people, and recently there has been a great deal of thought put into “Game Theory.” Negotiating decisions may rely on the actions of others or they may be based on one side’s understanding of the situation, with little or no understanding of the other party’s input. The idea of possible cooperation within negotiation adds a complex layer to the mathematical construct some theories are based upon. Game Theory started as a mathematical calculation that allowed for a determination of an optimal outcome given a set of circumstances. “In basic form, game theory is a “rational-choice” model of analysis that posits certain assumptions about the parties’ rationality and common knowledge. Game theory provides a model for understanding and predicting what a “rational” party “ought to do” based on that party’s self-interest, assuming complete or partial knowledge of other parties’ “choices” (Siegfried 69; Dickey 2). Cooperative bargaining theory is a form of game theory in which the players share common concerns (Dickey

3). The Prisoner's Dilemma is a classical matrix showing the motivations of two people in conflict and how a structure can be placed on a negotiation and how cooperation affects outcomes. Tit for Tat (cooperation followed by mimicking moves of the opponent), can be layered within game theory scenarios as a model that could determine behavior. In an effort to predict outcomes and understand negotiator differences, Neale and Bazerman explore the areas of how and why negotiators with a clear and positive negotiating zone⁴ can still fail to reach agreement (Neale 49). Lewicki, in his book on negotiation essentials and theory concludes; "...it appears that several aspects of negotiator cognition are significantly influenced by culture and that negotiators should not assume that findings on negotiator cognition from Western negotiators are universally applicable to other cultures" (246). The scope of this paper will not include these types of conflict resolution and negotiating analyses, yet it is important to underscore the existence of these theories, behavior strategies, and ways of thinking about conflict resolution, as we move toward looking at the core capacities that may underlie them.

The following literature review will explore five major areas of human core capacities and will focus attention on answering the question as to whether these capacities are a result of "nature or nurture." Those core capacities are: possessing the desire for reconciliation, understanding the benefits of cooperation, having the cognitive capacity to forgive, understanding the reciprocal nature of relationships, and having the capacity for empathy (Aureli et al. 2000; Raviv 60; Bonta 1993; Batson 413).

POSSESSING THE DESIRE FOR RECONCILIATION:

Douglas Fry, in his studies of the Semai and Zapotec peoples and in his reviews of related literature, concludes that all of the sources and case studies "emphasize that the goal of

⁴ Negotiators know their own high and low range for possible agreement. If one negotiators' highest possible offer is greater than the other negotiators' lowest acceptable position, there is a positive negotiating zone.

conflict resolution is to reestablish normal, harmonious relationships among the disputants” (Fry 345). Reconciliation behavior⁵ can be found in all peoples and emerges in various forms. Reconciliation behavior may include: stretching out a hand, smiling, joking, kissing, and embracing, special reconciliation meals, social gatherings of all the affected parties, rituals of drinking and smoking, and third party involvement to bring the parties together. All cultures and many animal species have in common this desire, need, and ability to reconcile their differences. In some cases, the post-conflict resolution needs to happen simply to stop the violence and to ensure the survival of the group and the individuals in the group, while in other conflicts a deeper recognition of the benefits of reconciliation by the community allows for some kind of reconciliation process to be entered into. Is it the anxiety of conflict that triggers this desire to move away from conflict and “make-up” with the other side or is it more complex than that, involving survival and productiveness of the species in general and cooperation among individuals to advance themselves in particular? The idea of reconciling differences with an adversary is complex, yet we see the behavior manifest itself in humans as well as in other animals.

The major school of thought on reconciliation suggests that this behavior is related to relationship re-building, while an opposing smaller school of thought presented by Silk (180) says that the post-conflict behavior, at least in primates, is mainly meant to signal that there is no longer an intent to be aggressive or create harm. The behavior is simply an easing of tensions and has no underlying connection to relationships or group survival. The subtlety of these differences seem trivial at first glance, yet they go to the heart of what is being studied and talked about around reconciliation, anxiety relief, relationships and conflict resolution.

Frans De Waal, from his studies of primates and humans writes,

⁵ The post-conflict friendly reunion between opponents.

The fact that monkeys, apes, and humans all engage in reconciliation behavior means that it is probably over thirty million years old, preceding the evolutionary divergence of these primates. The alternate explanation, that this behavior appeared independently in each species, is highly “uneconomical,” for it requires as many theories as there are species. Scientists normally dismiss uneconomical explanations unless there is strong evidence against a more elegant unified theory. Because no such evidence exists in this instance, reconciliation behavior must be seen as a shared heritage of the primate order. (De Waal, Peacemaking 270)

Does this mean that we are all born with the ability and desire to reconcile our differences? It is probably not as simple as that. The complexities of our cognitive abilities to learn how to survive coupled with our abilities to innately know how to survive, muddy the waters of the nature vs. nurture arguments. We can, however, infer from the extensive studies in non-human primates and the limited studies in humans that the existence of and desire for reconciliation behavior is something that we can count on to be present in most humans.

The research in early childhood reconciliation behavior is limited but at least one early childhood study reveals important information about children and post-conflict interactions. The study involved controlled observation of children in Russia, the US, Sweden, and Italy. They ranged in size from 20 participants to 120 participants, split nearly evenly between boys and girls, and all aged three to seven years old. Although the research was limited in scope and did not involve cross-cultural conflicts, it produced three results that I find of value to this project: (1.) through controlled observation they “consistently demonstrated a tendency in young children to make peace with their peers following a conflict-induced separation.” (Butovskaya et al. 248) and (2.) Within the Russian and US findings a conclusion was drawn that “Perhaps the simplest way of explaining these results is to suggest that both *interactions* and *relationships* matter to young children and that young children’s peacemaking reflects children’s motivation to repair damage to both” (Butovskaya et al. 252). And finally, a very interesting thesis in this study finds that the children’s tendency to make peace increases as they get older and may have roots in

cultural expectations. This age related result counters the theory that the behavior is only innate and adds to the complexity of the discussion. It may also be that this age related result correlates to normal childhood physiological developments. If humans are born with some ability to reconcile post-conflict, and environmental influences can change our use of this inherent talent, won't some cultures build upon this talent and learn to get better at post-conflict management while others lose (perhaps un-learn) the ability and find themselves with fewer ways to manage conflict after it has started? The importance of the relationship between the suggested innate capacity we have to reconcile and the potential for that capacity to be enhanced or diminished through societal learning is significant. To a certain extent this single childhood study puts us on notice that even if we can rely on our parties having the capacity to reconcile, we must also concern ourselves with the varying levels of ability to access that capacity in each of them. The evidence explored so far strongly suggests that we are going down the right path in expecting people we work with in conflict to have the ability to reconcile their differences, and perhaps the desire as well.

UNDERSTANDING THE BENEFITS OF COOPERATION:

Understanding the need for and benefits of cooperation has everything to do with why some groups of people survive, prosper, and are more successful than other groups. Focusing on that need for cooperation is a central tenet of many forms of conflict resolution. Two theories are important to understand in this realm: one is the idea that cooperation, not competition, is most productive in social interactions and human tasks; and two, cooperation is a human core capacity we are hard-wired to understand and use.

Kurt Lewin, Morton Deutsch, and the international social psychology movement over the past sixty years have turned the Darwinian theory of "survival of the fittest" on its head as it

relates to conflict resolution. The trend in the past was to believe that competition always moved humans in a long-term positive direction while now it is commonly accepted, and theorized through extensive research, that cooperation is more natural and works better to resolve conflicts and create conflict management systems (Deutsch, Workshop Notes). Taken from his workshop notes in 2004, Morton Deutsch said the following:

The focus of much of my work in the field of conflict resolution has been centered on the question: What determines whether a conflict takes a constructive or destructive course? After much research and thought, I came to the following conclusions:

1. A conflict is likely to take a constructive course if it is viewed as a mutual problem to be worked on together in a cooperative process; a conflict is likely to take a destructive course if it is defined as a win-lose conflict in which the conflicting parties engage in a competitive process to determine who wins and who loses.
2. The typical effects of a successful cooperative process when introduced into a conflict, that is not already strongly determined, tend to induce a cooperative, constructive process of conflict resolution. Such typical effect includes: open, honest communication; friendliness and readiness to be helpful to one another; enhancement of the other's power and well being; and mutual trust and trustworthiness. In contrast, the typical effects of a competitive process tend to induce a destructive, competitive process of conflict resolution. These typical effects include: communication designed to deceive; hostility and obstructiveness directed toward the other; attempts to weaken the power of the other and to keep or place the other in an inferior position; mutual suspicion and untrustworthiness. (Workshop Notes 2004)

Deutsch's life work is relevant to this study as it solidly outlines our common human propensity to cooperate in order to be most efficient, survive as a species, and flourish. Other researchers take this argument further and suggest that many primates, including humans, understand from a very early age, maybe from birth, that cooperation is a key to survival.

In Robert Axelrod's book, The Evolution of Cooperation, the idea that cooperation can be a naturally occurring phenomenon in many biological systems is explored. In particular, the idea that cooperation occurs within species and between species is important. Mutually advantageous cooperative relationships are found in many biological systems. Trees that feed

and house ants which in turn protect the trees is one example. Fig wasps and fig trees where wasps, which are parasites of fig flowers, serve as the tree's sole means of pollination is another example (Axelrod 90). How do these cooperative relationships develop? Does each new generation of wasp have to learn to cooperate with the fig tree, is it part of the wasp's natural ability to have this reciprocal relationship, or is it the circumstance that has developed over generations of learning that makes the selection of this behavior pattern successful for each new generation? Cooperation may be an accident in the evolution of a species, but if that accident works to promote the species' survival in the long term, it would follow that the cooperative behavior has become an innate ability of which the species now has ownership. It may also follow that we as humans learned to cooperate in groups because we are stronger in groups than we are as individuals. Have we made use of this skill for long enough, and have those humans that know this skill innately survived at a better rate than those that don't know the skill? Is that skill no longer learned but is in fact part of our genetic predisposition? The literature reviewed so far makes me believe that humans are in the midst of a cooperation evolution right now and that we as individuals and groups may be in a mixed state of higher and lower levels of cooperative ability.

Raviv relies on learning and teaching as the basis for cooperation in humans and groups of humans. Raviv writes, "Peace continues as long as nations cooperate effectively and manage their conflicts constructively. War results from the breakdown of cooperation and the destructive management of conflict. War ends when effective cooperation is reestablished among participants. Children and adolescents tend to gain an understanding of the nature of war and peace through their daily experiences with cooperation and conflict...It is through their daily participation in cooperative efforts that an implicit understanding of peace is developed" (Raviv

276). From a very early age, humans have had the ability to understand that cooperation can work to end conflicts and yet it would appear that we have the ability to also unlearn this idea and move more towards an individual-centered base of thinking. The overlap of what we are born with and what we develop through learning is exaggerated when we deal with cooperation. If our successes, especially in early childhood, come from cooperation with those around us, our natural abilities to cooperate are reinforced. If a higher success rate comes in the form of competition and individualistic behavior, our abilities to cooperate can be lost or at least forgotten. David Specht writes “An additional complexity around this is that cooperation is by definition a co-venture necessitating the involvement of multiple parties. So that it is possible that one group may be inclined to cooperate, but find themselves unable to address their conflict in that way because of an unwillingness of their counterpart to similarly engage, increasing the likelihood that they may, as a matter of survival perhaps, resort to either strategies of accommodating or competing. So we may know and even be inclined toward cooperation by virtue of nature and nurture both and still find ourselves resorting to other less desirable strategies” (Specht comments).

There is a growing body of evidence showing that cooperative behavior has origins in the physical make-up of humans. Ken Cloke writes in a recent article that explores the neurophysiology of the brain, “Oxytocin is widely believed responsible for prompting empathy, compassion, trust, generosity, altruism, parent-child bonding, and monogamy in many species, including human beings.” Oxytocin⁶, or the lack of, may explain some of our conflict behaviors and the chemical reactions in our bodies. It may one day lead to a better understanding of common capacities, reactions, and behaviors. Cloke continues, “Clearly, aggression and war are ‘hard-wired’ into the brain, but so are empathy and collaboration. Recent research has

⁶ Oxytocin is a hormone released from the posterior lobe of the pituitary gland. (American Heritage 1259)

emphasized the cooperative aspects of warlike behavior, which forms a core element not only in gangs, but sports teams, organizations and nation states, which use internal cooperation as an aid to external competition. Indeed, modern warfare can be seen as requiring a high level of internal collaborative activity” (Cloke 7). If we can explain some of our behaviors via common universal physical reactions, it could follow that we all share the capacities for these behaviors.

Whether or not we can show that humans have the ability to act cooperatively in a certain circumstance, I believe that the prevailing theories and research show that cooperative behavior is a part of our biological core. I now wonder if further study, comparing the literature of cooperation in more communal societies with that of more individualistic and competitive societies would highlight learned differences in those societies or would it reinforce the biological potential for common roots in cooperation. Natural cooperative behavior is an area rich with possibilities for cross-cultural study and research and should certainly be focused on in the phase two and three work of this overall project.

HAVING THE COGNITIVE CAPACITY TO FORGIVE:

There is a large element of learning involved in the understanding and act of forgiving, even if the cognitive capacity is innate. Seung-Ryong Park writes “Forgiveness is not reconciliation. Forgiveness is an internal release that a forgiver has achieved after much effort; reconciliation is a behavioral coming together that a forgiver and the forgiven may establish with trust” (Park 359). Park also speaks to the idea that reconciliation is dependant upon some level of forgiveness and cooperation by stating, “Reconciliation without forgiveness is hardly entitled to constitute genuine reconciliation. It is rather a truce or an interaction based on mutual interests” (Park 359).

Bernard Mayer talks about the emotional aspects of forgiving and apologizing and I believe points us toward the idea that we are geared to move toward emotional resolution:

The role of forgiveness and apology in reaching emotional resolution can also be critical. I have noticed that delivering an apology is usually more important to reaching closure than receiving one, and forgiving is often more important than being forgiven. Both apologizing and forgiving, when genuinely offered, are acts of emotional resolution. In effect each is a way for people to put some part of the emotional aspect of a conflict behind them. By offering an apology or forgiveness, disputants move themselves toward emotional resolution, even if their action does not have that effect on others. (Mayer 104)

Ken Heare, in his in-depth study of South African reconciliation, shows that even in situations where history and long standing disputes should cause the act of forgiving to be impossible, the human capacity to forgive can still be found if one digs deep enough:

The question should no longer be whether forgiveness is possible. The case of South Africa has provided example after example of individuals and groups who have effectively engaged in the process. The question now becomes how do we change our societal view to encourage forgiveness as a normal process? Professionals in the field of ADR have the opportunity to create the societal mindset toward forgiveness. By creating dialog, we open the door to exploring interpersonal healing. We create the space for stories to be told and empathy for perpetrators and victims to be realized.” “If we are truly concerned with resolving conflict, we must take a step into the painful and often messy process of reconciliation and forgiveness. (Heare 24)

Could there be varying levels of forgiveness aptitude or effect among different cultures, and, what causes these differences? Clinical observations that focused on US based groups that are exposed to forgiveness treatment and interventions vs. those that are not exposed have shown significant decreases in anxiety, anger, and grief compared with control groups that had not yet received the treatment/intervention. (Park 360, Coyle and Enright 1997). Less of a direct correlation was found in similar experiments made in Korea and Taiwan (Park 361).

A 1982 study of young people explores the correlation of apology to forgiveness and points to some important age considerations. It is important here that the younger students have a greater capacity to forgive and judge without social input, i.e. an apology, than older students do.

In 2 experiments, 221 kindergartners and 1st, 4th, and 7th graders judged actors who committed a transgression under conditions of low or high responsibility and low or high consequences. The actors' motives were good or bad and the act was intended or accidental. The actor then either did nothing or employed 1 of 3 increasingly elaborate apologies. As hypothesized, the actor's predicament was most severe, producing the harshest judgments when (a) the actor had high responsibility for committing an inadvertent act that produced high consequences, and (b) the act was the result of a bad rather than good motive or was intended rather than accidental. More elaborate apologies produced less blame and punishment and more forgiveness, liking, positive evaluations, and attributions of greater remorse. The judgments of the 7th graders were more affected by the actor's apology than those of the younger students (Ss). These age differences reflect the younger Ss' poorer ability to integrate social information and appreciate the implications of social conventions. However, the younger Ss' judgments were similar to those of older Ss (Darby 742).

These age differences seem to confirm that the capacity to forgive is present at an early age but becomes more refined as we learn to use it and work with others to elicit it.

These studies and comments start to reinforce the idea that the act of forgiveness is a part of most human behavior, starting at an early age. The complexities of how and when forgiveness can occur are too extensive to explore in this project but are important and worth further study. The evidence points to the act of forgiving as being directly associated with others actions (i.e. an apology) both as humans get older and more socialized and as a function of cultural differences. Both of these sway me toward the belief that there is a large element of learning involved in the understanding and act of forgiving, even if the cognitive ability is innate.

As pursued earlier in this paper, the capacity and desire for reconciliation appears to be a behavior/trait that is very much rooted in most people from a very early age and can be traced within other animal species as a core survival technique. The correlation and interdependency

between forgiveness and reconciliation is important. If reconciliation can be achieved in a “truce” like resolution without forgiveness, but true long-term reconciliation that allows for healing and real reduced anxiety, requires forgiveness, components of relationship closeness and cooperation may also be a factor when forgiveness becomes a vital element. The understanding of relationships, at which we primates seem to be so good at, may be innately intertwined with our capability to forgive. Research points to forgiveness being a behavior which humans tend to become more skilled in as they mature. The research also indicates that most people have at least some access to a capacity to forgive, even if that forgiveness behavior must be predicated by an apology or other reconciling behavior (Darby 742).

UNDERSTANDING THE RECIPROCAL NATURE OF RELATIONSHIPS:

The effect that past, current and future relationships have on the resolution of conflict can be profound. Relationships are the most abundant connecting bond in the universe. For every one entity, there is the relationship between it and every other entity, and starting with every single element there is a relationship between it and the groups of relationships made up by all the other elements. Some relationships are peripheral and make no real difference to the participants, while others create a connection, a bond, and potentially, a dependence, or inter-dependence upon those in the relationship. Some elements in a relationship may not have an awareness of the connection as in the relationship between a page in a book and its cover, while other relationships like those between a mother and daughter are explicit and have natural expectations and influences on behavior.

Having an understanding of the reciprocal nature of relationships may be a key factor in resolving conflicts from the participant’s standpoint. From a very early age, we humans understand our reliance on, and relationship to, other human beings. In North American

societies, we tend to think of relationships between individuals while in more community-driven societies people tend to think of relationships having a broader spectrum of people that are involved. Lederach describes the Central American experience of thinking of the community as a large “net” of entangled relationships. Describing the word “*encredo*” which is a synonym for conflict in Central America, he says, “The image is one of knots and connections: an intimate and intricate mess. A net, when tangled, must be worked through and undone slowly and patiently. Even untangled, it still remains connected and knotted: it is a whole...In other words, *encredo* is a concept of conflict embedded in tight-knit, primary social relationships” (Lederach 78). Whether it is in a society that is driven by individuals or by groups and the community, there will be relationships at play in all conflicts.

The relationship value each party perceives is a critical factor in relationships and their influence on conflict resolution. Relationship value is the level of importance that each actor in a relationship perceives. In a study of relationships in primates van Schaik & Aureli write “...we expect that relationship value will explain much of the variation in all aspects of conflict resolution, not just reconciliation, and will probably do so in both primates and non-primates” (Schaik 308). They go on to say “The most important generalization to emerge from two decades of work on reconciliation (i.e., post-conflict, friendly reunion between opponents) in primates is that individuals that reconcile are likely to have a strong social bond” (Schaik 307). Social bonding and its benefits is the commonality that attracts humans, primates, and other species to making peace with one another.

By understanding the value of relationships and the reciprocity they can deliver, we have the potential for resolving conflict. Bonta highlights that a major commonality in peaceful societies is their appreciation for, and attending to, ongoing individual and community

relationships (Bonta 1993, 1996). His research points to the idea that we understand the nature of relationships and that that awareness can create a space for conflicts to be more readily resolved than if there is no relationship. It is hard to prove that humans understand the nature of relationships from the time they are born, but it would seem that as a species, we have an awareness of the importance of relationships with other people and groups, and we have a deep understanding of the reciprocity that goes hand in hand with that awareness.

HAVING THE CAPACITY FOR EMPATHY:

Empathy is the capability to understand and identify with someone else's feelings, situation, and motives for action or inaction. It is a direct window into someone else's mind where you can "put yourself in their shoes." Except in cases of some neurological disabilities, most humans have the capacity for empathy and it is an ability with which we are born. After a moderately comprehensive research review, talking with mediation practitioners, working as a mediator, and working to understand a recent survey of mediators, I am confident in making the statement that most people have what it takes to understand what someone else is feeling and encountering via their ability to empathize. That being said, I also believe that this capacity, like the others explored in this paper, can be enhanced or suppressed through what we are exposed to or not exposed to during our lives. Empathy is an ability that many people in the conflict management profession hold up as an absolute necessity for moving conflicts towards resolution.⁷ Both the people in conflict and the conflict manager must have empathy. Empathy is not sympathy, or compassion, and although empathy may lead to sympathy and compassion, it stands on its own as the mechanism for arriving at an understanding.

⁷ Batson Baril Peacemaker Survey – April 2009 shows surfacing party empathy as a key conflict engagement tool used by those surveyed. See also Chart # 1 and Appendix A.

About empathy, Donald Saposnek writes, “This capacity for being able to understand and connect with the feelings of others is a skill that, according to research, lies on a continuum. At one extreme (as in pathologies of Asperger’s disorder and sociopathy) are people who either do not have, or are extremely deficient in, the capacity for empathy. At the other extreme are effective mental health practitioners, who are high in what Daniel Goleman (1995) refers to as emotional intelligence. This innate, intuitive capacity to understand and feel what other people are feeling and to read the emotions of others, by both verbal and nonverbal clues, is crucial for an effective mediator” (Saposnek 250). Empathy is also crucial for the parties in a dispute to have in order for them to move productively toward resolution. Daniel Goleman, through his work around emotional intelligence, concludes that “empathy is a given of biology” (Goleman 103). Daniel Batson et. al. in their studies on empathy and altruism conclude that empathy in individuals is not something that is derived from self-satisfaction but is quite selfless and altruistic. This fits into the general notion of empathy being derived for others and ties directly into our core ability to cooperate. We do not feel and act with empathy simply because we want pleasure, we do it as part of our instinct, almost like breathing (Batson 425).

De Waal (2008, 292) concludes in a comprehensive study of empathy and altruism:⁸

More than three decades ago, biologists deliberately removed the altruism from altruism. There is now increasing evidence that the brain is hard wired for social connection, and that the same empathy mechanism proposed to underlie human altruism (Batson1991) may underlie the directed altruism of other animals. Empathy could well provide the main motivation making individuals who have exchanged benefits in the past to continue doing so in the future. Instead of assuming learned expectations or calculations about future benefits, this approach emphasizes a spontaneous altruistic impulse and a mediating role of the emotions. It is summarized in the five conclusions below:

1. An evolutionarily parsimonious account (cf.deWaal1999) of directed altruism assumes similar motivational processes in humans and other animals.
2. Empathy, broadly defined, is a phylogenetically ancient capacity.

⁸ Altruism is the unselfish concern for the welfare of others. In Zoology it is; instinctive cooperative behavior that is detrimental to the individual but contributes to the survival of the species. (American Heritage Dictionary 54)

3. Without the emotional engagement brought about by empathy, it is unclear what could motivate the extremely costly helping behavior occasionally observed in social animals.
4. Consistent with kin selection and reciprocal altruism theory, empathy favors familiar individuals and previous cooperators, and is biased against previous defectors.
5. Combined with perspective-taking abilities, empathy's motivational autonomy opens the door to intentionally altruistic altruism in a few large-brained species. (DeWaal, Frans 2008)

Neuroscientists over the past twenty years have discovered what they call “mirror neurons” in human beings and other animals. A neuron is a nerve cell in animals that processes and transmits information via electro-chemical means. A mirror neuron is a neuron that transmits both when an animal acts and/or when an animal observes another animal act. Although an extremely complex area to prove and to understand, the theory is worth exploring. Some neuroscientists believe that the discovery of these neurons will one day be as important to the understanding of human behavior as DNA is to the understanding of human biology. “The simple fact that a subset of the cells in our brains-the mirror neurons- fire when an individual kicks a soccer ball, sees a ball being kicked, hears a ball being kicked, and even just says or hears the word ‘kick’ leads to amazing consequences and new understandings” says Marco Iacoboni in his in-depth exploration and detailed account of research in the field of mirror neurons (Iacoboni, 12). If we are neurologically stimulated from action emanating from ourselves and by observation of, or thoughts about others, then the concepts of empathy, imitation, sympathy, compassion, emotional understanding, etc... and how they are part of our natural behavior becomes easier to understand. As the research unfolds and we begin to understand more about how mirror neurons affect empathy, the innateness of their existence may guide us towards a better understanding of how we use empathy as a tool in conflict resolution. All signs point toward empathy being a crucial and present common ability that most humans have and use.

Physiological and psychological studies about empathy from various parts of the world would be a natural next step to take in this exploration in order to compare and contrast beliefs and potential human differences in various settings.

Survey Results and Synthesis:

First, I want to thank those who spent their valuable time taking the survey associated with this phase of this research. A high enough value cannot be put on the energy and thoughtfulness that those who took the survey put into their responses. The comments alone are very thought-provoking and full of rich information and experiences. We work in a community of good people. Thank you.

The balance of this paper will explore the five common capacities through a survey of cross-cultural mediators, peacemakers, conflict managers, and facilitators. The goals of this Phase 1 stage are:

- Get a sense as to whether practitioners experience these same five core abilities in their clients
- Explore the possible innate vs. learned origin of each capacity
- Explore other possible core capacities missed in this review
- Understand how practitioners would use the capacities to help their clients, if they knew these capacities existed.

The quantitative data will be presented first, with a summary of the qualitative aspects to follow.

A fourteen-question survey was developed to answer and explore the above-mentioned goals. Eighty-four mediators/conflict managers were identified from a variety of different disciplines. Commonalities in those surveyed include a mostly North American orientation: 70 are members of Mediators Beyond Borders – a non-profit conflict resolution group working throughout the world and 83 consider themselves mediators. Conflict management experience levels vary from new mediators and students of mediation to some of the most experienced international mediators and coaches in the world. The survey was conducted through the on-line

service Survey Monkey. It was confidential, individually delivered via e-mail, and only available on-line. The total response rate was 56% for a total of 47 responses from 84 participants.

Although the results presented here are adequate for getting a sense of what some peacemakers generally believe, the relatively low number of people surveyed along with the unknown experience levels of those that answered the survey, make the results here a “healthy start” rather than a comprehensive study.

The following data and analysis of each section is meant to show trends in the thinking of peacemakers as to the capacities of their clients. The information is meant to inspire further thinking about the potential commonalities in most people and how those commonalities may be used to help resolve conflicts. Fourteen questions were posed. Five “yes” or “no” style questions were asked centering on the ideas and the core capabilities outlined in this paper so far. Respondents were asked whether or not they believe that their clients possess these capabilities. Five more questions were asked, centering on those same capabilities. These second tier questions were meant to elicit ideas and feelings as to whether the capacities are the result of nature or nurture. Each respondent was given the opportunity to explain each of their answers in a “please explain” area of the survey. Respondents were also asked whether or not they would use these capabilities if they knew their clients all came to the conflict with them. Respondents were then asked for other core capabilities they see in their clients that were not mentioned in the previous questions. They were also asked to explain how they would use any or all of the five core capacities to help their clients. The results are as follows:

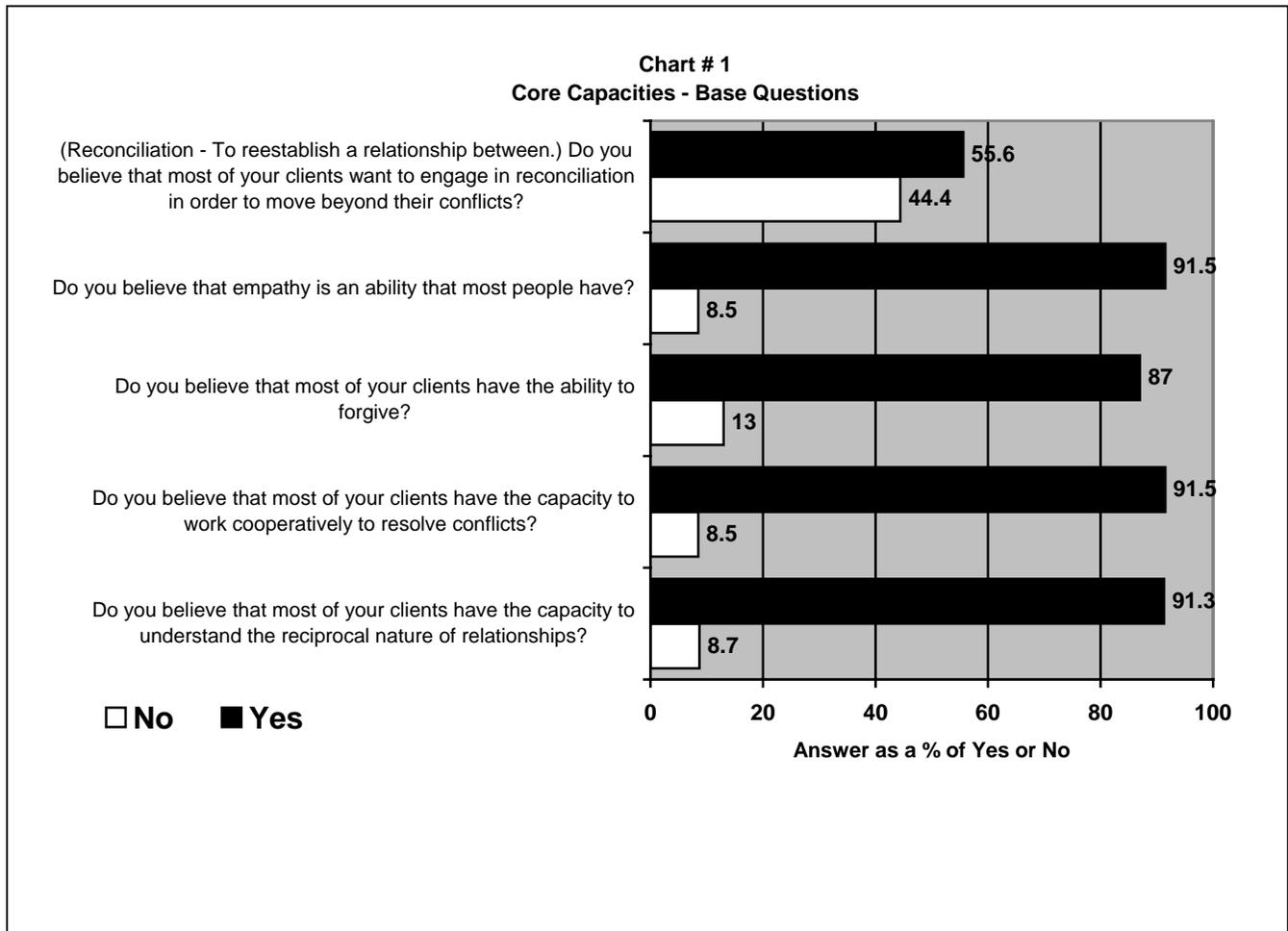


Chart # 1 describes the results of the questions that asked whether or not the peacemakers find each core capacity in their clients. Each question forced a “yes” or “no” response. I find it interesting that four of the five capacities are so prevalent as “yes” and that the one capacity, the desire to reconcile, falls so much lower on the scale of prevalence in comparison to the others. This may highlight some of the earlier literature findings that matched ongoing relationships and closeness of the combatants, to reconciliation behavior. It may also mean that although the capacity to reconcile is there, the desire to reestablish relations is not present, at least at the point in the conflict timing that the peacemakers are generally seeing their clients. It may also mean that in our individualist Western society there may not be a perceived, or real, need to reconcile differences when moving out of conflict.

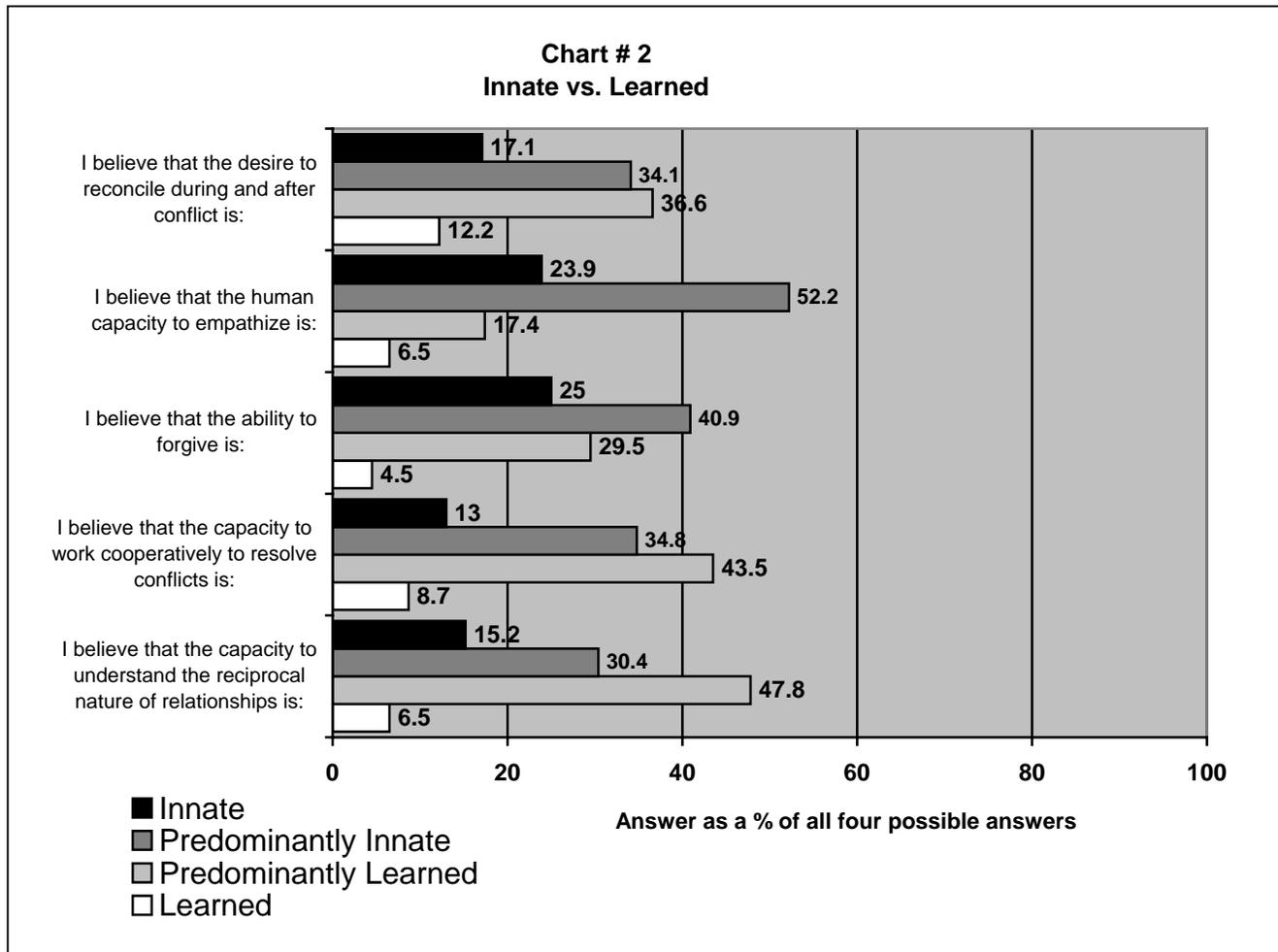
The answers for the bottom four categories fall more in line with what the literature reviews and previous studies would have predicted. The prediction being that these core capacities would be found in most people, in most conflict situations. The answers do not indicate that these capacities were used to help resolve the conflicts encountered, but they do give weight to the idea that peacemakers are experiencing these capabilities on a very regular, and perhaps predictable, frequency. Can we draw from these results the conclusion that most people we encounter in conflict will have these core capacities and that we can plan to work with those capacities? Probably not. Although the data would seem to point us in that direction, too many unanswered questions remain. At what points in the conflict do these capacities become most available to parties? Do they emerge in all parties at the same time? Are they always present, or do they come and go as the process follows its path? Are the levels of each capacity matched within the people in conflict so they can be useful? What role does the mediator play in eliciting these behaviors and does the behavior depend upon the expertise of the mediator?

With empathy being one of the areas that current literature points to as common among most humans that are not sociopaths, it is surprising that 8.5% of the peacemakers believe that empathy does not exist in most people. Does this mean that some peacemakers are working in segments of the population that do not have or use empathy, or does it mean that some peacemakers are not able to sense this in their clients for some reason (perhaps a lack of empathy in the peacemaker), or is it something else? The ramifications of the “no” answers in all five questions are as rich in information as the “yes” answers are because they highlight the peacemaker’s personality, ability, and perhaps even their style in using and enhancing that with which their clients arrive.

The questions and the data tend to simplify a very complex set of human behaviors. This simplification may be useful in some complex conflict situations, however we must be careful not to make assumptions at this point in the research. The questions were designed specifically to steer the respondents to these five capacities only, with the realization that there may be other core capacities and that all capacities may or may not be inter-related. In trying to root out a way to tabulate behavior, the questions related to reconciliation asked about the “desire” or “want” to reconcile rather than asking about the capacity to reconcile differences. Those questions assumed that the “desire” itself might be the innate capacity. Future research may refine the questions to try to define some of the ambiguity in the data. A great deal of further study is needed to test conflict managers and their clients in this area.

Questions and their answer data reported in Chart # 2 test the idea that some of the capacities may be innate while others may be learned. The questions were phrased in a way that allowed the respondents to answer in only one of four categories. As is the case with many nature vs. nurture discussions, the answers often straddle the divide. In the design of the questions, I wanted to allow answers on all sides of the spectrum. In interpreting the data, one could add the results of say “innate” and “predominantly innate” and make a comparison to the “learned” and “predominantly learned” total. This would set-up a competition between learned and innate, which is tempting, but not altogether useful here. For example, this competition in the data might leave out the person who believes that a capacity is “predominantly learned” and “innate.”

What appears to be significant for this study is that more respondents report that the capacities are strictly innate than those who report that they are strictly learned. In some cases, as with cooperation and relationships, twice as many people believe that the capacity is innate, while with empathy and forgiveness four to five times as many people believe that the capacity is innate. This doesn't necessarily mean that the capacities are innate, but it may show that some



peacemakers find behaviors related to the capacities to be an integral part of how their clients function. Empathy in particular shows up in the data as one capacity worthy of much closer examination. The data shows a very large proportion of the respondents believe that empathy is an innate human capacity. This is consistent with the literature review and points to the empathy capacity as one that could be predictable.

The heavy weight placed on the learned and predominantly learned answers of all the capacities, but especially cooperation and relationships, works both for and against the idea that these are common capabilities. For example, Chart 1 shows that understanding the reciprocal nature of relationships is found to be common by 91.3% of the peacemakers while at the same time, most of the same peacemakers believe that the capability is learned. While this may mean that humans all have the ability as a core capacity, and it may be nurtured to a point of being useful, it may also mean that the capability is only learned and that we may find people that have no concept of the behavior if the study were to be expanded. The answers may also reflect the “book learning” of the respondents rather than the actual make-up of their clients. This perception among peacemakers may open up an entirely new area to be studied, rich in ideas about what we as peacemakers bring to the table.

Comments From the Survey Questions:

So many of the written responses to the question “please explain your answer” focus on the idea that even if the five core capacities are part of being human, they can each be enhanced or diminished through our environment. That environment may be long-term learning or it may be a single catastrophic event that takes away or diminishes the capacity. One respondent writes, *“With these core capacities intact the crime rate would greatly be reduced and the community more peaceful.”* That one sentence sums up an enormous segment of the responses. Sure, there may be a capacity that the people we are working with had at one point, but through various circumstances some or all of the capacities have been diminished. Some of the responses also point to the idea that their clients come to them deficient in these behaviors and the enhancement of the behaviors is a large part of what the mediator must do to help the parties make progress. Could it be that those people most likely to end up in a conflict requiring help are lacking in

these skills and capacities or perhaps the ability to access these skills and capacities? If everyone in conflict could magically find these capacities, would there be fewer conflicts?

Appendix A is a collection of the written survey responses. As extrapolated from the results in Chart #1 & 2 there are strong opinions on many sides of each question. The one additional idea that runs across most of the answers is that of complexity in human behavior. The overlap in answers and constant referrals back to other questions and capacities shows an interlocking set of ideas around the human capacity to resolve conflicts without violence. I would like to think that identifying five particular capacities narrows the complexity, but that may not be the case. The literature review, and now the survey data, show an interrelated aspect to at least some of the capacities. The next phase of this research may need to add some capacities while removing others.

Several other behaviors, or core capacities, have been proposed by participants in the survey as integral to resolving conflicts. Some of those include basic ideas like: having the abilities to talk, listen, learn, see, reason, recognize social norms, etc., while others are more complex like: being present, being able to translate complex thoughts, and having a base recognition of negotiating techniques. Some of the most complex involve ideas of: compassion, self-awareness, self-preservation, self-interest, self-reflection, spiritual awareness, humility, ability to imagine a positive future, need to love and be loved, and a recognition of control over outcomes. Of all of these potential other base capacities, compassion and self-awareness appeared most frequently. Would it be worth further review to determine if they are natural abilities? Both compassion and self-awareness may have similar roots when compared with the other five core capacities and thus may be worth studying further to try to understand if they could be predictable capacities.

Conclusion – Phase 1:

It is quite clear from the literature reviewed so far that humans are hard-wired to resolve conflicts non-violently. Even without the argument that we are innately capable, it is hard to argue that we do not have at least the natural ability to learn very quickly how to approach and deal with conflict in a positive way. This project set out to answer the question, *what are the universal human core capacities, desires, and innate abilities people in conflict possess that cross-cultural peacemakers can always count on to help parties resolve conflicts?* I believe that the five underlying emotional and cognitive capacities outlined in this paper: reconciliation, cooperation, forgiveness, relationships, and empathy, are powerful underpinnings for resolving conflicts in a non-violent way and do start to answer the project question. Reconciliation behavior allows us to repair wounds, heal, and make-up with a former enemy. Understanding the need for cooperation has the potential to set up a future looking scenario for people in dispute with a focus on what they can accomplish together and to see what they cannot accomplish without one another. Forgiveness is that powerful ability to let go of a past harm and acts as a true foundation for a real and long-term reconciliation processes. Understanding the need for relationships forces us to consider the other person's point of view for the benefit of both. And, finally, empathy is a window into another person's mind, which allows us to feel what he or she feels and understand why they do what they do. The peacemaker survey results and comments indicate that conflict managers are experiencing the five core capacities in most of their clients in one fashion or another during conflict and these survey results support the view in the current literature that says these capabilities are common, and universal in most humans.

Building a solid foundation in cross-cultural conflict management strategies has never been so important as it is at this very moment in time. If we can be certain that these abilities are within most every human, the question then becomes how can we use this knowledge to help

resolve conflicts, especially as we turn our attention to conflicts that run across cultures? This cultural layer is where the answers presented in this paper can become blurred and masked by differences that are hard to see beyond. Are there tools or methods peacemakers would use more if they knew that everyone in the room had some access to the same core capacities? Would they choose to boldly model specific behaviors or create exercises that blatantly elicit these capacities? Are there tools they would decide to use later in the process, rather than early? Does the conflict system in front of them change with the knowledge that everyone has something in common that they cannot ignore because it is part of them? The five core capacities are in many cases intertwined with one another and can be enhanced or diminished with experience and environmental input. This learning element, and the identification of the core capacities could also help guide child and adult learning programs that focus on teaching conflict resolution.

Since no strategy for managing conflict can be based on an assumption, some may find these findings too cloudy to be helpful. Others may find further proof here for ideas they already felt had merit in their practices. Still others may be sparked to take on further research in these areas. There is a need for more research in this important base area of conflict resolution and peacemaking. Because the literature reviewed here is almost entirely limited to Western researchers and sources and the underlying questions being posed involve cross-cultural conflicts, the need to expand the literature review, personal interviews, and surveys to more parts of the world is important. If similar conclusions are drawn in an expanded, beyond Western study, a further step may be to embark upon quantitative research that will help to reinforce the ideas presented in this paper. Phase two of this research should be embarked upon with vigor.

“Social behavior is in all species a blend of inborn tendencies, experience, and intelligent decision making.” Frans De Waal

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Appendix A

This appendix is a compilation of the written survey responses collected for the Batson Baril Peacemaker Research (Core Capacities) Survey between April 8 and April 22 2009. The information presented here is unedited. Some similar responses have been removed, as have some short answers that the author believed had no relevance to the subject matter of this paper. The responses are presented here in the same order as the survey was taken. Each set of responses is prefaced by the question posed. I present them here as additional reading for those interested in these specific areas as experienced by peacemakers in the field. There are diamonds in this rough.

Do you believe that most of your clients have the capacity to understand the reciprocal nature of relationships?

1. My clients, all of whom are in either Small Claims or Civil Harassment court, come with a great deal of experience trying to negotiate reciprocal relationships. The issue for them is that either they lack the skills to fully participate as receiving and giving individuals, or they have encountered a "stone wall" and cannot proceed further with the relationship.
2. I do believe that most people have this capacity, although I believe that intense conflict can hinder a persons ability to access this "understanding"
3. Most of the time when the people I am mediating with are unrepresented, their mutual interest in maintaining their relationship becomes clear at some point in the mediation process. Often, however, when attorneys are involved, the adversarial positioning impedes this recognition.
4. This is not a skill that is innate and must be learned and most of my clients are in high conflict and they are here because they never learned it or learned poorly.
5. When clients are not escalated, they understand the importance of relationships and the reciprocal nature of relationships. When they are escalated to Stage III or above, their emotions overwhelm their cognitive processing and this capacity becomes greatly impaired.
6. There is an inherent understanding of reciprocity as the client is often the recipient of some type of largess. Most have the ability to feel appreciation and even humility. The difficulty arises when they see someone whom they view as so different from themselves that they cannot view that person with humility and kindness. The goal then is to help individuals see that despite the differences between them, that there is a great deal more that is the same. And, that the ultimate benefit of seeing sameness is greater than holding out for differences. This often takes careful work over years, decades and generations.
7. If they [those in conflict] were able to see the patterns of interdependence more clearly, I think conflicts would evolve more constructively.
8. There is a common expectation in the culture I work with that requests for help cannot be refused. Requests are then extended to strangers as well as community members.
9. Even when anger, pain, and suffering are present, both parties recognize at least how the behavior of the other affects them.
10. By coming to court they are expecting something to happen between them, particularly money paid or not paid but there is almost always, more than that.

11. Most of my clients understand that the way they treat others affects how others respond. Not everyone understands that the message(s) they are sending are NOT necessarily what other receive, NOR that intent and result in communication can be different.
12. No one lives in isolation. Most people understand the nature of social norms and the necessity to live in groups. They often, however, define groups narrowly and identify with their in-groups based upon the most urgent or familiar of their plural identities.
13. They do in the abstract, but if you mean do they actually get it, I think the answer is no. If they did, conflict resolution would be a lot easier, and pointing this out to them is part of what mediation is about.
14. Giving and receiving are fundamental to who we are as human beings - regardless of our ability to language it as such. From birth to death (and some would suggest before and after this) we are giving and receiving using our mind, body and spirit. The operative words in your question are "capacity to understand". I think understanding in this context can be a conscious or unconscious process - but we all have it.
15. While I believe they have the capacity, there are some people who are very far from being able to act on it.
16. The Golden Rule is fairly pervasive in Western culture.
17. I have found that people in general are very social creatures governed by their interaction with others. On a primal level we are based in the need of collaboration in order to survive. On the modern level that we exist in the need for understanding and acceptance is often hard to find and so increases it's importance.
18. If by this question you mean the capacity to understand that relationships have give and take, then I think emotionally mature people and developmentally mature adults understand this is part of mature relationship.
19. While I believe they all have that "capacity," I don't think they always have access to that capacity and/or the understanding itself when they are in the heat of the battle. Very often my clients will behave as if they have absolutely no understanding of that concept at all - but that does not change my answer to your question.
20. It may not be so much a matter of "understanding" which should be possible for most people, but of whether "reciprocity" is even appropriate or desirable for a given relationship. In some relationships, especially those of unequal status like parent-child, "reciprocity" may not be natural as the question seems to imply
21. They do as long as I bring it to their attention
22. In my work I deal mostly with a culture who lives in poverty. To them relationships is at the core of their being. They do not have material wealth or possessions; therefore, relationships become something they can hold on to and take with them where ever life takes them. I think they are more capable of understanding the reciprocal nature of relationships better than someone from middle-class or wealth.
23. I believe most people have the intellectual capacity to grasp the concept of reciprocity, but I also believe that when the issue at hand involves a personal conflict, people tend to project blame on the other and fail to recognize reciprocity.
24. Many of my clients are in relationships that will exist after the dispute is settled. They understand the need for compromise and integrity in those relationships. For those who are not in relationships that will be important after the dispute, I believe they understand the nature of the relationships, but may be more willing to sacrifice them for a "better" personal settlement.

25. They are in mediation precisely due to their recognition that they can't get what they want/need without engaging and reacting to the other.

I believe that the capacity to understand the reciprocal nature of relationships is:

1. I believe that one core aspect of our humanness is our ability to understand and reflect on our own experiences, as well as those of the people we encounter. We are also born with the capacity for compassion and empathy, although if this is not fostered from a young age, and we do not experience the benefits of these qualities directly, we may never develop them or trust in their existence.
2. I believe that we have acquired the ability to work together (have a relationship that is reciprocal) as humans in order to survive and thrive as a species. I believe that there are behaviors that can be learned that may make some people more predisposed to abusing one another, but that does not necessarily mean that they do not understand "the reciprocal nature of relationships" Predominately innate, influenced by life experience.
3. I think it is taught through modelizing, parenting, schooling, peer relationships.
4. Not a well-framed question. Humans are hard-wired genetically to form relationships, starting with the pair-bond with the primary caregiver. However, experience teaches them the subtleties, nuances, and tools for understanding relationships. So the real answer is that the capacity is innate and requires experience to manifest and develop.
5. While the capacity must exist when one is born, I believe that it is a potentiality and not a predicable outcome. Thus, one may be able to exist seeing the world through a selfish lens with every negotiation viewed as a victory. To nurture the innate ability to realize that relationships are reciprocal, there must be modeling, teaching and sharing of common wisdoms about the ultimate benefits humans realize by supporting each others' goals.
6. This is hard- -i think empathetic response is biological - -seen in babies- - but i think the realization that others' happiness increases the chances of mine develops with cognition and experience.
7. Nothing is pure nature or nurture. We are born with a certain amount of potential and aptitude, and the finer points...the more evolved stages...we learn through observation and life experience.
8. And yet...sure people know it, once you point it out. It's like when you buy a new car and then you look around and everyone else has one too. They were always there, you just never took the time to notice until you got one. People become hypersensitive to it once it gets pointed out.
9. While I don't know, I think I believe that we are born with the capacity to understand this, and either learn to actualize this or unlearn it.
10. I can see an argument that there is biological basis because reciprocity supports survival. That argument appeals to me, but I have not gathered or read evidence showing that to be true. I believe most behaviors are culturally created and reinforced, and we do observe that in operation.
11. I think there are some critical moments for infants when their needs are either met or ignored
12. Your environment predisposes you to a pattern of behavior in relationships. However, I do believe you can choose to change this pattern with head knowledge and heart motivation.
13. experience usually teaches people how they need to respond to others. Families, training, education all teach the values of listening, empathy, etc. How to activate these requires experience and education.
14. See Michael E. McCulloch, Beyond Revenge Innate, but an evolutionary basis

15. One rarely hears parents admonish their children not to share so much. Social relationships are learned through experience - this has been demonstrated repeatedly in primate research.
16. It is something we teach our children. When one works in the criminal justice system, one can see the negative impact when this behavior is not taught to children/or even adults.
17. I wonder if the sharing we see with children and carried over into adulthood is due to the examples they see from day one within families and friends. The mother "shares" in giving the sustenance. If isolated and it is a case of survival, there would be no community and no sure if sharing and reciprocation would exist. I would like to think it is a mix of both nature and nurture. If innate it is expanded upon through community. Without community it is suppressed for sheer survival.
18. What we know of relationships is the result of the combination of emotional imprinting, karma, and learning.
19. People are born with it, like animals are. Some are born without it, as happens in the natural order of things. We can also be socialized in ways that alienate us from it (as in extremely abusive environments).
20. People learn from modeling of others. Whether cruelty or love, what we experience influences our ability to relate to others in a healthy way.
21. I don't have a belief on either end of the continuum and had you offered a neutral response I would have selected it.
22. Again, I think the capacity is innate - the ability to access it, to make that understanding functional in any reliable way (especially during conflict), is very much learned.....
23. This is not something I have thought about and certainly have not researched it. From light reading, I have come to believe that reciprocity is somewhat culturally determined and even class determined e.g. middle class Americans might feel a need to reciprocate or alternate gift giving. Check out work by Judson Mills and Margaret Clark on how reciprocity is minimized in communal/family relationships and more prominent in business formal relationships
24. As an infant, when we are all dependent upon our parents we need a bonding relationship in order to progress through the various stages of development. Without relationship development is often delayed or stopped. However, as we grow up something occurs that causes a distance between individuals that gets in the way of understanding exactly what is needed for others. Although this is innate, for most, something changes as we age.
25. I believe severe (early) life trauma can interfere with this innate capacity so that it can become inaccessible to a very few.
26. I believe we are born with the capacity to understand, but that we must learn the effects and consequences of our actions within relationships (reciprocity?).
27. My experience with people making decisions is that they learn the nature of relationships as they engage. My belief is also based on my observations of people in relationships in which there is a significant power imbalance.
28. as we evolved (if you are a creationist do not read on) we found some give and take is needed to survive. it is our instinct to take what we want that gets us into trouble.
29. It is the stuff of bonding and the recognition that the ego can control the other and vice versa.

Do you believe that most of your clients have the capacity to work cooperatively to resolve conflicts?

1. This "capacity" must be fostered from a young age, and must produce concrete positive results. If the capacity is not fostered from a young age, the individual must possess the willingness to take a risk and embark on what probably feels like an alien or threatening path -- particularly if they have been inculcated into a "fight or flight" survival mode. In the latter instance, the compassion and skills of the mediator will have a direct effect on the person's willingness to take this risk, and the positive or negative direction the path takes.
2. They have the 'capacity' but it is often obstructed through their exposure to violence, trauma, neglect, and other obstacles, so in order for them to work cooperatively, they must acknowledge their challenges in doing so.
3. The answer depends upon the stage of escalation, the nature of the conflict, the intensity and duration of the conflict and host of other factors. The answer here could just as easily be No. Again, there are no black and white answers.
4. Capacity is, again, a word that recognizes a potential. However, there must be a desire - an active interest in working toward cooperative goals. The capacity is not always easy to be "awakened" without outside intervention as we are nurtured with many inherent biases. It takes years to attain wisdom, while it takes so very little to realize the surface benefits of selfishness, greater strength, etc. We are even taught to think of our given intelligence as something to "lord" over each other. To work cooperatively we must nurture our emotional balance toward each other, to have a no-tolerance policy toward bullying of any kind, to recognize our own limitations.
5. Unless they are suffering from some (not all) forms of mental illness or personality disorder OR unless they are in the grips of such strong emotion (anger, grief) that they have a loss (temporary) of ability to respond.
6. They just need a little help and/or guidance because often the situation feels very fraught with emotion and upsetting for them. It's hard to think clearly when one is upset.
7. Depends on what you mean by understand...I mean, in theory I think they get it but when there is so much emotion bound up in people's conflicts, it sure makes it hard for them. They understand it for other people's conflicts. maybe that's the rub, the herd sees it but the individual doesn't, it can't. Some sort of complementary though somewhat contradictory survival mechanisms, I fight individually but the collective seeks to mellow us all out. Maybe we understand it in the 3rd person but not in the 1st person.
8. For the most part, yes, although I tend to believe that this understanding can also be "unlearned"
9. I have observed many of them doing cooperative problem-solving, even if it is not a routine behavior. I hesitated in answering, though, because I see some who do not appear capable, and I do not know the proportions (that is, is it "most" who can or most who can't)
10. This is a working assumption as I begin a mediation. The outcome will depend partly on my skill in clarifying options and re-focusing attention on a future desired outcome.
11. Having the capacity is different than having the desire. I do not think that most clients want to be cooperative particularly at the beginning of conversation.
12. That's why they have chosen the path of mediation. The decision to do so and the "will" to at least try to work on a solution are first steps.
13. If they didn't mediation would not succeed as often as it does. Cooperation is learned and reinforced in the brain by oxytocin and endorphins.

14. I only mediate matters where there are more than one person on the side of a conflict. For those matters to resolve, there must be cooperation.
15. Again, though, while many people can, either on their own or with assistance, work to resolve conflict, there are others for whom this is a very far stretch.
16. For the most part if you can demonstrate the value to all parties you can achieve cooperative problem solving-
17. Once clients see what the positive outcomes can be, they have an interest in improving their situation. Some are invested in relationship and work to maintain or improve the relationship.
18. I think most humans have capacity beyond which they think they may have during difficulty.
19. They often learn that their self-interest is served by taking into account the interests of the other party(ies). Working cooperatively, however, may be different from simply recognizing a diversity of interests and possible common ground or compromise.
20. Most of my clients live in what I call "survival" mode. They use their innate fight or flight responses rather than cooperation skills to resolve conflict in almost every given situation.
21. The operative word here is "most." Some have been taught that aggression is the only way to resolve conflicts (i.e., "It's a dog eat dog world."), and have lost that capacity. But I do think they can find it again if the stakes are high enough.
22. I would likely not agree to proceed with a mediation if I felt one or more of the parties lacked the capacity for cooperation.
23. I believe that most people have the capacity to work cooperatively. However, for various reasons, they may choose not to do so. There are some clients with whom I work who do not have the mental capacity to understand cooperation. They are people who are better able to participate with advocates or support in the process.

I believe that the capacity to work cooperatively to resolve conflicts is:

1. I think one's ability is related to one's gender and other socialization. I think women tend to have a more "innate" ability, which has been reinforced over time by social roles and socialization. So, some folks do have to be taught how to work with others.
2. All human behavior is learned. Humans have genetic dispositions and latent capabilities that must be expressed contextually through experience in the environment.
3. This is something which must be modeled and the benefits must be realized before one will express energy toward those ends.
4. I think it's context driven. I think it depends on what's going on and I especially think it depends on whether they are in conflict or not. So that people who are in conflict may not think that there are benefits to cooperating with the people they are in conflict with, in fact, it may not benefit them! I might think of rephrasing the questions to exclude the use of "understanding" to something more tangible, something like, believe that cooperation is better than competition...then again, what if they don't. Hmmm...
5. This is definitely a survival behavior. I do believe, however, that traumatic circumstances can pound this out of a person.
6. evolved necessity to live in social groups

7. Small children start with parallel play, then learn to play together. In conflict, parties begin adversarially, then learn they can work cooperatively.
8. When children are in the "terrible twos" stage, everything is mine, mine, mine- they do not share. Sharing is something we teach them. However, it is also an innate in ways because there are certain children who share without a second thought.
9. the center of the universe of a two year old is himself. during that time there is much learning that redirects the "mine!" attitude and bringing about a willingness to share and work cooperatively.
10. Thinking of basic needs (the lack thereof producing "conflict" - we are "hardwired" to have these met - and we seek out those who can help us to do so. For example, an infant who is hungry and cries as an expression of this conflict, triggers a maternal response to feed. It's instinctual and thus, innate.
11. I think it's very much influenced by the human's learning environment, but that the capacity is predominately innate.
12. Because it is self serving (survival), I believe people work together to serve themselves or their unit (family, community, etc.)
13. Research of primate groups suggests that this may be in our nature. The work of Frans de Waal also suggests this. But again, I'm unhappy with a forced choice on a topic about which I don't feel that there's a definitive side of the line to land on.
14. Human have the ability to modify almost any behavior in part because they can become aware of innate or bio limits and capacities.
15. I do not believe that it is our fiber to cooperate. As evolution has progressed from the early hunters we have learned to live side by side with our neighbors. I think this is primarily because of the bounty of resources available to us; however, as the earth becomes more depleted of her natural offerings I believe many of us will revert back to the behaviors of hunter/ gatherers.
16. Again, I believe that severe emotional trauma, especially in early life can interfere with this. It seems more commonly interfered with than the previous capacity mentioned, so probably lesser trauma is needed to make it difficult for people to cooperatively resolve conflict.
17. I believe we humans are born with all kinds of capacity. I believe we are born with the capacity for cooperation, however, the process of resolving conflict is, i believe, predominately learned.
18. This is an opinion based mostly on observing children. Children who are isolated when they are very young and do not interact socially until later in childhood are less able to work cooperatively with others. They have to experience conflict in order to learn how to deal with it, including the ability to cooperate.

Do you believe that most of your clients have the ability to forgive?

1. I believe that all humans possess the capacity to forgive, but it is often buried or damaged or never fully developed. In a mediation context, the skills and compassion of the mediator can be brought to bear to surface this capacity to forgive.
2. Some people have to work through some very difficult emotions in order to forgive, but I believe that most people would prefer healing what has been broken instead or remaining wounded - or wounding others.
3. Even in mediation, people want to be "right," want primarily their experience and pain to be validated. Forgiveness comes after much hard personal work and much hard work in the mediation.
4. but again, this is a struggle of experience and learned behavior/approaches and this is a lot to overcome.

5. Ability to forgive and willingness to forgive are very different.
6. Most clients are too escalated to forgive, do not understand the forgiveness process, and are fundamentally not ready to be coached. Further, they do not understand that they must learn to forgive themselves first.
7. The ability to forgive does exist but the desire to forgive must also be awakened. To do this, one has a long path of admitting one's own failings and shame. It is life's hardest lesson and thus, we continue to see a great deal of suffering because of the inability (unwillingness) to forgive ourselves, and thus, the other.
8. sometimes religious beliefs help sometimes they inhibit
9. Again, it depends. I mean, sure, it's human nature and yet if there is no compelling reason to do so, they won't. In the absence of a compelling reason to do so then I think you need a process person there to push things along.
10. I say yes, but this may be more of a desire on my part. My sense, though, is that most people want the opportunity to lay down the burden of estrangement if they feel that they can do so safely.
11. this is even closer to the line of "most" who can vs cannot; I see many whom I am not sure have this capacity
12. Many of my clients tell me that they themselves find carrying anger, hatred, bitterness burdens them. They make a claim that forgiving is an act that lightens their own burden. They may also say that it frees them for new choices.
13. Most clients want to be forgiven their mistakes but are not so quick to forgive the mistakes of others.
14. Again, evolved necessity to live in social groups and in the self-interest of those who understand social norms ...but, the closer the relationship, especially geographic, the more likely to forgive and/or reconcile
15. They have the ability in general to forgive, but often not until they have said what is troubling them and had their interests met.
16. After anger, forgiveness usually follows, if people are allowed to be heard.
17. My experience tells me that fundamentally this ability is there - and, for many it can be buried beneath huge amounts of anger -- and below that, sadness. When the layers are peeled away - and a connection established between the "them and me", a recognition of fundamental kinship as human beings, the ability to forgive is revealed.
18. I am a believer in restorative justice principles, in which those who have caused harm work to understand the harm they have caused, make amends, plan to make better choices in the future, and possibly ask for forgiveness. While I believe that unilateral forgiveness is possible and sometimes desirable, I think that it is more helpful and restorative if the process is not one-way.
19. I wouldn't generalize this piece-it is useful but not essential to reach agreements.
20. If you are talking about the capacity, I believe we all have that. whether we can do that in the context of mediation is another question.
21. I believe humans have a deep capacity to forgive.
22. This takes practice. Again, once a person understands how forgiveness serves them, they are more inclined to forgive. Believing that forgiveness is about another, is less likely to be compelling.

23. Although they might have this ability it is not one that is commonly looked at in this society as a worthy attribute and so has not been developed.
24. Ability yes. I can't imagine any of them who haven't forgiven others not associated with the conflict at the table. Desire to forgive? Not necessarily.
25. Forgiveness is a huuuuge concept, many layers and levels, but yes, we all have the ability...
26. Don't know-- however this is very difficult for many humans but much easier if preceded by apology which is also difficult
27. I say yes apprehensively, it would depend on how bad the relationship had been tarnished.
28. Anyone who has raised kids has the ability to forgive. When you love, you forgive. Sadly, some have lost the capacity to love (usually because they have not been loved). This may take supernatural intervention, but I believe that's also available.
29. I believe everyone has the ability to forgive.
30. While I believe most of my clients have the ability to forgive, the willingness and timing and depth of forgiveness vary. For some, forgiveness requires time and the process of facilitated discussion or mediation in order to allow it to take place.

I believe that the ability to forgive is:

1. I think this is the part of us that can be described as spirit or soul. Again, predominately innate, influenced by life experience.
2. Not many of us forgive easily, which leads me to believe it must be learned and practiced to develop.
3. Monkeys and dogs forgive--it is a method of survival--less powerful forgive more powerful...what is truly amazing is if the more powerful forgive the less powerful--I believe that is a learned behavior.
4. I think that just as there is an inherent integration of heart, mind, body and soul; there is an inherent ability to forgive as this unites these elements. When we do not forgive we leave parts of ourselves behind. In other words, we become fractured and act without unified integrity within a world whose messages and values already lack cohesion.
5. this takes more than a natural ability to empathize- it requires cognitive abilities and the ability to regulate emotions
6. If monkeys do it, so can we.
7. I believe I have experimented with acts of forgiveness and acts of unforgiveness in my own life. I have found that it does not serve me to withhold forgiveness.
8. I think that there is a moral sense of right and wrong within everyone but some do not pay any attention to their inner conscience.
9. Forgiveness requires a level of self realization about the uses of forgiveness and how forgiveness can free even a victim. The experience of forgiving and doing it provide a sense of self, liberation and ability to move on
10. Forgiveness, I believe, is simply letting go of what is keeping you in conflict - I like to think of it as releasing ourselves from the burden of our own false expectations. This is learned.

11. Anger causes stress. Disagreement causes stress. Forgiveness causes less anger and disagreement- it helps reduce suffering.
12. I want to believe all humans have the capacity for forgiveness. It is a recognition of the human fragility and imperfection in us all.
13. Relating to the prior response, I think, as human beings, we are spiritually one - and forgiveness is embedded in that spiritual relationship and rooted in love. Life can create much to get in the way of our maintaining our recognition of this -- and our ability to forgive - beginning with our ability to forgive ourself. Learning can help to rekindle the connection and nurture the ability.
14. I still have to practice this learned behavior.
15. I believe we all have the capacity at one time in our lives, but experience can sometimes severely damage the capacity.
16. Human are born with a capacity to be touched in the heart by another's story. Forgiveness is a natural impulse when we are deeply touched.
17. Experiencing the power of genuine forgiveness is a life changing lesson.
18. Same primate answer as above. It's hard to imagine a social system evolving that didn't have cooperative capacities, including forgiveness, associated with it.
19. Minus those with extreme personality disorders, I do think that the ability to forgive is innate.
20. Our dogs forgive us when we accidentally hurt them, leave them, or forget to feed them. It must be innate in humans as well.
21. Same explanation as above. Again, the ability to forgive can be thwarted by bad experiences and examples particularly in early life.
22. I have observed that those who have grown up in supportive, forgiving, nurturing environments are more able to forgive. That supports my understanding that it is a learned ability.
23. hmmm..... most animals that live in communities in the wild dont hold grudges for any length of time ... but is that forgiveness or indifference??? we probably draw on that.
24. Forgiveness is a socially acquired condition. It's expression is meaningless unless within a commonwealth.

Do you believe that empathy is an ability that most people have?

1. Hard one to choose. I think compassion is more likely than empathy. I believe that people are mostly selfish or self serving, and by that I mean that they do what they must in order to survive and thrive - regardless of how it may impact others. I believe that when a person in conflict with another, it may be more difficult to access the capacity for empathy because they are overcome with other, very powerful emotions, like anger, fear, sadness, etc.
2. Unless, of course, there are developmental barriers, which could range from autism to legal training . .
3. EXCEPTION..... people exposed to trauma, abuse, neglect, violence.... empathy is something they loose and neuroscience proves this.
4. Empathy is the ultimate ability to love. And, I do believe that we do share this ability as this is what allows for forgiveness and for creating a future that looks better than the one we live within.

5. Everyone has mirror neurons with the exception of people with autism. Seems that's where empathy comes from.
6. I want to believe this, but have not studied it enough to know prevalence. Intuitively, it seems a necessary feature of the bonding that facilitates a tribe/economic unit.
7. I am able to sense that someone close to me is in pain. I believe this is an ability that most people share with me. Trauma or coercive training may limit or channel this ability.
8. Again, the ability is there because they usually love themselves and do good for themselves so they could appreciate what is good and bad for someone else.
9. Most people I think respond to pain and happiness and other emotions in others. The ability to empathize seems evident even in very young children.
10. Mental illness may be defined as absence of empathy to create a socialopath.
11. Empathy is now thought to be an operation of mirror neurons in the brain.
12. Or else there would be constant violence. Peace would not be possible.
13. Most have the ability, I would hope. There are those who do not unless it is someone very close to them.
14. With the exception of true sociopaths
15. When pointed out to them -It is sometimes a matter of time or perceived lack of time that enables people to focus only on their story or perception of the story.
16. This capacity can be severely damaged, but it's still there, if restored.
17. Empathy is a natural quality that people are usually (but not always) born with. It's part of our core emotional system.
18. This is another innate human ability that also has not been developed because of social needs not being based in collaboration.
19. I don't so much believe that empathy is NOT an ability that most people have..... I just really am not sure about this....
20. Most people can develop this capacity if it's not innate.
21. I think empathy can exist for ourselves and for others who are in difficult situations. Sometimes it takes another really bringing out the other side's story, but it usually results in some sort of empathetic response.
22. Yes, but it's very often suppressed by cultural norms and self interest.
23. Most people are able to imagine their situation as different from reality. Most have the capability to understand the feelings and situation of another even if the individual has not experienced the same circumstances.
24. Most of us have the ability to empathize but how many want to go there??
25. The ability to assimilate the emotional condition of another allows for shared experiential connectivity.

I believe that the human capacity to empathize is:

1. Predominately innate, influenced by life experience.
2. It comes from the original bonding of parent and child and grows from there. It can be derailed, but can be nurtured back into alignment.
3. You have mirror neurons from the start but they can be more or less cultivated depending on the environment people grow up in and their relationship to the people around them.
4. I'm unsure. My own guess is that mother-child bonding and pair-bonding is much more difficult if empathy is missing. Evolutionary success might relate to a capacity for empathy allowing more successful procreation and nurturing families.
5. We were created in God,s image and he is a compassionate, merciful being.
6. It may be a human trait that can die if it is not developed over time, but the ability of very young children to comfort one another, to help, to know when something is needed seems pretty basic. In very dysfunctional situations some people seem to become sadistic and this would seem to be a thwarted natural development.
7. This is how we learn...now hard-wired.
8. Here, I think our brains are structured in such a way that even babies experience empathy.
9. Look at children who get hurt while playing. Usually, it is a fellow child who offers to help the injured one first.
10. I personally don't remember not having it.
11. Although I think it is predominantly inate, I believe that there are many people whose life circumstances have prevented them from making full use of this capacity.
12. Mirror neurons....
13. Empathy is a quality of the heart that humans are born with (although some people may not be). For most people, it arises naturally, just as other core emotions arise in particular circumstances.
14. Seeing a situation from another perspective takes practice and intention. Parenting and modeling are critical to empathetic behavior.
15. mnay people don;t seem to know how to empathize without prodding or coaching
16. I believe that it often depends on our upbringing. We all have it but it depends on how it is nurtured.
17. Newborn infants will start to cry if they hear another baby in distress.
18. I think the capacity to empathize is innate, however for some people it is more so than others. It seems that some people empathy is part of their psychological make up more than others, like some are born with more musical talent than others, though all of us can learn music to some degree.
19. I believe empathy comes with life experience. We can't empathize until we can imagine. And I do know a few people who do not seem to possess the ability to empathize with others.
20. People who are exposed to more information seem more able to empathize. People with strong, active imaginations, social lives, and understanding of others have an easier time with empathy. That supports an understanding that information and experience are important in developing the ability to empathize.

21. requires a thought process we continually deny animals have.
22. If not, solipsism rules.

"Reconciliation - To reestablish a relationship between." Do you believe that most of your clients want to engage in reconciliation in order to move beyond their conflicts?

1. I do not believe that most of my clients start out wanting to reconcile; they each have short term goals in mind and need/want relief from a particular monetary or psychic injury. Note that I conduct same day court mediations; clients arrive expecting to see a judge and are redirected to a voluntary mediation process.
2. This really depends on the nature of the conflict, relationship between the parties, etc. I believe that most people crave to be accepted, loved, and without the baggage of conflict in their lives, but sometimes the position of not wanting to reconcile is a mechanism used to protect oneself, which is a legitimate desire.
3. That seems to be the primary reason most folks are willing to come to the table.
4. They value the importance of reconciliation, in whatever form is appropriate for them.
5. many of the people who request our services may be interested in reconciliation, while broader groups of individuals might not be
6. depends on whether they need to keep the relationship or not
7. Most clients want the problem to go away. Only in a minority of conflicts is reconciliation thought about and even in those, the desire for reconciliation is overwhelmed by the need for validation and vindication.
8. Most do not understand the distinction between win-lose and a win-win. This is something that it takes a great deal of effort to bring the parties to understand. Once you get to even a bit of that solution, reconciliation is a higher level of understanding. Do I think that my clients want it? Well, they might if they knew what it was - and they were not fearful of what they would be risking to get to it. Meanwhile, I think they are satisfied (almost relieved) when a compromise is reached.
9. they may not recognize this as a goal or in their best interest- - and may mostly be interested if their conflict partner is someone they anticipate being in some kind of relationship
10. I believe they are open to the idea of reconciliation, yes, but I believe that most of us in the US are acculturated to want retribution in response to a conflict in which we believe ourselves to be very much in the right.
11. For the most part I think they do. When they feel like there is some sort of conciliatory approach from the other side, unless they feel like it is a trap, there us almost universal love of the moment when people come back together.
12. Unless they have come to identify with their role in the client in a way that is core to their larger sense of identity.
13. They are keenly focused on being judged and marginalized. They want to be welcomed back and seen as the men they have grown into.
14. I see many of my clients struggling with a fear of change and a fear of losing the relationship. Finding a way to revisit the mutually positive moments can sometimes renew energy for the conversation about painful issues that need resolution.

15. I do not think people really want to stay conflicted but they often do not have the tools to end the conflict. Although I believe they could acquire those tools if so desired.
16. Most of my clients want to end a conflict and move on, not necessarily in reconciliation. Where a continuing working relationship is crucial, some consider an new, improved relationship a goal but reconciliation is not necessarily a priority.
17. Almost all people are stressed and fearful of continued conflict
18. They would love to but don't think it is possible and don't trust the other side. Thus, reconciliation is an act of opening one's heart to one's opponent, but to do so requires some advance work.
19. Many are just content to resolve the dispute and go separate ways.
20. If there is a relationship and if it is still important, yes. It may be different but still important. Small claims, being my primary experience, most had no relationship other than settlement.
21. Yes, and I do witness people willing to endure great cost to themselves -- physically, psychologically and mentally - rather than reconcile.
22. I think that in most cases they would like to move beyond their conflicts in order to consider the possibility of reconciliation.
23. For on-going relationships yes.
24. Most people want to avoid discomfort which is an integral process of reconciliation - therefore, most clients don't have that on their wish list.
25. My belief is that most people want to move beyond conflict, and whether THEY know it or not, reconciliation is the best way to do that. Transformative mediation theory holds that what parties want most from mediation is not settlement but "a way to change and transform the quality of their interaction with the other party from a negative and destructive pattern to a more positive one so that they can move on with their lives constructively." I agree with that in concept. In reality, I think people want different things, and don't always make rational choices. I believe people generally want to move beyond their conflicts (although a small percentage of people may not) and that people want to move beyond destructive conflict patterns (but some people want to "win" - like in Grumpy Old Men).
26. Most of my work is interpersonal meaning that there is a continuing relationship. Even in this work, people don't yet understand the healing power of repairing the harm. They tend to take the "easier" route of listening, empathizing to the best of their ability and moving forward without spending effort/time/energy on reparation.
27. I've found that most people want to feel "right" about their position and will make things "fit" that need.
28. This depends upon the nature of the client and the conflict.
29. Most? I don't have a way to measure this. If they say they're not interested, does it mean in their heart of hearts they aren't? If they say they are interested, are we sure it's not a manipulative tactic.
30. This is the primary reason, I think, people engage in reconciliation - because they simply do not want to be in the conflict anymore (for myriad possible reasons, not all having to do with a fear/dislike of conflict itself) - so the interest is really more in getting through the conflict than in reestablishing the relationship - reconciliation as a means to an end, not an end in itself....
31. Have no idea; however clients who voluntarily come to the table usually have a motive to move beyond the conflict, but they may also have other motives such as proving themselves right, venting, vengeance,

informal discovery etc. etc.

32. Reconciliation takes work-- and skills that they may or may not have developed.
33. Again, I answer with caution. It would depend on how damaged the relationship was.
34. Depends on whether they ever had a relationship. For instance, in a business or traffic accident case, it's mostly if not all about money and they really don't want a relationship. Divorcing couples want to end a relationship (but they can't if there are kids, so then they want to establish a new relationship, not re-establish the old one.
35. I am not sure about this answer, but it seems about 50/50. There are many who just want to put it behind them and move away from it and the persons associated with it. Again I do think that reconciliation is a natural innate desire, but that many people have lost the ability or hope that it can be done due the same reason I keep bringing up.
36. I believe that once someone has the desire for reconciliation, the conflict itself has moved beyond its most difficult stage. I believe most of my clients just want the situation to be different.
37. My yes is reflective of two things - relationships that will continue after the dispute, and the desire of most people to move on and let go of the weight of being in conflict.
38. except the israelis and Palestiniians.....and my wife
39. Even those who agree never to interact with the other again, have reestablished the relationship - from ambiguity to clarity.

I believe that the desire to reconcile during and after conflict is:

1. I see this desire as a mix of a profoundly human quality we are born with, and a learned ability to "let go of" a need for revenge or a specific outcome.
2. Predominately innate, influenced by life experience. If people could build the capacity to forgive, to truly forgive someone for the harm they have done, then I believe this desire is compounded.
3. It happens in mediation, so the ability is there.
4. By our very nature, we need to reconcile to survive, so yes, I believe it is predominantly innate.
5. This is a hard one. On a metaphysical level, I believe that there is a desire to reconcile and without reconciliation there is sadness and even grieving. However, it is not on a conscious level and thus, I have chosen that it is innate and not learned.
6. some innate desire to avoid or resolve conflict
7. Depends on how intense the conflict is and really at what point in the conflict you are. If you are at the point where things are escalating, the last thing on your mind is reconciliation, if you have passed the point of no return and hurt someone, you might wish to take it back and you might wish you could tell the other person it wasn't so bad and you understand why they said the things they said.
8. Not sure that the phrase "reconcile differences" means, exactly.
9. My own experience is that this can become a negotiation in which the fears and desires of both parties may be partially hidden and partially clarified in the conversation. Much depends on the ability of both parties to see advantages for remaining in the relationship.

10. No one can control one's desires but the person himself.
11. Societies have very different ways of resolving conflicts and in dealing with victims and perpetrators at the end.
12. This comes from the social setting and cultural norms, but these are universal since humans evolved to live in groups and reconciliation is a successful group strategy.
13. Conflicts are uncomfortable and everyone wants to love and be loved and not be in conflict, so the desire to reconcile is innate. Again, even babies want it.
14. It is innate and learned. We have to teach forgiveness after intense suffering. However, it is innate for people to want to live together without conflict- a base human trait.
15. As I move down this I am trying to go by my first instinctive answer. Humans, for the most part, seem, to me, to be pack or herd animals. I think we like a pod or herd or community as there is safety and survival in numbers (evolution).
16. Again, life experiences can cloud access to this innate ability. Learning can help to tap into it.
17. While there may be an innate desire to be in relationship with all life and all that is -- including those with whom we have conflict -- it is sometimes not practical to support this (often hidden) aspiration for all.
18. Depends on many factors-roles, relationships, future...
19. The habit of avoiding discomfort is learned.
20. That's really hard. Also, "during and after" throws me off. I believe there is a natural inclination to settle or resolve disputes, but do I believe it is more natural (innate) to solve conflict by conciliation versus by force? I think it is innate to settle conflict in your community without violence, and then to settle disputes with "other" with force. Yet toddlers often resort to force, even with their mother or father.
21. This process is quite involved and requires skills as well as commitment.
22. Seems like it would have to be built into our gene pool for the species to survive.
23. As much as one can learn to desire something....
24. I think of my children and they may not have cared to reconcile any conflict if it wasn't for the fact that they wanted to please me. For an example, when a toddler colors on the wall it is his or her desire to please the parent when the parent is upset; therefore, resulting in changed behavior.
25. We seek wholeness, not brokenness. But this depends on the kind of relationship (above)
26. Innately people desire to feel connected. Life experience seems to teach separation which makes reconciliation more difficult for many.
27. I really couldn't say. I don't believe that reconciliation is a driving force in conflict resolution. I believe a more influential motivation for conflict resolution is the desire to get specific needs met.
28. As individuals experience conflict, and the aftermath, they learn the difference between reconciliation and termination of relationships. For most, the first is easier and more productive than the second. They learn the difference between the two and are able to make choices about which one is more appropriate in the circumstances after the dispute.
29. I don't accept the premise of the question.

If you knew that all your clients would come to you with one or more of the core capabilities outlined in this survey, would you use that capability to help them?

1. As a mediator I work with any and all resources and capacities with which I am presented -- there is a way with each and every client to find the means to tap into their capacities for self-transformation -- the issue really is whether or not he or she is ready for this experience, and how accessible these capacities are due to life experience, mental health, and other considerations.
2. To forgive. It might help people in conflict to let the other back in so they can deal with the issues at hand. Forgive but not forget, basically allowing the parties to forgive and still be upset, or still have concerns.
3. Of course you meet the person where they are and if they possess some of the abilities that make mediation and conflict resolution more possible, why not use it?
4. There is a foundation from which we can all work.
5. I already do know that clients come to me with some of these core capabilities and use that to help them. This question is unclear.
6. negotiation skills and listening skills
7. One's awareness of a core capacity will make it all that much easier to get them beyond roadblocks - in their own mind, background, upbringing, religion, etc. However, there is still the need to help the other party (or parties, communities or nations) get to that point.
8. I assume that they have them -and ask questions to clarify
9. It would depend so much on the circumstances! Too hard to say.
10. You know, if I knew that everyone had them and when and how to work with them, I bet there would be a million ways, products, methods developed to strengthen them. Then again, when i do negotiation and communication workshops for people in conflict, I am trying to get them to realize the nature of reciprocity and the need to listen to the other person's need, in essence trying to develop their empathic powers. So perhaps we do this already. Perhaps an additional question might be added about whether people try to incorporate any of these core capabilities into their trainings, which ones, how and which others...That might be a quick way to get deeper with folks. In fact, you might want to start with that question to get their direct experience right away.
11. Yes, I do scan for some of these, and adjust my approach depending on what I notice.
12. I would hope that offering my empathy and compassion would help the parties learn how to do that more successfully for one another.
13. Every human should reach out to every other human with the gifts they possess to help each other.
14. Certainly building on clients' strengths and awareness and knowledge is key.
15. Compassion and empathy are core capabilities of successful peacemakers and peacekeepers.
16. Yes - there are powerful techniques for each.
17. The capacity of understanding by hearing or seeing "other" or the opponent in a different light can be helpful in mediation. The story telling is that on some level. Each party is cognitively able to hear one another and the exposure to the world of the other parties reactions and feelings and "side" of the situation, may then open the door for a better understanding. If we as human can not have the mind's work with

enlightenment through information and an organization of that information, then how do we change within society? (i.e. civil rights)

18. I work to tap into their core relationship as human beings, with the capacities described here, because I believe that through their recognition of that connectedness - their ability to solve their problems is awakened, enhanced, unleashed.
19. My real answer is "maybe." Some varieties of peacemaking focus on resolving the immediate conflict -- which is a laudable and practical goal. Some focus on understanding or reconciliation -- another laudable goal, which may or may not be practical in any given circumstance.
20. Absolutely, use everything you are given!
21. This is how I mediate.
22. Isn't the question "would I try to help THEM use that capability" that they come to me with? Or am I supposed to use MY OWN capability? I think all those core capabilities are critical to working out conflict, and I would want to create a climate where the parties would engage those capabilities.
23. Using clients desired outcomes, inclinations, experiences and skills is critical to successful resolution of disputes.
24. I'll use what ever tools are available to bring understanding.
25. I believe in tapping the capacities people already have to resolve the difficulties they face. It's a type of leverage.
26. The answer seems self-evident - all the core capabilities you have asked about are very useful to access when helping folks who may be lost, or stuck, in a conflict to "see" the other, and therefore negotiate more effectively with him/her/them.
27. I work with what the clients bring, not with concepts that I impose on them or presume that they have. I am quick to utilize hopeful elements that may come up such as reinforcing an apology and making sure that it is heard.
28. It helps in the amends making process. The affected parties often feel better because they are getting what they need and the responsible party comes away with his or her pride still intact.
29. Don't know how to answer. I try to engage the whole person, while avoiding manipulation and respecting self-determination.
30. I try to model these capacities and encourage people to find these capacities within themselves by reminding them that using them is more resourceful, bringing much greater likelihood that they will get a satisfactory outcome.
31. If my clients came to me with empathy, recognition of reciprocity, the desire to forgive or be forgiven, the desire for reconciliation, the capacity to work cooperatively, then they really wouldn't need me very much - if at all.
32. If I knew that my clients would all come with the ability to forgive, and the willingness to do so, I would work with them to imagine the future, with and without forgiveness. The same is true for the other core capacities. If individuals are capable of reconciliation, etc. a facilitator or mediator has the opportunity to use many more tools that he or she otherwise has. My general presumption as a mediator is that individual clients do have these capacities and I do my work based on that presumption. If it appears that my presumption is incorrect, I change my work in order to focus on other capacities.

33. My role of mediator is to allow the parties to decide how to play out their capabilities. Plus there is no way to assess to what degree each party has access to that capability, unless they choose to display the associated behavior. Reporting on one's capabilities in the absence of observable behavior is a dangerous assumption for a mediator.

Please choose one or more core capacities discussed in this survey and explain how you might use it in a conflict intervention and/or training. If I knew everyone in the conflict had this capacity, I would:

1. (Mediation) I would assess each party with respect to his/her willingness to reconcile, as well as his/her capacity to follow this path. This assessment would occur in the context of each party telling his/her story, and in the initial interactions between the parties, and between the parties and me. If I perceived one or other of the parties to be blocked in some way from moving down this path, I would caucus with each party and explore more fully the "stuck" aspects, as well as provide direct encouragement to become "unstuck". I would bring the parties back together at the point at which there had been sufficient movement so that the parties could now begin to proceed down the reconciliation path together.
2. Assist people in the process of forgiving one another, so they can move on to substantive issues.
3. let both parties speak freely and encourage the other party to reflect on the speaker's offering, highlighting the difference, where important and appropriate, and the similarity of each person's interest/experience.
4. I use this capacity to help them see what the repercussions of their actions, thoughts, etc have on others.
5. Encourage them to tell their stories and empathize with one another, generating motivation for reconciliation.
6. Utilize an interest-based negotiation process that develops cooperative problem-solving while it de-escalates the conflict.
7. With this cognitive ability, I think it would be easier to build affinity among the parties - a desire to belong. Also, it would aid in realizing that both have need of the other and have the ability to make each other's situation better or worse.
8. engage in discussion about the other sides needs and motives and review possible consequences of several approaches
9. Probably be out of a job as a mediator? ;-)
10. Empathy is the key in my style of mediation.
11. I am not sure how the cross cultural part fits into this. What if I would use these in non cross cultural settings or my choice to use them in cross cultural settings were not influenced by the fact that it was a cross cultural setting. What exactly is the question you are trying to get at with this one?
12. Have the capacity to empathize
13. build a series of small interventions over time, in which participants had exposure to each other in small, nonthreatening ways. Through these, people begin to feel the experience of the other(s) as ordinary and familiar. In time, we might talk about what it takes to trust (in general) and then move to why it is difficult to trust the other(s) and what it would take to start the first steps toward that. As that progressed, we might then talk more deeply about what led to the broken trust and seek affirmations of willingness to fix that, and what each would want from the other. After practicing that for a bit, we might have a similar series of conversations about forgiveness, and practice meeting the requests that arise out of that.

14. Offer a distinction between an act of forgiveness and an act of holding accountable. The ability to hold someone accountable may or may not be something that is within my power or control. The ability to forgive is mine to offer or withhold. If that is true for me, for the victims of rape, torture, injustice, etc., it may also be true for the people in this room. How can you imagine an act of forgiveness would make you feel?
15. Either tell stories or have them relate a story to bring out empathy and compassion.
16. Help them to articulate how the other feels and has experienced the conflict; get them to imagine how they might accommodate the other; get them to imagine how a resolution could free them all to move on
17. People need to recognize the interdependence and gains of mutual cooperation and respect.
18. ask them to indicate what kind of relationship they would like to have with each other.
19. As discussed, most people will forgive once they have had an opportunity to be heard and to listen to the others suffering.
20. have them tell the stories and ask questions drawing on their feelings and/or reactions to the situation. Reflective listening also brings into focus feelings (pain or joy, etc) and each side hears those expressions. As well the responses and attitudes within the mediation can be explored with each hearing them reflected back. In addition, the parties can reflect back how comment affected them. Opens better understanding.
21. Empathy opens us up, promotes sharing, increases understanding - fosters connectedness - which can lead to trusting one another sufficiently to have the kind of working relationship that supports problem solving.
22. I believe that all those capacities are called into play in the restorative justice process, which is primarily used when a "wrong" has been committed, not when two parties are at odds over something and neither has admitted to wrongdoing. In mediation over mundane matters such as property or money, I might or might not invite those capacities into play, depending on the parties, the nature of the mediation, and the energy in the room.
23. Be grateful. Pieces can be put into self-referential perspective.
24. Have the parties reflect each other's experience.
25. Benefits of cooperation: People can be reminded that cooperation is frequently more "useful" than competition or force. There are exceptions to the premise, so can parties see how cooperation would work in THIS conflict? Capacity to empathize: Seeing life from another's point of view, and feeling what it is like for them. This is critical in conflict, whether in training or intervention. Reciprocal nature of relationships: How to help people understand that we are interdependent. When two parents battling over custody can focus on the best interests of the child, everything changes. One of the key "shifts" that happens in mediation is "recognition" when we see common interests and move to the same side of the table for one or more issues. Ability to forgive: Important to know about. Can't be forced, has to "take bud" through the parties' interaction, and then the intervenor may work with the pregnant moment. Desire for reconciliation: It may not be present at the beginning of the mediation, but may emerge from parties' interaction.
26. All of the capacities checked above lead to openness and willingness to share critical information, increasing the possibilities for mutually beneficial and long lasting solutions. I did not include forgiveness which is more of a stretch for most people and, while desired, is not essential to a solution that will allow people to move forward to the best of their ability. Asking questions serving the goals of the client is critical. For example: What kind of neighbor would you like to have next door? How does your concern impact your daily life? Would you expect that to happen to other people? If you could replay the situation what might you do differently? What would you be willing to contribute to improve this situation? Does it make sense to you that the other party might have a different view/interest/concern? What might happen if

you work together to address this concern? How could you see that happening? The questions go on and on and rely to a great extent on self interest, willingness to hear another view and ability to see different possible scenarios and solutions.

27. Gently guide them through the mediation process of understanding and compassion. Hey Mark, Let's talk on the phone about this. I feel that we will get a lot more done, when is a good time for you?
28. invite each participant to acknowledge this capacity in themselves and each other in a way that is skillful and meaningful to the mediation. For example I might ask each participant: So you would really like to feel heard? Assuming the answers are yes, I would ask: So this is a shared desire - both of you would like to feel heard. How can that be achieved...
29. Invite them to consider how they might tap into the other party's willingness to participate in give and take by proposing solutions that meet the other party's interests.
30. Settle all my cases.
31. attempt to help the parties understand (or at least explore) the "effect" of their own actions/statements/behaviors on the others, and vice versa, have each party actively explore what it is they see, and react to, in the other.... if the "dynamic" is destructive and the parties can somehow realize what role they are playing in that dynamic, that can help transform the dynamic itself....
32. I chose none of these potentially positive capacities because I generally do not assume or impose on clients, not do I lecture or teach them about the benefits of cooperation etc. Whether or not I assume that clients have or embrace a capacity, inclination, skill, ability, I might ask related questions such as " Can you understand how X feels about this even though you may disagree (empathy)"
33. get them to resolve their differences
34. I have had clients where they really couldn't (or wouldn't) connect to the suffering of the other. Scoffing at their tears or really not "getting" why they are hurt or upset. Empathy in those moments would be extremely useful -- and is actually essential -- in moving forward.
35. be making a large difference in this community. Most of the client's that I have come in without the understanding that their behaviors and actions have had an impact on those around them as well as on the community as a whole. Their capacity to empathize is so minute that it takes time for them to see what the impact is of their actions. Furthermore, many of the client's that I work with have no desire to reconcile anything, but in fact it is a court imposed sanction that requires them to do so. For them it is the fear of further punishment. Moreover, due to their basic need for survival they cannot comprehend the need to cooperate because for many their basic needs are not being met. With these core capacities intact the crime rate would greatly be reduced and the community more peaceful.
36. I am not sure. I do believe people have these capacities and like I said, I would try to model them. Sometimes if people do not tap into them easily because they are stuck in projecting the problem on to the other party, I may actually discuss these and how they would get farther by seeing if they can access these parts of themselves. I think the first two, forgiveness and reconciliation may be the hardest in deeply entrenched people in conflict, not because the ability is not there, but because people have lost hope that it might be possible. Here we may need to help people with skills. If people have forgiven and reconciled in the past only to have been disappointed, they just may need to see where different interpersonal skills may make a difference. I think things like "non-violent communication" could be of help in such cases. Inter culturally, there may even be hundreds or more years of problems that make it hard to access forgiveness or the desire to reconcile. Yet without reconciliation I do not think there can be real peace, at best there can be a truce or a cease fire agreement, but no real peace. In these cases the challenge for the mediator is to contribute to a paradigm shift. Helping people in accessing these core abilities and helping them recognize the "the enemy" also possesses these and helping them see how they may create a new opportunity for

moving forward if they do connect to those core capacities and use them.

37. I am assuming a family-type mediation: If all parties understood the reciprocal nature of their relationship, then I would assume they could also understand the reciprocal nature of the building of the conflict, and thus the untangling of the conflict. With this hypothesis, I might walk them through some part of the history of the conflict asking each to reflect on his own contribution to it. Then also begin to build a mutual picture of future interactions highlighting how each planned to change his or her pattern. It is important to add, that there are many other variables that might make this strategy inadvisable, or downright useless. It is also important to note that if parties had all three of these (checked) capacities (inclinations?) they likely could do this work without me.
38. For the work I do, these capacities become most clear in families. Where family members have the ability to empathize with others, to forgive, and the desire for reconciliation, almost anything is possible. Family members are often the ones who can cause the most hurt and anger because of the nature of familiar relationships. Most times, family conflict is mired in and inextricably bound with emotion. By helping family members to empathize with the others a mediator can build a platform of understanding. Using these abilities I can assist them to understand their shared past and shared experiences from another's perspective. Family members who are able to forgive and move toward a different relationship often gain more than the end of the dispute. Many times they gain the ability to work together more capably in the future.
39. empathy - to reflect the other sides point of view in the hope of finding the reciprocal nature of the relationship so that they will be able to cooperate and come to some reconciliation... and maybe even forgiveness.
40. be making a dangerous assumption.⁹

⁹ The irony of this one comment/answer, falling at the very end of the survey, and at the very end of this paper, is symbolic. Without some assumptions, we are left starting from scratch with every intervention we make. If we make the wrong assumptions we may corrupt the process from the beginning.