Epilogue

The Biz

Christopher Honeyman & James Coben[*]

Editors' Note: *Collectively, the scholarship produced in the RNT project significantly "ups the ante" for what teachers ought to provide (and students and institutions ought to demand) in quality negotiation education. But can these higher aspirations be reconciled with the rapidly changing economics of higher education and the "entertainment" tendencies of the executive training field?*

Month after month, year after year they keep coming: the fresh-faced young hopefuls, the middle-aged characters, all in search of the glamour, the excitement, the prestige, the riches . . . . Well, maybe not the last of these. We are, after all, talking of the new arrivals not to Hollywood, but to negotiation and conflict management teaching.

Ambition runs up against limitations in every field. But the limitations are not the same in every field. This Epilogue closes out not just this volume, but a five-year, four-volume project, in which more than a hundred people have delved quite deeply, we think, into a wide variety of issues about the how, what, why, when and who of teaching. The scholarship produced has ranged from "big picture" theoretical pieces to detailed descriptions of innovative (and eminently practical) teaching and assessment tools. Rarely, though, have the project's contributors confronted the substantial *barriers* to change.

---

[*] **Christopher Honeyman** is managing partner of Convenor Conflict Management, a consulting firm based in Washington, DC and Madison, Wisconsin. He has directed a 20-year series of major research-and-development projects in conflict management, including as co-director of the Rethinking Negotiation Teaching project. His email address is honeyman@convenor.com. **James Coben** is a professor of law and senior fellow in the Dispute Resolution Institute at Hamline University School of Law, and co-director of the Rethinking Negotiation Teaching project. His email address is jcoben@hamline.edu.

The limitations that have not taken up much space in this series may have received less attention because they are generally perceived as not under the control of individuals; and they can be daunting. They arise, we think, from three different sources. At least one of these, in our brief discussion below, probably *is* beyond the capacity of anyone in our field to influence very much. If we collectively can attack the others, however, the next generation of teachers, not to mention their students, might find it easier to learn good work and do good work (see Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, and Damon 2001).

The first set of limitations arises from the institutional economics of teaching and training environments. These come in several different varieties; the constraints on a private firm offering "executive" courses are not the same as those of a major research university. But in each case, they unfortunately militate against many of the strategies and tactics for better and more comprehensive teaching as compiled in this series.

Law schools, for example, typically offer only one course in negotiation, valued in academic terms at two to three credits. We can see little likelihood in the near term, despite the conspicuously increasing sophistication of the material which *might* be taught and *should* be taught, that many law schools will provide the time to teach it. This flies in the face of the continuing enthusiasm of the students for the subject; it also is illogical in light of steadily increasing evidence that negotiation and related tasks will actually consume a greater proportion of the post-graduate working lives of law students than almost anything else such students might learn. The reasons why are beyond the scope of this brief wrap-up; but, anecdotal as our information may be, our contacts in business schools, planning schools, schools of international relations and other formal teaching environments are numerous, and have given us no reason to suppose that the picture is much better in any of their settings.

Compounding the problem is the virtual arms race that is the contemporary world of distance education (Matz and Ebner 2010: 1 note 1). Institutional pressure, coming perhaps more frequently from the chief financial officer than the academic provost, forces more and more courses into economical distance formats. Certainly, there is much to be gained in this new teaching environment (see Matz and Ebner 2010, and Fox and Press, *Venturing Home*, in this volume, for descriptions of extremely effective uses of online tools). But in the brave new world of massive open online courses ("MOOCs"), an ongoing challenge will be finding cost-effective ways for teachers to interact directly, and on an individual basis, with their students (Papano 2012).

Executive trainers, meanwhile, find themselves pressed by the demands of their clientele toward ever shorter and less substantial courses. As John Wade caustically observed near the beginning of this project:

> It is easy to ensure success. Just lower expectations (as in negotiations). For example, lower expectations to these goals: first, pay the bills for the course, and second, ensure that the majority of participants "feel good" for at least two hours after the course is over (2009: 172).

We have been nonplussed, in more than one country, to observe the avidity of program managers not only for every practitioner-student to be offered courses of as little as half a day's duration, but for mere attendance at such a course to be memorialized by a printed certificate, fully the equivalent in gilding and scrollwork to anything issued by Harvard or Yale. One of our colleagues in this project, inured to the economic realities of executive training, has described much of what she does all year as "entertrainment." We are more saddened than entertained that her undoubted talents must be thus directed.

The likelihood of new ideas for negotiation and conflict management keeping up the rates of development of the last thirty years, meanwhile, must face off against the decline in support for basic research: at the time of this writing it has been almost eight years since the last stalwart among the major U.S. foundations that initially funded "R&D" in negotiation (the Hewlett Foundation) closed its innovative program in our area of concern. Aside from the JAMS Foundation (which has graciously funded the RNT project from its inception, but which would be the first to acknowledge that it is not in the same financial league as Hewlett, Ford or MacArthur, the field's original three funders) there has been no sign that any other such institution is ready to pick up the slack; and meanwhile, government support for research (in many fields, not just our own) has been a victim of bitter and shortsighted politics. At the same time, we can see little prospect in the near to medium term for U.S.-based or European educational institutions to devote greater resources of their own to this field, though it is possible that in Asia and emerging economies elsewhere the picture may be somewhat brighter. (It is also possible that our composite field strikes so many sparks that the rate of new discovery will remain higher than the rate of funding would predict. We certainly hope so.)

The second set of limitations is also economic, but individual rather than institutional. We do not refer here to the prospect of lower earnings and benefits, and worse retirement arrangements, for full-

time faculty in Europe and the United States. Even though many anticipate an adverse environment on these measures, it is far from clear that faculty will be worse off than practitioners who are competing for jobs requiring a related skill set. Instead, it is the low pay and academic status of *adjunct* teachers that is the likely key source of trouble for innovation in teaching in the future, even if all that is asked is adoption of innovations created by the dedicated professionals who have been our colleagues in this series.

Simply put, adjunct teachers typically add on, to something resembling a full-time workload (or beyond) in practice work, a significant number of class hours, which are paid so badly that a tendency to give short shrift to preparation is almost inevitable. And their numbers in relation to tenure-track faculty continue to grow.

The cynicism that drives higher education institutions to adopt and expand this model *is* institutional, if particularly risible in a field like ours, in which the rate of new discovery is high and professional self-respect therefore demands constant attention and response to change. But this becomes an *individual* issue when instead of struggling against this tide, adjunct teachers treat it as normal, or natural, or inevitable. One of the editors was privileged to give an account of this project's discoveries and propositions to an audience billed as "academic," approximately eighty percent of which turned out to be composed of adjunct faculty. Their predominant reaction, unhappily, was dismay at the amount of additional and uncompensated work they perceived the project to be laying on them.

Somewhere between the second set of limitations and the third is the relentless pressure on tenure-track faculty to "produce," but in terms that unfortunately do not look like constructive or innovative production to us. More than ten years ago, in a predecessor project, one of the editors and two colleagues compiled the results from a series of experiments, with academics and practitioners from a wide variety of backgrounds (Honeyman, McAdoo, and Welsh 2001). The central conclusion was that one of the most adverse trends affecting our field – a *composite* field, in which this series alone should demonstrate how the innovation and the excitement derive largely from combining ideas from other fields into new concepts – was the tendency of departments in each "home" discipline to demand that faculty publish within a constricted range of recognized journals, each of which was resolutely uninterested in material that did not hew closely to the already-established concerns of the home discipline.

It does us little good to surmise, as we do, that the first biochemists must have had this problem in their "home" department, of either biology or chemistry, since they presumably must have come from one

discipline or the other. Perhaps there were many biologists and chemists who were unable to persuade their departments and journal editors to tolerate such deviant work, and good work was thus lost from the historical record, or never proposed at all. Self-evidently, *enough* biochemists withstood such pressures.

For our field, however, in which a predecessor of this project, *The Negotiator's Fieldbook* (Schneider and Honeyman 2006) compiled wisdom from nearly thirty disciplines and practice specialties, the promising combinations can be a lot stranger than a biologist working with a chemist. (See, for example, the authors of *Negotiating Wicked Problems: Five Stories* [Chrustie et al. 2010, chapter 25 in *Venturing Beyond the Classroom*], which included a key hostage negotiator for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, a former President of Ecuador, a professor of peacebuilding, a Lieutenant Colonel in the U.S. Army, and the ombudsman of the U.S. National Institutes of Health.) So in our field, the likelihood of this kind of wooden-headedness having a seriously adverse effect on future productivity is proportionately greater. While a significant number of established scholars have successfully navigated the economic and competitive pressures and joined our multi-disciplinary effort, it is far from clear that most academics can or will do anything similar, especially newer faculty, who may have the most to offer in the long run, but also the most to risk.

The final set of limitations is clearly individual and psychological. A predecessor to this project (see Honeyman, Ackerman, and Welsh 2003) compiled a full issue of a law review, a series of 17 articles, analyzing the causes and circumstances of *routinization* in our profession, and historically in others. We cannot improve on the findings of that project and will merely refer the reader to them.

So far, so "pretty bad." And we see little prospect for individuals in our field, or even sizable groups such as the hundred-plus scholars who have contributed to this project, to have much effect on such "macro" elements of this picture as the poor funding for basic research, or the pay level for adjuncts.

But on some of the more individual elements, individual determination can have a significant effect. Certainly the initiation of our field within academia did not occur in an environment of plenitude or of a welcoming attitude from established disciplines. Rather, it was the impregnable professional position of a small cadre of very accomplished faculty, who had decided to work together in a new area across disciplines, which allowed the first notable program of our field, the Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law School, to begin: The program's other resources came later.

We can at least hope, again, that if the RNT project has done anything of note, it has "upped the ante" for what teachers and students

might logically expect for the future. Such intellectual and moral ambition can help put steel in the spine. If the reader believes that continuous change and development have now been demonstrated to be the core of professional self-respect for the future, that alone becomes an asset for our field. Fighting the concept of "entertainment," and pressing on every level for the field's more searching discoveries to be taken more seriously in teaching, may be an incremental rather than epochal approach to change; but incremental change in some other fields has had a notably positive effect, over time.

At least one field in which practice and teaching occur on a mass basis, and which impacts every human being at multiple points during life, has conspicuously succeeded at this process. In medicine, new research is followed avidly by at least many practitioners, though not by all; it is widely reported in the press; and the resources provided to researchers and teachers alike are, by the standards of our profession, awe-inspiring. Perhaps the last hundred years' progress in medicine can serve as inspiration and example at the end of our project, just as it did when we began (Honeyman, Coben, and De Palo 2009: 13-14).

Everyone needs good health; everyone except a hermit needs to deal with other people. There is even research showing how failures of the latter can lead to failure in the former (see, e.g., Lawler et al. 2005; Recine, Werener, and Recine 2009). We do not claim to be able to see, by ourselves, how an entire field gets from A to B. But we can at least see how the topic needs to be on the field's continuing agenda. That much, at least, we hope this four-volume series has accomplished.

References

Chrustie, C., J. S. Docherty, L. Lira, J. Mahuad, H. Gadlin, and C. Honeyman. 2010. Negotiating wicked problems: Five stories. In *Venturing beyond the classroom: Volume 2 in the rethinking negotiation teaching series*, edited by C. Honeyman, J. Coben, and G. De Palo. St. Paul, MN: DRI Press.

Gardner, H. E., M. Csikszentmihalyi, and W. Damon. 2001. *Good work: When excellence and ethics meet*. New York: Perseus.

Honeyman, C., R. Ackerman, and N. A. Welsh (eds). 2003. Special issue of 17 articles, responding to the Broad Field Project/Penn State Dickinson Law School 2003 conference on threats to the conflict resolution field. *Penn State Law Review* 108(1): 1- 348.

Honeyman, C., J. Coben, and G. De Palo (eds). 2009. *Rethinking negotiation teaching: Innovations for context and culture.* St. Paul, MN: DRI Press.

Honeyman, C., B. McAdoo, and N. Welsh. 2001. Here there be monsters: At the edge of the map of conflict resolution. *The Conflict Resolution Practitioner.* Atlanta, GA: Office of Dispute Resolution, Georgia Supreme Court. Available at www.convenor.com/madison/monsters.htm (last accessed December 3, 2012).

Lawler, K. A., J. W. Younger, R. L. Piferi, R. L. Jobe, K. A. Edmondson, and W. H. Jones. 2005. The unique effects of forgiveness on health: An exploration of pathways. Journal of Behavioral Medicine 28(2): 157-167.

Matz, D. and N. Ebner. 2010. Using role-play in online negotiation teaching. In *Venturing beyond the classroom: Volume 2 in the rethinking negotiation teaching series*, edited by C. Honeyman, J. Coben, and G. De Palo. St. Paul, MN: DRI Press.

Papano, L. 2012. Year of the MOOC. *New York Times* (November 2).

Recine, A. C., J. S. Werner, and L. Recine. 2009. Health promotion through forgiveness intervention. *Journal of Holistic Nursing* 27(2): 115-123.

Schneider, A. K. and C. Honeyman (eds). 2006. *The negotiator's fieldbook: The desk reference for the experienced negotiator*. Washington, DC: American Bar Association.

Wade, J. 2009. Defining success in negotiation and other dispute resolution training. *Negotiation Journal* 25(2): 171-180.