

Positive Peace: Exploring its Roots and Potential for Public Administration

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Abstract:

This symposium on peace examines the Judeo-Christian roots of the ideas of peace. This article introduces the symposium, further explores the notion of positive peace through the ideas of John Paul Lederach, applies the concept of positive peace to public administration and develops an agenda to integrate positive peace into PA practice and scholarship.

Key Words: Peacebuilding, Peace, Public Administration, John Paul Lederach, Judeo-Christian tradition

In the spring of 2014 Patricia Shields began examining Jane Addams ideas of peace with the intention of applying them to peacekeeping theory. In the process she began to see the applicability of the ideas of peace and peacebuilding to public administration. Addams's (2007/1907) *Newer Ideals of Peace* contained a chapter – “Survival of Militarism in City Government,” which as the events in Ferguson, Missouri unfolded, seemed as relevant in 2015 as it was in 1907 (Barrett, 2014).

Picking up on Addams's theme, which linked peace to newer, more just, more inclusive ideals of governance, Shields and Soeters (2015) argued that positive peace should be an instrumental concept for public administration. Their “threshold” article was an attempt to begin the discussion by examining

Addams's ideas and applying them to contemporary public problems including the militarization of police and formal peacekeeping operations. This symposium moves beyond the threshold into an investigation of the Judeo- Christian roots of "peace" in Western society.

The Symposium began when Pat Shields approached her Lutheran Pastors with the idea of a sermon series on peace for the congregation. Reverends Highum and Sorensen embraced the idea inviting guest speakers (a Lutheran minister, a Rabbi, a Catholic nun, an Episcopal priest, and a Political Science professor) to explore the meaning of peace over six Wednesday evenings during Lent. An engaging examination of what peace research scholars would call positive peace (peace in a whole society sense – something well beyond the absence of war) followed. Cynthia Lynch, Editor of *Global Virtue Ethics Review* learned about the sermon series and proposed these "messages on peace" be transformed into a symposium on peace for *GVER*. These sermons, now essays, make up the content of this symposium on peace.

This article introduces the sermon series, further explores the notion of positive peace through the ideas of John Paul Lederach, applies the concept of positive peace to public administration and develops an agenda to further integrate positive peace into PA practice and scholarship.

Symposium Preview

The symposium begins with a dialogue between Rev. Brad Highum and Rev. Lynnae Sorensen (2015). They reflect on the complex dimensions of peace found in the Christian tradition. Peace is seen as everything ordered according to the goodness and loving intent of God. It is the healing of the world, a virtue, a state of mind. It is also an invitation to justice. Peace is active, ongoing and intentional. "Blessed are the peacemakers" (Matthew 5:9). In the next sermon-essay Rabbi Alan Freedman (2015) examines the meaning of *Shalom*, the Hebrew term for peace through an analysis of Psalm 72. The connection between

peace and governance is quickly apparent. Psalm 72 is a prayer attributed to David on behalf of his son Solomon who is about to become King. A great king leads a peaceful, whole or prosperous society. Peace and prosperity is not achieved through violence, rather through a society that cares for the needy and is dedicated to social justice.

The biblical connection between peace and social justice established by Rabbi Freedman (2015) is expanded by Rev. Michael Floyd (2015). Public Administration has recently focused on social equity and social justice. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in part, inspired this focus. Floyd (2015) discusses the biblical roots of King's famous quote "without justice there can be no peace." The intimate connection is illustrated through Psalm 85:10, "justice and peace have kissed each other." Floyd also elaborates on government's responsibility to ensure justice defined broadly to include defense of the poor and oppressed as well as ecological harmony.

Sr. Jean Springer's (2015) sermon-essay explores contemplative, spiritual and sacred aspects of peace. Peace is seen as a longing for spiritual unity with God and the community. It is an intimacy with the divine. Springer (2015) uses stories to illustrate ways to be attentive to the sacred and the peace of the divine in our daily lives.

Rev. Javier Alanis (2015) moves the discussion that links peace and justice to contemporary liberation theology. He uses the story of Gloria, a Honduran immigrant, to illustrate Christ's concern for the most vulnerable of society as expressed by "let the oppressed go free." Gloria's story puts God's gift of peace into practice by giving voice to the voiceless. Alanis (2015) also makes the connection between peace and social justice by drawing on the works of Oscar Romero and Gustavo Gutierrez.

In *Bureau Men and Settlement Women*, Camilla Stivers (2000) introduced public administration to Jane Addams and the Settlement women of the late 19th and early 20th century. Stivers and others have made a persuasive case that the settlement movement offered an innovative, more caring approach to public

administration (Gabriele, 2015; Guy, Newman, & Mastracci, 2014; Shields, 2006). Jane Addams was a leader in the settlement and peace movements (winning the Nobel Prize in 1931 and writing three influential books on peace). Patricia Shields's (2015) sermon-essay examines Jane Addams's approach to peace (peaceweaving) taking into account the Christian roots of her feminist, pragmatist perspective on peace. Addams approach explicitly links peace and social justice (Sklar, 2003).

Our hunch, even conviction, in pulling together this collection of reflections on the nature of a positive peace from Christian and Jewish thinkers, is that the field of public administration could be invigorated. By reflecting on the concept of a positive peace in its core conceptual frameworks public administrators could strengthen their capacity and their sense of vocation.

The idea of positive peace is also accompanied by skills and insights developed in the field of peacebuilding and conflict transformation, which could enrich public administration practice in useful ways. For example, successful peacebuilding requires significant training in group facilitation and the body of accessible literature on developing these skills (Schrock-Shenk, 2000). Likewise, there is increasing recognition in post-conflict and post-disaster settings that responders need to be conversant in the impact that trauma has on humans and be equipped with some knowledge of trauma-healing practices (Hart, 2008; Zelizer, 2013). For public administrators working in communities that have suffered recent trauma (a neighborhood shooting, returning veterans) or repeated trauma associated with racial oppression or historical harm, these too are valuable skill sets to incorporate in training current and future administrators (Hooker & Czajkowski, 2013).

Lederach and the Art of Peacebuilding

The literature within the field of conflict transformation and peacebuilding (two of the framings developed by those

wanting to emphasize the positive peace perspective) is robust. But for introducing a series of articles drawn from Judeo-Christian faith traditions some starting point must be chosen and this article focuses on a recent book by John Paul Lederach, *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace* (2005). The author of twenty-two books on peacebuilding and conflict transformation, Lederach is recognized as a foundational theorist and practitioner in the development of the discipline, and practice of peacebuilding (his 1997 book *Building Peace* is considered a classic in the field). Further his rootedness in the Mennonite peace church tradition makes his writings a useful dialogue partner for this faith-rooted collection of sermon-essays.

In *The Moral Imagination*, Lederach (2005) writes about a synergy in peacebuilding, as in art, between technical skills learned and deeper inspiration. The skills of peacebuilding make a support scaffolding. The core of peacebuilding, however, is a creative act, the well-spring of which “lies in our moral imagination . . . the capacity to imagine something rooted in the challenges of the real world yet capable of giving birth [to a positive peace] which does not yet exist.” He outlines four disciplines that underpin “moral imagination” in peacebuilding: relationships, paradoxical curiosity, creating space and risk-taking. Public administration applications are presented as we relate each in turn. Gardening metaphors are used to illustrate the role of imagination and creativity in building peace.

Centrality of Relationships

Like the essays of this symposium, Lederach (2005) points out the centrality of relationships in building peace. Taking time to build relationships with others, sometimes without immediate purpose or expectation can feel like a sacrifice. It is, however, essential to carefully build relationships because this practice “brings people into the pregnant moments of the moral imagination [where people recognize] that the well-being of our grandchildren is directly tied to the well-being of

our enemy’s grandchildren” (Lederach, 2005, p. 35). The process of tending relationships may be like the attentiveness of a gardener – going to check on and weed around small shoots not only once, but many times, even if they are tree seedlings that she will never see grow to full height.

What resonance might this discipline have within public administration? Certainly concepts of community policing draw on the way trust is built by many small repeated interactions (Cordner, 2014). Nelles (2012) has pointed to relational factors being key in managing cooperative, metropolitan-wide efforts that cross local state boundaries, efforts that require complex negotiations and long-term vision. The successful integration of immigrants into local communities is often based on relationships (Marrow, 2011). Rev. Alanis’s (2015) story of Gloria and the Texas border-land faith community reinforces this insight. In addition, recognition of generational interdependence can shift the paradigm of immigration controversies – when newcomer and native work toward the mutual well being of their grandchildren.

Paradoxical Curiosity

Paradoxical curiosity takes into account both the “face” value of one’s actions as well as the “heart” value – what might emerge from the current, sometimes sobering reality that isn’t easily visible (Lederach, 2005). Like a gardener planting a bulb, paradoxical curiosity implies the ability to recognize a reality of an ugly lump of brown root, but also the heart of the act - that only by planting it can a daffodil or a tulip emerge. Paradoxical curiosity requires us to live with and become comfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity – the bulb may not grow or bloom. Lederach encourages peacebuilders to approach social realities “with an abiding respect for complexity, a refusal to fall prey to the pressures of forced dualistic categories of truth, and an inquisitiveness about what may hold together seemingly contradictory social energies in a greater whole” (Lederach, 2005, p. 35). Lederach’s concept resonates with Addams’s aversion to rigid moralism and embrace of sympathetic

understanding (Hamington, 2009) or Farmer's more recent concept of "love for each whole person-in-herself in-her-difference" (Farmer, 2014, p. 178). All provide soil where paradoxical curiosity can grow.

Providing Space for the Creative Act

Lederach (2005) points out that in addition to the ability to imagine what might be, peacebuilders also need to take actions that bring the imagination into the world – building a space for creative acts to emerge. Like a gardener putting a large cage around a small tomato seedling, a space is provided for the fullness of possibility to unfold and grow. The powerful potential of space creation is visible in events like the extension of forgiveness to Dylan Roof by some family members of the nine people he shot and killed in Charleston, SC (Borden, Horwitz, & Markon, 2015). The administrator who created the space for family members of the victims to speak to Roof did not know what they would say, but that decision had far reaching impact on the spirit of subsequent events.

Similarly, deliberative democracy exercises offer diverse citizen groups a space to build relationships and develop creative problem solving and action (Bohman & Rehg, 1997; Gastil & Levine, 2005; Painter, 2013). This can energize administrators. As Lederach notes "we find time and again [that] in those moments where something moves beyond the grip of violence is [a] belief that the future is not the slave of the past and the birth of something new is possible" (Lederach, 2005, p. 39).

The Willingness to Take Risks

Finally, Lederach holds out risk-taking as a discipline to be cultivated. "To risk is to step into the unknown without any guarantee of success or even safety" (Lederach, 2005, p. 39). As noted above a gardener does not have any certainty that bulbs will grow. The building of peace often requires stepping outside comfortable areas and even risking security. In public

administration, efforts to steadily redress ongoing inequality in society around dimensions of race, gender and other identities are increasingly a focus under the banner of social equity (Wooldridge & Gooden, 2009) and still a risky undertaking - what Gooden (2014) calls a “nervous area of government.”

An Agenda for Peace in Public Administration

Certainly we are not the only persons to draw links between the fields of peacebuilding and public administration, but a review of literature that talks explicitly about a positive peace and public administration is quite limited. This literature often focuses on international or economic and social development aid efforts to build or rebuild good governance in stabilizing overt conflict situations (Barnett, Kim, O'Donnell, & Sitea, 2007; Brinkerhoff, 2005; Hillman, 2013; Lough & Mati, 2012; Meyer, 2003) or problems with the rule of law in nations undergoing post-conflict renewal (Bergling, Wennerström, & Sannerholm, 2010). A number of issues of the journal *Public Administration and Development* use case studies to examine topics like rebuilding governance in post-conflict settings (Brinkerhoff, 2005; Hillman, 2013). Likewise, there is little evidence of public administration pedagogy explicitly interacting with the notions of peace or peacebuilding.

The limited scholarship discussed above and the *Global Virtue Ethics Review* symposium on peace has clearly moved the study of peace in public administration beyond the initial threshold envisioned by Shields and Soeters (2015). What is needed is an agenda for engaging the field more widely in the study of peace. To this end, we have a few suggestions.

- Consider development of a conference focused around the interconnection of peacebuilding work and public administration, to include researchers and practitioners in both areas.
- In teaching, encourage flexibility in students through opportunities for multi-cultural and service learning - so that they master traditional skills (e.g.,

budgeting and human resource management) and learn experientially that solutions are often conditional on context.

- In practice, use a positive peace lens in seeking solutions, which takes seriously unhealed trauma from past conflicts and respects the agency of all stakeholders, especially the most vulnerable.
- Link the study of social equity and social justice in public administration to concepts and methods of positive peacebuilding.

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Biographical Sketch

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