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The Missing Piece in Sustainable Peace

Posted: 11/06/2012 6:03 pm

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Despite Governor Romney's newfound call for international peace during the final presidential debate, as well as all of the other

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when movements to study positive processes and states came more into focus.

So, what is needed going forward to better conceptualize, measure and realize sustainable peace? Here is one strategy:

1) A clear working definition of sustainable peace that includes both the prevention of destructive dynamics and the promotion of positive. We define sustainable peace as existing in a state where the probability of using destructive conflict, oppression and violence to solve problems is so low that it does not enter into any party's strategy, while the probability of using cooperation, dialogue and collaborative problem-solving to promote social justice and well-being is so high that it governs social organization and life.

2) Support for the development of basic theory and research on sustainable peace. There are few scholars today conducting basic research on the fundamental conditions and processes conducive to sustainable peace (the anthropologist Douglas Fry is one exception). However, it is critical that the applied frameworks which inform practice be informed by basic, sound, empirically-tested theoretical models, in order to foster peace most effectively. Our recent book, *Psychology's Contributions to Sustainable Peace* (Coleman & Deutsch, 2012), offers a sound beginning.

3) Education for Promotive, Sustainable Peace. It has been increasingly recognized that our schools have to change in basic ways if we are to educate children so that they are for rather than against one another, so that they develop the ability to resolve their conflicts constructively rather than destructively, so that they are prepared to contribute to the development of a peaceful and just world. An emphasis on cooperation and constructive conflict resolution in schools can offer children and adults an orientation to problems and a set of norms and skills that can assist them in fulfilling their needs in a non-violent manner. Teaching and modeling these processes are methods for preventing violence in that they can establish a culture of peace, and a sense of caring, within schools that provides students with experiences of safety, inclusion, fairness and hope. At the university level, we should commit to developing courses which involve a core group of faculty from different disciplines that are committed to working together to weave and develop the ideas and practices of sustainable peace to instruct the next generation of leaders.

4) The enhancement of current data-based indices for annual reporting on state and regional levels of sustainable peace. This project could build on the Global Peace Index for measuring and reporting on sustainable peace worldwide, but integrate promotive, pro-social assessments. This initiative could be informed by such initiatives as the Gross National Happiness Index (Med Jones, 2006), the eight bases of a Culture of Peace (UN Resolution A/RES/52/13), and the Peace Scale (Klein, Goertz & Diehl, 2008). Another possible step would be to develop a dynamical computational model with variables from multiple disciplines that have been shown to mediate the linkages and processes and then

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