

Passive Participation in Conflict: A Framework for Reclaiming Wholeness

The aim of this paper is to open paths to healing emotional injuries stemming from conflict and oppression. By expanding awareness of the ripple effects of conflict, we may better identify the injuries that occur often among passive participants in conflicts. Passive participants, like the obvious victims of conflict, may suffer from their experience in the conflict. The paper offers a framework to transform this suffering and thus reclaim wholeness in ourselves, in our communities, and in the world. This is a developing perspective;¹ I invite reflections, suggestions, and experiences.² I offer this paper with the hope that it inspires further inquiry and dialogue.

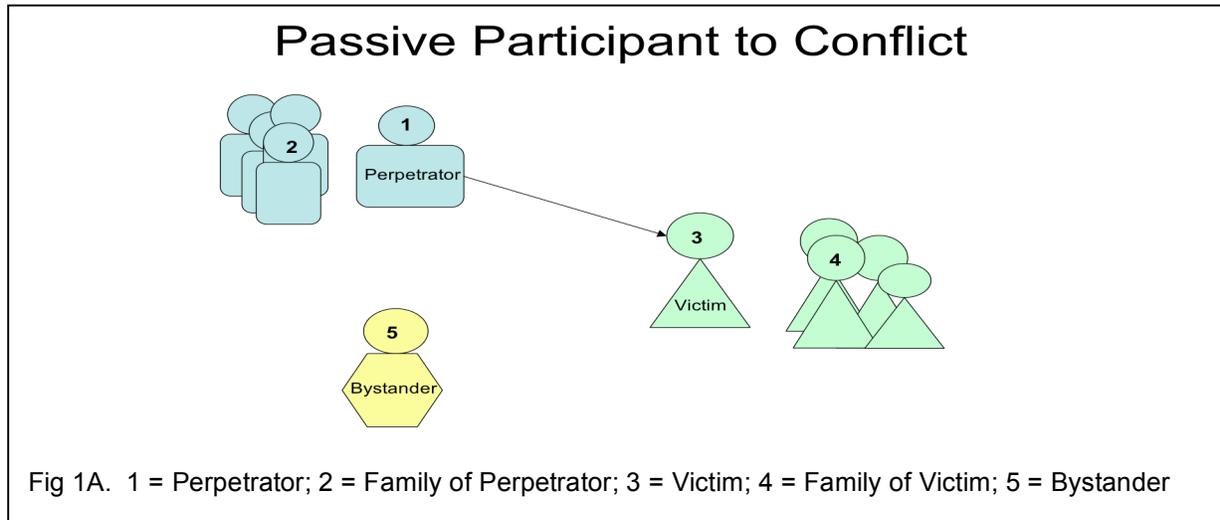
I. Expanding Awareness: Who are Passive Participants in a Conflict?

*One day, I notice a neighborhood cat with a mouse between its paws. The well-fed cat doesn't need a mouse for food, it chases the mouse from instinct. I bang on the window startling the cat, the wounded mouse flees, but realizing no real threat, the cat recaptures the mouse. As the cat walks away with the limp mouse in its mouth, the cat glances back at me. Understanding this is how nature is, I weep for the cat in all of us who without awareness and without remorse creates unnecessary suffering for others less powerful, and I weep for the mouse in all of us who experiences fear and suffering from these unconscious acts of others. Days later, I see this cat chasing a new mouse, I intervene spraying a hose not at the cat but in its vicinity hoping to distract the cat sufficiently. Fearful of the water, the cat drops the bloodied mouse, who scurries to safety. The cat looks at me, perhaps bewildered that I interrupted its activities, perhaps angry that I stopped its play, then skulks away, knowing it lost the mouse, and not understanding what has happened. I realize in that moment, to the cat I have been an aggressor. I weep for the lack of understanding, and for the part of our nature that instinctively drives us to acts that create suffering for others. I wonder, **how can we, as bystanders or passive participants in conflict, break cycles of violence without becoming a participant anew to the cycle?***

This figure shows some of the participants whose experience of a conflict may require healing. (Figure 1A). There is a perpetrator and a victim. In addition, their families and a bystander are passive participants to the event.

¹ This work draws upon the practices of Buddhism applying them to reconciliation and healing. I am student of all these disciplines, and I make no pretense of being a master of any of these fields. This paper leaves me with more questions than answers, and I humbly offer this framework with the hope that it will stimulate others to study this area and others' input will further inform my interest in healing conflict, building capacity, and promoting social justice.

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Most post-conflict healing focuses on the victim and the perpetrator. However, this paper identifies others who have a lesser or no apparent involvement in the conflict, and considers whether they also may suffer injurious experiences that require attention. Often people in these ‘passive’ roles may not recognize an injury or may not even perceive their involvement. Particularly in conflict where the active injury is extreme, it dwarfs these passive experiences. A bystander with unhealed injuries from prior conflict may lead to inappropriate actions (e.g. use of power in ways that perpetuate inequities). These actions may result in more violence, often a cyclical phenomenon, perpetuated through generations.

When we heal our experiences, we reclaim our wholeness. In wholeness, we are aware of our power, share our power with ease, and learn to use our power well. This paper posits that acknowledging these passive experiences in conflict may provide a path to heal, to reclaim our wholeness, and to allow transformative change – ultimately to end cycles of violence.

II. Background: Why consider Passive Participants in a Conflict?

In the aftermath of conflict, justice efforts traditionally focus on the highest-level perpetrators of violence and oppression. This punitive justice, such as war crimes tribunals, focuses on severe, public punishment of high-ranking officials. Societal condemnation of violence perpetrated by those in power remains a favored strategy for redress atrocities committed during war and conflict.

There remains a struggle within post-conflict and transitional justice communities regarding the degree of culpability imposed upon individual perpetrators of lesser crimes including complicity in these crimes. While culpability of the “leaders” is agreed upon, there remains discomfort in punishing those ‘merely’ following orders. Perhaps they may have complied involuntarily due to fear for their lives or

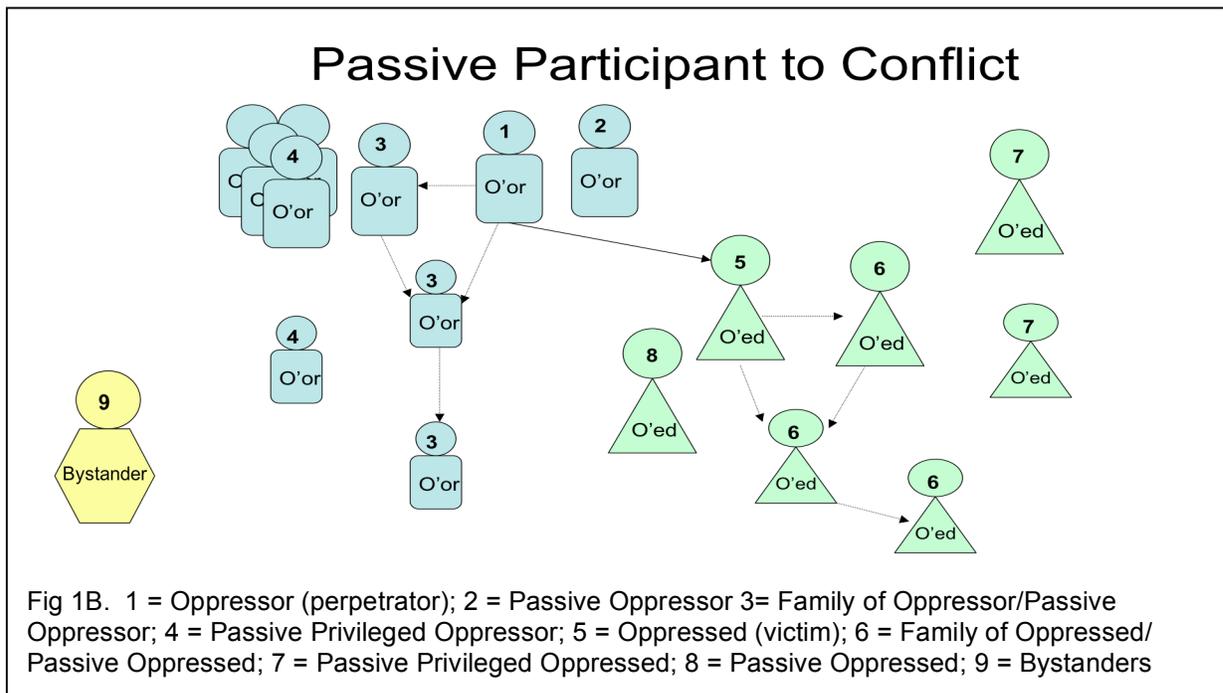
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their family's well-being. Further, individuals who neither speak out nor act in support are generally immune from culpability for their lack of action.

Recognizing the inadequacy of prosecuting only top officials to heal communities and to promote lasting peace, recent post-conflict justice has included reconciliation within communities and focused on emotional injuries stemming from the conflict. This approach addresses individual suffering through direct dialogue between victims and perpetrators, such as the truth and reconciliation hearings in South Africa and the guacas courts in Rwanda. Over the last century, additional strategies to redress conflict injustice have included restitution, economic remuneration, and formal 'apologies'. Nonetheless, the safeguards of justice and the perceived need to "move on" in post-conflict situations result in incomplete justice, and thus, incomplete healing.

Unacknowledged injustice can have crippling effects on individuals and society; when unhealed, this injury may be transmit across generations. This ripple effect leads to suffering and may perpetuate cycles of violence. The framework I propose for identifying passive participants of conflict aims to fill the gaps of traditional post-conflict models of justice in order to transform these passive experiences of injury from conflict. My hope is that by healing these injuries, we may end cycles of violence and live together in peace, joy, and harmony.

III. Framework to Identify Passive Participants in Conflict (PPiC)



When we consider group level conflict (Figure 1B), we see oppressors, oppressed, and bystanders. Passive participants are all the parties touched by the conflict other than the active perpetrator and victim. (2,3,4,6,7,8,9)

A. PPIc Framework Applied

At a private elementary school in New York City³, an 8th grade girl, Amanda, decides that she doesn't like Julia, a small, studious, kind 5th grade girl, because Julia reminded Amanda, "we're not supposed to go up on the stage without a teacher" when Amanda was going up on the stage one day. Amanda tells Penny "Julia is such a goody-goody, she's annoying, let's teach her a lesson. Tell Julia to meet you behind the library at recess." Amanda brings duct tape from home and when Julia comes behind the library, Amanda grabs Julia and tapes Julia's hands together. Terrified, Julia complies with everything they say. When they hear someone coming, Amanda and Penny pull Julia into a nearby alcove and discuss whether to tape Julia's mouth, they decide not to but threaten that they'll get even with her if she makes a sound. Amanda wants to leave Julia in a construction area that is "forbidden without a teacher" as they round a corner, another 5th grader, Sabrina, comes along. Sabrina sees that Julia looks distressed and says, "Hey, what are you doing?" Amanda tells Sabrina "mind your own business" but Sabrina sees Julia bound hands, "Julia, are you OK?" Penny grabs Sabrina, but Sabrina struggles distracting Amanda and Penny. Sabrina yells "Run Julia! Go get help!" Julia runs to her classroom and Sabrina breaks free from Amanda's grip. Sabrina and Julia tell their teacher. The school administrators hear from the two sets of girls and suspend Amanda and Penny for two days and require them to write an essay reflecting on their actions. A week later, the school sends a letter to the parents indicating that two older girls had tied the hands of a younger student and then untied them and that the school had managed the situation. Julia's parents are extremely distressed after hearing about this event from their daughter; they feel that more should be done to punish the older girls, but they feared if they stand up on behalf of their daughter, it would be their daughter who would suffer the consequences from the school. Julia's parents are hard working public servants; they are comfortable but not wealthy. Amanda's parents are very wealthy, have donated a lot of money to the school, and are leaders of a fundraising campaign for the school. During her suspension, Amanda's mother took her shopping for the afternoon. The parents of the girls involved meet with school administrators and the matter is deemed resolved, but what about the community? I hear about this event while visiting with a friend and his daughter, Beth, a classmate of Julia's; after her father relayed the story, Beth looked at him and said "Daddy, I'm scared." There was no attention to fully healing the entire community, rather the interest was to quickly, quietly resolve the situation, but at what cost? If a school has the best teachers and a state-of-the-art campus, yet students are terrified within the

³ This is a fictional narrative for teaching any resemblance to a true story is purely coincidental.

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environment, will they be able to learn? Is this merely, 'kids being kids' or is this a manifestation of other systemic issues? Does it matter that there are numerous power imbalances between Amanda/Penny and Julia/Sabrina – Amanda and Penny are older, larger, wealthy, and Caucasian- while Julia and Sabrina are younger, smaller, working class, and of Asian/Latino descent? How does a school equip a new generation with tools – skills and capacity- to build a brighter, inclusive future? How can adults – parents, teachers, community members – offer guidance to young people in this situation and demonstrate living together well, not condoning bullying and oppression? What is a just response that breaks the cycle of violence, offers healing for everyone, and transforms the situation to reclaim wholeness for the individuals and the community?

In applying the Passive Participant in Conflict (PPiC) framework to this scenario, we will focus primarily on the conflict as it arises out of the age differences⁴ while noting additional layers of power imbalance that may contribute to the experience of conflict for the participants.

All the 8th graders (13 year olds) become members of a collective oppressor group. Even though all have not 'acted,' their power relationship to the actors and victims makes them passive participants to this conflict. There are several perspectives that these 8th grade students might hold. Some might not see a problem at all. Some might not agree with the behavior of the two girls, but do not see themselves as involved. Others might not agree with the girls conduct, and might choose to act in a protective way toward the younger students.

The 7th graders (12 year olds) become passive participants to this conflict. Although the 7th graders may feel intimidated by the power of 8th graders, they have two grades of students below them who may be deferring to their power as they are much like 8th graders to these younger children. This group is likely to be unaware of their power role, since they are acutely aware of the power of those older than they are. When the 7th graders become 8th graders, they would likely be hurt and confused if younger students were scared of them, because they didn't "do" anything. If the school adopted a strict policy on this kind of conduct the following year, this group might feel resentful that they are being

⁴ I recently attended a powerful presentation to mediators on power imbalances related to age by Phyllis Beck Kitrek, author of [Negotiating at an Uneven Table](#). The speaker skillfully demonstrated to the dominant group in the room (largest, loudest, wealthiest aka Baby Boomers) that they were blind to their power, their behavior, their impact, and how this blindness was potentially detrimental to their capacity to harness their real power as they enter into the era of 'elders' – a role where transmission of power, wisdom, and resources onto the next generation is crucial for society's benefit. A baby boomer from the group stated that she felt like a fish swimming in water not having recognized her power. For those who find themselves in a 'group' that suffers from the inability to cultivate an inclusive space, whether across generational, socio-economic, ethnicity or other group-based identities, I hope the frameworks of PPiC, Mind the Gaps and I + U HALT Injustice provide tools to realize inclusiveness in your endeavors. Mind the Gaps and I+U HALT Injustice available from the author: kate@muralinstitute.com

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'punished' for a wrong that they did not commit. Next year, when this group become 8th graders, their use of power may be influenced by their experience of having been involved, albeit passively, in this conflict. Though one might believe that simply having experienced being oppressed provides enough guidance for people to learn to use their power well, history suggests that modeling is a powerful teacher; thus, until the injuries under power abuse are healed **and** one learns to use one's power consciously, change is not likely to happen.

The 6th graders (11 year olds) also become passive participants to this conflict. The 6th graders have a dominant power role related to the 5th graders. Though with two grades above them, they are likely to identify more with the 5th graders and the experience of being 'under' others' power, and one might expect the 6th graders to "do" more to support the younger students, perhaps making an effort to develop friendships across grades and looking out for younger girls; as a group, they are likely to actively promote equity and safety within the community.

The 5th graders (10 year olds), share a common characteristic with the victim, and thus, are all passive participants to the conflict. They have three grades of power holders above them. After an incident like this, some might be expected to hold a global sense of fear, such as that expressed by Beth, who now has a fear at school. Others might identify with the targeted child differently and experience something akin to survivors' guilt—a sense that "it could have been me".

The school administrators and teachers are also passive participants in this conflict. As people who are older and in power, they are by default most closely aligned with the 8th graders in this situation. However, as adults and administrators, they hold power to determine how to handle the 8th graders and the how to manage the entire school community. They punished the two students who acted out by suspending them from school, and they responded to the parents of children directly involved with a meeting to facilitate understanding of the situation. In one sense, the administrators are bystanders to the conflict between the girls; yet with a connection to this event, they are also participants and how they choose to intercede reflects how they model using their power.

Within the adult community, there are additional layers of power related to position and wealth. As private school administrators and teachers, the school's faculty work for the parents. They have an obligation to realize the school's academic mission and to maintain the school's fiscal health. As such, these administrators have authority over the children, yet they remain accountable to the parents⁵. In the adult landscape of power that considers position and wealth, one might recognize similar power positions analogous to the grades of student.

⁵ This relationship is peculiar to private school environments, but analogous to a variety of other situations, so I chose to make this "hypothetical case study" in a private school.

The parents of the children experience multiple roles; they become witnesses to the event experiencing the secondary effects of their child's group membership. Their own experiences in life will influence how they see and respond to their child's experience. Previously unhealed injuries may manifest by prompting them to respond quietly, as Julia's parents, whose fear led to not 'rocking the boat'. On the other hand, lack of awareness of one's involvement may lead to a sense of impunity or even indignation at being reprimanded, as Amanda's mother demonstrated by taking her daughter shopping in response to the school's punishment. The parents of the children also hold power in relationship to the school, its administrators, and teachers, and thus have a choice as to how to exercise their power in those relationships. Though Beth's father was concerned about the incident, his daughter receives a scholarship so he felt that it would not be prudent for him to speak up about the situation. Thus, even within the "group" of parents, one can see differences in the experiences of passive participants.

B. Elements of PPIc Framework

While traditional systems of post-conflict reconciliation focus on actors, victims and perhaps the family of victims, the passive participant in conflict framework considers remaining parties also impacted by the event. This section identifies the sub-groups and hypothesizes common characteristics of their experiences.

The focus is to raise awareness about passive participation, so we will not consider role of **perpetrators** and **victims** of oppressor/oppressed groups, about which there is extensive interdisciplinary literature. The purpose of this tool is to raise our awareness about the myriad ways in which we all passively participate in conflicts. Even we, whose work for reconciliation and who are committed to social justice, are passive participants to conflict. The tool may enable us to overcome the neurological tendency⁶ to avoid seeing the truth of ourselves. It aims to provide the capacity to see our participation on all sides – to see that we are both oppressed and oppressor. It seeks to enable us to use this awareness to cultivate compassion for ourselves and for others, so that we may reclaim our wholeness and act with clarity and insight.

1. Oppressor Group

This section explores possible emotional experiences of oppressor group members. Whether as an active or passive member when we oppress another group, we participate in an activity of separation from ourselves. In this context, oppression means that we use our power to suppress another (power over); for example, we hold a characteristic (appearance, age, class, nationality, language, education, industriousness, ideology) that is claimed as 'superior,' and we reject the part of ourselves reflected in the opposing characteristic. In the truth of

⁶ cognitive dissonance and heuristic of bounded rationality.

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wholeness, we embrace both characteristics in ourselves. If we are honest with ourselves, we can recognize that in different situations, we manifest both characteristics.

Inherent in being a member of the **oppressor group** is the experience of self-hate from rejecting an aspect of oneself. If we deny a part of ourselves, we will carry shame for the part of ourselves that we know exists, but we reject so aggressively. **Passive oppressors** actively supports the oppression, but do not directly injure an oppressed person. [e.g. 8th grade class from the school case]

A **passive beneficiary oppressor** benefits from the oppression but neither directly supports nor actively opposes oppression. For the passive beneficiary oppressor, the healing process may be more complex. On the one hand, this subset clearly benefits from the division, but as someone not actively participating in the oppression, this subset may not feel responsible for 'contributing' to the oppressors. This sense of separation from the oppressor group, supported by cognitive dissonance, may leave this subset not feeling a part of either group. If the passive benefits are not acknowledged, this group may not make an effort to participate in healing efforts and may ultimately feel bitter and unjustly penalized by post-conflict efforts that seek to remedy injustice with systemic rebalancing. As well, this group, unaware of their having benefited from oppression, may not have learned to use their power consciously in a way that reduces ongoing injustice. Alternatively, members of this subset may recognize oppression as unjust, but not fully understand what to do to stop it or may feel fearful of working toward changing it. This fear may arise due to varying levels of power within the oppressor group. Alternatively, this fear may stem from recognition that that the person is capable of carrying out the same behavior as the active oppressors. In a sense, the person fears a part of him/herself. This fear can often lead to paralysis, which in turn may lead to further self-hate, shame, and possibly guilt, for complicity in the oppression.

A **passive privileged oppressor** actively opposes the oppression yet also benefits from the oppression based upon group membership. This subset suffers from the collective self-hate and shame of group membership as well as guilt of being a beneficiary of an unjust situation that they actively oppose. The passive privileged oppressor's situation is complex. One who actively challenges an oppression may forget or have a kind of dissonance from acknowledging his/her role as an passive beneficiary. While immediacy of efforts to oppose oppression are vital, when action taken arises from guilt it may be of dubious value to end cycles of violence. Efforts to 'help' the victims of an oppressive situation without promoting power sharing are likely to simply require ongoing assistance ironically, keeping the passive privileged oppressor in their dominant, albeit conflicted, role rather than to transform the situation. Until one heals one's own participation in the conflict, one may act unconsciously to perpetuate it. Those

who recognize that oppression is unjust or unwholesome yet nonetheless benefit from the oppression are likely to experience intense guilt compounded by shame. This subset may need to remain vigilant about the discriminating condemnation of one side as right or wrong in order to embrace wholeness that will allow for transforming action, to accept and recognize that they are also beneficiaries of that which they ardently oppose, and to learn from that place to recognize how to use their power well. As members of the oppressor group, this subset is in the best position to promote understanding between both sides, to model how to share power, and to educate their peers about the benefits of sharing power with others. This subset has tremendous power to influence situations by concentrating their efforts on educating their peer group with whom they have credibility and by promoting efforts that empower the oppressed group.

2. Oppressed Group

This section identifies the roles and experiences of members of the oppressed group. Oppressed group members may be victims, perpetrators, passive group members, and their families as well as across generations if not healed⁷.

The **family members of oppressed-victims** experience a compounding loss of power; not only are they systemically disempowered, they must also witness a loved one suffer and they are unable to 'do' anything to intercede or to relieve these injuries for their loved one. Unlike the actual victim, the family of a victim suffers in a different way that requires attention in post-conflict strategies for healing. The victim can reconcile the experience for him/herself forgiving the perpetrator and making peace in him/herself. In contrast, a family member is removed from the power exchange, yet 'bears witness' to the injury through direct and indirect emotional suffering.

The common emotional experiences that span across all **oppressed groups**, are fear and hurt. Fear manifests from the experience of threat from someone using power over oneself. This fear may result in someone becoming compliant or becoming defiant. Hurt arises from the experience of rejection for having the characteristic that is being used to assert power over the oppressed, and one who experiences hurt may respond with indignation or shame or both.

A passive oppressed group member is not directly injured during the conflict. Due to the power dynamic of being collectively under another's power, the passive oppressed person experiences the power injury regardless of whether there is a clear, direct act. One might consider the situation of the war in Iraq; there are people who have clearly suffered a direct injury – lost property in a bombing, had their home raided, had a relative killed or imprisoned – and then there are the countless others whose lives have been completely altered due to

⁷ Dina Ward. Memorial Candles: Children of the Holocaust. Routledge Press 1992.

the conflict and who live in a kind of terror of what might happen to them. The passive oppressed groups are always in this state of psychological uncertainty and (re)experiencing their powerlessness.

A **passive privileged oppressed** group member could be persecuted, but does not suffer under the oppression for any reason. The passive privileged oppressed closely identify with the actual victims and could have been oppressed, but were not. Whether it is because they come a generation later, share a characteristic but do not live in the area of the conflict, or simply because the conditions of their life spared them from this persecution, these people never experience the oppression yet they see the characteristic they share with the oppressed. The experience of being spared may produce a tremendous burden of guilt. The passive privileged oppressed may respond to this guilt with efforts to do anything and everything to help others -- never seeming enough. Like the passive privileged oppressors, this group may work actively on behalf of those who suffer more acutely under oppression. Perhaps, if one carries the guilt of not suffering more injury too much, then one may unconsciously engage in a cycle of self-hate. For example, if we carry the burden of unhealed injustices of past generation into the present, we may feel that we cannot receive the gifts of the present because we are not worthy, instead we may work feverishly to intervene in the present on behalf of others. But what if in this drive to help others, we destroy the gift of our precious life because we failed to share the gifts of our life – our joy, our presence, our love- with those around us. Others in the passive privileged oppressed may retain a quality of overwhelming fear that compounded with their guilt leaves them paralyzed. If we endeavor to heal these legacies of injustice, we may both relish in the gifts of our life and we may use the power that we have for the benefit of others.

3. Bystander

As a removed bystander who hears about this school situation three times removed, am I a passive participant in this conflict? If I heard this story and it touches me, I may feel anger, despair, apathy, guilt- or I may be inclined to act in some way -- as I did in the situation with the cat-mouse, then I am a passive participant. There is little that happens in our midst that does not happen to us, whether or not we are able to see this interrelationship.

As a removed bystander in an event, I might wonder what can I do? If I sense that I identify with one side more than the other, I may not be ready to act and my action may stem from an unhealed place that perpetuates imbalances. If I am a bystander so removed that I cannot meaningfully participate to promote understanding between both sides, then it may not be the proper conditions for me to act. Perhaps, the most important contribution I can make is to examine my daily life – family, work, community and to intervene in situations of conflict and

injustice where I have power to actively promote sharing power and I am in a position to deepen understanding. This does not mean that I do not see how the conflict and oppression of others impacts me, rather I may choose to express my non-cooperation with that oppression and also take the opportunity to look deeply within my own life to see where I may be unconsciously promoting oppression and injustice. For each the path to wholeness will be different and the path of transforming action may be different. When I reclaim my wholeness, when I realize the power I hold, and when I work diligently to use it well, I harness my power to transform my passive participation in conflict and to heal myself, my family, and my society.

It is easy to see injuries of injustice happening to others. It is possible to welcome these events as opportunities to also reflect on our passive participation in conflict and injustice within our own lives. The PPIc aims to cultivate awareness of passive participation and to shine light on our power. If we look deeply and honestly, we have one foot on each side of a power imbalance in almost every aspect of our daily lives. If we jump too quickly to rest in the comfort of the truths, “we are both so it is meaningless” or “we are all one so it is the same,” then we may miss the opportunity to see the power we have and to learn how to use it well. In wholeness, we can use our awareness of the power we hold to share it with others and to live in line with our thoughts. If we only focus on condemning those who act badly or helping those who are injured, we may miss the opportunity to harness the great teaching of these lesser injuries and to heal our own suffering. The PPIc framework allows us to see our role as a passive participant in conflict and to transform our experience to end cycles of violence.

C. Strategies for Healing and Transforming Experience

Passive participation is individualized and varied, promoting a variety of potential emotional responses. This section suggests strategies for healing and actions for transforming the experience based upon emotional responses rather than categories of roles in the conflict. There are many paths to healing these injuries from passive participation in conflict. The following are merely suggestions on how one might approach healing and transforming the emotional responses.

1. Self Hate

a. Practice: love ACES self-hate

- Accepting Now: all things are as they are now – letting go
- Compassion: acceptance of oneself/others, seeing others in us
- Embracing Power: awareness enables us to choose our actions
- Self-Love: deep listening to oneself, giving self-empathy

b. Transforming Action:

- Mindful of self: focus on loving to oneself as key to giving love to others
- Mindful of others: how one treats others is how one treats oneself
- Participate in efforts of love on personal, community, and global level

2. Shame

a. Practice: give GRACE to shame

- Gratitude: honor the beautiful life force: within, in nature, past/future
- Release: letting go of how we think we ought to be, and be as we are
- Accept Perfect Imperfection: touch perfection within and self-love now
- Capacity to Change: harness the opportunity to choose our actions now
- Equanimity: embrace goodness and celebrate wholeness

b. Transforming Action:

- Mindful of self: focus: self acceptance in wholeness
- Mindful of others: release judgments and how others should be/do
- Participate in efforts that honor wholeness in self, community, world

3. Guilt

a. Practice: FORGIVE guilt

- Freedom: allow yourself the room to be as you are and be happy now
- Open to receive life's gifts and to share the gift of your precious life
- Release ideas of difference/meaning/explanations: accept what is now
- Gratitude: seek support from past/future and live to honor past/future
- Include: heal own wounds of exclusion to allow true inclusion
- Value resilience: water seeds of resilience & forgiveness to self/others
- Embrace opportunity: all parts are in us – use wholeness well

b. Transforming Action:

- Mindful of self: gratitude for life and support of all around and past/future
- Mindful of others: focus on forgiveness self/other and honor resilience
- Participate in efforts sharing your power in personal, community, global

4. Paralysis

a. Practice: ACTS through paralysis

- Accept Now: all things are perfect as they are – letting go
- Cultivate Trust: understand barriers- grow trust and courage to change
- Trust in Mindfulness: awareness grows clarity and insight
- Self- Love: Self care listen deeply to hear and trust ourselves

b. Transforming Action:

- Mindful of self: cultivate awareness of own feelings and perceptions
- Mindful of others: focus on opportunity that change affords to status quo
- Participate in commitment to inclusive personal, community, global action

5. Fear

a. Practice: WAIT with fear

- Water seeds: awareness, safety, resilience, wisdom to be mindful of fear
- Accept things are as they are, will be as they will be, and things change
- Interbeing: trust in strength of interbeing as guide to insightful action
- Tend to fear diligently: sit with it, transform and release before act

b. Transforming Action:

- Mindful of self: Listen deeply to stop fear-driven action and heal fear
- Mindful of others: Cultivate the capacity to be present with another's fear
- Participate: manage fear by waiting patiently rather than acting from fear

6. Hurt

a. Practice: HEAL hurt

- Honor ancestors by releasing hurt and harnessing our power well
- Embrace capacity for forgiveness, resilience and change
- Accept what is- finding the capacity for love and joy in present moments
- Let go of hurt: embrace that we choose how we respond

b. Transforming Action:

- Mindful of self: Listen deeply and heal one's hurts by seeing hurt in all
- Mindful of others: Cultivate capacity to hear others hurt with compassion
- Participate in efforts for healing hurt through empowering action for all

7. Despair

a. Practice: give HOPE to despair

- Heal hurt and transform hurt by cultivating diligence with own power
- Open to the possibility of change in oneself and other
- Practice patience: accept how people are now and what is as it is
- Embrace your power and use it for hope no matter what the outcome

b. Transforming Action:

- Mindful of self: Use power to inspire others to change just by being
- Mindful of others: Accept others as they are and trust capacity to change
- Participate in efforts that "are" the change you seek on all levels

IV. Using the Framework

We all have the opportunity to deepen our awareness and heal injuries from passive participation in conflict. We will not consider our roles as passive participants in order to become invested in the roles or our identities,⁸ nor to become trapped by the experience we discover on whatever side of injustice we find ourselves in the past or present. Our purpose is to see how our passive participation in conflict based upon power differences begets suffering. Ultimately we aim to transform this suffering and reclaim wholeness.

The readiness of an individual to heal aligns poorly with remedies for redress and it often comes long after suffering has been transmit to another generation. This scheme invites individuals who are ready to identify and heal their passive participation in conflict with the hope that increased consciousness may end unconscious transmission of suffering.

It is my hope that when you are ready, you will begin working with this framework in order to reclaim wholeness. The greatest limitation in complete societal transformation is the variability of individuals' readiness for healing; the presented framework aspires to hold room for individuals to engage in the transformation and healing of their suffering and to enable cultivation of the capacity to support healing of others.

I invite you first to look deeply within your personal narrative to see where you have been touched by conflict and to understand the nuances and complexities of your power role in relation to that conflict. For those of us who are drawn to issues of social justice or who are quick to condemn the actions of another as unjust, we must be diligent not to pass over the invitation to understand our power roles and our passive participation in conflict within our own lives, in our community, and in the world. While it may be easy to identify a relationship with the oppressed/victim or to see someone else's injustice, we may have difficulty to see how we have and do benefit from oppression of others.

Yet until we can fully embrace the truth of our wholeness, we may have difficulty gaining the trust of those who have been oppressed. For if we hasten to challenge injustice, we bring our blindness, (we do not see ourselves in wholeness), deafness (we do not hear because we do not ask/listen) and arrogance (we ignore guidance from those we claim to help because we know better). Masked by our good intentions, we may recommit the problems of the past as our actions contradict our stated intentions. Our actions, motivated by an unhealed state, are like shooting arrows at those we claims to defend.

⁸ For thoughtful consideration of identity and perspectives on transcending identity based violence: Amartya Sen, Identity and Violence, W.W. Norton & Co Press, 2006.

War, Reconciliation, Healing: Passive Participation in Conflict

To begin we use this framework to identify our passive participation in conflict or oppression within our family's experience. Most of us can directly connect to a war or major conflict within 2-3 generations. We can look deeply and use awareness from meditation to see the habitual responses and patterns within ourselves and our families. We may heal the experience using some of the practice strategies outlined and we may transform the experience by cultivating awareness of our power, cultivating the capacity to share the power we have with others, and learning how to use the remaining power well.⁹

My experience looking deeply at my relationship to conflict, my family's historical relationship to war/conflict, and my relationship to power past and present led to this framework. Cycling through this framework and healing unconscious emotional responses has enabled me to begin to cultivate wholeness, to heal injuries from passive participation in conflict, and to transform my experience by learning to consciously use the power I have to allow collective wholeness to flourish in our interconnected world.

My goal is to promote dialogue about how we may approach healing conflict in our selves and in society in a way that includes diverse experiences and promotes transformative healing for our collective benefit. My interest in alternative strategies for healing resulted from the observation that in the face of injustice, people have vastly different needs to restore a sense of wholeness and to experience a sense of safety, security, justice, peace, healing, and hope.

It is my hope that if we develop concrete ways to examine and heal our experience, we may build a just and inclusive society by becoming the change we want to see in the world. In reclaiming wholeness, we may fully share the gifts of our precious life and the capacity for collaborative, inclusive problem solving that will promote social change.¹⁰

⁹ Books on using one's power well are abundant. Recommended titles: Thich Nhat Hanh, Interbeing, Parallax Press; Thich Nhat Hanh, For a Future to be Possible, Parallax Press; John O'Neill, Leadership Aikido, Three Rivers Press, 1997; Dalai Lama, Kindness, Clarity, and Insight, Snow Lion Press, 1988; Thich Nhat Hanh, The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching, Parallax Press; Thich Nhat Hanh, The Art of Power, Harper Collins, 2007; Wayne Dyer, Power of Intention, Hay House Press, 2004.

¹⁰ See also. Kate Ettinger, Mind the Gaps.