Informality and the Social Art of Mediation: How Pure Mediators Create Conditions for Making Peace

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Abstract

This article explores how pure mediators make peace without using political, military, or economic leverage. It argues that informality helps mediators establish and build relationships that make it possible for the disputing parties to receive their assistance, information, and suggestions. The research uses case studies and first-hand interviews to explore beneath the institutional and strategic level of analysis and finds that informality manifests in peacemaking as informal people, language, time, and space. The findings also indicate that informality in peace processes often appeared organically to achieve positive results by default rather than design. The research has implications for the study and practice of international mediation, particularly for those who mediate without power. This research highlights the need for researchers and practitioners to conceptualize peace processes as a mutually reinforcing system comprising a formal and an informal layer and peacemaking as a team effort.

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Scholarship on peacemaking has long been at odds over the effectiveness of "power mediation" and "pure mediation." Power mediation can push and pull parties to settle by increasing the cost and benefit of reaching an agreement with a mix of sanctions and enticements.[1] Pure mediation, in contrast, involves building relationships with and between parties to help address the underlying grievances of a conflict.[2] While some favor one style over the other, research indicates that the two styles are complementary and serve different but essential functions in a peace process.[3] Today, a diverse group of actors are classified as "pure mediators."[4] States and most nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) as well as intergovernmental (IGOs) and regional organizations (ROs) are pure mediators when they do not impose their power to manipulate disputants into settling their conflicts.

Research indicates that even without leverage, pure mediators assist disputing parties in making peace.[5] Using less intrusive and heavy-handed strategies than power mediators, pure mediators help the parties by channelling information between them, providing them meeting space, establishing rules for their talks, and chairing their meetings.[6] Communication strategies help mediators break the disputants' dysfunctional patterns of behavior.[7] Mediators' expertise and brainstorming sessions help the disputants consider their options on complex topics.[8] Mediators use facilitation to control the interaction of disputants and move them in more productive directions.[9] Pure mediators also bridge the information asymmetry in a conflict by providing the disputing parties with intelligence that can aid in their decision making.[10] While mediation literature enumerates the many ways in which mediators can help the parties move closer to settling, it does not explain when, where, and why disputants accept a mediator's assistance, information, or suggestions.

There may be several reasons for this lacuna in knowledge. First, mediation is an activity that relies on confidentiality.[11] Mediators could lose the parties' trust by divulging what was said or even how it was said. Second, information on the relationship-building elements of pure mediation is a challenge to gather. Doing so requires taking the lid off the pot to look at the activities that are often conducted in private and obscured by the social contexts within which they take place. Journalists and researchers, however, rarely gain the real-time access needed to observe the underbelly of a peace process.[12] Third, mediation literature largely aggregates the mediation efforts at the mediating nation, institution, or organization level and focuses on their overall plan or strategy for the mediation effort.[13] The informal and behind-the-scenes efforts of individual mediators are markedly absent from academic research. Available information on the unseen and off-the-record aspects of pure mediation is largely anecdotal and is drawn from peacemakers' biographical accounts and memoirs.[14] While these personal accounts are interesting to read, drawing generalizable conclusions from such context-specific experiences is difficult. Fourth, mediation research has largely neglected the role of the peacemaking team.[15] While critical to any peace process, their discreet, behind-the-scenes efforts have rarely been documented systematically.

On rare occasions, researchers have had real-time access to peace processes. Their findings indicate that the informality of the interactions between the mediation team and the disputing parties during peace processes helps to create critical moments that promote relationship building.[16] Leary calls these critical moments "relational moments" and argues that turning points in a peace process often occur during these relational moments.[17] Leary's findings coincide with research on critical moments during negotiations, which indicates that connecting with the other party and building recognition and trust can be transformative.[18] While these studies point to a relationship between relational moments and turning points, they do not provide a theoretical framework for how relationship building occurs during peace processes. This gap leads to the principal research question in this paper: How do pure mediators establish trusted relationships with the disputing parties during a peace process? This research builds on Svensson's "who" of pure mediation [19] to focus on the "how" of pure

mediation.

I suggest that informality is the currency through which mediators create the atmospheric conditions for relational moments to occur in peace processes. Informality is ubiquitous in diplomacy. A big part of a diplomat's life is socializing informally. A diplomat's calendar is often filled with lunches, dinners, and receptions. Diplomats use occasions for sharing food and drink to create an environment that promotes familiarity, friendship, and opportunities to exchange information with relevant people.[20] At the United Nations, diplomats routinely negotiate informally. In this article, I explore how informality permeates peace processes, helping mediators establish and build relationships of trust that make it possible for the disputing parties to be heard and to receive the mediators' information, messages, and suggestions.

The purpose of this study is to advance knowledge on the practice of pure mediation. The article addresses the research gaps identified in the literature by conceptualizing peacemaking as a complex process in which the mediation team's informal interactions complement the lead peacemaker's formal exchanges. The research aims to demystify the mediation team's hidden efforts during a peace process. The article uses three case studies, from Africa, Asia, and Latin America, to explore the "how" of pure mediation. Much has been written about these cases. Previous research, however, has given limited attention to analyzing the informal efforts undertaken during the peace processes. This gap justifies examining how informality manifested in and impacted the peace processes.

The study finds that pure mediators, whether they are international organizations or NGOs conducted the peace processes at a formal and an informal level. In particular, research indicates that the mediation team members often acted as informal mediators during the peace process. This "informal process" helped the lead mediators better understand the disputing parties, bridge the divide between them, and forge mutually acceptable outcomes. Findings also indicate that the informal process was often conducted intuitively and achieved positive results by default rather than by design.

This article has five sections. The first section draws on previous literature to delineate how informality manifests in politics, diplomacy, and peacemaking. The second section provides the research design, the third provides a brief description of the cases and a glimpse into some of the hidden activities during the peace processes, and the fourth presents the findings of the research. The fifth section concludes with some thoughts about how to better understand international mediation and increase its efficacy in practice.

A Note on Theory

This section draws on previous research on diplomacy, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding from the fields of social psychology and politics to answer the central question, How do pure mediators establish trusted relationships with the disputing parties during a peace process?

Previous Research

Sociologists define formality as social practices characterized by explicit, usually professionally written, ritually accepted, and publicly available rules and regulations.[21] Behavior that follows these fixed codes of conduct is formal behavior. Informal behavior avoids, deviates from, or circumvents fixed rules of behavior. Historically, rules emerged to regulate the informal patterns of social life. It would be impossible to conceive of social life without its informal component.

"Formal" and "informal" are rarely presented as neutral terms.[22] In politics, "formal" denotes state and officialdom, legality, and power. "Informal" signifies a lack of official status and authority. Informal activity is seen as taking place in opaque spaces where official rules

are suspended. It is in these opaque spaces, however, that lobbyist prowl, coalitions are formed, favors are traded, and wheeling and dealing occurs. Based on mutual exchanges and favors, informal relationships cannot exist in the presence of prying eyes or a clear regulatory framework.[23] Formality and informality in politics are often presented as a form of duality: "proper"' and "improper," though the two forms are often mutually beneficial and reinforcing. Formal and informal relations are two sides of the same coin in social relations.

In international affairs, informal agreements permeate nearly all fields.[24] According to Hardt, informal communication provides privacy to share ideas without accountability.[25] In informal settings, participants speak freely without fear that they are giving away their institution's official position or that their ideas will be reported by the media the next day. For example, at the United Nations, diplomats know that the real negotiations of the Security Council are conducted in informal consultations and not in official meetings.[26] If diplomacy functioned only in the formal sphere, the world would likely be in a state of permanent paralysis, leaving diplomats without the ability to move beyond official positions. The formal and informal have always been complementary and mutually reinforcing in diplomacy.

Informality has also permeated the field of conflict resolution through the application of contact theory. Contact theory, developed to reduce hostility between adversarial groups, is based on the assumption that unfamiliarity and lack of knowledge about another group can promote hostility and rivalry.[27] The theory posits that increased contact between groups under the right conditions can improve intergroup reactions and relations. According to Allport, proximity in the right circumstances can lead to improved relations. He highlights four conditions that produce positive results: parties must be of equal status, have common goals, be free of intergroup rivalry, and be authorized to have contact.[28] Studies found that for contact to have a positive impact, it must be intimate and not superficial, and it must be among people of equal status and take place in natural and comfortable settings as opposed to forced and sterile settings.[29] Another study that advanced contact theory found that casual contact that produces superficial relations does not promote mutual understanding.[30] According to Amir, for contact to be effective in improving relations and promoting common understanding, casual contact must seek a deeper level of acquaintance and a more intimate relationship. It must be institutionally sanctioned and be pleasurable and rewarding to the participants.[31] Contact theory was conceptualized primarily to reduce hostility between rival groups. I posit, however, that elements of contact theory can be adapted to help the mediation team build relations with and between the parties.

Kelman advanced the idea that track 2 activities conceptualized as "problem-solving workshops" offer the potential for influential people to talk, listen, and explore ideas in private.[32] These activities allow the disputing parties to challenge each other's assumptions and positions without fear or blame. During these activities, the parties were able to meet each other as equals, free from the power imbalances and moral righteousness that has so often blocked formal processes. Kelman posited that under the right circumstances, the informal problem-solving workshop could contribute to the official peace process.

The idea that there could be an informal track in diplomatic negotiations emerged during the Cold War nuclear talks. US Foreign Service officers observed that "private individuals, meeting unofficially, can find their way to a common ground when official negotiators can't." [33] An informal track for negotiations was first conceptualized through the interaction between the disciplines of international politics and psychology. In 1981, Joseph Montville, a US Foreign Service officer, and William D. Davidson, a psychiatrist and president of the Institute of Psychology and Foreign Affairs, made the distinction between "official diplomacy" (track 1) and "unofficial diplomacy" (track 2) in foreign policy.[34] Unofficial diplomacy has the quality of being informal and unstructured. It is conducted by unofficial actors to create greater understanding between them and the groups to which they belong.

In the Montville-Davidson perspective, informal diplomacy is complementary to formal diplomatic efforts. The Montville-Davidson idea of a track 2 was to establish an informal and unofficial process to the formal and official negotiations. By extrapolation, track 2 as an informal process would be equally applicable to peacemaking whether conducted by a track 1 or a track 2 actor. Mediation literature, however, has lost sight of the real meaning of track 2 as an informal process conducted by those who are not officially leading the negotiations. Instead, current mediation literature presents track 2 as synonymous with mediation conducted by NGOs.

The end of the Cold War turned the attention of practitioners and academics to the challenge of making peace in civil wars. Lederach's academic contribution to conflict transformation theory started to deepen the practice of peacemaking. Lederach's peacebuilding pyramidal model divides society into three levels referred to as tracks: top leadership (track 1), mid-level leadership (track 2), and leadership at the grassroots level (track 3).[35] In what he calls a "middle out approach," Lederach argues that mid-level leaders have the "greatest potential for establishing an infrastructure that can sustain peacebuilding over the long-term."[36] Lederach's three-level peacebuilding pyramidal model encourages greater emphasis at the mid-level, because it has the potential to affect the leaders at the elite and grassroots levels. His focus on track 2 may have contributed to the growing number of NGOs who direct their efforts to the mid-level of society. According to Lederach's peacebuilding theory, relationships are at the heart of social change and social space is seen as the place where relationships are built and sustained. Applying, Lederach's pyramidal model, I suggest that the mid-level members of a peacemaking team serve as informal mediators in a peace process.

Mediating violent conflicts, particularly in civil wars, requires many kinds of expertise. After the Cold War, when internal conflicts became more prevalent, a more holistic approach to peacemaking emerged. MacDonald and Diamond conceptualized peacemaking as the interconnected activities of individuals, communities, and institutions working in multiple disciplines.[37] In their "multi-track diplomacy" framework, multidisciplinary actors coordinate to provide a comprehensive multisectoral systemic approach to the delivery of peace. After the publication of MacDonald and Diamond's research, making peace in civil wars no longer remained the exclusive purview of diplomats and statemen. A greater number of technical experts are now routinely involved in peacemaking activities. I argue that technical experts offer more than their expertise to a peace process. Someone deemed an expert can exert considerable sway over the future actions and decisions of a disputing party.[38] In this connection, experts in a peace process could also act as informal mediators.

Previous research has shown that building relationships during a peace process requires intimate interactions between equals and that this informal process does not stand alone but complements the formal process. This framework suggests several research questions to help answer the central research question of this article about how pure mediators build relationships of trust in peace processes: Who undertakes relationship building during a peace process? What kind of activities and interactions support their efforts? What is the relationship between the informal and the formal aspects of a peace process?

Concepts and Definitions

Informality
In this article, "informality" is defined as the quality of a person or condition that exhibits an unofficial style or nature, often demonstrated by a relaxed, friendly, casual, or familiar appearance and behavior that is marked by the absence of formality or ceremony. In peace processes, the quality of informality is identified by the absence of note-takers and the action of note-taking, giving the appearance that the interaction is literally off-the-record.

Peace Process

A "peace process" is an official national-level activity that spans three phases: a pre-negotiation phase that is often more informal and opaque than the other two; a more formal, visible, bargaining phase; and an implementation phase aimed at promoting the operational realization of commitments made in the peace agreement. A peace process may begin informally but usually concludes formally at the elite level. In the case of civil wars, a peace process officially ends with the government and the nonstate actor or actors signing an agreement.

Mediation

"Mediation" is a nonadversarial process in which a third party shifts a dyadic system of conflict resolution to a triadic system to help disputing parties resolve their underlying incompatibilities. The process is distinct from the parties' own efforts. Mediation occurs when disputing parties seek the assistance of or accept an offer of help from an individual, group, state, or organization to change, affect, or influence their perceptions or behavior without resorting to physical force or invoking the authority of the law. Mediation usually takes place when the efforts of the disputing parties to resolve their disputes have failed.[39] In this article, the term "peacemaking" is often used interchangeably with "mediation," since most peacemakers use the methods of dialogue, mediation, and negotiation when engaged in peacemaking.

Peacemaking

The range of peaceful dispute resolution methods is identified in Article 33 of the UN Charter. These methods include negotiation, inquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, the resort to regional agencies or arrangements, and other peaceful means of the parties' choice. In this article, "peacemaking" is understood as the formal and informal diplomatic efforts of a third party using dialogue, mediation, and negotiation to prevent or resolve violent disputes.

Mediator/Lead Mediator/Peacemaker

This article uses the terms "mediator," "lead mediator," and "peacemaker" interchangeably to denote a high-ranking representative of a state, regional, or international organization or NGO, or a private individual functioning as a third party to help resolve a conflict. These mediators are also sometimes referred to as "special envoy," or "facilitator."

A Note on Methods

This research used a comparative case study to provide an understanding of how pure mediators conduct their peacemaking efforts. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data, rather than tracing a small number of variables in a large study to ascertain how informality manifested and impacted peace processes.[40]

The cases were drawn from three different parts of the world to allow the researchers to drawing generalizable conclusions that are not bound by cultural specificity. The selected cases allowed a controlled within-case analysis as well as structured comparative analysis between cases.[41] The cases selected are all civil wars, because the asymmetry between state and nonstate actors made visible the level of formality between the state negotiators and the nonstate negotiators. The cases also had peacemaking teams that comprised a lead peacemaker and mid-level and junior team members. The Aceh conflict in Indonesia had two distinct peace processes, both mediated by NGOs, and thus it provided a suitable within-case comparison. The other two cases, El Salvador and Sierra Leone, were processes led by the United Nations.

The mediators in all the cases did not resort to using leverage to coerce or induce disputing parties into settlements.

The semi-structured, open-ended format of the interviews enabled the interview subjects to give first-hand accounts of historical events. These interviews allowed me to capture a "thick description" of how the mediation team established relationships with members of the disputing parties during the peace process.[42] First-hand interviews were conducted with members of the mediation team and negotiators from the conflict parties to explore how informality permeates the peace processes conducted by pure mediators.[43]

The format of the interviews also allowed participants in the peace process to freely express their views. At the end of each interview, the participants were given a summary and asked to confirm whether it matched their perception of reality.[44] Interview content analysis was then conducted to identify common themes.[45] I sought interviews, in particular, with senior advisors and experts, because these team members were able to influence the peacemaking team upward and downward while also having direct contact with the negotiators. Nonoperational junior staff who aided with research or note-taking and the administrative support personnel were not interviewed.[46] The representatives of the disputing parties provided an account of how the mediators and their teams interacted with them and how that interaction affected their comfort and trust levels, the development of their ideas and thinking, and their overall confidence with the peacemaker and the peace process. I was able to interview the mediation team and representatives of the disputing parties in each of the peace processes under study. Triangulation of data using multiple narratives helped me secure an accurate and fair account of the peacemakers' actions during the peace processes.[47]

More than sixty people were interviewed for this research. Participants were interviewed until the data was saturated and good themes were easily identified.[48] Data was reviewed repeatedly to ascertain whether the themes and explanations were logical.[49] Data collection was stopped when additional interviews provided no new themes and few additional details to the narrative already constructed. The lists of questions posed to the mediation team and the disputants are presented in the Appendix.

Notes on the Peace Processes

This section provides a brief summary of the three cases: a narrative of the conflicts and a description of the parties to the dispute and the mediating team. The aim of this section is to present a broad context for the findings that follow in the next section.

Aceh

The province of Aceh is located at the northern tip of Sumatra, the largest island of the archipelagic state of Indonesia. The Acehnese conflict between the Government of Indonesia and the Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM) lasted for nearly three decades, from 1976 to 2005.[50] Three main factors account for the outbreak of the decades-long armed conflict between the Government of Indonesia and the GAM: the historical, linguistic, and religious identity of the Acehnese that dates from the Acehnese empire in the sixteenth century[51]; the discovery of liquefied natural gas in several parts of Aceh in 1971, as a result of which Aceh became one of the wealthiest provinces in Indonesia; and the brutal and repressive tactics of the Indonesian government and its military to maintain state security and protect its own economic and political interests.

Shortly after the discovery of natural gas, the Acehnese began to resent how little they received of the financial returns it generated.[52] That resentment and the actions of the government fueled a violent uprising in Aceh and inspired the separatist insurgency of the GAM.[53] After waxing and waning for decades, the conflict came to a head at the end of the

Cold War with the fall of President Suharto in 1998 and the East Timor referendum in 1999. These events gave the GAM cause to believe that Indonesia was splintering from within and that its claim to self-determination through independence was within reach.[54]

The Geneva-based Henri Dunant Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) was the first organization to facilitate direct talks between the Government of Indonesia and the GAM.[55] The negotiation teams were led by Hassan Wirajuda, foreign minister of Indonesia, and Hassan di Tiro, the leader of GAM and "the Sultan of Aceh." The peace process was led by Martin Griffiths and supported by Louisa Chan-Boegli and Andrew Marshall. According to Griffiths, Chan-Boegli initiated the preliminary interactions between the parties and traveled back and forth between Jakarta, Geneva, and Stockholm, where the GAM leadership resided in exile.[56]

Chan-Boegli vividly recalls her first meeting with the former GAM premier minister Malik Mahmood at Changi Airport, Singapore. "We met at an airport restaurant and shared some fried rice! It was just so casual like we were old friends. We were able to talk just as easily about the food as about what an HD-led peace process would entail."[57] In contrast, though the setting of the Geneva talks, which were held in a palace, gave the GAM a sense of legitimacy and importance, she believed, it did not promote a convivial environment.

Later Marshall supported Griffiths by meeting with some of the parties, including the generals from the Indonesian National Army (Tentera National Indonesia).[58] Several rounds of talks in Geneva resulted in a humanitarian pause followed by the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement on December 9, 2002, more than a year later. When the humanitarian pause went into effect, HD deployed David Gorman to Banda Aceh to chair the meetings between the parties on humanitarian and security issues. Gorman recounted that once the pause had been initiated, he and the representatives of the parties who were negotiating in the humanitarian and security committees played badminton regularly. "It was a way for me to get to know them better," he said, "but it also provided an activity that allowed them to increase their interaction with each other and enjoy each other's company. It is more difficult to greet each other with animosity the next day when you have enjoyed time playing a sport together the previous day."[59]

After the signing of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, HD recruited and deployed former military officers from neighboring countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to help monitor the implementation of the agreement. The HD-led peace process formally ended on May 27, 2003, when the peace process broke down irrevocably, and the conflict reignited at full scale.

In 2004, Juha Christensen, a Finish businessman living in Indonesia, informally initiated the second Aceh peace process. Christensen spoke Malay (Bahasa Indonesia) fluently, and because he had lived on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi, he had some familiarity with the local language and was able to gain access to the leaders of the Indonesian government, many of whom came from Sulawesi. In the early days, before the official Helsinki Peace Process for Aceh had started, Christensen often shared meals with the Acehnese, during which he and the Acehnese often talked about their culture, their history, and their aspirations for the future. These moments, according to Christensen, allowed him to get to know the parties and to demonstrate affinity and empathy with them. During these informal meeting, Christensen explained to GAM representatives about how difficult it would be to achieve their goals for a separate state when the international community did not support their independence. He believed these discussions helped prepare GAM for the reality of their situation and what they could achieve in the peace process. Christensen also recalls the hours of driving in cars with Farid Hussain, the informal mediator from the government side.

> When you are in a car for hours, you can talk about so many things. There is no agenda. It gives you a real opportunity to get to know your interlocutors and become friends. I still stay in close contact with Dr. Hussain.[60]

Christensen traveled back and forth between Banda Aceh and Jakarta and persuaded both parties to enter another round of talks under the formal mediation of Martti Ahtisaari, former president of Finland. At that time, Ahtisaari was leading a Finnish NGO called the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI).

Once the formal Helsinki Peace Process started, Christensen stayed on to support Ahtisaari. As the "official unofficial mediator,"[61] he chaired the unofficial sessions between the parties in Malay and interacted with many of the negotiators informally. Christensen notes that even government delegations have a "pecking order" and that informal interactions are often possible with members below the level of delegation head.

> They gain information, discuss ideas, and "unofficially" pass messages to you so that you can convey these messages to the lead peacemaker. Likewise, we do the same so that they can communicate our ideas to their head of delegation. Ideas and possible reactions to proposals get passed back and forth without any record, allowing everyone to adjust themselves before officially presenting proposals to the lead mediator during the bilateral/proximity talks or to the other side at the negotiating table. This way, there are no surprise bombshells for the peacemaker.[62]

Later Christensen was joined by, among others, General Jaakko Oksanen from Finland.[63] Oksanen served as the military advisor to the mediator and helped to negotiate the military aspects of the agreement that emerged from the talks.[64] He often used plain language with the negotiators, particularly those from the GAM, when discussing the terms and responsibilities of the military undertakings in the agreement.[65] GAM, though functioning as a disciplined and trained armed group for decades, did not have the formal military training and terminology that the government side brought to the table. Oksanen used simple vocabulary to explain technical security issues to help GAM members comprehend their responsibilities and implement the agreement.

At a critical point during the Helsinki Peace Process, Ahtisaari met President Yudhoyono and Vice President Kalla in Jakarta and presented them with evidence of military atrocities in an effort to persuade them to rein in the Indonesian military. While the meeting was respectful, the discussion was candid enough to ensure that the government could not claim ignorance.[66] The Helsinki Peace Process concluded with the signing of the 2005 Memorandum of Understanding. Minister of Law and Justice Hamid Awaludin signed on behalf of the Government of Indonesia, and Malik Mahmud signed on behalf of the GAM. The Memorandum of Understanding provides the framework for the peace in Aceh, which holds to this day.[67]

El Salvador

The conflict in El Salvador was rooted in socioeconomic inequities that gave rise to popular uprisings and the unchecked power of the military and security forces that emerged ostensibly in response to them.[68] Ever since coffee became a major cash crop, well over a century before the official start of the civil war, and began bringing in 95 percent of the country's income, El Salvador has been in a class struggle between peasants and landowners. During the years before the civil war began, coups and countercoups took place, with each regime promising to improve the economic conditions in the country. Discontent with the government grew when promises again and again were not met.

Armed groups sprouted to oppose the government's heavy-handed military actions against those who sought social reform. As human rights violations by government troops and death squads increased, a broad leftist coalition emerged in the country.[69] Five armed groups formed a coalition known as the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) to intensify their efforts against the government.[70] On March 24, 1980, when Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo

Romero, one of El Salvador's most respected Roman Catholic Church leaders, was shot to death by gunmen as he celebrated Mass in San Salvador, El Salvador's civil war officially began.

Despite being called a civil war, the El Salvador conflict had irrefutable external dimensions. El Salvador was the final frontier of the Cold War. The East-West confrontation in El Salvador resulted in the US Government's supporting the Government of El Salvador with military training, weapons, and financial aid ostensibly to fight Marxist guerrillas who were supported by Cubans and the Soviets.[71] By the late 1980s, it was clear that the war was headed to a stalemate.[72]

The first of several efforts to make peace in El Salvador was undertaken by the Catholic Church, the next by the Organization of American States (OAS). Each initiative brought a particular focus and benefit. The effort by the Church led to some humanitarian respite, while the effort by the OAS, in concert with the leadership of five Latin American states, resulted in the two Esquipulas Agreements, which created the regional conditions for peace.[73] While providing a regional environment conducive to peace, the Esquipulas Agreements did not address the internal conflicts or bring the insurgent groups into the negotiations. In the end, neither the Church nor the OAS was successful in bringing peace to El Salvador. In September 1989, the FMLN and the Salvadoran government, now led by Alfredo Cristiani of the Alianza Republicana Nacionalista (ARENA) party, requested the good offices of the UN Secretary-General to help resolve the conflict.

The United Nation's response to the request was the institution's first foray as a peacemaker into a civil war. The UN Mediation Team was led by the UN Secretary-General's Personal Representative for the Central American Peace Process, Alvaro de Soto, and supported by Deputy Francesc Vendrell, Special Assistant Blanca Antonini, and the human rights and legal advisor Pedro Nikken. In UN Headquarters, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Marrack Goulding and Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar kept a watchful eye, intervening when required.

During the pre-negotiations phase, De Soto himself did much of the shuttle diplomacy between the parties in an effort to reach the initial framework agreement.[74] Once the face-to-face talks started, however, De Soto maintained his impartiality and limited his interactions with the dispute parties to chairing meetings, meeting parties in private talks, and managing official aspects of the peace process. Pedro Nikken did most of the initial agreement drafting.[75] Nikken spent a lot of time engaging informally with both parties. Often he would enjoy a glass of whisky or a cigar with his interlocutors while "talking shop" about the peace process.[76] The FMLN negotiator Ana Guadeloupe Martinez acknowledges that the FMLN was extremely grateful to Pedro Nikken. According to Martinez, Nikken often helped to break down the technical legal and constitutional issues into "simple terms." [77] FMLN negotiators had never governed before and were not familiar with some of the technical terminology. Hearing these concepts explained in plain language helped them to formulate their own positions and responses. Nikken also served as a go-between to Rodolfo Parker Soto, one of the lawyers in the government team, and the FMLN.[78] Sanctioned by the UN Special Envoy, Nikken's informal engagement helped produce the initial drafts of the agreements with a high degree of consensus even before they were tabled officially by the envoy to the parties. At the final stage of the peace process, Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar himself met with President Cristiani to gain final concessions from the government.[79]

The UN-led peace process from 1990 to 1992 culminated in the Chapúltepec Accords, signed January 16, 1992, in Mexico City. The Minister of Justice, Oscar Santamaria, led the Government of El Salvador, and Commander Shafik Handal led the FMLN negotiating teams.

Sierra Leone

In 1991, in an effort to address rampant corruption and the unequal distribution of resources from the diamond industry, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), an insurgent armed group, launched a war from the eastern border of Sierra Leone to overthrow the Government of Sierra Leone.[80] The national army defended the government with assistance from the Military Observer Group of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The ineffective response by the civilian government to the RUF, coupled with a disruption in diamond production, led to a coup by the Sierra Leone army in April 1992. The change of regime did not quell the RUF. Struggling to push back the rebels, the government invited mercenaries from a South African private military company, Executive Outcomes, to help defeat the RUF. As the civil war reached its peak in 1995, with severe abuses against civilians on both sides, Sierra Leone started to attract the attention of the wider international community.

In November 1994, President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah of Sierra Leone wrote to the UN Secretary-General, formally requesting that he facilitate negotiations between the government and the RUF. In February 1995, following an exploratory mission, the Secretary-General appointed Berhanu Dinka, a senior diplomat from Ethiopia, to be his Special Envoy.[81] The process leading up to the agreement was conducted at the elite level. President Kabbah and the RUF leader Foday Sanko had several face-to-face meetings.[82] Under strong international pressure from the United Nations, ECOWAS, the Commonwealth Secretariat, and the warring parties signed the Abidjan Accords in 1996. The agreement was short-lived. By May 1997, the Sierra Leonean army had joined forces with the RUF. Together they staged another coup and formed a ruling junta, known as the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council. The coup forced President Kabbah and his government into exile in neighboring Guinea.[83]

In September 1997, the UN Secretary-General appointed Francis G. Okelo, a Ugandan diplomat, as his Special Envoy to Sierra Leone, with a mandate to support ECOWAS in its efforts to reverse the situation in Sierra Leone.[84] In October 1997, both parties signed the Conakry Peace Plan, which called for the immediate cessation of hostilities and the reinstatement of the legitimate government of President Kabbah, within six months. This agreement, too, though negotiated at the top level of the parties, was short-lived.

The US Government pressured Kabbah and the RUF through President Charles Taylor of Liberia to attend talks in Togo. In Lomé, the United States brokered a ceasefire agreement between Sierra Leone and the RUF in May 1999 as a sign of good faith to hold peace talks.[85] The Lomé Peace Talks were conducted under the aegis of the chairman of ECOWAS, President Gnassingbe Eyadema of Togo. The talks continued for two more months, during which UN Special Envoy Okelo served as the day-to-day lead mediator under the authority of the ECOWAS chairman to help the parties reach a negotiated settlement. Okelo was supported by Modem Lawson-Betum, a senior political advisor, and Charles Anyidoho, a legal advisor. Both advisors supported the UN Envoy with the necessary political and legal advice, but they also engaged the parties informally at critical moments to gain information from and provide advice to the RUF.[86]

During the Lomé peace talks on Sierra Leone, the legal advisor Anyidoho was able to spend unscheduled time with the RUF negotiation team. "These guys were young," he said, "around the same age as me; we were from the same region. We shared a similar taste in music."[87] Anyidoho built a rapport with the negotiators between the formal sessions and in the evenings when they would simply talk about their favorite music. This rapport allowed the RUF negotiators to confide in Anyidoho and seek his legal advice regarding the terminology in the peace agreements. The RUF negotiating team had little experience or expertise in negotiations. Recognizing the value of this situation, Anyidoho requested permission from

Okelo to unofficially provide some capacity-building advice to the RUF. The advice helped the RUF to gain confidence to safeguard their interest during the negotiations.

During the Sierra Leone peace process, Modem Lawson-Betum accompanied RUF leader Foday Sankoh on his flight from Freetown to Lomé. Lawson-Betum recalls that the flight provided an unprecedented opportunity for him to have an in-depth discussion with Sankoh: "It was during this flight that I discovered that Sankoh had absolutely no political ideology or vision for Sierra Leone. He was only seeking power for the sake of power."[88] Lawson later conveyed to the UN Envoy that Sankoh could be appeased only if he gained real power through the peace agreement. In the end, Sankoh settled for nothing less than becoming vice president and chairman of Board of Commission for the Management of Strategic Resources, National Reconstruction and Development.

On July 7, 1999, the RUF and the Government of Sierra Leone signed the Lomé Peace Agreement, which continues to provide the basis for the peace in Sierra Leone today. The government team was led by the Attorney General and Minister of Justice Solomon Barewa, while the RUF was led by its leader, Foday Sankoh.

The Findings

This study explored how informality manifested in peace processes conducted by pure mediators. In Aceh, the HD-led and the CMI-led teams employed a distinct informal process that supported the formal talks. In the El Salvador peace process, the technical expert created an informal layer that complemented the formal process. In the Lomé talks for Sierra Leone, the UN Special Envoy's team functioned as an informal conduit for information and advice to complement the Envoy's formal efforts.

The research demonstrates that informality in a peace process manifests in four ways: informal people, informal spaces, informal language, and informal time. Together they provide the informal process where relationships are forged between the mediation team and the disputing parties to advance the formal peace process.

Informal People

The research found that lead peacemakers relied heavily on their team to engage disputing parties behind the scenes. Those teams had operational roles that brought them in contact with representatives of the disputing parties. This contact was regular and was undertaken without the presence of the lead mediator. During their interactions, members of the mediation team helped create a network of relationships that were based on mutual favors that could be called on to advance the lead mediator's peacemaking efforts.[89]

Without the diplomatic rank and the official status of the lead peacemaker, mid-level members of the peacemaking team functioned outside the formal realm of the peace process. These "informal people" gained the confidence of the parties and channeled information from the disputing parties to the lead peacemaker, enabling the peacemaker to get to know the parties beyond their positions at the negotiating table. Through these informal channels, disputing parties unofficially convey their vulnerabilities, their red lines in negotiations, and the real psychological cost of their concessions to the lead mediator.

During the first peace process in Aceh, led by HD, Louisa Chang-Boegli and Andrew Marshall functioned as the informal people on the peacemaking team. In the second Aceh peace process, Juha Christensen and General Oksanen served in the same capacity. In the El Salvador peace process, Pedro Nikken, the UN legal advisor, was instrumental behind the scenes in engaging the parties, particularly with the FMLN, which had no legal advisor on its team. And in the UN-led Sierra Leone peace process, Charles Anyidoho, the UN legal advisor, served in

a similar capacity behind the scenes with the RUF. These informal people's efforts were invisible and, for the most part, unrecorded.[90]

During the research, negotiators from the disputing parties reported that members of the mediation team allowed them to discuss ideas and concerns about the process off-the-record. They carried on these discussions in part because they knew the mediation team members could influence the lead mediator by raising the appropriate issues and adjusting the process to move forward more productively. This finding coincides with Lederach's finding that the mid-level has the most influence in a peacebuilding effort and Allport's view that informal contact must be sanctioned.[91]

The research found a distinction between how the state and the nonstate negotiators interacted with the peacemaking teams. The negotiating teams of the state actors preferred to deal directly with the lead mediators, while the negotiating teams of the nonstate actors were more at ease relating informally with members of the mediation team. These informal encounters afforded the representatives of nonstate actors opportunities to gain advice and to sound out ideas without divulging their lack of capacity or demonstrating their vulnerability to the official peacemakers. Nonstate actors preferred to meet with the lead mediators once they were more confident about and conversant with the issues. They treated meetings with the lead mediators, even in private sessions, as formal meetings. By engaging with the disputing parties informally and learning about their ideas and aspirations, fears and vulnerabilities, team members serving as informal mediators helped the lead mediators by enhancing progress during the formal process.

The research also found that when peacemakers were dealing with elite state actors, formal interactions were particularly effective in gaining final concessions. Elite interaction in these instances should not be confused with power mediation. Neither President Ahtisaari nor Secretary-General Pérez de Cuéllar used or threatened to use any coercive action. Their ability to gain movement in the peace process demonstrates that equal status between the actors helped promote the more positive and productive interactions posited by social contact theory.[92]

Informal Language

Peace processes involve a high degree of diplomatic formality, which includes the use of diplomatic language during the talks. The language of diplomacy is designed to "minimise misunderstandings and miscalculations that give rise to conflict."[93] Diplomats tend to be so entrenched in civility, however, and intent on avoiding any disrespect that they often speak in a formal style that is polite, indirect, and often circuitous. In peace processes, rather than minimizing conflict, "diplomatic speak" can often exacerbate conflict and cause damaging delays. Formal diplomatic language can be intimidating, deceiving, and patronizing. The use of formal language by state actors and the lead mediator can give the impression that the real issues are being avoided or that the speakers are trying to deceive those who do not have the education to understand.

In civil war mediation, nonstate actors are often represented by nonelites who do not have the education and experience of the state actors. Disputing parties often block the peace process when they feel patronized or they suspect the other side of trickery or deceit. Once experts helped to break down technical concepts into plain language, however, these same nonstate representatives became more productive in the talks. The peacemakers' use of informal language and simple terms to clarify some of the highly technical concepts and vocabulary used in the drafting of peace agreements proved essential to their gaining and building the confidence of the disputing parties, particularly the nonstate actors.

In this research, informal language appeared as slang, metaphors, storytelling, emotional discussions, and jokes. The use of humor, particularly when well-timed, can help conflict parties alter their usual patterns of behavior and communication.[94] Engaging in discussions

with emotional content and expressing feelings through the use of verbal and nonverbal cues helps the mediation team understand the disputing parties' states of mind and thus to better represent their needs during the peace process.[95] An informal style of language facilitates more personal and confidential discussions during peace talks.[96]

The research also found that the use of the parties' vernacular language created a sense of familiarity between the disputing parties and the mediation team. In three out of the four peace processes studied, the mediation team members were able to communicate with the parties in the vernacular. Informality through the use of vernacular language added a level of comfort and relational confidence between the disputing parties and the mediation team.

In peace processes, formal language can cause confusion, conflict, and class tensions.[97] This research found that when informality manifested through language, it helped to overcomes these challenges in a peace process. Research by Sillars and Wilmot supports the finding of this study that an effective communication strategy in a peace process provides space for the mediation team and the disputing parties to abandon diplomatic and technical jargon in favor of plain language.[98]

Informal Space

Peace processes require spaces that promote organic interaction. In the case studies, these spaces were often the coffee-break venues. The informality of these spaces allowed the negotiators to relax and engage in conversations without the perception of their being on-the-record. According to the finding, however, not all meal venues were conducive to intimate discussions. Some meals were held in the formal setting of a hotel restaurant. And though the conversations were casual, the atmosphere was too formal or contrived to be useful in promoting meaningful dialogue. According to Brewer and Gaertner, casual conversation alone is insufficient; a situation must provide intimacy to be an avenue for meaningful conversation.[99] Spaces that were more casual and intimate and less contrived provided the intimacy that facilitated more open communications.

The idea that informal space is conducive to deal making is not new. In the United Nations, deal making is so pervasive in the delegates lounge that UN diplomats commonly refer to the lounge as the "7th Committee."[100] Delegations often use the many corridors, lounges, bars, and cafés in and around the UN headquarters to hold informal negotiations. This research indicates that the quality of communication is enhanced when the space is informal and has a relaxed, quiet, and private ambiance that provides a perception of safety in which personal and off-the-record conversations can be held. These spaces include bars, cafés, restaurants, secluded corridors, planes, trains, and automobiles, and any other space where one is assured of privacy and is not bound by rules of formal behavior or the expectation that one will act and speak in an official capacity.

Many of the most pivotal conversations in the peace processes examined in this study were held in informal spaces where parties felt comfortable and unguarded where discussions were genuine exchanges of ideas. Informal spaces that promote confiding, act like "safe spaces" and "enhance the quality of the discussions."[101]

Informal Time

Informality also manifested in peace processes as time spent with disputants engaging in activities that were not related to the peace process. Peace processes are often denoted by the time pressure to reach an agreement that will end violence. Mediation teams may find it hard to consider spending time in pleasurable activities under such pressure. Informal time, however, is often unscheduled and has no agenda, time constraint, or deadline. Spending informal time with the parties conveys the message that the mediation team is genuinely

interested in getting to know them as individuals and to fully understand the situation rather than rushing the job just to gain a success.

In the cases studied, the mediation team members identified going for a walk or a drive, playing chess and other sports, and sharing a traditional meal with a family as examples of how they spent informal time with the parties. They described informal time as having the quality of being purposeless yet providing comradery. According to the members of the disputing parties, discussions that are held during informal times were often not focused on topics pertaining to the peace processes, nor did it seem that the members of the mediation team were pursuing an objective. The parties talked, for example, about their families or music and other hobbies. The mutually rewarding and pleasurable activities engaged in during informal time created a relaxed atmosphere of familiarity between the mediation team and the disputing parties. The cases revealed that mediation team members who spent informal time with the parties were often able to build a rapport with them and gain their confidence, allowing them to explore new ideas and ways of looking at the conflict issues without fear.

The idea that relationships can be improved between hostile parties through pleasurable activities is consistent with previous research on contact theory.[102] This study reveals that when members of the peacemaking team spent informal time with the disputing parties, without having an agenda beyond getting to know them, they were able to build a rapport with them and gain their confidence. The finding in this study that informal time provides the opportunity to hold unstructured conversations also resembles the finding in Kelman's study of problem-solving workshops, which facilitate the exploration of ideas between influential people who are open to talking and listening.[103]

Informal Mediator

On occasion, experienced members of the mediation team facilitated contact between the disputing parties to reduce hostility and improve relations between them.[104] Acting as informal mediators, they systematically facilitated relationship building and bargaining with and between the parties to advance the goals of the peace process. In most instances, the mediation team members were sanctioned by the lead mediator to go back and forth between the parties on an informal level. In other instances, the senior staff initiated informal interactions to build closer relationships with the parties on their own initiative. The information and outcomes from these initiatives were later fed back to the lead mediator and the formal process.

Informal mediators in a mediation team are usually senior members of the peacemaking team. They may be political advisors or technical experts who have a thorough knowledge of the ongoings of the peace process at the formal level and work closely with the lead peacemaker. Though they do not hold decision-making authority in the formal peace process, they are able to exert influence upward on the lead peacemaker's strategic direction and policies and downward on the operational and administrative functions of the team.

Informal mediators are recognized by the parties as close associates of the lead mediator. They worked invisibly in the background on behalf of the lead peacemakers. Disputing parties perceived informal mediators as being able to influence the lead peacemaker. They unofficially passed messages and ideas from the parties to the lead peacemaker, while retaining the capacity to hold in confidence what the parties did not wish to share with the lead peacemaker. Informal mediators also served as catalysts for fermenting ideas with the parties and empowering them to think strategically for themselves with a view to advancing the overall goals of the peace process as defined by the lead peacemaker. The behind-the-scenes efforts of these informal mediators complemented the diplomatic efforts of the lead peacemaker in the formal peace process.

The informal mediators in the peace processes were often mid-level members of the mediation team who had the access and the ability to influence the lead mediator. The informal

mediator serves in a sanctioned but casual capacity to build bridges between the parties. Political advisors and technical experts serve as informal mediators when they chair meetings, conduct brainstorming sessions, and shuttle back and forth while drafting the initial drafts of the agreement. This finding coincides with Lederach's pyramidal model, according to which the mid-level of society is seen as having the greatest potential to influence change.[105]

In all the cases studied, however, the informal process was not established from the outset as part of the overall process design; it was created intuitively by team members. The findings suggest that the informal process emerged because of a shared culture and relatability between the members of the mediation team and the disputing parties. In the Aceh case, Chan-Boegli was an Asian from Hong Kong who shared cultural nuances with the Indonesians. Christenson spoke Bahasa fluently and was culturally adept in Indonesia having lived there for a long time. In the Sierra Leone case, Anyidoho and Lawson-Betum were both from West Africa. Their native countries' developmental challenges, the consequences of colonialism, were much like those in Sierra Leone. Anyidoho was similar in age to the nonstate actor and shared the same language and interests. In The El Salvador case, Antonini and Nikken were Argentinian and Venezuelan, respectively, and understood the politics of military dictatorships. These factors indicate that a shared historical, cultural, and language affinity and a social personality are useful in constructing the informal process.

Conceptualizing a Peace Process

Extending Lederach's pyramidal model, Figure 1 depicts a peace process conceptualized as an interactive system that comprises a formal and an informal process.
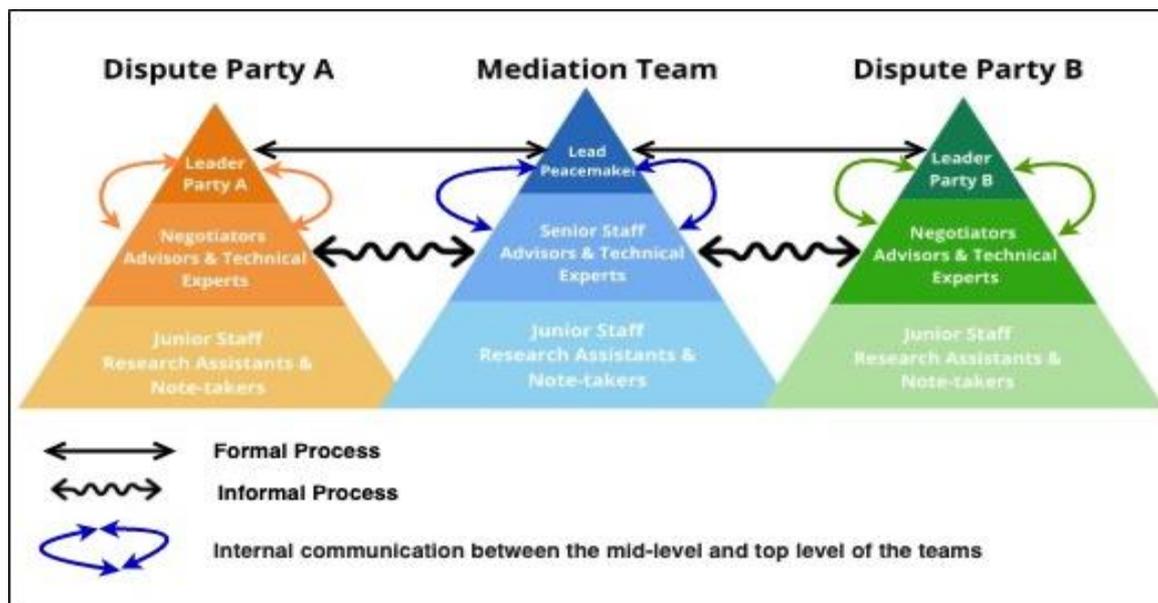
Figure 1. A peace process depicted as an interactive system

Formal Peace Process

The formal peace process encompasses official positions, demands, offers, concessions, and decisions. It usually takes place in formal and ceremonial settings where the code of conduct/behavior requires representatives to function in their official capacity and to act in a formal manner, using language that is official and diplomatic. The formal peace process legitimizes informal and formal deals. It is usually concluded by a public event that produces some form of official declaration or signed agreement. The formal peace process also includes

the efforts by the lead mediator to engage the disputing parties in exploration and bargaining discussions by shuttling back and forth between them and holding private sessions.

Informal Process

Drawing from previous research on multitrack diplomacy, contact theory, and conflict transformation theory, the informal process within a peace process can be conceptualized as an unofficial progression of bargaining that takes place during unstructured activities in informal settings during the course of unofficial activities. The informal process take place between representatives of the disputing parties and members of the mediating team who can influence the official peace process and have the time and space to speak in confidence, without inciting fear or acrimony, to delve into the underlying issues in a conflict and explore new ideas to advance the formal process.[106] Participants in the informal process meet each other as equals and are not affected by the power imbalances and moral righteousness that often permeate the formal process.

Summary and Conclusions

This research sought to understand how pure mediators conduct peacemaking at the granular level. I argue that an informal process is an essential aspect of how peacemakers without power advance the goals of the peace process. Relatedly, I suggest that the formal and informal process are complementary and that pure peacemakers use informality to create the conditions for relationship building in peace processes. Data was drawn from three cases that included four peace processes to explore how pure mediators build relationships of trust in peace processes. A set of questions were used to ascertain how informality manifested in peace processes conducted by pure mediators.

The findings of this research support the central argument of this article. There is strong evidence to suggest that pure mediators relied on informality to build relationships with the disputing parties. This study demonstrated that pure mediators intuitively constructed the peace processes in two layers: a formal and an informal process. The formal process was conducted by the lead mediator with the main negotiators of the disputing teams and was the more public part of the peace process. The informal process was conducted by members of the lead peacemaker's team who served as mediators behind the scenes. The informal process created an atmosphere that encouraged discussions of the hidden issues that underlie difficult deep conflicts.

Informality helped the mediation team get to know the disputing parties by meeting with them in social settings, where they treated them as equals and enjoyed their company and culture. The relaxed and casual atmosphere of these settings and the mediators' use of plain language allowed the parties to express themselves freely and divulge concerns they would otherwise not share with the lead mediator (or the other side) for fear that their vulnerabilities would be used against them. These informal gatherings helped the mediators forge settlements that not only met the parties' interests but also satisfied their psychological needs. Information gained unofficially, however, was brought to the attention of the lead mediator and deals made informally were legitimized in the formal process. The informal process thus complements and supports the lead mediator's efforts in the formal process.

The literature has understood the term "track 2" to refer to an informal track of diplomacy that involves unofficial actors, mainly NGOs. This research found that both track 1 and track 2 actors conducted an informal process within a peace process. If an informal process were simply an issue of unofficial actors serving as mediators in a peace process, peace processes led by NGOs would not have an informal process. The findings of this research indicate, however, that even peace processes led by NGOs have an informal layer. Thus, discussions of

the formal and informal process should not be about which mediating entity should conduct it, that is, official actors (states and international organizations) as opposed to unofficial actors (NGOs), but how it should be conducted and the characteristics and status of individual mediators. As the second Aceh peace process in Helsinki demonstrated, a peace process led by an NGO headed by a former president was still perceived by the parties as a formal process. Thus, the Helsinki Peace Process benefited from having an informal process with a lower-status mediator.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that there was larger space for an informal process before an official mandate was received for mediation. This conclusion is consistent with track 2 literature that finds that unofficial actors can play a useful role during the pre-negotiation phase.[107] It is important to note, however, that in all cases the informal process continued once official talks started and provided significant depth during the official peace process.

In the cases studied, male and female members of the peacemaking team were found to be equally capable of undertaking the informal process. This finding is consistent with previous research.[108] Male and female colleagues, however, were not equally visible at the formal or the informal processes. Female mediators were completely missing in the formal processes in all the cases examined and had only a pivotal role in the informal process in one of the four peace processes that was examined. In keeping with UN Security Council resolution 1325, more effort is needed to increase women mediators in formal and informal peacemaking.

An informal process worked best in exchanges where the status of a mediation team member matched that of the disputing party. The research found that nonstate actors responded better in discussions with lower-status team members. In contrast, state actors considered it diplomatic protocol and a sign of respect that their high status was equally matched by the mediation team. Meetings with the state actors were therefore often conducted by the lead mediator and thus were more formal. Practitioners may need to consider assigning a deputy mediator with a sufficiently high status to interact informally with the state actor.

Lead mediators could argue that they alternate their own style between a formal and informal approach and therefore informal mediators are not necessary. Lead mediators often use bilateral sessions to speak privately with each side between forum sessions.[109] Though these bilateral discussions offer privacy and confidentiality, they are still official. Parties rarely confide their real fears and vulnerabilities to the lead peacemaker, even in private sessions. As Chataway points out, "diplomats and government officials can never fully abandon their official positions or relinquish their formality to be able to hold open and unstructured conversations that can facilitate creative thinking."[110] The research suggests that an informal process could provide peacemakers with an avenue to get to the heart of the issues that prevent mediations from reaching a settlement.

This research indicates that peace processes conducted by pure mediators, regardless of whether they are official or unofficial actors, usually incorporated an informal process that complemented and supported the formal process. The research, however, examined only peace processes mediated by pure mediators. An avenue for further research could be to ascertain whether informality also manifests in peace processes led by power mediators. In addition, research on frozen conflicts could provide greater insight on the impact of informality on the trajectory of a peace process. Stalled peace processes that reignite and progress with increased informality could provide confirmation that informality should be more consciously integrated into peace process designs.

In summary, this research demonstrates that pure mediators often employ informality to create the atmospheric conditions for building relationships in their peacemaking efforts. A well-designed informal process can help peacemakers build closer relationships with the parties and help them find their way out of the entrenched, harmful patterns of thinking and behavior that led to their continued conflictual relations. In this research informality helped the

peacemaking team relate to disputing parties as human beings and build relationships that advanced the peace processes.

According to Bercovitch, "mediation is a social role requiring a set of skills. Like other social roles it can be learned, developed, and improved."[111] This research provides practitioners with insight on how to operationalize informality, create an informal layer within a peace process, and enhance their social role as mediators. The findings of this research will make a theoretical contribution to mediation literature on pure mediation. In addition, practitioners and policymakers may find this research useful in determining how they select and structure peacemaking teams and design peace processes.

Acknowledgments

Appendix

Questions Asked of the Mediation Team

1. What was your role and influence level during the peace process?
2. How did you interact with the disputing parties?
3. Can you describe these interactions; how did these interactions take place, when and where, and what was discussed?
4. How did you plan for these interactions?
5. How did your interactions shape your ability to influence the parties?
6. How would you describe your style of interaction?
7. How would you describe your relationship with members of the disputing parties at the beginning and at the end of the process?
8. Was this relationship important for the advancement of the peace process? Why?

Questions Asked of Negotiators

1. What was your role and influence level in the peace process?
2. What was your interaction with the peacemaker and his team?
3. Can you describe how, when and where you met the peacemaker/the team, and how things were discussed?
4. How did you plan for these interactions/meetings?
5. How did these interactions help shape your views during the peace process?
6. How would you describe the peacemaking team's style of interaction?
7. How would you describe your relationship with members of the peacemaking team at beginning and the end of the process?
8. Was this relationship important for the advancement of the peace process? Why?

Notes

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[2] Jeffrey Z. Rubin, Dean G. Pruitt, and Sung Hee Kim, *Social Conflict: Escalation, Stalemate, and Settlement* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994).

[3] Isak Svensson, "Mediation with Muscles or Minds? Exploring Power Mediators and Pure Mediators in Civil Wars," *International Negotiation* 12, no. 2 (2007): 230.

[4] "Power mediators are defined as mediation efforts by great powers, colonial powers, and neighbouring states, whereas mediators who are representatives of international, regional, or non-governmental organizations, individuals, and small and distant states, are classified as pure mediators" (ibid.).

[5] Oran Young, *The Intermediaries: Third Parties in International Conflict* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967); John Wear Burton, *Conflict and Communication: The Use of Controlled Communication in International Relations* (New York: Free Press, 1969); William I. Zartman, *Ripe for Resolution: Conflict and Intervention in Africa, New York* (New York: Oxford University Press for the Council on Foreign Relations, 1985); Peter J. D. Carnevale, "Strategic Choice in Mediation," *Negotiation Journal* 2, no. 1 (1986); Herbert C. Kelman, "Informal Mediation by the Scholar/Practitioner," in *Mediation in International Relations: Multiple Approaches to Conflict Management*, ed. Jacob Bercovitch and Jeffrey Z. Rubin (New York: Springer, 1992), 64–96.

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[11] Kevin Gibson, "Confidentiality in Mediation: A Moral Reassessment," *Journal of Dispute Resolution.* (1992): 26–28.

[12] For rare real-time observations of peace processes, see Kimberlyn Leary "Critical Moments as Relational Moments: The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue and the Conflict in Aceh, Indonesia," *Negotiation Journal* 20, no. 2 (2004): 311–338; and Katri Merikallio and David Mitchell, *Making Peace: Ahtisaari and Aceh* (Helsinki: W. S. Bookwell 2006).

[13] Mathilda Lindgren, "Peacemaking up Close: Explaining Mediator Styles of International Mediators" (Ph.D. thesis, Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University, 2016), 18.

[14] For interesting insights from peacemakers, see Harriet Martin, *Kings of Peace Pawns of War: The Untold Story of Peacemaking* (NewYork: Continuum, 2006); Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela R. Aall, *Herding Cats: Multiparty Mediation in a Complex World* (Washington, D.C.: US Institute of Peace Press, 1999); Isak Svensson and Peter Wallensteen, *The Go-Between: Jan Eliasson and the Styles of Mediation* (Washington, DC: US Institute of Peace Press, 2010); Waithaka Waihenya, *The Mediator: General Lazaro Sumbeiywo and the Southern Sudan Peace Process* (Nairobi: Kenway Publications 2006).

[15] For a rare glimpse of how a mediation team and experts work, see Leary, "Critical Moments."

[16] Ibid.; Merikallio and Mitchell, *Making Peace.*

[17] Leary, "Critical Moments," 313.

[18] Linda L. Putnam, "Transformations and Critical Moments in Negotiations," *Negotiation Journal* 20 (2004): 284.

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[59] David Gorman (HD field political officer), telephone interview by the author, July 13, 2018.

[60] Juha Christensen (chief of staff, CMI Helsinki Process) interview by the author, Jakarta, January 9, 2018.

[61] Nur Djuli (GAM negotiator), interview by the author, Banda Aceh, January 13, 2018.

[62] Christensen interview.

[63] The CMI team included several other individuals who made substantive contributions to the peace process. Juha Christensen and General Oksanen are highlighted as they functioned as "informal mediators" during the process.

[64] General Jakko Oksanen (CMI military advisor), telephone interview by the author, April 25, 2019.

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[77] Col. Ana Guadalupe Martinez (FMLN), interview by the author, April 30, 2019,, San Salvador.

[78] Rodolfo Parker Soto, interview by the author, April 30, 2019, San Salvador.

[79] Alvaro de Soto (UN Special Envoy Representative of the Secretary-General), interview by the author, August 16, 2018. Paris**.**

[80] For an in-depth study on the Sierra Leonean Civil War, see John L. Hirsch, "War in Sierra Leone," *Survival* 43, no. 3 (2001): 145–162.

[81] United Nations, Security Council, "Letter dated 1 February 1995 from the Secretary-General to the President of the Security Council," S/1995/120, February 7, 1995, available from undocs.org/en/S/1995/120.

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[83] Hirsch, "War in Sierra Leone," 146.

[84] United Nations, Security Council, "Letter dated 28 August 1997 from the Secretary-General to the President of the Security Council," S/1997/680, September 3, 1997, available from undocs.org/en/ S/1997/680.

[85] The May 1999 Lomé Ceasefire Agreement was brokered by US Special Envoy Rev. Jesse Jackson.

[86] Modem Lawson-Betum (senior political officer), telephone interview by the author, August 24, 2020; Charles Anyidoho (legal advisor), interview with author, December 19, 2019, New York.

[87] Anyidoho interview.

[88] Lawson-Betum interview.

[89] This article does not promote the idea of clientelism to enable the peacemaking team to manipulate the disputing parties. Instead, it posits that a relationship of mutual favors, when not based on a relationship of hierarchy and exercised in an even manner, can build trust and advance the goals of peacemaking.

[90] Exceptionally, Louisa Chan Boegli's informal efforts during the first Aceh Peace Process and Juha Christensen's efforts during the second Aceh peace process have been recorded. For more on their efforts, see Leary, "Critical Moments."

[91] Lederach, *Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies;* Allport, Clark, and Pettigrew, *Nature of Prejudice.*

[92] Thomas F. Pettigrew and Linda R. Tropp, "Allport's Intergroup Contact Hypothesis: Its History and Influence," in *On the Nature of Prejudice: Fifty Years after Allport,* ed. P. Glick J. F. Dovidio, and L. A. Rudman (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 264–265.

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[95] Leary, "Critical Moments," 330.

[96] Gabrielle Rifkind and Nita Yawanarajah, "Preparing the Psychological Space for Peacemaking," *New England Journal of Public Policy* 31, no. 1 (2019): 4.

[97] Rifkin and Martin, "Negotiating Expert Status," 33.

[98] Sillars and Wilmot, "Communication Strategies in Conflict and Mediation."

[99] Brewer and Gaertner, "Toward Reduction of Prejudice."

[100] Because the United Nations only has six committees, the Delegates' Lounge is often referred to as the "7th Committee."

[101] Rifkind and Yawanarajah, "Preparing the Psychological Space for Peacemaking," 4.

[102] Amir, "Contact Hypothesis in Ethnic Relations."

[103] Kelman, "Informal Mediation by the Scholar/Practitioner," 90–91.

[104] Allport, Clark, and Pettigrew, *Nature of Prejudice.*

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