

Conflict Resolution as a Profession and the Need for Communities of Inquiry

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Abstract

Conflict resolution has obtained the markings of a profession, including published journals, professional associations and academic programs. However, professional status also carries with it expectations and obligations upon which conflict resolution as a community should deliberate. Acknowledging conflict resolution as a profession highlights associated responsibilities around knowledge accumulation and ethical practice. Complexities of modern practice call for reuniting theory, research and practice, and updating our professional educational paradigm. Competent modern conflict resolution professionals must be able to innovate and adapt to novel and complex contexts, and must develop communities of inquiry for learning that is public, shared and cumulative. Because of the time constraints facing many professionals, and the lack of structure for reflection, a combination of direct community conversation and periodic journal review would likely be the most realistic for nurturing the needed reflection, continual learning and paradigm critique that results in system learning by the community of conflict resolution professionals.

Keywords: Reflective practice, conflict resolution, professional education, community of inquiry, expertise.

Conflict Resolution¹ has come of age as a profession. In its mission statement, *International Journal of Conflict Engagement and Resolution* notes how “the study of conflict resolution and its creative engagement [...] has led to the establishment of an ever widening array of academic and professional training programmes around the world”. But what does it mean to consider conflict resolution a profession? What are the privileges and obligations that accompany this status? What are the challenges of professions, and how can conflict resolution best overcome these challenges?

1. Becoming a Profession

Webster’s dictionary (2012) defines a profession as “a calling requiring specialized knowledge and often long and intensive academic preparation”. Argyris and

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1 I use conflict resolution here to apply generically to activities also including the engagement, management, and transformation of conflict.

Schön (1974/1992) note that professionals evolved from the 'profession' of a faith that certain values, such as justice, truth, or health, would be created through that profession's activities. The professional paradigm historically also included a binding ethic, a set of arts or techniques, a brotherhood of initiates, a status relationship to laypeople, an institutional setting and a worldview. While these emerged in the first 'profession' of the priesthood, this paradigm continued as the professions secularized and differentiated into law, medicine, engineering and the like. As the professions liberalized and rationalized, they each developed and brought along a specialized body of knowledge and standardized ways of training, and became affiliated with universities. The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the rise of technique, with the proliferation of both specializations and discrete bodies of expertise and technique undergirding these specializations. "The professional came to be seen, by himself and others, primarily as a technician who applied his professional knowledge, which was the basis of his authority" (p. 148).

Can conflict resolution be considered a profession? According to Dugan and Carey (1996), conflict resolution has all the requirements: published journals, professional associations and academic programmes. Applying the criteria in the professional paradigm outlined by Argyris and Schön (1974/1992) above, one could make a case that conflict resolution has a binding ethic, a set of arts or techniques, a brotherhood of initiates, a status relationship to laypeople, an institutional setting and a worldview. Yet professional status also carries with it expectations and obligations upon which conflict resolution as a community should deliberate.

2. Expectations of a Profession

Probably more important to consider than criteria for professional status is what it implies for conflict resolution to be considered a profession. Following on the work of earlier scholars on the nature of the relationship of the public to the professions (Lieberman, 1970; Schön, 1983; Veblen, 1918/1962), the public expects that conflict resolution professionals have specialized knowledge and expertise, continuing education in new knowledge and techniques, ethical standards and a way to 'police their own'. Is this the case with conflict resolution?

2.1 *Specialized Knowledge and Continuing Education*

Conflict resolution as a field has always had ambivalence about whether it represents a set of skills and approaches that are universally applicable and accessible even to every schoolchild, or rather is a set of specialized knowledge and techniques. Perhaps it is both. In an analogous way, schoolchildren can benefit from having their own better health practices, which do not take away from the usefulness of visiting doctors for cases that are beyond their capabilities to address. Similarly, though schoolchildren and the general population can benefit from conflict resolution skills and anger management, more skilled professionals can help with systemic and complex conflict dynamics. The expectation that conflict

resolution professionals engage in continuing professional education may be less supported, however.

2.2 *Ethics, Standards and Self-Monitoring*

Regarding ethical standards, conflict resolution as a field has developed its own sets of standards for ethical practice. A code of ethics was put forward by the American Arbitration Association (AAA) in 1977, by the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC) in 1984, and by the Society for Professionals In Dispute Resolution (SPIDR) in 1986.² However, the expectation by the public that the profession of conflict resolution 'polices its own' is less supported. Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) professionals who are lawyers are regulated by their state and national bar associations, while arbitrators are potentially sanctioned by the AAA. Various locations may have state or provincial bodies that credential and thus regulate ethical and professional conduct. However, many conflict resolution professionals, at least in North America, have no official oversight in the form of a credentialing or sanctioning body, and rely more on voluntary and aspirational 'model' standards.

2.3 *Newer Expectations*

Increasingly what is demanded and expected of professionals in all fields is the ability to deal with novelty and complexity. Because the scale and complexity of problems are increasing on an exponential scale, skilled professionals are those most able to adapt and innovate; in the words of Schein (1972), those most able to learn how to learn. The dilemma was captured decades ago by Brooks (1967):

Both ends of the gap [the professional] is expected to bridge with his profession are changing so rapidly – both the body of knowledge that he must use and the expectations of the society that he must serve. Both these changes have their origin in the same common factor – technological change. Technology has created a race between opportunities and expectations [...] The four professions [...] must bear the brunt of responsibility for generating and managing this change. This places on the professional a requirement for adaptability and versatility that is unprecedented. (p. 89)

Modern professionals are faced both with exponentially expanding knowledge, and increasing societal expectations, such that the heart of their work is managing complexity.

2 SPIDR and other conflict resolution professional organizations were merged into the Association for Conflict Resolution in 2001; its most updated ethical standards, arrived at jointly with the AAA and the American Bar Association's ADR section, are posted at <[www.acrnet.org/uploaded-Files/Practitioner/ModelStandardsOfConductforMediatorsfinal05\(1\)\(1\).pdf](http://www.acrnet.org/uploaded-Files/Practitioner/ModelStandardsOfConductforMediatorsfinal05(1)(1).pdf)>.

3. The Complexity of Modern Practice

In Schön's landmark work, *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983), he describes the contrast between the areas of practice for which answers and actions may be clear and straightforward, and the critical and challenging problems for which answers have not yet been anticipated:

In the varied topography of professional practice, there is a high, hard ground where practitioners can make effective use of research-based theory and technique, and there is a swampy lowland where situations are confusing 'messes' incapable of technical solutions. The difficulty is that the problems of the high ground, however great their technical interest, are often relatively unimportant to clients or to the larger society, while in the swamp are the problems of greatest human concern. (p. 42)

While training in cookbook approaches to conflict resolution may enable the discharge of relative simple cases, the nature of many conflicts involves complex issues, relationships and dynamics that may have no clear precedent. The nature of the practice situation today is characterized by complexity, uncertainty, instability, uniqueness and value conflict (Schön, 1983). The 'artful' practitioner is one who has "the ability to synthesize knowledge and skills in the moment of interaction, to integrate theory and technique into a series of strategies and interventions" (Lang & Taylor, 2000: 9).

[...] Artistry requires more than competence in the performance of the essential skills of professional practice, and more than the capacity to apply theory in a thoughtful and analytic manner. It is how the professional responds to the unique circumstances, the surprising events, that arise in professional practice that separates the artist from the practitioner. (pp. 9-10)

The essence of the task facing the professional today is not one of applying systematic knowledge to predetermined ends. It is the naming and framing of the task, and therefore the appropriate paradigm of practice, that can prove to be the most difficult.

In real-world practice, problems do not present themselves to the practitioner as givens. They must be constructed from the materials of problematic situations which are troubling, puzzling, and uncertain. In order to convert a problematic situation into a problem a practitioner must do a certain kind of work. (Schön, 1983: 40)

The practitioner must set the boundaries of the problem, determine what is wrong and in what direction it must be changed. It is just such situations when the ends desired are unclear that sets them apart from merely technical problems.

A conflict of ends cannot be resolved by the use of techniques derived from applied research. It is rather through the non-technical process of framing the problematic situation that we may organize and clarify both the ends to be achieved and the possible means of achieving them. (p. 41)

To address novelty and complexity, Schön (1983) suggests professionals need to cultivate reflectiveness, both within practice situations as well as subsequently. In his work on experts, he found that competent professionals engaged in both what he calls *reflection-in-action* and *reflection-on-action*. Reflection-in-action is the ability to be reflective in real time, while one is engaged in practice, adjusting to novelty, innovating on the spot and engaging in both single and double-loop learning.³ Reflection-on-action comes afterward, when the reflective practitioner subsequently considers his framing of the situation, his role in it, the actions taken and the underlying strategies and theories implicit in these actions.

In sum, professionals are expected to be able to apply up-to-date and specialized knowledge and skills to their domain of expertise and be self-regulating in their pursuit of ethical practice. In addition, the most competent professionals not only are able to engage in solving problems they have seen before, but they are also able to parse out uncharted territory and innovate ways to address novel and complex situations. Are we cultivating conflict resolution professionals' ability to reflect, critique, adapt and innovate? What is the system, format and curriculum best suited to producing informed, adaptive, ethical and innovative practitioners?

4. The Nature of Professional Education

The question of how to best educate professionals is not just one with which the field of conflict resolution is struggling. The nature of professional education in general has been undergoing a tectonic shift. After the rapid and increasing reliance on professions collapsed in a crisis of confidence in the latter twentieth century (Schön, 1983), educators of professionals and philosophers of science embarked upon some double-loop learning of their own. How had professionally constructed interventions such as urban renewal, the green revolution in developing countries, fail-safe nuclear power and mechanized warfare in Vietnam failed so miserably? Why had elegant research-based solutions missed their mark? Schön argues that it in large part goes back to how professionals are trained to conceive of problems and the inquiry process for finding answers. Systems with noble beginnings may evolve to produce structures and paradigms with non-

3 Argyris and Schön (1974/1992) consider learning a detection-and-correction process: detecting error and adjusting. They also emphasize the need to learn in a more fundamental way. Much of learning is what they call "single-loop learning", where one seeks feedback to better achieve ones' goals and objectives. However, continuing ineffectiveness may require "double-loop learning" where the goals and operating framework themselves are examined. Here assumptions are publicly examined and hypotheses are publicly tested (Argyris, 1982). Double-loop learning is especially important in situations where conditions are rapidly changing and uncertain.

adaptive results. In the pursuit of grand and generalizable solutions the ability to act responsively in specific contexts may have been lost. In the wake of Positivism's ascendance in epistemology, theory became increasingly decoupled from practice and action in the education of professionals.

The roots of the split between theory and practice can be traced back to the development in America of the multidisciplinary research university (Schön, 1983). Universities traditionally had been places to train professional clergy in intellectual issues, canon law, logic, accounting and administration. With the evolution of science in Germany in the nineteenth century and the rise of Positivism, science was seen not only as philosophical but also as the engine for social and economic progress. And the way to know things had to be through empirical procedures: "Knowledge could be accepted as knowledge only if it rested on empirical evidence" (Shils, 1978: 171). This new university culture took root, and was perhaps best exemplified by America's first research university, Johns Hopkins University. This culture also took pains to specify the 'proper division of labour' between professions and fields of scholarly pursuit. The professional schools would train men to be fit citizens involved in the 'workday world', while universities would fulfill the mission of preparing men for a life of science and scholarship; the two types of schools would interact but remain appropriately separated (Veblen, 1918/1962). The professions would apply and test the scientific knowledge produced by the universities.

Of course this division of labour carried a status implication, and it was not long before professional schools sought to associate themselves with universities. University governance had its own reasons for expanding, or appropriating (Schön, 1983), bodies of knowledge, so that by the mid-twentieth century most professional schools had moved within universities. However, as Schön (1983) describes, they had to pay the price of accepting both the Positivist epistemological framework woven into the fabric of the university, as well as the division of labour whereby university scholars created the theory that then the professions would apply to practice, with its accompanying differential status implications. The professional schools would teach systematic, generalized knowledge for its graduates to apply in practice, producing the now familiar split between theory/research and practice.

A common criticism aimed at professional schools from law to medicine to urban planning beginning in the 1960s was that they did not provide students with the skills needed for professional practice. This likely came from two sources (Schön, 1983). First, professional schools using the normative curricular model of first basic science, then applied science, then skills for practice (Schein, 1972) adopted a view of epistemology that is grounded in technical rationality, where agreement about ends is assumed, and thus training is oriented to transferring generalized, substantive knowledge. At the same time, students began to complain that they were not taught the thinking and skills of how to actually practice in real settings of law or medicine; these remained shrouded in 'mystique' and 'art'. While being taught rules, law graduates were finding that the practice of law more often required navigating bureaucracies and negotiating with other lawyers.

Thus arose the adage that often the development of professional competence occurs outside of professional school.

A second source for the sense of lack of preparation for professional practice lay in the fact that during the twentieth century the role of the professional in society underwent profound change. To function with artistry and wisdom in settings that are increasingly complex and unanticipated, professionals today require a competence that is not merely the mastery of a substantive body of knowledge, nor the initiation into a brotherhood of experts. Professional competence should be based on the capacity to learn how to learn, the ability to create a working theory that is continually modified under real-time conditions (Schein, 1972). Argyris and Schön (1974/1992) describe this as the ability to develop micro-theories of action, reflect on one's actions and then to draw conclusions about effectiveness. Schein (1972) also argues that innovators in professions are needed that can adapt to shifts in skills and technologies, can reexamine and redefine relationships to publics and clients and manage interpersonal relationships. In sum, what is most needed for modern professionals to be adaptive and responsive is practical knowledge.

Schön (1983) felt that what we consider to be practical knowledge actually is "largely tacit knowing-in-action and [...] the capacity of practitioners to respond to surprise in the midst of action through a process of on-the-spot reflection and experimentation". Psychologists would likely term this tacit knowing-in-action as implicit procedural knowledge, an area that has received increased attention in the last three decades (e.g., Stadler, 1989). Professional education needs to marry knowledge of applied science with training in reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Emphasis on the values of openness, continual inquiry and double-loop learning can counter the natural defensiveness raised when examining and transforming one's established patterns of action (Argyris and Schön, 1974/1992).

Some have described these capabilities as 'artistry' (Lang & Taylor, 2000; Schön, 1987). Superior practitioners do not necessarily have more professional knowledge, but have 'wisdom', 'intuition' and the ability to handle novel and complex areas of practice. Rather than focus on making better use of research based knowledge, Schön suggests we should carefully examine artistry, "the competence by which practitioners actually handle indeterminate zones of practice" (p. 13). "In the terrain of professional practice, applied science and research-based technique occupy a critically important though limited territory, bounded on several sides by artistry" (p. 13). These 'arts' include the art of problem framing, the art of implementation and the art of improvisation, which mediate in practice the actual application of science and technique. He goes on to argue for professional education that includes two critical pieces: learning by doing, and good coaching, as one might find in the studio tradition in the arts and design.

In sum, a model for professional education that is based in an educational model that separates theory and practice will be hampered from developing the abilities for complex, context-dependent and ethical problem framing and solving required of modern practitioners. New approaches to professional education are called for.

5. Cultivating Professional Artistry

How can the thinking required of modern professionals in conflict resolution best be cultivated? Two components suggested by this more recent thinking in professional education can be identified: supervised field-based reflective practice, and the formation of professional communities of inquiry.

Rather than perpetuate this artificial and restrictive separation of theory and practice, graduate programmes aimed at developing conflict resolution professionals are increasingly recognizing the importance of field-based learning. This field-based learning is not merely the final step of applying theory and research-based substantive knowledge to clinical or field settings. Rather, it involves developing the ability to frame problems 'on your feet', engage in strategic thinking informed by your knowledge and experience, reflect on this performance, and seek adjustments and improvements. Research and practice must be integrated in the act of performing.

The Association for Conflict Resolution's (ACR) Higher Education Model Guidelines Task Force Report (2012) offers guidelines for field experiences.⁴ These field experiences may include internships, clinics, shadowing and/or service learning, and will provide both "real-world, real work experience for the student" and quality onsite supervision. The best programmes will help students integrate theory and practice, with this typically more intentionally done through clinics or faculty-supervised practicum programmes than internship programmes. The clinic or practicum structure builds in reflection on experience, as well as connecting literature and coursework in real time with the field experience. The Guidelines suggest that a typical practicum or clinical structure will:

- Provide direct service delivery
- Be course-based
- Include an initial training or teaching component to prepare students for their case involvement
- Include regular meetings with faculty instructor to review and learn from the case experiences
- Directly cultivate reflective practice on the part of the student (ACR Higher Education Guidelines Task Force, 2012: 17)

Lang and Taylor (2000), who focus in particular on mediation, describe the process of cultivating professional artistry as movement along a spiral path, passing from novice to apprentice to practitioner to artist. Those who practice with artistry, go beyond training to incorporate practices of reflection, curiosity and continual learning. "Artistry requires more than an ability to apply techniques skillfully; it also requires a grounding in theory, the discipline of reflective practice, and the purposeful application of interactive process" (p. xvii), the latter being the recognition of the influence of each person's behaviour and choices on the responses and choices of others in the interaction. Continually flowing between

4 These Guidelines are offered for professional rather than research focused graduate programmes.

interaction and reflection allows for artistry in practice. It is equally important for professional development to cultivate not only skills but awareness, described by Lang and Taylor as openness or “beginner’s mind”.

Schön (1987) describes this form of professional education as a “reflective practicum”, one that is particularly aimed at helping students develop the ability to address the messy, complex “indeterminate zones” of practice. Rather than assume there is one set of facts to which an expert can and must relate, the alternative constructivist view considers that through perceptions and beliefs a reality is constructed. Communities of practitioners engage in “worldmaking” (Goodman, 1978) through attention, setting boundaries, framing and applying professional knowledge that matches the frame. Their professional way of seeing the world maintains it. When practitioners encounter indeterminate zones, they engage in “a reflective conversation with the material of their situation” and remake part of their practice world, also revealing the “tacit processes of world-making that underlie all of their practice” (Schön, 1987, p. 36). When someone learns a profession, he or she learns not only its systematic knowledge, but also its procedural knowledge – its ‘patterns of knowing-in-action’. Ideally this will include what to do when your textbook has no clear answer.

Such a practicum is designed for learning a practice. It involves learning by doing, interacting with coaches and fellow students, and gaining background knowledge. Students learn to recognize competent practice. Students ‘practice’ in both senses of the word, engaging in repetition. Students benefit by being coached. As Dewey (1974) stressed, a student

has to *see* on his own behalf and in his own way the relationship between means and methods employed and results achieved. Nobody else can see for him, and he can’t see just by being ‘told’, although the right kind of telling may guide his seeing and thus help him see what he needs to see. (p. 151)

Schön (1987) says students should

learn a kind of reflection-in-action that goes beyond storable rules – not only by devising new methods of reasoning, [...] but also by constructing and testing new categories of understanding, strategies of action, and ways of framing problems. (p. 39)

Once students are comfortable with the familiar, coaches help by focusing in on the complex, the confusing, the novel, and how to have “reflective conversations with the materials of the situation”.

A second critical component for cultivating professional practice is the creation of a community of inquiry. Knowledge must not only be shared, but must be vetted and must accumulate. Community already is core to the notion of a profession, in that it is a community of practitioners with a specialized knowledge that sets them apart. However, a profession also can be seen as similar to a scientific community, in that its knowledge is vetted and verified communally. Philosophers of science have confirmed the transition for scientists from a notion of

objectivity to *intersubjectivity* – the closest approximation to ‘truth’ is knowledge which is held by many and confirmed by a community of inquiry. Knowledge is a community product: “all contemporary accounts of science agree that science is a social enterprise, carried on with communities of inquiry according to practices or rules for distinguishing valid from invalid claims” (Argyris *et al.*, 1985: 11). Learning is public, shared and cumulative.

As with communities of scientists, a community of practitioners can serve this function for each other. However, this means overcoming three inclinations of professionals. The first inclination is to remain unreflective about how and why they engage in dimensions of practice, operating on unexamined and unexpressed tacit knowledge. This leads to the second inclination, the lack of accumulation of new learning and the seeking out of new knowledge. The final inclination is to become proprietary about knowledge that has been made explicit. Thus Argyris and Schön (1974/1992) argue that in contrast to a scientific community’s public, explicit and cumulative approach to developing scientific theory, professionals learning about effective practice is a process that is often private, tacit and ephemeral.⁵

The danger in the lack of reflection is that theories of practice become, in Argyris and Schön’s terms, “self-sealing”. There becomes no way to test their validity and usefulness, because their basic tenets are not examined or questioned. There is little learning and little behavioural change, and the learning is only that which preserves governing variables and the model or approach. This is what they term single-loop learning. Practitioners need to learn to test their assumptions and their theories of action. “Each situation of practice is an opportunity for testing some elements of theory of action. Acting is testing, and the practitioner is an experimenter” (p. 159). However, they must be tested in such a way that guards against withholding or avoiding disconfirming evidence. “There is no way of doing this for ourselves without doing it for and with others” (p. 161).

Haas (1992) describes how communities of professionals may also become *epistemic communities*. He defines these as “[...] a network of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy relevant knowledge within that domain or issue-area” (p. 3); epistemic communities in this sense arose particularly through professionalization of government agencies. Members of epistemic communities share (a) a set of normative and principled beliefs, forming the value basis for their actions, (b) causal beliefs derived from analyzing the practices that contribute to the central problems in their domain, that then suggest linkages between actions (particularly policy actions) and outcomes, (c) notions of validity, as internally defined criteria that identify valid knowledge in their domain, and (d) a common enterprise or set of practices associated with the set of problems on which their professional competence is focused, in order to better enhance human welfare. Epistemic communities are also vulnerable to the tendency to be ‘self-sealing’.

5 Argyris and Schön (1974/1992) also observe, however, that “the scientific community has been far more public, explicit, and cumulative in developing scientific theory than in learning about the practice of scientific research” (p. 144).

Critical to effective inquiry is the willingness to reflect on and critique operating assumptions. By considering scientific epistemology/rationality as the social practices of scientific communities (Kuhn, 1962/1970), one sees a connection between science and practical deliberation (Argyris *et al.*, 1985). One also can see a connection between what Argyris and Schön describe as double-loop learning, when operating paradigms are questioned, and what Kuhn calls abnormal or revolutionary science, when common criteria for reaching agreement are themselves in dispute and the role of value conflict becomes more obvious. By blurring the artificial line between research and practice, we see that in the same way that scientific communities operate with some characteristics of social practice, communities of social practice can effectively operate with some of the norms and procedures of knowledge generation and testing used by scientific communities. Argyris *et al.* (1985) argue for creating communities of inquiry in communities of practice. Such communities engage in the search for reliable and valid information, though focused on enhancing practical knowledge rather than generalized and abstract (nomothetic) knowledge, and do so by “creating conditions for public testing and potential disconfirmation of knowledge claims” (p. 34). The degree to which a practice community reflects on its own “rules and norms of inquiry” will determine its capacity for learning.

Critical to this condition is the cultivation and maintenance of forums for sharing of knowledge and ongoing continuing professional education. Various forms of knowing are needed, including substantive knowledge, procedural knowledge or knowing-in-action, and meta-level knowledge that includes the review and critique of the ways of knowing themselves. Learning must include learning-by-doing, with a critical role played by coaching (Dewey, 1974). Where can this type of knowledge cumulation, reflection and learning take place for the profession of conflict resolution?

Opportunities that might serve the purpose of forming real or virtual communities for reflection and continual learning are many. First, professional organizations, having evolved beyond serving as a mere ‘brotherhood of initiates’, also can provide opportunities for reflection, mutual learning, coaching and double-loop learning. Such activities most frequently occur at professional meetings or conferences,⁶ but increasingly occur online through webinars, chat rooms, blogs and learning portals.⁷

Second, university-hosted forums and symposia offer a local or regional site for professionals to convene, hear about the newest relevant research, and share their accumulated knowledge-in-action in a way that encourages vetting and evidence/empirical support.

Finally, journals such as this one play a critical role in providing a similar forum that relies on evidence-based reflection and discussion within the profes-

6 Professional conferences focused on various forms of conflict resolution practice include those of the American Arbitration Association, American Bar Association-Alternative Dispute Resolution section, Association for Conflict Resolution and its sections, Alliance for Peacebuilding, International Association for Public Participation, and National Coalition on Dialogue and Deliberation.

7 For example, <www.dmeforpeace.org> is a location where peacebuilding professionals share knowledge, reflection, and coaching on topics of program design, monitoring, and evaluation.

sional community. Peer review encourages a standard of writing, logic and argumentation. However, discussions in print allow more universal access and participation, regardless of location, time zone, or schedule constraints, when compared to the direct, synchronous convening provided by other forums outlined above. Journals play important roles in scientific communities (Schaffner, 1994), many of which could be constructively replicated in professional communities such as conflict resolution. By extension, the roles for journals in professional communities could include the following:

- Building a collective knowledge base that is comprehensive and up-to-date,
- Communicating information among the community members, despite an increase in online forms of communication,⁸
- Validating the quality of research and inquiry, and setting and maintaining community norms around how knowledge is deemed reliable and valid,
- Distributing rewards, or perhaps more germane here, establishing paternity or maternity for ideas and approaches when credit is the currency for status and/or advancement, and
- Building community – through defining the intellectual territory, providing a place to discuss issues in the field such as findings, implications, training and funding, and alerting the community to new positions and the passing of members. In epistemic communities of professional practice, this role may also include defining shared normative and principled beliefs.

In conclusion, acknowledging conflict resolution as a profession highlights associated responsibilities around knowledge accumulation and ethical practice. Complexities of modern practice call for reuniting theory, research and practice, and updating our professional educational paradigm. Competent modern conflict resolution professionals must be able to innovate and adapt to novel and complex contexts, and must develop communities of inquiry for learning that is public, shared and cumulative. Because of the time constraints facing many professionals, and the lack of structure for reflection, a combination of direct community conversation and periodic journal perusal would likely be the most realistic for nurturing the needed reflection, continual learning and paradigm critique that results in system learning by the community of conflict resolution professionals.

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8 Schaffner (1994) points out that research suggests that most of what scientists communicate about informally are journal articles.

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