Connections and Collaboration—Celebrating the Contributions of Barbara Gray

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Abstract

In July 2017, Dr. Barbara Gray was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award from the IACM during its 30th annual conference in Berlin, Germany. In this tribute article, we celebrate Barbara's unique and varied contributions to our understanding of conflict and collaboration. We highlight multiple aspects of Barbara's scholarly work including research on (a) intergroup conflict and organizational change, (b) power and conflict dynamics, (c) frames and framing, and (d) shared meanings and institutional theory approaches to conflict and conflict resolution. In reviewing this work, we recognize Barbara's lifelong concern for social justice and environmental sustainability, her pioneering use of qualitative methods, and her ongoing commitment to the development of young scholars.

Preparing this tribute to Dr. Barbara Gray offered an opportunity to review her many contributions across multiple areas of knowledge. While the common thread of conflict management runs through all her work, Barbara's scholarly interests scale from individual cognition to transnational institutions, and her knowledge of theory spans across the fields of negotiation, psychology, political science, communication, sociology, and beyond. We quickly realized that we needed to address the full breadth of Barbara's work, as her impact stems in no small part from her unique position as a boundary spanner who builds bridges between the ivory towers of the academy.

Barbara Gray is Professor Emeritus of Organizational Behavior at The Pennsylvania State University. Barbara received her Ph.D. in Organizational Behavior from Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio, in 1979 and shortly thereafter joined the Smeal College of Business faculty. Barbara led the Center for Research in Conflict and Negotiation in the Smeal College at Penn State for 22 years. Dr. Gray has held visiting scholar positions at the Harvard Law School's Program on Negotiation and the Katholicke Universiteit in Leuven, Belgium. She has also served as TVA Fellow at The Darden School at University of Virginia, Boer & Croon Chaired Professor at the TIAS Business School at Tilburg University, and as Bella van Zuylen Chair at Utrecht University in the Netherlands.

Barbara was among the first researchers to study multiparty disputes among organizations. Her work has particularly enriched our understanding of environmental disputes and those that involve business,

government, and nonprofit organizations. She has written more than 100 publications that address conflict management, interorganizational collaboration, institutional theory, power and inequality, and organizations and environments. Her work has appeared in *Academy of Management Journal, Academy of Management Review, Administrative Science Quarterly, Human Relations, Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, Negotiation and Conflict Management Research, Organization Science*, and many other journals. Her books include the seminal work *Collaborating: Finding Common Ground for Multiparty Problems* (1989), *International Joint Ventures: Economic and Organizational Perspectives* (with Kalyan Chatterjee, 1995), *Making Sense of Intractable Environmental Conflicts: Concepts and Cases* (with Roy Lewicki & Michael Elliott, 2003), and the forthcoming *Collaborating for Our Future: Multistakeholder Partnerships for Solving Complex Problems* (with Jill Purdy, 2018). She has received two NSF grants to study environmental and transdisciplinary team conflicts as well as numerous other grants. Barbara is a trained mediator who has consulted to organizations globally including the Dutch Ministry of Environment and Agriculture, U.S. Steel, the Irish EPA, Greenpeace, Stanford Medical School, and Oxfam USA. She has served in numerous academic leadership roles including Chair of the Conflict Management Division and President of the International Association for Conflict Management (IACM) from 1998 to 1999. She received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Cross-Sector Partnerships Conference in 2016 for her research on multiparty collaboration.

In 2017, Barbara was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award from the IACM during its 30th annual conference in Berlin, Germany, which prompted this tribute article (see Figure 1). Below, we

Figure 1. Barbara Gray's Lifetime Achievement Award presentation at the 2017 IACM Conference in Berlin, Germany with (seated left to right) Art Dewulf, Roy Lewicki, and Jill Purdy.

attempt to capture the range and variety of Barbara's work while illuminating the common threads that link her work. We begin with Joe Labianca's discussion of Barbara's research on intergroup conflict linked to organizational change, focusing on schemas and scripts as well as the influence of social networks. This is followed by Jen Kish-Gephart's review of Barbara's work related to power and conflict dynamics, illustrating Barbara's deep concern for social justice through scholarship that addresses marginalization linked to gender, race, ethnicity, status, and social class. Next, Shaz Ansari discusses Barbara's work on frames and framing with particular emphasis on her research related to climate change and related conflicts. Finally, Jill Purdy reflects on Barbara's contributions to interactive framing and institutional theory and how she integrated micro- and macro-approaches to understanding the role of shared meanings in conflict and conflict resolution. Together, our reflections illuminate Barbara's lifelong concern for social justice and environmental sustainability, her pioneering use of qualitative methods, and her commitment to the development of young scholars.

Organizational Schema Change and Social Networks—Giuseppe (Joe) Labianca

When I first arrived at Penn State in 1992, I had been going through a scholarly crisis of sorts—I had been an undergraduate in Harvard's Psychology Department and had focused on social and personality psychology. Somewhere along the way to finishing my senior honors thesis on how self-monitoring was related to the initiation of dating relationships, I realized that the types of experiments that were prevalent in psychology were very inaccurate representations of the social world. In reflecting on my own social life as a member of a huge Italian extended family, the social context drove human behavior far more than any individual's personality. I wanted to move toward studying interpersonal networks to better capture that social context, but I felt that this research stream also ignored a crucial element to understanding behavior—conflict within the social system. Barbara was the perfect mentor to help me understand conflict in a field setting from a qualitative perspective and then to help me to bring that knowledge into the more quantitatively oriented social networks realm. She got me involved with researching real-world conflicts around organizational change from the first semester I arrived at Penn State, as well as increasing my knowledge of negotiations in these field settings, for which I will always be grateful.

On our first project together, Barbara was asked to conduct an action research project on a healthcare center that was close to losing its accreditation because of its internal coordination problems, which often resulted in lost medical records, lost examinations, and billing errors. The center had long recognized that they needed to move from their functional organizational structure to a more matrix-based structure, but previous attempts at structural change had failed. The external pressure on the center to change was intense, resulting in a leadership change and a renewed focus on changing structure. The previous failed organizational change had produced a great deal of conflict and blaming, both across functions and across hierarchical levels, and the new medical director recognized that she needed expert assistance.

Organizational Schema Change

The project sparked two papers. The first paper, published in Organization Science (Labianca, Gray, & Brass, 2000), was a qualitative examination of the decision-making schema that the health center employees held as they moved through this wrenching organizational change. The new leadership recognized that the employees had to be involved in the change for the restructuring to work. With Barbara's help, the leaders decided to empower the employees to decide on how best to restructure the health center. The hope was that by including the employees and allowing them to have strong input into the restructuring process, along with assurances that no one would lose their job, there would be less resistance to the major change. Through interviews of the employees on the central restructuring team during

the process, it became clear that despite the opportunity to participate and provide input, the employees remained deeply skeptical that the process was anything other than window dressing. The employees had an existing schema of how decisions were made there at the health center that had been well-learned over a long period of time: Decisions were made by administrators, decision making took place in an information vacuum, and input from employees, if sought, was ultimately disregarded. The new leader was attempting to put in place a new decision-making schema, an interpersonally shared cognitive framework about how decisions were to be made, that was more inclusive and open than the old hierarchically driven decision-making schema. However, that well-learned schema was very resistant to change, even in the face of disconfirming information coming from the new leader.

Prior research had suggested that introducing this new schema would help employees break free of the existing schema and move toward the newer, more open, and empowering schema (Schein, 1988). Our research, however, showed that there were a great many difficulties that kept the schema shift from occurring. For one, while the existing schema was well-learned and hence greatly elaborated, the new schema that was being offered was, of necessity, more vague: What did it mean that the employees were empowered? If employees suggested a new structure and the leader disagreed with their suggestion, what would happen? How in-depth could they get in their input and how would they know if they had "crossed a line" in terms of decision making? No one involved in the project really knew the answers to these questions, although the new leader kept reiterating that the employees would have broad input. The new schema's fuzziness led the employees to imagine the worst: The employees were studying leadership's actions during this period in minute detail, attempting to prove that nothing had changed and that the old decision-making schema was still the dominant schema. In interviews, they suggested that the entire restructuring process was an elaborate sham that would continue until the employees created the suggestion that management had wanted all along and that the process was all a meaningless "show." The employees were at a point where they were ready to resign from the restructuring committee in protest. It took a major intervention by Barbara and the organizational leaders to reassure the employees of their commitment to the new schema, all the while acknowledging that the new schema was fuzzier and in greater need to being elaborated jointly between employees and management as they went along. The managers also acknowledged that they would at times lapse into their old decision-making routines, but they reiterated that the employees were now empowered to call them out on their behavior and that this would change. In turn, the employees recognized that they were now empowered to make important decisions and they would no longer be able to blame problems solely on management because they also owned the solutions that were being developed jointly. This allowed the process to resume and to ultimately be successfully concluded, resulting in a much better organizational structure and in a new decision-making schema where lower-level employees were now empowered to form and lead important problem-solving teams. The study resulted in a new four-phase model of organizational schema change that greatly elaborated the process through which managers' actions and employee evaluations interrelate to generate more or less resistance to schema change.

Barbara had long been interested in schemas as they relate to organizational change. In a prior study of a bank undergoing a restructuring and an organizational schema change from a conservative, investment-oriented bank to an aggressive marketing-oriented one (Poole, Gioia, & Gray, 1989), they had identified four different modes through which top management could induce a schema revision without resorting to directly laying off employees. The most effective mode was "enforcement," which entailed privately coercing an individual to change their behavior; the second-most effective mode was "manipulation," where individuals were placed into positions without their knowledge that would either pressure them to change or make them realize that they needed to leave the organization; the less effective modes included "instruction," involving explaining privately how an individual's role would change, and "proclamation," which tended to be via mass-distributed messages that were ultimately easy for organizational members to ignore because they were so impersonal. It was interesting to note that most of the modes employed in the bank setting could not be used in the healthcare center described above because the nature of the

attempted organizational schema change was so different. Had managers in the health center used enforcement or manipulation; for example, they would have undermined the very empowering decision-making schema they were attempting to encourage within their organization. It suggested a need to employ different types of change models depending on the type of organizational schema involved.

Barbara also illustrated how organizational scripts, specialized schema about appropriate coordinated behaviors among organizational members in specific situations and contexts (e.g., meeting scripts, hiring scripts), are born. These scripts serve to increase the predictability of organizational behavior by structuring expectations of future actions in certain organizational settings. The study involved following students moving through a new organization created via a management simulation and attempting to create a resource allocation script. The organizational members engaged in a process of interactive accommodation, where they accommodate to each other and to the organizational situation through coincident meaning, resulting in expectations of both events and behavioral sequences that are shared across individuals. Over time, those expectations develop into increasingly patterned activity that reinforces the organizational script and assists in forming plans of what to do to move onto the next event that will get them to goal attainment. Comparing the groups going through the simulation together to ones working outside of those interactive groups showed that the scripts were developing and being negotiated through interaction, suggesting just how important it is to help develop scripts for critical situations (e.g., crisis scripts). It also suggests that some organizational conflicts might be rooted in individuals holding differing scripts and that elucidating those differences might help them to negotiate and bridge the conflict.

Social Network Perspective on Conflict and Intergroup Relations

The second paper to come from the health center project (Labianca, Brass, & Gray, 1998) illustrates how willing Barbara was to examine conflict and intergroup relations from a new perspective—a social network perspective. At the time, conflict research was dominated either by qualitative or experimental approaches. In contrast, the network perspective involved asking every member of the organization to describe their relationship with every other member, and we collected data within the health center to help us understand where conflict was situated within the organization's overall social landscape. We were interested in exploring perceptions of intergroup conflict from this network perspective, so we asked each individual about the level of intergroup conflict they perceived between their department and every other department in the health center. By aggregating the responses, we had a sense of the "true" level of intergroup conflict in the organization. But we also knew about each individual's negative relationships with others in the organization. We found that a person's perception of intergroup conflict was not only biased by whether they had direct negative relationships with others in another department, but even if their friends had a negative tie to the department. This showed how perceptions of intergroup conflict could be affected both directly and indirectly through dyadic negative relationships. In practice, this meant that the portions of the organization that were charged with managing conflict in organizations (e.g., the HR department) might not have a very accurate picture of where intergroup conflict existed because their view might be limited by the direct and indirect ties they had and that a more comprehensive survey of conflict was more appropriate prior to launching conflict management efforts. Our results also showed that the amount of communication and contact between the departments was not related to perceptions of intergroup conflict, showing again that the contact hypothesis, which suggests that increasing contact between groups reduces their level of conflict (Allport, 1954), was not supported.

Barbara's subsequent work from a network perspective (Mollica, Gray, & Treviño, 2003) suggests the difficulties inherent in attempting to create intergroup interventions in organizations. They examined an MBA program that was explicitly attempting to bring in a more racially diverse group of students and encouraging them to form more diverse network ties with other students. They showed that all racial groups showed a strong preference to maintain homophilous, within-race friendships, and that one of

Figure 2. (L to R) Rob van Tulder, Barbara Gray, Jim Austin, and Sandra Waddock honoring Barbara's Lifetime Achievement Award in Collaboration Research from the Cross-Sector Social Interactions Community at its 2016 Symposium at Schulich School of Business, York University

the main challenges was that racial minorities had an even stronger preference for homophilous ties than majority students, in part because being in the minority activates stronger social identification with the minority group. These preferences persisted throughout the life of the program despite repeated organizational attempts to create greater network diversity.

At a time when leaders in the field of conflict research were saying that they would never allow their area of research to become "infested by network research" (C. Alderfer, personal communication), Barbara instead embraced a research approach that was very different from the type of grounded theory building, qualitative research that she normally conducted. Her intellectual openness is a strong hallmark of her academic career and something for which I admire her greatly (see Figure 2).

Power and Inequality: A Path toward Self-Engagement and Change—Jen Kish-Gephart

Barbara and I first met in 2006 in Barbara's Qualitative Methods seminar at Penn State University. I was a first-year PhD student with a strong desire to study social class, and Barbara's course represented the first opportunity for me to pursue what many viewed as a "taboo" topic with little relevance to organization studies. Since that time, I have been privileged to work with and publish with Barbara. I focus below on the "Class Work" piece we published in the *Academy of Management Review* (Gray & Kish-Gephart, 2013), providing a brief overview and some takeaways. I conclude with a look at Barbara's work within the context of power and inequality more broadly.

A Tale of "Class Work"

The "Class Work" project emerged out of a recognition that social class differences in organizations constrained interactions in ways that not only momentarily impacted one or more of the interactants, but also had longer-term implications for maintaining class differences within organizations. Integrating

micro- and macro-level theorizing, Barbara and I proposed a theoretical framework to explain the process by which cross-class interactions elicit "class work"—defined as "interpretive processes and interaction rituals (Goffman, 1967) that organizational members individually and collectively take to manage cross-class encounters (i.e., when members of different classes interact and class becomes salient)" (Gray & Kish-Gephart, 2013: 671). At the individual level, we theorized that cross-class interactions trigger class anxiety, in part because individuals become aware of their own or others' privilege or disadvantage. To quell this anxiety, interactants engage in different forms of *intra*personal and *inter*personal class work. Individuals with an upper class standing, for example, may attempt to minimize their privileged class standing ("declass") by comparing their current circumstances to more extreme situations (e.g., "I am not *that* extravagant; my neighbor has several houses and a much bigger yacht"). Interpersonally, they may use distancing techniques (e.g., separate executive or employee lunch rooms, elite outings, or a private elevator for the CEO) to prevent or minimize future interactions that provoke cross-class anxiety. In both cases, individual-level class work serves not only to mitigate cross-class anxiety, but also to maintain the elite's privileged status. Over time, these micro-level interactions and concomitant class work become institutionalized within organizations as prevailing, taken-for-granted rules and practices, or "collective class work." Collective class work can take several forms (we identified six in the paper), including segregating classes via physical workspace (e.g., in luxury hotels, custodial staff are purposefully and physically separated from guests to minimize uncomfortable interactions) and perpetuating legitimating myths (such as the myth of meritocracy or the belief that anyone who works hard can achieve success). The outcome of collective class work is once again the perpetuation or maintenance of the (unequal) status quo.

Overall, this paper was influential for several reasons. Not only did it highlight the role that individuals within organizations play in the maintenance of social class differences, but it also helped to advance a topic that had previously received little attention in organization studies (see Figure 3). Although anecdotal, it is telling that back in 2009, Barbara and I were unable to find just four social class papers to include in a symposium conference proposal. Since the publication of the "Class Work" paper, however, we have been encouraged by the amount of newly published work (Gray, Johnson, Kish-Gephart, &

Figure 3. (L to R) Roy Suddaby acknowledging Barbara Gray and Jen Kish-Gephart as Best Paper Award Finalists at the 2013 Academy of Management Annual Meeting, Orlando, Florida

Tilton, 2017; Kish-Gephart & Campbell, 2015; Martin, Côté, & Woodruff, 2016; Scully, Rothenberg, Bea-ton, & Tang, 2017) and growing interest in the topic (as evidenced by the number of faculty and PhD students we have met who are now actively working in this area). In addition, and perhaps more impor-tantly, taking this journey with Barbara has yielded many (treasured) personal and professional insights. While I have numerous examples and experiences to share about our collaboration, here I will focus on two points:

Don't be Afraid to Pursue the Tough Questions

I have always been impressed by Barbara's fearlessness and tenacity when it comes to pursuing research. Even when it is clear that the questions, conclusions, or methods might be unpopular or unwelcome, Barbara has followed her heart and remained focused on the overarching goal (e.g., giving voice to the voiceless; Gray, 1994a, 1994b; Gricar & Baratta, 1983). Knowing this has been inspirational to me per-sonally. Many times in my career (as a PhD student and faculty member), I have received feedback dis-couraging the pursuit of social class research—people suggested it was not worth my time because social class does not exist in America or no longer matters (especially in organizations); it has already been studied under the auspices of status; and it would not be published in a top-tier journal. Despite the potentially debilitating nature of this feedback, Barbara's voice stood out as a force of encouragement. As one of Barbara's former students so aptly expressed: Barbara's legacy is not only "visible on the pages of numerous academic journals," but "is also quietly expressed in the ongoing actions, choices and suc-cesses of her former students" (L. Pilver, personal communication). Even when Barbara is not formally listed as a coauthor, her mentorship and encouragement is reflected in our subsequent work.

Research is a Process of Self-Engagement and Change

I borrowed the language for this subtitle from one of Barbara's excellent papers (Gray, 1989a). In this self-reflection piece, Barbara described the process of self-engagement:

> The relationship between researcher and research [represents] a continual process of socialization in which researchers are engaged in a search for their own identities and project their own conflicts into their profes-sional work (p. 389).

She goes on to say,

> I believe that through critical self-reflection, people can transform themselves and the social interactions in which they engage. In so doing, they have the potential to emancipate themselves from self-imposed con-straints. (p.392)

For us, the "Class Work" project represented a process of self-reflection and transformation. I fondly look back on the many hours Barbara and I spent discussing our own experiences with cross-class inter-actions and class work. Once we started this project, we recognized class work in almost every corner of our lives. Interactions and situations that might have been previously overlooked became the subject of considerable self-reflection and analysis—from interacting with tour guides ("There was a sudden real-ization that we come from very different places") to "enjoying" an unexpected upgrade to first class ("I felt guilty and uncomfortable"; "the interactions with the flight attendant were different"). The paper came to reflect some of our own struggles with social class and identity.

The project was also transformative. It helped us to expose our own privilege and assumptions; to crit-ically examine ourselves and our research; and to "question [our] own potential to be an oppressor (con-sciously or unconsciously)" (Gray, 1994b: 287). And we hoped it would do the same for others. Indeed, we were encouraged by some of the feedback we received. One anonymous reviewer[1] wrote the following:

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[1] A special "thank you" to Doug Creed for one of our favorite reviews.

My first thoughts on writing this review, as I told the editor, was to ask myself if it would be excessive to open with the line "this is one hell of a paper." The paper haunted me for days after my first reading because there was an ache of recognition regarding my own history of class work as a middle class person. . .

Others shared similar sentiments with us, describing their reaction to the paper as "haunted," "convicted," and "disconcerting." Some who thought of themselves as particularly open to issues of power and inequality expressed surprise at their reaction ("why am I uncomfortable with some of these ideas!"; "it made me(!) uncomfortable").

Power and Inequality in Collaboration, Conflict, and Diversity

Barbara's contribution to understanding power and inequality extends beyond social class research. Indeed, in preparing this tribute, I was struck by the extent to which much of Barbara's research, whether directly or indirectly, touches on these themes.

In her extensive work on collaboration, for example, Barbara has advocated for "shared power" (Gray, 1989b), wherein stakeholders will "collectively make decisions about their future and mutually authorize each other to take action on behalf of the collectivity" (Gray, 1994b: 288). Whereas high-power actors often control the discourse, processes, and solution (Gray, 1994a, 1994b; Gray & Schruijer, 2010), successful collaborations bring parties of unequal power together to share "power to define the problem and to propose a solution" (Gray, 1989b: 119).

Barbara's work on conflict—or the "perception of incompatible activities (goals, claims, beliefs, values, wishes, actions, and feelings)" (Gray, Coleman, & Putnam, 2007: 1415)—similarly points to conflict as emerging from or being aggravated by power dynamics, including perceived inequities (e.g., asymmetrical access to information or decision making), lack of respect for deeply embedded values, and systemic discrimination (Gray, 1994a; Gray & Schruijer, 2010; Gricar & Baratta, 1983; Wondolleck, Gray, & Bryan, 2003).

Finally, these themes extend into Barbara's work on gender and racial minorities, including understanding the influence of diversity networks (Mollica et al., 2003; Ren, Gray, & Harrison, 2014) and the experiences of those with multiple marginalized identities (i.e., intersectionality; Gray et al., 2017). Barbara has also drawn on feminist theorizing to critically examine collaboration and negotiation theories and practices (Gray, 1994a, 1994b). These papers revealed issues of power, patriarchy, and taken-for-granted assumptions; they also called for reflexivity among business school researchers (Adler, Forbes, & Willmott, 2007). As Barbara and colleague noted:

Our intention is to unsettle, to provide alternative ways of thinking by focusing on either what is unspoken or unseen or on what is in plain view but that became, by habituation, naturalized, crystallized, all too familiar, and accepted as "given." (Chiaburu & Gray, 2008: 309)

As a scholar and an activist, Barbara's work has given voice to the voiceless. As a teacher and a mentor, she has shared her spirit and imparted her wisdom. Together, they encourage and convict us—to question, to pursue, to stretch, and to grow.

Framing and Climate Change—Shaz Ansari

While I have long been an ardent admirer of Barbara's work, I have had the good fortune of working with her over the last decade or so (see Figure 4). It has been tremendously inspirational and a great learning experience from both a personal and professional standpoint. A key paper she coauthored with Frank Wijen and me is titled: Constructing a Climate Change Logic: An Institutional Perspective on the "Tragedy of the Commons" published in Organization Science (Ansari, Wijen, & Gray, 2013). In this article, we drew on the rich body of work that Barbara had published on frames and framing in the

Figure 4. (L to R) Shaz Ansari and Barbara Gray, on 16 January 2014 at University of Cambridge, England

context of conflict and negotiation in complex environments to develop a sociological perspective of the "commons" as against economic models of commons, which argue that commons occur naturally and are prone to collective inaction and tragedy. In this social constructionist account of commons, we show that actor-level frame changes can eventually lead to the emergence of an overarching, hybrid "commons logic" in a field and avoid "tragedies of the commons." We tracked the evolution of the global climate change field over 40 years and identified five mechanisms (collective theorizing, issue linkage, active learning, legitimacy seeking, and catalytic amplification) that underpin how and why actors changed their frames at various points in time and how this built consensus around a transnational commons logic. The crux of the paper was to explain how the emergence of a commons logic in a transnational field involves satisfying three conditions that capture the bases of an emerging consensus among actors about a field as a commons: the view that their fates are interconnected, the acceptance of joint responsibility, and the need to take collective action. Barbara has developed a novel and insightful perspective on the theory around frames and framing developing a processual perspective to explain how frames are not just cognitive devices carried around in our heads but an interactional achievement and working with her proved to be an enlightening experience for scholars interested in institutional and framing processes.

Earlier, Barbara, Frank, and I had published an essay in Strategic Organization, titled: Fiddling while the ice melts? How organizational scholars can take a more active role in the climate change debate (Ansari, Gray, & Wijen, 2011) where we engage with the debate over anthropogenic climate change or amid seemingly irreconcilable differences among the key actors involved, both within the developed world and between developed and less developed countries. Climate change is one of the key interests of Barbara, and she has written about controversies regarding causes and consequences, as well as different attitudes toward risks, technologies, and economic and social well-being for different groups. Consequently, developing consensus is elusive amid demands for short-term economic prosperity from politicians seeking re-election, shareholders demanding short-term profits, or middle-class families trying to make ends meet. We took issue with the relative neglect of this issue by organizational scholars and argued how organizational science including well-established strands of institutional theory, stakeholder theory, and complexity theory can provoke rethinking of some of the current notions of climate change and contribute to understanding and theorizing climate change and its social and political ramifications.

   While I have focused on two papers we co-authored, Barbara's work has been inspirational for scholars from a wide variety of disciplines. I have been particularly inspired by her recent work on social class and on the dynamics of collaboration. Her previous work and very recent work (Gray & Purdy, 2018) and conversations with her have been illuminating in terms of how potential partners in collaboration need to have relatively equal ability to influence each other and how huge power asymmetries allow powerful partners to strong-arm others to promote their own desired ends. It shows the importance of not confounding collaboration with cooptation that can happen when one partner is able to coerce the other. Each time I have a conversation with Barbara Gray, I learn something new and useful from both a personal and professional perspective – it's like a Master class from a dear friend (see Figure 5). I look forward to continuing to collaborate with Barbara, learn from her, and be inspired by her.

Collaboration and Shared Meaning—Jill Purdy

Barbara Gray's (1989b) book *Collaborating: Finding Common Ground for Multiparty Problems* is a groundbreaking text that weaves together theories and examples from multiple contexts to provide a comprehensive lens for understanding collaboration. Prior to its publication, few resources existed that considered why, when, and how to work together to resolve disputes. Barbara's work filled a significant gap between negotiation and legal theory, and provided rich examples that highlighted both the possibilities and the difficulties of working things out through collaboration. At a time when alternative dispute resolution was gaining disciples who thought better conflict management might save the world, she did not promise that collaboration was a panacea. She turned a scholarly eye to the many examples of collaboration that were happening in fields as different as coal mining and banking, and unpacked the conditions and mechanisms that made it work…or not. Her long-standing interest in social and

Figure 5. Barbara Gray making a research presentation to the PhD Program at Ivey Business School, University of Western Ontario, 10 November 2017

environmental issues guided the inclusion of cases that illustrated both successes and failures, quietly illustrating the high stakes and world-changing consequences of conflicts around natural resources and human rights. Significantly, *Collaborating* is both scholarly and practical, making it a valued resource for executives, government officials, and others working to solve complex problems such as labor disputes, disposal of toxic wastes, racial integration, and the use of biotechnology. A reviewer noted that it "joins Fisher and Ury's classic 1981 text as essential reading for all who remain soberly optimistic about the possibilities of a negotiated social order" (Kramer, 1990: 547).

Barbara's work on collaboration also is deeply influential across a wide range of academic disciplines and has influenced practice in many fields, including environmental dispute resolution, public policy-making, corporate social practice, and human rights activism, to name just a few. In generating essential theory for understanding the context, process, and outcomes of collaboration (Gray, 1985; Wood & Gray, 1991), Barbara has leveraged the boundary between theory and practice to the benefit of both. She has used field research to develop theory that is grounded, relevant, and applicable in the "real world" (Gray & Wood, 1991). Her work also has provided guidance to practitioners of collaboration that supports the design and implementation of collaborative processes (Gray & Purdy, 2013) and engaged in actively testing the application of theory to practice through action research and outcome-based studies (Gray, 2008; Purdy & Gray, 1994). Very few scholars have engaged in research that includes such a wide span of theory-generating and theory-testing.

A central theme of Barbara's work on collaboration has been to better understand the role of shared frames and shared meanings in generating or resolving conflicts. A crucial finding that has profoundly

Figure 6. (L to R) Jill Purdy and Barbara Gray at the 2017 Research Workshop on Multistakeholder Initiatives in Los Angeles, CA

influenced subsequent research in negotiations, teamwork, and social psychology is that, "in the absence of shared meaning, organized action is made possible by the shared repertoire of communication behaviors group members use while in the process of developing equifinal meanings for their joint experience. That is, organized action does not require that the meanings held individually by organization members be coincident; equifinal meanings are sufficient" (Donnellon, Gray, & Bougon, 1986: 44–45). This finding, based on research conducted at the individual and team level, challenged the conventional wisdom in both communication theory and social psychology. It has been influential to numerous streams of research in organizational behavior as scholars have sought to understand how individuals negotiate meanings by studying sensemaking (Weick, 1995), managerial cognition (Walsh, 1995), and team dynamics (Gersick, 1988). It also prompted scholarly inquiry by organization theorists and sociologists seeking to test the findings as they apply within and across organizations through studies of culture (Hatch, 1993), organizational learning (Huber, 1991), innovation (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995), and institutionalization (Phillips, Lawrence, & Hardy, 2004). For example, Barbara's research at a more macro-level of analysis (Gray, Bougon, & Donnellon, 1985) reframed organizations as constituted by the construction and destruction of meaning. Barbara's multilevel approach to understanding social organization has given scholars a strong foundation for unpacking how actors negotiate meanings and how shared meanings are related to actions at the group, organization, and societal levels (see Figure 6).

This collection of work is actively influential to scholars today who are exploring the mechanisms of how meanings are coconstructed in light of institutionalized norms and understandings that provide sometimes-conflicting heuristics and templates for action (Mitnick & Ryan, 2015). Our research on the persistence of multiple logics in an emerging field of dispute resolution organizations considers how diverse meanings and practices are perpetuated through iterative cycles of organizational action and institutional consequences that shape the nature of organizational fields (Purdy & Gray, 2009). While this work helped reveal the relationship between organizational action and institutional dynamics, Barbara sought to connect these findings with her knowledge of framing and its role in conflict. She collaborated with numerous colleagues to explore how parties to intractable environmental conflicts made sense of their situations and how these framings led to the enactment of different outcomes (Brummans et al., 2008). Additional collaboration yielded a robust conceptual model of frames that characterizes both the cognitive nature of frames and the substance of what is being framed, identifying six approaches to framing that act as a set of lenses for research and analysis (Dewulf et al., 2009). The culmination of this extensive inquiry into both institutional dynamics and framing led to a recently published theory paper that explains the mechanisms by which shared meanings created at the dyadic level can amplify through interactive framing to yield new practices and understanding that become taken-for-granted, with the potential for institutionalization at group, organizational, or transnational levels of social organization (Gray, Purdy, & Ansari, 2015). As is typical of Barbara's work (for example, see Gray, 2011), she brings together theories from disparate fields (in this case communication theory and institutional theory) to yield new insights, identify new questions, and develop new avenues for scholarly exploration.

Methods and Process

Barbara has been instrumental in furthering the acceptance of qualitative methods such as discourse analysis as not only valid but also highly efficacious tools for understanding phenomena that involve cognitive and relational processes among actors. In 1992, Barbara taught what was likely the first-ever doctoral-level course on qualitative research to be offered in a business school. She wanted scholars to have rigorous tools to explore mechanisms and processes rather than to simply search for cause and effect relationships. Although process research and qualitative methods are widely accepted in negotiation and organizational research today, a great deal of effort was needed to widen the scope of inquiry beyond economic and game theoretic models. Barbara's most frequently cited publication,

other than her book, is an article that draws on negotiation research and the concept of bargaining power to understand structure and patterns of control in joint ventures (Yan & Gray, 1994). The study challenged the conventional notion that ownership share is an appropriate proxy for managerial control, revealing instead that managerial control is strongly influenced by bargaining power in the form of local and global capabilities as well as the stakes and available alternatives in the context. This research, conducted in partnership with Aimin Yan, brought a new theoretical lens to the study of strategic management and joint ventures that extended and complemented the dominant economic theory approaches of that time, emphasizing the importance of informal control, trust, and relationship dynamics in interorganizational relations. Based on interviews of Chinese and US partners in joint ventures, it also illustrated the value of qualitative research and comparative case analysis for understanding organizational performance. This work is a great example of Barbara's accomplishments in expanding the boundaries of scholarly inquiry, and typical of her approach to collaborating with doctoral students by prioritizing their scholarly interests and contributing her broad expertise to answer their research questions. Barbara extended this collaborative, developmental process in creating the Interuniversity Consortium for Research on the Framing of Intractable Environmental Conflict in 1998. The Consortium's work, linking interdisciplinary faculty and doctoral students from many universities, led to the publication of Barbara's co-edited book with Roy Lewicki, which won the IACM book award in 2003 (Tomlinson et al., 2017).

In Her Own Words

We asked Barbara to respond to several questions about what she has learned and the future of conflict research. Her responses provide insights and inspiration for scholars to reach out across boundaries and pursue new paths of inquiry.

What Have You Learned in Your Research that you Think has the Greatest Potential to Help Individuals, Organizations, and Societies Manage the Challenges They Face?

Despite recognizing the promise that multistakeholder partnerships can bring to solving complex, wicked problems (Rittel & Webber, 1983), my research has argued for paying careful attention to how they are designed and managed and to the many challenges that partners must overcome to realize success. Partnering should not be a haphazard, figure it out as you go process, but instead a carefully thought out and crafted process each step of the way. For example, those who envision launching multistakeholder deliberations should give careful consideration to the selection of a convener or conveners who simultaneously have clout but are also perceived as neutral and can offer a vision that transcends the limited or parochial views of individual partners (Gray, 1989a, 1989b). Conveners can also ensure that all parties with knowledge of or who are affected by the problem have a voice in the deliberations.

My research has also stressed the important role of acknowledging and managing differences among partners (Gray, 1989a, 1989b). While finding trade-offs among interests is fundamental to integrative negotiations (Fisher & Ury, 1981), exploring other types of differences is also essential to forging collaborative agreements such as how partners are framing the problem in the first place as well as the values and cultural and historical identities sustained by their framing (Lewicki et al., 2003). Failure to recognize and sensitively address threats to partners' identities that arise during partnership negotiations can impede or erode the trust necessary to bridge or capitalize on critical differences and perpetuate intractable conflict (Lewicki et al., 2003). On the other hand, creating an atmosphere within the partnership in which partners can explore alternative frames without having to abandon their own framing can reduce identity threats and open up avenues for innovative outcomes.

My work has also pointed out that collaboration is not a panacea for solving difficult problems. It is one possible solution that offers potential when partners that are highly interdependent realize the need to join up. However, potential partners must also have relatively equal ability to influence each other. In other words, power checks and balances are needed among partners so that one or a few powerful ones cannot strong-arm others to privilege their own desired ends over those of other partners. In situations in which the power distribution is clearly lopsided or more powerful partners are unwilling to acknowledge and incorporate the aims of less powerful partners, the partnership can no longer be deemed "collaborative." Lower power partners risk loss of voice and cooptation and should seriously consider how to level the table or exit the partnership if that is not possible.

My most recent work with Jill Purdy and Shaz Ansari emphasizes the links between partnership formation and institutional change within fields (Ansari et al., 2013; Gray & Purdy, 2018; Gray et al., 2015). New partnerships have the potential to disrupt fields by introducing and normalizing new meanings and practices or, especially if they fail, to leave fields in institutional conflict and disarray.

What Are the Most Important Questions We Have Yet to Answer that Will Advance Our Understanding of Collaboration?

Two important questions that management scholars often gloss over when analyzing partnerships are as follows: (a) What strategies and tactics can lower power participants engage in to guard against domination and cooptation by their powerful counterparts and (b) under what conditions would they be advised to exit the partnership to forestall these outcomes? Among the strategies already identified to bring powerful parties to a collaborative table are the use boycotts of their products (Bartley & Child, 2014; Den Hond & de Bakker, 2007; King, 2008) and exposure of the negative externalities they have created. Another table-leveling strategy is to appeal to powerful third parties or stakeholders who exert power in other arenas. Their presence can exert leverage by legitimizing the voice of low power groups. A case in point was the role of the Catholic in assisting the indigenous people's coalition, CONAIE, in their negotiations with the Ecuadorian government over control of their lands (Gray & Purdy, 2018). Despite such initiatives, power imbalances are a common reason why multistakeholder partnerships, particularly those involving indigenous peoples, fail. More systematic research on how lower power partners can enhance their legitimacy and standing in multistakeholder partnerships is clearly needed.

A different but not unrelated issue concerns how partnerships are negotiated across jurisdictional levels (Gray & Purdy, 2018). This issue is most pronounced in global standard-setting partnerships attempting to regulate production of commodities such as lumber, cotton, and palm oil and to establish fair trade practices (Pattberg, 2007). Such partnerships are often plagued by differences in aims among global level partners such as MNCs, state-level partners, and local-level partners such as farmers or loggers that are often working at cross-purposes (Riisgaard, Lund-Thomsen, & Coe, 2017) or by the unwillingness of some partners to accept their complicity in problems such as climate change (Ansari et al., 2013). Finding solutions to the highly inequitable distribution of resources that is increasingly characterizing societies around the globe (Anand & Segal, 2015; Stiglitz, 2012) is also of paramount importance, but may be the issue that truly tests not only the value of partnerships but our resolve as a society.

Cross-Disciplinary Collaboration is Widely Acknowledged in Medicine, Sciences, and Computing as the Key to Unlocking New Knowledge, But the Social Sciences Do Not Seem to Have Embraced This Trend. From Your Experience in Bridging Across Disciplinary Boundaries, What Potential and Pitfalls Do You See for Cross-Disciplinary Collaboration in the Research Areas that are Important to You?

Researchers have increasingly turned to cross- or transdisciplinary research, as it is more commonly referred to, to find breakthrough answers to knotty problems that disciplinarily focused research has

been unable to do. This has been particularly true in fields like medicine, sciences, and computing where transdisciplinary innovations are emerging. While some transdisciplinary projects involve social scientists, the practice is clearly more limited among us. Until recently, even within our disciplines we have assiduously clung to our preferred micro-, meso-, or macro-explanations without considering how these may operate in tandem to account for outcomes. And attempts to work transdisciplinarily among economists, psychologists, legal scholars, sociologists, and anthropologists are still rare and difficult to manage because of siloed publication norms. In my own experience of studying some fledgling efforts, the major impediments to engaging in them stem from publication standards within each field which assiduously define the limits of what is considered "new knowledge" and how it should be presented (Younglove-Webb, Gray, Abdalla, & Purvis-Thurow, 1999). Transdisciplinary work is stigmatized both for its quality and its methodology as well as for the rigor of how it is reviewed.

Within social science, however, some efforts to reverse this trend have begun to emerge. Research on sustainability, for example, draws both on scientific and technological advances and psychology, sociology, and business. Studies of supply chain partnerships are one example because firms are profiting from building in sustainable practices to improve environmental outcomes as well as reduce the costs of production of goods. And in predicting human behavior, researchers have begun to integrate genetic, psychological, and sociological explanations to try to increase predictive validity, thereby addressing the nature versus nurture debate by trying to nail down the contribution of each in explaining individual and collective behavior (Conley, 2016). The explanation for such work can only be that the answers you seek from research in your own field can be better informed by seeking insights from other disciplines. That was certainly true of my own work on agricultural conflicts that was conducted with a team of researchers from agricultural economics, law, and organizational theory (Abdalla et al., 2002). Knowledge from each of these fields was necessary to understanding the bases of the conflicts and to devising comprehensive, rather than piecemeal, solutions.

Conclusion

In identifying the highlights of Barbara's impact on scholarly knowledge, we have not only noted many substantive contributions to theory and practice. We also have seen the effect she has had on us as scholars. One is struck by the yin and yang of her work: calling out unjust and flawed structures while illuminating approaches for changing them; recognizing the limitations, flaws, and challenges of our relationships while creating greater understanding of how to build healthy ones; and highlighting the failings of our society while offering hope for the future. Barbara Gray has had a profound impact on the work of multiple generations of scholars, through her integration of varied theoretical lenses and literatures, through her focus on research settings and topics linked to her concern for just societies and a flourishing planet, and through her deep and loving engagement with students and colleagues. We all strive to achieve such balance and such impact.

There are those who seek knowledge for the sake of knowledge; that is Curiosity.

There are those who seek knowledge to be known by others; that is Vanity.

There are those who seek knowledge in order to serve; that is Love.

—Bernard of Clairvaux

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