

Movie Review: Holistic Conflict Resolution Skills Applied to *The Man Who Knew*

Infinity

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Abstract

The holistic problem of racial prejudice is widespread in modern society. The purpose of this conflict resolution movie analysis is to apply the racial issues described in the film through the lens of conflict resolution perspectives. The film and book describe the life of a young self-educated mathematician who wanted to discover the secrets of the world encoded in numbers. However, he became a victim of condemnation due to his racial background. Expounding upon the theoretical, practical, and integrative knowledge of conflict resolution described in the books of Richmond (2014), Avruch (1998), and Lederach (1998), this paper presents strategies for resolving conflicts to racial prejudice. The most effective strategies for resolving racial conflicts are the establishment of international agreements covering human rights and the formation of civilian peace.

Keywords: racism, holistic conflict, strategies, multidimensional resolution

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Introduction

The Man Who Knew Infinity is an impressionistic, biographical film based on the book of the same name by Robert Kanigel. The book recounts the remarkable legacy of the young Indian self-educated mathematician Srinivasa Ramunujan who made a significant contribution to mathematics. Ramanujan demonstrates his brilliant mathematical insights and calculations to the British mathematician Professor Hardy, his Cambridge mentor. Hardy realizes that Ramanujan is an exemplary mathematician. He asks Ramanujan to come to Cambridge and prove his hypotheses. Ramanujan arrives in Cambridge marked by major culture shock and experiences discrimination from the upper strata of English society. The fascinating complexity of the film evolves from the relationship between Hardy and Ramanujan. After overcoming frustrations and burgeoning conflicts, Ramanujan, and Hardy work on a revolutionary formula regarding composite numbers. However, during this time, Ramanujan's health deteriorates. Hardy expresses both admiration and sympathy for Ramanujan in every scene. As humanity rises to the occasion, Hardy eventually tries to help get Ramanujan elected to the London Mathematical Society. Their teamwork and collaboration on the formula brings success to both, and the London Mathematical Society recognizes the genius of Ramanujan.

Movie Analysis and Various Theoretical Conflict Resolution Applications

The Main Conflict Resolutions Depicted in the Film

Integrative conflict analysis can be used to apply theoretical knowledge to the elaborate racial issues described in the film and to identify holistic mechanisms to ameliorate the problem of racism. One can distinguish several mechanisms for dealing with major existential

threats of racial conflicts from local to global levels, that is, from microcosmic to macrocosmic domains. First, both sides of the conflict must have a reciprocal and voluntary approach. In the film, one can see how difficult it is for Ramanujan to leave his home country and family through the cross-cultural depictions (Brown, 2015). He is not afraid of condemnation in his home country and rejection in a foreign one, seeing beyond the external influences, both positive and negative, and reaching for his highest aspirations. At the same time, one can see how the other side in the person of Professor Hardy also runs the risk of being criticized and condemned by the elite mathematical society for inviting an unlikely candidate from a poor Hindu-Brahmin traditional family with no education to work in an elite university. Second, it is necessary to carry out a change in core values. Ramanujan tried to share his calculations with other famous British mathematicians. Some dismissed him, arguing that his work was inaccurate and that he lacked the formal training needed to be taken seriously. However, these reasons were indirect because the main reason for the refusal was its origin (Kanigel, 1991). Hardy is the only one who could genuinely appreciate the talent and the hidden genius of the young Indian.

The movie is a dazzling, divine depiction of imagining the unknown. Hardy understood that talent should not have limitations and definitions, thinking outside the box against all odds within the infinite domains. Thus, the message is that each person is unique and has unique special gifts and abilities which cannot be limited by the prejudices of other people. The film demonstrates how the problem of racism, masquerading with many cross-cultural elements, religious challenges, and humanistic inclinations can be resolved holistically through conflict resolution mechanisms from local to global levels, transcending all boundaries from the

microcosmic to macrocosmic, and ultimately expanding the lens of conflict resolution to infinite domains. This is where we turn next.

How the Threats of Racism at a Global Level Can Be Solved by Lederach's Peacebuilding Triangle Strategy

Focusing on a more global level, the spectacular film portrays the solution to the problem of racism through the integrative prism of Lederach's peacebuilding triangle strategy. It can be assumed that integrative strategies play the role of criteria and basic methods for resolving conflicts. Lederach (1997) argues that any conflict involves the highest, middle, and lowest levels of leadership and different approaches to building peace that are appropriate to use at each level. However, the most effective way to resolve the conflict will take place at the middle level of leadership. The middle level is represented by the holistic dimensions of ethnic, religious, academic, intellectual, and humanitarian leaders. These people are informed about the local problems of people but can also collaborate with the top-level leadership (Lederach, 1997). Integrative problem-solving discussions are often held with middle-level leaders which create advanced problem-solving opportunities that can be achieved due to the cooperation and collaboration with the highest level (Lederach, 1997). Hardy is the middle level leader between the elite, scholarly, and profoundly privileged society of mathematicians in England and the Indian self-educated mathematician Ramanujan. Hardy is a notable mathematician and respected figure at the university. Therefore, he succeeds in resolving the conflict of racial bias by demonstrating the young man's amazing, gifted talent and remarkable validation of genius to a mathematical society that is snobbish (Brown, 2015). Thus, the director of the film

demonstrates that the solution to the problem of racism on a more global level can be achieved with the help and collaboration of a middle level of leadership.

Theories Integration into Analysis of the Movie

Theories help to consider possible holistic options for a conflict. Avruch (1998) believes that the conflict can be provoked by socially constructed and politically motivated ethnic and cross-cultural differences. Avruch's statement can be confirmed by a scene from the film when the main character comes to the blackboard at the request of the teacher and demonstrates a knowledge of mathematics beyond that of the teacher. After class, the arrogant teacher insults the young man and censures him for his low origin (social difference) and belonging to Indian culture (ethnic difference) which he considers inferior (Brown, 2015).

Resolution Strategies that Can Be Applied to Racism and Cross-Cultural Conflict

Unfortunately, in modern society, there is no one-size-fits-all, universal and standardized method for resolving conflicts regarding racial hatred. However, due to certain integrative strategies, society can come closer to solving this issue. The most important conflict resolution strategies are the making of international agreements and the establishment of civil peace. Thus, the conclusion of international treaties and unions on the rights and opportunities of people around the world would constructively establish a balance of power between different states, common values, and certain racial and cultural differences (Richmond, 2014). Consequently, with the help of international treaties, international order can be maintained, and prejudice eradicated. Civic peace lies in the strength of ordinary local to global humanity to unite and stand up against racism on a larger scale. The essence of civil peace is that everyone in society can mobilize for peace from different holistic perspectives whether for

disarmament, international cooperation, or against violence, discrimination, and oppression (Richmond, 2014). This strategy is especially relevant in modern society, where any problem becomes infectious due to digital technologies. Humanistic civil peace enables society to integrate and act collectively on a global scale.

Conclusion

The Man Who Knew Infinity is a story about how people are heinous, corrupt, hostile, and unjust. A sensational biopic film, illustrating a storyline like similar legends Isaac Newton, Einstein, and other extraordinary icons, such as, “A Beautiful Mind”, this cinematic gem truly reveals a story of a self-educated Indian mathematical genius who faced multidimensional racism. Even though the film describes the events in India and Cambridge of the early twentieth century, the topic of racism is still persistently painful. Through research on the main methods of conflict resolution, integrative strategies have been identified to address racial prejudice. These include the establishment of international holistic agreements and the development of humanistic civil peace from local to global levels. When the difficulty concerning racial prejudice is universally eradicated at its roots, and eternal empathy and comprehension reigns between people, then, perhaps, people will truly begin knowing and practicing infinity.

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