External Sources and False Conflict

By *Harrison Barnes*

When I was growing up, I always noticed a fascinating thing with my elder stepsister and many of the girls I knew. As I grew older, I saw my girlfriends repeat this pattern.

Once a girl would get a boyfriend, and as the girl started spending less time with her friends, her friends would eventually instigate some kind of conflict between the girl and her boyfriend. They might call her with a negative rumor, or they would fish for negative information about the boy and pass it along. They would inevitably find reasons to criticize the boy and would create some sort of problem. Her friends would want her companionship and would generally grow to resent the girl for not being available. The girl's friends would often create a divide between the girl and the boy--sufficient enough to cause a breakup.

When I was in college, there was one weekend when my girlfriend had traveled out of state with the tennis team. Before I met my girlfriend, she had always done everything with her friend, who was also her roommate. The two spent an amazing amount of time together. On this particular Friday evening, I was standing on the front porch of a building where there was a big party. My girlfriend's best friend came up to me and said: "I am afraid to sleep in the apartment alone with Rebecca gone. Can you sleep next to me in my room? I am very afraid to sleep alone without her there."

My girlfriend traveled with the tennis team every few weeks and this girl had always been fine. This was a ruse she was using in order to create a problem. I did not do this because I knew sleeping next to my girlfriend's roommate would result in a huge conflict in my relationship. It might have even ended the relationship, and the roommate would have gotten my girlfriend back eventually as her always available friend.

When I met my wife, she had a friend in San Francisco whom she used to speak with on the phone every night and with whom she would spend all of her free time. This friend seemed like a very nice person. After my wife and I became a couple, she stopped speaking with her friend every night and the two stopped spending all of their free time together. According to my wife's other friends, my wife's friend was very depressed about this and was feeling quite isolated. My wife had been somewhat of a *social crutch* for the girl; she was someone the girl could turn to all the time.

The first time I met this friend, I was with my wife (who was my girlfriend at the time), in San Francisco, staying in a hotel. My wife had worked in San Francisco six months back, and we had traveled there from Los Angeles to visit this friend, who met us at the hotel. At the time of the visit, I was sitting in bed watching television. We were staying in a large hotel suite that had a couple of rooms.

My wife's hair stylist was in San Francisco and my wife had made an appointment to get her hair done at the salon. Instead of going with my wife, the girl said she wanted to hang out in the room and rest. This seemed unusual.

When my wife left, her friend had been in a separate room, sitting and reading a magazine. After my wife left, however, the girl walked into the room where I was lying on the bed, and took off her sweater. She was wearing a very thin and very see-through shirt with no bra. She told me she was tired and asked if she could get on the bed with me. I said okay. Within a minute or two this girl was very close to me, and it quickly became an invitation for something more to occur. Her legs were touching mine and she was lying very close to me on a king-size bed. Then the girl got up to go to the bathroom and came out of the bathroom with her zipper down. She got back on the bed, zipped up her jeans, and put her belt on.

Given the fact that I did not know the girl very well, I found this behavior very strange. She was a former model and was obviously smart enough to know that this type of behavior would invite immediate attention from virtually any man. I did not respond to it, of course, and I knew that she was creating an opportunity for conflict.

I am pretty confident this woman was not interested in me; her interest was, instead, in creating a problem in my wife's relationship. Had I not withdrawn from the situation as fast as possible, I am sure that the girl would have told my wife and all of her friends that I had made a pass at her or something along those lines. My wife would have been very angry and our relationship would have been negatively tainted forever, or ended.

Later that day we all went out for Japanese food. My wife's friend was half Japanese and she started talking about Japanese culture. I started talking about Japanese culture and how much I admired it. All of a sudden the girl became very quiet and angry. I did not understand what this was about at all.

She told my wife later that she thought many of the things I had said about the Japanese were very "racist." She did not want to talk to me anymore, and she refused to ever see me again. My wife had been at the same table and did not understand the girl's reaction any more than I did. Someone who had been my wife's best friend, whom she had talked to several times a day, very quickly forced my wife to choose sides. She said she would not be friends with my wife if she continued to see me.

My wife has not spoken with the girl since. I am just as astonished about this as my wife was, because in reality I had not said anything racist at all. What I know now is that the girl was trying to introduce conflict into our relationship, to serve her own ends.

When these small incidents transpire, a universal human law is present that is incredibly important to both your career and life: *In virtually every conflict we are involved in with an employer or other individual, a third party is present who is instigating the conflict.*

In both of the episodes above, the friends were attempting to introduce conflict in order to further their self-interest, which in these cases meant having more access to their friends. These are juvenile sorts of incidents, but the same rule plays out in your relationship with employers, the relationships between countries, and others.

Here is a different kind of example: Just this week Scotland released a Libyan man who was responsible for the bombing of

a Pan Am flight several years ago over Lockerbie, Scotland. The Scottish did this for several reasons, I believe, including the fact that they want access to Libyan oil. However, both the Americans and the British are very upset with this, and the people in the Scottish government who are responsible for the release are not being investigated or aggressively questioned about this by their own government. By vocalizing their disapproval of Scotland's actions, the American and British leaders are attempting to introduce conflict into the situation, because the release of the prisoner does not further American and British political ends.

While most people are under the belief that two people alone are usually responsible for creating and maintaining a conflict, in reality more conflicts are caused by the presence or influence of a third person than just between the two people alone. I am going to go out on a limb here, but I want you to understand how powerful this law is. I am not an expert by any means in foreign relations, but I do want to make a few small observations that are general in nature. Let's take the US war against Iraq: It was alleged that Saddam Hussein was hiding nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, which were never found. The United States went to war with Iraq, and in the process tens of thousands of people on both sides have been killed, billions and billions of dollars have been spent, and all sorts of destruction and problems have occurred.

What is the *true* cause of this conflict? Since there never were any weapons of mass destruction found, it seems strange that this conflict ever occurred at all. Why did the US go to war without any proof of these weapons of mass destruction?

One of the reasons the war may have started is due to the fact that Dick Cheney was pressuring George Bush to start the war. The company of which Cheney is the former Chief Executive Officer, Halliburton, made billions of dollars from the war. Consider one report:

An analysis released by a Democratic senator found that Vice President Dick Cheney's Halliburton stock options have risen 3,281 percent in the last year....

Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) asserts that Cheney's options--worth $241,498 a year ago--are now valued at more than $8 million. http://www.rawstory.com/news/2005/Cheneys_stock_options_rose_3281_last_1011.html

This is potentially an example of a third party causing a conflict. Was it in Cheney's best interest to cause a serious conflict between the United States and Iraq--in order to further his own ends?

Another reason for the war may have been George Bush wanting revenge on Saddam Hussein, who at one time attempted to kill Bush's father. Would the war in Iraq still have occurred if Bush were not seeking personal vengeance?

I am not a political analyst by any means; however, it is important to understand that behind many serious conflicts there are generally third parties who cause the conflict. Would the war still have occurred if Cheney did not have the connection with Halliburton?

The causes of war and conflict are often not what they seem.

In your career and in your life you are going to come into conflict with bosses, mates, friends, and others. Often, the conflict that you find yourself in will be wholly unjustified and more the product of others creating conflict, than of any specific issues you actually have. It is always important when you find yourself in conflict to look and see if some other person has really caused it. If you look for the other person and identify his or her motives, you and the person or group you are in conflict with will often resolve the conflict quickly. Knowing this rule could help you save your job or your relationship with another.

THE LESSON

There is always a third party of some kind at the root of the conflicts in your life. Conflicts with others are an inevitable part of your life and career. When you analyze the conflicts in your life, you will often find that they are unjustified and created by others rather than by your own internal issues. When you identify a conflict in your life, determine whether the source is internal or external to you; once you identify the source, you will be able to quickly resolve these conflicts and remove impediments to your own career.

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