

A conflict intervention in postapartheid South Africa suggests new insights into encouraging an honest and engaging participation in the dialogue process.

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Enhancing collaborative tendencies: Extending the single identity model for youth conflict education

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Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed.

—Preamble of the Constitution of the United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

PERHAPS MORE THAN EVER before, we need innovative and successful approaches to developing the defenses of peace in the minds of all humanity. We have witnessed the consequences of not attending to these needs in the many and varied international, inter-ethnic, and intergroup conflicts around the globe. And while there are a variety of approaches to peace education, such as those that Ian Harris and Mary Lee Morrison have chronicled recently, we still know too little about how to encourage a peaceful orientation.¹

My own reflections on these issues, prompted by two decades of work in conflict education, were stimulated during a three-year project in the Gauteng region of South Africa in the immediate

postapartheid era.² In this chapter, I share some reflections on our successes and our missed opportunities and integrate those thoughts with more recent developments in peacemaking. The majority of my attention in this chapter is given to exploring the possibilities for conflict intervention using the concept of single identity work as a process that enhances the potential for collaboration among youth involved in entrenched and even intractable conflicts, especially when used in conjunction with contact-based interventions.

Assumptions about reducing intergroup conflict

Several assumptions about the reduction of intergroup conflict guided the initial design of the South Africa project that my colleagues and I developed for the U.S. Information Agency (USIA). Like many other scholar-practitioners working to reduce prejudice and intergroup conflict, we were guided by contact theory and social identity theory.

Contact theory

Since the end of World War II, social scientists have been concerned with how to reduce conflicts between groups, particularly when those conflicts are caused or heightened by identity-based differences. As Thomas Pettigrew and Linda Tropp report, the human relations movement in the late 1940s began experimenting with the use of strategic intergroup contact to reduce discrimination and prejudice.³ Less than ten years later, Gordon Allport published his groundbreaking work, *The Nature of Prejudice*, in which he outlined the basic assumptions of contact theory.⁴

For fifty years, Allport's theory has been used as the basis for conflict interventions. During that time, researchers and practitioners have asked, "Under what conditions will contact reduce intergroup hostility?" From the beginning, there was an appreciation that contact alone was not sufficient. Allport's work began by specifying four conditions necessary for contact to have the desired effect:

1. Supportive environment. There should be institutional and social support for the intergroup contact. If social institutions are resistant to the contact or if significant identity groups are not supportive, the contact will have little positive effect.

2. Equal status. There needs to be equal status between the groups. Contact between minority and majority groups is not likely to be successful in reducing hostility unless power balancing between the groups happens first. In fact, contact between power-imbalanced groups can create the opposite effect from that desired.

3. Close contact. In order for the contact to make a difference, it must be close, prolonged, and frequent. In other words, members of the groups have to spend considerable time together over a series of interactions.

4. Cooperation. The interaction of group members must be in an environment of cooperation, not competition. This factor is later echoed in the work of Morton Deutsch, who suggested that cooperative social climates are key to developing constructive and functional conflict processes.⁵

Over the years, research has confirmed that all of these conditions are likely to reduce prejudice and the destructive intergroup conflict associated with discrimination. For example, Pettigrew and Tropp conducted a massive meta-analysis of 203 studies on intergroup contact as an influence on prejudice. Ninety-four percent of these studies found that when contact occurred under these conditions, prejudice was significantly reduced. They also found that the positive impacts applied beyond the groups in conflict. The prejudice reduction in one situation tended to extend to other situations. This is a very hopeful finding, suggesting that youth who become less prejudiced as a result of intergroup contact in one situation are likely to be less prejudiced in general and less likely to develop prejudices when encountering others who are different from them.

This effect is not the same for members of majority and minority groups, however. One cautionary note in Pettigrew and Tropp's analysis was that intergroup contact was much more likely to have the hoped-for effects with members of the majority group. For

members of the minority group, the impacts were significantly less evident.⁶ Practitioners working with youth from minority groups should realize that additional intervention is probably going to be necessary.

Susan Fiske and her colleagues found an important condition for contact to work. Fiske was interested in why someone would be motivated to work with another whom he or she disliked or disrespected. She argued that in order for contact to make a positive difference, the people involved had to believe that they needed each other in order to achieve some task or goal that was important to them; they had to feel they were socially interdependent. Her research on social interdependence provided support for her assumptions and demonstrated that contact without social interdependence was unlikely to make much difference in the degree of prejudice or discrimination.⁷

Social identity theory

Social science research on prejudice has followed two major theoretical perspectives: contact theory and social identity theory. Contact theory is concerned with how to structure intergroup contact to reduce discrimination, but it does not explain why these intergroup differences exist in the first place.

Social identity theory provides an explanation for why we see our membership in groups as important and why those group loyalties are likely to lead to conflict with people who are not in our group. Social identity theory rests on two premises. First, people see the world in terms of categories in such a way that they minimize the differences between people in the same category and accentuate the differences between categories. Second, since people are members of some categories and not others, there is an in-group/out-group distinction. More important, people gain a sense of identity and an emotional comfort from their membership in the group.⁸

The more we define ourselves in terms of these categories or in-groups, the more we feel the need to defend them against “outsiders.” And this need is especially pronounced in adolescence,

when the primary life challenge is one of forming and maintaining a social identity.⁹

What do we know about how to counteract our tendency to categorize ourselves and others? Stuart Oskamp has a fairly pessimistic assessment of how much energy we have devoted to this question:

As far back as the 1920s, prejudice has been a major topic of study in the social sciences. In fact, it is one of the most studied areas in all of psychology and sociology. However, most of the research has been aimed at describing the nature of prejudice and understanding its causes, and also, to some extent, at documenting its consequences in people's lives. Probably almost all the researchers wanted to attack prejudice and destroy its pernicious effects, but few of them have concentrated their research energies on the key question of how to reduce prejudice and create a society where equality and social justice are the norm instead of the exception.¹⁰

John Dovidio agrees that we have posed more possibilities than we have produced processes to accomplish these goals. He and his colleagues explain four models of intervention that can be used to decrease categorization and reduce discrimination: decategorization, recategorization, mutual differentiation, and dual identification:¹¹

- Decategorization models. These models involve personal contact between members of different social groups. This is a typical outgrowth of contact hypothesis assumptions. Basically, the members of various in-groups are taken out of their groups and put together in social situations for certain periods of time. This contact leads to a breakdown of the stereotype used against the out-group. Once those barriers have lessened and people see each other as individuals, they are less likely to use the group categories to define others.

- Recategorization. This model involves uniting the people in a common in-group identity that may be new or may already exist. The hope is that the new group identity will be more important than the old identities—for example, taking “Virginians” and “Georgians” in eighteenth-century America and getting them to see themselves as “Americans.” Benjamin Broome has talked about

this idea as creating a “third culture.” Drawing on his experience in the Greek and Turkish Cypriot conflict, he describes the power of creating a third culture with which members of two conflicting cultural groups can identify.¹²

- **Mutual differentiation.** This model keeps the original social groups and their differences, but sets the groups up to have to work together on some project. For example, I may not attempt to change your mind about the other group or encourage you to see yourselves as more similar, but I will ask you to work together toward the common completion of some goal that we all feel is worthwhile.

- **Dual identification.** In this last model, a new idea that Dovidio and his colleagues developed, people are encouraged to see themselves as members of both their original groups and a new group. In school-based conflicts with youth, there may be fights between “goths” and “geeks.” These original groups do not get along. But imagine a third, overarching group identification: “conflict managers” where it is possible to be a goth and a conflict manager or a geek and a conflict manager.

Contact theory and social identity theory offer insights about what to do in a project that brings together people from various cultural and ethnic groups that had traditionally been in serious conflict. Such was the case in the mid-1990s when our team of educators began work on the Community Peace and Safety Networks project in South Africa.

Community Peace and Safety Networks in Johannesburg

If people cannot collaboratively resolve differences, democracies, and especially new democracies, are in jeopardy. Such was the case in 1995, a year after Nelson Mandela had been elected to the presidency of South Africa, a year after the de Klerk government had resigned, ending one of the most dramatic social conflicts of the twentieth century.

It was clearly a period of important and rapid social change for South Africa. The country was in the process of racially integrating institutions that had been completely segregated and unequal for some time. A critical social institution, then and now, was the educational system—the public schools. Our project involved establishing Community Peace and Safety Networks that linked school-based mediation programs and community mediation programs in four sections of Johannesburg.

Community Peace and Safety Networks (CPSN) originated in the Philadelphia region and were used to extend the impact of school-based mediation programs by involving the school, a community conflict management organization, and community members (sometimes involving police, clergy, business owners, or representatives of other community groups based in and dedicated to the neighborhood surrounding the school). The school-based and community-based mediation programs taught children constructive and collaborative approaches to handling conflicts, especially conflicts related to bias, prejudice, and discomfort with cultural diversity.

There were several reasons for the emphasis on school-based conflict programs and conflict education for youth in South Africa. The damage that had been done in the apartheid era struck most devastatingly at the youth of the country. Especially in the townships, children had been raised on a diet of violence.¹³ Straker, Mendelsohn, and Tudin studied the perceptions of violence among South African youth in the apartheid and postapartheid periods and found that black-on-black violence did not decrease after the repeal of apartheid; it changed from politically motivated violence to domestic violence and random violence.¹⁴ The township youth increasingly perceived distrust and hostility in the townships. Peace education efforts were seen as opportunities to reverse these conditions. Valerie Dovey stated that the youth “are far more assertive and ‘verbal’ than their parents . . . , but they are often insufficiently equipped to channel their idealism constructively. They need to have opportunities to understand, question, and challenge how society operates and how they can influence peaceful change in a positive way.”¹⁵

After apartheid, schools were seen as an agent of social reform. The Department of Education in South Africa was very explicit about this, as Clive Harver notes in his analysis of peace education programs in South Africa:

In South Africa, government policy since 1994 has strongly emphasized education for peace and democracy. The Department of Education White Paper on Education and Training stated, "The education system must counter the legacy of violence by promoting the values underlying democratic processes and the charter of fundamental rights, the importance of due process of law and exercise of civic responsibility and by teaching the values and skills for conflict management and conflict resolution, the importance of mediation and the benefits of tolerance and cooperation."¹⁶

Given the changes in educational policy in postapartheid South Africa, schools were becoming more quickly integrated than other institutions. Thus, it was assumed that the educational institutions could teach and model social justice, especially given the success of conflict education in some schools.¹⁷ These programs could build social and life skills, particularly for students in the black townships.¹⁸ Peace and conflict education was a means of strengthening the society to more effectively manage the issues of diversity inherent in the new social configuration. These goals resonated with similar ideologies in the use of peace education for social justice in the United States.¹⁹ And, not unimportant, conflict education programs, like those in this project, have proven effective in increasing social and emotional competencies related to constructive conflict, tolerance, and social justice.²⁰

The Community Peace and Safety Networks generally were meant to build cultural bridges in two ways: (1) helping members of diverse cultural groups from South Africa to work together as a team of conflict managers who promote and deliver mediation programs and (2) encouraging South African students, teachers, and community members to collaborate in community outreach activities to increase cultural awareness and promote effective conflict management. The South African team included members from two black African townships (Soweto and Thokoza), an Afrikaans community, and a British community, as well as representatives from a black South African nongovernmental organization. In each com-

munity, a school-based conflict education and mediation program was created in a local high school and linked with a community mediation center created in that community. The project took place between 1995 and 1998.

Inadvertent but advantageous limitations on contact for youth

We originally designed activities, especially those for educators and community members, to maximize intergroup contact. We tried to create a cooperative environment and encourage a superordinate goal that required group members to work together. Based on our knowledge of contact theory research, we tried to have as much contact between the adults as possible. Interestingly, the contact, even under optimal conditions, created more tensions than it reduced. The reasons for those dynamics have been considered elsewhere.²¹

With the students, we tried to have more intergroup contact, but were limited in what we could do given unanticipated logistical and political constraints. In hindsight, it would be nice to pretend that we had planned what ended up happening, but the truth is not so friendly. While we were in the process of the project, we feared that the inadvertent limitations on student intergroup contact would severely damage the project. To our surprise, this reduced intergroup contact was quite advantageous.

Here I identify two of the inadvertent restrictions on contact. And for each, I examine the benefits we enjoyed—benefits that have led to an appreciation of the potential of single identity work.

In the beginning of the project, we had anticipated doing facilitated dialogues with students from the four high schools. In these dialogues, we hoped to gather information about their perception of the current level of conflicts and gauge the degree of intergroup tension. But due to travel restrictions, it became clear that we did not have the support of the school administrations to bring all the students together in this way. The alternative was to conduct independent focus group interviews with students from each school. In these interviews, which were conducted in the initial phases of the

project and prior to mediation training, we learned about the conflict context and their preferred modes of conflict management.²²

The focus group interviews allowed students to talk openly about their views of conflicts, something they had not done before and something they would not have done in front of students from other schools (as they later indicated in exit evaluations). They reflected on their usual approaches to managing conflicts and the extent to which those orientations were adaptable to the conflict processes emphasized in the project.

The second inadvertent reduction of contact concerned the delivery of peer mediation training to students. We saw a great opportunity for intergroup contact through mixed participation in the mediation training. We envisioned the eighty-four students from the four high schools together for four consecutive days of training. But logistics and politics intervened again. The consequence was that two mediation training sessions were held: one with the students from the township schools and the second with the students from the British and Afrikaans school.

At the time, this was a great disappointment and caused considerable stress in the project team. We felt the “separate but equal” tone of the training would communicate insincerity about collaborating across communities. And although there are elements of truth there, the reality again was that this situation ended up being better for the students and the ultimate accomplishment of project goals.

We underestimated the need for students to embrace these new ideas in an environment of safety. It was a huge change for the South African students from all communities to be empowered with the kinds of responsibilities inherent in the mediation programs we were establishing. By learning these new skills in groups they were already comfortable with, they were able to take risks and make challenges more easily. They were also able to concentrate on building relationships across similar communities, where such relationships had not existed for the youth. Prior to the project, the youth from various communities lived in a fairly isolated manner, rarely socializing outside their original community. And they had the opportunity to talk about how

they saw these programs fitting in their schools and in their communities, a more tailored consideration than would have been possible in the more inclusive original design. The separate mediation trainings allowed the students opportunities for reflection, debate, and adjustment that gave them ownership they would likely not have had without it.

The students did come together across schools and had the opportunity to interact in a variety of ways during the last two stages of the project. The schools hosted mediators from all other schools in “mediation days” and meetings where the students could talk about the nature of their school mediation programs and how these were linking with the larger community. Toward the end of the project, the students helped plan and participated in a conference held for people from all four communities. These opportunities for intergroup contact, following the limitations on the same, yielded great rewards, as the following recollection suggests:

At the end of the USIA project we had a full day “conference” with all the adult and student members of the project as well as members of their communities who had not been directly involved. During the afternoon of the conference we facilitated a visioning workshop as a means of having them talk about the very long-term goals for continued action (we asked them to imagine the South Africa of 2050 and to talk about what it would be like in their ideal and what it would take to get there). At the request of the students we had two groups—an adult group and a high school student group. Both groups were very multicultural. And in both groups the majority of members had not worked together before.

At the end of the afternoon, each group was going to present their “visions” and “action lines” to the other group. Two hours passed and the adult group had not progressed at all. They were complaining that this was impossible, that there were too many pragmatics to consider, and so on and so forth. They actually started talking about how to help the students face the disappointment (assuming that the students were as blocked as they were). The students came in and asked whether we were ready to see what they had come up with. They proceeded to unfurl a huge banner on which they had developed a 50-year timeline of action leading to a well-articulated future reality. Literally, in two hours, they had created a future that they could articulate, critique, modify, and bond together about. The adults were stunned, truly speechless, in genuine awe.²³

An introduction to single identity work

Single identity work was a concept unrecognized, or at least unpublished, when we were conducting our project. Yet it has developed and proven useful in other intractable conflict situations, most notably Northern Ireland.²⁴ A major impetus for single identity work was the growing dissatisfaction with contact theory interventions that were exacerbating rather than relieving the cultural tensions in Northern Ireland.²⁵ As Church and her colleagues state, “In many cases, contact initiatives have been found unreliable and even detrimental to community relations by reinforcing stereotypes and distrust between groups.”²⁶

Single identity work is a concept rather than a process, and it may take a variety of forms. The idea is that it is important to make space for interaction between members of the same group or community (usually but not exclusively defined by cultural, political, or religious identity divisions) in order for them to reflect on, think through, and critique current and future situations. The Community Relations Council of Northern Ireland describes single identity work as “projects and initiatives which provide opportunities for a single tradition to reflect on and address issues of concern. It seeks to create opportunities for a single tradition to debate complex issues relating to the conflict and to enable exploration of their own culture as part of a process. Single identity work seeks to lead to an increased awareness, understanding, respect, acknowledgement, tolerance, and active participation in the development of a pluralist society.”²⁷

Single identity work offers an opportunity to unearth differences that often exist between members of the same in-group. While we are tempted to assume that everyone in our group thinks as we do, we know that is not the case.²⁸ There are advantages to recognizing the variety of views, doing one’s own “identity work” before engaging with other groups.

Single identity work can be used alone or in conjunction with intergroup contact or cross-community contact. Projects range from those that pursue “own culture validation” to those engaging

in “respect for diversity” work. “Own culture validation” projects argue that single identity work is useful in its own right. “Respect for diversity” work aims to bring participants to the stage where they are able to engage with the other community. Many “respect for diversity” projects involve concurrent single identity and cross-community relations work, considering single identity work essential as both a prerequisite of and parallel to cross-community contact.²⁹

There are concerns that single identity work may have negative consequences. There is the possibility that prejudices may be reinforced rather than reduced, or that attempts to promote cross-community collaboration are undermined for political or personal reasons. But these concerns are manageable and do not seem sufficient to disregard the potential of single identity work as an important resource.

Extensions of single identity work

Our experience in the South Africa project has convinced me of the power of “respect for diversity” approaches to single identity work. And although we did not have the opportunity to enact the following extensions of this idea, I offer them for consideration. How might single identity work be best used to reduce hostility among youth groups? I suggest they offer a valuable preparation to dialogue processes and a means of emotional coping for targets of contempt (usually minority and disempowered groups).

Preparation for dialogue

Dialogue is a potent process and has contributed significantly to our ability to construct the defenses of peace. As Stephen Littlejohn explains from his experience as founder of and consultant to the Transcendent Communication Project, dialogue differs from conventional interaction in a variety of ways, most notably, in terms of focus on first-order or second-order change. Conventional discussion and debate concentrates on first-order change, or

changing a participant's point of view about the content being discussed. Second-order change concerns transformation of the relationship between the parties or transformation of the social system of which they are a part.³⁰ The goal of dialogue is a deeper understanding of self and other in order to redefine the relationship between them.

Harold Saunders recently reflected on dialogue processes in Tajikistan that he has been involved with since 1993. He summarized the five-stage model common to most dialogue processes:

- Stage 1: People on different sides of a conflict decide, independently or with the encouragement of a third party, to reach out and explore peace.
- Stage 2: The people come together and talk, beginning with venting and issue identification but ending with resolution to continue with more serious talks.
- Stage 3: There are disciplined exchanges, with participants looking at specific problems. These exchanges are usually facilitated by a professional.
- Stage 4: The parties design a scenario of interacting steps to be taken in the political arena to alter relationships.
- Stage 5: The parties think of ways to put that scenario in the hands of those who can act on it.

Saunders emphasized that the focus is on transforming relationships through these five stages: "In this process of sustained dialogue there is always a dual focus: Participants, of course, focus on concrete grievances and issues, but always the moderators and participants are searching for the dynamics of the relationships that cause the problems and must be changed before the problems can be resolved."³¹

How often are people ready to take part in dialogue processes, especially with others whom they feel contempt for or who feel contempt for them? This is a quandary that has concerned me for some time but was heightened by some of the dynamics I witnessed among adult members of the South Africa project and later wrote about:

It seems that dialogue models make certain assumptions that limit their utility for the kinds of problems I have been discussing. Specifically, dialogue models focus on bringing people from relatively well-defined positions (e.g., pro-life, pro-choice) who have already identified as a member of that group to have dialogue with others from the “other side”. These processes assume: (1) that participants are willing to dialogue, (2) that they are willing to communicate respectfully in the facilitated process, (3) that they have the skills to communicate respectfully (e.g., to listen, to articulate without verbal aggression), and (4) depending on the dialogue model, are willing to share personal experiences that inform the other about their individual orientation to the issues from their life experience. In my experience these are significant (and often incorrect) assumptions. “How do you motivate one who is contemptuous to engage in dialogue process?” And “How do you structure the process so that their participation will be honest rather than manipulative?”³²

I believe that single identity work offers a possible answer to these questions. Single identity work allows us to sense the degree of contempt, confusion, or concern within a group and adjust our work accordingly. It enables us to consider whether bolstering or emotional coping may be helpful. And it presents an opportunity for members of the group to appreciate the range of viewpoints within their own group, and possibly recognize that the viewpoints of others, even those outside the group, may be worthy of respect. It also offers participants an opportunity to have a safe dialogue about uncomfortable issues before interacting with members of the out-group.

One possible template for these kinds of discussions in single identity work has been presented by Mary Alice Speke Ferdig. Without trying to be comprehensive, she suggests several examples of questions that can help change people’s perspectives of other members of their group:

To focus on identity—Who am I? What is important to me? Who are we together? What do we both care about? What does each of us bring to this conversation based on our previous experiences around the topic that brings us together?

To focus on principles—What do I stand for? What do we jointly stand for? How do our choices and actions reflect our individual and collective values? How do we want to interact with one another in the context of this self-organizing process of change? What might that process look like? What can we agree on?

To focus on intentions—Where am I going? What do I want to see happen here? What are we up to in this conversation? What can we create together that brings us to where we want to be?

To focus on assumptions—What aren't we thinking about here? What is our logic for these conclusions?

To focus on exploration of possibility—What are the things you value most about yourself and the self-organizing experience of which you are a part? What are the core factors that give life and energy to the self-organizing process of which you are a part? What are the possibilities of that which we can create together based on the best of who we are?³³

W. Barnett Pearce and Stephen Littlejohn characterize a party enjoined in moral conflict as “compelled by its highest and best motives to act in ways that are repugnant to the other [party].”³⁴ The more entrenched the conflict is and the more contemptuous the groups are, the more some preparatory process like single identity work may benefit. Single identity work increases the possibility that participants can “risk being changed.”³⁵ The more secure the parties are, the more they may be willing and ready to engage in what Hill refers to as a conversation of respect: “Conversations of respect . . . are ones in which the participants expect to learn from each other, expect to learn non-incident things, expect to change at least intellectually as a result of the encounter.”³⁶

I have framed this use of single identity work in terms of preparation for dialogue as a means of intergroup contact. But in situations where “own culture validation” is the goal, the same processes can produce conversations of respect within the youth group as well.

Emotional coping

Pettigrew and Tropp believed that intergroup contact often had different effects on members of majority groups as compared with members of minority groups. I believe that a plausible explanation for this is that members of minority groups have had to endure often intense, unrelenting, and devastating emotional damage as targets of the contempt of members of the majority. Even when attacks against their group have not been directed at them personally, youth targeted by the attacks may suffer damage to self-esteem and may doubt their ability to respond effectively to the attacks.³⁷ As social identity theory argues, once a person has categorized herself as a member of a social group, she bases an aspect of her self-esteem (collective self-esteem) on the perceived value of that group.³⁸ Damage to the group identity results in loss of personal face.

An exciting application of single identity work is helping members of minority groups cope emotionally as a means of empowering them for intergroup contact. Support from this idea comes from research on prejudice reduction and on adolescent identity and self-esteem.

Brenda Major and her colleagues raise an important question: “What can a target of prejudice do to lessen the impact of prejudice?” They note that this question has received very little attention in the volumes of literature written on prejudice and discrimination. The answer they propose is to teach targets of prejudice emotional coping strategies. Using Robert Lazarus’s theory of emotional appraisal and reappraisal, Major suggests two strategies: emotion-focused coping and problem-focused coping. The former involves teaching yourself to reappraise the situation that led to your emotional experience—in other words, to help yourself feel better about the situation by altering your perception of the attacker or your ability to deal with the problem. This leads to work on problem-focused coping or how to prevent the prejudiced person from attacking you (perhaps by reducing her prejudiced attitudes toward you, limiting her access to you, or developing alliances with more powerful others).³⁹

But emotional coping cannot take place in a public situation, and certainly not in front of conflicting parties. It requires a facilitated conversation in a private and safe space. Thus, single identity work provides a context that allows youth to identify times and ways they have been disrespected, how they have felt about that, and how they might be able to cope through reappraisal. Similar processes using Lazarus's model have been applied to other conflict contexts.⁴⁰

One reason that emotional coping with contempt requires safety is that the contemptuous behavior usually creates a sense of shame that makes the target vulnerable to the attacker. Michael Lewis argues that the link between contempt and shame can be very important for group and interpersonal conflict, especially among adolescents.⁴¹ Does being treated with contempt cause shame? It may, if we accept the evaluation of others and use it as a mirror by which we see ourselves. If being treated contemptuously results in shame, it may result in the shame reparation cycles discussed in detail by Suzanne Retzinger.⁴² She argues that someone who has been shamed usually makes some sign that this has happened. Through verbal or non-verbal communication, the person "announces" that she is feeling ashamed and "demands" that the person who hurt her do something to make the situation right. In healthy relationships, the response is usually a quick attempt by the offending person at repair. But in relationships where one party feels openly contemptuous of the other, repair is very unlikely. In fact, the attacker may even be motivated to use harsher forms of behavior.

The attacker is usually tempted to continue the contemptuous behavior because contempt is a self-perpetuating emotion; it is seductive. This dynamic is evident among youth groups where insults are hurled until they have done damage. Like blood to sharks, the sense of hitting the mark often stimulates more of the same behavior, which escalates the conflict.

Fortunately, there is some evidence that focusing on strengths of a culture or ethnic identity can increase self-esteem and reduce the ability of the other's contempt to harm you or leave you feeling ashamed and unprotected. Recent research on ethnic immer-

sion, a process similar to single identity work but more general in scope, suggests that attention and reflection on one's group identity can bolster self-esteem, especially for adolescents.⁴³

If single identity work is a mechanism for emotional coping, especially for minority youth, we still need a lot of work on techniques for accomplishing these ends. What is the best way to facilitate such sessions? How private should these be? What are the benefits of having emotional coping be a group interaction, especially in cultures that have a more collective rather than individual sense of self? Appreciating the possibilities of single identity work opens the door to pressing questions about its form and delivery.

Conclusion

I believe, as the UNESCO Preamble states, that wars do indeed begin in the minds of men. And I believe, like Carol Izard, that contempt is the pernicious emotion that gives rise to thoughts of physical and psychological violence against an other:

In contempt, one feels prejudiced against some object, idea or person . . . contempt may have emerged as a vehicle for preparing the individual or group to face a dangerous adversary. For example, a young man might prepare for defense of himself or of his group with such thoughts as: "I am stronger than he, I am better." Eventually, this message might become a rallying signal for all the men in preparation for defense or attack. Perhaps those who were quite persuaded marshaled more courage (and felt less empathy for the enemy) and were more successful in surviving the hazards of hunting and fighting. Still today the occasions that elicit contempt are situations in which one needs to feel stronger, more intelligent, more civilized, or in some way better than, the person one is contending with. . . . However, once contempt is turned against other human beings, it is hard to find anything positive or adaptive in this emotion.⁴⁴

To the extent that we can decrease the tendency of youth to have contempt for others or to let others' displays of contempt affect them, we may have sown seeds of the defenses of peace. While intergroup contact under certain conditions can reduce prejudice

fueled by contempt, there are possibilities for single identity work to contribute to this process as a preparation for intergroup contact or as a replacement for it. As conflict practitioners, we are only at the beginning of our discussion about these important possibilities. We can hope that one day, as the South Africans might say, we will see these ideas contribute to *Thokoza* (peace) in our lifetime.

Notes

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The greatest diversity between the student groups was in how they managed conflicts. The British students relied on authority to manage conflicts between peers. Students also reported the use of direct confrontation, yet ensuing talk typically involved attempts to persuade one another rather than genuine discussion. Thus, the conflict was often left unresolved unless it was brought to the attention of one of the supervisors.

The Afrikaans students dealt with conflict almost exclusively through peer groups and rarely consulted adults in the school to assist them. Interpersonal conflict, or conflict between members of a peer group, became a group issue, often with the “leader” of the group and other group members taking the responsibility of negotiating for the members in conflict. They also placed a high value on face saving in this context. If the issue had not been adequately addressed (that is, if the injured party did not feel redeemed), they waited until another explicit issue (related or not) arose, or they created another issue, and then went through the same process. The girls at the Afrikaans school also reported that conflicts were frequently managed through silence. Very similar patterns were discovered independently by Tihanyi and du Toit (in press). In their ethnographic analysis of racial integration in South African high schools, they found that racial and ethnic orientations to conflict and conflict management still affect the extent to which reconciliation mechanisms are at work in the South African educational system.

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