Tolerance and Solidarity

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Tolerance and solidarity are recognized as key elements in the United Nations Culture of Peace Declaration. The contributions of psychology to our understanding of the causes of intolerance and the promotion of both tolerance and solidarity are discussed by drawing on insights from the Costa Rica symposium and connecting more widely with the scholarly literature in social and peace psychology. Guided by theory and research, we examine the sources of intolerance and exclusion, emphasizing not only small group processes but structural, societal-level changes. We cite provocative evidence indicating that democratization and globalization leave in their wake new divisions and intolerance. While noting the value of intergroup contact in the context of interdependent goals, we underscore the limits of traditional social psychological approaches when addressing complex social phenomena. We emphasize the critical role peace psychologists can play in exposing ideologies of oppression, and promoting social designs and practices that support tolerance and solidarity, at micro and macro levels, within the context of a collaborative, multidisciplinary framework.

The United Nations Culture of Peace Declaration casts a wide net when addressing tolerance and solidarity, “recognizing the need to eliminate all forms of discrimination and intolerance, including those based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.” The breadth of this charge is appropriate in the post-Cold war era where intolerance is seen across fault lines that divide people not so much by the contours of states but by ethnicity, religion, wealth, health, population density, and
other categories that together form a complex pattern of interlacing schisms (Klare, 1998).

Although the field of psychology is rich with analyses of the causes of intolerance and conditions that favor tolerance, there is a paucity of research on solidarity. Moreover, solidarity is often equated with ingroup cohesion and intergroup intolerance (e.g., hate groups). The construct of “solidarity” is less problematic when tightly linked to the promotion of tolerance, which implies “intergroup solidarity.”

The Programme of Action that accompanies the Declaration not only endorses a tight link between tolerance and solidarity, but implies a broader conception of solidarity in which the powerful and powerless unite in a liberatory struggle that addresses structure-based inequalities. Indeed, solidarity as community, and its cognitive representation as a wider sense of identity, is implied in the Declaration, which encourages “actions that foster understanding, tolerance and solidarity throughout society, in particular with vulnerable groups.”

In this article, we review some research in social psychology and in peace psychology that addresses the sources of intolerance. We then examine some applied work that seeks to mitigate intolerance and promote solidarity. We are acutely aware of the Western bias in our review, a bias that imposes serious constraints on the constructs that are chosen for study as well as the ways in which chosen constructs are operationalized. Nowhere is this limitation more apparent than in the use of the term “solidarity.” Because our review is guided primarily by research conducted in the West, we refer to “solidarity” in the narrow sense, as intergroup tolerance. However, in our concluding section, we raise a number of research, practice, and policy questions and argue for a more inclusive research agenda that examines solidarity in a socially transformative sense.

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH ON THE SOURCES OF INTOLERANCE

The bulk of research on intolerance has focused on three constructs: stereotypes, prejudice, and racism. Stereotypes are typically regarded as a form of social categorization, which simplifies and reduces the complexity of the social world (Brown, 1995), at the cost of biasing the selection (Snyder & Swan, 1978), interpretation (Duncan, 1976), and retention (Hamilton & Rose, 1980) of social information. As simplifying devices, stereotypes may be largely devoid of affect, though often the mere categorization of others produces positive and negative valence depending on whether category assignment is inside or outside of one’s identity group (Howard & Rothbart, 1980). One’s own group is not only evaluated as better but also as more competent, friendlier, and stronger than other groups (Messick & Mackie, 1989). The biases appear even under conditions in which groups have pos-
itive interdependence (Brewer & Silver, 1978). In addition to evoking a favorable ingroup bias, the formation of social categories simplifies our complex social world by accentuating differences between groups and attenuating differences within categories (McGarty & Penny, 1988). Hence, social categorization evokes both perceptual distortions and evaluative biases.

Stereotypes matter in another way. In a number of studies, Steele (1998) examined “stereotype threat,” a phenomenon that can affect the performance of members of any group (e.g., women, older adults, etc.) for whom a negative stereotype exist. These negative stereotypes affect one’s self-definition, and whenever the individual engages in a task to which the negative stereotype is attached, the fear of being reduced to the negative stereotype arises and adversely affects performance. Stereotype threat has been demonstrated in the academic performance of African Americans and in women’s performance on difficult math problems.

In contrast to stereotypes, prejudice typically is regarded as an attitude with belief, behavior, and affective dimensions (Jones, 1998). Distinctions between prejudice and racism are conceptually muddled but among the more useful distinctions is one that suggests the construct of racism includes not only a prejudicial attitude but also a power differential (Operario & Fiske, 1998). Another distinction that adds clarity applies prejudice only to the individual unit of analysis, whereas racism can operate at multiple levels including the level of institutions (Jones, 1998).

In recent years, it has been recognized that there are many forms of prejudice and racism, some of which are hot, close, and direct and others that are cool, distant, and indirect. Pettigrew and Meertens (1995) showed that “blatant” and “subtle” prejudice can be distinguished by two characteristic clusters. In blatant prejudice, there is a rejection of the outgroup that is perceived as threatening, and there is opposition to intimate contact with this outgroup. In subtle prejudice, traditional values (e.g., individualism, achievement) are perceived to be under threat from the outgroup. Cultural differences between the outgroup and ingroup are exaggerated and the outgroup’s inferior status is attributed to their not having the “values” that would allow them acceptance and success. There is also a denial of positive emotions toward the outgroup.

Another form of racism, symbolic racism, has at its core the twin beliefs in individualism and self-reliance (Sears, 1988). Symbolic racism is highly compatible with political conservatism, and is manifest in opposition to policies designed to redress historical discrimination. In contrast, aversive racism is associated with liberal political views that embrace egalitarian values and favor measures that redress historical discrimination. At the same time, liberals have been socialized, even if unconsciously, by the blatant racism of the dominant culture. Hence, research in the United States indicates that liberal Whites often have an uneasiness when in the presence of minorities such as African Americans, presumably due to the clash between socialized negative affect and egalitarian values (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1996).
Prejudice may arise through \textit{relative deprivation}, which means the perception of a discrepancy between one’s current standard of living and the standard of living the individual believes he or she \textit{should} be enjoying (Gurr, 1970). The gap between expectations and achievement produces prejudice, and the target may be another individual or another group. When the perceived gap is in comparison to other social groups, outgroup hostility can result (Brown, 1995).

Although relative deprivation can produce prejudice, Staub (1992) emphasized the importance of \textit{absolute deprivation} as the starting point for genocide and mass killings. Here, “difficult life conditions,” such as severe economic problems, frustrate human need satisfaction. In response, people adopt destructive ideologies in which “others” are viewed as barriers to need satisfaction and must be eliminated. Staub saw the pattern repeated in a number of historical cases including the Holocaust, the genocide of Armenians in Turkey, the Cambodian genocide, and mass killings in Argentina.

Prejudice also may have its roots in real or perceived conflicts of interest between groups. According to Realistic Group Conflict Theory (Sherif, 1966), if one’s goals are in conflict with those of another group, prejudicial attitudes may result. The conflict may be real in the sense that one side’s win is the other side’s loss, a zero-sum arrangement in which the relationship is characterized by negative interdependence. Under conditions of negative interdependence, the individual’s response is likely to be ingroup favoritism, outgroup enmity, and discrimination. Realistic Conflict Theory often plays out under conditions in which two or more groups are competing over scarce resources. A wide range of empirical findings support the theory. To cite just one classic study, Brewer and Campbell (1976) examined intergroup relations among 30 tribes in East Africa. An ingroup bias was apparent as 27 tribes rated themselves more favorably than any outgroup. Most important, nearby groups that had a history of overt conflict (e.g., competition over land or water) were evaluated negatively whereas those groups that shared positive interdependence (e.g., trade) exhibited greater interpersonal attraction. Physical proximity promotes more contact but whether or not evaluations of outgroup members are negative or positive depends on whether the contact is in the context of positive interdependence or competition and conflict (Brewer, 1986).

Not all instances of intolerance are due to competition for scarce resources. Social Identity Theory emphasizes a comparison and evaluation process in which the groups with which one identifies (e.g., ethnic, gender, class) are viewed more positively than outgroups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). A central proposition of Social Identity Theory is that individuals’ are motivated to protect and enhance their self-esteem by evaluating one’s own group against other groups and choosing dimensions in which the ingroup has a comparative advantage. The favorable ingroup bias enhances the group’s and the individual’s self-esteem. The bias is most pronounced when there is a threat to one’s identity (Giles, 1977). Social Iden-
tity Theory has a dynamic quality that allows the theory to flexibly deal with the wax and wane of intergroup tolerance and intolerance. The theory is robust, bearing on a wide range of manifestations of intolerance, from gay bashing (Murphy, 2001) to the rise of nationalism (Druckman, 2001). Even in the case of Northern Ireland, a complex, protracted conflict, where multiple sources of division—religion, history, politics, economics—are at work, people derive at least part of their self-concept by identifying with one of the two rival communities (Cairns & Darby, 1998).

**PEACE PSYCHOLOGY AND THE ANALYSIS OF INTOLERANCE**

Although research in social psychology has contributed to our understanding of individual and group processes, among the major goals of peace psychology is the development of theory that sheds light on linkages between structure-based inequalities and direct violence (Christie, Wagner, & Winter, 2001). Recent research is beginning to clarify some of these macro–micro relationships in connection with the development of intergroup prejudice (Boehnke, 1999, Dawes & Finchilescu, 1999, July). In particular, the global spread of democracy and capitalism, although applauded in the West, can leave in their wake new divisions and intolerant attitudes among those individuals whose voices are attenuated or whose material well-being is diminished as a result of political and economic transitions.

Dawes and Finchilescu (1999) outlined the problem in the context of the radical political changes in South Africa. Under the Apartheid State, a hierarchy among the race groups was instituted, with differing rights and privileges conferred on them by law. When the new democratic government decreed that discrimination on the basis of race (among other distinctions) was unconstitutional, those communities that were formerly most oppressed under Apartheid were also most accepting of the changes. However, for some segments of society, democratization has been accompanied by increases in intergroup intolerance. A longitudinal study undertaken between 1992 and 1996 with 14- and 17-year-old high school students indicated that levels of racism, especially among groups previously advantaged under Apartheid, were high and in some instances increased since the dismantling of Apartheid. White adolescents in particular had strong negative orientations toward Blacks in terms of subtle and blatant forms of racism (Dawes & Finchilescu, 1999; Finchilescu & Dawes, 1998). In short, these findings suggest that a major determinant of the rise in racist attitudes among Whites in South Africa was the degree to which they saw themselves as having lost or gained in the democratization process, a finding consistent with the relative deprivation hypothesis and realistic conflict theory. Those groups that were most advantaged under Apartheid not only exhibited high levels of fear in response to the threat of impending change but also, in the wake of change, had the highest levels of racism.
Similarly, structural changes in the economic sector can produce psychological changes. Movement away from a command economy toward market driven reforms is not necessarily accompanied by increasing levels of tolerance. A provocative finding by Boehnke (1999) demonstrates a relation between the rise of xenophobia in male adolescents living in East Germany and the internalization of the core values of capitalism. In particular, individual differences in “hierarchic self-interest,” a second-order construct associated with a number of values that endorse a Western-style capitalism, accounts for some of the variance in xenophobia (cf. Boehnke, Hagan, & Heffler, 1998). In short, although the post-Cold war impulses toward democratization and globalization are welcome by the West, these political and economic changes create new divisions that have the potential for the development of intolerant attitudes.

PROMOTING TOLERANCE AND SOLIDARITY: INSIGHTS FROM SOCIAL AND PEACE PSYCHOLOGY

Efforts to promote intergroup tolerance and solidarity have drawn heavily from social psychological theories of prejudice. Relative deprivation theory, for example, implies that reducing the gap between rich and poor in societies would desirably impact the problem of intolerance. Such a perspective is consistent with evidence indicating that those societies with the smallest gap in wealth have better health, lower crime rates, and most important for our analysis, greater social cohesion (Wilkinson, 1996).

Realistic Group Conflict Theory posits negative interdependence as a source of prejudice whereas the contact hypothesis suggests positive interdependence can improve relations. Allport (1954) first proposed the contact hypothesis and conditions that favor the development of positive intergroup relations. Subsequent research has supported Allport’s contention that contact alone will not promote positive intergroup relations. Important additional conditions include: (a) cooperative interdependence across groups, (b) equal status contact between minority and majority group members in pursuit of common goals, (c) support for intergroup contact by those who represent the institution, and (d) the opportunity for members of both groups to interact with each other as individuals. Although a critique of the contact hypothesis is beyond the scope of this article, Pettigrew (1998) concluded that the accumulated evidence is generally supportive of the hypothesis, though he suggested a number of issues remain unanswered.

Contact theory has been applied in a variety of contexts. In schools settings, for example, teachers can be change agents by structuring learning experiences in ways that promote positive intergroup relations. Rather than reinforcing notions of group superiority, teachers can foster cooperation and empathic role taking between members of different communities. Well-planned contact experiences can
open the possibility of re-categorisation and can encourage the creation of new social categories that transcend racial and gender groupings with which children and adolescents identify. However to be most effective, the participants in these “contact”-type activities should as far as possible be willing participants, the activities should be enjoyable, minority group participants should not be a numerical minority, and the activities should be led by positive role models who promote them (Jones, 1997).

In contrast to social psychology, peace psychology is unabashedly value laden (Wessells, Schwebel, & Anderson, 2001) and has socially transformative aspirations. While recognizing group processes are involved in the production and reduction of prejudice, the hidden curriculum of the school can serve the function of maintaining or signaling power differences between children from different communities. In multicultural societies, questions about the values that are transmitted can be raised. For example, what events does the school celebrate? Which languages are offered and which languages are given status? To what extent does the staff profile reflect the student profile? Is the current curriculum content sensitive to the experiences of the students? To what extent do texts reflect anti-bias materials (Eyber et al., 1997)? Noting the limits of educational interventions in the face of macro-level forces, Jones (1997) suggested: “To the extent that individuals believe in group dominance … or are socialised to a racialistic ingroup perspective, there is a significant limit to … education-based change. … What should be targeted is the nature of the social information from which biased attitudes are derived” (pp. 302–303).

Although traditional psychological approaches often locate the problem of prejudice in the individual (Wetherell & Potter 1992) or group processes, a critical role for peace psychologists is the analysis of dominant, culture-based discourses and their ideological underpinnings of intolerance. Discursive approaches examine the shifting nature of the language in which racism may be cast and hidden; (Billig, 1988; Burman, 1991; Parker, 1993), capturing repertoires in context, highlighting “the way concepts … are mobilised, paying close attention to their specific construction, to their placement in a sequence of discourse, and to their rhetorical organisation” (Wetherell & Potter, 1992, p. 93). Hence, racism may be defined as “an ideology which refers to a negatively evaluated representation of certain people and acts as a justification for exclusion and/or domination” (Foster, 1991, p. 363). Although forms of racism and the justificatory discourses used in its elucidation may change (e.g., from blatant to more subtle), the fundamental equation of group superiority and inferiority remains constant.

Similarly, peace psychology is well-suited for challenging cherished ideologies (e.g., democracy, capitalism) that support structural changes, reduce social cohesion, and increase intergroup prejudice, as has been observed in Costa Rica (Dobles, 1999), Germany (Boehnke, 1999), and South Africa (Dawes & Finchilescu, 1999). Clearly, we should expect xenophobia and other indexes of intolerance to spike under economic and political policies that increase social inequalities.
Peace psychologists also have a role to play in debunking ideologies of oppression such as the biological basis of prejudice, a myth that can be used to justify prejudice as inevitable and immutable. As Deutsch (1999) argued in relation to the question of a biological propensity for “us versus them” thinking: “There is no reason to assume that one potential or another is inherently prepotent without regard to particular personal and social circumstances as well as life history” (p. 19). Biological determinism can unwittingly sanction individual racism as natural, and can also support pernicious forms of institutional racism. Similarly, the ideology of patriarchy supports oppressive “isms” at all levels of society and can be seen structurally in the masculinization of wealth and power. At present, there is no society in which women enjoy the same opportunities as men, whether measured by enrollment in school, literacy, preparation for careers, political participation, earned income, or any other measure that reflects quality of life (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 1995). Worldwide, compared with men, women receive only 54% of the years of schooling, even though more education for women translates into multiple benefits to societies such as lower rates of fertility and child mortality (UNDP, 1996). The reduction of prejudice is not just a social nicety. Prejudice and discrimination are profoundly harmful to individuals and to societies as a whole.

SOME UNANSWERED QUESTIONS AND POLICY ISSUES

To develop policies that effectively reduce intolerance and promote solidarity, two fundamental questions arise at the micro level: (a) What are the intrapsychic changes that occur when people become more tolerant and develop a wider sense of identity? and (b) What are the optimal means of encouraging these changes? Research on the contact hypothesis speaks to means but does not shed much light on the nature of intrapsychic changes. The question of intrapsychic changes that accompany increases in tolerance is profoundly important for psychological theories and practices that bear on a wide range of peace-promoting processes including the prevention of violence, the management of protracted conflicts, and reconciliation in the aftermath of ethnopolitical violence, to mention a few.

Kelman (1999) speculated about intrapsychic changes that must take place to enhance tolerance and a wider sense of identity in the context of the protracted conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. Central to his analysis is the contention that the conflicted parties are locked into a relation of negative interdependence such that the assertion of each group’s identity requires the negation of the other group’s identity. Under these conditions, the contact hypothesis can be implemented by using interactive problem-solving workshops. Kelman’s contention is
that the conflict will remain unresolved until both sides develop a larger, transcendent identity that does not threaten the particularistic identity of either side.

Brewer and Brown (1998) further complicate the picture, suggesting there may be a variety of ways in which intergroup contact influences social categorization processes. Contact may lead to decategorizing or personalizing the other, recategorizing or arriving at a common ingroup identity, subcategorizing or developing a distinct social identity, or cross-categorizing. Kelman (1999) seems to be arguing for a combination of recategorizing and subcategorizing to build a transcendent identity and reduce intolerance.

Recently, Brewer (2000) provided evidence for the usefulness of cross-categorization processes in connection with the reduction of intolerance. Her research suggested that individuals whose cognitive representations of their ingroup are complex tend to be more tolerant of outgroup members.

Clearly, research on social categorization has provided some insights into cognitive processes related to the promotion of tolerance. However, if tolerance and solidarity are orthogonal constructs, they may respond quite differently to the same social categorization process. Accordingly, we call for a socially transformative research agenda for peace psychology that would examine social categorization processes as they relate to the development of community or “solidarity” in a wider sense.

Another consideration that bears on research and practice in peace psychology is the level of analysis problem. The psychological processes operating between individuals are different from the processes governing group contact situations (Hewstone & Brown, 1986). Therefore, initiatives designed to promote tolerance and cross-group solidarity need to address both individual and group level processes.

Moving toward the macro level, there are a number of ways peace psychologists can promote cultures of peace (Wessells, Schwebel, & Anderson, 2001). In this article we have emphasized the importance of identifying ideologies that promote intolerance. Once these ideologies are exposed, a question that arises is how to mobilize people to change hierarchically organized societal structures and discourses of oppression. At present, we are only beginning to see research efforts that are fleshing out some of the psychological substrates of nonviolent social action (Mayton, 2001; Montiel, 2001).

In conclusion, it is evident from our brief review that contemporary psychological inquiry spans the intra-individual, intergroup, ideological, and societal-structural levels of analysis. Each makes a significant contribution to our understanding of tolerance and solidarity, and the complexity of how these levels interact makes us wary of simplistic solutions. Indeed, although interventions at the individual and local intergroup levels are important to pursue, their outcomes are powerfully constrained by forces operating at the ideological and social-structural level. These macro forces include contemporary celebrations of
individual and even national advancement over collective well-being, as well as real and perceived differences in resource allocation within and between nations. Peace psychologists can modestly contribute to a culture of peace by pointing out ideologies, social designs, and practices that support exclusion and intolerance, at macro and micro levels, within the context of a collaborative, multidisciplinary framework. Ultimately, all disciplines will have to contend with powerful groups that have a vested interest in maintaining and promoting current structural conditions, including the division of academic disciplines, an arrangement that makes multidisciplinary approaches to the problems of intolerance and exclusion challenging.

REFERENCES


