

Intergroup Conflict

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This article outlines some of the main social-psychological bases of intergroup conflict, illustrating the many ways in which social psychology can contribute to the study of conflict. The most convincing theoretical account is provided by perspectives that concentrate on the distinct nature of intergroup phenomena (especially social identity theory). Two of the most promising social-psychological interventions to reduce intergroup conflict are also reviewed. The first is based on improving contact between members of previously hostile groups; the second attempts to change the structure of social categorizations (via decategorization, recategorization, and crossed categorization). This social-psychological perspective is proposed as a key part of a necessary, multi-disciplinary approach to intergroup conflict.

Cet article présente certains des principaux fondements socio-psychologiques du conflit entre groupes et illustre les différentes façons par lesquelles la psychologie sociale peut contribuer à l'étude du conflit. L'interprétation théorique la plus convaincante provient des perspectives qui se concentrent sur la nature particulière des phénomènes inter-groupes (particulièrement la théorie de l'identité sociale). L'article examine aussi deux des interventions socio-psychologiques les plus prometteuses dans la réduction du conflit inter-groupes. La première est basée sur l'amélioration du contact entre membres de groupes antérieurement hostiles; la seconde essaie de changer la structure des catégorisations sociales (par la décatégorisation, la recatégorisation et la catégorisation croisée). Cette perspective socio-psychologique est vue comme un élément-clé d'une approche multidisciplinaire du conflit inter-groupes.

The diversity of phenomena subsumed under the term intergroup conflict is potentially vast, including prejudice, discrimination, injustice, perpetuation of inequality, oppression, ethnic cleansing, and genocide. At any one time, there are thousands of conflicts played out across the globe, some of which are ethnic (e.g. apartheid-era South Africa, former Yugoslavia), others of which are not (e.g. Belgium, Northern Ireland)¹. This article focuses primarily on prejudice and discrimination (i.e. negative attitudes and behaviours with respect to an out-group), and is divided into two main parts, each of which is a relatively brief and selective review of a large literature². The first part lays out some of the main social-psychological bases of intergroup conflict, and the second part presents some of the most promising social-psychological interventions to reduce intergroup conflict.

SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL BASES OF INTERGROUP CONFLICT

Conflict attracts and requires the research attention of, among others, anthropologists, historians, sociologists, economists, and political scientists, as well as social psychologists. But there are also distinct social-psychological bases of intergroup conflict, which primarily concern what is special about our behaviour as members of social groups. Although some social psychologists have attempted to account for intergroup conflict in terms of some intra-individual factor (e.g. personality, or frustration-leading-to-aggression; see Billig, 1976, for a review), a far more convincing account can be provided by concentrating on the distinct nature of *intergroup* phenomena.

Group Perspectives on Intergroup Conflict

Ethnocentrism. The roots of these perspectives can be traced back to Sumner's (1906; see also Brewer, 1979) sociological writings on the basic state of conflict between the "we group" (or in-group) and "othergroups" (or out-groups). Sumner termed intergroup biases in general *ethnocentrism*, defined as the "view of things in

¹ The interested reader can consult the "conflict data service" website of the Initiative on Conflict Resolution and Ethnicity (INCORE) (www.incore.ulst.ac.uk/cds/).

² For reasons of space, references are primarily given to recent reviews, rather than original sources.

which one's own group is the centre of everything, and all others are scaled or rated with reference to it" (Sumner, 1906). This general tendency can be seen in preferences for in-group characteristics, products, customs, languages, speech styles, and such. Sumner saw such biases as resulting from intergroup competition and functioning to preserve in-group solidarity and justify the exploitation of out-groups. However, whereas Sumner saw ethnocentrism as universal, social psychological research has examined what conditions lead to an increase or decrease in ethnocentrism.

Realistic Group Conflict Theory. This approach to intergroup relations (Brewer, 1979; LeVine & Campbell, 1972; Sherif, 1966) assumes that group conflicts are rational in the sense that groups have incompatible goals and compete for scarce resources. Thus the source of conflict is "realistic." Sherif and colleagues carried out a number of famous field studies of boys at summer camps, who were split up into different groups and engaged in various competitive behaviours. They concluded that competition causes intergroup conflict, and that there needed to be some positive and functional interdependence between groups, before conflict between them would abate (i.e. they must be made to cooperate). Superordinate goals, goals that neither group could attain on its own and that superseded other goals each group might have had, created this interdependence.

Notwithstanding the pioneering influence of Sherif's work, it did *not* show that conflict of interest was a necessary requirement for the emergence of intergroup hostility. As Billig (1976) noted, anecdotal evidence from Sherif's studies actually indicates that the negative reactions to an out-group emerged at a stage prior to the planned introduction of competition. Thus mere knowledge of the other group's presence was sufficient to trigger the first instances of intergroup discrimination. This realization of the potency of social categorization led to Tajfel's later work on social identity.

Social Identity Theory. According to social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), individuals define themselves to a large extent in terms of their social group memberships and tend to seek a positive social identity. This social identity consists of those aspects of an individual's self-image that derive from the social categories to which the individual perceives him- or herself to belong; and to the value and emotional significance ascribed to that membership. Thus it is a self-definition in terms of group membership. A positive social identity is achieved by comparing one's own group with other groups to establish a positively valued psychological distinctiveness for the in-group³. Emphasizing that motivational as well as cognitive factors underlie intergroup

differentiation, social identity theory holds that positive comparisons (intergroup differences seen to favour the in-group) provide a satisfactory social identity, whereas negative comparisons (differences that favour the out-group) convey an unsatisfactory identity. Social identity differs from earlier group perspectives in two key respects. First, in contrast to Sumner's claim that ethnocentrism is rampant, social identity theory predicts that members of social groups will differentiate primarily on dimensions that provide them with a favourable view of their own group (i.e. dimensions on which the in-group is superior to the out-group). Moreover, intergroup discrimination is often driven by in-group favouritism rather than out-group derogation (see Brewer, 1979). Second, in contrast to Sherif's claim that competitive goals cause conflict, social identity theory argues that social categorization per se can cause intergroup discrimination.

Tajfel and colleagues demonstrated the power of social categorization in their minimal groups paradigm (Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971). In this paradigm, participants are classified as members of two discrete groups, ostensibly on the basis of trivial criteria (e.g. preference for one of two abstract painters; over- or underestimation of dots shown in a pattern; even allocation to group X or Y according to the toss of a coin); in fact, allocation to group is always random. Participants then have to distribute rewards between pairs of other participants (not themselves) using specially designed booklets that assess the strength of various response strategies. The most interesting results concern how participants assign rewards between two anonymous others, one of whom is a member of their group, and one of whom belongs to the other group. The authors of the original research considered the groups to be minimal for the following reasons: (1) categorization into in-group and out-group was based on trivial criteria; (2) there was no explicit conflict of interests; (3) there had been no previous hostility; (4) participants did not engage in social interaction; (5) there was no rational link between economic self-interest and the strategy of favouring one's own group.

The most striking finding to emerge from these studies was that participants, although they made some effort to be fair in their allocations, showed a persistent tendency to give higher rewards to another (unknown) in-group member than to another (unknown) out-group member (see Brewer, 1979). Participants were particularly keen to ensure that their fellow in-group member received a higher reward than the out-group member, rather than to maximize rewards gained for the in-group or to maximize joint gain (i.e. for both groups). According to social identity theory, the only way for participants in these studies to obtain a positive social identity is by identifying with the groups into which they are categorized, and then ensuring that their group comes off best in the only available comparison between the groups (i.e. giving more rewards to the in-group than the out-group).

These results illustrate how trivial differences can lead to conflicts. It would be difficult to over-estimate the

³ Social identity theory claims that social categorization arouses self-evaluative social comparison processes whereby individuals strive to obtain a positive self-esteem. The evidence for this claim is, however, unconvincing (Rubin & Hewston, 1997).

importance of social categorization, and its link via social comparison to social identity and the need for psychological distinctiveness. The social identity approach has now become the dominant explanatory framework for the study of intergroup relations in social psychology (see Brewer & Brown, 1998).

Outside the laboratory, social identity has had to confront the fact that groups in conflict often differ in status, and that changing status relations and their perceived legitimacy are crucial determining characteristics of intergroup relations. Thus when lower status or minority groups perceive the dominant group's position as illegitimate and unstable, they use a variety of different strategies to obtain a positive social identity: (1) they may search for a positive identity by redefining characteristics of their own group which had previously been seen as negative; (2) they may find new dimensions for making comparisons between the groups; (3) they may even find a new comparison group. Only later may the out-group be directly confronted, as when comparisons are made directly on dimensions such as power and status, and the lower-status group demands equality. This in turn may threaten the identity of the dominant group, leading to a backlash. All these strategies are discussed in more detail by Tajfel (1978; see also Ellemers, 1994; Van Knippenberg & Ellemers, 1990). In particular, social identity theory helps us to understand the behaviour of those whose identity is perceived to be threatened, and whose behaviour might otherwise seem quite irrational or pointless. An example from Northern Ireland is the insistence of members of the Orange Order (Protestant Unionists) that they be allowed to march down the Garvaghy Road, located in the centre of a Catholic area of Drumcree. To outsiders, the route of the march may seem irrelevant, but to members of a previously dominant group whose very identity is threatened, it may come to mean everything.

Is There Something Special about Intergroup Behaviour?

Tajfel (1978) compared interpersonal and intergroup forms of behaviour. He proposed a hypothetical continuum, with end-points of pure interpersonal and intergroup behaviour, respectively. Interpersonal behaviour concerns relations that are completely determined by interpersonal characteristics of those involved (e.g. two friends). Intergroup behaviour concerns relations that are defined totally in terms of individuals' memberships of social groups or categories (e.g. a member of one group killing an innocent, unknown member on the other side of a conflict simply because he was a member of the out-group).

Tajfel suggested that intergroup behaviour could be distinguished by three criteria. First, at least two clearly identifiable social categories should be present in the situation (e.g. a Hutu and a Tutsi, a Catholic and Protes-

tant, a Serb and a Croat). Second, there should be little variability of behaviour or attitude within each group. Intergroup behaviour tends to be uniform (i.e. "we" agree about "them"), whereas interpersonal behaviour shows a range of individual differences. Third, a member of one group should show little variability in his or her treatment of members of the other group (i.e. "they" are "all alike"); in Tajfel's words, out-group members are treated as "undifferentiated items in a unified social category" (1978, p. 45). There is evidence that people's behaviour is indeed qualitatively different in group settings (see Brown & Turner, 1981). For example, when group membership is salient (e.g. during overt conflict), the individual tends to become depersonalized in the group; this is not a loss of identity (deindividuation) but a shift from personal to social identity. A concern with the in-group takes over from a concern with the self; in-group favouritism replaces self-favouritism; the self is stereotyped as an in-group member; and the in-group is viewed as coherent and homogeneous (see Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). There is also extensive evidence that groups are more competitive and aggressive than individuals (e.g. Schopler & Insko, 1992). In a similar vein, Brewer (1997) has proposed an in-group/out-group schema, consisting of three principles likely to operate in any social situation in which a particular in-group/out-group categorization is made salient. The *intergroup accentuation principle* refers to assimilation within category boundaries and contrast between categories; all members of the in-group are seen as more similar to the self than members of the out-group. The *in-group favouritism principle* refers to the selective generalization of positive affect (trust, liking) to fellow in-group, but not out-group, members. The *social competition principle* refers to the fact that intergroup social comparison is typically perceived in terms of competition, rather than cooperation, with the out-group.

Of equal importance to the empirical evidence are the theoretical implications that follow from the distinction between interpersonal and intergroup behaviour (Brown & Turner, 1981). First, theories that attempt to explain intergroup phenomena by reference to interpersonal relations are unlikely to be very predictive. Second, if the individual is depersonalized in the group, then what affects the group as a whole has implications for the individual. Intergroup behaviour is likely to be influenced by intergroup relations of status, power, and so on, not by interpersonal relations. Third, some variables that have one effect on interpersonal relations may have a different effect on intergroup relations. For example, similarity may have attractive properties at an interpersonal level, but may threaten group distinctiveness and lead to intergroup discrimination. For all these reasons, Tajfel (1979) came to conclude that intergroup behaviour requires a different level of analysis from intra- or interpersonal behaviour.

Types of Intergroup Conflict

Tajfel and Turner (1979) distinguished between a number of types of conflict. This helps to highlight where social psychology's contribution should be greatest.

Objective vs. Subjective Conflict. When we talk about conflicts we normally have in mind what Tajfel and Turner (1979) call *objective conflicts* over power, for example wealth or territory. These conflicts obviously have their determinants outside the realm of psychology and require an analysis in terms of social, economic, political, and historical structures. These objective conflicts can be distinguished from psychological or *subjective conflicts*, such as attempts to establish positively valued distinctiveness. Although distinct, objective and subjective conflicts are often interwoven, and subjective conflict can exist long after objective disparities disappear (cf. Deutsch's, 1973, notion of destructive conflicts that are likely to continue after initiating causes have become irrelevant).

Explicit vs. Implicit Conflict. A further distinction can be made between explicit and implicit conflicts. An *explicit conflict* is legitimized and institutionalized by rules or norms (e.g. the competition between groups in Sherif's studies or the World Cup competition for international football teams). Tajfel and Turner (1979) propose that the behaviour toward the out-group in this kind of conflict can, in turn, be classified into instrumental and noninstrumental behaviour. The former refers to actions aimed at causing the in-group to win the competition (such behaviour can be explained in terms of the motive to win), Noninstrumental behaviour is more interesting, psychologically, because it is gratuitous discrimination against out-groups, and has no sense outside the context of intergroup relations. A prime example is the ascription of negative stereotypes to members of out-groups, and indeed to the group as a whole. Generally, a set of traits is attributed to all (or most) members of the category: individuals belonging to the category are assumed to be similar to each other, and different from the in-group on this set of traits. Treating the out-group in this way makes them more predictable, can be used to justify discriminatory behaviour, and can help group members to differentiate the in-group positively from the out-group (see Oakes, Haslam, & Turner, 1994).

Finally, *implicit conflicts* exist in the absence of explicit institutionalization (e.g. experimental participants' preference for relative gain at the expense of the out-group in the minimal groups paradigm, even when this means a decrease in objective reward and where there is no explicit conflict of interests). Tajfel and Turner (1979) refer to the many cases in real life where differentiations of all kinds are made between groups by their members although, on the face of it, there are no reasons for these differentiations to occur. A tragic example is

provided by the Tutsis and Hutus in Rwanda. Contrary to widespread beliefs, they are not ethnic or tribal groups; they have the same language, religion, and culture, there has been a history of extensive intermarriage and even people exchanging identities. In fact, they are essentially the same people, but differences between them were emphasized by colonialists, leading to exaggeration of quite small differences in physical attributes such as height and skin colour. In this instance, what began as social differentiation ended up as genocide (see Prunier, 1995).

Thus social psychological aspects of conflict are most evident in the case of implicit conflict, and are also illustrated by noninstrumental behaviours associated with explicit conflicts. But they can also be important where objective and subjective conflicts have become inseparable, and a contemporary subjective conflict has outlived a more ancient objective one.

Summary

The overview of social-psychological bases of intergroup conflict illustrates that there are many ways in which social psychology can illuminate the study of conflict, and many points at which a conflict can become psychological. We believe the social identity approach has most to offer this area theoretically, and that many apparently pointless conflicts become more understandable when viewed as, at least in part, attempts to establish, maintain, or defend cherished social identities. Finally, we have also argued that intergroup behaviour is distinct from interpersonal behaviour, and that specific types of conflict can be identified in which social-psychological considerations are crucial.

SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERVENTIONS TO REDUCE INTERGROUP CONFLICT

In this second part of this article we give an overview of two main types of interventions aimed at reducing intergroup conflict (see Hewstone, 1996). The first is based on bringing about positive and cooperative contact between members of previously hostile groups, and the second attempts to change the structure of social categorizations. Both interventions may be aimed at changing various aspects of intergroup perception and behaviour, but we will focus on three main types of change identified by Brewer and Miller (1988). The first is a change in attitudes towards the social category as a whole, making the view of an out-group less negative or preferably more positive. The second is an increase in the perceived variability of the out-group, whereby the perceiver comes to view the out-group in a less simple, more differentiated way. The third kind of change involves a decrease in category use (termed decategorization), whereby the perceiver comes to see the old categorization as less, or no longer, useful for identifying and classifying individuals.

Contact between Members of Different Groups

There is now extensive evidence that contact between members of different groups, under appropriate conditions, can improve intergroup relations (see Pettigrew, 1998). Favourable conditions include cooperative contact between equal-status members of the two groups, in a situation that allows the individuals to get to know each other on more than a superficial basis, and with the support of relevant social groups and authorities. But there remain serious limitations to the so-called contact hypothesis (Hewstone & Brown, 1986).

One of the most serious limitations is that participants in cooperative contact programmes do not necessarily generalize their positive attitudes and perceptions. Even if they do come to view one or a small number of individuals from the other group more positively, they may not generalize beyond the specific situation in which the positive contact took place, and they may not generalize from specific contact partners to the group as a whole (Hewstone & Brown, 1986). Recent work on intergroup contact is aimed at overcoming precisely this limitation. There is also evidence to suggest that contact with an out-group is associated with intergroup anxiety (Stephan & Stephan, 1985). This anxiety may be caused by low- or poor-quality contact, negative expectations or stereotypes about the out-group, or a history of intergroup conflict. Importantly, intergroup anxiety is associated with poor recall of the contact experience, increased avoidance, and increased out-group stereotyping.

If there are theoretical and practical limitations to intergroup contact, why the insistence on its implementation? The answer to this question has two parts, the first dealing with why contact has to be engineered, and the second justifying why we should bother to bring about contact. Unless proactive attempts are made to bring about contact, many people avoid intergroup contact. This effect is likely to be exacerbated in the context of conflict where any dealing with the other side may be proscribed and violations severely sanctioned (e.g. Rwanda). In addition, society itself may be so segregated (e.g. Northern Ireland) that unless we intervene there is almost no opportunity for contact.

Contact between groups can sometimes be the cause of hostility, especially when it leads to intergroup comparisons concerning inequalities of resources such as land and other commodities. But in principle we believe that some contact, especially where it can be made positive and cooperative, is desirable. The absence of contact is likely to reduce the likelihood of future contact, strengthen the assumption that the two groups have different (even irreconcilable) beliefs, maintain intergroup anxiety, and reinforce the boundary between groups.

Interpersonal vs. Intergroup Contact. A major limitation of research on contact is the failure to generalize from positive interpersonal encounters to views of the out-group as a whole. Hewstone and Brown (1986) there-

fore argued that unless contact can be characterized as *intergroup* (i.e. between individuals as group representatives), it is unlikely to generalize to the group as a whole. Group affiliations should still be clear in contact situations, and when members of one group meet members of the other group, they should both be seen, at least to some extent, as typical of their groups. Only under these circumstances should cooperative contact lead to more positive ratings of the out-group as a whole (see Hewstone, 1996). Despite this evidence, there are some potential dangers associated with intergroup contact. Where intergroup conflict is extreme, contact may promote intergroup anxiety, and it may be better to begin with positive interpersonal contact, and later make group memberships salient (Hewstone, 1996; Pettigrew, 1998). Another serious practical limitation is that optimal contact is hard to bring about on a large scale, especially for adult participants (for the young it is somewhat easier when incorporated into formal education). Wright and colleagues have proposed an extended contact effect to overcome this limitation (see Wright, Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe, & Ropp, 1997), in which knowledge that a fellow in-group member has a close relationship with an out-group member is used as a catalyst to promote more positive intergroup attitudes. This extended contact is second-hand, rather than involving the participants in direct intergroup contact themselves, and so could potentially bring about widespread reductions in prejudice without everyone having to have out-group friendships themselves. This second-hand contact may also overcome the problem that contact with an out-group is associated with intergroup anxiety (Stephan & Stephan, 1985).

Changing Social Categorizations

Since social categorization is the cause of discrimination, an improvement in intergroup relations must be brought about by reducing the salience of existing social categories (Brewer & Miller, 1984). Different interventions try to achieve this by very different means. The first, decategorization, seeks to eliminate categorization; the second and third, recategorization and crossed categorization, seek to alter *which* categorizations are used (see also Wilder, 1986).

Decategorization. Brewer and Miller's (1984, 1988) personalization model suggests that contact between members of different groups should be differentiated (allowing for distinctions to be made among out-group members) and personalized (allowing for perceptions of the uniqueness of out-group members). The goal then is a more interpersonally oriented and non-category-based form of responding that allows members "to attend to information that replaces category identity as the most useful basis for classifying each other" (Brewer & Miller, 1984, p.288).

Brewer, Miller, and their colleagues have tested their model in a series of experimental studies (see Bettencourt,

Brewer, Rogers-Croak, & Miller, 1992; Bettencourt, Charlton, & Kernahan, 1997; Miller, Brewer, & Edwards, 1985). The studies confirmed the hypothesized effects of personalized contact. Participants who adopted an interpersonal focus displayed significantly less in-group favoritism than did either those who focused on the task, or those in a control condition. Participants also differentiated among out-group members more in the interpersonal conditions and there was a strong correlation between perceived similarity of out-group members (to each other) and the degree of intergroup bias shown.

Personalization aims to, and can, achieve decategorization: individuation of out-group members results in the category being seen as less useful and, thus, being used less often. This intervention may also succeed in changing perceived group variability (encouraging a more complex and differentiated perception of the out-group), which may ultimately reduce the likelihood of applying a stereotype to individual members in the future. However, the very conditions that promote personalization impede generalization of attitudes from individual members of the out-group to the out-group as a whole.

Recategorization. Both recategorization and crossed categorization are interventions inspired theoretically by social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978) and, more recently, by self-categorization theory (e.g. Turner et al., 1987). These theories emphasize that we all typically belong to several social categories and therefore may have a series of social identifications, one of which is salient at any given time. Self-categorization theory develops the earlier social-identity perspective by arguing that self can be conceived on a number of levels of inclusiveness. The level at which the self is defined determines how one relates to others, including members of the same group.

Gaertner, Dovidio, Anastasio, Bachman, and Rust (1993) argue that intergroup bias can be reduced by factors that transform members' perceptions of group boundaries from "us and them" to a more inclusive "we" (e.g. in Northern Ireland Protestants and Catholics might unite in their support for the Ulster rugby team playing against French opposition). They acknowledge that several factors influence intergroup bias and conflict, but their common in-group identity model regards the cognitive representations of the situation as the critical mediating variable (see also Dovidio, Gaertner, Isen, Rust, & Guerra, 1998). Whereas a representation of the situation as one involving two groups is thought to maintain or enhance intergroup biases, decategorized (i.e. separate individuals) or recategorized (i.e. common ingroup identity) representations are expected to reduce tension, albeit in different ways. Decategorization reduces bias through a process that moves initial in-group members away from the self and towards out-group members; thus former in-group members are seen less positively and as more evaluatively similar to out-group members. Recategorization, in contrast, should reduce bias by increasing the attractiveness of

former out-group members, once they are included within the superordinate group structure. The common in-group identity model resolves in-group vs. out-group conflict by changing group boundaries and creating, at a superordinate level, a common in-group identity.

There is extensive support for the common in-group identity model from laboratory experiments (reviewed by Gaertner et al., 1993). Bias was lower with a one-group than a two-group representation, and attraction to former out-group members was increased. Intergroup cooperation reduced bias via its effect on cognitive representations of social categorization. Two outstanding problems remain, however. First, common in-group identity may only be short-lived, or may not be realistic in the face of powerful ethnic and racial categorizations (e.g. the break-up of former Yugoslavia into Serbs, Croats, Bosnians, etc.). A more successful strategy may involve a superordinate identity and distinctive subgroup identities. Second, a joint limitation of both the decategorization and recategorization perspectives is that they seek to de-emphasize cherished identities. Yet, since membership of ethnic and other kinds of groups often provides a source of desired social identity (Tajfel, 1978), it may be impractical as well as undesirable for all parties concerned to ignore distinctive memberships. As Brewer (1997, p. 203) concluded: "Decategorization and recategorization—as appealing as these concepts are—are inherently limited in their applicability when we move from the laboratory to real-life situations in which social groups are very large and the context is highly politicized." One solution to this problem is to use a combination of different strategies. Hewstone (1996), for example, suggested that where intergroup relations are characterised by high anxiety, initial contact should be interpersonal, only later making group memberships salient, and addressing intergroup differences. Similarly, Pettigrew (1998) suggested that at the initial stage, contact should involve interpersonal (decategorized) relations to promote early positive interactions. In the slightly longer term, group differences should be highlighted to promote categorization and therefore generalization. Finally, recategorization becomes possible over the course of extended contact.

Crossed Categorization. Most realistic intergroup contexts involve several categorizations, some of which coincide and some of which cut across each other. Thus others may be out-group on one dimension (e.g. different ethnic groups in Eritrea), but in-group on another (sharing either Muslim or Christian religion). Where others can be classified as out-group members on multiple dimensions, the situation involves converging boundaries, where discrimination is likely to be increased. Many instances of intergroup conflict in the real world involve just such multiple converging social categorizations. For example, in Belfast, Northern Ireland, Catholics and Protestants tend to live in different places (e.g. Shankhill Road vs. Ardoyne), espouse different politics (Nationalist-Republican vs. Unionist-Loyalist), and even

support different football teams (e.g. Cliftonville vs. Linfield).

The idea that crossed categorization might be used as an intervention comes from early anthropological work showing lower levels of conflict in societies with cross-cutting structures than those with pyramidal-segmentary structures (see Crisp & Hewstone, 1999). Social psychologists later analyzed how crossed categorization should affect the categorization process itself. According to Doise's (1978) category differentiation model, single or simple categorization leads to two cognitive processes: an accentuation of both the differences between categories (an interclass effect) and similarities within categories (an intraclass effect). In contrast, the crossing of two categorizations leads to convergence between the categories (weakening the interclass effect) and divergence within each category (weakening the intraclass effect). Thus, for example, the accentuation of perceived similarities within one category (e.g. A rather than B) will be counteracted by a simultaneously aroused accentuation of perceived differences, since category A contains two different subgroups according to another (e.g. X/Y) categorization. As a result of these processes, intergroup discrimination based on the A/B categorization should, theoretically, be reduced or even eliminated.

However, the results of experiments have typically not shown that crossed categorization could eliminate discrimination, or even reduce it below the level of discrimination aimed at single out-groups. Most studies do, however, show greatest bias against the double out-group, which is reduced when the target is a member of the in-group on one dimension and the out-group on the other (see meta-analysis by Migdal, Hewstone, & Mullen, 1998). This result suggests that crossed categorization can still be effective as an intervention, by helping to reduce bias against existing double (or multiple) out-groups. It should do this, in part, by making perceivers aware that the out-group consists of different subgroups (thus achieving differentiation). It should also reduce the importance of any one category, force the perceiver to classify other individuals in terms of multiple dimensions, and point to at least some similarities between groups (see Vanbeselaere, 1991).

Like the other interventions reviewed, there remain limitations to the use of crossed categorization. Since one categorization is normally dominant in cases of conflict, even crossing multiple alternative categories may not weaken discrimination. Crossing categories may also not help when categories are correlated, as is the case in many real conflicts (e.g. in Nigeria, the Yoruba tribe are predominantly Christian and the Hausa predominantly Muslim). There is also a need for further basic research exploring when and how various models of crossed categorization might operate, and what type of change is brought about by this intervention. Nonetheless, crossed categorization does provide an important intervention for reducing bias against outgroups characterized by converging boundaries.

Changing Social Structures

Our emphasis in this part of the article is on social-psychological interventions. Nonetheless, we acknowledge that "conflict resolution must go beyond changes in perceptions, attitudes, and qualities to the creation of enduring structures that institutionalize equality, autonomy, and respect among different groups" (Fisher, 1994, p. 61). These structures include federalization and consociational arrangements for what McGarry and O'Leary (1993) called the macro-political regulation of ethnic conflict. For example, electoral systems can be designed to fragment the support of a majority ethnic group, induce a majority ethnic group to behave moderately toward another ethnic group, or encourage multi-ethnic coalitions (see Horowitz, 1985). We wish to emphasize, however, that whatever political structures are advocated, this decision should be guided by what we know about social categorization and its impact on conflict. At present some scholars advocate structural arrangements that cross-cut ethnic boundaries, whereas others argue that they should follow them.

We also acknowledge that resolution of social conflicts involves more than changing negative stereotypes and improving intergroup attitudes. In principle, interventions that succeed in reducing prejudice and discrimination could still leave participants unable to forgive, and certainly to forget, earlier atrocities. We therefore propose that social psychologists should take a wider view of outcome measures that should be addressed by their conflict interventions, and a correspondingly broader perspective on the types of intervention that they should be evaluating.

Summary

This overview of social-psychological interventions to reduce intergroup conflict shows that different interventions can achieve different kinds of change. We have argued that an absence of contact between groups will polarize images and reinforce group boundaries; moreover, intergroup contact under appropriate conditions can bring about generalized change in out-group attitudes. Changing the structure of social categorizations is also important and decategorization, recategorization, and crossed categorization can reduce or change the salience of existing categorization in a complementary fashion. Indeed, interventions most likely to succeed will integrate these perspectives. Changing the social structure may also, ultimately, be necessary, but it should be guided by what we know about the functioning of social categorization.

CONCLUSIONS

Our aim in this article has been to present some of the main contributions of a social-psychological approach to conflict, and how this approach is different to the

contributions made by other disciplines. We have demonstrated the potency of social categorization and argued that the social identity theoretical approach helps us to understand why social categorization can so easily lead to intergroup conflict. Although there is certainly more to most social conflicts than mere psychology, we have argued that most intergroup conflicts have an identifiable social-psychological component. This psychological component can exist alongside and exacerbate objective conflicts, and attacking this component of conflict is important in and of itself. We have also reviewed what we see as the most important group-based social-psychological interventions aimed at reducing intergroup conflict. These include intergroup contact under appropriate conditions and attempts to reduce the salience of existing social categorizations. These interventions are not intended as a panacea for conflict, but rather as a set of ideas that can be used to achieve specific types of improved intergroup relations. These interventions, like our social-psychological perspective, are not meant to replace alternative interventions, but to be used as part of a necessary, multi-disciplinary approach to intergroup conflict.

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