

Culture's role in conflict and conflict management: Some suggestions, many questions[☆]

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Abstract

The contributions to this edition of the *Journal* are viewed as identifying two roles of culture in intergroup conflict. One is that culture separates people into an in-group and out-group based on the criterion of whether or not they share a common culture. According to social identity theory, this division creates the necessary condition for intergroup (intercultural) conflict. The second role is that culture shapes the individual's perception of conflict and how he or she will respond to the conflict. It is argued that embedded within the history and myths of a culture are stories that identify specific out-groups as likely protagonists. A model for achieving peaceful co-existence between cultural groups is presented. Peaceful co-existence has three components: cognition (acceptance of the right of the out-group to exist), emotion (low fear of the out-group), and behavior (willingness to engage in cooperative interaction with the out-group). It is argued that in order to achieve peaceful co-existence between cultural groups, intergroup contact must promote the security and identity of the ingroup, reduce the perceived threat of the out-group, and promote the perception of diversity within the out-group. The difficulties of achieving positive relations between cultural groups is recognized, and that a focus on intercultural relations should be prevention of hostility rather than reducing violent conflict after it has occurred.

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1. Introduction

When most people think of Hawaii, their thoughts turn to pounding surf, sandy beaches, and captivating hula dances. Hawaii is all of these, but when I moved to Hawaii 6 years ago, two additional characteristics were quickly added to my picture of paradise. Hawaii is one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse places in the world; the most recent US. census identified the island of Hawaii as the most ethnically diverse county in the country. No single ethnic group constitutes a majority. The social landscape includes Hawaiians, Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, Pacific Islanders, and white Americans representing many ethnic backgrounds. As an example of this diversity, my immediate neighbors are a Hawaiian, a Chinese couple, a Japanese family, and a Portuguese family.

The second characteristic that captured my attention when I moved to Hawaii was the fertility of the soil. Everything grows here, and it grows year round. One can cut a branch from a plant, jab it into the ground, and several days later, it will begin to root. And best of all, I found that I could grow my own bananas in my back yard. With visions of fresh bananas every morning, I mined my back yard with small banana plants.

Who could find conflict and culture in this happy story? But conflict was lurking just around the corner. To my delight, my banana plants thrived. I was soon enjoying the fruits of my labor. But it was not long before I learned that rampant fertility can breed cultural confrontation. My banana plants multiplied like rabbits, refusing to recognize the boundaries of my property. The plants happily invaded my neighbors' lands. I hacked, poisoned, and cursed the plants, but for each one I killed, two more sprung up in its place!

Relief came when my Hawaiian neighbor smiled knowingly, joked about the "fruits of the land", and harvested the banana crop now growing on his land. But my Japanese neighbor scowled, and lost no opportunity to inform me that "this situation" was another indication of white haoles' insensitivity and arrogance; "they" (haoles) were bent on taking over the island and had no respect for their neighbors. (Even though the plants are now only bad memories, my neighbor [and my friend] still reminds me that "a Japanese family would never act this way.") My banana plants had created a haole vs. Japanese skirmish. My Chinese neighbor never said a word, but late at night I would hear strange chopping sounds (thump, thump), and in the morning I would find the remnants of banana plants stacked neatly in my yard. And my Portuguese neighbor responded by planting a variety of giant banana on our border, laughingly proclaiming, "You think you can grow bananas, now you'll see what a Portuguese banana can do!"

The banana plants are now gone (save one that we keep as a monument), and harmony has returned to the neighborhood, but important lessons remain. One lesson obviously is that one should not plant bananas in a small yard. But the broader lesson has to do with the role of culture in conflict and conflict management. Indeed, this lesson is also clearly evident in papers that comprise this edition of the *Journal*. Culture plays two related but distinct roles in the conflict. On one hand, culture (and ethnicity) serves as the vehicle for identifying and distinguishing the groups that are likely to be parties to conflict. This role is most clearly seen in the responses of my Japanese and Portuguese neighbors. For my Japanese neighbor, I represented white American culture and he represented Japanese culture. My runaway banana plants epitomized the evils of white American culture, and were viewed as a direct affront to Japanese culture. My neighbor and I represented two different groups separated by culture, as well as the boundaries of our land. Similarly, my Portuguese neighbor's comments showed his view that the "banana war" was one

involving two groups (his [Portuguese] and mine [white haole]). Likewise, the participants in Kelman's workshops represent two distinct groups (Palestinians and Israeli Jews) identified and separated by their culture. The ultimate aim of the workshop is to entice the participants to influence policy that can reduce conflict between the groups. In Berry's paper, culture distinguishes immigrants from the receiving host. These cultural differences are the grounds for conflict, and "resolution" is determined by how the different cultural groups adapt to each other (acculturation).

The second role for culture occurs at the intragroup level. In this case, culture shapes the way individuals perceive a conflict and respond to it. My Hawaiian neighbor (presumably influenced by his culture) saw no conflict in a situation that he viewed as being created by "the land", while my Chinese neighbor (also reflecting his culture's influence) avoided direct confrontation with me by silently (except for his nightly attack on the plants) resolving the problem on his border. This role of culture is the focus of the papers by Marsella, Davidheiser, and Hammer. Marsella points out that culture shapes the way people "construct their realities" and ultimately guides conflict and confrontation. Davidheiser explores how (whether) culture shapes people's approaches to dealing with conflict within their cultural group. He tested the hypothesis that different cultures have different ways of approaching mediation and conflict resolution. Hammer, too, examines the role of culture in shaping people's approach to conflict. However, he casts a wider net focusing on general styles (direct/indirect, emotionally expressive/emotionally restrained) rather than specific types of mediation. The underlying message in these three papers is that culture has a hand in guiding how people deal with conflict.

These two roles often overlap, and together they make a clear case for the urgent need to consider culture when examining conflict. In fact, I think it is very likely that culture will become more prominent, rather than less prominent, in conflicts around the world (Cushner, this volume). One reason for this is that there is increasing contact between people of different cultures. European population growth has slowed to a crawl (declined in some places), but the demand for workers has increased. As a result there is increasing immigration to every country in Western Europe resulting in contact between cultures that previously had been separate. The new catch word in international business is "outsourcing" which not only involves placing jobs in other cultures, but requires contact between consumers and "source" who share neither location nor culture. And despite the important role of culture in daily lives, culture and foreign language have become less evident in school curriculums in the United States and several other countries. The lack of cultural understanding is clearly seen in the question that has become increasingly common since the 9/11 attacks: "Why do they (Arabs, Muslims) hate us (Americans)?" In the remainder of my discussion, I will explore and expand upon the two roles of culture in conflict. Rather than review or summarize the points made by the papers in this edition of the *Journal*, I will use these discussions to illustrate points and raise questions about culture and conflict.

2. Culture's role in defining the participants in conflict

Culture and the closely related concept of ethnicity are major forces drawing the line between in-group and out-group. Culture which includes history, language, dress, religion, food preferences, and beliefs/attitudes is the glue that binds people together. People who share a common history, a common language and common religion share a common

identity. And culture and ethnicity are the basic building blocks of one's personal identity. The division of people into groups by culture is not only pervasive but it is often clearly visible. Factors such as language, dress, and symbols are readily apparent and easily seen. One need have little contact with another to determine his/her culture and ethnicity. However, recognizing these differences does not necessarily explain why or how they contribute to conflict and confrontation.

Early theories on intergroup relations argued that frustration or competition (Berkowitz, 1962; Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, & Sears, 1939; Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961) was the basis for violent confrontation. These theories suggest that cultural groups should be able to co-exist until there is competition over scarce resources or one of the groups feels that its goals are thwarted. However, more recent work on self-categorization (Turner, 1987) and social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) suggests that simply delineating an in-group and an out-group is sufficient to ignite in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination. Social identity theory posits that individuals' esteem and personal identity is based partly on the groups to which they belong. Once group identity becomes salient, individuals will advantage their own group and discriminate against the out-group. This discrimination and conflict can occur in the absence of intent or competition.

Even if this conflict is not overt and violent, the seeds of intergroup conflict reside along the cultural divide waiting for an incident or leader to nourish them into intergroup confrontation. The salience of cultural differences can be fanned by the rhetoric of nationalism or the blame that may accompany economic strife or other group crisis. When this occurs neighbors cease being the next-door resident, but, rather, are perceived as Croat and Serb or Hutu and Tutsi. Hatred and violence ignite along these ethnic lines. The conflict is facilitated by the tendency to view the out-group as homogeneous; "they" are all the same (aggressive, dangerous, inhuman, stupid). Numerous investigators (Linville, Fischer, & Salavoy, 1989; Quattrone & Jones, 1980) have found that individuals view the out-group as more homogeneous than the in-group. Defining groups along cultural or ethnic lines and perceiving all people in the cultural out-group as the same sets the stage for intergroup conflict.

This is a rather depressing scenario for the student of intercultural relations. It suggests that cultural groups cannot reside together without conflict and confrontation. However, there are several points that offer some hope for the course of intercultural relations. First, although self-categorization and social identity theories have been offered as approaches that can shed light on a wide variety of situations involving intergroup relations, much of the research has involved laboratory groups in the minimal group paradigm (Hogg & Abrams, 2003). The "groups" in these situations are categories and the responses often are confined to assigning resources (points) and perceptions of the groups (Abrams & Hogg, 2001). I will return to these points, but it is important to recognize that the case for social identity in violent cultural conflict has not yet been established (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000). A second reason for hope can be found in research aimed at identifying approaches (and processes) that reduce intergroup conflict and hatred (Allport, 1954; Amir, 1969; Pettigrew, 1998; Sherif et al., 1961). In general, these approaches focus on contact between people of equal status working toward a common or shared goal. Kelman's workshop approach (this volume) embraces these steps. Other investigators have suggested additional factors to facilitate the role of contact. Pettigrew (1998), for example, suggested that the contact should result in forming friendships across group (cultural) lines. Worchel,

Andreoli, & Folger. (1977) found that only cooperative efforts that resulted in success (rather than failure) cooled the fires of conflict.

Although this research on intergroup contact offers a guide for reducing intercultural conflict, it must be embraced with caution. It must be remembered that violent confrontations between cultural and ethnic groups often arise in situations where the groups have a history of cooperative contact (Yugoslavia, Rwanda). This point aside, even if we accept the positive role of contact, we must still puzzle about why contact has an effect. What are the processes involved? Numerous investigators delved into the processes that serve as the basis for the contact–conflict resolution. Although there have been several theories on this issue, the most widely embraced ones focus on categorization, or, more correctly, changes in categorization as the result of contact. According to this perspective, contact leads individuals from the different groups to view themselves as belonging to a common group/category or as sharing characteristics (recategorization: Gaertner, Mann, Murrell, & Dovidio, 1989). Or contact encourages individuals to ignore categories altogether and perceive others as individuals (decategorization: Brewer, Manzi, & Shaw, 1993). Contact will be successful in reducing conflict and violence to the extent that individuals see themselves as belonging to a common group or category, or by eliminating the focus (salience) of group categories. At a conceptual level, these processes have some similarity with Berry's (this volume) acculturation processes of integration and assimilation. Eliminate or blend cultural differences between immigrants and hosts and you reduce stress and conflict.

Dealing with intercultural or interethnic conflict should simply involve applying these general theories and approaches into this realm. Obviously the answer is not that simple. The world continues to witness violence between cultural groups. We can share Marsella's (this volume) frustration about the deteriorating relations between many cultural groups, and his lament that at least in the United States, a culture that promotes conflict and violence has developed. One of his suggestions to reverse this process is to create "peace universities" to expose students to issues surrounding war and conflict. But one must be motivated to inquire about what we would teach these students. Do we understand the forces that instigate intercultural confrontation, and are there lessons in the conflict resolution literature that, if applied, would have the desired effects? To these questions I would suggest that existing research on intergroup relations provides, at best, a beginning to understanding intercultural conflict and violence. In an insightful review of the literature and theories on the causes of war, Fresard (2004) reached the same conclusion; the research has established a good beginning, but we are still far from understanding the causes of war and the approaches to peace. Large gaps in understanding intercultural conflict still exist. In order to bridge these gaps social science needs to develop new paradigms for research and new perspectives to define the issues. Given limited space, my examination will be cursory, but I have addressed these issues in more depth in a recent publication (Worchel, in press).

2.1. Conflict's role in groups

Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) argues that the division of people into groups can sow the seeds of conflict. However, one can point to countless examples where multiple cultural groups exist peacefully side-by-side. The cultural differences are salient as are the boundaries of the cultural groups. For example, Hawaii's islands are populated by

numerous cultural groups, each openly engaging in its own traditions, practices, and languages. These groups exist in a state of relative harmony, although one may well argue that the conditions for future conflict exist. Likewise, the suggestion that contact, even involving equal status, will necessarily reduce conflict ignores the fact that contact is often a factor in igniting violence between groups (Brewer, 1979; Berry, this volume). Further, one must ask why groups in conflict would agree to engage in cooperative contact when anger and hatred characterize their relationship. In the laboratory, an experimenter can “order” contact and set the conditions for this contact. But this is not the case in situations of intercultural conflict.

It is important to place the research and theories that focus on general intergroup relations in the specific context of intercultural and interethnic relations. For example, in much of the work on social identity theory, the “group” exists as a category within the individual’s cognitive framework. However, enduring groups, such as cultural groups, have structure, leaders, norms, and purpose. Enduring groups, that have a history and expectations about the future, have a goal to survive and thrive well into the future. In order to accomplish this goal, the group must ensure that individual members remain faithful to the group and carry on its traditions (Worchel, Coutant-Sassic, & Wong, 1993). In order to survive and retain its identity, the group must influence the behavior of its members. When Hawaiians became concerned that their culture was fading out, efforts were made to “revive” the culture. Hawaiian immersion schools, that taught Hawaiian language and culture, were created. New university programs in language and culture were developed. Hawaiian groups became politically active. And accompanying the creation of these opportunities were pressures, sometimes subtle and sometimes more direct, on Hawaiians to participate in these efforts. Ethnic Hawaiians are being “encouraged” to learn about their culture, participate in cultural activities, and help protect the culture and its homeland. Similar process can be found in many world locations (e.g. Maori in New Zealand, Aborigines in Australia, numerous tribal groups in Africa, the ethnic groups in the former Yugoslavia). Culture and ethnic roots define the group, and the group becomes active in pressuring group members to participate in protecting and perpetuating the culture.

These groups have many “tools” to “encourage” people’s participation and loyalty. Symbols, history, language, and music remind people of their “roots”. And one of the most powerful tools in effort of group identity is intergroup conflict. Once the lines between cultural/ethnic groups are drawn, portraying the out-group as a threat to the in-group’s culture leads to in-group cohesion, conformity to group norms, obedience to group leaders, and salience of group identity. Intergroup conflict, not necessarily violent, lubricates the wheels of group formation and concern about the out-group helps ensure a ready supply of loyal group members. Conflict, then, is functional to the cultural group and groups resist the resolution of this wonderful conflict (Deutsch, 1973).

Of greatest concern to an in-group will be contact that can lead to recategorization or decategorization is a threat to in-group identity. Likewise, the possibility that group members will “integrate” with other cultures is threatening. For this reason, unsanctioned contact with an out-group member (in workshops or peace camps) will bring quick rebuke (and sometimes physical punishment) from in-group members. I worked for several years with a summer camp (Seeds of Peace International Camp) designed to bring together youth from cultural and ethnic groups engaged in violent protracted conflict. At first glance, it warmed the heart to see Palestinian and Israeli kids playing and working

together. But one must remember that every camper was chosen by his or her government and the contact was sanctioned by these governments. Even within this atmosphere, kids that get too close too quickly with out-group members faced displeasure from in-group members.

I want to make several points in this discussion. First, conflict between cultural groups is not only “natural” but it is functional to group dynamics. Indeed, Hammer (this volume) makes this point in his mention of intercultural conflict that occurs on space stations as well as on “planet earth.” As a result, the resolution of intergroup conflict will often be resisted by the groups, especially when they fear for their security and existence. It was no accident that President George W. Bush fanned the flames of intergroup confrontation after 9/11 (Marsella, this volume). It was not only the ethos of war that fueled this action. Bush had won (some say lost) the presidential election with a minority of votes. He and his cabinet held personal beliefs that traditional American culture was eroding. The Soviet Union was no longer the threat that could keep the American people together. The economy was already beginning to show sign of tiredness. The threat, indeed the terror, from the Arab Muslims could bring Americans back into the fold, behind their culture and their leader. The second point is that the group as well as the individual determines how and when contact with out-group members will take place. Individuals who violate norms of contact or seem to be adopting another group’s culture (integration or assimilation) face censure and punishment from their own group. As Berry (this volume) points out, acculturation involves both individuals and groups and the in-group can exert considerable influence over the individual’s process of acculturation. Unbridled contact between members of the various groups is not easily achieved.

Finally, it is important to recognize that contact and cooperation between groups are much more difficult to achieve when one or both of the groups fears for its security and identity. Concerns about defection from the group and the needs to control group members are highest when the group feels that its existence is at stake. An illustration of this point is the stricter penalties given traitors when a country is at war as opposed to when no state of war exists. The Seeds of Peace Camp has experienced difficulty obtaining participants from some Middle Eastern groups during times of crisis and heightened conflict in the region. One can wonder how conditions of conflict affect Kelman’s ability to attract participants to the workshops, and how these conditions affect the eventual outcome of these workshops. My point is that the nature and degree of conflict that exists between cultural groups will affect whether or not the traditional approaches to reducing conflict can be applied. Indeed, the sickest patient may have the most difficulty taking their medicine. In summary, conflict between cultural groups will be resistant to “resolution” because it plays a functional role for group identity, and the existence of high level of conflict conspires against contact aimed at reducing inter-group conflict.

2.2. *What to measure?*

Even if investigators had the golden key for dealing with intercultural conflict, how would they know if the door was open? Terms such as “peace”, “conflict resolution”, and “adjustment” are commonly used to define the objectives of building better relations between groups. As investigators rush to embrace these terms, there is the assumption that there are common and widely accepted definitions of each concept. However, an

examination of the literature suggests that this is not the case. Dependent measures of “improved intergroup relations” and/or “conflict resolution” include increased attraction (Worchel, Andreoli, & Folger, 1977), friendship (Pettigrew, 1998), more positive stereotypes (Aboud & Levy, 1999), cooperation (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000), and more equitable distribution of resources or imaginary points (Tajfel, 1970), to name a few examples. There have been few attempts to relate the various measures to each other. For example, is increased positivity of stereotypes always associated with attraction, and how are these measures related to the distribution of resources? When applied to the relation between cultural groups, which measure(s) best indicate that conflict(s) has been “resolved”?

As if these questions were not enough to deal with, social science has generally refused to grapple with issues related to *time* (McGrath & Tschan, 2004). The history of cultural groups, as it relates to conflict, is rarely addressed in theory or research. In experimental research, group history is viewed as an extraneous variable, and it is dealt with by creating new groups/categories that have no history. However, several investigators (Bar-Tal, 1990; Worchel & Rothgerber, 1997) have argued that ethnic groups often have collective beliefs imbedded in their history that define traditional enemies and the stereotypes of these enemies. A poignant example is displayed in interaction between Palestinian and Israeli Jews in the Seeds of Peace Camp. It is not uncommon to hear campers reach back thousands of years (to the time of Abraham) to justify their conflict and the basis of their fears of the out-group. Hence, conflict between certain cultural groups may be rooted deep within the histories of these groups, and in order to understand the conflict, we must understand the history involved.

A second issue related to time concerns the measurement of conflict resolution. A common paradigm in research involves introducing an independent manipulation or intervention and immediately measuring the impact of the variable. This approach gives insight into the short-term effects, but gives no indication about long-term impact, if any. Indeed a night of consuming great quantities of cheap wine may give one a warm happy feeling, but the morning after is a different story! When dealing with conflict between cultures, attention to both short-term and long-term effects is necessary. For example, it is important to ask whether certain approaches (such as assigning blame) had short- and/or long-term effects on the conflict between the parties studied by Davidheiser (this volume) and whether mediators switched to different methods if the first approach proved ineffective. Similarly, we should ask whether participation in one of Kelman’s workshops (this volume) leads to sustained efforts to develop policy changes or whether the effort to introduce new policies disappears over time. In my own research at Seeds of Peace Camp, it is clear many of the immediate effects of contact wear off rather quickly.

2.3. *Complexity, complexity, complexity*

Gordon Allport (1954) had a tremendous influence on the study of intergroup relations. It must, however, be remembered that he was focused on a specific problem of his time: prejudice of white Americans toward black Americans. He developed a paradigm that involved examining two groups (blacks and whites) and focused largely on individual cognition (prejudice) and behavior (discrimination). Sherif, Tajfel, and others who built

upon Allport's work remained within this paradigm. They, too, studied conflict between two groups and examined discriminatory behavior and attraction/attitudes.

However, half a century has passed since Allport's influential book and the attention of cultural psychologists and others interested in intergroup relations has embraced such issues as immigration, international relations, and personal/group adjustment. Conflict in these situations often involves more than two groups. For example, many cases of immigration involve more than a single immigrant group and a host group. Hawaii saw waves of immigrants coming to its shores, one after another. New immigrants not only had to deal with the host culture, but with previous immigrant groups. Recent Turkish immigrants coming to Germany must deal not only with local Germans in their community, but also with the legacy left by the last wave of immigrants largely from the Balkans. Rothgerber and Worchel (1997) found that the relationship between low power minority groups is very different than the relationship between a low power and high power group, and that the nature of these relationships is affected by other groups that are present.

Finally, whether we talk of conflict or conflict resolution, we are not dealing with discrete either-or events. Conflict is often not "resolved" and the accommodation made in one conflict situation can become the foundation for other conflicts and disagreements. Deutsch (1973) pointed out that individuals or groups may settle (resolve?) a matter that was at the center of a dispute, but if one side feels that the solution was unfair or one's honor is offended (Davidheiser, this volume), other conflicts or confrontations may soon follow. Likewise, it may be visually instructive to identify four approaches to acculturation (Berry, this volume). However, it is important to remember not only that these approaches occur along a continuum of degree, but that these processes may occur simultaneously and to different degrees in various areas of one's life. Navas and her colleagues (Navas, Garcia, Sanchez, Rojas, Pumares, & Fernandez, in press; Navas et al., 2003) expand the models of acculturation offered by Berry (1990) and Bourhis, Moise, Perrault, & Senecal. (1997) in two important ways. First, Navas argues that individuals have *preferred* strategies to acculturation and *adopted* (actual) strategies. The degree of congruence between these two strategies is an important predictor of the stress the individuals will experience and how long the approach will last. Second, she argues that there are seven *areas of acculturation* (work, economic, social relations, family relations, religious beliefs/customs, ways of thinking). The type of acculturation may be different for each of these areas. An individual or group may adopt (assimilate) a host culture's dress, language, and eating patterns, but cling to its original religion (separation). Davidheiser (this volume) makes a related point in demonstrating that the various Gambian cultures each use several forms of dispute resolution, some being more likely to be applied to specific types of disputes. This picture is further complicated when we incorporate Berry's (this volume) point that the host culture may have different preferences for acculturation (that may differ across the areas).

My point is not to suggest that understanding cultural conflict is hopeless. Rather, I want to emphasize the complexity of the issues involved in intercultural relations, and argue that the investigators must be open to adopting new paradigms and perspectives when studying conflict between cultural. The traditional approaches for studying intergroup conflict (two groups, measures of stereotype change and/or attraction) may be a good starting point, but exploration must move beyond this paradigm and include such factors as multiple groups, the history of the groups, level of focus (individual/group), and time.

3. An illustrative example: toward a model of peaceful co-existence between groups

It is always tempting to confine comments to presenting a few criticisms and making a few comments (hopefully insightful), and then move back to the sidelines. As cathartic as this approach might be, it is of limited value. I would, therefore, like to take a moment to offer a somewhat different approach to begin examining intergroup (both intercultural and interethnic) conflicts (Worchel, *in press*, 2005, 1999). My ideas are based on dealing with interethnic/interculture conflict over a number of years and in a variety of settings (peace camps, Viet Nam war, conflict with immigrants in Europe, New Zealand, United States, and Asia) and have been shaped by the insightful comments of a host of colleagues and graduate students. And I draw heavily from ideas stimulated while reading the papers in this volume.

My approach begins with the observation that cultural and ethnic groups are enduring groups. Unlike laboratory groups, these groups have long histories and expectations of a future. Group members feel (or are made to feel) that they have an important mission to fulfill for the group: preserving and protecting the group's culture, language, homeland, and, above all, identity for future generations. Often the group's history and myths identify other groups that should be considered threats to an in-group's identity. The group, like many cultural groups, may not have a clearly defined structure, but it often has identifiable leaders. Culture and/or ethnicity distinguish the in-group from multiple out-groups. And within the in-group, social pressure can be brought upon individual members to be faithful to the group's major goals: preserving group identity.

We can look to any corner of the world to find examples of these points. For example, Jews viewed Israel not only as their historical homeland, but also as a place of refuge where Jewish people could avoid persecution and Jewish culture could thrive (Bar-Gal, 1993; Elon, 1971). A dominant theme of Jewish culture is survival (Bar-Tal, 2001). Whether in religious books, books of history, school books, or the press, Jews portray their history as fighting efforts to destroy the Jewish people. The protagonists are clearly identified. Jews are reminded of the need to preserve and protect the culture. Orthodox Jews who seem so out-of-step with modern society and are recognized as holding extreme minority views on many subjects are given special privileges (e.g. not serving in the military) and respect because they are seen as representing the identity of Judaism and its culture. Concessions to other cultural groups, such as giving up land, are portrayed as chipping away cultural identity and threatening group security.

Because identity and security are the basic goals of cultural and ethnic groups, conflict between these groups often revolves around these issues. Cultural groups can comfortably exist side-by-side unless or until they began to fear that the out-group is a threat to their identity and security. Although I take a somewhat different approach, I embrace Hammer's (this volume) emphasis on the role of emotion in conflict. I suggest that a common emotion (fear) resides at the root of many intercultural conflicts. Groups that fear that others are bent on destroying them cannot live together as neighbors or toil as co-workers. It is not group identity per se (or the salience of this identity) that is the root of intercultural conflict (Worchel, *in press*). Rather, it is the perceived threat to group security and identity posed by another group that ignites intercultural conflict. This threat may be real or imagined. The threat may arise from major actions such as declaring that members of a target group can no longer speak their native language or worship their traditional deity. Or the threat may be based on seemingly minor, but symbolically important, acts



Fig. 1. The cycle of fear in intergroup relations.

such as a trespass on a group's sacred shrine or denying members of a cultural group the right to wear traditional head covering. The message at the base of these steps is that the group is not respected.

The arousal of fear impacts both relations within and between groups. Within the cultural group, perceived threat to identity leads to actions designed to increase in-group cohesiveness and conformity to tradition and norms. Contact with out-group members is discouraged (and possibly punished). Integration with (i.e. adopting out-group cultural practices) is also prohibited. The impact of fear on intergroup relations is even more dramatic. Fear increases the view of the out-group as homogeneous and evil (Worchel, 1999). It increases the tendency to mistrust the out-group and "misinterpret cues and information as signs of threat and danger (Bar-Tal, 2001)." Fear for security leads groups to "bind the present with past experience related to conflict with the out-group (Bar-Tal, 2001)." However, fear cannot sustain itself in a vacuum. Once a group is gripped by fear for its security, it must justify that fear. This justification often comes about by increasing the perception of the out-group as dangerous and evil. This perception not only justifies existing fear, but it leads to increased fear, which in turn results in more negative portrayals of the out-group. Protracted intercultural conflict feeds on the escalating cycle of fear (emotion) and the perceptions of the out-groups as homogeneous, danger, and evil (Fig. 1).

This cycle of events is clearly seen in the United States following the 9/11 terrorist attack. The events of that day were quickly followed by pronouncements that bin Laden and Al Qaeda had infiltrated American society and "hidden cells" of supporters were bent on destroying U.S. society. Descriptions of the strength, organization, and finances of al Qaeda grew as the country took dramatic steps to combat the danger. The more the

country spent on security, the more it needed to justify the actions by enhancing the prowess of bin Laden and the evil intentions of al Qaeda. The war in Afghanistan followed, but did not end the process. The mystic of bin Laden increased as he evaded capture. Fear and the threat to U.S. society grew as bin Laden was linked to nuclear weapons and Saddam Hussein. Under this cloud of increasing fear based on questionable evidence, a “pre-emptive” war was launched against Iraq. And recent surveys show that a majority of people in the U.S. do not feel more secure despite two wars, extraordinary expenditures of money and effort on security, and dramatic changes in the freedoms of citizens that formed the backbone of U.S. culture. Fear still grips the United States. Marsella (this volume) suggests that the Iraqi war was the result of a culture of violence and greed. I offer a somewhat different explanation. I suggest that the United States has become a culture of fear, justified and enhanced by increasingly frightening portrayals of the strength and evil intentions of its enemies. The seeds of the fear can be traced to the Viet Nam War which eroded the U.S. feelings of invincibility. The fear of the outside world has been fed by growing uneasiness of reliance on “foreigners” for the economic foundation of the culture: oil, outsourcing of jobs, cheap imports, and reliance on immigrants to perform basic jobs (farm work, sanitation, etc.). The efforts to “protect” the culture were seen in such initiatives as “English only” language, increase in activities by fundamental (e.g. “basic to American culture”) religious branches, and growing power of conservative political groups. The glowing coals of this culture of fear (for identity and security) were ignited by 19 “foreigners” armed with box cutters who guided the 9/11 attacks.

Relating concern for group identity to fear of the out-group not only offers insight into the causes of intercultural conflict, but it also identifies steps to be taken to manage the conflict. However, the identified path does not clearly follow the traditional approach to conflict resolution that is based on existing research. If the basis of intercultural conflict is the group’s concerns for its identity and existence, “peace” activities that are construed as further threatening identity are likely to be resisted. Activities such as inviting contact designed to deemphasize the differences between cultural groups (recategorization) or eliminate group identity (decategorization) will increase the threat to group. Under these conditions it is likely that group members will be discouraged from having contact with out-group members or participating in these activities. Groups are unwilling to send their members to such events and those who do participate are sanctioned and viewed with suspicion (e.g. marginalized). Decategorization and recategorization will not aid in improving relations between enduring groups that are locked in conflict.

In order for contact to occur, much less be successful, cultural groups (and their leaders) must be convinced that the efforts will result in increased group security and protection of the identity of the cultural group. This requirement seems to present a conundrum: how does one encourage contact between cultural groups while, at the same time securing the unique identity of the various groups? In fact, several steps can be, and in many cases are unwittingly, taken toward this end. The opportunities afforded by contact to enhance group identity and security, showcase cultural traditions, and present group positions can be made explicit and clear. An example of this process can be seen in the subtle and often unnoticed approaches adopted by peace camps. In many cases, such as Seeds of Peace, participants are chosen by the power structure of the groups involved. This approach recognizes the authority of the groups and allows them to be comfortable with those participants who are viewed as “examples” of the group. In many cases, the participants to

programs are accompanied by representatives (adult) of the group who do not oversee or spy on the participants during their daily activities, but who are there to help “emphasize” the identity of the cultural group. At Seeds of Peace camp, for example, these representatives hold daily “delegation meetings” with participants of their groups. These meetings emphasize group identity and “remind” participants of their membership in these groups. Although, this “intrusion” can, in the short run, inhibit openness in between-group interactions, my observations suggest that the secure attachment with the in-group facilitates taking risks with out-group members. Another important activity, from this model’s perspective, is that the identity of each group is emphasized during program activities by allowing the participants to present aspects of their culture (Culture Night), engage in their religious services (open to all participants), and express their views on the conflict (co-existence groups). These activities serve two purposes. On one hand, they emphasize group identity and show respect for the group’s culture. On the other hand, they demystify the cultural practices for members of the out-group. The out-group members can see that these practices are different than those of their own group, but they are not a threat. The experience illustrates that co-existence between people with different cultural practices is not only possible, but interesting. Although not explicitly stated, I suggest that a major outcome from Kelman’s workshops (this volume) is that participants become less fearful of the other side, and as a result, they become more willing to propose policy changes that can both facilitate interaction between the groups and preserve the security of their own group.

Another issue related to contact between enduring groups, like cultural groups, concerns the end result. The literature in social psychology suggests that “conflict resolution” will be reflected in increased attraction between members of different groups, more positive perceptions of the out-group, increased tendencies to view the in-group and out-group as similar, and friendships across group boundaries. I am reminded of a “60 Minutes” report of the Seeds of Peace Camp that depicts scenes of Israeli and Palestinian campers hugging each other as they depart the camp. For the last several years I have examined the short- and long-term impact of several types of “peace programs”. Although the research is still ongoing, several trends are emerging. The immediate impact of the programs fits the scenes in the “60 Minute” report. Friendships between members of the different groups do form, attraction between the groups’ members increases, intentions to maintain cross-group contact are high, and differences between the groups are de-emphasized. But, it seems beyond reason to expect that a few happy weeks together would be sufficient to wipe out years, even generations, of hatred and distrust between the groups. Long-term (1–3 years) follow-up interviews and questionnaire responses support this skeptical view and indicate that many of these positive effects are fleeting. Positive perceptions of and attraction for the out-group wane, regular contact across group boundaries is maintained by only a few participants, and similarities between the groups are rarely mentioned.

At first glance, these results suggest that the programs have little enduring value. However, the picture is not completely negative. Some important effects seem to stand the test of time. The tendency to view the out-group as heterogeneous (rather than homogeneous) occurs in both the short- and long-term reports; the out-group may not be viewed as especially positive, but participants recognize that there is considerable diversity within the out-group. Second, participant’s views of self-esteem and self-efficacy that increase after program participation remain high. As one participant stated, “I did the thing I feared the most (lived with the enemy), and now I feel that I can do almost

anything.” This higher level of self-esteem and self-efficacy is associated with a sense of personal security which is carried over to feelings about group security. Finally, the reduction (not elimination) of fear of the out-group that was evident immediately after program participation remains after several years.

These results not only reflect on the impact of particular programs, but they also reflect on a broader theoretical issue. The results suggest that there is little, if any, lasting changes in attraction, perceptions, or conflict as a result of face-to-face contact programs involving cultural and/or ethnic groups. On one hand, this is surprising (and disappointing) because these effects have been found in laboratory and field studies. On the other hand, these results are not at all surprising. Culture and ethnicity are pervasive influences on individuals and identification and stereotypes of the out-group are often deeply embedded within the culture. How could one expect a short encounter, whether it be a peace camp or workshop, to greatly affect attraction, trust, perceptions, and conflict between groups? However, the results of my research and that of several other investigators (Berry & Kalin, 1995; Bourhis, et al., 1997; Navas et al., *in press*) suggest that more subtle, and ultimately more influential, changes can result from the contact experiences. I think the changes can best be described as embracing the concept of peaceful co-existence. The concept of peaceful co-existence is multidimensional. Peaceful co-existence involves recognizing the out-group and respecting its right to exist. Curiosity and interest in the out-group and its culture rather than fear represent the *emotional component* of peaceful co-existence. Recognition of the differences between the groups and the differences within the out-group (out-group heterogeneity) are important *cognitions* that facilitate the identity of the out-group and the reduced fear of this group. Finally, a willingness to interact and cooperate with the out-group toward goals that are mutually beneficial guides the *behavioral component* of peaceful co-existence. This willingness can only occur when group members feel that the out-group will not attempt to force assimilation on them. Borrowing from Berry’s terminology (this volume), I suggest that the perception that the out-group is accepting of “multiculturalism” will facilitate the state of peaceful co-existence between cultural groups.

Before leaving this issue, there are several points I’d like to make. First, embracing peaceful co-existence does not necessarily involve liking the out-group or cooperating with the out-group. However, when cultural groups accept that they can co-exist peacefully and view the out-groups as being heterogeneous, the stage may be set for future contact, cooperation, and attraction. Second, I want to emphasize that the simple existence of different cultures and different cultural groups will always carry the potential for conflict between these two groups. However, the conflict, itself, need not be corrosive to intergroup relations (Deutsch, 1973). The conflict becomes destructive when groups begin to fear that the out-group is threatening their security and identity. Third, I will echo the proverb that “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” Once violent confrontation arises between cultural groups, it is very difficult to “resolve”, regardless of how “resolution” is defined. The conflict becomes part of the group’s history and guides future actions and perceptions; Deutsch recognizes this in his presentation of the “conflict spiral”. Therefore, efforts to improve relations between groups and “resolve” conflict should occur before violent conflict arises, rather than after it occurs. We know the conditions that are likely to lead to intergroup conflict and hatred (e.g. cultural groups in contact, group security being threatened [from within or from the outside]). Prevention efforts (such as “peace camps, workshops, education) can be most effective if applied when the conditions exist

(inoculation) but before the hostilities begin. With this in mind, I feel that the suggestions offered by Marsella (this volume) will be most valuable to reduce destructive conflicts in the future, rather than markedly influence existing violent conflicts. Finally, the time factor must be incorporated into the equation (McGrath & Tschan, 2004). We run the risk of being misled if we focus only on short-term results of intercultural contact. Imagine the richness of understanding that would result from using Berry's model of acculturation to examine acculturation and stress in individuals and groups over a period of several years. Likewise, it would be instructive to learn when in the context of intercultural relationships Kelman's workshops are most likely to lead to meaningful policy changes, and whether the policy changes that follow one workshop can set the stage for future workshops.

4. From between to within: cultural approaches to dealing with conflict

Having faced the dragon of culture's role in intergroup conflict, let me return to the second contribution of culture. Marsella, Hammer, and Davidheiser focus on how factors internal to a culture (cultural group) can affect dealing with conflict. Marsella raises the possibility that a culture can embrace the value of violence that will guide its relationship with other cultural groups and within the cultural group. This position has been embraced by several previous investigators. For example, Nisbett and Cohen (1996) suggest that the culture in the southern United States is one characterized by a focus on honor that supports the use of violence to protect one's honor. Bar-Tal (1990) introduces the concept of "group beliefs" suggesting that collective beliefs can include views about threats to the group and identify enemies of the group. These beliefs can both increase a group's vigilance to threats to its existence and support the use of violence to deal with these threats. Bar-Tal (2001) does a masterful job in pointing out that the beliefs about persecution (and the accompanying group emotion of fear) held by Israeli Jews may be hindering progress in developing peaceful relations with the Palestinians. He, like Marsella, also illustrates how leaders can manipulate group beliefs to inflame group fear and consolidate their power. It is interesting to speculate about the possible link between Hammer's dimensions (directness and emotionality) of cultural approaches to conflict and the cultural ethos of violence and group beliefs involving persecution and the danger of outside groups.

The contributions to this volume make the important point that in order to understand and deal with both intra-cultural and intercultural conflict, it is vital to examine the characteristics of the cultures as well as the conditions involved in the relation between the cultures. Further, each of these investigators turns to group history to develop their positions. Unfortunately, as pointed out earlier, psychological approaches to studying intergroup relations and group dynamics are largely a historical. The group's past is viewed as a pesky contamination (extraneous error) to true scientific inquiry. This nasty error can be controlled by developing new groups with randomly assigned members in the laboratory. These new groups have no history or future. Although this approach may result in a scientifically elegant design and it may be appropriate to study some issues, it insults the study of culture and conflict. The roots of cultural conflict and the approaches to that conflict (Davidheiser, this volume; Hammer, this volume) often reside within the history of the culture and its traditional beliefs. Effective means of dealing with conflict (intra- and inter-cultural) require understanding the history of a culture and taking steps to

address this history (peace universities, peace museums, religions, peace festivals; Marsella, this volume).

However, the incorporation of history into the study of culture and conflict must be undertaken with scientific rigor if it is to add to our understanding. History is notoriously difficult to make objective. I have listened to numerous discussions between participants in peace programs. These discussions invariably involve history; history is vital to group identity and legitimacy. The participants often agree completely on many points such as names and dates. But these are only the *entree* to history. The flesh of history is interpretation, and here is where the various sides take very different roads. An attack on civilians is viewed as terrorism by one side, but as an act of freedom and justice by the other side. Will history write the story of the Iraqi war as a naked act of aggression by the United States (and its coalition of willing partners [Poland, Costa Rica, etc.]) or will it be recounted as a defensive action against terrorism? Even in Marsella's efforts to paint the picture of culture of violence in the United States, questions can be raised. For example, in presenting the case of imperialism, exploitation and war by the United States, he offers examples of the Indian Wars and Native Hawaiian Conflicts in a scenario of victims and aggressors. However, an examination of the histories of several of the "victims" (native Hawaiians, American Indians) reveals that each of these groups had its own history of war and violence. Indeed, it is difficult to identify a culture that has not mistreated and been mistreated, and does not revere and honor its war leaders and those who have fallen in battle. It is equally difficult to find a violent confrontation between national or ethnic groups where one side proclaims that it was the aggressor. Wars always seem to involve parties acting defensively (in some cases, "preemptively" defensive).

I do not necessarily question the conclusions of investigators such as Marsella, Bar-Tal, and Nisbett. Indeed, they have ventured into important territory in their study of cultural history. I simply wish to caution that this is complex and treacherous territory, and cultural psychologists must take care in developing appropriate paradigms to guide their research.

One additional point should be added here. Davidheiser's study (this volume) in the Gambia illustrates the danger of assuming that a culture can be easily characterized as having a (one) approach (or belief) for dealing with a problem, conflict in this case. He found "remarkable variance" within cultures in the approaches used to mediate conflict. Cultural practices, like the individuals from the culture, are heterogeneous. This finding questions the notion that cultures may be easily defined and classified on the basis of common behaviors within the culture. It further stands as a reminder of the difficulty of predicting individual cases from generalizations about the culture from which that individual comes. Morales, Lopez, and Vega (1992) argued that while Hofstede's (1980) classification may help describe general cultures, it does not necessarily apply to the individual; collective cultures will have many "individualistic" individuals, and visa versa. Morales argued that it is important to develop measures for both cultures and individuals. Berry (this volume) points out that the study of conflict and acculturation must take pace at both individual and group levels. Is it possible that integration may reduce the stress experienced by the individual, but contribute to the stress (and future conflict) of the cultural group that perceives its members adopting too much of the other culture? Hammer (this volume), too, moves from a focus on the characteristics of culture (group) to individual measures of approaches to conflict. The challenge is to determine how (and when) group and individual responses to conflict are related. An equally fascinating and

important question involves how intra-cultural group approaches to conflict affect responses to conflict between cultural groups. How do individuals from a collective culture who tend to be indirect and emotionally restrained respond when facing an individual from a more individualistic culture who is emotionally expressive and direct? In such cases, the approach to conflict resolution may cause as much conflict as the issues involved in the initial conflict.

Finally, Davidheiser's finding of diverse approaches to conflict within culture may, itself, reflect the acculturation processes. The cultural groups that Davidheiser studied had contact with each other, and presumably experienced conflict with each other. It is very possible that this contact and these efforts to resolve conflict between groups "taught" each group different approaches to conflict that were ultimately incorporated within each culture. The diverse approaches to mediation that he found within each group may have been partly the result of acculturation. Indeed, when my Japanese neighbor and I joke about the "good old days" and the runaway banana plants, he confides that direct confrontation is not the traditional Japanese way, but that he "has been around haoles so much, that I adopted their ways of dealing with problems (runaway banana plants?)." And he admits that he sometimes uses this approach at home "until a stern look from my wife quiets me down." Although a cultural groups' beliefs and approaches to conflict may influence how it deals with other groups, intergroup contact and confrontation may have broad influences within the cultural group. In other words, a cultural group's approach to conflict and mediation may be cast in the role of independent (or mediating) variable in examining intergroup relations, or it may be the dependent variable. Examinations of either role can help explicate the relationship between conflict and culture.

5. Summary

The papers in this special edition demonstrate that the relationship between culture and conflict is profound and multifaceted. At one level, culture can define group boundaries, thereby, identifying the participants and establishing the basis for intergroup conflict. Culture carries with it a history that can define enemies and issues over which conflict will occur. Contact between cultural groups can serve as the spark that ignites violent conflict or the water that can cool the flames of conflict. I have suggested that in order for contact to have a positive effect, fear for group identity and security must be reduced. In addition to the domain of intergroup conflict, culture and conflict must be examined within the cultural group. Not only can culture influence perceptions of conflict and responses to conflict, but culture, itself, can be changed by conflict. It is both the hand that shapes and is shaped by conflict. Because culture is constantly changing, the relationship between culture and conflict is best understood by a paradigm that includes both time (past, present, expectations of the future) and level of relationship (individual, group, and intergroup). This position, admittedly, is a tall order and it suggests that the study of culture and conflict may not fit easily within existing paradigms of research.

Finally, I am reminded of the true lesson that I took away from my experience with the banana plants. It took me years to finally control my banana plants and restore harmony with my neighbors. Had someone told me of the rambling habits of banana plants, much angst could have been avoided. The lesson is that true conflict resolution is best achieved by interventions before conflict occurs; interventions applied after the conflict has gripped intergroup relations can, at best, achieve some degree of conflict management. The seeds of

conflict between cultural groups are always present, and, therefore, efforts to control and contain must be constant. However, social science research has identified many variables that are likely to incite open confrontation. These seeds may be found within the histories of cultural groups that include beliefs glorifying violence, identifying enemies, and defining areas of greatest sensitivity to the cultural group. The seeds are sown by present conditions of cultural groups that are likely to create concern over group identity and safety (e.g. widespread poverty, social or political change and uncertainty, natural disaster that destroys basic group structure). And the seeds can be found at the intergroup level when situations create unusual contact between cultural groups (i.e. high rates of immigration [both in-migration and out-migration], destruction of wall or barrier that previously separated groups). Programs that include workshops, camps, peace universities, etc. that are instituted at this point may prevent or lessen the storm of conflict.

In closing, I suggest that the perfect storm for intercultural and interethnic conflict is brewing throughout the world. Rapid change in technology is forcing rapid change and uncertainty onto groups. This change strikes at the heart of cultural traditions and cultural identity. The gap between wealthy and poor (groups and individuals) is increasing. The rate of immigration in many regions of the world has dramatically increased. Developments in communication and mass transportation are bringing about more contact between cultural groups. And there is a heightened level of fear throughout the world. People not only fear the random acts of terrorists, but they are bombarded by warnings of global warming, decreasing supplies of energy, and pollution of the waterways. And there is fear of possible consequences human ingenuity such as weapons of mass destruction and cloning. These are the conditions that demand greater study and wider intervention to ensure the peaceful co-existence between cultural and ethnic groups.

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