
Look Both Ways

Ending prejudice is insufficient. We must strive to find and create occasions to feel affection, engagement, kinship, comfort, and enthusiasm for groups other than our own.

BY TODD L. PITTINSKY

Atoms were once thought to be indivisible — that’s what the ancient Greek word *atomis* means. It didn’t turn out to be true. Atoms are made up of *subatomic* particles and there are mysterious forces both of attraction and repulsion between them. It’s a more complicated picture, but we can do a lot more with it.

A new stream in social science theory and research is making our picture of the groups, gangs, cliques, and clubs that populate American educational institutions more complicated, but I believe we’ll be able to do a lot more with it. We are finding that among groups, too, there are forces of attraction as well as repulsion: not only the commonly considered prejudices, but also feelings of affection, engagement, kinship, comfort, and enthusiasm for groups different from one’s own. These positive feelings are often overlooked; indeed, they only recently have a name — *al-philosophia*, from the ancient Greek words meaning “love of the other.”

Allophilosophia remedies a long-time imbalance: attention to intergroup hate and prejudice at the expense of intergroup regard. Of course, many people are fond of a foreign people and culture. Many young people love to get to know elderly people. My colleagues and I have been finding surprising and encouraging instances of allophilosophia, for example, among the Jews and

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Arab citizens of Israel (Pittinsky, Ratcliff, and Maruskin 2008). Allophilosophia is a normal human feeling. It just doesn’t grab your attention like a race riot.

Research is finding that these two kinds of feelings that people in one group can have for the people in another group are not simply mirror opposites. They are more independent than previously thought. For example, prejudice and allophilosophia have different ef-

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fects. In a school without racial prejudice, for example, there will be no nooses hanging from trees, but the black and white students won’t necessarily sit at the same lunch tables or join together to protest a racial incident. In a school with allophilosophia, these good things are much more likely to happen.

The insights of allophilosophia research, combined with insights on leadership research, make for a winning combination: intergroup leadership. Intergroup leadership tells us that a school needs to be led not only as a single group, but also as a collection of subgroups. Now, stir in the allophilosophia model — independent negative and positive attitudes toward groups who are different — and you start to get a handle on how to lead a group as a collection of subgroups. As educators, we need to weed out prejudice, and we need to plant and cultivate allophilosophia.

It seems to me that too many initiatives in education that seek to promote positive intergroup relations describe more of a weeding job than a planting job. There is a bias in education (and elsewhere) toward

reducing the negative rather than promoting the positive. Even advocates of multiculturalism often state their goal as bringing about “the end of racism, sexism, and other forms of prejudice and discrimination” (Bennett 2001, p. 173), rather than promoting anything really positive. Leading organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League, Tolerance.org (run by

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the Southern Poverty Law Center), and Facing History and Ourselves offer teaching resources that say more about reducing the negative than about promoting the positive. When they do acknowledge more positive experiences, their tone is often lukewarm, discussing “acceptance,” “understanding,” and “respect” for those who are different. Or they assume that positive feelings happen only when similarity, rather than difference, is acknowledged.

I’m excited by this opportunity to put the diversity puzzle together in a new way. Diversity in schools too often has an inescapable “uh oh” quality. Some educators feel it’s simply not within their mandate — or within their power — to undo prejudice. Some feel a moral or professional imperative to do just that. Some take a practical stand: This is a diverse world, and young people need to learn how to get along in it. It seems to me that these views have something unfortunate in common: The task they describe is more of a weeding job than a planting job. Why have educators been more comfortable talking about reducing prejudice than about promoting allophilia? Prejudice creates immediate — sometimes life-and-death — problems that demand immediate attention. Prejudice is seen as within the purview of social science, while “love of the other” is religion’s business. And there is already an active prejudice-awareness-and-reduction industry peddling its goods.

But we need to do what the school crossing guards always told us: Look both ways. Seek to reduce prejudice *and* seek to promote allophilia. A school without prejudice is not a paradise, it’s just a school without prejudice. To be more, its leaders will have to do more. Martin Luther King, Jr., made this point in reverse when he said, “It may be true that the law cannot make a man love me, but it can stop him from lynching me” (Frady 2002, p. 40).

French President Nicolas Sarkozy may have stumbled over this same point when he called for a pro-

gram in which 5th graders in France would learn the life story of one of the 11,000 French children killed in the Holocaust. The purpose was to raise children with “open eyes,” prepared for global citizenship. His proposal was abandoned, but could it have succeeded? The work of my colleagues and I suggests: Only partly. In a large study, we found that experiencing sympathy for an outgroup is associated with lower levels of prejudice, which are, in turn, associated with lower levels of discrimination, support for hate crimes, and so on. But sympathy is not a positive attitude — it is not allophilia — and increased sympathy for a group was *not* associated with increased feelings of affection, engagement, kinship, comfort, and enthusiasm for that group. What, then, should Sarkozy’s program have included? One possibility would have been a parallel focus on aspects of the Holocaust that inspire admiration (Jewish resistance, the actions of “righteous gentiles”) or even joy (works of art, literature, and music created by people in hiding or even in concentration camps).

Education strikes me as a domain where allophilia theory and research really fit the bill as a concept that can build on existing foci but extend theory and practice in new ways. In fact, educators have long been involved in the quality of relations in society. As far back as Colonial times, educators, social activists, and scholars tried to reduce tensions between groups and create schools where diverse groups could learn together. This impulse was formalized in the Intergroup Education Movement of the 1930s and 1940s and is reflected today in the multicultural education movement and the recent movement to educate for global citizenship.

Today, the key will be to look both ways — and then go both ways: combating prejudice and hatred while finding and creating occasions to feel affection, engagement, kinship, comfort, and enthusiasm for groups other than our own. **K**

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