Moral exemplar intervention

A new paradigm for conflict resolution and intergroup reconciliation

Sabina Čehajić-Clancy, Stockholm University
Michal Bilewicz, Warsaw University

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Outline

• Overview of social-psychological interventions aimed at conflict resolution and intergroup reconciliation

• Development and empirical testing of the moral exemplar intervention

• Content and conditions of the moral exemplar intervention

• Theoretical framework for future research
Psychological obstacles to intergroup reconciliation

• Negative emotions (e.g., anger, hatred)
• Lack of intergroup trust
• Lack of meaningful and positive contact (structural and psychological barriers)
• Moral disengagement processes (e.g., denial and justifications)
• Perceptions and judgement of outgroups (e.g., essentialistic attributions)
Social-psychological interventions aimed at conflict resolution and intergroup reconciliation

A. Active engagement or dialogue with outgroup members (e.g., intergroup contact)
B. Instructing people to adopt new perspectives (e.g., perspective-taking or social re-categorizations interventions)
C. Interventions targeting perceptions of the self (e.g., self-affirmation interventions)
D. Exposing people to new information (e.g., malleability beliefs, paradoxical beliefs, group interests beliefs, apology offers etc.)

Development of the moral exemplar intervention

- Focus on morality dimension as an important dimension for evaluations of both individuals and social groups (e.g., Brambilla et al., 2013; Leach et al., 2015)

- Biased and competitive attributions of morality are even more pronounced in intergroup conflict environments

- Inspirations from literature on social learning indicating violation of expectations as the main mechanism for driving changes in attitudes and behaviour (Hein et al., 2016) and research on education pointing to importance of stories as models for driving changes in behaviour (Han et al., 2017)
Empirical setting

• The main hypothesis was tested in five post-conflict contexts (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Poland, Turkey, Armenia and Hungary) with nine experimental studies using members of real and antagonistic social groups investigating the effects of moral exemplar stories on important intergroup reconciliation indicators (Čehajić-Clancy & Bilewicz, 2020)

• In these studies participants were presented with moral exemplars from national ingroups and outgroups (e.g., Turkish bureaucrat rescuing Armenians during the genocide, German officer offering help to a Polish-Jewish musician, Bosniak hiding a Serbian soldier in his house) utilizing textual as well as visual materials (pictures, films)
The effects of the moral exemplar intervention on intergroup attitudes
The effects of the moral exemplar intervention on behavioural tendencies

![Bar chart showing the intensity of behavioural tendencies in control and moral exemplar intervention groups.](chart.png)
Content and conditions of the moral exemplar intervention

• Usage of **real stories** as educational models of inducing changes in behaviour (e.g., Han et al., 2017)

• Usage of **relevant** stories (Han et al., 2017) set in a relevant socio-political context focusing on social groups in a meaningful (structural or psychological) relationship (Witkowska et al., 2019)

• Uses the strategy of exposing people to **information counter** to either socially shared representations or individually held beliefs about groups’ morality

• Usage of **positive information** to provoke moral elevation (Haidt, 2000) and in that way reduce potential tension provoked by information consistency

• Presenting moral exemplars are **common and typical** to avoid subtyping (e.g., Benede et al., 2019)

Theoretical perspective: an emotion regulation process

• Importance of positive (e.g., warmth) and constructive intergroup emotions (e.g., guilt) for intergroup reconciliation
• Intergroup reconciliation as an emotion regulation process (Čehajić-Clancy, Goldenberg, Halperin & Gross, 2016)
• Moral exemplars as a tool for regulating intergroup emotions through cognitive changes
Facilitation of positive intergroup emotions through learning about outgroup moral exemplars in a post-conflict setting of Bosnia and Herzegovina

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outgroup Emotions</th>
<th>Outgroup moral exemplar N = 68</th>
<th>Outgroup immoral exemplar N = 51</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>1.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warmth</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Facilitation of positive intergroup emotions through learning about relevant (vs. irrelevant) outgroup moral exemplars in Sweden

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outgroup Emotions (towards Muslims in general)</th>
<th>Relevant outgroup moral exemplars (Muslims) N = 175</th>
<th>Irrelevant outgroup moral exemplars (Germans) N = 179</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Warmth</td>
<td>4.14 1.62</td>
<td>3.72 1.69</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>4.24 1.76</td>
<td>3.89 1.61</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>4.90 1.80</td>
<td>4.55 1.69</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Learning about ingroup moral exemplar

- Hypothesis: under conditions of threatened ingroup’s morality (e.g., ingroup moral violations against outgroups) learning about ingroup moral exemplars might provide a buffer against default responses (e.g., denial, justifications etc.) and lead to more constructive responses such as group-based guilt
Context and design

• All participants across all conditions read one-page long text containing information on their group’s moral wrongdoings (historic discrimination against Sami)

Between-subjects design with three conditions

I. **Experimental 1**: ingroup (Swedes) moral exemplars helping the context relevant outgroup individuals (Sami)

II. **Experimental 2**: ingroup (Swede) moral exemplars helping identity-unknown individuals

III. **Control condition**: no stories
Group-based guilt

**Q1:** Although I have not personally discriminated against Sami in the past, I still feel guilty due to my associations with Sweden.

**Q2:** I feel guilty about the past and present social inequalities between Sami and Swedes.

**Q3:** Sometimes I feel guilty about the benefits and privileges I receive as a Swede.

ANOVA between-subjects with three conditions

\[ F = 6.10; \quad p < .002 \]

\[ M_{\text{exp1}} = 4.14; \quad SD = 1.78; \quad N = 129 \]

\[ M_{\text{exp2}} = 3.87; \quad SD = 1.76; \quad N = 144 \]

\[ M_{\text{con}} = 3.43; \quad SD = 1.78; \quad N = 165 \]
Theoretical model on prosocial regulation of intergroup relations through learning about moral exemplars: an emotion regulation process
Thank you for your attention.

sabina.cehajic-clancy@psychology.su.se