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English 1103-11

22 August 2015

Teaching Hate

Many cultures throughout the world are unfortunately stricken with a disposition of hate directed at others that is harmful to both the group that is receiving the hate as well as the one spreading it. The hate is woven into these cultures over long periods of time, which makes it extremely difficult for the issues to be addressed unless a long-term solution is instituted. An article in *The Washington Post* discusses an educational method, known as anti-bias education, that could be the long-term solution that is needed. This education method utilizes various aspects of the psychological process and properties of children in order to increase the likelihood that they develop positive dispositions toward those who are different from them. In a nutshell, the curriculum entails exposing children to other races, cultures, or creeds more often while also educating them on the values of diversity and teaching them the ability to distinguish stereotypes from reality (Derman-Sparks). Exposing children to the people who are different from them is the factor here that I believe would be the most important. After all, hate is often derived from fear. Exposure to those of a different culture, especially in a positive way, could significantly reduce the level of fear, which would also reduce the likelihood of hate. This kind of education is one that should be integrated in early school curricula in the future. This is particularly useful for people studying some form of education because they will undoubtedly have the most influence. While it may seem to be a fantastical prospect, this education can be incredibly effective and

help prevent the unfortunate instances of hate or, at the very least, hinder them before they escalate further.

When a person is born they come equipped with an array of innate mental processes. Among these processes is a baby naturally clinging to its mother, a need for food and water to survive, and a desire for social belongingness. However, while hatred of a specific group of people is often placed upon people from an early age, hatred is not innate. If hate is not something that someone is born with then it must be learned at some point and oftentimes, this is at an extremely young age (Pogatchnik). In this paper I will examine two studies which demonstrated that hatred is learned, struggles in Israel and Northern Ireland in which animosity between two groups has been sustained by early teachings of contempt, and discuss how anti-bias education could prevent similar events closer to home. Early inundation of hateful teachings results in prolonged conflict, puts children in positions where hateful lives are nearly inescapable, and eventually leads to a culture in which animosity has been firmly instilled.

Given a typical upbringing free of hate propaganda, people are generally good to one another. An excellent example of this fact comes from an article by Radha J. Horton-Parker. Horton-Parker cites a psychological study on World War II soldiers shortly following the war's end. The study showed that only about 15% of the soldiers were even willing to take a shot at another human. This fact is something that I found that displays my belief that humans are innately good. However, this unwillingness to harm others does not make for a capable soldier. This, of course, led to more training regimens to alter this disposition. and make more capable soldiers (Horton-Parker). Why then, one may ask, is there so much violence and hate between certain groups of people in this world if, unless their dispositions are altered, even soldiers are not willing to shoot their enemies? The majority of these soldiers were likely not born into

environments where they were taught to dislike the Europeans they would eventually come into conflict with. However, if a child is born into a world where the idea of learning to hate is as ingrained into their minds as the idea of learning to read, walk, or write they will certainly not grow old with the same opposition to hatred the bulk of humanity is equipped with (Cramer).

Killing others is on the extreme end of the hate spectrum, however. People are not even born with a dislike of a particular group of people unless taught to. This can be displayed by a well-known psychology experiment in which children in a classroom were divided based on eye color. Brown-eyed students were said to be superior to the blue-eyed students. Within a half hour, the brown-eyed students were said to look at the blue-eyed as inferior and enemies, even though these students did not display this behavior at any point before. This analysis is vital in establishing that hate is a learned trait rather than innate (Amsden). Although there are still some potential negative outcomes on the children from this examination, it was still merely an experiment. Unfortunately, there are many cases throughout the world in which children are taught similar lessons, but not for the benefit of a study. These cases occur as a result of major religious, political, or territorial conflict.

The conflict in Northern Ireland is an example of a long-standing conflict sustained partially by teachings to children. Northern Ireland was the home of a tumultuous dispute between the Loyalists and the Nationalists. Ireland slowly began gaining independence and sovereignty from Great Britain in 1920, but one-sixth of the country remained loyal because of religious ties. Ireland was a Roman Catholic entity and the Protestants in the north did not want to be part of the new independent nation. This portion of Ireland remained under British control even through Ireland accruing complete independence in 1949. However, there were and still are a sizable amount of Roman Catholics remaining in Northern Ireland who did not want to be

separate from Ireland itself. Tensions began to boil when these Roman Catholics were discriminated against, eventually resulting in an attack by Northern Ireland's police force on Catholic protesters on October 5, 1968 (Barr). The upheaval was fueled by differences in religion and nationality, alongside other cultural issues that were among the leading causes of the deeply ingrained animosity between the two sides.

The dispute in Northern Ireland between the Catholics and Protestants is one that raged from this aforementioned incident in 1968 until peace was reached through the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. Although the conflict may be politically over due to the agreement, some animosity still lingers. A 2002 article in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* shows that children in Northern Ireland were still learning antagonism to the opposing side as early as three. The article provides staggering quotes of children vocalizing this distaste at these early ages (Pogatchnik). One young girl was quoted as saying "I like the people who are ours. I don't like those ones because they are Orangemen. They're bad people" (Pogatchnik). The author, Shawn Pogatchnik, attributes this early onset of hatred both to parents and Northern Ireland's school system, which was still almost entirely divided according to religion.

The article also indicates that, four years after the Good Friday Agreement, only a miniscule four percent of young children were educated in schools of mixed religion (Pogatchnik). Hate is often a result of ignorance towards another group of people so it would be logical to believe that this does nothing but increase the level of hate between these children that are now in young adulthood. Although many efforts have been taken to prevent the issues from escalating, it would seem that the generation that was a part of the time where schools were separated by religion may be more inclined to take issue with those of the opposing religion. Despite the severity of this matter, the religious dispute in Northern Ireland is not the only strife

in our world that is kept going by the feeding of hateful teachings to young people. The next example I will provide is even more storied and volatile.

I first became interested in the conflict between the Palestinians and Israelis from a documentary entitled *The Anatomy of Hate*. It was particularly poignant to me, because it displayed how awful the situation really was, and this realization inspired me to want to do further research on the topic. An article written by Richard Schifter tells of the origin of the hatred between Palestinians and Israelis that began with the establishment of the state of Israel itself in 1948. While the country itself is very young, it has already developed a history and culture that can rival even those most long-standing parts of the world. When Israel became an official state, the surrounding Arab countries quickly started a war. This led to around 700,000 Arabs being forced to flee in fear of the approaching armies. As the Arabs fled, a similar number of Jews fled from Arab states into Israel. These two groups were not the only ones forced to flee their home territory following World War II. The difference here is that each of those other groups was given their lands back from the United Nations. Among these are Germans, Transylvanians, and Czechoslovakians. The Arabs that fled from Israel have not been given their lands back. This is where the conflict comes in. These Arabs who fled, known as the Palestinians, want back what they feel is theirs, but the state of Israel has not allowed it for many years and does not seem to be willing to change that mindset (Schifter).

Land disputes are oftentimes some of the most heated. This situation is not an exception. Many Palestinians and Israelis have an acute hatred of each other and are locked in a vicious war that does not seem to be dissolving any time soon. The lands of Israel and Palestine are a breeding ground for violence and hatred. This struggle, in particular, is one that best displays how hate is a vicious cycle that carries through generations. If young people involved in this

conflict were not being fed lessons of contempt, then this conflict may have ended long ago. In fact, only about seven percent of the original refugees are even alive today (Schifter). Despite this, the conflict continues to thrive off of a continuous flood of new members. Young people are fed propaganda and teachings that glorify martyrdom and violence. They are inundated with this from school, media, and even their own parents (Calof).

While a parent cannot prevent a child from seeing hateful speech on television and textbooks, they can teach them what is wrong and right. The issue is, however, that a substantial number of them do not see acts of martyrdom or violence as wrong (Calof). Why would they? Palestinians have grown up being fed a message that they should hate the Israelis and partake in any action to help further the Palestinian cause. A similar level of animosity comes from the Israelis. The beliefs on both sides are taught to the younger generations from the older because their convictions are extremely firm and unyielding. Whether the lands truly should be given to the Palestinians or not, the violence that occurs with the Israelis is not going to get them there. All that is being accomplished is unneeded bloodshed and vitriol and this will never end as long as children are taught to be hateful towards their imposed enemies. Until that occurs, more and more people will die young with the fault lying at the lessons they have been taught.

After informing people of the nature of these conflicts and the roles of children in them, a logical next step would be to form some sort of call to action. This is difficult to do concerning the two main examples I have discussed, but it is the unfortunate truth that similar, yet arguably less critical, situations do occur closer to home. This takes the form, for the most part, of various forms of racism as well as other forms of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or religion. To put this into perspective, *BigStory.org* reports that in 2012, 51% of Americans expressed anti-black sentiments in a survey. Another survey in 2011 reported 52% expressing

anti-Hispanic sentiments (Ross). Racism and other forms of hate in America is a topic that has been a point of contention for years and still continues to this day from racial issues with the police to the brutal shooting in Charleston in which the shooter explicitly said his actions were racially motivated (“Dylan Roof confesses”).

As enforced by the first psychological study discussed earlier, hatred of a particular group is something that I believe to be learned. This is where anyone who works with children can better themselves in order to lessen the amount of people learning to hate from education, parents, peers, propaganda, or otherwise to prevent these attitudes from becoming even more a part of a culture than they already are. Whether in the United States or elsewhere, anti-bias education is a way to prevent these situations from occurring more often or escalating further.

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