



Dismantling Enclaves through Education

I have been a professor of philosophy for almost thirty years. Following Fulbright Scholar awards to Bosnia and Kosovo, my research and teaching took a turn towards peace building in the Balkans

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For some time I have held the view that building a sustainable peace includes persuading those with opposing ethno-nationalist identities that a multiethnic society is important for deliberative democracy. Not only deliberation in the halls of parliament, but also on the streets of neighborhoods. Creating a multiethnic society was another story.

My argument for that went something like this. Ethnic enclaves are an obstacle for a diverse, integrated, and interactive society — a multiethnic society, so the enclaves must go. Since enclaves are themselves maintained by a variety of evocative objects (flags and murals) that rouse the ire of ethno-nationalists, it follows that those objects must go as well.

Enough said about the general outline of the argument. As for the treatment plan, identity politics and issues of constitutionality would make legislation to regulate such objects next to impossible. What is left? Nothing other than the traditional default for any difficult social ill: education.

Education becomes the invisible hand of last resort. Somehow or other the idea of civic design eliminating objects of antagonism to exploit economic potential is learned by city planners, architects, developers, shopkeepers, and homeowners. They accept the story that getting rid of objects that antagonize and replacing them with those that unite, beginning along the edgeland of enclaves, leads to increased economic prosperity. The grocery store, for example, becomes less threatening to the enclave outlier and, perhaps, a convenient place to make a purchase.

More importantly, the unintended consequence of all those self-interested acts is eventually the multiethnic society, so foundational for deliberative democracy. We have reached the Holy Grail by something akin to Adam Smith's invisible hand.

Yet the question remains: how exactly does this approach entice the outlier to mingle along the edgeland and beyond? It occurs as the outlier falls under the influence of positive emotions, perhaps initially as pleasure in perceiving the disappearance of provocative objects but ultimately through constructive interactions with the ethnic other. In a sense, the outlier unwittingly becomes a student in learning about neighborhoods that were previously off limits.

Social scientists have amassed a body of research on the

connection between learning and emotion. Of the connections that have been uncovered, two are especially relevant in offering the peace builder a scientific basis for the breakdown of ethnic enclaves.

First, in formulating the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions, the social psychologist Barbara Fredrickson makes it clear that "positive emotions are worth cultivating...as a means to achieving psychological growth and improved well-being over time." This is because positive emotions like joy and interest "broaden people's momentary thought-action repertoires, widening the array of the thoughts and actions that come to mind." Joy "broadens by creating the urge to play, push the limits, and be creative," while interest "broadens by creating the urge to explore, take in new information and experiences, and expand the self in the process."

The likelihood that the outlier will cross an enclave boundary to create novel experiences and explore the ethnic other will increase to the extent that the enclave outlier has the emotions of joy and interest.

For those who say that the past is too dark to allow joy and interest, Fredrickson has this response: "positive emotions also make us psychologically resilient in the long term by undoing the damage done by negative emotions...they augment people's enduring coping resources." Perhaps outliers who are not victims of war trauma are more apt to be "creative, intellectually expansive, and resilient students" of the edgeland and beyond.

Second, the organizational psychologist Sigal Barsade's work on emotional contagion and group behavior reminds us that "people do not live on emotional islands but, rather, that group members experience moods..., these moods ripple out and, in the process, influence...other group members' emotions ... [and] their group dynamics and individual cognitions, attitudes, and behaviors...."

Being mindful of the group is especially important when the goal is to do away with ethnic enclaves. That does not mean doing away with people's ethnic identities, but harnessing those identities within a multiethnic society.

It is one thing to layout theory and its empirical basis and quite another to nudge people along the way, whether it is the shopkeeper who removes the flag or the outlier who arrives to buy bread. For the most part, the nudge comes without explanation. Today, the shopkeeper and the outlier are stuck without each other. The only way for them to get out of this mess is to be stuck with each other.

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