

## Chapter 1

# Introduction: Borders of the Mind

Nikki Slocum-Bradley

It has been widely acknowledged that preventing destructive conflicts by addressing their ‘root causes’ would save lives and many other resources. Despite the conceptual and political endorsement this goal has received, very little research has yielded useful results on arguably the most important root cause of conflict: the ways in which people form perceptions of themselves and others (Commonwealth Commission on Respect and Understanding 2007). As Nobel-prize recipient, Amartya Sen (2006), has pointed out, social and economic analyses have commonly disregarded the essential role of ‘people’s sense of identity with others’ on what they value and how they behave.

While many factors contribute to fomenting violent conflict, violence between social groups – whether defined in ethnic, religious, linguistic, gender, racial or other terms – necessarily entails the construction of a certain perception of one’s own group and that of the ‘other’, as well as of all persons esteemed to be members thereof. As Westphalian-based identity perceptions are challenged by processes of globalization, regional integration and disintegration, which have dissolved or re-drawn national borders (see Newman 2001, 2006a, 2006b), people’s identity concepts have become uncertain, often generating fear. Taking advantage of this fear and uncertainty, these identity concepts have been the tool of those who would foment violent conflict, with the intention to turn one group of people against another. By manipulating the identity concepts of those often unaware, people have fomented hatred and instigated violence, including ‘genocide’, against people who were previously neighbors, friends and even relatives living together in peace.

The impact of such manipulation has been illustrated throughout history: journalists for Radio Rwanda incited hatred against the Tutsis and encouraged Hutus to murder their longstanding Tutsi neighbors (Rothbart and Bartlett 2008; Slocum-Bradley 2008; see also Doom and Gorus 2000). Similarly, German politicians and journalists construed Jews to be inferior beings, leading to their estrangement, enslavement and slaughtering. In both cases, the victims were dehumanized and portrayed as threats to the society. How does this demonization of certain social groups occur, generating animosity and eventual violence against innocent and defenceless persons? In what ways are the identities of social groups construed by communicators to incite such animosity, and how are people manipulated into horrifying acts of destruction? In contrast, some diverse societies live in harmony and mutual respect. How can communicators promote

tolerance, respect and peace between social groups? Underscoring ‘the importance of human minds in the pursuit of human security’ (p. 81), and particularly the role of identity manipulation in engineering violence, the Commonwealth Commission on Respect and Understanding (2007: 81–2) has emphasized the need for a clear understanding of ‘the ways and means through which the thinking of a large number of activists is influenced in a violent direction’.

To address these questions, this volume explores the relationships between identities, borders, and conflict or peace. Each of these concepts and their relationships are explored in the following sections. This theoretical overview is followed by a summary of Chapters 2 to 9, which present case studies of identity construction in different world regions, using various methodological approaches. Here, a ‘region’ is understood not necessarily as a pre-identified geographical space, but rather as a socially constructed ‘entity’ (see Van Langenhove 2003) that may be based upon (alleged) geographical proximity, common religion, language or other cultural heritage, a common plight such as poverty, a common destiny, or any other discourse that constructs an identity.

The overall purpose of this book is to contribute to peace and mutual understanding between people. It aims to do so by illuminating the nature and process of identity construction and highlighting its prominent role as a root cause in conflict or peace. It is hoped that the gained understanding of these processes and consequences will empower people to construct their and others’ identities in a way that promotes peace and social solidarity.

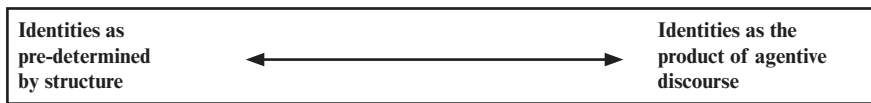
## **The Study of Identity**

Identities, and similar concepts under different rubrics, have been defined, dissected and discussed by authors from nearly every social scientific discipline. Multifarious theories either directly or indirectly have attempted to capture the nature, process and consequences of identities. Many have either begun their reflections with a statement regarding the complex or elusive nature of identity, such as Strauss’s (1959: 11) remark that ‘identity as a concept is fully as elusive as is everyone’s sense of his own personal identity’ or Harré’s (1993: 2) note that, ‘identity is a complex concept’. Other authors have entirely eschewed any attempt at articulating their definition of, or approach to, studying the concept.

While a comprehensive overview of the vast and diverse literature is beyond the purview of this volume, an attempt will be made to extract the main issues of debate over identities, particularly as they are relevant to the other focal issues of this volume. We can already narrow the discussion here by stating that we are concerned with the identities of actors, as opposed to objects. Actors can obviously be individual persons, but they can also be anything else which is narrated – or positioned – as an actor, such as a group of persons (‘Muslims’), a country (‘South Africa’), a region (‘Europe’, ‘West Africa’, or ‘Flanders’), an institution (‘the United Nations’) or any other type of purported community (‘migrants’, ‘the international community’, ‘people of color’ or ‘Hispanics’) (Slocum and Van Langenhove 2004). In contrast, we are not here concerned with the identity

of ‘chairs’, ‘art’, ‘Protestantism’, ‘globalization’, or ‘poverty’ insofar as these are not – or are not portrayed as – actors with agentive powers.

The main debate about the nature of identities can be portrayed as running parallel to the *nature* versus *nurture* debate, and the ‘autonomy’ debate prevalent in philosophy and political science. In other words, different views can be placed along a continuum that stipulates the extent to which ‘identities’ are pre-determined by some sort of ‘structure’ or, alternatively, are the product of human agency. At one pole are approaches that claim that identities are ‘natural’, that is either biologically inherent to human beings or to groups, or (somehow) otherwise pre-determined. On the other end of the spectrum are approaches that allocate a great deal of agency and power to individuals in shaping identities through discursive practices. This continuum is depicted in Figure 1.1.



**Figure 1.1 Determinism in the identity debate**

Amongst researchers who claim that identities are socially learned, as opposed to biologically pre-determined or otherwise innate, the main point of debate turns around the extent to which some sort of ‘social structure’ (see Breakwell 1986, Chapter 2) shapes individual identities and, if this is the case, ‘where’ the social structure is located, and how the shaping occurs. While some authors emphasize the strong determinism of a social structure in shaping individual identities, others emphasize individual autonomy and power to act in accordance with a range of principles (Harré 1979). Furthermore, the level of determinism inherent in various approaches may differ between what is stated in theory and what is reflected in the methodology employed by researchers.

Marxists and other historical materialists represent one end of this spectrum, where a strong and rather deterministic social structure shapes individual identity. For example, for Leonard (1984), persons are the product of their particular socio-historical location – as constituted by the economy, the family and the state, whereby the influence of these factors is modulated by the individual’s age, class, gender and ethnicity. According to Leonard, the individual internalizes actions, thoughts, emotions and belief systems and represses socially unacceptable psychic urges by ‘identifying’ with role models. Other authors implicitly or explicitly assume that people inherently fall into certain categories – such as ‘White’, ‘Muslim’, ‘Francophone’, or ‘elite’ – and that these categories determine the ‘identity’ of the persons encompassed within.

On the opposite end of the ‘social determination’ spectrum are various varieties of constructivism, represented by scholars such as Harré, Bruner, Gergen and Shotter, according to whom ‘identities’ are the (more or less fleeting) product of discourse, and individual identity and action are restrained by the nature of the

discursive practices that are available in a given society. In the words of Shotter and Gergen (1989: ix):

The primary medium within which identities are created and have their currency is not just linguistic but textual: persons are largely ascribed identities according to the manner of their embedding within a discourse – in their own or in the discourses of others. In this way cultural texts furnish their ‘inhabitants’ with the resources for the formation of selves; they lay out an array of enabling potentials, while simultaneously establishing a set of constraining boundaries beyond which selves cannot be easily made. ... In the process of critique, the boundaries of our current modes of being are softened, and intelligibilities for possible new forms of personhood are revealed.

Within this type of approach, a great deal of human agency and choice is allocated to individuals, as new discourses can generate new ways of being – that is, of *identifying* oneself and others, and of acting.

A multitude of approaches can be placed throughout the depicted continuum. Most authors might agree that people construct identities within certain socio-cultural constraints. However, careful attention must be paid to the theoretical questions posed and definitions (if existent) proposed by authors, as well as to their methodological approaches, because these can conceal various aspects of determinism. Approaches that claim there is some sort of stable content to identities necessarily edge toward the left of the continuum, and ‘anything that encourages the view that particular categories are inevitable may be regarded as contributing to their reification and naturalization’ (Hopkins and Reicher 1996: 91).

For example, a frequently entertained question in research and policy discussions is, ‘Can people have multiple identities?’ (see, for example, Risse 2004; Carey 2002; Schild 2001; Risse et al. 1999). This query is commonly ‘operationalized’, in the Eurobarometer and other surveys, with questions such as, ‘to what extent (on a scale from 1–7) do you feel: A) European, and B) Danish?’ (see, for example, Egeberg 1999). A high score for ‘feeling European’ is taken as evidence of a strong ‘European identity’. High scores given for both categories are presented as evidence that people can identify with both their nation state and with Europe – in other words, that they can have multiple identities, and that ‘European’ and ‘national’ identities are not incompatible. The implicit assumptions embedded in this sort of question, and in the method of inquiry, is that people ‘have’ one or more things called (national, regional, local, and so on) ‘identities’, which may or may not be compatible or complementary, and that these can be measured. What it means for the responder to ‘feel European’, and the meaning of this purported ‘European identity’, are implicitly assumed and left unaddressed, or they are characterized by the author of the research, rather than by the respondents. In both cases, the meanings are assumed to be static.

In contrast, discursive approaches underscore the meanings attributed to identities in discourse – by the (agentive) interlocutors – as a function of the social tasks being accomplished through identity discourse (see, for example, Hester and Housley 2002; Rapley and Augoustinos 2002; Slocum-Bradley 2008; Wetherell and Potter 1992; Zehfuss 2001). These approaches caution against reification

of concepts such as ‘identity’, pointing out that the meaning of any identity construction is ephemeral: it must be understood in a specific context, in which actors are accomplishing social tasks. Thus, within the context of the discursive persuasion, identities are often defined as *processes* (see, for example, Paasi 2002: 144; Wodak et al. 1999: 866). Accordingly, ‘identities’ are continually constituted and re-constituted by meanings applied (by persons) to persons or other purported actors. Meanings are generated (by people) using discursive tools – narrative, labels, categories, symbols, and so forth. Based upon this foundation, the following working definition of identity can be proposed: ‘Identities’ are meanings – labels, categories, symbols, and so forth – applied to persons or other narrated actors in specific contexts. Armbruster and Meinhof (2002: 18) emphasize the role of narrative in identity construction, stating that, ‘narratives are constitutive of the self rather than the reflective action of an already constituted individual’. In concordance with such a discursive approach, understanding ‘identities’ entails examining the processes through which such meanings are constructed and to what ends, within specific contexts (see Harré 1979; Bruner 1990; Harré and Gillet 1994; Harré and Stearns 1995).

**Box 1.1 A working definition of identity**

Working definition: ‘Identities’ are meanings – labels, categories, symbols, and so forth – applied to persons or other narrated actors in specific contexts.

Drawing upon Kant, Appiah (2005) develops a thorough argument for understanding the ‘structure versus agency’ debate through a ‘two standpoints approach’. Accordingly, whether one emphasizes the role of structure or agency depends upon the task one is interested in achieving, or what one is trying to make sense of. Appiah summarizes:

If we’re interested in the conditions that make people act a certain way – if we’re interested, say in ‘situationist’ psychology – we tell one narrative ... If we’re interested in retribution and blame, we tell another ... When is something a condition of choosing and when is it a constraint upon choice? Invariably, how we answer is a matter of interest-guided judgment, of what standpoint we adopt. (59)

Given that the interests of the present volume are to examine the relationship between identity constructions and peace and conflict, in order to enable identities that facilitate peace, it makes sense that the chapters in this volume all fall, to a greater or lesser extent, toward the right, or agency-emphasizing, side of the determinism spectrum. The goal is to illuminate how agents can construct peace-promoting identities, not to list and describe all of the factors constraining identity constructions. Nonetheless, Appiah’s words of caution should be kept in mind:

... Neither the picture in which there is just an authentic nugget of selfhood, the core that is distinctively me, waiting to be dug out, nor the notion that I can simply make up any self I choose, should tempt us. ... We make up selves from a tool kit of options made available by our culture and society. We do make choices, but we don't, individually, determine the options among which we choose. (107)

Within this general constructivist tendency, some authors in the present volume specify their own definitions of 'identity', while others articulate their approach to studying the constructive process thereof. All of them investigate the role of various types of borders in the construction of identities.

### **Borders of the Mind**

Since 'identity' is '... a form of categorization, where boundaries are used to distinguish one areal domain or social collectivity ("us") from others', Paasi (2002: 139) points out that, 'identity and boundaries are different sides of the same coin'. In the Westphalian world order, state 'borders, together with the institution of citizenship, designate both inclusion and exclusion and define the sociopolitical community both in terms of the "who we are" as well as the "who we are not"' (Rudolph 2005: 14). The Westphalian system divided geographical space into states and people into nation-state categories, thus lending 'national identities' a 'natural' appearance (Billig 1995, 1996; Hopkins and Reicher 1996). Billig (1996: 183) defines 'nationalism' as 'those beliefs and assumptions by which it appears 'natural' for the world to be divided into separate nation-states, and, thus, for the world of nations to be reproduced as today's "natural" social environment'. The ideology inherent in the practice of using national borders to classify the world highlights the psychological character of these borders.

Concomitant to processes of regional integration, the emergence of regional identity narratives has challenged the apparent 'naturalness' of national identities (Slocum and Van Langenhove 2005). This process has been described by Golob (2002: 2–3) as follows:

This view of the international system of states as one of fortified units geared both internationally and domestically for continuous defense – individually and in strategic alliances – has been challenged in the immediate post-Cold War years by those proclaiming the rise of a community of 'liberal democratic states' that were no longer arming against one another, but rather opening their borders for economic (and, in the case of Europe, political) integration, often in regionally-defined spaces. In the vernacular of the constructivist literature within International Relations, which advocates for such a 'constructed' view of politics based upon the social transformation of identities, this is an expansion of the 'we', a redefinition of the 'in-group' to, if not fully to include then to no longer absolutely exclude those who are beyond a nation's strict political perimeter.

Understanding the formation of regional identities as an expansion of the 'we' from nation-state identities well aligns with Paasi's (2002: 146) definition of

regional identities as 'collective narratives on who and what 'we' and 'our region' are and how these differ from others'. Paasi emphasizes that such narratives always include a normative element of power, alluding to the fact that the psychological and ideological nature of regional borders is no less than that of state borders. Linking identity with agency, Paasi (2002: 139) argues that, 'a region and regional identity are social facts that can generate action as long as people believe in them'. He further quotes Yuval-Davis as suggesting that,

borders and boundaries, identities and difference construct and determine to a large extent the space of agency and the mode of participation in which we act as citizens in the multilayered polities to which we belong.

This power of borders and boundaries to generate identity and agency can also be said of other categories that people use to partition the world. Fearon and Laitin (2000) refer to beliefs in the naturalness of any kind of social category as 'everyday primordialism' (848). Extrapolating from Billig's definition of 'nationalism', different types of 'everyday primordialism' can be specified. Thus, the practice (and concomitant beliefs and assumptions) of dividing the world into racial categories can be called 'racism'. In the same fashion, 'religionism' subdivides the world into religious groupings, 'linguisticism' into language categories, 'ethnicism' into ethnic groups, and 'socio-economicism' classifies the world into groups of 'poor', 'uneducated', 'elite', and so forth. These categories are the 'borders' with which we partition the world and conceptualize the resulting actors. The widespread nature of such ideologies is evidenced, for example, by Carli et al. (2003), who conclude from their discourse analysis that the 'one nation, one language ideology is still widespread in the 'common people' of Europe ... [who still tend] to have a monolithic vision of language as a differentiator of identity and culture' (880).

It has often been argued that national identities have been used to mobilize conflicts across national borders. It has also been argued that border conflicts have been used as tools to construct a group identity by generating a sense of 'other' (see Tronvoll 1999). While regional integration has been sold as a means to avoiding national conflicts, it has not always proven to be the panacea it is sometimes sold as. For example, Golob (2002) illustrates how identity discourses provoke conflict between Canada and the US in spite of major advances in technical and material border cooperation. Adejumbi (2005: 19) makes a similar point at the global level, arguing that,

The explosion in identities and identity-based conflicts in the world ordinarily contradicts the logic of globalization. The social dynamics of globalization should impel social integration through transculturalism or multiculturalism and engineer inter-group harmony on a global scale ... This however is not the case.

A closer look at how identities are constructed, whether through national borders, regional borders or other types of psychological borders, should provide insight as to why identity-based conflicts are proliferating despite (or perhaps, as a partial consequence of) worldwide transformations in geopolitical borders.

Intrinsic to the categorization or identification process described above is the assignment of rights and duties to actors. Since the categories evoked within a given context, as well as their meaning – including membership criteria – are malleable and dynamic, contestations over rights and duties are largely played out through competing identity constructions. Thus, the borders and identities evoked have implications for the moral standing of actors and can have important consequences for social harmony or conflict. The role of rights, duties and norms in conflict will be further explored in the next section.

### **Characterizing Conflict and Peace**

Many proposals have been put forth to define, or outline defining characteristics of, conflict and peace. In the view of proponents of ethno-methodological approaches, ‘conflict’ and ‘peace’ are that which is understood as such by the actors engaged in them. In this vein, Lederach (1995: 9) has written that ‘[c]onflict emerges through an interactive process based on the search for and creation of shared meaning’. This highlights the inherent nature of conflict in the natural process of meaning-construction. Furthermore, it underscores that not all conflict should be seen as inherently ‘bad’.<sup>1</sup> The negativity of conflict emerges where the natural constructive process is arrested and becomes a process of destruction. This is arguably always the case when violence emerges, whether physical or psychological. As the Commonwealth Commission on Respect and Understanding (2007: 27) points out, ‘psychological violence’ is almost always concomitant to physical violence, because a physical attack, ‘is also an attack on personhood, on the human-ness of others, on an individual, community or institution’s sense of self-worth, on identity’.

Research on discursive expressions of conflict has identified various patterns in contentious searches for meaning, with the aid of Positioning Theory (Harré and Van Langenhove 1999; see Slocum 2001a; Harré and Slocum 2003a and 2003b; Harré and Moghaddam 2003; Moghaddam et al. 2008). According to Slocum (2001a: 179–80; see also Slocum-Bradley 2008) some patterns evident in conflict include:

- certain types of speech acts, including accusations, rebukes, lambasting, reproaches, belittlement, condemnations, censure, reprimanding, blaming and social obloquy;
- the assignment of discrepant rights and duties to different groups by allocating rights and duties according to criteria that are met by some persons but not others;
- assigning stable traits to groups of persons, especially ‘victim’ and victimizer identities; and
- undermining the legitimacy of other actors and their actions through various discursive techniques, including attributing malign intentions.

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1 Moghaddam, Harré and Lee (2008: 285) argue that, from a moral perspective, some conflicts should be amplified, rather than (immediately) resolved.

These patterns are buried in narratives about what is, and what should be, going on. The acts through which they are constituted are discursive expressions of conflict; in other words, they are the acts through which conflict is accomplished.

Slocum (2001a: 113–14, 181–4) has also identified patterns in discursive acts that promote peace. These include:

- the equal allocation of rights and duties to groups of people;
- identifying people as members of the same group;
- characterizing certain individuals as problematic and the ‘majority’ of people as unified and harmonious;
- characterizing certain actions as ‘unintentional’;
- the attribution of benign motivations; and
- characterizing groups as weak when divided but strong when unified.

In their attempts to define or characterize ‘peace’, various researchers (Galtung 1964; Wenden and Schäffner 1995; Jeong 1999) have distinguished between ‘negative peace’, which is characterized by the absence of war and other types of physical violence, and ‘positive peace’, which includes the absence of discriminatory and inegalitarian social structures and institutions, or so-called ‘structural violence’. Accordingly, ‘positive peace’ entails ‘the development of just and equitable social structures that respect and enhance the human rights of all’ (Wenden and Schäffner 1995, xvii) and includes the elimination of poverty (Jeong 1999: 8).

Wenden (1995) assesses whether Galtung’s (1964) definition of peace represents a consensus by examining how peace is understood by various major cultural traditions, institutions and educators. She concludes that, while most recognize both the ‘negative’ and ‘positive’ components of peace, two aspects of this definition are still emerging. First, a distinction between organized and unorganized violence is not widely recognized, which will influence assessments of the presence or absence of ‘negative peace’. Second, she establishes that there is no consensus on the conditions that constitute ‘positive peace’. An understanding of the concept of peace is important, because according to her (constructivist) view, ‘which recognizes language as a dynamic force that shapes the world of meaning guiding human endeavour ..., it is the meaning represented by the word ‘peace’ that will inform the goals and determine the efforts of those who strive to achieve it (Wenden 1995: 15)’.

## **Identity in Conflict and Peace**

Evident throughout the various approaches to conflict and peace is the inherent role of identity. Less evident is how this role is conceived and studied. According to Social Identity Theory (Abrams and Hogg 1990; Hogg and Abrams 1999), conflict

is the consequence of a person's attempt to achieve a positive social identity.<sup>2</sup> One strategy to achieve this is to directly challenge and denigrate the *out-group*, in order to improve the relative status and power of one's *in-group*. Alternatively, socio-biologists (see Wilson 1975; Van den Berghe 1987) argue that ethnicity is a direct cause of conflict. Socio-biological theories claim that a person's ethnicity (phenotype) reflects his or her genotype, such that those who share a common ethnicity also have more genes in common than those of a different ethnic heritage. Thus, individuals will act aggressively towards those who are more dissimilar, because this strategy is more likely to ensure that their own genetic material is passed on. Another explanation is provided by rational choice theory, which is based upon the assumption that people have fixed, hierarchical 'interests', and their behavior maximizes the fulfillment of these interests, under the presumed condition of competition for scarce resources. In this view, identity groups are seen as instrumental coalitions formed in an attempt to compete and achieve one's 'interests', whereby such 'interests' are generally pre-defined by the theorist.

In critique of socio-biological theories, which manifest at the left pole of the 'identity determinism continuum' (refer to Figure 1.1), Fearon and Laitin (2000) contrast what they refer to as 'primordialist' versus constructivist approaches to studying ethnic identities and violence, explaining that,

Primordialists suggest that ethnic violence results from antipathies and antagonisms that are enduring properties of ethnic groups. The constructivist position rejects the notion of unchanging, essential characteristics and thus rejects this claim. (849)

From a constructivist position, Van Hoyweghen and Vlassenroot (2000: 112) argue that ethnicity cannot be the cause of a conflict, but that 'ethnic identity narratives justify behavior'. Such primordialism is depicted by Neumann (1999: 45–6) as a weakness of political science research based upon rational choice theory:

if, as mainstream political science tends to take for granted, the political is a question of 'who gets what when', then war becomes one of a number of mechanisms by which a certain distribution of values and goods can be realized. Crucially, the 'who's' that are supposed to get something at a particular point in time are treated as fixed entities.

Finally, various critical issues are left unaddressed by Social Identity, rational choice and socio-biological theories. For example, both rational choice and Social Identity theories assume the relevance of a particular identity category and fail to acknowledge that a wide range of identity categories could be evoked in any given situation. Consequently, the conditions under which people will define their 'identity' in terms of, or form a coalition based upon, a particular identity category remain obtuse (Slocum-Bradley 2008). Furthermore, the above theories fail to address the meaning of an evoked identity category (out of the many possible) and how it facilitates peace or conflict. This critique applies, for example, to

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2 Within this theory, 'social identity' is defined as 'that part of a person's self-concept which is derived from membership in social groups' (Moghaddam 1998: 485).

Gartzke and Gleditsch's (2006) article on 'Identity and Conflict: Ties that Bind and Differences that Divide', in which the authors conduct a statistical analysis of pairs of state groupings that, according to them, do or do not have different dominant 'civilizations' or cultural affinities. They conclude that violence is more likely 'within than between civilizations or groups of similar states' (55). The authors' methodology – the state centric analysis and presumed identity structures within the different groupings – obfuscates the meaning of the identities evoked as well as the nature of identity construction and how it relates to conflict.

Kaufman (2001) concludes that the 'fundamental explanation of ethnic war lies in the meanings the participants see' (205). He proposes 'symbolic politics theory' to explain the outbreak of ethnic war. This approach emphasizes the role of an 'ethnic myth symbol complex' that justifies hostility toward another group. The theory posits that this ethnic myth symbol complex, combined with 'ethnic fears' and 'opportunity to mobilize and fight', are the key conditions that must be fulfilled for ethnic war to occur. In applying the theory to various case studies, the author concludes that historical myths and conjured fear outweigh, and can even override, 'objective' (material) interests in explaining ethnic war. They do so 'by explaining how ethnic groups understand their interests' (206). Kaufman thus asserts that, 'we need to know less about people's 'objective' interests and more about their attitudes and the myths and symbols that influence those attitudes' (221).

A constructivist approach, through which the construction of meaning – including attitudes and identities – can be examined, is more useful for addressing such issues and the focal questions of the present volume. Constructivism emphasizes that the meaning of identities, including definitions of group membership, members' values, attitudes, interests and so forth, are constructed in discourse that accomplishes social tasks. From this perspective, Taylor (1985) notes that social practices are carried out, and social institutions are constituted, through acts that are enabled by certain self-understandings. Thus, Shotter and Gergen (1989: xi) point out that, 'the identities of those conducting the practice are constitutive of its nature'. In the words of Harré (1989: 33), 'the folk who use the metaphors [of identity] are not captured by the pictures: they use them for whatever needs to be said or done'. It is here argued that what is said or done may constitute conflict, be prone to instigate conflict, or promote social harmony and peace.

In mainstream psychology literature, 'attitudes' have been analytically distinguished from 'identity'. Accordingly, attitudes have been defined as 'an evaluative disposition toward some object' (Zimbardo and Leippe 1991: 31). However, this literature commits the error of reification in that an attitude is treated as something that people 'have' and that can be tapped into, given the appropriate instruments (such as the Eurobarometer survey, discussed above). In contrast, constructivists (see Bamberg, 2004; Edwards and Potter 1992) treat expressions of opinions or 'attitudes' in the same manner as expressions of identity. In order to understand what a person 'means' when (s)he expresses an attitude, one must identify what the expression is accomplishing in the given discursive context.

Thus, within a constructivist framework, ‘conflict’ and ‘peace’ can be understood as social tasks accomplished through discursive acts, as illustrated by Slocum (2001a). Such discursive acts include invoking identities in different ways. Invoked identities must tie into existing narratives (Kaufman 2001) and draw upon the discursive resources available within a given culture (Shotter and Gergen 1989). On the basis of the above insights, one can conclude that different identity discourses enable different types of practices, some of which constitute or incite conflict and others that promote peace. Within this framework, we can address the central concerns of the present volume: What kinds of identities enable peace-promoting acts, and what kinds of identities facilitate conflict-promoting acts; and why? In other words: how do identity constructions promote peace or conflict?

Some research has begun to address these questions. For example, Sen (2006: xv; see also the Commonwealth Commission on Respect and Understanding 2007) has argued that creating an illusion of a choice-less and singular identity is kindling for conflict:

Many conflicts and barbarities in the world are sustained through the illusion of a unique and choiceless identity. The art of constructing hatred takes the form of invoking the magical power of some allegedly predominant identity that drowns other affiliations, and in a conveniently bellicose form can also overpower any human sympathy or natural kindness that we may normally have. The result can be homespun elemental violence, or globally artful violence and terrorism.

Similarly, Moghaddam (2006) argues that at the root of terrorism lies a pervasive Islamic identity crisis and consequent search for an ‘authentic’ identity.

Gergen, McNamee and Barrett (2001) have described the link between identity and conflict as locating ‘the evil’ in the actions of ‘the other’, who is portrayed as inferior, stupid or villainous. They argue that such ‘negative stereotyping’, or ‘rigid and simplified conceptions’ of the other, leads to social atomization. Such negative stereotyping, or identifications, evident in conflicts has been described by Slocum-Bradley (see Slocum 2001; Slocum-Bradley 2008). It entails identifying oneself (or one’s group) as the ‘victim’ and identifying others using stable traits with highly negative connotations, such as hypocritical, untrustworthy, intolerant, uncooperative, negligent, arrogant, manipulative, totalitarian, discriminating, greedy, abusive, egoistic, extremist, and so forth (Slocum 2001: 109–10, 176–81).

Various authors (Fujii 2002; Moghaddam 2006; Slocum-Bradley 2008) have argued that norms are integral to understanding how identity constructions can promote conflict or peace. Underscoring the link between norms and identity, Katzenstein (1996) defines a norm as ‘the standard of appropriate behavior for actors with a given identity’ (5). Depending upon the social reality constructed, which sets a normative framework, violence can be construed as the ‘appropriate’ behavior in a given context. Fujii (2002: 2–3) argues that the *génocidaires* in Rwanda ‘were able to construct a world where genocidal thinking was the norm and to make that world the only consequential reality for victim and killer alike’.

Similarly, Moghaddam (2006: 123) underscores the importance of authority figures and prevailing norms for understanding the behavior of suicide bombers, explaining that, 'In some communities, what we call "terrorism" is seen as a legitimate and rational strategy for fighting against 'barbarian invaders'.

Intrinsic to norms are allocations of rights and duties, which are distributed in accordance with a person's evoked identity (see Slocum-Bradley, Chapter 6). According to Adejumobi (2005: 20), struggles over the allocation of rights and duties within societies are the roots of identity-based conflicts in Africa:

Underlying the litany of identity-based conflicts in Africa is the issue of citizenship and rights, a phenomenon that has been exacerbated by globalization. The genealogy to this is the history of African society dating to colonialism in which primordial identities were the foci of individual rights, and not the state. State citizenship was constructed on and above primordial logic. Currently, group identities have assumed not only the primary means of social expression, but also of rights and privileges in the polity. The concept of national citizenship of equal rights, benefits and duties for all citizens has been attenuated or bifurcated, with the state sunk in a cesspool of intergroup struggles and conflicts over the distribution of public goods.

Alubo (Chapter 3) also highlights the how a struggle for rights and privileges is played out through identity politics in Nigeria. Slocum (2001) illuminated how identities evoked, and the meanings attributed to them, bore consequences for the allocation of rights and duties within the context of a conflict between the university and residents in Georgetown, Washington, DC. Rights were sometimes implicitly allocated in accordance with 'community' membership. However, the term 'community' was used by some people to include students and non-students, and by others to signify only non-student residents. To make such assumptions explicit, new categories were employed, such as 'matriculated citizens'. Evoking the term 'citizens' (whereby the matriculation status is irrelevant) places student and non-student residents on equal moral footing, suggesting an equal distribution of rights and duties. Simultaneously, the evocation of this superordinate category, with the equal distribution of rights and duties it implied, was a peace-promoting act (see 182–3). An examination of social norms and attributed rights and duties is therefore indispensable to understanding the relationship between identity construction and conflict or peace.

Finally, various authors (Beck 1998; Sen 2006; Slocum 2001a: 196; Slocum 2001b) have pointed to the reflexive nature of identity construction, emphasizing the impact that theory can have upon social reality. In critique of Huntington's (1996) theory of civilizational clash, Sen (2006) argues that theories that reduce people's humanity to a single form of identity can have far reaching consequences, as theories can influence thought, action and public policy. Reduced identities, such as those portrayed by Huntington, are illusions that can be invoked to foment intergroup strife, whereby harmful consequences are often not intended by the proponents of theories. Sen importantly points out that,

high theories with solitarist features like civilizational partitioning or communitarian confinement are not, of course, aimed in any way at sewing confrontation – in fact quite

the contrary. When, for example, a theory of the ‘clash of civilizations’ is presented and promoted, the objective is to identify what is perceived as a pre-existing reality ..., and the theorists see themselves as ‘discovering’ a confrontation, not creating – or adding to – one. (178)

Theories about identity, whether promoted by social scientists or laypersons, can generate and reify identity conceptions that can (be used to) foment conflict. How identity is studied thus has equally important implications for peace or conflict as the object of study.

## **Overview**

The case studies included in the present volume pursue the reviewed lines of research by exploring identity constructions in different ‘regions’ of the world. Each chapter addresses three focal questions:

- 1) How are identities being constructed and used in the region?
- 2) How are these identities related to borders?
- 3) In what ways do the identity constructions and processes foment peace or conflict?

The authors come from diverse disciplinary backgrounds, including psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science, geography, and history. Their studies present a wide array of methodological approaches to studying identity, conflict and peace, each of which highlights different elements that constitute identity, its construction process and its consequences.

The first three case studies examine identity construction within attempts at nation building. Dubois (Chapter 2) provides a historian’s perspective on the making of nations in the Benelux region, focusing on the formation of identities in what has come to be Belgium. He exposes how two different models of a nation – the political model and the cultural model – have influenced the borders of and within Belgium. Belgium, as a state, developed on the basis of a political model, its borders changing throughout Europe’s long history of territorial wars. In contrast, some contemporary identity narratives, based upon the cultural model of a nation, are promoting language-based nationalism. The resulting ‘linguistic border’ is the subject of great contention, albeit devoid of violence. He argues that this border is the platform for political and economic power plays.

In his study of nation building in Nigeria, Alubo (Chapter 3) contrasts constitutional provisions for Nigerian citizens with practices that privilege certain identities over others. He highlights how religious, ethnic and other identities are strategically evoked within different contexts. Space in Nigeria is continuously re-partitioned, and new identities are constructed, such as ‘indigene’ or ‘settler’, in order to claim rights and privileges. Alubo eloquently illustrates how Nigeria is a country of ‘several citizenships’, the borders between which are conflict rife.

Newman (Chapter 4) highlights the territorial and spatial dimensions of national identity constructions by the Jewish society in Israel/Palestine. He illuminates how these identity constructions are used to justify claims within the context of the Israeli and Palestinian conflict over territory and space. Participants to the conflict draw upon geographic, historical and archaeological narratives and discourses to 'prove' that the land belonged to their antecedents, and to claim, on this basis, a right to present control. Newman contrasts post-Zionist and neo-Zionist challenges to hegemonic mainstream Zionist identity narratives and the associated reasoning behind their territorial claims. A fundamental difference between each of these challenging discourses is the distribution of rights and duties allocated to different national groups within a geopolitical space. Newman argues that the territorial policies advocated in each of the discourses have very different implications for conflict resolution.

In the fifth chapter, Camroux and Pathan examine identity constructions within the context of an irredentist movement in southern Thailand. They illuminate the roles of ethnicity and religion, as well as neighboring Malaysia, in the identity narratives of peoples in this region, contrasting these with outsiders' narratives, which portray the irredentist movement as 'insurgents' fighting a 'global jihad'. Within local 'Patani' narratives, the authors reveal the existence of a Malay nation, which defies the borders of the Thai state. The contradiction between geopolitical space and the 'sense of cultural space' shared by the Malay people manifests in a literal inter-national conflict. While religion is a strong signifier of difference, the authors argue, it is not the cause of the rejection of Thai rule; rather, it merely provides another reason for rejecting what is portrayed as an 'infidel occupier'.

Identity constructions at the US–Mexico border are the subject of analysis in Chapter 6 (Slocum-Bradley). As an analytical tool, Slocum-Bradley draws upon Positioning Theory, to which she proposes an expansion and modifications. This theory development allows for more precise analysis of identity constructions and how they relate to norms, narrative, and discursive acts that constitute conflict or promote peace. Her analysis illuminates the variety of geopolitical and other psychological borders implicit in the identities evoked, as well as the allocation of rights and duties linked to these borders, within discourses on migration and border policy. Slocum-Bradley's fine-grained analysis enables her to pinpoint key elements at the core of identity construction that are conducive of conflict or peace.

In the seventh chapter, Duina compares the processes and consequences of identity constructions in three formal regional integration organizations. Drawing upon examples from the Mercosur, the EU and NAFTA, this chapter examines how the creation and functioning of regional trade institutions generate new identities and instigate both peace and conflict. According to Duina, identities, which he concisely defines as shared beliefs and viewpoints, are created through institutional processes. These processes include cross-national institution building, regional law, public discourse and mobilization, and symbols and images generated and disseminated by the regional institutions. Illustrating his point with various examples, Duina argues that regional identities are the mechanisms through which regional organizations can promote peace or cause conflict.

In contrast to the formal and institutionalized forms of regional integration studied by Duina, Moghaddam (Chapter 8) describes the role of identity construction in informal regional integration. Emphasizing the fluidity and unpredictability of identity borders, he argues that religious identity has played a decisive role in the rise of a Shi'a Crescent, the emergence of which was largely unforeseen by external regional planners. Moghaddam highlights the role of internal and external narratives in the emergence of the Shi'a Crescent, as well as the implications it has for peace and conflict within the region and with the West.

In the final case study of this anthology, Brown (Chapter 9) examines identity constructions *within* and *of* Melanesia, a constitution of Southwest Pacific islands. She illuminates the role of custom and tradition in establishing thresholds for, restraints to, and constructions of violence, contrasting this with Western representations of Melanesia as 'conflictual' and 'warlike'. Her exposé highlights the reflexive nature of identity constructions, whereby external constructions of Melanesian identity impact attitudes about Melanesia, which in turn influence policy orientation towards Melanesia. Brown argues that the resulting policies can foment conflict within Melanesia and between Melanesia and the West. She creatively proposes that an understanding of the strengths of the Melanesian culture, and its grappling with change, can bear great potential for conflict prevention, development and other positive change. As such, her perspective provides a constructive alternative to theories of civilizational clashes.

Extracting insights from each of the above case studies, the concluding chapter of the volume revisits the three focal questions. It summarizes insights gleaned and reflects upon their implications for addressing identity constructions as root causes of conflict or peace.

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