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PAIRING FOR THE PREVENTION OF PREJUDICE: PAIR COUNSELING TO PROMOTE INTERGROUP UNDERSTANDING

Michael Justin Karcher[1]
Harvard Graduate School of Education and
The University of Texas, Austin

ABSTRACT: This paper describes theory and practice related to the promotion of interpersonal and intergroup understanding. The first part of the paper introduces the "prevention therapy" framework and "pair counseling," two interventions which focus on prevention through fostering development, both cognitive and interpersonal. Part two illustrates "intergroup understanding," which is the ability to understand the meaning and experiences related to one's own and another's group membership, by presenting examples from two multicultural pair counseling cases. Therapeutic strategies for promoting intergroup understanding are suggested.

During their eighth session of pair counseling, Kenny and Carl were talking about why they each thought Kenny was teased so much by his 6th grade peers. Carl, who prior to pair counseling had been one of Kenny's most ferocious teasers, had many suggestions. Some were painful for Kenny to hear, like the fact that Kenny did not wear cool clothes or pay as much attention to his grooming as the other middle schoolers did. But Kenny found one of Carl's explanations most surprising. Carl said, "They call him names 'cause he's from Africa. They say his family runs around naked, don't wear shoes, and eats other people. But it's true. Seriously they do, I saw it on TV!" Neither Kenny nor the counselor knew quite how to respond to Carl's statement. Both Kenny and Carl were black, and Basil, the counselor, was white. Kenny had moved to the U.S. from Africa just before entering middle school, and he was seen as very "different" by his peers. Basil wondered how he and Kenny might respond to such prejudices. Kenny probably asked himself the same question.

Prejudice as Misunderstanding

Prejudices are usually misunderstandings. Certainly not all prejudices are "bad" or unfounded, and many would argue that prejudices are the unavoidable foundations of social understanding (Gadamer, 1975). But prejudices are very often a source of misunderstanding, alienation and disconnectedness. Much of what is written about reducing prejudice suggests that the best prevention of prejudice occurs through the development of authentic and meaningful relationships with those whom we believe are different from ourselves (see Allport, 1954). Likewise, the first step in understanding another culture is to better understand one of its members — *interpersonal understanding forms the basis of intergroup understanding.*

This paper focuses on the cognitive and social-cognitive underpinnings of "intergroup understanding" (Karcher, 1995a), which is the ability to understand the meaning and experiences related to membership in one's own or another's group. The model of intergroup understanding illustrates not only the structure and content of cognition, but also the emotional dynamics related to taking the perspectives of "others." The model is designed to help practitioners, teachers, and other concerned adults identify ways in which the horizons of the adolescent's thinking may be broadened and deepened.

As one example of the application of this model to clinical work, this article illustrates how pair counselors have promoted intergroup understanding among two children by assisting them in the task of friendship development and maintenance (see Selman & Schultz, 1990; Selman, this volume). These cases illustrate how prejudices as misunderstandings are overcome through childrens' deepening social and cultural understanding in authentic relationships. One example, to which we return later in the article, is the relationship between Kenny and Carl described above. This case vignette shows how their interpersonal and intergroup misunderstandings were overcome by their getting to know each other.

Both pair counseling and intergroup understanding may be conceptualized in terms of a philosophy of prevention and intervention called "prevention therapy." Prevention therapy is derived, in part, from prevention-based practice and research at the Harvard Graduate School of Education's "Risk and Prevention Program," and focuses on promoting development by increasing connectedness and understanding. Pair counseling for the prevention of prejudice may be considered one type of preventative intervention falling under the prevention therapy umbrella of activities, all of which focus development of interpersonal connectedness and understanding.

Prevention Therapy: Philosophy and Practice

In her review of the main objectives of residential care, Karen VanderVen (1991) suggests several areas of child development that child care workers should work to promote. In this list of "functions indicative of positive mental health," VanderVen notes both intrapsychic aspects (e.g., self-esteem) as well as interpersonal skills such as "the ability to relate to others, to sustain intimate relationships, and to be productive" (1991, p. 279). Similarly, thirty years earlier at the first major primary prevention conference in North America, Barbara Biber (1961) presented a similar list of areas of development on which preventionists should focus. More recently scholars from various disciplines agree on these areas of focus for school-based interventions (Bond & Compas, 1989; Dryfoos, 1990; Schorr, 1989). The consensus among these research-practitioners appears to be a preventative emphasis on developing the child's connectedness to his or her own feelings, to peers and significant adults, and to society as a whole. That is,

they suggest that working to promote the child's connectedness to self, other, and society should be the primary goal of prevention efforts in schools.

Prevention therapy is a philosophy of intervention built on this belief. It states that developing connectedness is the key to promoting psychological health. The focus is on identifying and developing what is unique and positive about the child in order to circumvent problems (e.g., dropout) and promote those functions indicative of positive mental health. The model reflects the integration of two distinct abstract traditions: social-cognitive development and hermeneutics. Prevention therapy relies on the lens of cognitive and social-cognitive theories (Fischer, 1980; Noam, 1988; Selman, 1980; Selman & Schultz, 1990) to guide a wide array of interventions that all serve to promote the student's connectedness and develop his / her strengths. Hermeneutic theory (Gadamer, 1975; 1993; Heidegger, 1962; Packer & Addison, 1989), which has historically meant the interpretation of texts through attention to context and history, describes the way in which interpretations are made. In prevention therapy, as well as in pair counseling, hermeneutic theory can guide the practitioner's efforts to help children uncover greater awareness about the ways in which they are connected to others and to society, and to the ways those two worlds affect how they understand who they are. Connectedness, in this framework, has three dimensions. It refers to the student's *understanding* of different worlds, his or her *activity* in these worlds, and the degree to which these worlds are *personally meaningful* (Levitt, Selman & Richmond, 1991; Karcher, 1995b).

Prevention therapy interventions focus less on identifying and tackling psychopathology and focus more on helping children better understand and act positively in their various worlds. The activities that fall under the umbrella of prevention therapy all serve to promote connectedness to self (self-understanding), others (social awareness and activity), and society (e.g., school, culture, and the future)(Karcher, 1995b). For example, as a preventionist, a youth care worker or counselor can help children reflect on their interpretations of their connectedness to these worlds over time (Nakkula & Selman, 1991). This requires that the adult help children think about how they understand their world, and how effective their actions are at promoting connectedness. The preventionist maintains a focus on how the children interpret what is meaningful to them and what is possible in life. Prevention therapy also requires that children act on these insights. To promote connectedness to the self, social, and societal worlds, the preventionist works to challenge the children's self-understanding, provide experiences that promote feelings of belongingness and care for others, and encourage the children to commit themselves to their worlds in some way that is personally meaningful.

Several key concepts guide the prevention therapy model, and can be used to inform the practice of pair counseling, especially when the focus of the pair counseling is on issues of culture or difference. The first practice

concept is to encourage children to challenge their assumptions about how the world works and what their place is in it. Preventionists challenge these *assumptive worlds* (Frank & Frank, 1991) by asking children to think critically about themselves, their background, and their futures. This is done by helping the children think and talk about the barriers, or *walls,* that they perceive between them and what they want to do or be (see Wehmiller, 1992).

Preventionists provide children experiences that challenge their ideas of what can and cannot change, and identify what in their world is ripe with *possibility* versus that which is trapped in *"facticity"* (Heidegger, 1962; Maddi, 1988). Finally, preventionists help children see the ways that they play by the *rules of the games* in their lives, at school, in society, and in teen and urban subcultures (Gadamer, 1975). Preventionists, whether pair counselors or youth care workers, help children explore what they know, what they do, and what they care about.

A final goal of prevention therapy programs is to help children function successfully in a multicultural society. This becomes increasingly important for children of color and children from low-income families who often encounter formidable challenges to their connectedness — to self, others, and society — because of social prejudices, economic barriers, and culturally specific institutional practices. If Jerome Bruner (1990) is correct when he says, "All we can hope for is a viable pluralism backed by a willingness to negotiate differences in a worldview," (p. 30) then clearly it is of utmost importance that the children who face these challenges learn to negotiate their needs in peer relations early in life. The development of such skills in youth will likely foster connectedness and possibilities throughout their lives.

Pair Counseling to Promote Social and Cultural Connectedness

Pair counseling is an intervention that serves to promote psychosocial development through the development, negotiation, and maintenance of relationships. In this intervention, a counselor guides the interactions and negotiations of a pair of children, typically for one hour per session over the course of a school year or longer. Through pair counseling, two children learn about themselves and about how to develop and sustain relationships. The goal of pair counseling is to help children develop friendship-making and friendship-maintaining skills, so that they are better able to develop and maintain the social connections that are critical to adolescent development (Karcher, 1996).

Pair counseling is a particularly effective means for promoting intergroup understanding, because "pairs" provides a context for children to know another child more authentically, especially a child who may be "different" from himself or herself in many ways. From the vantage of the prevention therapy framework, the real relationships present in pair counseling afford unique opportunities for children to explore interpretive worlds, bring down walls, distinguish between what is immutable (facticity)

and what is possible or changeable (possibility), and to discover the rules that define the games they play (or that play them) at school, at home, and across various cultures in society. The preventionist as pair counselor is able to structure the children's interactions in a way that challenges the children's assumptions about their worlds, as well as their assumptions about "otherness." Pair counseling in public schools and residential settings provides repeated examples that, through the development of friendships among children who are "different," beliefs and attitudes can be effectively altered. These friendships provide meaningful cross cultural experiences and the opportunity to reflect on and learn from these experiences (Karcher, 1991; Karcher & Nakkula, in press).

Kenny and Carl

In the case of Kenny and Carl, which opened up this article, both boys suffered from extreme social disconnectedness. Their interpretations of why they were so socially disconnected had led them to see themselves as incompetent. This disconnectedness led them to withdraw in school from their work and their peers. Their social failures decreased their connectedness to their school, teachers, and peers. These experiences also disconnected them from feeling positively about themselves. But they did not keep these feelings of disconnectedness to themselves. They engendered feelings of incompetence, inferiority, and worthlessness in each other at every opportunity. One of the opportunities in which Carl chose to engender his negative affect in Kenny was when he expressed with conviction and disdain his prejudices and misunderstanding about what it meant for Kenny to be from Africa. Conflictual moments such as these between the two children initially signaled to their teachers how poorly each negotiated interpersonal situations, and were the basis of their referral for counseling.

These children were similar in several respects, but they also were culturally and interpersonally quite different. Kenny and Carl were both Black children from poor families. Both struggled in school and regularly experienced interpersonal catastrophes. However, Kenny was born in Africa, while Carl was born in an urban metropolitan city in the U.S. Kenny's strong accent was the basis of much teasing in school. Where there was a verbal attack on Kenny, usually Carl was either the instigator of the attack or else he was not far from the scene. Their status within the school culture also differed dramatically. Kenny was one of the brightest children in the school, and until his sixth grade year had worked hard consistently. Carl on the other hand did not do well academically. He was a roughhouser whose bullying disconnected him from his peers and teachers. This was one part of Carl's contempt for Kenny—he seemed jealous of the praise Kenny received from teachers. This phenomenon, of immigrant children performing better academically than their nonimmigrant ethnic peers, is often a source of prejudice and misunderstanding among students (Ogbu, 1991; Suarez-Orozco, & Suarez-Orozco, 1996; Valencia, 1991).

Through their work in pair counseling, the dynamic of antagonism and misunderstanding between Kenny and Carl was effectively addressed. Their natural struggles for intimacy and autonomy in the development of this friendship challenged their differences and highlighted their similarities (see Karcher, in press). After a brief period of Carl attempting to establish his dominance and control in the sessions, the boys began to explore their shared interests and experiences. Each began to experiment with the other's social role. Through drawings, puppet shows, and discussions, they shared their own perspectives and perceptions of each other.

Over the course of that fall, each began to see himself less dichotomously in relationship to the other. Kenny, whose interpersonal negotiations in the classroom had been characterized by incapacitating passivity and timidity, began to assert himself in the pair. He was eventually able to tell Carl that Carl's prejudices were incorrect and hurtful. Carl, who had rigidly held onto his role as the dominator in the classroom and during their first two months in pairs, began to loosen the reigns of power and open himself to the prospect of failure by investing more in his school work. He was able to differentiate "playing tough" from being an "incompetent student." Understanding how Kenny saw him allowed Carl to separate his social and academic self, so that he could begin to do well in school and still "be cool." By the end of their first year, both were a great deal more flexible in their use of interpersonal negotiation strategies, and subsequently both boys functioned more successfully in the areas that had once threatened their success in school.

How did this happen? In accord with the philosophy of prevention therapy, pair counselors and preventionists counsel across differences through highlighting strengths, and by acknowledging the behaviors that may increase the children's chances of becoming more connected to themselves, their peers, the school, and society. In the counselor's work with this pair, Basil praised Kenny both for his work in school, and for those times when he asserted his needs in the pair. Basil helped Carl identify the times when he could negotiate his needs with Kenny, and applauded Carl's efforts to do so. Basil also complimented Carl's self-initiated efforts to work with a tutor outside of class on his school work. Basil's focus was on helping each boy identify his own strengths, and on encouraging each to experiment with the other's strengths rather than focus on their respective liabilities. He encouraged each boy to challenge the other's as well as his own prejudices in order to promote the boys' understanding and connectedness in their relationship.

Over the course of their two years together, these two boys underwent the kind of social transformation not often witnessed as a result of therapeutic efforts in schools. Their work in pairs directly affected the climate of their classrooms. As Carl became more aware of how his teasing and prejudices affected Kenny and their relationship in session, Carl teased Kenny and his other peers less. By not maintaining his leadership role in bullying Kenny

and other children, Carl freed up the energy he had formerly expended "watching his back" for the retaliatory attacks of peers, and he began to focus on school work instead. Carl made more friends as fewer peers feared his attacks, and his schoolwork improved as he began to see himself as someone who could do well in school. In the absence of Carl's teasing, Kenny was freed from the demoralizing experiences that kept him from connecting to his peers and from feeling good about himself. Kenny developed more friendships in school and was better able to maintain his school performance. Through pairs the boys strengthened their connectedness to each other, to their peers, their teachers, and the process of schooling, as well as to positive feelings about themselves.

The Perspectives, Skills and Emotions of Intergroup Understanding

Pair counseling with youth of different cultural, religious, or class differences has provided many examples of how the development of friendship-making skills in the context of an authentic relationship has led to more tolerant and thoughtful attitudes among these adolescents (see Selman, Schultz, & Watts, in press). However, research and theory in the cognitive foundations of prejudice and intergroup understanding suggest that helping individuals practice the development of more complex beliefs about groups is also critical to developing low-prejudice attitudes. And there are specific tools the adult can use to promote intergroup understanding. The following two sections describe the theoretical foundation for several specific strategies that child care workers, preventionists, and counselors can use in pairs or other interventions to promote more complex interpersonal and intergroup understanding. This is followed by a description of the four strategies, and illustrations of how the model of intergroup understanding informs their use in addressing the cognitive bases of prejudice and misunderstanding.

The cognitive foundations of prejudice

In her research in the cognitive foundations of prejudice, Patricia Devine (1989) conducted a series of studies to explore the differences between individuals who scored high and low on the Modern Racism Scale. She found as many similarities as differences. First, she found that high and low prejudice white college students were aware of the same stereotypes about Blacks. Second, she found that unconsciously presented group-related words activate group-related stereotypes, such as "Blacks are aggressive." That is, regardless of one's conscious feelings about groups, unconsciously both high and low prejudice individuals make similar associations to group stereotypes. Finally, she found one main difference between high and low-prejudice individuals: low-prejudice individuals tended to make more elaborate descriptions of other groups by contextualizing stereotypes and by describing groups in terms of more

complex beliefs and elaborate thoughts, instead of simply reporting concrete representations, stereotypes, or generalizations.

One important aspect of Devine's research was to show that the main difference between high and low-prejudice individuals is that low-prejudice individuals seem to try to think about other groups in more complex ways than typically is presented in common group stereotypes. Devine's work suggests that low-prejudice individuals do this by making conscious efforts to break down stereotypes into more complex patterns of understanding, to take the perspective of members of other groups, and to see beyond the emotions and perspective (needs, interests, and goals) of their own group's typical perspective.

Intergroup understanding

The model of intergroup understanding proposed here attempts to account for the relationships between these aspects of social understanding and misunderstanding (prejudice) by highlighting the perspective-taking, cognitive complexity, and emotions involved in understanding the meaning of group membership. The model uses the lens of social perspective coordination (Selman, 1980) to identify the degree to which one is able to take the social perspective of another group and to expand one's understanding beyond the narrow interests of his or her own group. The model also uses cognitive skills theory (Fisher, 1980) to assess the complexity or depth of thought demonstrated in descriptions of the meaning of group membership. Finally, the model examines the affect behind explanations of intergroup understanding in order to account for the dynamics behind one's ability to understand and think complexly about group membership.

Social perspectives in intergroup understanding

In the seventies, Selman (1980) began researching the ways in which children and adolescents understood social perspectives, and more specifically, how they acted in moments of conflict. From this work he developed a model of interpersonal understanding which included several levels of social perspective-taking. He identified the child who seems to act on impulse, not even aware that his needs or outlook may differ from those around him (level 0, ages 3-6[2]). Selman demonstrated that somewhat older children become able to identify and articulate their own perspective, as well as focus on the physical actions involved in conflictual situations (level 1, ages 5-9). Still older children develop the ability to take another's point of view, and compare it to their own. This allows them to better negotiate reciprocally in order to get what they want, for example, through cooperation (level 2, ages 7-12). Adolescents, following the development of these earlier abilities, usually develop the ability to abstract their thoughts from context and take a third person perspective (level 3, ages 10-15). The third person perspective provides a "bird's eye" view. It provides youth with a wonderful tool for developing broader understandings about individuals as well as groups.

Extending Selman's model illustrates that social perspective coordination also applies to understanding the collective perspective of group members (see Figure 1). The first group perspective is ethnocentric, leaving the point of view of one or more groups unacknowledged or invalidated. With a second group perspective, the individual can understand the psychological experience (e.g., beliefs, goals, feelings) as well as social relations (e.g., histories and current situation) related to a second group, but different groups are considered somewhat isolated from each other. With the third group perspective the individual takes a "bird's-eye" view on groups-in-relation to each other. This social perspective allows the individual to combine the social relations and psychological experience of multiple groups, and to see the mutual relationship between the experiences, statuses, histories, and current practices of multiple groups. For example, with this social perspective comes the ability to understand the fact that racism is not just an interpersonal act but a phenomenon that also has ramifications for the two groups involved and for the social order in general. Conversely, in the absence of this mutual social perspective-taking ability, a child will not likely be swayed by such an explanation of racism. The social perspective coordination dimension of intergroup understanding includes several group perspectives that range from a wide to a narrow, or ethnocentric, point of view.

Table 1: *The cognitive dimensions of Intergroup understanding: Deep & Wide*

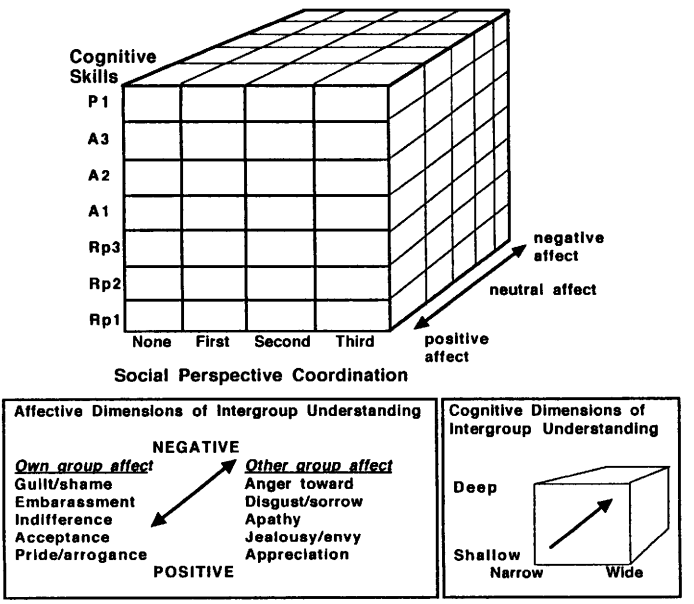

Figure 1: The cognitive and affective dimensions of intergroup understanding: Cognitive skills, social perspective coordination, and affective valence.

"DEPTH OF UNDERSTANDING"
Cognitive Skills

P1 Single Principles
The person describes how Systems of Abstractions about one group's experience are related to a second System of Abstractions (typically describing another dimension of a group or the experience of another group).

A3 Systems of Abstractions
The person related two Abstract Mappings or several Abstractions to each other to describe the experience of group membership.

A2 Abstract Mappings
The person relates two Abstract concepts to each other (e.g., how one causes the other or is either similar or different from the other) to explain a group's experience.

A1 Single Abstractions
The person describes how two or more Systems of Representations are related in a way hat conveys an aspect of group membership that is abstracted from any one context, event, or action.

Rp3 Systems of Representations
Two Representational Mappings or several concrete aspects of group membership are related to describe several concrete characteristics of an action or characteristics of an action or characteristics in a context.

Rp2 Representational Mappings
Two concrete aspects of group membership are related to each other.

Note:
1) The cognitive skills in intergroup understanding are separated by several transformations which are not described here. These transformations result in "complex skills" (Kennedy, 1994), which account for the development of more complex skills.

2) This model of social perspective coordination draws heavily from Selman's (1980) original and more recent (Levitt, Selman, & Richmond, 1994) research and is informed by Quintana's (1995) model of ethnic perspective-taking.

"WIDTH" OR BREADTH OF UNDERSTANDING
Social Perspective coordination

Social Coordination of group perspectives describes a person's cognitive ability (and typically their willingness) to take a group's perspective other than the one generally held by the members of his or her own group.

LEVEL 3: Third Group Perspective (mutual)
This perspective is like a "third person's" perspective or a "bird's eye view" on the relations and dynamics of two or more groups. The person can use as a point of view the histories, current concerns, and goals of two or more groups in deciding how to act or where to stand on a particular topic. The person may describe collaborative actions, where negotiations are mutually informed by the perspectives of both groups.

LEVEL 2: Second Group Perspective (reflective)
This perspective acknowledges the experience of the other groups. In this way the person can describe the wants, goals, histories, and current plight of two groups. These two perspectives, however, either, conflict or are similar, and there is little understanding that both groups' must give a little if they are both going to successfully coexist or benefit mutually. They are either seen as at odds or there is "no problem."

LEVEL 1: First Group Perspective (ethnocentric)
This perspective places priority on one group's point of view. Only one group's perspective (wants, concerns, plight, and history) is validated. This point of view may delegitimize the perspective of other groups or it may result in the person being unaware of his or her own group's wants, experience, and situation. A person may rigidly and ethnocentrically defend his or her own group's perspective, with little or no acknowledgment of the other group's point of view. One also may exclude the perspective of his or her own group to fit the perception of the other groups.

Cognitive skills in intergroup understanding

Kurt W. Fischer's model of cognitive skills provides the yardstick for measuring the depth or cognitive complexity one brings to the task of describing the meaning of membership in one's own group or another group. Fischer's theory of cognitive skills, which reflects an integration of constructivist (i.e., Piaget) and behaviorist (i.e., Skinner) theories, illustrates the ways in which adolescents develop abstractions (i.e., such as "athletic") through the interrelation of several concrete representations and experiences (e.g., "runs fast," "is big," "plays sports")(see Figure 1).

In terms of intergroup understanding, young children learn to relate two *representations* (Rp1) (e.g., "they have dark skin" because "they are from Mexico") to describe groups. This is called a *representational mapping* (Rp2), because two representations are mapped or related to each other. The relations can be causal, conditional, or categorical in nature. Later children are able to relate sets of these mappings (say, two pairs of mapped representational descriptions) into a system of thought. This *system of representations* (Rp3) could be two mappings or four related concrete aspects of group membership. For example, being Mexican-American means having "dark skin and from Mexico" and "working hard and caring a lot about their family" are two examples of systems of representations used to describe Mexican Americans. Here the child describes two pairs of concrete aspects of group membership as related in that they are all, similarly, qualities of being Mexican American. This ability, typically present by middle school, precedes the development of abstract descriptions and understandings which typically develop in adolescence.

As the child approaches adolescence, he or she typically develops the cognitive capacity to step outside his or her own shoes, to abstract understanding across contexts. This cognitive ability both allows for a third-person perspective, described earlier, and facilitates the integration of separate systems of representations, like the one just described, with other systems of representations. The result of relating two or more separate systems of representational descriptions or concrete experiences are *single abstractions* (A1), such as "contentious," "having distinct appearance," "heritage," "are proud," "are outgoing," or "are discriminated against." For example, a teen might say "Some people don't like brown skinned people from Mexico, and so they don't give them the jobs they need to support their families; so that shows how they are discriminated against." "Discriminated" becomes an abstract concept generated from the relationships of several representational examples, and which can be applied generally across contexts, people, or specific actions.

When the adolescent is able to think abstractly, or describe abstract aspects of group membership, he or she has the ability to understand the experience of another group much more deeply. Both the social experiences and the cognitive maturation that typically precede adolescence allow the adolescent to relate or to map abstractions — for instance, by describing how "powerful" and "discriminated" are related to each other. These

relations may be of similarity or opposition (i.e., categorical), or may be causal or conditional. This is an *abstract mapping* (A2) because one abstraction ("power") is a condition for the other — it must be present for the other ("discrimination") to occur.

With time and experience, the adolescent may even be able to relate several abstractions to form a *system of abstractions* (A3) to describe the meaning of group membership. Later, some adults and adolescents may develop the ability to relate systems of abstract systems in a way that illustrates a *principle* (P1) of a complex phenomenon or that explains intergroup dynamics. But even when these cognitive skills suggest deeply complex understanding they can be limited to a narrow intergroup understanding of only one group's perspective and constrained by emotions.

Emotions in intergroup understanding

Cognitive skills theory allows the child care worker, preventionist, or counselor to understand the depth of the child's ability to think complexly, but it alone does not explain the width of understanding or the role of emotions. Often cognitive abilities are narrowed by the person's attempts to resist taking a perspective on the experience of membership in another group. Rigidly holding one's own group's perspective — their collective wants, wishes, and goals — can constrain his or her ability to acknowledge the perspectives of other groups. Furthermore, the emotionality of an individual's perspective, his or her jealousy, pride, or guilt, can discourage the individual from acknowledging aspects of his or her own experience (e.g., "privilege"). Frequently this occurs because such an awareness would lead the individual to see how his or her own experiences and behaviors are related to another group's experience in a way that is troubling or confusing to the individual. Often individuals deny their own privilege or power, because to acknowledge it presents either a moral dilemma that they would rather avoid or a reality they would prefer to deny. A complete description of intergroup understanding must account for the depth (complexity of cognitive skill), the width (the degree of social perspective coordination), and the emotions (affective valance) that inform these cognitive processes.

In the model of intergroup understanding (see Figure 1) it is easy to see how complexly one thinks about group membership by looking at the cognitive skills, social perspectives, and emotions conveyed by one's descriptions of group membership. The greater the cognitive skills involved in one's understanding, the more deep it is. Deep (as opposed to shallow) understanding implies the differentiation and hierarchical integration of many experiences or aspects of group membership into more complex patterns of thought. The degree of social perspective coordination suggests the width of one's intergroup understanding. Wide (as opposed to narrow) understanding suggests that one is able and willing to take the perspectives of other groups into account, or to acknowledge the "we"ness or mutuality of intergroup relations. Finally, the emotional or affective dimension reflects the dynamic aspect of intergroup understanding. It can provide

clues to what impedes an individual's and group's movement toward more deep and wide intergroup understanding. The emotions will differ for each group, and are understood differently by the individual depending on the depth and width of their intergroup understanding.

This is not to suggest that all of a child's thoughts and actions rigidly reflect one particular social perspective or set of cognitive skills. In fact, children present a range of developmental perspectives and cognitive abilities depending on context, experience, and the task at hand. As Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the "zone of proximal development" suggests, children's thoughts and actions are heavily influenced by the support they are provided. Kurt W. Fischer and his colleagues have shown repeatedly that with modeling, encouraging, and coaching, children can usually demonstrate greater cognitive skills and social perspectives than they tend to by themselves (Fischer, 1980). On one end of this developmental range is the person's "optimal level" (what she can do with contextual support), and on the other end is the person's "functional level" (her ability in the absence of contextual support) (Fischer, Bullock, Rotenburg, & Raya, 1993).

It can be argued that a person's functional level of intergroup understanding often reflects the type of thinking that seems most adaptive for a person's or a group's maintenance of power or status. In research investigating the complexity of adolescents' intergroup understanding (Karcher, 1995a, in progress), the amount of contextual support (such as prompting, encouragement, and clarifying) provided to adolescents heavily influenced whether they spoke defensively and dismissively (functional level) or whether they employed their most complex cognitive abilities (optimal level) to describe the meaning of ethnic group membership. Often the adolescents' "optimal intergroup understanding" was quite different from their "functional intergroup understanding" which reflected either "politically correct" responses or the defensive, narrow attitudes and prejudices common within their communities. In this study, the level of support the adolescents were provided made a significant difference in the complexity of the understanding they articulated. This research and clinical data suggest that child care workers, preventionists, and counselors, when aided with effective strategies for promoting the development of more complex intergroup understanding, can help children develop deeper and wider attitudes and beliefs than what those typically generated in their less supportive, everyday discussions with others about groups.

Tools for the Prevention of Prejudice

This section describes several tools that child care specialists, preventionists, and counselors may use in their work with children and adolescents to promote intergroup understanding and to prevent the maintenance of prejudices as misunderstandings. These strategies are tools of the trade for prevention-minded practitioners, because they provide direct ways of challenging "facticity," overcoming "walls" of misunderstanding, and expanding interpretive worlds that form the horizon of

intergroup understanding. These tools can help individuals focus on the meaning of prejudices and social understandings in particular contexts and relationships, and on how misunderstandings both develop in communities over time and can keep communities divided. These four strategies for promoting intergroup understanding are 1) to help the children break down generalizations into concrete instances, 2) to help children build toward more complex understandings, 3) to challenge ethnocentrism by helping the children take the perspective of someone in another group, and 4) to help children see the similarities between themselves and members of other groups.

Help children break down generalizations into concrete instances.

Regardless of the age of the person, all people generalize at some time. This is one of the double-edged aspects of social cognition. In order to promote deep and wide intergroup understanding, children need to practice identifying the concrete instances or events that inform the psychological experiences related to group membership. Children also benefit from help in identifying the relationships between these experiences or events. For example, when children generalize about a group or use complex-sounding words, adults may ask them to give specific examples: *"Tell us a time when that happened? Any other times that you can remember that happening?"* If children can give many examples, adults should relate them in order to try and determine if the examples are concrete or abstract. Finally, the adults can encourage children to make connections between the experiences they identify for members in one group and the experiences they identify for other groups. It can also be helpful for the adult to provide his or her own examples and to encourage children to discover how different aspects of group membership may be related. This can be done in the moment or through structured games and activities.

Help children build toward more complex understandings

Fortunately, with support, encouragement, modeling, and guidance children and adolescents are able to dramatically increase the complexity of the understanding they demonstrate. The adult's task is to help children see what is just beyond their functional level of intergroup understanding (not to see it at the counselor's level of complexity). Typically the developmental progression of the ways in which children discuss groups are: 1) the physical aspects of group membership, 2) the social patterns (e.g., where they live or who they hang out with), 3) the member's psychology or feelings, and 4) combinations of a group's social and psychological experience (Selman, 1980; Quintana, 1994). Given this sequence, if a child talks about physical differences between groups, an adult can share with him or her how group history and social practices also define groups. If the child

typically provides concrete examples of "what they do," the adult can help him or her better to understand how groups are similar or differ in what they feel and experience. That is, adults should help children build their understanding from the social to the more psychological aspects of group membership, all the while focusing on the *meaning* of the events or felt experiences. In this way, the adults coach the children into their zone of proximal development of intergroup understanding and they encourage the children to take the perspective of other groups.

Help children identify and challenge their ethnocentrism

Clearly people speak more complexly about their own group than they do about other groups, particularly in descriptions of ethnic groups (Aboud, 1987; Allport, 1954; Tajfel, 1981). These biases are not, however, something people frequently admit. Often, in discussions about culture, people either insist their beliefs are warranted or they appear to cave in to the other's point of view to save face or avoid conflict. That is, people tend to either emphasize their own values and take the perspective of their own group, or they give up trying to persuade the others to see it their way. Rarely do individuals simply acknowledge this bias or truly challenge their own perspective by identifying the needs, wants, and goals of other groups. It seems most people rarely come to realize that there may be some middle ground, or a shared "we" (human) perspective that unites them and encourages them to collaborate with their "different" neighbors in order to coexist more successfully.

When working with children and adolescents, the adult can help children challenge this ethnocentrism by exploring the meanings behind their actions and beliefs. This may be done by helping children 1) identify the inconsistencies and overgeneralizations in their descriptions of other groups, 2) acknowledge their normative nature, as well as 3) encourage children to think about what another group's experiences mean or what it would be like if they were a member of that group. For example, when one child dismisses the impact his name-calling has on his pair mate, the adult might say *"Davis, I can remember a time when you were very upset because Dennis called you a name. So how do you think he feels when you call him 'Cracker'?"* Helping the children take the other person's perspective as complexly as they take their own can help children understand the reciprocal nature of prejudices and stereotyping. This is the first step in overcoming group-level generalizations.

As another example, children who are nearing the ability to take a third-person social perspective and to relate abstractions (e.g., as early as late middle-school) may be asked very direct questions about other groups: *What do you think it is like to grow up in a family with little money? What do you think it means to be one of the few Black children in a school that is mostly White? How would you feel if you were in his shoes?* These questions prompt the children to widen their understanding by exploring another's perspective.

Focus on strengths and similarities

In many cases of pair counseling, as in group counseling, children grow most from coming to see the common ground between them. They also benefit from learning to identify and capitalize on their strengths. When the positive aspects of groups are emphasized, there is less need to defend or address stereotypes. Though stereotypes about groups differ, the experience of being stereotyped is similarly painful across groups. Emphasizing the strengths and similarities among children of different "cultural" backgrounds is a useful way of helping children shift away from seeing group membership in terms of deficits and shift toward seeing membership as a source of connectedness to self, other, and society.

An example of pairing to prevent prejudice: Charlie and Sanders

Andy, a White, middle-class male counselor, had the opportunity to work with two eighth-grade African-American children in an urban middle school who were identified as at-risk for gang involvement. What made this pair unique is that the two boys had been good friends in the sixth grade, and they did not fit the typical "pair" prototype. They were quite flexible and adept in their use of negotiation strategies. They were masters at perspective-taking, and both had a balanced interpersonal style that made them quite popular among their peers and liked by most teachers. Unfortunately, these skills also made them prime recruits for gang membership, and both their teachers and parents were concerned. The boys had, as it became clear during their work, affiliated themselves with rival gangs. Although they were not "members," they were becoming more involved in gang activity, especially at school.

When they began their work, these generally agreeable boys were becoming more distant from their teachers and peers. The teachers became concerned and critical of their gang mannerisms and clothing. It also put considerable strain on the boys' friendship during the past year, and had discouraged many of the other children from becoming friends with either of them. During the first meeting, they would not even talk to each other. They sat with crossed arms and legs on opposite sides of the room. Each sent his gang's sign to the other in a playful way, but it was clear that this playfulness alienated and served to disconnect them from one another.

Pair counseling was chosen because in group counseling they had been intimidating jokesters who were difficult to engage in discussion about the seriousness of gang activity. Individually neither wanted to admit that the "boys around their way" were really a gang. They entered pair counseling under the premise that it might be fun and could help prevent further conflicts between them in the school.

For the first month Charlie and Sanders were distant and quiet in session, but they began to rekindle their friendship by the second month. They "sized each other up" by asking guarded questions about how involved the other was with "his boys" and how "deep" (or many in

number) the gang was. Andy, the counselor, could not resist asking his own covert questions about why the boys hung around these groups and how they felt about the risks involved. Andy was trying to break down the phenomenon of gang activity into its positive and negative parts, but it seemed to create a distance between himself and the boys. Charlie and Sanders united by calling Andy a "rich White" guy who didn't know their world. Faced with these misunderstandings, the counselor was straight forward in trying to break down the positive and negative aspects of being a middle class White. Andy admitted that he might not know their world as well as they themselves did, but that he knew something about their world. These early attempts to "break down and build up understanding" were met with some resistance.

By the second month, the boys were getting along fine, and it appeared that their renewed friendship had positively influenced their school behavior. They were noticeably less territorial and defensive in school, but increasingly distant from their pair counselor. The boys had differentiated their interests and group affiliations, allowing them to overcome their prejudices toward the other through a shared similarity. As their gang affiliation became one part of their shared identity, the walls between them, their teachers, and their peers came down. In school their friendship took precedence over their gangs — whether their gang affiliation outside school decreased was less clear.

But as the boys' relationship strengthened each session, they made it more and more clear that they and Andy were not three of a kind. Each week the pair talked, while they played a different game, and the boys ensured their privacy by talking in a mixture of Black dialect and urban slang which isolated Andy. While at first he was very uncomfortable with this alienation, Andy was able to use it as a tool to challenge the walls between them.

As this pair agreed would be their routine, each session the counselor would use the last ten minutes to review with the boys what they had done that day. He realized that approaching their gang situation cognitively would not work until he had connected emotionally with them. So he began to discuss with them how rejected his exclusion made him feel. He focused on their shared affective experience. Andy shared with the boys that he felt his experience of rejection helped him better understand how they might be feeling in school when the teachers started to see them as gang members and treated them with derision. Initially they appeared to find this funny, but a few sessions later they slowly began to include him in discussion about their attraction to the gangs. His willingness to share his affective experience served to connect them by identifying a similarity among them. It opened up new doors of communication between them.

Once these similarities were identified and focused on, the boys were more willing to talk with the counselor about their gang participation. First, Andy used their shared affective experience of exclusion to break down their conception of the white middle-class world, which they saw as very

alien to them. Sensing their disconnection from his world, as they described whites as "rich," "rude," and "prejudiced," Andy had them describe what they thought his life was like. He then helped them identify their similarities, such as that all three cared for their families and tried to do what they needed to do to stay connected and safe. That led to several conversations about how they might get jobs in high school and about what college was like. He then asked them to imagine themselves in school, and had them build up a more complex understanding of "his world" that included them in some way. One strategy he used was to bring in the *Multicultural Guide to Colleges* and have them read about schools and write off for information. This activity led the boys to talk about their fears of not graduating from high school, which served as their first offer to let him into their world. Another way he encouraged them to feel less disconnected from the "white world of jobs and school" was to have them give examples that would explain why they saw whites as rich, rude, and prejudiced. He then asked them to think about white people they knew and to think about how well these words described those people. Inevitably they identified their own "prejudices" and were able to develop deeper and wider understandings of "Whites."

The three of them spent much of the rest of that Spring talking about how the world likes to place people into slots, and how hard it can be not to allow others to convince you that you are this or that kind of person. They talked about how they played up their gang behaviors at school, in part, to spite their teachers' expectations and criticisms. These discussions illustrated to them the power of interpersonal self-fulfilling prophecies: "how one person's expectations for another person's behavior can quite unwittingly become a more accurate prediction simply for its having been made" (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968, p. vii). This was a powerfully important lesson.

It took almost two months to get to where the counselor hoped the boys would go, but it was worth weathering the storm of resistance. By identifying and holding their emotional experience for a while, the boys allowed Andy to enter their world and they his. In time each challenged his own ethnocentrism by taking the perspective of another group, and by breaking down the experience of the White world so that they could build it back up with a part of themselves in it. For the remainder of their work together the boys discussed the possibilities before them (e.g., high school graduation, jobs, gangs). They talked about the ways that gangs, like schools, are games, in that the boys could use both to access their goals, or could allow the games to play them. Both boys learned in pair counseling that it was not to their advantage to "prejudice" others into categories, and that they needed to actively evaluate the "factuality" of the prejudices others state about them.

Into Adulthood: Moving Beyond "Camouflaged Understandings"

The majority of this text has supposed that most individuals, and especially children, need to develop more complex intergroup understandings, and that there are ways adults can support this development by providing high support contexts to address prejudices and misunderstandings. Equally often, however, one of the jobs of child care workers, preventionists, and counselors is to help individuals learn to communicate clearly and effectively across cultural and linguistic walls or barriers — to develop connections and understanding through honest dialogue. To do this they can assess the depth and breadth of intergroup understanding used by individuals and help them bridge the misunderstandings that inform their prejudices.

For example, in conversations with both children and adults, conflict and misunderstandings often arise about culture and diversity. Often people do not appear to be speaking the same language. Some speak with big, seemingly abstract words like "oppression," "discrimination," and "dominance," while others use more direct, specific descriptions of the meaning they intend to convey.

These two manners of discourse do not always work well together. Often it seems that individuals become frustrated with each other because they discuss group characteristics not only using different types of language but also from different understandings. The frustration often results from *"camouflaged understandings,"* where two people assume they are talking about the same thing but have different things in mind because one disguises narrow and shallow understanding with complex sounding words. Consider a man who believes that ethnic groups are defined by what they do and what they like (concrete or representational aspects of group membership) but who describes these concrete qualities with *"abstract definites."* Abstract definites are tools of camouflaged understanding. They are words that seem to be abstract and appear to subsume many concrete examples but which actually refer to specific representational events, actions, or characteristics and are quite definite in nature. For example, this man describes a group using big words saying, "They are festive, and more family oriented than industrious," when what he really thinks is that they party a lot, have big families, and don't work.

Consider a woman with whom he discusses that group, who refers to groups in terms of the psychological similarity of its members that results from their shared personal, cultural, and historical experience. She describes group members not as similar looking or all having activities in common, but as sharing subjective experiences. In order to be clear, she cites specific examples: "When they are promoted, they know a few of their colleagues will not credit their advancement to their hard work" or "When a member of this group chews with his mouth open, or says something stupid, or dresses down, he knows this may be taken by some people as a reflection of his group as a whole." She describes prejudice without using the word.

When these two people talk, the first uses abstract-sounding words to camouflage concrete stereotypes, while the second uses concrete experiences to illustrate abstract phenomena that define the experience of a group member's awareness of how he is seen by other groups. In such discussion, misunderstanding is very likely to occur and can be very frustrating.

To understand these individuals' interpretations of the meaning of group membership (their intergroup understanding) it is helpful to reflect on the two dimensions of intergroup understanding: depth and width. The first man simply describes how he sees the group, their physical and social qualities. He acknowledges what they do, but he says nothing about how they feel, what they want, or how they are affected by common experiences. He does not describe their social perspective, only how they appear to him from his own perspective. The woman on the other hand clearly articulates the psychological experience of the group and the ways in which two social perspectives collide in the presence of prejudice. Clearly she demonstrates a wider understanding by articulating common experiences unique to that group's members.

But in a pair counseling discussion, how can we distinguish someone who uses "abstract definites," (narrow understanding using complex words to describe concrete examples), from someone describing complex phenomena using concrete descriptions (to articulate wide or deep understanding)? The dimension of *depth* allows us to focus on the quantity and relations between the different concrete or abstract descriptions of group experience a person provides. For example, when describing White-Americans, teens in South Texas often use representational systems, such as "they are good students," "they work hard," "they usually go to college," and "they will probably get rich." (Karcher, in progress). When they can articulate the relations among these systems of representational systems descriptions, for example by stating that they are all ways of being "industrious," they are describing an abstract quality of being White. "Industrious" becomes one abstract concept that encompasses several concrete experiences, and we know it is abstract when several examples are provided, or when the word can be defined and generalized across contexts and particular events or people.

Using the model of intergroup understanding provides a solid basis for distinguishing shallow and narrow from deep and wide understanding. The use of more complex social perspectives allows for wider or more encompassing understanding of how history, culture, and psychological experience define group membership. One's ability to differentiate these descriptions and to interrelate them determines how deep, or complex the person's understanding is. For example, if someone uses the word "prejudice" but cannot articulate multiple concrete examples, then this word is not used abstractly and reflects a more shallow understanding than it appears to. If the person cannot describe the two group perspectives involved and the way they conflict or interact, regardless of the presence of big words like "oppression," "racism," and "discrimination," this reflects a more narrow

understanding because it lacks width of social perspective. Intergroup understanding is dependent on verbal ability as well as on one's feelings, personal experiences, and attempts to make meaning of each.

Intergroup understanding includes both the social perspective one uses to describe the experiences or ramifications of group membership (the physical, social, or psychological aspects), as well as the individual's ability to include multiple experiences to form abstractions that can be related to other abstractions about group experience.

Conclusion

Pair counseling is about negotiating across differences and beyond prejudices. Pairs can be employed to attend to almost any "critical difference" that threatens to thwart social understanding or effective interaction. Although typically the "critical difference" we use to pair children has to do with their level of understanding or their style of negotiation, we may also pair because there is enduring conflict between two children who may benefit from learning the interpersonal strengths of the other, such as with Kenny and Carl. In cases where adolescents demonstrate inappropriate interpersonal relations or where prejudices and stereotyping among children result from group affiliation (such as Charlie and Sanders) these children also can benefit from developing authentic relationships that promote intrapersonal, interpersonal, and societal connectedness. All children benefit from guidance in how to think about differences, and counselors can use the model of intergroup understanding to identify the depth and width of understanding, as well as to better understand the emotions involved. In pair counseling unique opportunities arise to help children break down preconceived notions of groups, build toward more complex intergroup understanding, identify similarities, and challenge ethnocentrism. In reality, quite often the surface differences are less important and meaningful than are the shared similarities that when acknowledged, explored, and developed in an ongoing relationship can prevent prejudices and lead to greater connectedness to self, other, and society.

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[2] The ages noted listed here are from Selman's original work (1980), and suggest typical ages at which these abilities tend to make a first appearance. Note that although the ability may be present, the degree to which people engage these abilities depends on their willingness to care, share, and be concerned about the needs, wants, and goals of others or of the relationship itself.