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Implications of Lived and Packaged Religions for Intercultural Dialogue to Reduce Conflict and Terror¹

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Abstract: The use of intercultural dialogue (ICD) to promote intergroup understanding and respect is considered as a key to reduce tensions and the likelihood of conflict. This paper argues that understanding the differences among religions – those between packaged and lived religion – enhances the chances of success and makes the effort more challenging. Religions contained and packaged are found in formally organised expressions of religion – churches, denominations, synagogues, mosques, temples and so on. For packaged religions, religious identity is singular and adherents are expected to identify with only one religion and are assumed to accept the whole package of that religion. ICD in this context involves communicating with religious groups such as organisations and encouraging different leaders to speak with each other resulting in platforms filled with 'heads of faith' – bishops, muftis, ayatollahs, chief rabbis, swamis and so on. In contrast, lived religions involve ritual practices engaged in by individuals and small groups, creation of shrines and sacred spaces, discussing the nature of life, sharing ethical concerns, going on pilgrimages and taking actions to celebrate and sustain hope. There is some evidence that, although packaged religions are declining, lived religions continue at persistent levels. Violent extremism is more likely to be associated with lived rather than packaged forms of religion, making a more balanced intercultural competences approach to ICD critical to countering conflict.

Keywords: religious diversity; intercultural dialogue; religion and terrorism; conflict reduction; Westphalian settlement.

1 Introduction

Cultural diversity has been increasingly appreciated as an abiding reality in the world (UNESCO, 2009). For many, diversity is no longer seen as a problem to be overcome on a path to some universally integrating viewpoint. Similarly, cultures are not seen as fixed blocks of separate and largely unchanging beliefs, values, practices and artefacts, but as interconnected, interrelating and each rich with internal diversity (UNESCO, 2009; Bouma, 2011). While the term 'multicultural' is increasingly used to describe societies with diverse populations, the term 'intercultural' is used to refer to modes of communication among persons

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and groups which differ culturally, religiously or otherwise. Neither of these terms is without its detractors and both generate much debate (Meer & Modood, 2012; Levey, 2012; Kymlicka, 2012).

This paper uses the term intercultural dialogue (ICD) to refer to programmes that were designed to promote intergroup understanding and respect both among groups and individuals and also argues that a richer understanding of different dimensions of religions enhances the chances of success and makes the effort more challenging. The Council of Europe (2008) describes ICD as '...an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic backgrounds and heritage on the basis of mutual understanding and respect.' UNESCO (2009) states that the success of ICD is '...largely dependent on using "intercultural competencies", defined as the complex of abilities needed to interact appropriately with those who are different from oneself'. According to UNESCO (2013), intercultural competencies '... are closely integrated with learning to know, do, and be.' Furthermore, UNESCO emphasises that ICD involves both listening and telling in an 'open and respectful interchange in which diversity is maintained but is also included rather than being excluded.' Although ICD does involve different cultures, it is seen by UNESCO as fundamentally occurring between interacting individuals – cultures do not interact but people do. This paper uses UNESCO's approach to the use of ICD to reduce interreligious conflict as one example of a widespread approach found in organisations such as King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID) and Religions for Peace and in many national initiatives working in this area.

Religions are among the cultural elements usually uniting but also often dividing people. Religious differences in identity, belief and practice have been used to divide, to motivate hatred and to legitimate violence. When religion divides and intergroup conflict threatens as interest groups use religious difference to promote violence, ICD is often proposed as a way forward to reduce tensions and the likelihood of intergroup violence. However, given that the practice of ICD is shaped by the way religions are conceived (Jackson, 2012, 2014), the failure to recognise the many ways people are religious deprives ICD to a great deal of richness (Arweck & Jackson, 2014). Too often, the adherents of religion and the practitioners of ICD see religions as systems of belief, identity, and blocks of internally uniform culture, led and controlled by leaders working out of head offices (see, for example, Giddens, 1997). If the focus is on belief and creed, orthodoxy becomes the issue as arguments ensue as to what is correct and what is not. If the focus is on formally organised religious groups, the energy is directed largely toward attempts to get various leaders to converse with each other via head office communication and to shape the views of adherents through directives. Such approaches miss less-organised groups and the various sub-groups and movements that are within the larger organisation, but which are out of the complete control of leaders or formal structures.

Religions come in several forms. This paper argues that successful ICD would engage all forms of religions and religiosity to achieve the aims of enhancing mutual respect and decreasing intergroup tension and peace. One distinction that has gained attention arises from the fact that religions can be seen to be 'contained and packaged' on the one hand and 'lived' on the other (McGuire, 2008; Woodhead, 2011). Recent attempts to define religion have increasingly added 'spirituality' to capture some of the breadth of what is encountered when observing people as they make meaning, negotiate crises, foster hope and form moral and ethical judgements (Bouma, 2009; Bouma and Halafoff, 2017). This paper explores the implications of one dimension of religious diversity – the differences between packaged and lived religion – for ICD.

2 Packaged Religion

Religions contained and packaged are most readily found in formally organised expressions of religion – churches, denominations, synagogues, mosques, temples and so on. The most familiar forms of packaging to Western eyes derive from Catholic, Protestant and Pentecostal groups. Therefore, it is through their competition with each other that religious packages are produced and the boundaries around them

are constructed (Beyer, 2016). Within Christianity, each competing package, whether an Americanstyle denomination, European State Church, Pentecostal mega-church or single non-denominational congregation, purports to contain and present a complete religion together with leaders, creeds, and sets of rules and practices declared to be normative, seeing their form both as normal and correct expressions of the religion along with communities of association providing identities along with both sacred and secular services. Each religious package traces its pure version of the religion back in time and usually denies borrowing or being influenced by other packages, despite often being in vigorous reaction against one – Protestants versus each other and versus Catholics. Somewhat similar packaging occurs in Islam in the distinctions between Sunni versus Shi'a versus Ahmaddiyah versus others. Then, there are the several Buddhist traditions.

From the perspective of packaged religions, religious identity is singular, and those who approach religion in this way expect adherents to identify with only one religion; therefore, adherents accept one product and are assumed to accept the whole package of that religion. Multiple identities, along with taking bits and pieces from several religious traditions – called bricolage – and instances of syncretism – combining elements from different traditions – are scorned by those who take this perspective. However, viewing religions as packages has the methodological advantage of enabling the correlates of religious identity to be assessed and interpreted as being due to religion. This relies on the assumption that the act of identification involves either a selection of or differential exposure to the sociocultural, mutually exclusive available options that come with a range of preferred, and at times enforced, orientations on religious, political and social issues (Bouma & Dixon, 1986; Bouma, 1992, Bouma, 2006). The ease of this type of analysis and its apparent accuracy can tempt the researcher to make the demographic fallacy of ascribing to individuals whose traits observed to generally apply to a religious group, for example, assuming that because a person says they are Christian they will believe in 'resurrection' but not 'reincarnation'. Treating religious identity as reflecting a singular choice among whole packages and the adoption of one renders invisible the ways by which the contents of the package are selected and used alongside material not in the package (McGuire, 2008).

The packaged-religion approach reflects a very Protestant Christian view of religion. Protestant Christianity stripped Roman Catholicism of rituals, pilgrimages, shrines, sacred spaces, rich imagery and limited religion to belief – to the cerebral, creedal, rational and organisational. The key concern became orthodoxy, with sermons providing the main focus of services of worship, not sacraments (Bouma, 1991, 1992). Protestants have dominated the sociology of religion, particularly in the United States, and this dominance is reflected in the focus of much research conducted (Smilde & May, 2015). Moreover, until quite recently, much of the study of religion in the West has focussed on religions contained and packaged (Beyer, 2000; Kniss, 2014). This form of religion is comparatively easy to research with its official statistics, demographic data, organisational structures and interactions with other parts of the society. Although religion is often referred to as an institution, it is studied as an organisation, taking the most organised expression of the institution for the whole (Bouma, 1998). A parallel can be found in viewing education as an institution and focussing research on the study of schools and universities. The fact that research based on religious identities is easy and that the packages want information about whether their share of the religious market has fuelled much of the sociology of religion.

Clergy and religious leaders favour packaged religion, as this approach facilitates their control of the religion and enhances their power positions in organisations and communities (Sullivan, 2015). The very strong negative reaction to 'spiritualities' by religious leaders stems in no small part from their sense of loss of control and failure to contain in the package what they offer; the loss of their monopoly on the trade in religious goods and services (Stolz, 2006). Failure to contain a religion and what it offers can result in loss of their share of the religious market and consequently of status and income to its clergy (Iannaccone, 1990, 1994).

Religions contained and packaged are usually patriarchal, dominated by men and accustomed to using non-inclusive language (Jule, 2005). Moreover, most are quite resistant to the ministry and leadership of women except in rare cases (Brubaker, 2013). They are not only packaged but are quite hierarchical, and as such, they have tended to be controlling and oppressive of diversity (Sullivan, 2015).

Western Christian national religious organisations began to take modern form after the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 which ended the 'wars of religion' in Europe. Each nation-state was presumed to have a single-state religion, along with a distinctive culture and cuisine (Beyer, 2016). Today's forms of religious packages took shape during urbanisation and industrialisation in the mid-nineteenth century. Most churches served the rising middle classes, providing legitimation for their status, training in manners and morals, clubs and societies to provide sociality and entertainment, schools to educate youth and hospitals for the sick. Incidentally, some churches, such as the Salvation Army, and some religious organisations also provided social services to the poor and needy (see, for example, Grimshaw et al., 1994; Kaye, 2002).

This packaged-religion conceptualisation has largely formed the approaches that groups promoting religious ICD have taken to deal with religion, which leads to a focus on dealing with religious leaders, identifying the different belief systems of groups and asking about what policy documents regarding ICD they have produced (Bouma, 2013). This approach is seductively easy as it facilitates approaching religious groups and communicating with them as organisations and, in the process, ICD becomes a tool for encouraging different leaders to speak to each other resulting in platforms filled with 'heads of faith' – bishops, muftis, ayatollahs, chief rabbis, swamis and so on. A packaged-religion approach also suits nation-states and policy makers, as governments need only to deal 'heads of faith' to develop and implement ICD. Although this form of interaction may have been a useful first step in interreligious ICD encouraging leaders to set examples, it is far from a complete approach, at least because it overlooks internal group differences treating each as homolithic rather than being comprised diversity and presumes that religious leaders have control over and represent their adherents.

It is also true that well-established and articulated packaged religions offer deep wells of spiritual, liturgical and theological experience to be drawn on in nourishing a religious life, as well as grounded and well-tested disciplines in their use. The very fact of their persistence over generations indicates that religions do promote sustainable values and orientations. Packages are not all bad, but they do defend what they see as their turf.

3 Lived Religion

Religions are also experienced as 'lived' – diffuse, diverse, personal, local, derivative, innovative, vital, precarious and precious (McGuire, 2008). Lived religions involve ritual practices engaged in by individuals and small groups, creating shrines and sacred spaces, discussing the nature of life, sharing ethical concerns, going on pilgrimages and taking actions to celebrate and sustain hope. Lived religion often mixes modes of encountering or drawing on power from and connection with the 'more than', the divine, the supernatural, or the powers of the universe using meditation, guided reflection, silence in carefully selected or prepared spaces and travel to special places (Tacey, 2000). Lived religions tend to be experiential and ephemeral. Lived religions often deal with activities, practices and places that promote mindfulness, hope, healing, renewal and justice. There is a strongly pragmatic aspect to lived religions – if a practice, prayer, amulet, visit to a shrine works, do it; if not, give it away (Hall, 1997; McGuire, 2008).

Lived religions are usually reported as being practiced more often by women, but not solely (McGuire, 2008; Tacey, 2000). This perception may well be due to the fact that researchers are more able to 'see' women's private devotional practices and modes of seeking to secure safety, hope or blessing. Men's religious behaviour may not so much be more 'rational' (itself a mode of action grounded in belief, presupposition and ritual practice) as different from women's. As such it would require a different eye to see, identify and study it. The fact that lived religions are found more often among women has contributed to their invisibility and to being dismissed as wrong, out of control, and dangerous, at times leading to outbreaks of violent oppression from the packages, but always scorned and deprecated. Lived religions and spirituality were despised by Robert Bellah (Bellah et al., 1985) who coined the term 'sheilaism' to refer to these more amorphous forms of spiritual life. Sociologists have dismissed lived religion, just as earlier social scientists disrespected those practices engaged in by Australia's Indigenous people, which

might have qualified as lived religion if contemporary researchers had been studying them and writing in the 1820s.

This disparity in the sociological analysis of religion prevents practitioners and policy makers from seeing some aspects of life that are deeply important to people and to intergroup relations. Lived religion can provide liberating alternative sources of power and strength but it can also be patriarchal and oppressive, as Meredith McGuire found among Latinas in Texas (McGuire, 2008). Lived religions are often seen as free from domination, as out of control and free floating. Religious identity has become more a matter of individual choice as people negotiate their ways through à la carte offerings of spirituality and religion, leaving packaged religions caught between being open enough to attract and disciplined enough to maintain a coherent core (Hervieu-Léger, 2003). Control is not a feature of lived religion unless enough people are attracted to a particular shared practice that, as with all human action that is shared and repeated, it becomes normalised, standardised, then controlled and finally organised and packaged.

Elements of lived religion are freely (and not so freely) shared on the Internet, in religious and spiritual stores, some sites have come to be experienced as very spiritual, such as Sedona in Arizona, and there are many pilgrimage destinations. Some of these, like Lourdes, are managed by packaged religious organisations, but provide opportunities for kinds of lived religion including experiential encounter and reflection. The distinction is far from absolute. For example, a developing element of lived religion in Australia has been the practice of making pilgrimages to Gallipoli and to the cemeteries on the Western Front, walking the Camino, making the Haj to Mecca and Medina, or walking other historic sacred paths (Aly, 2015). Tens of thousands of Australians make these trips annually and return reporting all sorts of encounters, transformations, renewals and life-enriching experiences (Scates, 2013). More destinations are being added each year. Engaging people in their daily lives and the diverse ways they encounter the religious 'other' is critical to the promotion of effective ICD.

There is some evidence that, while packaged religions are declining, lived religions continue at persistent levels (Alper, 2015; Gill et al., 1998; Bouma and Halafoff, 2017). The Pew Research Centre measures spirituality through four dimensions: '…feel a sense of spiritual peace and well-being, …feel a sense of wonder about the universe, …feel a sense of gratitude or thankfulness, …think about the meaning and purpose of life' (Alper, 2015). When measured across generations of Americans, they find substantially the same levels of agreement with these measures of spirituality, while measures of religious belief and practice decline. Bouma and Halafoff (2017) present similar findings for Australia. To focus on packaged religion in the West is to study organisations in decline and it is also to miss the ways people are negotiating the challenges of life, maintaining hope and finding inspiration to form community and contribute to the common good.

Lived religions are notoriously difficult to study (Beyer et al., 2016; Mason et al., 2007). Most of this difficulty is due to the fact that scholars have been trained to focus on packaged religions. Indeed, most definitions of religion point to beliefs and organisations (see, for example, Giddens, 1997). These dimensions are easily tapped through the responses generated by questions in quantitative survey research. However, to detect lived religions, it is necessary to listen with open ears and look with open eyes (Ammerman, 2013a), for the standard approaches taken to study packaged religion will lead to the conclusion that there is not much out there and that because, at least in the West, the packages are losing their appeal and power, all else including lived religions will follow. While some attempts to measure religiosity can be seen to be attempts to get an empirical handle on lived religion, most of the approaches are too shaped by the expectations of packaged forms of religion – attendance, affirmation of orthodox belief, conformity with set ethical and moral positions to provide a view of a person's lived religion.

Lived religions are probably not able to be studied using the dominant modes of research in the sociology of religion. Yes, more ethnographic approaches are required, but seeing religious practices requires a new openness, a readiness to observe with senses that have been numbed by secularism (Spikard et al., 2002). Moreover, the application of the label 'religious' to some observations may well be resisted by both research colleagues and by those among whom the practices are observed. Researchers do not know what questions to ask to unlock what people are actually experiencing, doing and believing (Beyer et al., 2016). Moreover, participants are not accustomed to giving accounts of this part of their lives – a part which

is sacred and precious to them, which they will be inclined to protect from prying eyes and to reject being tagged as religious.

For example, my wife and I are both Anglican clergy and are regularly given the stories of people who, feeling safe with us, tell us about spiritual experiences – healings, senses of a supporting presence, encounters with deceased friends and relatives, and other religious experiences that are not encouraged by most packaged religion or are not well received by very secular acquaintances, but which are very precious to them and serve to give them hope, meaning and comfort (Hardy, 2017). Similarly, I have never had someone reject an offer of prayer or a blessing, not even those who are resolutely not religious.

The emerging reawakening to the continued presence of religion in life, particularly in social policy debates, has moved some to call this age post-secular (see, for example, Calhoun et al., 2013; Taylor, 2007). To use the term post-secular presupposes a 'secular' age. As I see it, this term is used by social scientists who were blinded to lived religion by a focus on religions contained and packaged and then blindsided by the return of packaged head office religion to public policy debates (Sullivan, 2015; Sullivan et al., 2015), but not to increased participation in the forms of packaged religions, and the persistence of spiritualities that had gone unnoticed. The use of the term post-secular tells us more about those using it than about the social worlds they seek to study.

4 A Balanced View

While both packaged and lived religions are often perceived to be conflicting forms of religious life, it is more useful to appreciate both how different packaged and lived forms of religion and spirituality are and, at the same time, how they are continuously in complex relationships (Ammerman, 2013b). To put it simply, any packaged religion that does not inform and inspire forms of lived religion among its adherents is dead, and any lived forms of religion practiced for any period of time tend to become organised and start to exhibit qualities of packaged religions. The choice is not between one or the other, but rather to ensure that in any analysis of religion, the full range of understandings of religion are present and appreciated, or at least that a deliberate and argued decision is made to view religion one way or the other. More recently developed UNESCO approaches to ICD and intercultural competencies promise to change this situation through richer and more diverse forms of interaction that attend to the whole person and the fullness of religious phenomena (UNESCO, 2013).

The need to take a balanced view became particularly poignant when devising a study of youth spirituality and worldviews. Youth in the West are very likely to declare that they have 'no religion' (Bouma and Halafoff, 2017). However, it soon becomes very clear that they are not atheists or all that secular. They have mystical experiences, see beyond themselves, are attracted to ideals and inclined to make value judgements and take actions formed by ideas of the common good. Moreover, studies of radicalisation of youth to terrorism indicate that although religion may play a role, it is not the packaged forms of religion – churches, mosques and temples – but the lived forms – informal, familial, personal yearnings for recognition, divine approval and other-worldly reward (Lentini, 2013). Given these findings, taking seriously the distinction between lived and packaged religions has implications for the ways ICD is imagined, its aims formulated and the ways it is practiced. It also has profound implications for efforts to combat terrorism.

5 Religion and ICD

Many efforts to promote ICD and interreligious dialogue deal with nation-states and national religious groups. While from a Westphalian perspective, nation-states were assumed to have a single and unified state religion (Beyer, 2016); this situation is no longer the case, which requires much more diverse and often creative ways of engaging religious diversity in social policy, including ICD efforts to reduce conflict

and terrorism. While internal dissent within religious groups has been repressed, at times violently – think of Franco in Spain – it has become impossible to maintain religious uniformity within either states or packaged religions. Gradually, the one church fragmented into dissenting groups, many of which eventually became tolerated and then formed denominations – an American term for formally organised religious groups, which were acceptable variants of a religion and could be counted on to support the state (Niebuhr, 1929; Herberg, 1955). Many European states have maintained a state church along with a few tolerated smaller groups, but none have completely suppressed diversity among groups, let alone diversity within groups.

The dominant approach to religion is shaped by the Westphalian denominational assumptions of religious organisation so profoundly present in the United States on the one hand (Herberg, 1955) and by the ethos of French *laïcité*, which deems all things religious to be private and not to be relevant to public policy (Beckford, Joly & Khosrokhavar, 2005). Thus, on the one hand, ICD attempts to deal with religious head offices and organises for 'heads of faith' to speak with each other presuming that this brings their communities into harmonious relationship. Although effective at a ceremonial and symbolic level, this approach deals with only part of the picture. On the other hand, French *laïcité* renders it impossible to take seriously the public policy implications of both packaged and lived religion.

While the recent declines in packaged religions in the West might provide the basis for overlooking religions in the ICD efforts, this would be a mistake in no small way due to the religious dimensions of intergroup tensions in the West and of violent conflict in the Middle East and elsewhere. The need for effective programs to promote intergroup understanding, respect and cooperation has dramatically increased in recent decades and it has not decreased. The use of ICD to address these issues in the 21st century cannot be done without including religions.

Religion was often ignored by the social sciences toward the end of the last century as theories of secularisation led many to believe that religion was dying out and would soon disappear (Berger, 1999). This approach to both the study of religion and developing social policies regarding religion is a form of Western hegemony. That this thinking was very Euro-centric and is no longer tenable has become clear and made absolutely evident by recent terrorist attacks, particularly following September 11 (Berger, 1999; Lentini, 2013; Thomas, 2005). However, the role of religion in contemporary conflict is not driven neither by packaged religions, nor by their head offices. Religions are officially at peace, with extremely few exceptions. It is informal networks of people, some of whom will use religion to legitimate violence that, for example, drives neo-jihadism (Lentini, 2013) and whom perpetrate violent acts against those involved in providing abortions. This pattern is true of right-wing political violence, as well as most of what gets labelled as Islamist violence. Moreover, as increasing numbers of people, particularly youth, declare that they have 'no religion', to focus on packaged religion is to miss what is going on with 30–40 per cent of people in the West and increasing numbers elsewhere (Beyer et al., 2016; Bullard, 2016). The ability of packaged religions to shape and control their adherents has declined not just in the West, but also globally, resulting in vastly more internal diversity.

6 Conclusion

Globalisation and the role of religion in intergroup tension and violence have raised religious diversity in most parts of the world; if the aim of ICD is to reduce the likelihood of conflict by promoting intergroup understanding and mutual respect, then working with religious head offices will only be a small part of the way to address the issues. Similarly, education about religious diversity, which simply gives the official or 'packaged' version of a religion, will not prepare people for the rich diversity of religious life and practice that has to be encountered in the lived experience of their neighbours (Jackson, 2012, 2014). However, until research examining the full range of religious life is conducted and respected by policy makers and educationalists, much of the energy of religions will not be understood or appreciated.

A more holistic approach to interreligious dialogue as part of ICD is required by the changing ways religion is and is not organised, by the changing ways people are religious and by a realisation that packaged

religions are only part of the story. Interreligious dialogue, at least in the West but also in those parts of the the world where western Protestant ideals of religion did not and do not sit comfortably, will have to include those whose spirituality is shaped in places other than formally organised religious groups. When religion is not entirely about beliefs and norms that were set and enforced by organised communities, then attention must be paid to a much wider range of human activities. This is even more true if the aim is to include those who are under the age of 40 years. A much more diverse array of people must be involved than those who might qualify as religious leaders, let alone official clergy. Effective ICD should include people who have declared that they have 'no religion', as the PEW Research Centre and other research (Bouma and Halafoff, 2017) increasingly shows that although 'nones' are not organisationally committed they are not atheists, nor are they anti-faith, but nurture matters religious and spiritual (Blumberg, 2016). Matters and activities previously associated with formally organised religion now have moved out of the control of religious professionals, as people take charge of their own spiritual lives, seek out what appeals to and works for them and also decide on the implications of what they encounter for action. ICD that only deals with religious leaders and those in packaged religions misses most of the action. This has become very clear in many ways, including studies of radicalisation (Lentini, 2013).

In taking a holistic approach to interreligious dialogue, ICD will no longer see religion as special, as requiring its own domain and needing different approaches. Religions both packaged and lived must be a part of ICD, and, of course, religions need to be treated with respect. But, like all other cultural elements, religions, whether packaged or lived, have both positive and negative aspects from the perspective of promoting intergroup harmony, mutual respect and reducing conflict. In this context, UNESCO's move to develop intercultural competencies (UNESCO, 2010, 2013) will provide precisely the skills and openness needed to detect and appreciate all forms of lived and packaged religion and to see their roles in the lives of people and societies. While not particularly designed to enhance our understanding of religion, using these skills and orientations will, in fact, provide precisely the tools needed to do so as they are much more sensitive to the role of lived religion in a person's life. This approach and others like it will develop the skills needed to negotiate the many forms of diversity encountered in daily life and, by giving people confidence, will reduce fear and promote healthy relationships.

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