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Abstract

This chapter demonstrates the dynamism and utility of positioning theory, in the domain of social justice. The illustrative examples are drawn from international intergroup situations, particularly in Afghanistan and Iraq. These situations involve interpretations of rights and duties by different groups, rights and duties being central to positioning theory. The chapter critically explores the questions of whether there are universals in rights and duties, and whether people apply moral principles consistently across contexts. Both the traditional empirical research literature and positioning theory reveal that context has an important influence on moral thinking, including on the interpretation of rights and duties.

Key Words: positioning, rights, duties, storylines, speech acts

Introduction

Give to everyone what you owe him: If you pay taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

Romans 13:7, NIV (Old Testament)

“To each his own” (*suum cuique*) is an ancient Latin motto for justice, attributed to the Roman orator Cicero (106–43 BC) and alternately translated “to each what is his” (38).¹ The concept appears in Plato’s *Republic* when Socrates argues that justice is fulfilled when everyone receives “his own” (e.g., rights) and is not deprived of “his own” (e.g., rights, property, and customs; book 4, section 433e). Later, Byzantine Emperor Justinian I would codify this into Roman law, stating, “Justice is the constant and perpetual wish to render every one his due” (see Honore, 2003: 803). This definition seems straightforward. A thief is unjust, for example, because he takes what is not his own, or in other words, what is not his right to take, and may be assigned by a judge or arbiter the duty to return it. Very often, however, two parties cannot agree on different aspects of

justice, such as *who* has a right to *what*, and *who* has a duty to *whom*. In such cases, positioning theory is a powerful tool for understanding how two parties can come to radically different stories on the basis of the same evidence.

A *right* is a demand placed on others by the person who possesses it, and a *duty* is a demand placed by others on the person who owes it (Moghaddam, Slocum, Finkel, Mor, & Harré, 2000). These are intimately tied to notions of justice but also to a person or group’s position. For example, a doctor is considered unjust if he neglects his *duty* to care for a patient. A murderer is unjust because he denies his victim a *right*, which is the right to life. But these positions are pliable and negotiated. Imagine a plaintiff who says, in a court of law, “I am a victim, your honor, my rights were violated by him,” pointing to the defendant. The defendant, in turn, counters, “He is not a victim, your honor, I am the victim here.” The defendant may change both the storyline and his position in the storyline. Positioning theory assumes that storylines are being constantly challenged, negotiated, and transformed in social interactions.

Just as individuals are said to have rights and duties based on their positions, groups can also have assigned rights and duties. For example, Native Americans in Alaska maintain a *right* to fish without a license, while the United States federal government is said to have a *duty* to honor treaties and agreements with Native Americans. Like individuals, groups can differ not only in their perception of who has which rights and duties, but as norm-generating units, groups can also disagree as to what acts should constitute a duty or right. The Greek historian Herodotus (484–425 B.C.) illustrates this with a story about King Darius of Persia. When Darius asks the Greeks how much money would induce them to eat the flesh of their dead fathers, the Greeks are horrified and reject such an idea because they are duty-bound to burn their dead, as was practiced by Zoroastrians in that time. When Darius asked a group of Indians how much money would induce them to burn their dead, they were equally horrified and rejected the idea, because their custom was to eat the flesh of their dead fathers. Customary duties toward the deceased differed based on each culture's storyline for how the dead should be honored. Rights and duties are therefore not a simple expression of *who* is owed *what*. The maxim "to each his own," and the Old Testament admonition, "if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor" are dictated by social norms that function in a context of narratives accepted as authoritative in each culture.

In positioning theory, rights and duties result from the organization of positions within storylines (Harré, Moghaddam, Cairnie, Rothbart, & Sabat, 2009). Boxer (2003) suggests that the theory evolved from feminists influenced by Foucault (1978) who were concerned with improving the position of women in society, starting with Hollway (1984). It was then picked up and advanced in the 1990s by Rom Harré and colleagues as an analytic tool with a wide variety of uses (Davies & Harré, 1990; Harré, 1991; Harré & van Langenhove, 1991; Harré & Moghaddam, 2003; Tan & Moghaddam, 1995; van Langenhove & Harré, 1991). Over the past decade, it has gained momentum among researchers across a wide variety of social science topics, from conflict (Tirado & Gálvez, 2007) to organizational change (Zelle, 2009) to health psychology (McKenzie, 2004) to discourses of radicalization (Moghaddam & Kavulich, 2007, 2008; Konaev & Moghaddam, 2010). Most of these studies have focused on interpersonal positioning. Increasingly, however, researchers are applying it to intergroup

relations (see chapters 9–15 in Moghaddam, Harré, & Lee, 2008), and this chapter contributes to our understanding of collective processes through positioning analysis.

The chapter is organized into three parts. First, we review positioning theory's origins, basic assumptions, and major components in the context of some related social psychological theories. This is part of a research trend focusing on what people say in "political" settings (see Hammack & Pilecki, 2012). Next, we examine research on rights and duties, which have a central place in positioning theory. Finally, we apply positioning theory to real examples from the international development sector. The development sector is chosen for intergroup analysis because it involves the interaction of radically different cultures working closely together, often with different perspectives of what development and "progress" represent. For example, its constituents are largely Western "aid workers" and "development experts" who interact with largely non-Western "beneficiaries" in developing countries, yielding a rich diversity of cultural storylines colliding. Within the development world, we highlight examples from Afghanistan, which has received more international aid than any other country in the past decade (World Bank, 2012), and, to a lesser extent, from Iraq. These examples are timely and relevant because of Western efforts to "democratize" Afghanistan and Iraq and to change ideas and practices of rights and duties in these societies (Moghaddam, 2016). We apply the three analytic lenses of positioning theory—positions, storylines, and speech-acts—to explain how some practices and speech acts in Afghanistan can be understood as "rational" by one cultural storyline and "irrational" by another (for further discussion of rationality in storylines, see Harré & Moghaddam, 2013).

Origins and Assumptions

Positioning theory can be understood as part of the emergence since the 1970s of a class of social theories and methods characterized by an interest in the study of face-to-face interaction, conversation scripts, situated definitions of "I," and situated discourse as component parts for the construction of social order (Moghaddam & Harré, 1995). Among the more prominent of these in recent decades include narrative theory, symbolic interactionism, conversational and discourse analysis, cognitive sociology, ethnomethodology, and social phenomenology. Like these, positioning theory places special emphasis on the

role of discourse in organizing relationships (positions). Unlike these, however, positioning theory focuses on the resulting assumptions, which unfold from the storyline and positions within the discourse, of rights and duties (Winslade, 2005). In other words, it focuses on the organization of social demands based on often contested, often changing perceptions of what acts are owed in any interaction.²

Positioning theory shares three general assumptions with other theories in its class:

1. Normative systems govern social interactions, based on assumed roles or positions.
2. Language and speech acts are meaningful components in the production of social reality.
3. Social reality is the product of negotiations between storylines.

Beyond these, it could be framed in the context of many different theories, as some have done. For example, Baert (2012) argues that positioning theory ought to be seen in the context of speech-act theory, because of the assumption that speech, or "performative utterance," should be considered an "action" because it accomplishes things, based on the speech-act principles outlined by John Austin (1961). Others can argue that it ought to be seen in the context of discourse theory and narrative theory, based on the Wittgensteinian notion that language is critically important to constructing social reality and on Vygotsky's (1978) belief that linguistic and manipulative skills are needed to make sense of cognitive experiences and processes (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999). Neither claim would be disingenuous, as it builds from the assumptions of each.

The unique contribution of positioning theory is that it highlights the interpretation of rights and duties as primary explanatory variables for social interaction. These are the outcomes of an intersection between positions, speech acts, and storylines. It assumes that in any social situation, individuals and groups assign each other positions, and these positions convey norms, rights, and duties that organize "correct" conduct (Harré, 2006). A position thus "implicitly limits how much of what is logically possible for a given person to say and do" (Harré and Moghaddam, 2003, 5). Rights and duties typically exist in a moral space of *oughts* and *shoulds*. A son *ought* to obey his parents. A doctor *should* heal the sick. However, positions can be contested and can change through discourse.

For these, positioning theory distinguishes between two types positioning: *performative* positioning and

accountive positioning (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999). Performative positioning is carried out or "performed" by any two people in a conversation. "Waiter, bring me my bill." "Son, do your homework." "Doctor, my knee hurts." Each utterance is a speech act that assigns positions and, based on these positions, moral assumptions about the rights and duties expected of each person. For example, the waiter's duty is to serve the customer, who has a right to be served and a duty to pay the bill. A son has a duty to obey his parent. A doctor has a duty to heal her patient, and a patient has a right to be treated. Accountive positioning takes place whenever these positions are contested. For example, the doctor may say, "I'm off duty." The son may say, "You're not my real father." The waiter may say, "You don't need to pay, tonight you are our guest." Accountive positioning challenges the positions originally assigned and, therefore, also shifts the assumed rights and duties of those positions. A guest does not have a duty to pay the bill, and a doctor does not have a duty to see patients if she is on vacation. Negotiation between performative and accountive positioning is what defines the storyline. For example, the patient may counter, "You're off duty, but you're still a doctor." The father may counter, "I may be your step-father, but I'm still your father."

Are positions like roles? In a way, yes, but positioning theory was largely developed as an alternative to the earlier paradigm interested in "roles" as a primary unit of analysis for interpersonal relationships (see Davies & Harré, 1990). Whereas *roles* tend to be static categories for analysis (e.g., doctor, son), *positions* are situation-specific, shifting, and dynamic. Whereas *roles* are often fixed, formally defined, and long-lasting, *positions* can more easily explain "conventions of speech and action that can be fluid, contested, and ephemeral" (Harré, Moghaddam, Pilkerton-Cairnie, Rothbart & Sabat, 2009, p. 133; Phillips, Fawns & Hayes, 2002).

Consider, for example, the following transcript from the historic 1988 vice-presidential debate between Republican candidate Senator Dan Quayle and Democratic candidate Senator Lloyd Bentsen:³

Quayle: . . . the question you're asking is, 'What kind of qualifications does Dan Quayle have to be president? . . . I have far more experience than many others that sought the office of vice president of this country. I have as much experience in the Congress as Jack Kennedy did when he sought the presidency. . . .

Quayle's roles, for example, as senator or Republican nominee, are static and uncontested. In that moral space of "who *ought* to be the president?" the storyline that Quayle is positioning himself within is one that says, "the president should be a person with experience, like Jack Kennedy, a Democratic favorite." However, Senator Bentsen then contests Quayle's positioning:

Bentsen: Senator, I served with Jack Kennedy. I knew Jack Kennedy. Jack Kennedy was a friend of mine. Senator, you're no Jack Kennedy.

Bentsen is not contesting Quayle's roles. He is contesting Quayle's positioning as the "right man for the job," on the basis of the claim that he is like Jack Kennedy. He is telling Quayle that he does not have the right to position himself as being another Jack Kennedy.

Another common way of characterizing the different types of positioning is in terms of first-, second-, and third-order positioning. First-order positioning is identical to performative positioning. In other words, first-order positioning "refers to the way persons locate themselves and others within an essentially moral space" through utterances that convey meaningful storylines (Harré & van Langenhove, 1991, p. 396). When these storylines are contested by another person in the conversation, this is called second-order positioning. If the storyline is contested by a third person *talking about* the conversation (i.e., not in the conversation directly), this is called third-order positioning. Verena Minow (2012) gives an example of third-order positioning using a 2008 speech by then-Senator Barack Obama. Obama references previous statements by his then-rival Senator Hillary Clinton, saying, "She said I'm elitist, out of touch, condescending. Let me be clear: It would be pretty hard for me to be condescending toward people of faith since I'm a person of faith . . ." (100). By positioning himself as a "person of faith" he does what Harré and van Langenhove (1991) call acting "relative to that original act of positioning" (399), and is engaging in third-order positioning.

Major Components

Positioning theory approaches discourse through triangulation of three units of analysis:

1. *Positions*, which determine a cluster of rights and duties as acts to receive or perform within a

storyline. In a playbook, these would be the roles and character descriptions, though more fluid and dynamic than a typecast role.

2. *Speech-acts*, which are performed utterances with illocutionary force that shape a storyline (i.e., these must be meaningful in a social context, and cannot be word fragments or references to things that have no symbolic meaning or relevance in the context of a conversation). In a playbook, this would be the text of the discourse, including witty statements, banter, exclamations, declarative sentences, question statements, and so on.

3. *Storylines*, which are the unfolding of episodes according to a loose cluster of narrative conventions. In a playbook, these would be the plots—plural—as there may be many storylines operating at once.

The interaction and negotiations that take place between these three components results in perceptions of "rights," or perceived entitlements, and "duties," actions that one is morally bound to perform (Figure 18.1). Where these are contested, conflict can arise.

Importantly, while the combination of these components is unique to positioning theory, the importance of each component is not. As discussed earlier, positions build from role theory. Use of the term "role" and role theory became prominent in sociology in the 1920s and 1930s, but in the 1970s and 1980s, feminists such as Raewyn Connell (1979) criticized it, in combination with gender roles theory, as oppressive toward women. The major limitation of roles is that the expectations and norms for a role are predetermined rather than

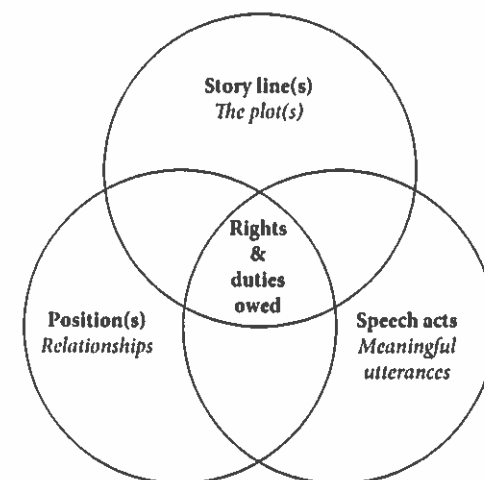


Figure 18.1. Positioning Theory Triangle

fluid. Roles cannot explain behavior that is deviant from expectations and norms the way a position or relationship can. Power dynamics, for example, are more clearly articulated by the relational position of one person to another or one group to another than by one person's "role in a situation."

The term "speech act" (*sprechhandlungen*) appeared in philosophy as early as the turn of the 20th century (see Schuhmann & Smith, 1987). Edwards and Potter (1992) adopted it in their Discourse Action Model, which approaches language as a mode of action.⁴ Before them, however, Potter and Wetherell (1987) adapted the concept of illocutionary force (borrowing from John Austin, 1961, and others; see Harré, 1979) in the practice of discourse analysis. Discourse analysis involves transcription of scripts, typically interviews, followed by a search for patterns referred to as interpretive repertoires. Social scientists from the critical movement appropriated these techniques into critical discourse analysis, also called social discourse theory (Rogers, 2004), which begins with the assignment of positions of power and then analyzes discourse to understand how language is used to promote one group's power over another. Positioning theory assumes that power dynamics are inherent within the framework of rights and duties, such as an "abuse of power" often corresponds with the perceived failure of a person or group in power to fulfill a duty, or that group's violation of another's rights.

Storylines are no different from the concept of stories in narrative theory (Bruner, 1991). While the practice of using stories to organize, explain, and make sense of the world is as old as recorded human history (Boyd, 2009), narrative theory in modern psychology refers to a method of discourse analysis that uses core components of storytelling. It is interested in the structure of authors, narrators, and narration. It is interested in plot, time, and progression—as well as in setting, space, and perspective. Positioning theory, too, is interested in all of these. The concept of a "storyline" helps map multidimensional perspectives in a moral space that can explain, for example, why "justice" to one group's position may be "injustice" to another. Consider the storyline, "we were enslaved, deprived of our rights, and therefore due differential treatment for our historic losses," in contrast with the storyline of some Right-Wing majority groups in various countries, "we do not owe anything to minorities, they are responsible for their own poverty." As Herman (2012) explains, "narrative affords methods—indeed, serves as a primary

resource—for world-modeling and world-creation" (15). By highlighting storylines, positioning theory can address rights, duties, and normative meanings in a way that is true to the complexity of social life, where multiple stories and storytellers can exist in the same moral space.

Rights and Duties: A Psychological Perspective

The central place of rights and duties in positioning theory contrasts with the scant psychological research on rights and duties (for an early example, see Moghaddam & Vuksanovic, 1990). However, the psychological research that has been conducted (see Doise, 2002; Finkel & Moghaddam, 2005; special issue of the journal *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 2015) helps illuminate two related topics of great importance: first, the possible universality of certain rights and duties; second, the cross-situational consistency with which people apply rights and duties. These issues are discussed briefly here, before being taken up in the next section in the context of Afghanistan and Iraq.

With respect to the universality issue, the *United Nations Declaration of Human Rights* attempts to present a standard for all cultures and encourages the upholding of universal rights to prevent genocide, rape, and mass abuses (see Osiatynski, 2009, for review). However, critics (e.g., Louis & Taylor, 2005; Worchel, 2005) argue that human rights are relative and determined by those in power. They propose that universal human rights is a "mask for Western interests" (Rengger, 2011, p. 1173), and represent primarily Western values and storylines—neglecting duties (there is no "United Nations Declaration of Human Duties") and collective rights (the collective is almost completely absent from the *United Nations Declaration of Human Rights*), for example. Indeed, when the declaration was passed by the General Assembly in 1948, several non-Western countries abstained. For example, Saudi Arabia disagreed with Article 18, which accords everyone the right "to change his religion or belief," and with Article 16, which accords equal marriage rights between men and women. However, international surveys (see Doise, 2002; Finkel & Moghaddam, 2005) are showing that young people are increasingly endorsing the contents of the *United Nations Declaration of Human Rights*, perhaps reflecting an increasing Westernization of world values.

A solution to the universalist versus relativist debate is to acknowledge power dynamics while also allowing the possibility that a small number

of rights and duties appear stable across contexts. Positioning theory suggests this solution, by shifting attention to understanding positions, which include power dynamics, rather than broad philosophical claims of universalism versus relativism. Increasingly, the debate has shifted toward the context of intergroup power dynamics and intergroup storylines. For example, in a review of experiments on the priority given to rights versus duties by those with more and less power, Moghaddam and Riley (2005) identified a general trend: groups respond to the language of rights and duties differently based on intergroup positioning. When groups are positioned against each other, such as when one position is being contested by another, groups with equal or lesser power give priority to *rights*, while groups who enjoy greater power give priority to *duties*.

A related question concerns the way individuals give priority to rights and duties across different contexts. Kohlberg's (1963) model of moral development proposes that certain individuals—those who reach the highest level of moral thinking, the post-conventional or principled level—are guided by general moral principles and consistently apply these principles across contexts. Through his analysis of responses to his moral dilemmas, Kohlberg proposed that people “are consistent in their level of moral judgment” (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977, p. 54). Kohlberg's claim is that his model is universal, and that a person who has achieved a certain level of moral thinking will remain consistently at that level. If Kohlberg's model is true, then individuals at the principled level should not be influenced in their decisions by the characteristics of the context.

An alternative view is that most people are able to think in a principled way, but whether or not they do so will depend on how the issues and decisions line up with their political ideologies. This alternative view suggests the particular level of moral reasoning a person will actually adopt in a particular context will depend on his or her ideology, and empirical evidence supports this idea—positions on moral issues depend on circumstances (Emler, Renwick & Malone, 1983; Emler & St. James, 2004; Moghaddam & Vuksanovic, 1990; Sparks & Durkin, 1987). “Flip-flopping” by politicians seems to reflect this: Politicians espouse one set of views when they are in opposition but shift position and make different decisions when they come into political office. The same shift in behavior is evident among revolutionaries, before and after they topple a government and seize power (Moghaddam,

2004). When they are rebels attempting to topple a government, revolutionaries celebrate rights and make promises to expand rights, but after successfully overthrowing a government and coming to power, revolutionaries typically switch to giving priority to duties, and particularly the duties of citizens to obey the law.

The influence of context on moral thinking is also demonstrated by research using the so-called footbridge dilemma (Greene, Sommerville, Nystrom, Darley, & Cohen, 2001), where you, the participant, suddenly see a runaway railroad cart and realize the only way to save five people walking by the railroad track is by pushing a large stranger in front of you off the footbridge, onto the railroad track below. This will save the five people, but kill the large stranger. In this situation you have to choose between two different rules: maximizing benefits for everyone (by killing a person) versus the moral duty not to kill under any circumstance (and allowing five people to die). Research suggests that the choice made by individuals faced with this dilemma depends on whether the rule “save lives” or the rule “do not kill” is cognitively more accessible at the time of decision making (Broeders, Van den Bos, Müller, & Ham, 2011). Researchers found that by making either the “save lives” or “do not kill” rules more cognitively accessible, they could increase the probability that participants would apply a particular rule and make the corresponding choice. Thus, priming, brought about by manipulating aspects of the environment, could change the rules applied and the moral choices made.

In conclusion, then, the empirical research evidence suggests that context plays an important role in the priority people give to rights and duties.

Contested Storylines in Afghanistan and Iraq

In this section of the chapter, we further demonstrate the usefulness of positioning theory through positioning analysis of some situations in Afghanistan and Iraq, where radically different cultural storylines intersect in the domain of war, human rights, and development. Group positioning is constantly being contested as each group performs rights and duties according to their own storylines. In particular, we are able to highlight the relationship between context and rights and duties, and how rights and duties are interpreted differently by competing groups. In the case of the Bush administration and the justification for the invasion of Iraq, we find that the storyline, and interpretations of

rights and duties, made by the same group changed strategically over time (Zimbardo, 2007).

When the United States led the invasions of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003, the White House positioned the war, in different ways over time, in terms of increasing security and the threats of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), exporting democracy, implementing human rights, and preventing terrorism. In these shifting storylines, the United States government is positioned as a liberator, protector, and nation-builder, performing “duties” to defend and liberate the oppressed in Iraq and Afghanistan. Naturally, however, armed opposition groups (as well as critics in Western societies Zimbardo, 2007), contest this positioning and articulate competing storylines. In Iraq, opposition groups broadcast the narrative that America is an occupier, an exploiter of Iraqi oil, and a lawless jailer associated with Abu Ghraib. In Afghanistan, Taliban leader Mullah Omar assigned Western forces the position of “occupiers” and non-Muslim “Crusaders,” drawing parallels to a historic storyline. This storyline positioned the Taliban to be defenders of Islam and protectors of Afghan sovereignty, where jihad is a duty to protect the rights of Muslims. For both the Bush administration and the Taliban, each group conveyed a storyline that organized rights and duties in a moral space: war is a duty to defend people's rights, liberating them from a threat. In this way, storylines organize conflict. The assignment of positions, as oppressor/liberator, for example, creates moral imperatives for who has a duty to fight whom.

Control of these storylines is often the crux of “hearts and minds” campaigns by governments and militaries. For example, one strategy by US military forces in Afghanistan involved distribution of books featuring photographs of American mosques. Such positioning directly competes with the Taliban narrative of America as Christian Crusaders, emphasizing that Americans are Muslims, too. Another Taliban narrative, widely publicized, is the story that the Taliban represent “pure Islam.” The new “post-Taliban” Afghan government counters this by positioning itself as Muslim. It subsidizes the salary of Islamic religious clerics, as was done by the Taliban regime. It has built more mosques than the Taliban did. It has codified into its constitution the requirement that no law can contradict Islamic Shari'a law. In 2012, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan helped sponsor a showcase of the world's largest Qur'an, produced by an Afghan calligrapher. Such positioning may reflect

real cultural values by most Afghans. However, it also functions to position the new Afghan government as an Islamic government. It is positioning that weakens the storyline of many armed opposition groups who claim to that Islam is under attack and jihad is a duty to be carried out against the Afghan government.

Women's rights are another area of contested positioning and storylines, often cast in terms of a tension between traditional and modern perspectives. For example, the Taliban justify their application of the *burqa*, the full-body covering that was imposed on all Afghan women during the Taliban regime, as fulfilling duties to Islamic modesty and to the protection of women. By contrast, international forces in Afghanistan emphasize women's right not to wear the burqa on the basis of international conventions. However, duties and rights for dress depend on their storylines. A student in France who wears a burqa is banned from public school since, in the French narrative, the duty not to wear a head covering is mandated by law. In New York, however, the same woman may be seen as exercising her rights, since in the American narrative, freedom is demonstrated by individual choice.

Another example can be found in the application of international laws for women's rights in Afghanistan. In 2003, after the Taliban regime had collapsed, the transitional Afghan government ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). This landmark treaty, overseen by the United Nations and approved by Hamid Karzai (President of Afghanistan, 2004–2014), guarantees women access to education, health care, and political representation. In 2003, it was largely unchallenged. Six years later, in 2009, Karzai responded to international pressure and signed the Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) law, an act that was hailed by the international community as a landmark achievement for girls and women in Afghanistan. EVAW criminalized rape, set punishments for domestic violence and forced marriage, criminalized hindrances to women's rights to acquire dowry, inheritance, and property, and set additional laws for men who marry more than one woman. In Western storylines, international laws and treaties are important speech acts that fit within a storyline of progress and peace. By this measure, Afghanistan appeared to be on a path to development for women. To be a signatory on the CEDAW and EVAW laws validated the international community's storyline as liberators and also validated the storyline

that international sacrifices in Afghanistan have been worthwhile, meaningful, justified.

However, as Boggio-Cosadia (2013) notes, President Karzai did not advertise his signing of EVAW in Afghanistan internally, and it was implemented in roughly only half of Afghanistan's 34 provinces. The same year Karzai signed EVAW, he also responded to demands from Afghan leaders to endorse the Shiite Personal Status Law. For many Shia clerics, the Shiite Personal Status Law was a story about Shia Afghans being recognized, for the first time, in national law. It was a story about progress, with the minority religious group, Shias, positioned as advancing in society relative to Sunnis. However, for international observers, signing the law was a story of Afghanistan moving backward. The English translation of Article 132 reads, "As long as the husband is not traveling, he has the right to have sexual intercourse with his wife every fourth night . . . Unless the wife is ill or has any kind of illness that intercourse could aggravate, the wife is bound to give a positive response to the sexual desires of her husband" (Shiite Personal Status Law, 2009). The law also allows a wife to leave the house "to the extent that local custom allows," but not more, and renders the legal age for girls to marry two years younger than for boys. Whereas Afghan media described the signing of the law as a fulfillment of Shia rights, Western media described it as a violation of women's rights.

Using Positioning Theory for Analysis

One approach to using positioning theory for intergroup relations and conflict is to draw a matrix of rights and duties on the basis of storylines. We review three examples of intergroup relations from Afghanistan, then map these in terms of whether they fulfill a duty or exercise a right, on the one hand, or violate a duty or right, on the other. We then state whether the storylines was accepted or contested.

Example 1

In 2007, the US military expressed regret for a "heart and minds" campaign aimed at Afghan children that distributed thousands of soccer balls to Afghan children that were decorated with the flags of countries from around the world. The soccer balls were part of a goodwill campaign, but the project failed because the soccer balls also featured the Saudi Arabian flag, a flag that bears the shahadah, a passage from the Qur'an. Afghans regard any Qur'anic verse as holy, and not to be dropped, kicked in the dirt, or used as an object of play.

Outcome: Increased intergroup conflict

Example 2

When the internationally funded National Solidarity Programme (NSP) called for the establishment of provincial "Women's Councils," the idea was blocked by many conservative areas on grounds that women should not be making leadership decisions. According to Da'ud Saaba, former governor of Herat province, many of these districts allowed "Mother's Forums" to be established in place of "Women's Councils" (personal conversation, 2008). Women's Councils and Mother's Forums are functionally no different, but in Afghanistan, mothers are granted special rights and privileges.

Outcome: This incident helped to avoid further intergroup conflict.

Example 3

When, in 2006, a major international telecom company began sending text messages to its subscribers offering cash prizes, such as "Pay 5 Afghans for a chance to win 1,000,000," religious clerics organized to protest. They accused the company of promoting gambling, which is religiously prohibited. Former executive at the Afghan Central Bank, Noorullah Delawari, reported that a group of mullahs approached him to complain about the promotion, stating that this was gambling and should be illegal in Afghanistan under Shari'a law. Delawari reframed the service, explaining that this was not "gambling" but rather "paying a fee for the opportunity to receive money" (personal conversation, 2007). Today, the company still uses the promotion, without resistance from mullahs, and using different language: "Do you want to be a millionaire? Dial 235 & participate in a Health Quiz. Give correct answers to score points and you might win cash prize of 1 million! 10 Afghans/minute."

Outcome: This incident helped to avoid further intergroup conflict.

Why did the first example increase conflict, while the second two did not? Broken down by rights and duties, we see patterns emerge (see Table 18.1). Where the storyline was reframed from violating a right or duty into exercising a right or duty, no conflict resulted. In the first example, kicking a soccer ball with holy verse violates an Islamic duty to treat the Qur'an with respect. The intervention backfired, inciting grievances, and the US military was forced to collect the soccer balls and dispose of them in a way that follows Islamic custom for destruction of holy objects.

In the second and third illustrations, the storylines were effectively reframed to avoid perceived

Table 18.1 Illustrative Use of Positioning Theory for Analysis

Intervention	Exercises a Right	Fulfills a Duty	Violates a Right	Violates a Duty	Storyline Accepted/Rejected
Playing with soccer balls with Qur'anic verses				✓	×
Formation of Women's Councils			✓		×
Formation of Mother's Forums		✓			✓
Gambling for a prize				✓	×
Paying a fee for an opportunity	✓				✓

violation of local rights and duties. While men are seen to have a "right" to be primary decision makers in Afghan society, the storyline was changed so that the focus is on protecting mothers' rights and appealing to an Afghan sense of duty to honor those rights. Afghan society accords "mothers" as having a relative position of respect, and therefore Afghan men have certain duties toward them. For example, in many parts of Afghanistan, a male member has a duty to obtain the mother's permission before engaging in jihad. The storyline also changed such that male rights were no longer endangered: whereas a council is a decision-making body, forums are non-threatening, even if they are functionally comparable to a council. In the third example, the storyline of gambling (i.e., an un-Islamic practice) was transformed into a storyline of commerce (i.e., something promoted by Islam), which in turn transformed a violation of a duty (i.e., not to gamble) into the exercise of a right (to participate in a trade).

Positioning Theory and Social Justice

In this section we further clarify the reasons that positioning theory is particularly suitable for researching social justice issues. First, we discuss the centrality of rights and duties in both positioning theory and social justice. Second, we highlight the disputed nature of rights, duties, and storylines in contexts where social justice is a theme, and how positioning theory is especially suitable for studying and unravelling dispute processes. Third, we examine the strength of positioning

theory in exploring social and psychological processes that are potentially open-ended, with the possibility that one or a few of different storylines could become dominant for a time but decline in importance. In keeping with our earlier discussion of Afghanistan and Iraq, we will adopt the invasion of Iraq as a central focus.

Common to both positioning theory and social justice is the centrality of rights and duties. Positioning theory explores how individuals and groups attribute rights and duties to themselves and others, how such rights and duties are accepted or disputed, and how actions become influenced by the rights and duties introduced. Rights and duties are also central to all social justice issues. For example, consider something as "simple" as the question, "Why are eleven-year old Neil Morgan and his nine-year old sister Hillary living in abject poverty?" An answer could be, "The rights of the Morgan family and poor people like them are being violated, because the government has failed to provide them with basic social services, health care, and unemployment benefits." However, an alternative answer to the same question could be, "The parents of these two children are neglecting their duty to find employment and provide a minimum of food and shelter for the family. By teaching the Morgan parents to be dependent on welfare, the government has violated the rights of the Morgan family to learn to become self-reliant." Through this example we see that rights and duties are not only central to social justice, they are also routinely disputed as part of the larger discussion on social justice.

Positioning theory is particularly appropriate for studying and deconstructing disputed storylines, rights, and duties. For example, positioning theory provides an excellent lens through which to understand the 2003 US led invasion of Iraq, a major international event that galvanized different groups, in support of different storylines. The invasion and subsequent occupation cost the United States and United Kingdom governments, in particular, at least hundreds of billions of dollars. Critics vehemently argued that the governments of US President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom had not only violated the rights of the Iraqi people, but also the rights of American and British peoples. The enormous sums of money "wasted" on wars in the Near East "enriched" private companies such as Blackwater and Haliburton but should have been used to improve education, health, and social services for the masses in the United States and the United Kingdom. From this perspective, these wars violated the rights American and British taxpayers and showed that Bush and Blair were not carrying out their duties toward their own nations. In response to the critics, some argue that by invading Iraq, President Bush and Prime Minister Blair were carrying out their duty to defend the West from Weapons of Mass Destruction (apparently) being developed by the Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

The dispute over storylines associated with the invasion of Iraq (2003) is open-ended, which makes it particularly appropriate for analysis through positioning theory. New reports based on "new information" are regularly being published, influencing the competing storylines about the Iraq war. These storylines continue to be developed, in an open-ended process that seems to have no end in sight. For example, leaked memos suggest Prime Minister Blair had a larger role in the "march to war" than had earlier been reported (<http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/oct/18/tony-blair-warpath-from-early-2002-colin-powell-memo-chilcot-inquiry-invasion-iraq>). Further revelations could again change the storylines in the coming years, strengthening some storylines and weakening others. Positioning theory is particularly suitable for analyzing these kinds of dynamic, fluid, open-ended disputes over storylines, rights, and duties.

Concluding Comment

We used this opportunity to review positioning theory's origins, basic assumptions, and major

components and to apply positioning theory to a context of intergroup contact and conflict. We showed through positioning analysis that rights and duties are adopted and applied fluidly, in relation to group goals and context. This theme reflects findings from traditional empirical studies, demonstrating that moral thinking, defined broadly, is to a high degree context dependent (Emler, Renwick & Malone, 1983; Emler & St. James, 2004; Moghaddam & Vuksanovic, 1990; Sparks & Durkin, 1987), but there are some consistencies across contexts. However, application of positioning theory to intergroup conflict need not follow our model of a matrix of rights and duties. We share these only to highlight the ways that positioning theory can be applied for better understanding intergroup and interpersonal exchanges. Importantly, whereas analysis of interpersonal conversation may require attention to a person's self-concept and individual narratives, analysis of intergroup exchanges requires attention to cultural narratives and group identities. These are not mutually exclusive, of course. But culture has a unique authority to dictate, borrowing a characterization from Bower (1966), the way we do things around here.

Culture dictates which storylines are acceptable or unacceptable and organizes the moral space in social interactions, such as gendered space between men and women or between religious or ethnic groups. Positioning theory helps explain how an act that is "rational" according to one cultural framework can be "irrational" from another, and how storylines depicting "rationality" and "irrationality" can change in an open-ended manner. The cross-disciplinary foundation of positioning theory, which is in line with 21st century trends in research, also suggests it will be adopted and applied in more projects in the future.

Notes

1. "Nam iustitia, quae suum cuique distribuit," which can be translated, "For justice, to each his own," or "to each what rightfully belongs to him." See *de Natura Deorum III*, p 38.
2. Although beyond the focus of this chapter, positioning theory is also concerned with acts that are considered "beyond what is owed" by a position or supererogatory rights and duties. *Supererogatory duties* are behaviors that a person is not obligated to perform but is applauded for carrying out, while *supererogatory rights* are what a person is owed by others but is willing to forgo for the sake of the greater good (for discussion, see Moghaddam, Novoa, & Warren, 2012).
3. "The Bentsen-Quayle Vice Presidential Debate" (October 5, 1988) Accessed September 1, 2014: <<http://www.debates.org/index.php?page=october-5-1988-debate-transcripts>>
4. See Mills (1997) for a summary of the definition and assumptions of *discourse*.

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“In the Minds of Men . . .”: Social Representations of War and Military Intervention

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Abstract

This chapter reviews research on representations of war and military intervention, primarily situated in two different social psychological research traditions: individual attitudes and social representations. The former has approached the object of investigation by studying the cognitive and affective correlates, more general predictors, and behavioral consequences of individuals’ support (vs. rejection) of war or military intervention. The latter focuses to a greater extent on contextual and historical processes that influence the social meanings attached to war and military intervention; in this approach attitudes are just one (evaluative) component of social representations—and differences between individuals and groups may be attributed to the various functions social representations fulfill. We thus adopt the broader social representations approach. Based on this, the chapter closes by drawing implications for strategies to change individual attitudes, as well as representations of war and military interventions, and by offering questions for future research.

Key Words: Peace, war, military intervention, attitudes, social representations, social psychology, political psychology

“Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed”—so says the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in the preamble to its constitution (1945). The statement raises various questions. How are wars represented in the minds of men (and women)?¹ How can these representations be changed to “construct the defenses of peace”? And to what extent can peace be brought about by changes in representations at the individual level? Accordingly, psychologists have a long tradition of engaging with war and peace (though not always *against* war and *for* peace; for an overview see Christie & Montiel, 2013). In light of today’s widespread militarization and occurrence of wars and warlike conflicts, the discipline’s engagement with such questions is more important than ever. The Stockholm International Peace Research

Institute (2016) reported that worldwide military expenditure increased from US\$1,222 billion in 1992 to US\$1,760 billion in 2015. And the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (2016) found that there were 43 wars or limited wars taking place globally in 2015, with an additional 180 violent crises. Money spent on militarization funds wars and military interventions, and thus contributes to direct violence. However, the resulting lack of funds to address other pressing social issues also contributes to structural violence: the presence of structural and institutional conditions that prevent humans from meeting their basic needs and fulfilling their physical and mental potentials (Galtung, 1969). With social justice defined as the absence of structural violence, research on representations of war and military interventions is of great relevance to the focus and priorities of this handbook.