

WHILE SOCIAL SCIENTISTS DEBATE the definitions of *nationalism* and *patriotism*, they agree that love of nation comes in two forms. One form, often called “patriotism” or “liberal nationalism”, describes positive “feelings about one’s own country” and is a healthy and harmless attitude (Korostelina 183-184). The second form, often called “nationalism” or “intolerant nationalism”, is a love of nation based on “feelings of national superiority and a need for national power and dominance” (Korostelina 183). This second form leads to hostility and conflict behavior. While the semantics vary, one thing is clear: there *is* such a thing as a bad way to love your nation.

To avoid confusion, I use alternative terms to distinguish between peaceful love of nation and the love of nation that tempts us into wars. These terms are *Peaceful Nation-Love* and *Conflictual Nation-Love* and they go right to the point: are our attitudes likely to produce conflict behavior? In America, most agree it is “good” to be “patriotic”, but for our nation and our global community, we must examine our “patriotism” by asking: is it *Peaceful Nation-Love* or *Conflictual Nation-Love*?

Cynics claim that love for one’s own nation is inextricably linked to the denigration of other nations, but this is inaccurate. Studies have shown “one can love and identify with one’s nation without disparaging out-groups and supporting violence” and that “intense loyalty to one nation does not necessarily lead to hostility toward another” (Pettigrew 44, Korostelina 198). While positive attitudes towards one’s own group naturally lead to in-group biases, comparisons with out-groups, and mild feelings of superiority, these biases can be kept modest enough to avoid causing conflict.

The crucial difference between *Peaceful Nation-Love* and *Conflictual Nation-Love* is whether the love of nation is based on positive evaluations of one’s own nation or on the presumed inferiority of others. In the former case, nations have an *internal locus of self-esteem* and their love of nation stems from pride in ones own nation. In the latter case, nations have an *external locus of self-esteem* and their love of nation is based on feelings of superiority. Nations with internal loci of self esteem “have few conflict intentions”, however nations with external loci of self-esteem are likely to develop “conflict intentions and a readiness to fight” (Korostelina 92), making them more likely to engage in wars.

The difference, then, between *Peaceful Nation-Love* and *Conflictual Nation-Love* is the source of self-esteem. How can we in America maintain our internal locus of self-esteem and manifest *Peaceful Nation-Love* during wartime and in the age of global terrorism? We know that “out-group denigration seems more likely to emerge in situations of conflict and when a group is under threat” (Korostelina 91), so we must take extra care at times like these. Groups with internal loci of self-esteem usually have “power and supremacy” and relatively “high economic and social position”. While America has long enjoyed these benefits, global uncertainty threatens this source of self-

esteem. Now more than ever we must turn toward other internal sources of self-esteem. Nations with “unique cultures and exceptional positions in history” often enjoy an internal locus of self-esteem and therefore display *Peaceful Nation-Love* (Korostelina 91). We must empower our educators, artists, writers and intellectuals to celebrate our unique American history and culture. We must cultivate our unique qualities and strengths, so that we can be proud of who we are, not who we are better than. Inspired by this *Peaceful Nation-Love*, we’ll find it easier to avoid war.



LANE SALTER is a modern dancer and Development Associate at *Moving in the Spirit*, a youth development and dance nonprofit organization in Atlanta, Georgia. She earned her M.S. from George Mason University's Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (ICAR). Prior to ICAR, Ms. Salter studied modern dance and political anthropology at the Colorado College, and peace and conflict studies in Ireland with the School for International Training.

CONTACT: lane.salter@gmail.com

RESOURCES

Korostelina, Karyna V. [Social Identity and Conflict: Structures, Dynamics and Implications](#) 2007 Palgrave Macmillan, New York, NY

Peacock, J. L., Thornton, P. M. and Inman, P. B. (2007). [Identity Matters: Ethnic and Sectarian Conflict](#), Berghahn Books

Copyright 2010 Impact Times. The information contained in this article may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or otherwise distributed without the prior written authority of Impact Times.