

Periodicals

between ages nine and 13 and their drinking or drug use at age 15.

Psychologists long believed that low self-esteem was an important cause of violence. But a number of studies point to a different conclusion: "Perpetrators of aggression generally hold favorable and perhaps even inflated views of themselves."

It's important to note that Baumeister and his colleagues eliminated from consideration thousands of studies that relied on the subjects' own assessments of their self-

esteem, a notoriously unreliable gauge.

Lest champions of self-esteem lose all of it themselves, the authors report that some studies show "that people with high self-esteem are significantly happier than others." But it's not clear whether high self-esteem *causes* happiness. Both may be the product of success at work, in school, or in one's personal life. The champions can take heart from one last finding: High self-esteem does seem to promote persistence in the face of failure.

PRESS & MEDIA

Tuning Out the World

"The News Media and the 'Clash of Civilizations'" by Philip Seib, in *Parameters* (Winter 2004–05), U.S. Army War College, 122 Forbes Ave., Carlisle, Pa. 17013–5238.

For Americans groping to understand the world in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, a "clash of civilizations" between Islam and the non-Islamic West offers a familiar paradigm. But the news media need to think twice before stealing a ride on this ideological horse, says Seib, a journalism professor at Marquette University.

Journalists like us-vs.-them stories. With the end of the Cold War, they searched for new ways to frame international coverage, and found one in the "clash of civilizations" theory political scientist Samuel Huntington first aired in 1993. It holds that a world order is emerging based on civilizations rather than national boundaries, and that the West is increasingly in conflict with other civilizations, especially the Islamic world and China.

Caveats and alternative theories to Huntington's idea get short shrift in the news. Other thinkers point to divisions within Islam itself, the power of globalization to blur cultural divisions, and the fact that the radical Islamic groups in conflict with the United States do not represent all of Islam. These views rarely get much of a hearing in the mainstream media. "Aside from their occasional spurts of solid performance, American news organizations do a lousy job of breaking down the public's intellectual isolation," writes Seib.

One reason is that there's little space or time to provide more nuance. According to one media analyst, the big three U.S. television networks, ABC, CBS, and NBC, offer mere dribbles of international news. For all of 2003, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict received a total of 284 minutes of coverage in the three networks' weeknight newscasts, an average of less than two minutes per week per network. Afghanistan received 80 minutes, the global AIDS epidemic 39 minutes, and global warming 15 minutes. Iraq earned 4,047, but only because of the U.S. invasion. Meanwhile, the number of foreign bureaus is shrinking. As of mid-2003, ABC, CBS, and NBC each maintained only six overseas bureaus with full-time correspondents, having scaled back even in major cities such as Moscow, Beijing, and Paris. But picking up a newspaper won't necessarily fill you in: Nearly two-thirds of print foreign news editors polled in a 2002 study rate the news media's foreign coverage as fair or poor, and more than half were critical of their own newspaper's reporting.

More and better international news coverage is needed, Seib insists. Journalists shouldn't embrace any theory about the world but should familiarize themselves with "the diverse array of ideas about how the world is changing."