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# Building a Peaceful Society

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## *Origins, Prevention, and Reconciliation After Genocide and Other Group Violence*

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*The 20th century was a century of genocide and other great violence between groups within societies. Already at the beginning of the 21st century, there have been mass killings, civil wars, violent conflict, and terrorism. This article summarizes influences that tend to lead to intense group violence. It then considers prevention, stressing early prevention—and reconciliation as an aspect of prevention—and focusing on central principles and practices. The principles include developing positive orientations to previously devalued groups; healing from past victimization and promoting altruism born of suffering; moderating respect for authority; creating constructive ideologies; promoting understanding of the origins of violence, its impact, and avenues to prevention; promoting truth, justice, and a shared history; and raising inclusively caring, morally courageous children. Practices related to all of these are also discussed. The article stresses the role of progressive change, that is, of psychological, behavioral, and social evolution, in both extreme violence and positive relations between groups; the role of passive bystanders in the unfolding of violence; and the role of active bystanders in the prevention of violence, in the promotion of reconciliation, and in the development of harmonious societies. It emphasizes psychological processes but notes the importance of creating societal institutions. The author cites findings from both laboratory research and case studies, reviews interventions and their evaluation in Rwanda, and points to the need for further research.*

**G**enocide may be defined as the attempt to eliminate a whole group of people—a racial, ethnic, religious, or political group—which can involve varied means, ranging from murder to making it impossible for the group to reproduce (Staub, 2011, p. 100; see also Fein, 1993). This definition, in contrast to that of the United Nations Convention on Genocide, includes political groups. Mass killing is killing a large number of people without the aim to eliminate a group. The victims in mass killing may belong to varied groups in a society (Staub, 1989). Conflict between groups, when it becomes persistent, intractable, and violent, at times evolves into mass killing and can lead to genocide (Fein, 1993).

The 20th century saw many genocides, mass killings, and intensely violent conflicts. The 21st century has started with much violence. Apart from war between nations, which is not a focus of this article, examples include the

genocide and mass killing in Darfur and the Nuba mountains of Sudan, the many-sided violence in the Congo, the intensely violent civil war in Sri Lanka, violence between Israelis and Palestinians, peaceful uprisings in the Middle East that turned violent as governments used force against demonstrators, and violence between ethnic and religious groups in Iraq and Afghanistan. With competition for scarce resources, huge inequalities in part related to group membership, the potential for global warming to create scarcity and other problems, and identity conflicts and nationalism, the danger of more violence is great. How can we prevent violence between ethnic, religious, and political groups, or between dominant and subordinate groups in a society, and build peaceful societies? In this article I aim to show psychology's potential to help us understand the roots of mass violence, and especially to help prevent violence between groups, and thereby to contribute to the welfare of human beings.

I first consider the origins of extreme violence, since the influences leading to violence point to avenues to prevention. I then focus on prevention, especially early prevention, and approaches to prevention in which psychology can play a significant role. I also consider avenues to reconciliation, which is essential to prevent renewed violence (Long & Brecke, 2003). A number of processes/practices can serve both prevention and reconciliation purposes.

Extreme violence usually evolves progressively. Identifying the conditions in a society—social, cultural, psychological—that in combination make group violence probable provides opportunities both for early preventive actions and initiating constructive social processes. Preventive practices can also inhibit conflict from becoming persistent, intractable, and violent and its potential evolution into mass killing or genocide.

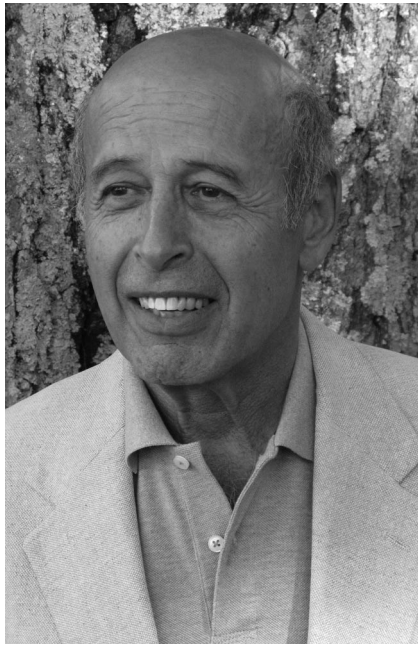
Psychological research and theory have identified many principles that can help us understand intergroup conflict and violence (e.g. Bar-Tal, 2007; Kelman & Fisher,

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2003; Tropp, 2012). But research and theory about genocide and mass killing have been limited (see, however, Newman & Erber, 2002; Staub, 1989, 1996, 2011; Waller, 2007), perhaps because experimental methodologies cannot be applied to them. Political scientists, sociologists, specialists in international relations, and historians who have studied these topics have focused on political systems, the conditions of the state, and local and international institutions (e.g., Fein, 1979, 1993, 2007; Harff, 2003; Kiernan, 2007; Melson, 1992; Totten & Parsons, 2013). The conception of the origins of conflict between groups within societies, of genocide, and of other mass violence presented here is based on the application of social science and psychological research and theory to historical data from instances such as the Holocaust, the genocides in Cambodia and Rwanda, the genocide of the Armenians in Turkey, and the mass killings in Argentina and the Congo (Staub, 1989, 1999, 2011; see also Harff, 2003; Kiernan, 2007; Totten & Parsons, 2013).

## **The Origins of Extreme Group Violence**

Extreme violence by groups is the outcome of a combination of influences; the more of them that are present, the greater the likelihood of extreme violence.

### **Difficult Life Conditions and Group Conflict as Starting Points**

One starting point or instigating condition for great violence between groups is difficult life conditions in a society. Among important forms of these conditions are economic decline (but not poverty by itself, Harff, 2003), political disorganization, and great and rapid changes in society (Staub, 1998, 2011). These were present in every

genocide and mass killing mentioned above. Another starting point is persistent group conflict (Fein, 1993). Such conflicts may be about land, differences in privilege between dominant and subordinate groups, and threats to identity as a group and to safety and survival, whether real or imagined (Zartman & Anstey, 2012). For example, while there was no actual conflict between Germans and Jews in Germany, the Nazi leaders presented Jews as a mortal threat to Germans, and many Germans apparently experienced them as such. Material conflicts, if they persist, seemingly inevitably also become psychological in nature, each group devaluing the other, seeing itself as right and moral, and seeing the other as responsible and immoral (Bar-Tal, 2007; Kelman, 2007; Kelman & Fisher, 2003; Staub, 2011).

Both difficult life conditions and group conflict tend to frustrate material needs and seemingly inevitably frustrate core psychological needs such as needs for security, effectiveness and control, identity, connection to other people, and understanding the world and one's place in it (Staub, 1989, 2003, 2011; see also Kelman, 1990; Maslow, 1971; Pearlman, 2001). Increased identification with and connection to a group, whether in response to difficult life conditions or to conflict, can satisfy psychological needs but can also move people to participate in destructive processes (Cairns, Tam, Hewstone, & Niens, 2005; Čehajić-Clancy, Effron, Halperin, Liberman, & Ross, 2011). To enhance connection and feelings of effectiveness, to protect identity, and to gain a new world view, members of groups at times together scapegoat an outgroup and create ideological visions that give their group hope for the future but are destructive in that they identify enemies who stand in their way. Examples of such ideologies include nationalism, in Turkey, Germany, as well as Cambodia; belief in the superiority and purity of the group, as in Germany; and "total" social equality, as in Cambodia (Kiernan, 2007; Staub, 1989, 2011). Creating ways to fulfill psychological needs constructively is important for prevention.

### **Cultural Characteristics**

The existence of certain cultural (and political) characteristics of a society makes these processes, and one group turning against another, more likely (see Staub, 1989, 2011). One of the especially important characteristics is a *history of devaluation* of a subgroup of society. This makes it probable that in difficult times, the devalued group will be selected as a scapegoat and ideological enemy. Certain types of devaluations, such as seeing the other group as morally bad or as a threat to one's own group, are especially dangerous. The danger is enhanced if the devalued group is doing relatively well materially and in terms of its position in the society, which can intensify enmity (Glick, 2002; Staub, 1989).

Another important cultural characteristic is a strong *authority orientation*, the result of culture, child rearing practices, and/or an autocratic system. Such an orientation makes it more likely that people accept destructive leadership in difficult times and remain passive bystanders in the course of the evolution of violence. Milgram

(1974) regarded his research, which showed that many people will obey an authority that directs them to do great harm to another person, as a representation of what happened in the Holocaust. A strong authority orientation strengthens the tendency to obey authorities. However, genocide is the outcome of a combination of influences, which lead many people to *join with and follow* leaders and an ideological movement that propagates harm, with the orientation to do harm further developing as the group evolves (Staub, 1989, 2011). Even in the limited context of the obedience experiments, a reinterpretation of Milgram's findings claims that participants administered intense shocks to others not due to obedience, but as a result of identifying with the aims and following the lead of the experimenter (Reicher, Haslam, & Smith, 2012).

**Unhealed group trauma and forms of victim consciousness.** Another important contributing cultural characteristic is unhealed group trauma, especially one due to past victimization. The great majority of violent individuals have been victimized (Rhodes, 1999). Aggressive boys have often been harshly treated and see others as hostile (Dodge, Bates, & Pettit, 1990). Past victimization and unhealed psychological wounds can lead members of a group, both the population and the leaders, to *feel vulnerable and see the world as dangerous*. In response to new threat, real or imagined, they may forcefully defend themselves even when this is not necessary, thereby becoming perpetrators (Staub, 1998, 2011). The past victimization of both Israelis and Palestinians is one source of difficulty in resolving the conflict between them (Staub, 2011).

Research on victimization shows that survivors of group violence, as well as their descendants who have not directly experienced it, can have intense victim beliefs, varying in nature (Vollhardt, 2012), with important correlates. Israelis' beliefs about their group's vulnerability and past injustice were associated with endorsing more aggressive policies toward Palestinians (Maoz & Eidelson, 2007). Competitive victimhood, the belief that one's group suffered more than an opponent, was associated with less forgiveness in both Chile and Northern Ireland (Noor, Brown, Gonzalez, Manzin, & Lewis, 2008). Past victimization can become a group's "chosen trauma" (Volkan, 2001), an important component of its identity, shaping perceptions of and responses to events.

Perpetrators of violence are also wounded. Even killing in war creates psychological wounds, as shown by research with American soldiers (Maguen et al., 2009), which found greater effects on those who committed atrocities (McNair, 2002). Thus, genocide can create psychological wounds, even if not of an equivalent nature, in everyone involved, even in passive bystanders (Staub, 2012). Healing by everyone is important for reconciliation and the prevention of future violence. Public education and its evaluation in Rwanda, discussed later, showed that information about the origins and impact of violence, when applied to one's own

experience, can lead to varied changes, including reduced trauma symptoms (Staub, Pearlman, Gubin, & Hagengimana, 2005). Education about the ways victim beliefs are embedded in cultures and transmitted across generations could also bring about positive change.

### **The Evolution of Mass Violence, Passive Bystanders, and Moral Transformation**

Prior aggressive behavior makes later and greater aggression more likely both by individuals (Bandura, Underwood, & Fromson, 1975; Buss, 1966) and by groups (Harff, 2003; McCauley, 2004; Staub, 1989, 2011). Individuals and groups learn by doing, and they change as a result of their actions. Harmful actions by a group can start an evolution of increasing violence—steps along a continuum of destruction (Staub, 1989). Even violence that looks "volcanic," or as if it suddenly erupted (Albright & Cohen, 2008), tends to develop through progressive change—in devaluation, discrimination, and earlier violence (Staub, 2011).

Perpetrators justify their actions by devaluing their victims more and more, and they do so with reference to the higher ideals of their ideology. They undergo *moral transformation*. They may start with moral disengagement (Bandura, 1999). As they progress, they appear to exclude their victims from the moral realm (Fein, 1979; Opatow, 1990; Staub, 1989). Moral exclusion can turn into a *reversal of morality* (Staub, 1989, 2011). Historical records indicate that many perpetrators come to see killing members of the victim group as right and moral (Kiernan, 2007; Staub, 1989). The lessening of empathy and the ensuing moral transformation can expand, as suggested by the expanding circle of victims in many places, including Germany (Lifton, 1986) and Argentina (Staub, 1989). Some of the practices of prevention (developing a positive view of the other, a constructive ideology) may help with the *moral recovery* of perpetrators (and bystanders). This seems important for reconciliation and the prevention of violence toward other groups.

Bystanders mostly remain passive. Many people may hope that each harmful step taken by the group will be the last, may rely on the guidance of leaders, or may believe that as individuals they cannot inhibit a societal process and don't know how to join with others to do so. Having already absorbed the cultural devaluation of victims, many passive bystanders, in order to reduce their own empathic distress, may over time further distance themselves from victims (Staub, 1989, 2012). In most cases, only after a genocide has begun do a small minority of bystanders emerge as rescuers, attempting to save lives (African Rights, 2002; Oliner & Oliner, 1988). Part of the task of prevention is to generate earlier action by bystanders.

The passivity of witnesses, internal bystanders who are part of the population and external parties such as groups and nations (Des Forges, 1999; Hamburg, 2007; Staub, 1989), affirms perpetrators and allows the unfolding of the evolution of violence. The diaries of Goebbels, the powerful Nazi propaganda minister, show that he saw the unwillingness of other countries to take in German refugees as an indication that they would like to do to Jews what

Germany was doing (Taylor, 1983). Often, internal and external bystanders are also complicit, by adhering to discriminatory practices, continuing with normal relations, and at least indirectly supporting perpetrators. U.S. and other corporations were busy doing business in Germany during the 1930s as the Nazis' opponents were killed and Jews increasingly persecuted (Simpson, 1993).

Finally, genocide not infrequently is perpetrated in the course of a war (Des Forges, 1999; Straus, 2006). An ongoing war usually combines difficult life conditions and the extreme evolution of violence. The victim group need not be the enemy in the war. As in the Holocaust and the genocide of the Armenians, it can be a group preselected by the influences described above, including devaluation, scapegoating, and identification as an ideological enemy.

### **The Situation and Personal Dispositions**

The above analysis of the origins of genocide and mass killing is a situational and systems analysis. The instigators are social conditions, joined by culture, and the resulting psychological forces and social processes. Such an analysis is consistent with the current emphasis in psychology on the importance of situations leading people to harmful action, ranging from the Stanford Prison Experiment, where guards were abusing inmates, to Milgram's research, to Lifton's (1986) notion of the atrocity-generating situation, to the focus on ordinary persons as perpetrators (Browning, 1992; Waller, 2007). It is also consistent with research showing that the presence of other people makes helping by each person less likely (Latané & Darley, 1970).

But the long tradition in psychology of the joint influence of situations and personality remains relevant in the realms of both perpetration and prevention. People often enter situations in part as a result of personal dispositions, which can further develop in an ideological or violent group. For example, Carnahan and McFarland (2007) found that people in their study who responded to newspaper ads for volunteers to participate in a *psychological study of prison life* scored higher on measures of hostility and Machiavellian orientation and lower on empathy than did those who volunteered for a *psychological study*. People with such characteristics are likely to be more predisposed to the abusive behavior the guards showed in the Stanford Prison Experiment (Zimbardo, 2007)—and might be more likely, as inmates, to engage in behavior that incites abuse. Steiner (1980) found, in his studies of former SS members, that they grew up in authoritarian families and developed authoritarian personalities characterized by willing submission to higher authority and enjoyment of exercising authority over others. He proposed the concept of the "sleeper," a person who shows a radical shift under violence-inducing conditions.

In short, not all people who find themselves in violence-generating situations respond the same way. In studies using Milgram's obedience research paradigm, participants with higher scores on the California F scale, a measure of authoritarian personality, were more likely to continue to administer to another person what they believed to be increasingly extreme shocks (Elms & Milgram,

1966). Participants with moral reasoning that focused on their responsibility were more likely to stop administering shocks (Kohlberg & Candee, 1984). Oliner and Oliner (1988) found that rescuers, those who endangered their lives to save the lives of designated victims of genocide, acting in opposition to powerful situational forces, tended to be more empathic, to hold moral values such as justice, and to have had more positive experiences in their families of origin than did people in the same countries who under comparable circumstances did not become rescuers. These characteristics were likely to both influence helping and further develop as a result of it.

Browning (1992) introduced the concept of the ordinary person as perpetrator, as he described a unit of German reserve police who were called up to serve as members of special troops, killing Jews as they followed the German army on the Eastern Front. In addition to the extremely powerful situational forces acting on them, people who join the police are likely to have personal characteristics that make violence easier. Moreover, Germans as a whole underwent significant evolution under the Nazis (Staub, 1989). Members of the reserve police underwent further evolution, through organizing pogroms of the population, creating local militias, and engaging in other activities (Rhodes, 2002), before they were called upon to kill Jews.

Certainly many perpetrators are "ordinary" people, members of a group affected by difficult life conditions and group conflict—the situation in the larger society—as well as by others' reactions to these in their environment. But ordinary people vary in their personal characteristics, which together with progressive psychological and behavioral changes also appear to play a role in the nature of people's reactions and actions. This is even more the case when people act contrary to powerful social forces and situational pressures in order to *resist* perpetration or to engage in rescue, making the socialization of children, education, and life experiences that develop relevant characteristics of great importance.

### **Preventing Group Violence**

Early prevention helps to avoid immense suffering and loss of lives as well as great financial costs (Lund, 2009). Halting significant violence, whether violence directed by one group at another or mutual violence between groups, requires intense diplomatic response, sanctions, and often military action (Albright & Cohen, 2008). In early prevention, psychological factors play a central role. In societies where the conditions exist that make group violence probable, the motivation to build and maintain institutions that make violence less likely can be greatly facilitated by prior psychological change in people.

### **Developing More Positive Attitudes Toward the "Other"**

A history of devaluation of the group that becomes the victim or is identified as the enemy has a central role in probably every instance of intense group violence. But the devaluation of "others" is not inevitable. Contact between people belonging to different groups is one way to reduce

or overcome devaluation or prejudice (Al Ramiah & Hewstone, 2013, this issue; Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). The depth and quality of contact matters: Greater effects are observed when people engage with each other, working for joint goals (Deutsch, 1973; Hewstone & Swart, 2011). Children belonging to majority and minority groups working on shared tasks in cooperative learning situations have developed more positive attitudes toward and later engaged in more interaction with each other (Aronson, Stephan, Sikes, Blaney, & Snapp, 1978). Many rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust grew up in families that engaged with and had positive relations with people outside the dominant group (e.g., Catholics in Poland), including Jews (Oliner & Oliner, 1998).

Through deep contact and joint projects, people can develop relationships and see the other's humanity, which can extend to other members of the other group (Pettigrew, 1998). Deep contact can also lead people to see themselves and others as part of a common ingroup. This results in both a more positive attitude toward and more help for members of the other group (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Saguy, 2009). Other avenues to building common identities may be respect from authorities and society for minority groups, joint commemorations of past suffering, and a constructive vision for society that embraces all groups. But in many situations, a "dual identity" encompassing both a common identity and a separate subgroup identity (e.g., Korean American) is more realistic (Dovidio et al., 2009). In the Netherlands, many Muslims would like to be integrated into the society but also retain their Muslim identity (Staub, 2007). In Rwanda, the government now dictates "unity," the notion that there are no Hutus or Tutsis, only Rwandans. The government discourages and even punishes expressions of Hutu and Tutsi identities as "divisionism." But these identities are deeply ingrained. Local people identify others as Hutu or Tutsi for outsiders—and presumably for themselves. People would be more likely to accept dual identities (Staub, 2011).

Dialogue is an important form of contact. While it best serves early prevention, in crisis situations high-level international leaders can bring the parties together to negotiate. In Kenya, in 2008, the speedy engagement of such leaders helped stop the violence between tribes following contested elections (Carson, 2008). However, such engagement is not common. One aim of prevention should be to generate active bystanders in crises by high-level leaders.

Positive attitudes can also be promoted by words, the media, leaders, and people in everyday conversations humanizing others. They can be promoted by what children are taught in schools. Real information about the other group is likely to have greater effects than nice words. In Macedonia, journalists from different ethnic newspapers interviewed members of the different ethnic groups and wrote articles in their papers showing the many commonalities in their lives (Burg, 1997). The stories of rescuers who saved lives (Bilewicz & Jaworska, in press) may humanize the group that perpetrated

violence, both in the survivors' eyes and in the eyes of its members, making both groups more open to reconciliation (Staub, 2011).

**Long-term and real-world effects of contact (and other practices).** Even guiding people to imagine a sequence of significant positive interaction with a member of another group can lead to more positive attitudes (Crisp & Turner, 2009). But laboratory research often aims to identify important psychological processes rather than aiming at enduring change. Additional experiences are likely to be necessary for effects to persist. More research is needed on the prevention and reconciliation practices discussed here to determine whether they have lasting effects, how the effects of interventions might expand to more people, and whether such practices work when there is active hostility and violence between groups. Initial applications of these practices in real-world contexts appear promising.

In a study in Sri Lanka (Malhotra & Liyanage, 2005), Sinhalese and Tamils who spent four days together in educational activities showed more empathy for members of the other group a year later, and donated more to poor children in the other group, than did members of a control group. Joint projects in other hostile real-world situations also had positive effects. Members of different ethnic groups who were brought together by the conditions of funding to collaborate on agricultural projects in the Ivory Coast remained nonviolent when violence flared up in the region (Chiot & McCauley, 2006). In three cities in India where there was no violence between Hindus and Muslims after instigating events, in comparison to three cities where there was violence, members of the two groups closely worked together in commercial and civic institutions and brought pressure on political leaders not to incite violence (Varshney, 2002). Ongoing contact, as in the last two instances, and structures that promote positive contact seem especially useful.

In another project, Israeli and Palestinian students who spent time together in summer camps still showed an increase in positive attitudes toward each other after a year in their home environments. This is an impressive effect, considering the ongoing hostility and violence between the groups. But the positive attitudes did not last beyond the first year (Hammack, 2011). Supporting conditions in the environment or repeated contact may be essential to maintain newly acquired positive attitudes that replace negative ones.

How can interventions affect large numbers of people? Lederach (1997) distinguished between top-down, bottom-up, and mid-level influences. When leaders change, their policies and practices can in turn change the population. When the population changes, for example, through the highly popular radio programs in East Africa to be described later, their new attitudes and actions are likely to affect the leaders. However, changes in the population may be latent (Vallacher, Coleman, Nowak, & Bui-Wrzosinska, 2010) until evolving conditions allow their expression. If the attitudes, beliefs, and values of those at a middle

level—such as media or church leaders—change, they in turn can influence both leaders and the population.

### **Healing From Past Victimization**

Healing by survivors, as well as by perpetrators and bystanders, can improve the quality of their lives and make future violence less likely. Group healing processes seem essential when people have suffered together as members of groups. Individuals talking about their experiences in small groups (Herman, 1992), or even members of the community talking to and empathically listening to each other (Staub, 2011), can be considered means of group healing. Commemorations can help people mourn as well as create connection and support. With the passage of time, there is the potential for joint commemorations by past enemies. When this happens, there is some degree of inherent mutual acceptance. However, commemorations often only focus on past suffering, which may maintain woundedness. It would be valuable to explore the benefits gained from adding to commemorations a vision of a shared positive future.

When violence stops, perpetrators often continue to devalue their victims and hold on to the ideology that led to the violence. In many instances, healing, forgiveness, and reconciliation are made more difficult as members of violent groups continue to justify their groups' actions or at least remain unwilling to assume responsibility for them, as in the case of Turks denying the genocide of the Armenians (Bilali, *in press*) or Germans immediately after World War II who, while acknowledging that they knew about the concentration camps, pointed to the Nazis and the SS as being completely responsible (Janowitz, 1946). The same is true in cases of mutual violence between groups, as in, for example, Israelis (Halperin, Bar-Tal, Sharvit, Rosler, & Raviv, 2010) and Palestinians (Nets-Zehngut, 2011b) each seeing the other as responsible.

However, when Israelis, and Serbs in Bosnia, were guided to focus on experiences that affirmed them as individuals, they were more likely to acknowledge their group's responsibility for harmful actions and to support reparations for them (Čehajić-Clancy et al., 2011; see also Nadler & Schnabel, 2008). Participants in several studies have accepted more shame and guilt for harmful actions by their group—for example, Canadians for their treatment of Aboriginals—after their group was affirmed (Gunn & Wilson, 2011). Healing presumably also strengthens the self and makes acknowledgment more possible. Acknowledgment of a group's suffering by the rest of the world, in words or through justice processes, presumably also helps with healing.

**Altruism born of suffering.** Some people who have been harmed, rather than becoming hostile and aggressive, want to prevent others' suffering or help those who have suffered (Staub, 2003, 2005; Staub & Vollhardt, 2008). In a world where many people are victimized, this reaction is crucial for peace. Incidental research findings in many studies that explored other aspects of the aftermath of victimization, as well as memoirs and media reports of altruism by people who have suffered, strongly support the

phenomenon of altruism born of suffering (Staub & Vollhardt, 2008).

One study that specifically explored this phenomenon found that participants who several weeks before in a different context reported that they had suffered due to harm done to them by family members, through persecution as members of groups, or through natural disasters, felt more empathy with and more responsibility to help victims of the 2003 tsunami, and were more willing to collect donations for them, than did people who reported no suffering. They also reported more volunteering, but only when it involved helping people directly (Vollhardt & Staub, 2011).

Perhaps research and theory have overestimated the extent to which past victimization and suffering lead to aggression by studying those individuals (Gilligan, 1996; Rhodes, 1999) and groups (Staub, 1989) who have acted violently and finding past victimization in their backgrounds. Possibly, many people who have suffered care about others' suffering, especially if they have had protective and healing experiences. Further research can explore whether victimization in some people results in inclinations both to help and to engage in what they see as defensive violence, depending on particular circumstances.

Experiences that are likely to contribute to altruism born of suffering include having been helped by others and having been able to act in one's own or others' behalf at the time of suffering. These experiences were reported by Holocaust survivors who were part of the Israeli peace movement, but not by those who were not (Marsa, 2007). Experiences that help with healing, and caring/support after suffering as well as before it (which may increase resilience), are also likely to contribute. Having acted to help others, or beginning to help after such constructive experiences, can lead to learning by doing (Staub, 2003, 2005; Staub & Vollhardt, 2008).

Altruism born of suffering can also be found on the group level. Inclusive victim beliefs, in contrast to exclusive ones that focus only on the suffering of one's own group (Vollhardt, 2009, 2012), appear to contribute to previously victimized groups reaching out to help others. Brysk and Wehrenfennig (2010) noted that American Jews were highly active both in the civil rights movement and in attempting to stop the violence in Darfur. The Japanese American Citizens League combatted discrimination against Japanese people and was successful in bringing about compensation for the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. After 9/11, this group challenged the legality of illicit detention of Arab Americans. Brysk and Wehrenfennig proposed that a group's having articulated both a narrative of their own experience and a narrative that identifies similarity with others' suffering contributes to a group's attempt to help suffering others. They also proposed that political and intellectual leaders are important in linking the two. So is learning by doing leading to the evolution of positive actions and inclinations. The Mothers of the Plaza del Mayo in Argentina began to demonstrate after their children's disappearance, but their concern with human suffering progressively expanded

(Burchianti, 2004; Staub, 2011). Research on what experiences promote altruism born of suffering in groups and individuals seems of great importance.

### **Creating Constructive Ideologies and Constructive Groups**

Responding to difficult life conditions with visions and practices that embrace all groups in a society makes it less likely that people will turn to destructive ideologies and movements to fulfill psychological needs. At the time of the Great Depression, the policies of the Roosevelt administration (Alter, 2006), including work programs that helped people materially but also said to them that the United States is a community that cares about its members, represented such a vision. A good constitution is also a type of positive vision. In Macedonia, where there was fighting between the government and the Albanian minority in 2001, a new constitution both provided a positive vision and led to practices that addressed at least some Albanian grievances (Burg, 1997). In the Palestinian–Israeli conflict, an economic community that benefits everyone and contributes to peace in the region can be such a vision.

A positive vision and accompanying actions to achieve it require committed leadership, as in the case of the Roosevelt policies, which encountered substantial resistance (Alter, 2006). It may also require dialogue at all levels of a society. Often, external bystanders can help. In Macedonia, outside nongovernmental organizations both worked with journalists who wrote articles to humanize members of each ethnic group and made recommendations that were adopted in the constitution (Burg, 1997).

### **Promoting Moderate Respect for Authority**

This is a special challenge, since strong respect for and the tendency to obey authorities may be entrenched in a society's child rearing practices, in the nature of its institutions, including hierarchical social arrangements (Straus, 2006), and in the political system. Authority orientation will be more moderate in a pluralistic culture with democratic institutions (Hamburg, 2007), which allows public discussion of a wide range of values and beliefs and provides access for all groups to the public domain. Access also makes it possible for groups to speak in their own behalf, to protect themselves. Prior psychological changes, in attitudes toward "others," in values such as justice and its expression, and in equality of opportunity, can lead some to work for, and others to accept, pluralism and equitable social relations. Public education can contribute to such psychological changes, and in a society where people can vote, it can also contribute to the selection of leaders who promote pluralism and a constructive vision.

### **Prevention and Reconciliation**

Reconciliation is a process of moving toward mutual acceptance, developing a vision of peaceful coexistence, and creating practices and institutions that promote mutual acceptance (Nadler & Schnabel, 2008; Staub, 2006, 2011). While the concept has normally referred to people coming

together after violence, reconciliation can also help prevent significant violence.

### **Public Education Promoting Reconciliation and Prevention**

In Rwanda, in 1994 about 700,000 Tutsis were killed by Hutus, and about 50,000 Hutus were also killed mostly because they were seen as politically moderate (Des Forges, 1999; Mamdani, 2001). My colleagues and I recently developed interventions to promote reconciliation in Rwanda (Staub et al., 2005),<sup>1</sup> but such interventions can also serve the purposes of prevention. The evolution of actions leading to mass violence can be slow, especially at the beginning. People not seeing where such actions might lead contributes to passivity. Information can change perceptions, beliefs, and behaviors (Ball-Rokeach, Rokeach, & Grube, 1984; Bandura, 2006), leading to foresight and motivating action.

To promote healing and reconciliation, facilitators at local organizations in Rwanda who worked with groups in the community participated in a nine-day workshop. They were provided with general principles about the origins of mass violence, as described earlier (based primarily on the work of Staub, 1989), as well as information about the traumatic impact of violence (Pearlman, 2001; Saakvitne, Gamble, Pearlman & Lev, 2000; Staub, 1998). Qualitative evaluation suggested that two aspects of the workshop were highly valuable: using as examples genocides from around the world and having participants apply the information in the course of discussion to their experience in Rwanda. The qualitative assessment of the effects of the training on the participants showed that they came to believe that having been harmed was not the victims' fault ("It was not God's punishment") and that they felt empowered to work for prevention (Staub et al., 2005).

The primary evaluation was designed to explore the extent to which the effects of the intervention could spread beyond the participants in the training. Therefore, the participants in the evaluation study were people once removed, that is, members of newly set up community groups such as those with whom the participants in the training usually worked. The treatment groups were led by some of the participants in the training; the treatment-control groups were led by people who did not receive the training. Change was assessed from before the training to two months after the training. In the treatment groups, in comparison to the treatment-control and control groups (each with four subgroups), trauma symptoms diminished. Hutu and Tutsi participants in the treatment groups also showed more positive orientation to the other group, more aware-

<sup>1</sup> The work to promote healing and reconciliation in Rwanda was initiated, and the trainings/workshops were conducted, by Ervin Staub and Laurie Anne Pearlman, a trauma specialist, working with assistants and Rwandan associates. They then developed, guided by their approach, the radio programs in collaboration with producer George Weiss and the organization he created for this purpose, Radio La Benevolencija Humanitarian Tools Foundation. U.S. associates working on the radio programs included Rezarta Bilali, Adin Thayer and Johanna Vollhardt.

ness of the complex origins of genocide, and greater conditional forgiveness (e.g., “I can forgive them if they acknowledge what they did”). Presumably as a result of applying the information to their own situation, participants seemed to transform knowledge into a deeper “experiential understanding” (Staub et al., 2005). In subsequent separate trainings with members of the media, national leaders, and other groups, information was added about avenues for the prevention of group violence and reconciliation (Staub, 2011; Staub, Pearlman, & Bilali, 2010).

To reach the whole population, the conceptual foundations of the approach were extended to educational radio programs. One of them, a radio drama with information about origins, prevention, and reconciliation embedded in the story “Musekweya” (“New Dawn”), has been broadcast in Rwanda since 2004. It is a story of two villages in conflict that involves difficult life conditions, a bad leader and his followers, attacks by the two villages on each other, positive active bystanders, and a love story. The principles of the origins of group violence, trauma recovery, prevention of group violence, and reconciliation were transformed into “communication messages” (e.g., Staub, 2011; Staub & Pearlman, 2009). Local writers trained in the approach used the messages to insert educational information into each episode of the radio drama. Over the course of eight years, the story moves to reconciliation and joint positive action by the two villages to prevent violence in the region. Radio programs with the same general approach have been broadcast since 2006 in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, applying the general principles to these contexts (Staub, 2011).

In an experimental study in Rwanda at the end of the first year of the radio drama (Paluck, 2009; see also Staub, 2011; Staub & Pearlman, 2009), six groups of people who listened to the radio drama showed a variety of positive effects, both in beliefs and behavior, in comparison to six groups of control participants. (Most of the population in Rwanda listened to the radio drama; those in the control groups agreed to listen during the year to an alternative radio drama, and aspects of the evaluation showed that they lived up to their agreement.) These effects included (a) greater empathy with varied groups, (b) participants more often saying what they believed in public settings, (c) greater awareness of the traumatic impact of violence, and (d) more participation in reconciliation activities involving engagement with members of the other group.

Listening to the radio drama also increased independence of authority. At the end of their participation, in all six control groups participants decided, without discussion, to have the local leader hold some resources for the group that they had received as a reward. In contrast, in all six treatment groups, members engaged in substantial discussion about the resources and decided that the group or someone in it would be in charge of these materials (Paluck, 2009; Staub, 2011).

The significant effects of the educational radio drama after one year makes it likely that after eight years there will be substantial change. Since most of the population listens to the radio drama, without a control group this is

difficult to evaluate experimentally. However, people in the Rwandan countryside have reported reconciliation activities they have engaged in that were inspired by the radio drama. For example, members of one village approached a neighboring village whose members they had killed during the genocide, asking for forgiveness and developing relationships with them as they joined them to help with work in the fields (Ziegler, 2010).

The workshops and the educational radio programs are examples of public education, which can create awareness of instigating conditions, destructive leadership, and the progression of mass violence and then generate resistance to them. It can move people to constructive action. Many forms of education can be of value. In one study, Israeli students who were exposed to the perspectives of the two sides in the Northern Ireland conflict were more able to adopt a Palestinian perspective than were those who were not so exposed (Salomon, 2004). In another study, information indicating that groups are malleable and can change with changes in environmental conditions and leadership, and that leaders can also change, led to more positive views of the other group and greater willingness to compromise among both Israelis and Palestinians (Halperin, Russell, Trzesniewski, Gross, & Dweck, 2011). Presumably, for such effects to persist, strengthening the initial limited intervention will be necessary.

**The training of leaders and real-world change.** In Rwanda, after receiving training about origins of group violence, prevention of group violence, and reconciliation, leaders in small groups considered whether policies they were just introducing would make violence more or less likely (Staub, 2011; Staub et al., 2010). In trainings in Burundi, Hutu and Tutsi leaders learned skills and practices of dialogue and effective engagement, becoming familiar with and more trusting of each other (Wolpe & McDonald, 2008). However, when members of hostile groups engage with each other, they often focus on the harm inflicted on them, and the hurt and anger make progress difficult. Starting with the kind of training we used in workshops in Rwanda (people interacting while gaining information and developing understanding) should make subsequent engagement more productive. It seems to humanize each group to some degree and also provides substantive content for dialogue.

The context in which leaders operate can subvert newly acquired attitudes, values, or goals. According to personal goal theory (Staub, 1978, 1980), the environment can activate and elevate particular values and goals. People with a strong prosocial value orientation who also had strong achievement goals responded less to another person’s psychological distress when achievement goals were also activated by a task than did those with weaker achievement goals (Feinberg, 1978; Staub, 1978, 1980). The environment can raise the importance of particular values in a hierarchy of values. Loyalty or ambition can become dominant over moral concerns—or even treated as moral values. Leidner and Castano (2012) found this kind of *morality shift* in the face of environmental pressure.

Real-world contexts exert multifaceted pressure on leaders. A concerned diplomat, embedded in the policy of



U.S. support for Iraq in the Iraq–Iran war, had trouble accepting the evidence that Iraq, not Iran, was using chemical weapons (Power, 2002). In the case of leaders in Rwanda, their training, described above, was brief (one three-day session and one two-day session) and without follow-up. With television being the leaders' primary media source, their exposure to the radio drama "Musekweya" was limited. Their context included the supreme power of President Paul Kagame (Prunier, 2009), their perception of still-hostile Hutus, and a deeply set ideology of "unity." As a result, they have continued to inhibit discussion by the population of Hutu–Tutsi differences (Staub, 2011). While the leaders showed impressive ability within the trainings to use new concepts and apply them to current issues in their society, to overcome a powerful context requires extensive engagement. Potentially, education can provide substantive content, help leaders become aware of how their circumstances and the people around them activate and shape the expression of their values, and create mutual support in resisting the subversion of their moral and humane values.

### **The Truth and Collective Memories**

Establishing who did what and why is essential for acknowledgment, for justice, and for collective memories or group narratives that can move groups toward a shared history. Truth is often complex, with both groups having engaged in hostile acts. For example, in Rwanda, the minority Tutsis were long dominant. They were highly repressive of Hutus under colonial rule, between 1916 and 1959, when the Belgians had Tutsis rule in their behalf. During the fighting in 1994 to stop the genocide, and especially afterward fighting *genocidaires* in the Congo, the Tutsi army killed many Hutus (Prunier, 2009). But even in completely one-sided violence, each group usually develops a narrative that claims its own innocence and blames the other (Cairns & Roe, 2003; Staub, 2011).

However, collective memories can change. Israel has long maintained that the approximately 700,000 Palestinians who left their homes at the time of the 1948 war did so because they wanted to escape from the fighting and because their leaders told them to leave for the duration of the war, which they expected to be short and victorious. The official Palestinian view, in contrast, has been that they were all expelled. Morris (2004) and other "new historians" in Israel established that Palestinians left for all the reasons mentioned, including expulsion. This view became increasingly accepted in Israel. In four studies, Palestinians scattered in the region also cited all these reasons for leaving, giving the desire to escape fighting near their homes as the most frequent reason (Nets-Zehngut, 2011b). More veridical collective memories can move groups toward accepting responsibility for their actions and toward a shared history. However, the level of acceptance of this new history declined in Israel during the second intifada, new fighting between Israelis and Palestinians between 2000 and 2005 (Nets-Zehngut, 2011a), showing that the "truth," historical narrative, is affected by situational and psychological factors.

In addition to historians, since the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, truth commissions with witness testimonies have often been used to establish what happened. Contrary to initial beliefs about the healing effects of giving testimony, giving testimony can have negative effects, since witnesses rarely receive appropriate emotional support, even when the perpetrators who have harmed them are present. This was the case in the gacaca court in Rwanda, which was also a community justice process. Testimony that could lead to sentencing an accused was given in front of relatives and a predominantly Hutu community (Brounéus, 2008).

One study assessed changes in survivors, and prisoners accused of crimes, from before to after their involvement with the gacaca court. Their involvement reactivated negative emotions about the genocide and generated negative feelings. However, it reduced the negative views of survivors and prisoners toward each other and the perception that the other group is homogeneous, a hallmark of prejudice (Kanyangara, Rimé, Philippot, & Yzerbyt, 2007). In a somewhat analogous manner, in South Africa, testimony had mixed effects on witnesses. But providing knowledge of the practices of the apartheid governments and/or enhancing it in people's consciousness led to more reconciliatory attitudes by White South Africans (Gibson, 2004). While these processes can be difficult for participants, such processes appear to advance reconciliation. Psychological support for people giving testimony could help both individuals and reconciliation processes.

A challenge in addressing collective memories is that they are partly shaped by broader historical narratives. For example, the official Turkish narrative about the genocide of the Armenians has been that it was "intercommunal warfare" and a response by Turks to threats by the Armenians and external forces. This fits into the broader historical narrative of Turkey as a civilized nation whose territorial integrity has been threatened by others (Bilali, in press). In one study, 75% of Turkish participants subscribed to this narrative of the genocide. Consistent with other research, it was found that people who glorified their nation and believed it to be threatened by others (and in this study, also those who had a positive attitude toward war) were less likely to acknowledge their group's responsibility (Bilali, in press).

While a completely shared view of history after mass violence may rarely be reached, movement away from opposing, mutually blaming, and less truthful histories may reduce the likelihood of new violence. Commissions working to uncover the truth that consist not only of historians (an example is a Czech–German commission after World War II, Handl, 1997) but also of psychologists and leaders and other representatives from both groups could be useful.

### **Justice After Violence**

Historical records and engagement with victimized groups such as Rwandans, Congolese, and Armenians (Staub, 2011) indicate that people who have been greatly harmed yearn for justice. Effective justice processes inherently acknowledge people's suffering, increase feelings of security as the world says that what was done is unacceptable,

and recreate some balance in group relations after victimization diminishes a group. Effective justice processes can contribute to healing as well as to a more positive attitude toward the other and a diminished desire for revenge, which is one definition of forgiveness (McCullough, Finchman, & Tasang, 2003). Without justice, psychological wounds and tensions can persist. Societies may then turn to and engage, even after many years, in at least partially effective justice processes, as was seen in Argentina in the first decade of this century in the wake of the “disappearances” of the 1970s (Burchianti, 2004).

A balance of different types of justice can satisfy the need for justice without creating new hostility and violence. These include retributive justice (punishment, especially of the most important perpetrators), procedural justice (a system that makes future impunity unlikely), and restorative justice. Restorative justice practices can take many forms. One form is compensation, financial or through work, that contributes to the welfare of people who have been harmed or to society in general. Another form is engagement between perpetrators and victims, in the course of which perpetrators acknowledge what they have done and apologize. This is an increasing practice in individual harm doing, after the guilt of the perpetrator has been established through confession or a justice process. The engagement takes place in the company of facilitators and supporters of both parties—friends and relatives. It has positive effects on both parties (Strang et al., 2006). Psychologists can serve a useful role in working with comparable restorative justice procedures in the aftermath of group violence.

## **The Power and Potential of Bystanders**

Even a single person can, at times, exert powerful influence, such as when Joe Darby called attention to the abuse of prisoners at Abu Ghraib or when Ron Ridenhour worked tirelessly to let America know about the My Lai massacres, both of which affected national practices, or when a German major persuaded a superior not to destroy La Chambon, the village in France that gave refuge to thousands of Jews, mainly children, during World War II (Staub, 2011; Thalhammer et al., 2007). However, to create social change, normally many people need to join and work together. Members of civic institutions, such as faith communities and chambers of commerce (Varshney, 2002), can be agents in preventing violence and building peaceful societies.

The power of concerned people to influence others is great. In one emergency helping study, differing communications by a confederate-participant greatly affected whether the other person in the room helped (Staub, 1974). The strongest communication, identifying both the need for help and the response needed, always led to helping. A program of training active bystanders in schools led to a 20% decline in student-reported harm doing directed at them, in comparison to control schools (Staub, in press). The program, which can be adapted to many settings, includes information about what inhibits action by bystanders, the feelings of victims, and possible reasons for the actions of harm doers. It promotes skills in intervention, in engaging other bystanders for joint action, and in minimizing the risks of intervention (see Table 1).

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**Table 1**  
*Contributors to Active Bystandership*

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- Personal characteristics/dispositions:
    - Moral values, caring and empathy, responsibility, and moral courage
    - Seeing the humanity of others and inclusive caring
    - The capacity to take others' roles, see others' need and pain; competence; and decision-making ability (about the meaning of events and appropriate actions)
  - Socialization practices (and trainings) that promote such characteristics
  - Experiences (such as healing and support) that help move people who have suffered (and whole groups) to become caring and helpful (altruism born of suffering)
  - Understanding the origins of harmful actions, which can develop critical consciousness—the capacity to use one's judgment—and generate motivation to act
  - Awareness of how context can subvert moral and caring values, and the ability to resist it
  - Learning about inhibitors of action—diffusion of responsibility, pluralistic ignorance, self-consciousness, fear, the impact of emotional and material costs
  - Developing skills (which can increase feelings of effectiveness/empowerment) for different kinds of active bystandership
  - Skills and inclinations to invite others as allies, to join with others, and also to join, as well as create, institutions that facilitate alliance with other bystanders
  - Members of the population developing community standards of positive behavior and activism and the motivation and skills to generate positive leadership
  - Awareness of one's potential power as a bystander who can help others and affect social conditions
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## Inclusive Caring, Moral Courage, and Socialization

How can children develop inclusive caring—caring not only for members of their group but for all human beings (Staub, 2005, in press)? The concepts of inclusive caring and common ingroup identity overlap. However, given the strong tendency to draw lines between one's ingroup and outgroups, and the existence of many outgroups, developing caring for people even if they are seen as members of any other group may have greater generality. The overlap with common identity is greater in Moghaddam's (2009) concept of omniculturalism, in which the primary identity is being human. The relatively small minority of people who identify with all humanity (McFarland, Webb, & Brown, 2012) are, presumably, inclusively caring.

Caring about other people can be promoted by nurturance, guiding children with positive/caring values and rules, and providing the example of helpful models (Eisenberg, Fabes, & Spinrad, 2006; Staub, 2003, 2005). Many rescuers reported that they had at least one humane parent who cared about and helped people (Oliner & Oliner, 1988). Learning by doing, accomplished through guiding children to engage in positive actions in others' behalf, contributes to the development of caring and helping (Eisenberg et al., 2006; Whiting & Whiting, 1975). Children who made toys for poor hospitalized children or who taught younger children were later more helpful than children provided with alternative activities (Staub, 1979). But it is not only children whose caring and helping develop through engagement; rescuers who sometimes were ready to help to a limited extent often became committed helpers over time (Staub, 1989).

Active bystandership, especially resistance to the evolution of group violence, can require the courage to face opposition and potential negative consequences. While research on the roots of moral courage is scarce, giving children a voice, allowing and encouraging them to express their views, and including them in developing rules in the classroom and in decision making in the home are likely contributors (Staub, 2005, in press). Parents encouraging children to act on important values in the face of potential negative consequences, as long as the risks are moderate, is likely to promote moral courage. Fostering a "heroic imagination" in the service of others and for social causes (Franco, Blau, & Zimbardo, 2011; Zimbardo, 2007), through stories and the example of others, may also contribute.

## In Conclusion: Values and Practices of a Peaceful Society

The practices of prevention and reconciliation go a long way toward building peaceful, harmonious societies. Positive attitudes toward outgroup members, constructive visions, and values that stress caring, connection, respect, and empowerment can lead to building institutions that promote and maintain peace. The societal practices they give rise to can help people fulfill material and basic psychological needs constructively. Demonstrating the positive effects of such attitudes, visions, values, and practices in research (see Lippitt & White, 1943) and working to promote them in the lives of people and

society are among the ways psychologists can contribute to building harmonious societies.

Individuals, groups, organizations, and nations becoming active bystanders in relation to mass violence in other countries is crucial for prevention. The training of leaders, public education through television and other avenues, and the training and influencing of writers and members of the media, the clergy, and business communities who can exert influence both on leaders and the population (Lederach, 1997) can contribute to prevention. Early actions by outsiders can activate internal bystanders. Psychologists have an important role in generating and transmitting relevant knowledge and in developing and evaluating potentially useful interventions.

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