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Collective Memory of Conflicts

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This chapter examines the processes by which collective remembering of past conflicts affects the course of current conflicts. Memory of collective violence that has been experienced in the past often burdens present conflict with aggressive forms of in-group favoritism, a duty of retaliation, generalized hatred, and makes the current situation appear as a repetition of previous violent conflicts. Recently, there have been many examples where the collective remembering of historical warfare, like the Field of Blackbirds near Kosovo, became a tool for fueling civil war and a justification for a current conflict. Emotionally loaded collective memory of past conflicts, wars in particular, can make it virtually impossible to negotiate a compromise solution, by sewing seeds of fear and mistrust (see Bar-Tal, 1998, 2007). This chapter briefly summarizes what collective memory is, and describes factors related to the creation, maintenance and reactivation of collective memories of past conflicts. Then, it discusses societal beliefs or social representations of past warfare, focusing on the World Wars and various civil wars, elaborating how different forms of representing past warfare reinforce or weaken pro-conflict attitudes. Finally, processes of collective remembering that can help to overcome intense violent past conflicts, such as changes in war representations and transitional justice rituals like truth and reconciliation commissions, are examined.

Definition of Collective Memory

Collective memory (CM) is widely shared knowledge of past social events that may not have been personally experienced but are collectively constructed through communicative social functions (Schuman & Scott, 1989). These social representations, or shared knowledge about the past, are elaborated, transmitted and conserved in a society through both interpersonal and institutional communications. Social representations of the past are helpful to people for a variety of reasons. First, they maintain a positive image of the group which they belong to. Second, they preserve a sense of continuity of the group, able to endure through time (Bellelli, Barkhurst & Rosa, 2000). Third, they provide guidance to group values and norms by prescribing behaviors and contributing to what characterizes or should characterize the group (Olick & Robbins, 1998). Fourth, collective memories are a symbolic resource that can be mobilized politically to legitimize political agenda for the present and future (Liu & Hilton, 2005).

Some scholars argue that collective memory is a reification of individual process and an example of the inappropriate application of personal features to collective processes (Winter, 2006). It is argued that in the social discourse, there is a frequent use of metaphors, such as "the nation never forgets" or "repressed events re-emerge in the collective mind" or "a nation suffering from a negative past needs to express feelings to heal and deal with this past". From this point of view, collective memory is a juxtaposition of personal and national processes where societies are conceived as king size psyches or personalities writ large (Hamber & Wilson, 2003) We do not subscribe to this strong version of collective memory where a collective mind is assumed to exist above individual minds. We rather hold with those who favor a distributed view of collective memory where representations of the past are distributed and emerge through

interactions among members of a group, including institutionally mediated interactions like public education or commemoration (Wertsch, 2002). We emphasize the processes through which people and institutions engage in collective acts of remembrance.

Collective memory is an explicit, if informal, transmission of meaning and identities from the historical past of a group. It is common to differentiate between formal or institutional memories and informal or popular ones. At the formal level, carriers of collective memory include official histories and textbooks as well as commemoration, monuments and rituals. At the popular level, processes of collective memory include magazines, newspapers, television, and film, whereas at the informal level, conversations, letters, and diaries are included (Olick & Levy, 1997). If we focus on process, collective memory encompasses the cross-generational oral transmission of events important for the group (Vansina, 1985). Core characteristics of collective memory are group dynamics in remembering and forgetting - oral stories, rumours, gestures or cultural styles, in addition to written stories and institutionalized cultural activities (Halbwachs, 1950/1992). Following Assman's (1992, quoted in László, 2003) argument, a distinction between communicative and cultural memory is needed. According to Assman, communicative memory is mainly related to the oral transmission of vivid "first-hand" information about an event while cultural memory is the semantic knowledge that the culture affords (e.g., knowledge about 19th century wars). A characteristic example of communicative memory is generational memory (Schuman & Scott, 1989), which spans about 80-100 years (or three or four generations). Generational communicative memory explains why World War II (WW2) and other recent wars are important events for collective memory, because there are living grandparents still talking about these events. In this case, memory is lived, and as such tends to be more influential in public discourse and personal behavior.

Cultural memory, on the other hand, is usually institutionally mediated, through such societal functions like commemoration or public education regarding history. This aspect of collective remembering appears to be the province of sociologists and historians rather than psychologists. However, collective memory in our view needs to examine the interplay between institutional or cultural and informal or communicative modes of remembering. Conflict between different memories of the same events and between institutional and informal memory are frequent. For instance, in the case of Germany, the official or institutional position assumes the responsibility of the nation for WW2 crimes. However, in a 2000 survey, only 30% of Germans agreed with the statement that "German citizens supported the Nazis and were involved...", whereas 40% believed that German people were passive bystanders and 23% that they were victims of Nazis. A majority (51%) agreed with putting a line over the past putting it behind (Langenbacher, 2003). In spite of institutional self-criticism, trials by German judges, and laws against the denial of Holocaust, current public opinion in Germany tends to reject collective guilt and agrees with forgetting the negative past (Dresler-Hawke & Liu, 2006).

The Construction of Collective Memory

CM, considered as shared memories of relevant public events with their important psychosocial functions, usually results from a few markedly positive but more often negative events that are unexpected or extraordinary (Wagner, Kronberger, & Seifert, 2002). CM evolves from events that affect collectively a large number of people, either as members of a national community or a political group. These events could be specific, like John F. Kennedy's (JFK) assassination, or chronic, like the Stalinist terror or the Great Depression. Studies show that people remember more events that are relevant for their social identity. For instance, 54% of African Americans recalled

as an important historical national event the Civil Rights movement and 4% WW2, versus 10% and 23% of Whites respectively. Similarly, memories of the Martin Luther King assassination were more common among African Americans than among Euro-Americans (Gaskell & Wright, 1997).

Moreover, CM relates to important changes in the social fabric or to important threats to social cohesion and values. Collective memory rests on events which have had an impact on collectives and have driven them to modify their institutions, beliefs and values; as such, they are often still relevant today (Sibley, Liu, Duckitt, & Khan, 2008). Connerton (1989) analyzes how even though the killing of French kings was not unusual in French history, the execution of Louis XVI during the French bourgeois revolution of 1793 had a very strong impact and is remembered today because it altered the social landscape. For the United States, the American Revolution, Civil War, WW2 and Vietnam War are largely institutionally commemorated or recalled in polls as important events, while the War of 1812, 1847 Mexican–American War, the Philippines War of Independence, and the Korean War are largely forgotten (Neal, 2005; Piehler, 2008). Vietnam and WW2 were associated with high impact on institutions and subsequent societal change, whereas the Philippines or Korea were less socially relevant wars for Americans (but not for Philipines and Koreans). American casualties in the Korean War were similar to those suffered in Vietnam or in the entire Pacific during WW2. However, as American objectives were achieved and the necessity of engagement in Korea was perceived as consensual within American society, the Korean War has not formed an enduring part of American CM (Neal, 2005).

Events such as collective triumphs or, at the opposite, attacks, disasters, political assassinations and crises all provoke shared emotions such as surprise, interest and pride, or, at the opposite, sadness, anger, fear and anxiety in rank order, when the group

is the target of events like September 11th (Conejero & Etxeberria, 2007). Reported emotionality counts are among the predictors of long term sustained memories, such as the memories of JFK's assassination (Luminet & Curci, 2009; Rimé, 1997).

Finally, because of its impact on the social fabric and group identity, unexpected and emotionally loaded events provoke intense social rehearsal through mass media and interpersonal communication. A majority of people initially learned about CM events from mass media, and then kept following news about these events subsequently, often sharing them with others. The case of JFK's assassination offered a paradigmatic example of such collective sharing and rehearsal. According to Neal, "The nation was engrossed in television coverage of the funeral ceremony...and the subsequent funeral procession to Arlington" (Neal, 2005, p.108). More generally, Wagner, Kronberger, and Seiferth (2002) consider symbolic coping to be a major driver of the creation of societal beliefs.

CM influences the development and course of present-day conflicts. First, CM of past conflict can reinforce categorization or differentiation and enhance ingroup superiority. CM of past conflict could amplify present intergroup conflict by influencing categorization processes, such as: reinforcing the intensity of ingroup identification (which strenghtens the ingroup boundaries salience), increasing perceived dissimilarity between outgroup and ingroup beliefs, questioning superordinate categories increasing cues to category membership, and diluting or eliminating crosscutting categories(Messick & Smith, 2002). For instance, collective remembering of ancient battles between Turks and Christians in Kosovo were revived by Serbian leaders to clearly differentiate between present day Serbs and Muslims by marking Kosovo's Muslim successors as heirs to the Ottoman Turks.CM of past trauma increases cues for identity and "forgetting" or ignoring superordinate categorization, Nationalist Serbian

narratives omitted the existence of multiethnic periods and states (like Tito's Yugoslavia). Serbian nationalist CM criticized Croatians and Albanians. Both groups were associated to fascist and collaborationist militias that killed thousand of Serbs in WW2. Serbs omitted their own repression of Croatians within Serb dominated Yugoslavia, and downplayed the existence of crosscutting social types such as the non-fascist Croatian Marshall Tito, who was in fact a communist Croatian (Jones, 2006).

Second, CM of past conflict plays a cognitive–perceptual role by shaping the perception of interest, threat and others intentions (Bar-Tal, 2007). Perceived or real threat is an important factor in conflicts. When remembering past conflicts, groups often perceive their present-day security to be endangered, and might even be afraid of extinction through violence or assimilation. Such fear inevitably destroys any trust the group might have toward the outgroup, and, in consequence, even conciliatory gestures from the out group may be misinterpreted as menacing. For instance, when remembering past slaughters during recent Balkan's wars, Serbs perceived the conflict as an extreme one and believed that Croatian and Albanian atrocities could be repeated (Jones, 2006).

Third, CM of past conflicts has a motivational function for collective behavior, as it stimulates groups to act collectively, and justify actions of the ingroup towards the outgroup (Liu & Hilton, 2005). In respect to the motivational function, fear related to the past threat and anger stemming from the revival of past atrocities motivates people to fight against historical enemies and justify a preventive war – needed to "eliminate the danger" and this motivates and justifies current conflict. Some studies confirm the existence of the justificatory function of CM. These studies analyzed the consequences of remembering past collective traumas or historical victimization for reactions to a current adversary. Jews who were reminded of the Holocaust were more inclined to

accept their group's harmful actions toward the Palestinians than those not reminded of their ingroup's past victimization. Americans justify more (i.e. experience less collective guilt) the harms committed by their ingroup in Iraq following reminders of the September 11th, 2001 attacks or the 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor (Wohl & Branscombe, 2008).

Collective memories that reinforce extreme conflicts have some specific features: a) they are usually associated with contempt, hatred and anger directed towards an outgroup, b) there are rituals or current circumstances that maintain or revive the past traumatic event in the present, c) they are based on chosen traumas that are simultaneously a chosen glory, which makes it difficult to mourn the loss, and d) often deny important aspects of the history. Chosen glories are important, usually idealized achievements that took place in the past and chosen traumas are losses, defeats or humiliations, also mythologized and usually difficult to mourn (Pick, 2001).

A prototypical historical example is the "myth of the knife in the back": the German Army was supposed to have lost World War I because Germans were betrayed by communists, socialists, liberals and Jews (the trauma facet) after a victorious campaign (the glorious facet). These representations of the past were historically baseless but widely believed. German CM in the thirties also was based on claims of innocence in 1914 and emphasized wrongful oppression in the aftermath of WW1. Economic compensation to Allies and the economic crisis reactivated those representations of "betrayed innocence" and played a role in the rise of Nazism and the outbreak of WW2 (Pick, 2001; see Sen & Wagner, 2005 for an example from India using the more psychological interpretations).

As we have seen, social factors are involved in the processes which explain why certain past conflicts are better maintained and more easily reactivated by society

members, both at formal or institutional remembering level and at informal or "popular" memory level. Important factors in the maintenance and reactivation of CM include the existence of ritual or intensity of formal and informal acts of remembering and relevance to current social issues. Other more generic factors affecting CM processes are intergroup power relations, tendency to enhance collective self esteem, level of experience and involvement in collective events and cultural values. These factors will be reviewed with respect to the CM of past wars examples because of their relevance for current social conflicts.

Factors in the Maintenance and Reactivation of Collective Memories (CM)

Events that create CM often also provoke participation in collective behaviors and rituals, such as political demonstrations, public worship, funerary rituals and so forth (De Rivera & Paez, 2007). In time, these can become institutionalized through commemoration, museum exhibits, and historical textbooks and finally form part of (in Assman's vocabulary) cultural memories. The frequency and content of institutional and informal rituals and acts of remembering are an important factor in the maintenance and activation of memories of past conflicts. For instance, Japanese remember the end of WW2 better than Germans. In Japan "Surrender Day" is also a day of ritual remembering of fallen soldiers by the nation while no ritual related to surrender day exists in Germany (Schuman, Akiyama & Knaüper, 1998).

A survey (1995) showed that German people reported the lowest historical pride ("Do you feel proud of your nation's history?"; 8% of Germans responded "yes" versus a 34% general mean) among a sample of 23 European, American and Asian nations. Austrian and Japanese samples showed a medium level of historical pride (40% and 33%), suggesting a lower level of collective guilt and shame (UNESCO, 2000). Cultural explanations of German learning versus Japanese "amnesia" refer to a

dichotomy between cultures of shame, focused on public image and external punishment, and cultures of guilt, related to internalised self-critic (Conrad, 2003). However, this argument does not explain the case of Austria.

One plausible explanation for lower historical guilt is lower levels of institutional self-criticism facilitated by Allied political decisions (Liu & Atsumi, 2008): Emperor Hirohito was never judged as a war criminal despite of his involvement in Japanese Army decisions leading to war crimes. Austria was recognised as a victim of Nazi Germany in spite of widespread support from the population for Nazism. Trials were larger in Germany than in Japan and Austria – the ratio of war crime death penalties by millions of inhabitants was higher in Germany (20) than in Japan (12.4) and both were higher than in Austria (5.8) (Rousso, 1992; Dower, 1999).

Changes in formal education and political context also influence how people remember historical events. Older Russians emphasize the positive military role of Stalin in WW2. Younger Russians, educated under post-Soviet systems of education, evaluated Stalin negatively and blamed his leadership for the early failures against the German Army (Emelyanova, 2002; see also Merridale, 2003). In 1945, a poll found that 57% of French people believed the Red Army was the most important factor in defeating Germany in WW2. Sixty years later, after the Cold War, the USSR collapse and dozens of movies showing the role of the US and UK armies, only 20% agreed with this idea (Lacroix-Riz, 2005)

Finally the creation of a state strongly influences collective remembering (Olick & Robbins, 1998). For example, a recent study has found that virtually every single event nominated by East Timorese as important in world history was relevant to the creation of the new Timorese state, including the invasions by Indonesia, the intervention by the United Nations based on human rights legislation, etc; similar though less extreme effects

were found in India and China, ancient civilizations where collective remembering is now focused on the history of the contemporary state (Liu, Paez, Slawuta, Cabecinhas, Techio, Kokdemir et al , in press).

Usually, formal and institutional memories enhance collective self-esteem, self-efficacy, collective cohesion, and the distinctiveness of the national group. Even in the case of negative events, ingroup favoritism is frequent. A good example is the war of 1812 between USA and Great Britain: for Americans, most confrontations ended in defeat and efforts to invade Canada proved to be embarrassing. However, in the aftermath of the war (and American historical texts today) collective remembering has focused on a few great triumphs and the exploits of Andrew Jackson, selectively ignoring the general failures (Piehler, 1995). At the informal level, studies show that national and ethnic belongingness and identification are related to elevated levels of free recall of ingroup favoring and relevant political events. For instance, when asked to mention important historical events of the twentieth century, highly identified Basque respondents recalled more frequently such events as the political struggle against fascist repression, the transition from Franco's dictatorship to democracy, and the emergence of the Basque Country autonomy (Bellelli, Barkhurst & Rosa, 2000).

However, studies do not always find that social identity is related to selective and ingroup favoring remembering. For instance, a study conducted in Ireland did not find that Catholics remembered better events related to political conflict than Protestants, and another survey showed that both Catholic and Protestants mentioned the IRA's ceasefire as an important event in 1995 (McLernon et al, 2003). Both leftist and rightist people in Spain mentioned the Spanish Civil War as an important historical event of the XX century (Bellelli, Barkhurst & Rosa, 2000). These examples suggest

that some events are remembered because of their importance, mass media coverage and formal commemoration rather than simply being group relevant.

A case in point is World War II. Different studies have found that across Eastern and Western societies, young people overwhelmingly remember war and to a lesser extent politics as the most important events in world history, with WW2 being the most important event in virtually all samples, and more events nominated from Europe than Asia even for Asian samples (Liu, Goldstein-Hawes, Hilton, Huang, Gastardo-Conaco, Dresler-Hawke et al., 2005; Pennebaker, Rentfrow, Davis, Paez, Techio et al , 2006, Liu et al, in press). Across cultures, social representations of history were overwhelmingly about politics and wars. The overall pattern was more eurocentric than ethnocentric. These representations attest to the power of Western nations, and their disproportionate control of the world's wealth, power, and resources (Liu et al., 2005, in press).

Ingroup favoritism organized by the state is constrained by relationships with other states. History can be contested between states and by supra-national institutions as well as by ethnic or other groups within states. Liu and Hilton (2005), for example, note how the problem of misconduct during WW2 was much more of an issue for Germany, located at the center of Europe and the object of countless Hollywood movies, than it was for Japan, an island nation that surrendered to the USA rather than to its Asian neighbors against whom it committed its most serious war crimes (Liu & Atsumi, 2008).

At the national level, Liu,Wilson, McClure & Higgins (1999) showed that both the dominant white settler group and indigenous Maori people remember the Treaty of Waitangi as the most important event in New Zealand history, and both consider the "colonized" group to have honored the Treaty better than the dominant group. Sibley and Liu (2007) found that white settlers and indigenous Maori were equally closely associated to New Zealand national symbols, in marked contrast to American data showing that

white Americans had closer implicit associations with American symbols than other ethnic groups. New Zealand has a bicultural narrative that configures history to provide indigenous Maori with an ethnically marked place in the national consciousness despite their manifestly low-power and low-status position in New Zealand society (Liu, 2005).

Cultural memory is important because distal memories can be "brought back to life" through politically motivated dialogue and action (Schwartz, 1996), such as — when the Field of Blackbirds battle took place between Christians and Muslims five hundred years ago— were used by Serbian leaders to justify action against contemporary Muslims in Kosovo. The past is often appropriated to serve current attitudes and needs. A good example at the institutional level is the rehabilitation of Masada, an isolated armed rebellion against the Romans previously ignored in Jew traditions. This event is represented as a precedent of the IDF, the Israeli army, and helps to legitimize the Israeli state (Zerubavel, 1995). Hence, current attitudes and needs can influence informal remembering. In 1985 30% of USA citizens mentioned WW2 as an important historical event; this dropped to 20% in 2000, but following the September 11th bombing, the percentage rose to 28%, in a "resurrection" of WW2 in the context of international terrorist violence (Schuman & Rodgers, 2004).

"Fresh events" are more accessible to people as they are anchored to direct experience and communicative memory. Britons were more likely to remember WW2 than were Americans by a margin of 16%, probably because the British experienced the war much more directly and personally (Scott & Zac, 1993).

Collective memories are also cohort-dependent. Mannheim (1925 quoted in Schuman and Scott, 1989) claims that different cohorts or generations in a nation share a specific version of the culture. Studies confirm that individuals remember historical and collective events experienced during the formative years of adolescence or early

adulthood (Pennebaker, Paez & Rimé, 1997). Older Americans most frequently mentioned in a 1989 survey the Great Depression and WW2, while younger generations mentioned more frequently the JFK assassination and the Vietnam War, events that had occurred during participants' early adulthood (Schuman & Scott, 1989; Neal, 2005). This cohort effect is due to childhood socialization and social events that influence identity formation during young adulthood. Adolescents and young adults who are not committed to a way of life are thought to be particularly prone to remembering social events and influences during their formative years.

Different authors further suggest experience as another constraint for CM. Studies confirmed that when asked about important political events lived by relatives (Pennebaker, Paez, & Rimé, 1997) or about genealogical knowledge and relatives´ episodic information, most people have information for about two-three generations (Candau, 2005). Assman (1992 quoted in László, 2003) proposes that collective memories are "lived" through interpersonal communications for about a century or three generations, and then memories change to ritualized abstract and semantic knowledge or "cultural memories". In line with this idea, Páez et al.(2008) confirmed that the recall and positive evaluation of war within the last three generations (e.g., WW2) predicted willingness to fight in future conflicts, but not remembering war in general (i.e. recall of WW1). This suggests that there is something qualitatively special about living memories, transmitted from parents and grandparents to children and grandchildren by word of mouth that influences current political decisions.

Some authors (Jones, 2006) have argued that the activation of centuries old conflict in the Balkan Wars was achieved through the narrative linking of ancient conflict to vivid memories of ethnic and religious conflict during WW2. Hence, while communicative memory is likely to be the more decisive factor mobilizing conflict, the

cognitive narrative templates used for this (Wertsch, 2002) may draw from ancient and festering wounds.

Finally, social representations of the past are related to general norms and meaning structures prevalent in a societal context. Given its position as a core representation, it is perhaps not surprising that remembering WW2, its evaluation and willingness to fight in a war were negatively related to post-materialistic/individualistic values at the country level (Páez et al., 2008). Post-materialistic values emphasize expressive individualism and self-actualization. The shift from an industrial and materialistic to a post-materialistic society (Inglehart & Baker, 2000) appears to be associated with a shift from a social representation of war focused on heroes, martyrs and a positive connotation of collective violence, towards a representation focused on suffering, victims, the murder of civilians and the meaninglessness of war. Post-materialistic values erode "heroic war narratives" and do not provoke positive attitudes towards collective violence.

WW2 remembering, its evaluation and willingness to fight in a war were also positively related to collectivistic/materialistic and hierarchical values (Power Distance-PDI and Hierarchy HIE). PDI is associated at the cultural level to Schwartz's (1994) Conservatism and negatively to Autonomy. This implies that PDI is associated with Security and Conformity values and inversely related to Self-direction and Stimulation. Such a "PDI cultural syndrome" promotes differences in power and hierarchical systems of roles, emphasizing obedience and respect for authorities, while Hierarchy (HIE) emphasize the legitimacy of using power to attain goals, including ingroup or national goals (Schwartz, 1994). PDI and HIE are also related negatively to Inglehart's Post-materialism, and correlate negatively with a socio-structural index of a "culture of peace" (De Rivera& Páez, 2007).

In summary, memories of past conflicts are maintained and reactivated when they fit dominant cultural values, like hierarchical and defensive values, when they are based on direct and vivid experience for the group or society, when they are relevant for current social issues, enhance collective self-esteem and are supported by institutional and informal acts of remembering. We have examined these processes using mainly the collective remembering of wars. Now, in order to provide a better understanding of the role of CM of past wars in current conflicts we will examine main types of social representations of collective violence.

Collective Memories of Wars and their relationship with Identity and Conflict

In many countries, wars of independence or other instances of collective violence are among the foundational events for narratives of national identity (Huang, Liu, & Chang, 2004). Moreover, representations of war associated with the nobility of arms, the cleansing effects of combat, and the redemptive and manly character of sacrifice, have played an important role in the legitimization of national institutions and social identity (Winter, 2006). Societies involved in intractable conflict cope using collective memories, usually associated with a societal ethos that emphasizes collective emotions of hatred, fear, anger and pride (Bar-Tal, 2007, see Halperin and Sharvit in this book). From the perspective of formal memory, institutional narratives of heroism and romantic notions of war were widespread before WW1 but even today are used to reinforce conflicts. Rosoux (2001), focusing on Germany and France in the nintieth and early twentieth century, found the following common features of institutionalized representations of past wars:

a) They explain and justify the outbreak of the conflict and the course of its development. Ontological differences existed between France and Germany, with

intergroup relationships marked by natural hostility and mistrust, and each country portrayed as the natural and hereditary enemy of the other.

b) They present the ingroup in a positive light. Memorials, monuments and textbooks often gloss over the tragedies of collective violence, and the horrors of war are displaced by emphasis on heroes, glory, and justification of sacrifices. Death and destruction are re-evaluated within the sacred task of defending the nation. "Our" shameful past war episodes are concealed. "Our" heroes, martyrs and epic battles are remembered. No references to others as victims appear.

c) They describe the outgroup in delegitimizing ways. A negative image of the outgroup justifies violence (see Fisher & Kelman in this book). For instance, the Germans were called the Huns in WW1 – an image of barbarians. Negation of the enemy as human being, an image of being inferior or with animal traits, low or deficient in morality, is associated to high death tolls in the Mexican-American war, war with Native Americans, colonial wars, Pacific and Eastern front in WW2, by comparison with the American civil war or the Western front in WW2 (Neely, 2007).

d) They portray the ingroup as a victim of the opponent. Recalling past persecutions and martyrs imposes the duty of fidelity and justifies revenge against evil-doers. Aggression against enemies is portrayed as a manner to revenge injuries suffered by the nation (Rosoux, 2001; Fisher & Kelman, this volume).

A group's representation of its history can explain how its world has come to be the way it is and justify its responses to current challenges (Liu & Hilton, 2005). In the case of victorious nations, like USA and Russia, WW2 is represented as a Just War, or a "Great Patriotic War" (Wertsch, 2002) and this representation reinforces attitudes favorable to participation in a new war. Páez et al. (2008) found that at the national level, young people in victorious nations reported higher recall of WW2 memories, a less

negative evaluation of this event and expressed more willingness to fight in a new war for the motherland; on the other hand, belonging to the Axis powers was related to a relatively lower mention of WW2 and its lower evaluation.

Moreover, differences in meaning related to victory appear within a nation: Russian participants mention WW2 with two different labels, World War II (56%) and the Great Patriotic War (44%) (Pennebaker et al, 2006). Only 6% mentioned both. The mean evaluation for the first label was 2.09 and for the second 4.0. Younger Russians, educated under post-Soviet systems of education, used predominantly the first label and evaluate WW2 negatively – probably because of Stalin's negative leadership, failures against the German Army and high casualties. Wertsch (2002) argues that the "Great Patriotic War" label, on the other hand, is a condensation of the important positive narrative template "triumph over alien forces" for Russia.

Even if loser nations conceal more negative aspects of their WW2 actions (e.g., denial of crimes of war by the Imperial Japanese and German Armies; Buruma, 2002), their representations of the war do not (or are not able to) reinforce a positive view of war and national warriors. As defeated nations remember war defensively, emphasizing ingroup suffering, they may teach new generations about the negative effects of collective violence (Conrad, 2003). The younger generations learn that wars are "social catastrophes".

Civil wars or internal political violence after the war were unrelated to WW2 recall, evaluation, or to willingness to fight in a new war (Páez et al., 2008). This rules out direct experience of collective violence as a factor affording positive dispositions towards war. While civil wars may be just as violent as wars between states, they are rarely glorified. In fact, some authors argue that the remembering of catastrophic civil wars (e.g. the French Commune in 19th century) played a role in inhibiting the

opposing attitudes of political elites and reducing the level of social conflict in the transition of Vichy to the 4th Republic (Rousso, 1992). A similar social representation of the Spanish Civil War was constructed in the last phase of Franco's fascist dictatorship. Some authors posit that this representation of the Spanish Civil war as a catastrophe teaches new generations the necessity of consensus and of avoiding social conflict, and helped ease a relatively peaceful transition from dictatorship to democracy after Franco's death (Barahona, Aguilar & Gonzalez, 2001).

From the point of view of popular memory, most soldiers remember war as a negative but normalized experience – experience was mainly negative in the case of victorious armies, like the Red Army, and even more negative in the case of defeated armies, like the German Army (Bourke, 2001). Both in the case of victorious nations, like USSR (Merridale, 2006) and in defeated nations, like Germany and Japan after WW2, people remember their own suffering but conceal, silence or ignore other's suffering (Wette, 2006; Dower, 1999). Only a minority of war veterans recalled and narrated the brutal nature of combat and talked about the violence and crimes in which they played a role as actors; more of them were willing to talk about comradeship (Phieler, 1995).

The collective suffering of WW1 and WW2 was too much to sanitize. Direct remembrances of large-scale collective suffering, together with changes in cultural values, progressively eroded representations of war as heroic, epic and positive events. Highly idealized portraits of soldiers, characterized by stoicism, leadership and voluntary sacrifice for a meaningful cause were changed by heavy civilian casualties, traumatized war veterans, and by the failure of ideological goals. WW1 was called the last war as a symbol of a social catastrophe. Even if WW2 retains a better image, victims of genocide and the Holocaust are their current dominant symbols, more than heroic combatants (Bourke, 2001), leading to a collective learning of disenchantment with warfare (Winter,

2006). Anti-romantic representations of war and full conscience of the evils of collective violence became dominant – even if romantic and positive representations were still important and supported by national institutions. It is important to notice that currently, even among victorious WW2 nations, mean evaluations are not positive, but rather neutral or less negative than in defeated nations (Páez et al., 2008).

Representations of Past Collective Conflicts and Improving Current Intergroup Relationships

How to deal with and remember past collective crimes is a frequent problem (for negotiation and reconciliation in the case of intergroup conflict in general see Reykowski, Pruitt, Rouhana and Boehnke in this book). We will review two forms of overcoming the negative effects of past wars and collective violence: changes in the representation of wars and rituals of transitional justice aiming at the creation of collective memory of past conflicts.

As we have seen, painting representations of past wars as a social catastrophe can help to overcome prolonged conflicts. On the other hand, the reconstruction of social representations of the past can help to overcome the past of intense and violent intergroup conflict. One example, though controversial, is the commemoration of the American civil war at the end of 19th century: Commemoration focused on the battlefield and the heroic qualities and suffering soldiers' experiences on both sides, avoiding political issues and minimizing the causal role of slavery and the participation of black soldiers in the conflict. Monuments, memorials and commemorations mourned the dead, remaining free of symbolism arousing polemical displays of emotions. Official memory promoted reconciliation, honoured the sacrifice of all who fought in the civil war, glossed over the causes of conflict, and the brutality and anger of war was ignored by creators of Civil war memorials (Phieler, 1995). Despite this, celebration of

the American centennial in 1876 was primarily a Northeastern project, and relatively ignored in the South, where the wounds were still raw (Spillman, 1997). It took a hundred years for Abraham Lincoln to be transformed from "protector of the union" to a symbol of racial equality (Schwartz, 1997).

Another example of reconstruction is the representation of WW1 and WW2 in official German and French memory. The meaning of great battles, like Verdun with a quarter million victims, was patriotic and nationalist in the aftermath of WW1. Verdun was construed on both German and French sides as a manifestation of heroism, glory, and the fighting spirit of combatants. After WW2, battles like Verdun became a symbol of the slaughter with a similar meaning for combatants on both sides. Soldiers who fought in opposite camps gathered in a common tribute. This representation was enacted when Mitterrand and Kohl, the French president and German prime minister, stood hand in hand in front of a French ossuary of dead soldiers (Rosoux, 2004).

These experiences suggest that the acceptance of events is a first step towards the negotiation of a shared representation of the past. Acceptance of real facts, including others' suffering, is essential for reconciliation. What is important is to acknowledge the reality of the suffering and victims, "to keep it from happening again..." but to forget the emotions of hate (Hayner, 2001; Rosoux, 2001). As a former French Prime Minister said: "memory should be considered not as a way of awakening ancient sufferings, but as a tool allowing people to make peace with the past, without forgetting previous wounds" (Rosoux, 2004). The narrative grasping or configuring of facts within a narrative that offers a place for both sides without completely sanitizing the conflict could complete the cycle of healing (Liu & László, 2007; Wertsch, 2002).

Public apologies and expression of repentance can help to restore better intergroup relationships, the prototypical case being the former German anti-Nazi

fighter and Prime Minister Willy Brandt asking for pardon non-verbally by kneeling in front of the Warsaw ghetto insurrection monument. However, usually these rituals are perceived as having positive effects at the societal level but not helping to overcome the suffering of victims (Lille & Janoff- Bulman, 2007). Direct victims with proximity to the violence, are associated with dismissing or not accepting such apologies – "too few and too late" is a common critique that these apologies arouse in different contexts, from America to Europe, New Zealand and Africa. Vicarious perpetrators or members of the group responsible of past collective violence agree more with the efficacy of apologies, while direct and indirect victims are more reluctant to accept apologies (Ferguson, Binks, Roe, Brown et al, 2007; Manzi & Gonzalez, 2007).

Truth, Justice and Reparation Commissions, like South-African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) are a common response to deal with and remember past collective crimes. There have been more than 30 official truth commission established around the world since the 1970s (Hayner, 2001). Truth Commissions may serve long-term societal goals such as prevention of cycles of revenge and prevention of new crimes of war and collective violence. Commissions and trials are supposed to reinforces the rule of law, including the accountability of holders of government, army, police and armed political factions, and the respect of political rights. They could contribute to strengthening social norms and reduce future human rights violations. A central aspect of these rituals is the construction of shared and inclusive collective memory. This memory of past conflict reinforces intergroup reconciliation as it documents factual atrocities committed by all sides involved, asserting that all groups are to blame and "have dirty hands" (a representation similar to current view of the American civil war). Sharing blame and victimhood prevents selective victimization, ingroup idealization and opens a space towards dialogue (Gibson, 2004) Public rituals

of transitional justice (e.g. truth commission) which incited the reconstructing of collective memory of suffering did not achieve a 'therapeutic' goal at the individual level and, on the contrary, reinforced negative emotions. For instance, two thirds of a South African national poll perceived that the revelations of the TRC had made people angrier and complicated intergroup relationships (Gibson, 2004). However, these rituals of collective memory construction and reconstruction are perceived to have other positive effects at the individual and the macro-social or national level, fortifying ingroup cohesion and reconciliation in long term process (Lille & Janoff-Bulman, 2007). Gibson (2004) study in South Africa found that people who were more willing to accept the TRC's version of the truth, that is, to accept collective memory declaring that all sides are to blame and "have dirty hands", agreed more with reconciliation, even if this "truth effect" was stronger for dominant and vicarious perpetrator groups: the correlation between truth acceptance and reconciliation was 0.23 among Africans and 0.53 among Whites. Of course, reality constraints imposed limitations on this "relativistic" reconstruction of the past. In some cases rates of mortality and misdeeds were similar in both groups, in other cases there was a clear victimized and perpetrator group.

Evidence suggests that truth commissions, which give rise to shared and accepted collective memory of past suffering and of collective guilt and responsibility, have a positive psycho-social impact. This type of CM not only fails to reinforce conflicts, as exemplified with those cases when it becomes commonly accepted that "all groups have dirty hands" and suffering was common in both groups, but also decreases current conflicts because: a) it is associated with sadness and with a limited degree of anger directed at a small number of individuals, not large out-groups, b) there are no rituals or events that maintain or revive the traumatic collective experience, c) is based

on unambiguously chosen traumas that are not a chosen glory, what makes it easy to mourn the loss, and d) finally, the degree of denial of the history is mild. An example of this type of CM is the current representation of the American Civil War or the Franco–German representation of the World War I. The loss of life during battle was not denied, there was no chosen glory aspect of the event, there was no emphasis on anger or on hatred of enemies, and there were no rituals perpetuating the hate towards the enemy and revitalizing the desire for revenge (Pick, 2001).

Conclusions

Collective events have the highest probability of leading to a long-lasting collective memory, or set of social representations concerning the past, when they (1) influence social change in the long run and are socially relevant in the present, (2) are emotionally loaded, (3) elicit abundant social sharing, (4) are socially rehearsed by mass media, and (5) are associated with collective behavior and commemoratives rituals, that can be narrated coherently by institutions and individuals.

In all types of cultures, people have mythologized their own war dead, and forgotten their out-group victims. Because societies tend to remember their own heroes and soldiers and forget their crimes and misdeeds, social representations of history can feed violent conflicts, where there is rumination on ingroup suffering that represents the national ingroup as a victim, and where the target outgroup is defined as an aggressor or perpetrators. In this way, violence is construed as a legitimate form of retaliation. Social representations of the past can reinforce aggressive actions, where war and collective violence is seen as a rational and justified response to the past aggression of outgroups and generates a cycle of competitive victimhood.

With respect to collective ways of dealing with negative historical events associated to violent conflicts, we offer the following tentative conclusions. First,

humanization of the other side and acknowledging of their suffering are an important step forward. Acknowledgement does not necessarily imply an agreement as to the meaning of events, but at least allows the coexistence of different representations of a shared truth. Second, the absence of personal and collective guilt is a modal response for perpetrators of collective crimes and violence (Marques, Paez, Valencia & Vincze, 2006). Hence, it is not realistic to think that a majority of perpetrators should feel guilt and react with reparative and compensation behaviors towards victims. Denial, justification, and other forms of cognitive coping, allow perpetrators to share a positive collective identity and reject criticism about human right violations (see Branscombe & Doosje, 2004; Sibley et al., 2008). Only a minority feel guilt, whereas a majority might display public guilt and shame, but only as compliance to institutionalized norms. The third generation descended from a perpetrator group could paradoxically be more able to feel collective guilt, shame and responsibility than the generation involved in war crimes because the emotional distance allows somewhat greater acceptance (Dresler-Hawke & Liu, 2006). Even in this case, it is reasonable to expect the presence of "defence mechanisms" oriented towards negation, minimisation and positivistic reconstruction of past criminal collective behavior (Marques et al, 2006; Sibley et al., 2008).

Third, internal procedures may be more important for public opinion than external trials and procedures. In Germany, the Nuremberg Trials had a lower impact on public opinion than the normal action of German justice on human rights violations (Evans, 2003). Credible local or ingroup leaders are more able to gain the population's adherence to social representations of past that accept responsibility for past crimes and errors, and, furthermore, can reinforce truth and reconciliation trends – like Mandela and Archbishop Tutu in South-Africa (Rosoux, 2001). When dealing with the evidence

of collective negative past behavior, people tend to question the credibility of the sources. They engage cognitive coping mechanisms that minimise emotional reaction and question the relevance of events – "these are old stories, they are not important in the present" (Sibley et al., 2008). They reframe ingroup criminal behavior as more understandable in the historical context, attribute negative and criminal behavior to a minority of black sheep – extreme atypical members of the nation - and minimise the frequency of criminal behaviors.

Fourth, the tendency to punish a minority of criminals appears correlated with a global positive reconstruction that denies the reality of general apathy and diffuses global responsibilities (Marques et al., 2006). Official reports should be able to overcome these collective defence mechanisms. In these cases, self-criticism by high status ingroup sources is important for the perpetrator group. However, these public apologies have a limited effect for direct or indirect victims of past collective violence. Public rituals of transitional justice (e.g. truth commissions or trials on crimes like Gacaca) do not help to overcome suffering at the individual level and usually reinforce negative emotions. However, these rituals have some positive effects at the individual level, empowering victims, reinforcing the truth of accounts of past violence, and this in turn reinforces reconciliation, improving intergroup relationships. Transitional rituals have macro-social or national level positive effects, reinforcing cohesion and reconciliation, and respect for human rights.

In final summary, there appear to be several basic narratives used with varying degrees of effect to reconcile bloody past conflict. The first, rarest, and most powerful form is a complete cognitive reconfiguration of the meaning of national identity. This has been attempted in Germany and New Zealand to handle the Holocaust and the bitter fruits of colonization for indigenous peoples respectively. More common is a

sanitization of past conflict in order to overcome intractable differences in the meaning of war. This was undertaken in the USA following its Civil War, and appears characteristic of accounts in Latin America as well; in Moscovici's (1988) terms, these are emancipated representations that mutually intersect but also agree to disagree. The danger of this form is that because of incomplete narration, the past can rear its ugly head and lead to a fresh cycle of recrimination and vengeance, as in the Balkans for example. Most common is denial, emphasis on own victimhood, and ingroup favouritism. This form rests on having the power to repress or ignore alternative accounts. While this is the most palatable form psychologically for the perpetrator group, it is very risky when a former victim, like China in the case of the Sino-Japanese War, becomes powerful enough to contest the denial. In this case, active mediation by political elites on both sides is necessary to prevent the reinvigoration of conflict (Liu & Atsumi, 2008).

The narration reconfiguration and collective memory of conflict is one of the most promising future avenues for psychology to contribute to global peacemaking, precisely because it delineates the flaws and foibles of our human inheritance as meaning making beings.

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