Truth, Restoration, and Reconciliation:
Post-Conflict Peacebuilding and the Politics of Identity[1]
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By

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Drawing upon a interdisciplinary synthesis of theory from the fields of political science, sociology, and social psychology, this paper argues that acts of mass atrocity committed between communal groups are best understood as the violent culminations of social conflict; that is to say, as processes through which societal divisions foster violent antagonisms in multicommunal societies, pitting "Self" against vilified "Other." Ethnic violence and intercommunal acts of atrocity are essentially social conflicts: the existence of significant cleavages between two or more societal groups is a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for communal violence to occur. As this paper contends, when levels of "social capital" – networks of trust, communication, and reciprocity – decline among communal groups in a society, parties frequently become antagonistic, thereby increasing the potential for intergroup conflict.[3] In essence, each group may come to frame the actions and beliefs of the other as villainous, and may therefore subsequently regard all members of this enemy group as outside the normative boundaries, or "moral order" of society. The use of violence to purge society of the enemy Other is thereby legitimized, and this violence is socialized by means of stories, communal memories, and myths that demonize the actions of the enemy group and validate its persecution. Ultimately, such societies can become trapped within intractable cycles of violence, throughout which gross human rights violations and acts of mass atrocity are perpetuated between and among communal groups.

To break free of these cycles of violence, this paper argues that nations in transition from pasts marked by gross human rights violations and communal strife must seek post-conflict peacebuilding strategies that address the breakdown of societal bonds underlying the commission of communal violence. After examining the societal processes of mass atrocity, this paper posits that a truth commission, used as a mechanism for the application of restorative justice in transitional regimes, might serve to repair long-standing societal divides and therefore preclude the renewal of otherwise intractable social conflicts.[4] A restorative framework, based on the unique methodology of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), is analyzed as a possible paradigm of post-conflict peacebuilding for future transitional societies. The truth-telling model of the TRC sought to narrate the experiences of both victims and perpetrators of past violence in an attempt to bridge societal schisms and dispel errant belief systems that could otherwise perpetuate communal antagonisms through myth, propaganda, and discriminatory history. This paper argues that the public acknowledgement and explication of past atrocities facilitated by the TRC process are integral components of peacebuilding in regimes recovering from communal conflict and mass atrocity.

I. Mass Atrocity as Societal Process

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[3] Significantly, current theory from social psychology suggests that the formation of "enemy images" may be driven by an innate human need for social identity satisfied by one's inclusion in a social group or groups which, in turn, engenders a valorization of one's own "in-group" against other "out-groups," and ultimately leads to "systematic comparison and differentiation…often to the derogation of other groups." For a comprehensive summary of the suggested link between group identity and conflict in application to political science, see Janice Gross-Stein, "Psychological Explanations of International Conflict," in Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, and Beth Simmons, eds., *Handbook of International Relations* (London: Sage, 2002), 298-299.

[4] As will be discussed, with its conditional amnesty provisions and larger focus on the eventual reconciliation of society, the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission model is a modified example of a more limited, strictly investigatory 'classic truth commission.' For a concise and informative discussion of this distinction and a detailed account of other countries' experiences with diverse truth commission models, see Priscilla Hayner, "Fifteen Truth Commissions – 1974 to 1994: A Comparative Study," *Human Rights Quarterly* 16.1 (1994): 598-655.

Acts of communal mass atrocity are societal in both their genesis and execution; for mass atrocity to occur, both its victims and perpetrators must in some way be attributed mutually exclusive characteristics within social categorizations that divide "us" from "them," such that individuals exist either within a demarcated group or outside of it.[5] In multicommunal societies, these divisions are often drawn upon existing fault lines of ethnicity, such as race, religion, or language.[6] As a result of these societal categorizations, whether one is a perpetrator or victim of atrocity is predicated solely upon one's inclusion within a particular social group, rather than upon personal characteristics or conduct; individual identity and actions are subsumed to those of the group.[7] Additionally, in order for atrocity to occur, the victimized societal group must be dehumanized in order to render its extermination morally justifiable to the perpetrators; in other words, the targeted victim group is placed outside the standard moral order of society.[8] That is to say, it is excluded "from the universe of the collective conscience" by means of statements and depictions that "dehumanize and stigmatize the group as non-human, applying animal, insect, germ, and viral metaphors" to enforce that "the victim is alien and does not belong."[9] Daniel Bar-Tal refers to this practice as the process of "delegitimization," whereby adversarial social groups are made party to "extreme negative categories that essentially deny their humanity… suggest[ing] that the adversary is evil, malevolent, immoral and inhuman."[10] In consequence, the normative structure (or moral order) of society can quickly become imbalanced, with one group viewing the other as sub-human and, therefore, beyond the bounds of their society's "collective conscience."[11]

The Breakdown of Social Capital

Recent work on social capital theory offers an effective means of analyzing and addressing the destructive impact of a breakdown in the social cohesiveness of a society. Robert Putnam defines social capital as "the features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit."[12] Significantly, Putnam emphasizes the distinction between forms of social capital that "bond" homogenous groups together by means of exclusivity, and more inclusive forms of social capital that "bridge" or build ties between diverse, heterogeneous groups.[13] Alternately, Nat Colletta and Michelle Cullen frame social capital as "the norms, values, and social relations that bond communities together, as well as the bridges between communal groups and the state."[14] In societies deficient in "bridging" social capital, groups may lack the trust or desire to work towards shared goals through mutual collaboration; individuals come to identify with a particular group (the Self) while shunning all other societal groups (the Others). Effectively, in nations in which levels of "bonding" social capital exists to the exlusion of "bridging" forms of social capital, society comes to be marked by ethnocentrism, as groups gradually adopt the belief "that their own ways of life are admirable and other people's ways are strange and less worthy."[15]

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[5] Celia Cook-Huffman, "Who Do They Say We Are: Framing Social Identity and Gender in Church Conflict," in *Social Conflicts and Collective Identities*, eds. Patrick G. Coy and Lynne M. Woehrle (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 115-116.

[6] See, for instance, D.A. Lake and D. Rothchild, "Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict," *International Security* 21 (1996): 41-75.

[7] Gina Petonito, "Racial Discourse and Enemy Construction," in *Social Conflicts and Collective Identities*, eds. Patrick G. Coy and Lynne M. Woehrle (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 34.

[8] See, for example, Helen Fein, "States of Genocide and Other States," in *Will Genocide Ever End?*, eds. Carol Rittner, John K. Roth, and James M. Smith (St. Paul: Paragon House, 2002), 47.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Daniel Bar-Tal, "Collective Memory of Physical Violence: Its Contribution to the Culture of Violence," in *Ethnicity Kills? The Politics of War, Peace and Ethnicity in SubSaharan Africa*, eds. Braathen Einar, Morten Boas, and Gjermund Saether (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 83.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Robert Putnam, "The Prosperous Community: Social Capital and Public Life," *American Prospect* 13.1 (1993): 36.

[13] Idem, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 22.

[14] Nat J. Colletta and Michelle L. Cullen, *Violent Conflict and the Transformation of Social Capital: Lessons from Cambodia, Rwanda, Guatemala, and Somalia* (Washington: The World Bank, 2000), 4.

[15] Louis Kriesberg, *Social Conflicts* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1982), 35.

Breakdowns in societal social capital have been linked to a number of different catalysts.[16] In particular, unequal access to economic resources, political power, or other basic rights and freedoms tend to help demarcate and reinforce communal divides.[17] For instance, Ervin Staub notes that when individuals feel threatened, or when economic, social, or political resources are scarce, competition tends to increase, and, as a result, "connection to others, community support, and the experience of a shared identity will diminish."[18] As Staub explains, "persistent difficulties of life…disrupt the relations among members of [society]…they disrupt human connections. People focus on their own needs, compete with others for material goods, and feel endangered by others."[19] Ultimately, faced with adversity, "like" people tend to band together for mutual protection and increased gain while competing against "unlike" people.[20] While this process has the beneficial effect of building strong and lasting networks of bonding social capital *within* a group as members unite for common cause, it also has the unfortunate result of necessarily excluding all those outside of the group's demarcated boundaries. Effectively, networks of bridging social capital become frayed as group solidarity intensifies to cope with perceived external threats, and lines of communication break down amongst groups as individuals distance themselves increasingly from the Other. Indeed, Lewis Coser argues that it is by such processes that "group boundaries are established through conflict with the outside, so that a group defines itself by struggling with other groups."[21] In time, this process can come to foster what Staub refers to as "ideologies of antagonism" in which "each group defines the other as an enemy bent on one's own destruction. Each develops an identity as the enemy of the other."[22]

Similarly, the social constructivist paradigm of sociological theory and its "enemy construction process" offers substantial insight into the ways in which a decline in social capital between groups may create the conditions necessary to regard the Other as enemy, and ultimately, as a legitimate target for violence. Indeed, the initial step in this process is the creation of a societal schism, either externally or internally imposed, that divides a society into distinct categories and minimizes meaningful contact between members of opposing groups.[23] Often, these divisions are marked by seemingly intransmutable factors of communal identity, such as ethnicity, religion, or nationality. After easily discernible characteristics of difference have been established, individual traits become of secondary regard to factors defining inclusion in the group identity. As Gina Petonito notes, "constructing people categories is one of several steps in constructing enemies. Subsuming distinct individuals into a category allows people to react to the group, forgetting the human beings who comprise it."[24] Sara Cobb, too, reiterates the importance of this step to the construction of the Other as enemy, noting that it "is when the personal identity, forged in daily interaction, across social networks, collapses into the singular ethnic identity" that the potential for ethnic violence first occurs.[25] In fact, Clark McCauley argues that this kind of social categorization is an absolute necessity for communal conflict, particularly for violent conflict on the scale of mass atrocity:

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[16] While the scope of this paper does not allow a closer examination of the different factors which can undermine communal cohesion, an excellent compilation of factors that may undermine societal cohesion in multicommunal groups can be found in Ted Gurr, *People Versus States: Minorities at Risk in the New Century* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2000), 105-132, and Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2000), 141-228.

[17] It is important here to note the devastating impact that colonial rule has had in dividing societies economically, politically, socially, and culturally. It is no coincidence that a great number of the violent communal conflicts that have erupted in the last century have taken place within postcolonial societies. For a concise summary of the divisive nature of colonial rule and the decolonisation process, see Shashi Tharoor, "The Future of Civil Conflict," *World Policy Journal* 16.1 (1999): 3-4.

[18] Ervin Staub, *The Roots of Evil: The Origins of Genocide and Other Group Violence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 42.

[19] Ibid., 10.

[20] Ibid, 42.

[21] Lewis A. Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict* (New York: Macmillan, 1956), 87.

[22] Ervin Staub, "Preventing Genocide: Activating Bystanders, Helping Victims Heal, Helping Groups Overcome Hostility," in *Studies in Comparative Genocide*, eds. Levon Chorbajian and George Shirinian (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 254.

[23] Petonito, 20.

[24] Ibid., 35.

[25] Sara Cobb, "Fostering Coexistence in Identity-Based Conflicts: Towards a Narrative Approach," Antonia Chayes and Martha Minow, eds., *Imagine Coexistence: Restoring Humanity After Violent Ethnic Conflict*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 298.

[k]illing by category requires a particular kind of categorization. Killing by category can be justified, perhaps can only be justified, by a belief that all members of the category are equally guilty or equally threatening. A common belief of this kind is that all members of a group share a common 'essence' – an invisible something that distinguishes the group from other groups and leads to common group characteristics, or at least the tendency to develop these characteristics.[26]

Dehumanization and the Destruction of Moral Order

Therefore, in multicommunal societies divided into antagonistic groups, there is invariably an attempt by members of one group to employ "rhetorics of binary opposites" to devalue the Other and render enemies "worthy of condemnation."[27] Petonito argues that "this judgement implies a dichotomy of inferiority and superiority, whose claimants see themselves as superior to those they denounce, further distancing the other from themselves."[28] The enemy categorization is assigned a kind of "master status," whereby "any member's action can be constructed as having evil intent."[29] In effect, the enemy becomes "dehumanized," or regarded as subhuman. This, Petonito warns, is "one short logical step from referring to human beings as hordes or masses in need of extermination."[30] Indeed, if "the threatening group is seen as essentially bad and essentially hostile, then we are justified in killing all of them…their different essence means that they are not quite human, and we can slaughter them the same way we would slaughter diseased animals."[31]

Thus in multicommunal societies, the eradication of social capital leads to communal cleavages; that is to say, members of the enemy Other are framed as lesser beings, existing outside the moral bounds governing one's own community, and this framework, in turn, incites and legitimizes violence.[32] Troy Duster draws specific attention to the important role that a deficit of social capital plays in the dehumanization of an externalized Other. He notes that in order to figure this Other as alien – in other words, as subhuman – meaningful social interaction between communal groups must be kept to a minimum; without this contact, members of the Self group become increasingly unable to recognize a shared humanity with members of the enemy Other. Thus, Duster argues, for atrocity to occur, it is necessary that:

[y]ou allow no human contact…[o]r on the homefront, if contact is allowed, or if it cannot be prevented, you indicate that the contact is not between equals; you talk about the disadvantaged, the deprived. You make sure that the culture and customs of the target populations are seen as having no value to your own group and you indicate this attitude either by laughing at those cultures or by destroying them.[33]

Helen Fein notes that in the genocides of both Yugoslavia and Rwanda, this form of moral polarization precipitated the outbreak of atrocity. In both instances, she notes that a decline in the society's social cohesion allowed for antagonistic communal categorizations to flourish, resulting eventually in the vilification and dehumanization of the other as an intractable enemy existing outside of that society's shared moral boundaries:

[i]n both cases, we note evidence of past exclusion of the victim from the universe of moral obligation which co-existed with comfortable patterns of interaction at the local level. The

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[26] McCauley, 80.

[27] Petonito, 35.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid., 20.

[30] Ibid.

[31] McCauley, 82.

[32] Hugh Miall, Oliver Ramsbotham, and Tom Woodhouse, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution: The Prevention, Management, and Transformation of Deadly Conflicts* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 207.

[33] Troy Duster, "Conditions for Guilt-Free Massacre," in *Sanctions for Evil*, eds. Nevitt Sanford and Craig Comstock (San Fransico: Jossey-Bass, 1971), 27.

exclusionary beliefs were expanded by ideologies of antagonism and blatant appeals to hatred which were broadcast in the mass media in the years prior to the genocide in Yugoslavia and Rwanda.[34]

Indeed, the scholarly literature on genocide and mass communal violence is replete with examples of dehumanization. As Jack Porter notes, in the Armenian genocide, "the Muslim Turks regarded the Christian Armenians as *dimmis* or infidels…Armenians were also labelled *rayah* or sheep who could be fleeced."[35] Throughout the Rwandan genocide, Tutsi victims were frequently referred to as "sleazy cockroaches" or as "creature[s] not of this world, with horns and tails."[36] Victims of Bosnian violence were deemed "undesirable parasite[s]."[37] Throughout the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Palestinians have been labelled "blood-thirsty terrorists" by Israeli Jews who have, in turn, been classed as "sadists" and "murderers."[38] In the German Holocaust, Jews, Gypsies, and other "undesirables" were formally defined as outside the genetic stock of the proper German race. Porter recounts that among the perpetrators of the Holocaust, it was believed that:

> the Germans belonged to the 'greatest, highest race' of Aryans, the Jews and Gypsies belonged to no human race. By definition they were nonhuman. Jews were to be annihilated because they were 'vermin,' 'lice,' 'bloodsuckers,' 'parasites,' and 'bacilli;' Gypsies, because they were 'filthy animals,' 'rodents,' etc.[39]

In this way, the process of dehumanization, facilitated by a lack of meaningful social connection, is invariably recognized as an integral component of mass communal violence. As Staub has noted, "making others appear different and worse than oneself is a primary condition…for the perpetration of evil."[40] Similarly, Duster elucidates the central role that the process of dehumanization plays in the psychological preparation of a society for mass ethnic violence:

> [t]he most general condition for guilt-free massacre is the denial of the humanity of the victim. You call the victims names like gooks, dinks, niggers, pinkos and japs. The more you can…use these names and others like yellow dwarfs with daggers and rotten apples, the more your success.[41]

Thus, as Terrel Northrup illustrates, the dehumanization of the Other "is a process which itself makes violence more tolerable…[as] it is more difficult to harm something or someone who is like-self, and easier to harm something or someone constructed as not human or inhuman."[42] Inevitably, "the result is that it becomes easier to behave with violence towards the 'enemy'…since the enemy is increasingly construed as nonhuman and 'evil.'"[43]

The implicit danger of this form of dehumanization is that it serves to legitimize the use of violent force against the Other, further widening and deepening the chasm of social and moral disconnect between the Self and its perceived enemy. Ultimately, the dehumanization of the Other leads to the breakdown of the moral order of a society, resulting in the creation of a skewed moral equilibrium in which it becomes

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[34] Helen Fein, "Testing Theories Brutally: Armenia (1915), Bosnia (1992) and Rwanda (1994)," in *Studies in Comparative Genocide*, eds. Levon Chorbajian and George Shirinian (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 163.

[35] Jack Nusan Porter, "Introduction," in *Genocide and Human Rights: A Global Anthology*, ed. Jack Nusan Porter (Washington, University Press of America, 1982), 13.

[36] Howard Ball, *Prosecuting War Crimes and Genocide: The Twentieth Century Experience* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999), 220.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Bar-Tal, "Collective Memory of Physical Violence," 86.

[39] Porter, 13-14.

[40] Ervin Staub, *Positive Social Behaviour and Morality: Social and Personal Influences* (New York: Academic Press, 1978), 153.

[41] Duster, 27.

[42] Terrel A. Northrup, "The Dynamic of Identity in Personal and Social Conflict," in *Intractable Conflicts and Their Transformation*, eds. Louis Kriesberg, Terrel A. Northrup, and Stuart J. Thorson (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1989), 74.

[43] Ibid.

acceptable or even "right" for one group to embark upon a campaign of violence against an enemy group.[44] Normally, the moral code of nearly every society protects the sanctity of human life as a fundamental precept. As Daniel Bar-Tal explains:

> [t]he maintenance of life is perhaps one of the most sacred and universal values in human culture…killing, or severely physically hurting another human being is considered with some exceptions the most serious violation of the moral code…[s]ocieties tend to adhere to this commandment devoutly, creating norms and enacting laws, to preserve it…the right to life has become a basic principle; under most circumstances, no person is allowed to take the life of another person.[45]

Further, John Mack recognizes, "[i]t is difficult in the face of civilized codes of morality to commit mass murder against another people unless that people [is] first deprived of their claim to consideration as human beings."[46] The process of dehumanization, by framing the enemy as subhuman, effectively promotes a "reversal of morality," whereby the other comes to exist outside of the shared moral code governing the rest of society.[47] As Staub argues, "feelings of responsibility are subverted by excluding certain people from the realm of humanity or defining them as dangers to oneself and one's way of life and values… a complete reversal of morality may occur, so that murder becomes a service to humanity."[48] In this way, the moral order of society in divided societies becomes corrupted, such that mass violence against the Other becomes legitimized, or even normatively valued as something that is "good, right, or desirable."[49]

Reinforcing Cycles of Violence

However, the process of dislocation and dehumanization does not end with the advent of overt violence. Indeed, the onset of violence serves only to widen and deepen the social divides that exist among antagonistic communal groups. As a result, communal conflict between such groups tends to become both protracted in duration and intractable in nature. Further, violence occasions the formation of exclusionary memories and mythologies, fostering a subjective communal narrative that justifies and legitimizes continued aggression against the Other. Ultimately, divided societies may become trapped in cycles of violence and vengeance that preclude the formation of intercommunal trust and the creation of an equitable moral order.

As Colletta and Cullen's case study of the Rwandan and Cambodian atrocities indicates, after the onset of overt violence, the destruction of social capital that precipitates the outbreak of conflict is further exacerbated within society:

> violent conflict within a state weakens its social fabric. Intrastate conflict divides the population, undermines interpersonal and communal group trust, and destroys norms and values that underlie cooperation and collective action for the common good, decimating social capital stocks – and, thus, exacerbating communal strife.[50]

Indeed, the onset of violence can have a powerful polarizing effect, further broadening schisms between already disconnected groups and increasing the likelihood of continued violence. As discussed earlier, internal group cohesion, or the level of bonding within a communal group, is drastically heightened

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[44] Borrowing from Ervin Staub, this paper utilizes the concept of moral order as "the moral orientation…[that] sets limits on acceptable conduct and influences the choice of avenues to cope with difficult life conditions." See Staub, *The Roots of Evil*, 57.

[45] Daniel Bar-Tal, "Collective Memory of Physical Violence," 79-80.

[46] John E. Mack, "The Psychodynamics of Victimization Among National Groups in Conflict," in *The Psychodynamics of International Relationships, Volume I: Concepts and Theories*, eds. Vamik D. Volkan, Demetrios A. Julius, and Joseph V. Montville (Toronto: Lexington Books, 1990), 125.

[47] Staub, *The Roots of Evil*, 83.

[48] Ibid., 83.

[49] Ibid., 18.

[50] Nat J. Colletta and Michelle L. Cullen, "Social Capital and Social Cohesion: Case Studies from Cambodia and Rwanda," in *The Role of Social Capital in Development: An Empirical Assessment*, eds. Christian Grootaert and Thierry van Bastelaer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 279.

when that group is faced with violent external threats. Northrup notes that violence and discrimination levelled against a communal group make its members "much more likely to be highly aware of their group membership at all times…[as] the constant presence of threats, danger, discrimination, or potential harm is likely to heighten the importance of maintaining and protecting a person's [communal] identity."[51] In essence, groups facing violent attack tend to "band together" for protection and, in so doing, distance themselves accordingly from all other members of society; when threatened, "the group defines itself narrowly, sharply distinguishing its 'friends' from its 'enemies.'"[52]

Additionally, the decline of bridging social capital between communal groups is further compounded by the inception of violence.   As Northrup argues, the perpetrators of violence are increasingly "cut off from [their] own feelings of connectedness (like-self-ness) to a whole category of people, the 'enemy' whomever they may be."[53] In this way, aggressors distance themselves further from their victims by committing violence, and thus become more inclined to engage in future atrocity. Staub refers to this process as the "evolution of violence," whereby "[m]embers of the perpetrator group change as a result of their own actions. They come to devalue the victims more, and become motivated to and capable of inflicting more harm on them."[54] As James Waller explains, "perpetrators are reinforced in their perception of the victims as less than human by observing – and causing – their very victimization."[55] In many cases, perpetrators of violence blame their victims for their own persecution, holding fast to a fundamental belief in a "just world" in which "people get what they deserve and deserve what they get."[56]

Further, for victims of communal violence, it becomes increasingly difficult to empathise with an enemy who has committed "inhuman, immoral, and atrocious acts" against one's own group.[57] Mack refers to this dislocation as the "egoism of victimization," referring to the "incapacity of an ethno-national group, as a direct result of its own historical traumas, to empathize with the suffering of another group…or to take responsibility for the new victims created by their own warlike actions."[58] As a result, the Other is distanced further, becoming the target of escalating levels of violence, rather than the subject of empathy. Similarly, Staub details the manner in which violence against one's own group limits one's capacity to empathize with the Other, while heightening one's own propensity for further conflict:

> [a] group that was the victim of violence has an increased potential for violence. The victims' intense insecurity in the world diminishes their capacity to consider others' perspectives or needs, especially at a time of threat to the self. They come to believe that violence is necessary to protect themselves…[e]ven when harm-doing is mutual and a group that suffers also creates suffering, groups and their individual members tend to focus on their on pain. They rarely take in the pain of the other [or] see their own responsibility for it.[59]

Thus, violence forges a "mutual antagonism" amongst communal groups, in which "each group comes to define the other as an enemy bent on one's own destruction."[60] As Cobb argues, acts of violence based on social categorization tend to spawn cycles of reciprocal atrocity in which "violence [becomes] a form of interaction in a context where 'they' deserve to be victimized for what they have done to us or might do to us. Violence is the breeding ground for more violence, an endless succession of victimization and countervictimization."[61] Wronged groups come to frame the actions of the other as unfounded acts

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[51] Northrup, 66.

[52] Mack, 124.

[53] Northrup, 74.

[54] Staub, "Preventing Genocide," 252.

[55] James Waller, *Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 248.

[56] Ibid., 250.

[57] Bar-Tal, "Collective Memory of Physical Violence," 86

[58] Mack, 125.

[59] Staub, "Preventing Genocide," 256.

[60] Ibid., 254.

[61] Cobb, 294.

perpetrated by an intractable and alien enemy, yet these groups justify their own violent actions as the appropriate responses of "victimized" parties. These beliefs are reinforced by means of cycles of violence that validate stereotypes of the enemy other as monstrous and capable of atrocious acts, while confirming one's own status as an unjust victim of violence. Bar-Tal elucidates this process, detailing that:

> [a]s the number of human losses grows, societies develop beliefs about being victimized by the opponent. These beliefs focus on the losses, deaths, the harm, the evil and atrocities committed by the adversary while they delegate the responsibility for the violence solely to the 'other.' This self-perception focuses on the sad and wretched fate of the group and frames its victims as martyrs. The dead and wounded become the salient, concrete evidence of the group's status as a victim.[62]

Accordingly, McCauley argues that reciprocal violence in communal conflicts becomes "self-justified" as "the rationalization of initial violence supports increasing violence against the same target group…[by] perceiving the target group as increasingly bad and threatening, and increasingly deserving of retribution and pre-emptive violence."[63] As the Other is vilified as the instigator of one's own victimization, the desire for vengeance in response to violence grows; thus, revenge becomes a powerful motivator for the perpetuation of conflict. Bar-Tal argues that this desire for vengeance is a nearly "universal phenomenon" when one group is victimized through intergroup conflict.[64] In fact, avenging the victimization of one's own community may be a kind of social obligation; that is to say, "a basic norm in many societies, and may even be considered a moral requirement."[65] Indeed, in his case study of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Bar-Tal notes that:

> human losses usually stiffen the opinions of both sides, causing demands to punish the other side…[t]hat is, vengeance is perceived as a matter of national or ethnic obligation, an expression of responsibility to those who were killed. It is, therefore, seen even as a matter of national honour to punish the opponent, so as to 'prevent' future losses by showing the perpetrator that violence against the group will not be tolerated.

Thus, as Nancy Rosenblum illustrates, violence sets in motion the destructive dynamic of a "cycle of hatred," whereby "[a]vengers feel perfectly justified in wreaking destruction – they feel liberated to become persecutors in turn."[66] Future conflict is ensured as "one community takes revenge on another…in turn sow[ing] the seeds for continued violence."[67] However, as Minow points out, the implacable "thirst for revenge" that characterizes most cases of ethnic conflict often culminates in a violent response that is "beyond proportion [and] beyond reason."[68] As violence escalates, the conflict becomes increasingly intractable as each group seeks violent redress for its own "unjustified" victimization. Often, as evidenced in the killing fields of Cambodia, the genocides of Rwanda and Burundi, or the brutal apartheid system of South Africa, this escalation culminates in the commission of mass atrocity or genocide. As John Galtung warns, "[v]iolence breeds violence…[becoming] the projection of a spiral that may run its course the same way as a fire: stopping when the house is burnt down."[69]

Formations of Collective Memory and Myth

In this way, societies trapped in cycles of endemic conflict can evolve into "cultures of violence," in which communal groups form their own selective social memories regarding the "others'" culpability for the

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[62] Bar-Tal, "Collective Memory of Physical Violence," 86.

[63] McCauley, 79.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Bar-Tal, "Collective Memory of Physical Violence," 82.

[66] Nancy L. Rosenblum, "Justice and the Experience of Injustice," in *Breaking the Cycles of Hatred: Memory, Law, and Repair*, ed. Martha Minow (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 78.

[67] Ed Cairns and Michael D. Roe, "Introduction: Why Memories in Conflict," in *The Role of Memory in Ethnic Conflict*, eds. Ed Cairns and Michael D. Roe (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 5.

[68] Martha Minow, "Memory and Hate: Are There Lessons from Around the World," in *Breaking the Cycles of Hatred: Memory, Law, and Repair*, ed. Martha Minow (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 17.

[69] Johan Galtung, *Peace By Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization* (London: Sage, 1996), 72.

instigation and progression of atrocities.[70]   As violence escalates, each group engages in the "dynamic social and psychological process" of creating a "collective narrative" about its own role and the role of the other in past antagonism.[71]   In the wake of mass atrocity, different communal groups are likely to have widely divergent views about the "truth" of past events, as each group bases interpretations of history upon its own collective narratives. Bar-Tal notes that these views are formed to "make sense of the present reality," but, he warns, "in order to fulfill this function, the past is reconstructed and re-appropriated to serve the current needs and attitudes of society's members."[72]   Indeed, Patrick Devine-Wright's study of the role of memory in conflict suggests that one's membership in a particular group shapes the nature of his or her beliefs about the past, and that "[m]embers of [similar] ethnic groups in contexts of conflict are likely to share accepted ways of seeing history…[while] members of different groups are likely to have significantly different beliefs about the past.[73]

Thus, these *collective memories* of past violence, developed by communal groups in conflict, inevitably reframe history in an antagonistic and exclusionary manner; that is to say, the actions of the Self are legitimized and ennobled, while the actions of the Other are remembered as unwarranted and unjust. Accordingly, in his examination of the formation of collective memories, Bar-Tal emphasizes that "[collective memories] focus mainly on the other sides responsibility for the outbreak and continuation of the conflict and its misdeeds, violence and atrocities; on the other hand, they concentrate on self-justification, self-righteousness, glorification and victimization."[74]   In essence, as these subjective histories are told and re-told, they generally assume a dichotomous structure: members of communal groups come to hold enemies solely responsible for the evils of past violence, and this, in turn, legitimizes their own use of future violence in prosecuting these enemies. Waller's study of communal conflict illustrates that the polarizing nature of collective memory contributes to the mythologizing of beliefs about one's own actions and the actions of the "other:"

> [i]nstead of judging other people across a broad spectrum running from good to bad, we make extreme categorical judgements based on the polar opposites of 'good us' versus 'bad them.' Our cause is sacred; theirs is evil. We are righteous; they are wicked. We are innocent; they are guilty. We are the victims; they are the victimizers. It is rarely *our* enemy or *my* enemy, but *the* enemy – a usage of the definitive article that hints of something fixed and immutable, abstract and evil.[75]

In extended conflicts, such beliefs become actively socialized and institutionalized within groups. They are transmitted and maintained through political, social, and cultural channels, and passed on through myth to future generations, eventually becoming a central element of communal identity.[76]   As Edward Azar details, in protracted social conflicts, it is the perpetuation of "exclusionist myths, demonizing propaganda and dehumanizing ideologies…[that] justify discriminatory policies and legitimize atrocities."[77]   The enemy is portrayed as an intractable opponent, and the continuation of violence validates this specious image as members of one's own group suffer at the hands of the other. Northrup argues that it is through this "rigidification" of identities that conflicts become truly intractable; any remaining communication between Self and Other becomes distorted by myth, and an intercommunal relationship develops in which:

> the only types of behaviours that occur in the relationship…serve to validate the distortions which created the behaviours in the first place. If the 'enemy' was not truly devious and aggressive before the distortions began, they certainly begin to behave just like enemies in response to the distortion. In

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[70] Bar-Tal, "Collective Memory of Physical Violence," 79.

[71] Patrick Devine-Wright, "A Theoretical Overview of Memory and Conflict," in *The Role of Memory in Ethnic Conflict*, eds. Ed Cairns and Michael D. Roe (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 28.

[72] Bar-Tal, "Collective Memory of Physical Violence," 85.

[73] Devine-Wright, 32.

[74] Bar-Tal, "Collective Memory of Physical Violence," 78.

[75] Waller, 243.

[76] Bar-Tal, "Collective Memory of Physical Violence," 78.

[77] Azar, as quoted in Miall, Ramsbotham, and Woodhouse, 75.

other words, the effect of distorting the other group is to make the other group behave in a way which is consistent with the distortions.[78]

As Azar illustrates, once a protracted conflict becomes intractable, renewed cycles of violence become likely, or even inevitable, as "attitudes, cognitive processes and perceptions become set and ossified…[m]eaningful communication between or among conflicting parties dries up, and the ability to satisfy communal acceptance…is severely diminished."[79] Violence begets myth, and myth ensures a return to violence, as "the worst motivations tend to be attributed to the other side…and the consequence [becomes] reciprocal negative images which perpetuate communal antagonisms and solidify protracted social conflict."[80] The final result, as Mack details, is a ceaseless "cycle of mutual victimization" in which "[v]ictims kill victims through unendingly repeated cycles that are transmitted from one generation to another, bolstered by stories and myths of atrocities committed by the other people, and by heroic acts committed in defence…by one's own."[81]

II. A Restorative Approach to Post-Conflict Peacebuilding

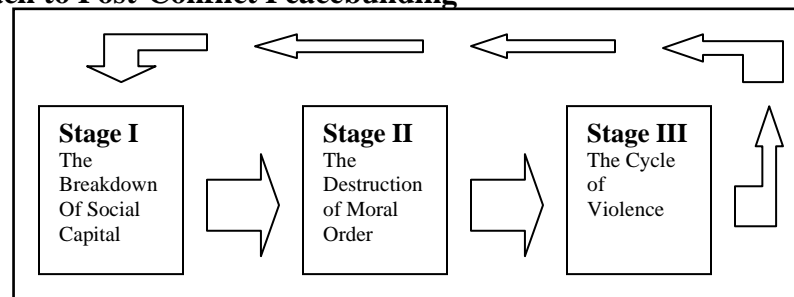| **Stage I** The Breakdown Of Social Capital | **Stage II** The Destruction of Moral Order | **Stage III** The Cycle of Violence |

Figure 1.1 – A Model of Intractable Communal Conflict

Having examined the societal process of mass atrocity, a generalized model detailing the instigation and perpetuation of intercommunal violence may be posited. As Figure 1.1 illustrates, the first stage in the instigation of violence is a breakdown in the social capital between groups. This decline in social reciprocity, if left unresolved, leads necessarily to the second stage, in which a society's moral order becomes skewed as groups dehumanize Others, effectively placing their enemies outside that society's shared normative framework. Finally, as illustrated by the model's third stage, groups are moved to initiate acts of violence against one another, which, in turn, further reduces any remaining stocks of social capital, lending increasing legitimacy to vilification of the enemy and, consequently, to future conflict. Such a self-perpetuating cycle of violence will continue to intensify until either one group effectively eliminates the Other (as would occur in a "successful" genocide) or until a peaceful resolution is reached.

If, as the proposed theoretical model suggests, the primary causal factor of the advent and renewal of endemic ethnic violence is a breakdown in social cohesion between communal groups, it follows that the prevention of future cycles of violence must incorporate attempts to repair these divides. In order to be effective, the formation of lasting peace in such societies requires both the cessation of overt violence and provisions for long term reconciliation aimed at regenerating social capital.

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[78] Northrup, 75-76.

[79] Edward Azar, "The Analysis and Management of Protracted Social Conflict," in J. Volkan, J. Montville, and D. Julius, eds., *The Psychodynamics of International Relations: Volume II* (Lexington: D.C. Heath, 1991), 17.

[80] Ibid., 15.

[81] Mack, 125.

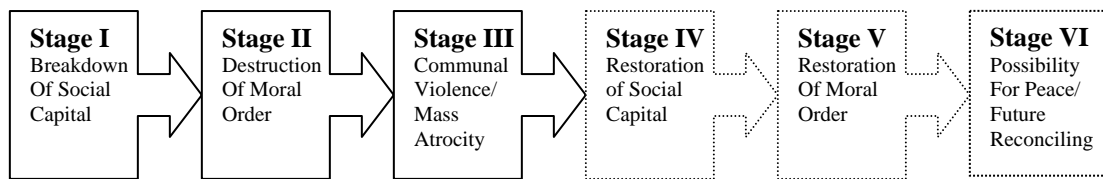| Stage I Breakdown Of Social Capital	Stage II Destruction Of Moral Order	Stage III Communal Violence/ Mass Atrocity	Stage IV Restoration of Social Capital	Stage V Restoration Of Moral Order	Stage VI Possibility For Peace/ Future Reconciling

Figure 1.2 – A Restorative Model for Post-Conflict Peacebuilding

Therefore, as Figure 1.2 illustrates, the first step in post-conflict peacebuilding must be to repair the shattered societal bonds responsible for the disruption of moral order that instigates and inflames intrastate violence. Only by rebuilding meaningful networks of communication and trust between disparate communal groups can the potency of antagonistic social identities based on concepts of ethnicity, religion, or language be diminished. In this way, fostering social capital might allow for the restoration of equitable moral order to a long-divided society; once meaningful and lasting relations are formed between individuals and groups, it becomes increasingly difficult to objectify or dehumanize the other. Thus, re-establishing social capital and moral order changes intercommunal antagonism to conciliation, and this, in turn, could mitigate previously intractable conflicts and free societies from cycles of violence. In this regard, principles of "restorative justice" may provide an innovative framework with which to approach peacebuilding in otherwise intractable conflicts, as their "emphasis is on reintegrative measures that build or rebuild social bonds, as opposed to [retributive] measures…that isolate and alienate the perpetrator from society."[82]

Truth commissions – non-judicial bodies set up in transitional regimes to establish the "truth" about accountability for past atrocities – are one example of the manner in which restorative principles have been recently employed in peacebuilding efforts. Since 1974, over 25 official truth commissions have been enacted internationally, and these proceedings have attempted to clarify historical truths about human rights violations.[83] Accordingly, in most truth commissions, the victims of past violence are invited to provide statements chronicling their personal experiences, in order "to establish an accurate record of a country's past, clarifying uncertain events, and lift the lid of silence and denial from a contentious and painful period of history…[in effect] recording a hidden history."[84] De-emphasizing retributive sanctions against perpetrators, these truth-seeking mechanisms focus instead on providing a full and official acknowledgement of past events, often as a means of promoting societal restoration and future reconciliation. However, due to their victim-centered focus and lack of any legal power to ensure compliance with their mandates, truth commissions are often unable to glean a comprehensive accounting of previous atrocities. The perpetrators of past crimes – those perhaps most knowledgeable about how and why violence occurred – are seldom inclined to come forward autonomously to relate their experiences, for fear of public "shaming" or future incrimination for their actions.[85]

III. The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission

The recent South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission stands as distinctive innovation of the truth commission process, and as an innovative example of the manner in which principles of restorative justice can be incorporated into the peacebuilding process of a society in transition from a past of intractable conflict. The South African model is unique, for while those guilty of committing criminal acts could, in theory, be prosecuted as part of South Africa's transition from apartheid, the TRC granted conditional individual amnesties to the perpetrators of violence in exchange for truthful public testimony detailing their complicity in past events. As Martha Minow suggests, this amnesty provision afforded perpetrators who

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[82] Jennifer J. Llewellyn and Robert Howse, "Institutions for Restorative Justice: The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission," *University of Toronto Law Journal* 49.3 (1999): 357.

[83] Mark Freeman and Priscilla B. Hayner, "Truth-Telling," in *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict: A Handbook*, eds. David Bloomfield, Teresa Barnes and Luc Huyse (Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2003), 122-127.

[84] Hayner, *Unspeakable Truths: Facing the Challenge of Truth Commissions* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 25.

[85] Ibid., 123.

disclosed their crimes the option of "[t]rading truth for amnesty, and amnesty for truth…to promote the gathering of facts and the basis for society to move on toward a strong democratic future."[86]

  The TRC's primary goal was to work toward future societal reconciliation by pursuing a "third course" of restoration that lay somewhere between potentially divisive criminal proceedings and "total amnesia."[87] As Paul Lansing and Julie King argue, it was crucial for South Africa to embark on this "third course" by implementing the TRC in order to avoid a return to previous cycles of violence:

> [b]ecause all people in South Africa still had to live and work with each other after the change in government, the process for dealing with the human rights violations committed during the apartheid years needed to assign accountability, but not in such a way as to continue to divide the nation, which could make it impossible for the nation to move forward.[88]

As Dan Markel notes, "[t]he TRC strove to determine not just 'what had happened,' but also how knowing it would contribute to the reparation of the damage inflicted in the past and to the prevention of the recurrence of serious abuses in the future."[89] By seeking to paint a complete, coherent picture of the social causes of apartheid's violence by means of victim testimony, amnesty hearings, and bystander interviews, the South African TRC attempted to promote societal restoration; it was "concerned not so much with punishment as with correcting imbalances, restoring broken relationships – with healing, harmony, and reconciliation."[90] In essence, the TRC's mandate focused on the greater restoration of South African society as a whole, forgoing blanket retribution against perpetrators in exchange for a "societal dialogue" between the testimonies of victim, bystander, *and* perpetrator as a means of better understanding the truth behind apartheid's atrocities.

  Indeed, frequently endorsed by its proponents as a model of restorative justice, the TRC was an instrumental part of the transitional process guiding South Africa away from the violent legacy of apartheid, and towards a society ostensibly "committed to human rights, democracy, and peaceful co-existence."[91] In light of this recognition, the South African peacebuilding process may well function as an example for other societies seeking to emerge from pasts of atrocity. By examining its innovative use of restorative justice, new methods for the resolution and future prevention of violent internal conflict might be uncovered. Indeed, the TRC model illuminates the manner in which inclusive truth-telling, used as a mechanism for the application of restorative justice in transitional regimes, might aid the resolution of protracted conflict by seeking to heal the "psycho/social scars" of communal antagonism that could otherwise lead to the renewal of intractable cycles of violence.[92]

The Restoration of Social Capital

From its inception, the South African TRC placed a significant emphasis on suturing the divide between communal groups by surmounting what Rosenblum refers to as the "psychological obstacles to reconciliation and repair" through the simultaneous reintegration of victim, bystander, and perpetrator into civil society.[93] As John Paul Lederach notes, in order to facilitate the goal of cross-community reconciliation after conflict, innovative peacebuilding initiatives must first be sought "to create a time and a place, within various levels

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[86] Martha Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History After Genocide and Mass Violence* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), 56.

[87] TRC *Final Report*, as quoted in Dan Markel, "The Justice of Amnesty?: Towards a Theory of Retributivism in Recovering States," *University of Toronto Law Journal* 49.3 (1999): 396.

[88] Paul Lansing and Julie C. King, "South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission: The Conflict Between Individual Justice and National Healing in the Post-Apartheid Age," *Arizona Journal of International and Comprehensive Law* 15.3 (1998): 761.

[89] Markel, 410.

[90] Excerpt from the *Final Report* of the TRC, as quoted in Elizabeth Kiss, "Moral Ambition Within and Beyond Political Constraints: Reflections on Restorative Justice," in *Truth v. Justice: The Morality of Truth Commissions*, eds. Robert I. Rotberg and Dennis Thompson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 69.

[91] Minow, *Between Vengeance and* Forgiveness, 53.

[92] Miall, Ramsbotham, and Woodhouse, 206.

[93] Rosenblum, 100.

of the affected population, to address, integrate, and embrace the painful past and the necessary shared future as a means of dealing with the present."[94]   By including all levels of South African society in the truth-telling process, the TRC occasioned a space in which, for the first time, a conciliatory "dialogue group" involving previously segregated communal groups could be formed. As Staub notes, the "trust and connectedness" needed to rebuild social cohesion between communities can only "arise from 'proximal' experiences…[and] must evolve through a history of contact, cooperation, and friendly relations." [95]   Thus, rather than pitting previously antagonistic groups against one another in an adversarial trial setting, the TRC sought to bring together all parties affected by apartheid's atrocities to reflect upon the experiences of the Other, and to incorporate these experiences into a shared communal history.[96]

Over the course of the TRC's mandate, more than 22,000 victim testimonials were collected by its Human Rights Committee, many of which were publicly broadcast on national television.[97] By affording victims a comforting and non-judgmental environment in which to express their individual experiences, the TRC allowed for an acknowledgment of the devastation and trauma precluding individual survivors from effectively reintegrating into societal networks.[98] By reasserting the societal value of the victims of apartheid, the TRC facilitated their reincorporation into the society from which they were previously excluded by addressing "the breach of social equality that constituted the wrong," and, in so doing, aimed to "restore [victims] to the ideal of social equality as manifested by dignity and equal concern and respect."[99] As Minow notes, by giving voice to those who suffered, the South African TRC attempted to return to victims a sense of empowerment and identity, allowing them to reconnect to the greater community of which they are a part.[100]

In addition to acknowledging the role of victims, perpetrators of violence were also offered opportunities to recount their actions and experiences during the apartheid regime. By providing individual amnesties to these perpetrators, the TRC emphasized its commitment to societal reconciliation, recognizing that if "the equality or equilibrium that must be restored is an equality or equilibrium in relationships within society," re-establishing networks of social capital must necessarily aim to reincorporate perpetrators into society.[101] To restore a similar sense of civic reintegration to the masses of bystanders – those neither directly victimized by, nor perpetrators of, apartheid violence – the TRC created a Register of Reconciliation to which individuals could contribute personal reflections on their "direct or indirect responsibility" for previous abuses, thereby providing the possibility of reconnecting with other societal groups by way of the truth-telling process.[102] By incorporating these bystanders, the TRC allowed for the inclusion of those who had little connection to the extraordinary violence of apartheid but may have contributed to, or benefited from, its ordinary violence (such as the privileged white business owners who were the primary beneficiaries of cheap black labour). Therefore, the TRC model provided a forum in which bystanders might confront their own moral ambiguities and recognize their complicity in the system of apartheid.[103]

Accordingly, cooperative dialogue groups, such as that provided by the truth-seeking model of the TRC, may prove significant to post-conflict peacebuilding, as they bring together formerly intractable enemies, thereby helping to establish the communication and connection necessary for future reconciliation. As Northrup argues, in cases of large-scale social conflict, cooperative dialogue groups can facilitate the long-term reconnection of former adversaries by creating a conciliatory space within which a "sense of

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[94] John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington: Unites States Institute of Peace, 1997), 35.
[95] Staub, *The Roots of Evil*, 265.
[96] Markel, 413.
[97] Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness*, 25.
[98] Minow, "Memory and Hate," 16.
[99] Markel, 413.
[100] Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness*, 64-65.
[101] Llewellyn and Howse, 379.
[102] Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness*, 78.
[103] Kenneth Christie, *The South African Truth Commission* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 157.

shared existence and common identity" is fostered.[104] Similarly, Mark Osiel notes that by working together as "equal participants in the common task of truth-seeking…each party comes to learn, at the very least, what its opponent actually thinks and most deeply cares about [and] through this process, dangerous misperceptions about 'the other' are overcome."[105] Over time, he argues, "through the actual human experience of the resulting exchanges" promoted by such dialogue, contact and connection might be renewed among even the most intractable of former adversaries.[106] By creating an initial forum for cooperative intercommunal dialogue to begin, the TRC model may provide an important means for reinitializing the networks of trust and communication necessary for restoring bridging networks of social capital between communal groups and, in essence, for enabling "the initial public step in the process of South Africans getting to know one another after generations of isolation, exploitation, estrangement and mutual suspicion."[107]

Re-Establishing Moral Order and the Rehumanization of the Other

The ethnic violence that occurred under apartheid was not a random confluence of individual human rights atrocities; rather, it was the physical manifestation of an entrenched *system* of corrupted moral norms. Individuals became victims or beneficiaries of the apartheid system not because of individual characteristics, but because of membership in artificially delineated societal groups predicated upon pre-conceived, essentialist notions of racial identity in which "[b]lack and white had to be kept apart, circumscribed by an equation that described each as the enemy of the other, and each the antithesis of the other."[108] Under this system, "individual [identity]…came to be mediated and…articulated through processes of socialization and group identity," resulting in the rending of South Africa's societal fabric as racial divides allowed whites to prosper while black South Africans faced subjugation, poverty, and persecution.[109] An individual under apartheid was, for better or worse, a member of this system, having his or her opportunities, beliefs, actions and "moral worth" circumscribed, in large part, by its normative and legal structures.

In essence, the South African apartheid regime was characterized by a corrupted moral order, in which the social worth of whites and blacks was unbalanced, favouring the former while assigning little value to the latter. This disequilibrium was codified in, and protected by, the normative social and legal frameworks that divided South African society and condoned outbreaks of racial violence. Thus, as Bar-Tal argues:

> [p]articularly in the context of inter-ethnic…conflict is the fact that although individuals perform violent acts, the violence is initiated and carried out within a social system. That is, the social system provides the rationales or justifications for the violence, system's organizations train the individuals to carry out violent acts, and social mechanisms and institutions glorify the violent confrontations.[110]

Accordingly, by means of truth-telling, the TRC worked to expose the corrupt belief systems at the root of ethnic violence, rather than assigning final responsibility to individual perpetrators who carried out the violent symptoms of these long-naturalized beliefs. Thus, the TRC model allowed not only for an acknowledgement of the extraordinary atrocities perpetrated by individuals under apartheid, such as rape, murder, and torture, but also for a recognition of the inequitable moral order underlying the more pervasive

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[104] Northrup, 80-81.

[105] Mark Osiel, *Mass Atrocity, Collective Memory, and the Law* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1997), 42.

[106] Ibid., 43.

[107] Charles Villa-Vicencio, "Getting on with Life: A Move Towards Reconciliation," in *Looking Back Reaching Forward: Reflections on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa*, eds. Charles Villa-Vicencio and Wilhelm Verwoerd (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2000), 206.

[108] Thabo Mbeki, as quoted in Mxolisi Mgxashe, "Reconciliation: A Call to Action" in *Looking Back Reaching Forward: Reflections on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa*, eds. Charles Villa-Vicencio and Wilhelm Verwoerd (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2000), 214.

[109] Edward Azar, ""Protracted International Conflicts: Ten Propositions," in Edward Azar and John Burton, eds., *International Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice* (Boulder: Rienner Publishers, 1986), 31.

[110] Bar-Tal, "Collective Memory of Physical Violence," 79.

ordinary violence of segregation, discrimination, and inequality.[111] By acknowledging the underlying causal role played by a corrupt moral order in apartheid's rampant ethnic violence, the restorative justice employed by the TRC stands, in this respect, as a more effective means of peacebuilding than the individualized retribution of criminal trials. [112] Consequently, the TRC model may provide a stronger, more enduring resolution to conflict by "initiat[ing] a process of identifying the social forces that nurture separation" and by recognizing the necessity of "redress[ing] the forces that contribute to the violation of fundamental human rights.[113]

Perhaps the most important effect, however, of bringing victims, perpetrators, and bystanders together in a truth-telling forum is the eventual possibility of the "rehumanization" of the Other. Rafael Moses notes that "a face-to-face meeting of erstwhile enemies" is an extraordinarily useful tool with which to begin the process of rehumanization, as "it is much harder to maintain hatred toward a flesh-and-blood human being with whom one exchanges words, than toward a mythical distant demon one has no compunction about killing."[114] By allowing for intercommunal reconnection, the truth-telling TRC model provides members of previously antagonistic groups the opportunity to hear, often for the first time, the other's story, and to re-examine their own complicity in past cycles of violence. Indeed, Moses argues that the "awareness and open, detailed discussion" facilitated by dialogue "are two tools to use against dehumanization."[115] Accordingly, as Staub notes, dialogue groups are instrumental in restoring the sense of empathy ultimately needed to rehumanize the Other:

> [a]s the members of each group describe the pain and suffering of their group at the hands of the other, they can begin to open up to the pain of the other. They can grieve for themselves, for the other, and assume responsibility for their share in the historical antagonism and violence.[116]

Indeed, when the division between Self and Other is challenged by an ongoing reciprocal relationship, previously intractable "parties begin to achieve a sense of mutual identity" which may lead to "an investment in de-escalating the conflict and in increasing cooperation."[117] Northrup notes that the experience of relating in this new way, given time, generally allows for members of previously feuding groups to alter their perceptions of the other's identity; through renewed contact and a coincident increase in levels of empathy, individuals become able "to see the 'enemy' as more human."[118]

Breaking Down Communal Myths

In order to establish and preserve a common morality, however, polarizing societal beliefs and biased accounts of past atrocity must also be addressed. As Mark Ensalaco argues, it is "only upon a foundation of truth [that] it [is] possible to meet the basic demands of justice and to create the necessary conditions for achieving lasting national reconciliation."[119] Essentially, if skewed accounts are left unaddressed, they may reinforce historical "points of conflict," continue to divide communal groups and, ultimately, perpetuate cycles of violence.[120] Therefore, as Staub details, "to create a non-violent world we will have to change

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[111] David Dyzenhaus, *Judging the Judges, Judging Ourselves: Truth, Reconciliation, and the Apartheid Legal Order* (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 1998), 12.

[112] Unfortunately, the scope of this paper does not allow for a broader examination of the relative merits of restorative and retributive frameworks of justice. However, for an excellent examination of this ongoing debate in the context of South Africa, see *Truth v. Justice: The Morality of Truth Commissions*, eds. Robert I. Rotberg and Dennis Thompson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000)

[113] Villa-Vicencio, 204.

[114] Rafael Moses, "On Dehumanizing the Enemy," in *The Psychodynamics of International Relations: Volume II*, eds. J. Volkan, J. Montville, and D. Julius (Lexington: D.C. Heath, 1991), 117.

[115] Ibid.

[116] Staub, "Preventing Genocide," 255.

[117] Northrup, 78.

[118] Ibid.

[119] Mark Ensalaco, "Truth Commissions for Chile and El Salvador: A Report and Assessment," *Human Rights Quarterly* 16.1 (1994): 651.

[120] Hayner, *Unspeakable Truths*, 27.

cultures and social institutions which carry the devaluation of others, maintain discrimination…and in other ways provide the structures that lead to violence."[121]

In describing the nation's transition from apartheid, Alex Boraine notes that "South Africa has come out of a period in which its society was based on lies and deceit. Radio and television were little more than giant propaganda factories producing a packaged product to reinforce oppression and exclusivity."[122] In recognition of the capacity of such distortions to subvert the peacebuilding process, the establishment of a truthful, unbiased narrative of the apartheid regime was forwarded as a primary goal of the TRC. Accordingly, Elizabeth Kiss recounts that the work of the TRC "made a special point" to "discredit some widely circulated accusations and counteraccusations" that could otherwise "easily provide the basis for mobilisation towards further conflicts."[123] Indeed, by including victim, bystander, and perpetrator in the formation of an agreed-upon shared narrative examining the "truth" of apartheid-era atrocities, the TRC model was able to "establish a cumulative factual record of the sort that no single trial or set of trials could match" and that could not be appropriated by any one group in society to incite future returns to violence.[124]

In this regard, the truth-telling process of the TRC actively facilitated the establishment of an equitable moral order by dismantling the system of entrenched myths, propaganda, and antagonistic communal narratives that perpetuated divides between communal groups under apartheid. As Minow argues, the creation of such an official record of the truth can be beneficial to post-conflict societies, if used to "cut through myths, rumours, and false pictures about the past…separating truth from rampant lies and rumours."[125] Accordingly, in South Africa, this official, inclusive accounting of past events worked to silence myths and to rectify antagonistic communal memories about past events that would otherwise "remain open about exactly what took place during the years of repression" and be allowed to "fester and deepen."[126] As Brandon Hamber and Richard Wilson note, "[b]y having this shared memory of the past, and a common identity as a traumatized people, the country can, at least ideally, move on to a future in which the same mistakes will not be repeated."[127]

IV. Conclusion: Towards Reconciliation?

If a necessary cause of communal violence is a breakdown in social cohesion among societal groups, the prevention of future cycles of violence requires attempts to repair these divides. If these undergirding psycho-social factors stand unaddressed, past Self/Other attributions of communal groups – both justifiable and illegitimate – remain pervasive, even in the absence of physical conflict. Ultimately, this lack of societal restoration inevitably engenders future violence, thereby consigning societies to renewed cycles of communal conflict. Therefore, any post-conflict peacebuilding initiative that works towards the eventual reconciliation of antagonistic groups must attempt, first and foremost, to repair the shattered societal bonds responsible for the disruption of moral order that instigates and perpetuates intercommunal violence.

Accordingly, the principal goal of post-conflict peacebuilding in such intractable circumstances must be to alter the ways in which antagonistic communal groups conceptualize the other. Only by rebuilding meaningful "bridging" networks between disparate communal groups can antagonistic social identities based on concepts of ethnicity, religion, or language be amended. Thus, the development of social capital restores equitable moral order to long-divided societies; once meaningful relations are formed between individuals and groups, dehumanization of the other becomes increasingly difficult. Indeed, the restoration of social

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[121] Staub, "Preventing Genocide," 259.

[122] Alex Boraine, "Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: The Third Way," in *Truth v. Justice: The Morality of Truth Commissions*, eds. Robert I. Rotberg and Dennis Thompson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 151.

[123] Kiss, 72.

[124] Rosenblum, 94.

[125] Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness*, 76.

[126] Hayner, *Unspeakable Truths*, 11.

[127] Brandon Hamber and Richard A. Wilson, "Symbolic Closure through Memory, Reparation and Revenge in Post-Conflict Societies," in *The Role of Memory in Ethnic Conflict*, eds. Ed Cairns and Michael D. Roe (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 144.

capital and moral order changes allows for a more conciliatory societal tenor, and this, in turn, helps to mitigate previously intractable conflicts and to free societies from cycles of violence.[128]

A restorative framework, based on the unique methodology of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, seems a possible model for the post-conflict mediation of divides amongst otherwise intractable communal groups. Rather than pitting previously antagonistic groups against one another in an adversarial trial setting, the TRC sought to bring together all parties affected by apartheid's atrocities to reflect upon others' experiences, and to incorporate these experiences into a shared communal history. By including all levels of South African society in the truth-telling process, the TRC occasioned a space in which, for the first time, a conciliatory societal dialogue involving previously segregated communal groups could take place. The TRC model suggests that truth-telling, applied as a measure of restorative justice, might aid the resolution of intractable conflict by attending to the psycho-social factors underlying communal antagonisms that, if left unaddressed, could foster further violence in transitional regimes.[129] By deconstructing systemic violence, and allowing for the renewal of trust and communication between communal groups divided socially and legally during the era of apartheid, the methods of restoration employed by the TRC model served to re-establish a common moral order among the people of South Africa – an order vital to eventual reconciliation.

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[128] Indeed, James L. Gibson has noted, in an empirical study, what appears to be a causal relationship between participation "in South Africa's collective memory by accepting the "truth" about the country's apartheid past" and increased likelihood to hold "reconciled racial attitudes." Importantly, Gibson finds that "reconciliation is indeed enhanced by interracial contact and interaction," further indicating that the TRC has been responsible, at least in part, for aiding the process of reconciliation by rebuilding social capital among racial groups in South Africa. See James L. Gibson, "Does Truth Lead to Reconciliation? Testing the Causal Assumptions of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Process," *American Journal of Political Science* 48.2 (April 2004): 202-215.

[129] Due to the relatively recent conclusion of the South African Truth and Reconciliation process, empirical assessments of the Commission's effectiveness are limited. However, early assessments indicate that the TRC has been considered an effective institution for revealing the truth about apartheid injustices, and has had a positive effect on the ongoing reconciliation process. See for example James L. Gibson's thoughtful and wide-ranging empirical survey in *Overcoming Apartheid: Can Truth Reconcile a Divided Nation?* (New York: Russell Sage, 2004) which suggests a significant increase in levels of reconciliation among South Africans as a result of the truth-telling mechanisms employed by the TRC. See also Jay A. Vora and Erika Vora, who note increased levels of reconciliation, particularly as reported by Xhosa participants in "The Effectiveness of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Perceptions of Xhosa, Afrikaner, and English South Africans," *Journal of Black Studies* 34.3 (January 2004): 308-311.