

The Cycle of Violence: Understanding Individual Participation in Collective Violence

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Why do “ordinary” people engage in collective violence, harming others on behalf of their group? In this article, we argue that the violent group itself, and the identity it bestows on participating members, is an often overlooked and yet fundamental source of motivation for an individual’s participation in collective violence. Reviewing insights from social and moral psychology, military history, and public health, we outline how the psychology of individual violent behavior presents a puzzle. For an ordinary person, participation in violence is often an aversive and distressing experience, and yet violent behavior leads to more violence in the future. A better understanding of the dynamics of collective violence allows us to make sense of this paradox. Violent groups can promote violent behavior among members by increasing members’ motivation to engage in violence, particularly through group identification and deliberate strategies, and by removing psychological obstacles to violence (i.e., by making violence less aversive). Our synthesis of the literature points to a cycle of individuals’ participation in collective violence, in which group identification motivates violent behavior and violent behavior increases identification with violent groups.

KEY WORDS: violence, groups, identification, collective violence

Moral and legal systems in societies around the world are built upon the principle of “do no harm.” In spite of this basic principle, history is rife with examples of ordinary people harming others on behalf of their group, a phenomenon known as collective violence. Extreme cases include the murder of approximately 11 million Jews, Poles, and others by the Nazis during the Holocaust and the massacre of 800,000 Tutsis by their Hutu neighbors over a 100-day period in Rwanda. These cases are particularly striking because so many people were either complicit or actively engaged in violence against others with whom they had once peacefully coexisted. Additionally, the vast majority of perpetrators had no previous history of violent behavior prior to joining their violent group.

Social scientists have long been interested in understanding how ordinary people—those without extreme tendencies toward violent behavior—come to harm others on behalf of their group. While instances of genocide are rare, many different kinds of groups use violence to achieve economic, political, or social goals. Examples include conventional militaries, insurgent movements, terrorist organizations, gangs, and organized criminal groups. Such groups recruit ordinary people

into their ranks and then induce them to engage in violence. The purpose of this review is to examine the social and psychological reasons why ordinary people harm others on behalf of a group and the consequences of their participation in collective violence, including future violence and violent group membership.

Previous research offers a puzzle regarding the psychology of individual violent behavior. For an ordinary person, participation in violence is generally an aversive and distressing experience, and yet violent behavior leads to more violence in the future. A better understanding of the role of violent groups, specifically as a source of social identity and belongingness, allows us to make sense of this paradox. We bring together literatures from moral, military, intergroup, and political psychology to propose that participation in collective violence is best understood as a cycle that is motivated by and that reinforces the existence of a violent group. Violent groups promote violent behavior among members by removing psychological obstacles to violence (i.e., by making violence less aversive) and by increasing members' motivation to engage in violence, particularly through group identification. We propose that these processes contribute motivations for perpetrating violence above and beyond the individuals' preexisting motivation for joining the violent group. In turn, carrying out violence on behalf of the group increases members' identification with the violent group. To begin, we make clear what we mean by the terms violence, collective violence, and violent groups.

Violence. We define violence as intentionally harming another person(s), causing bodily injury or death. The intentionality component is consistent with standard definitions of aggression and violence typically used in social psychology (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). However, our definition does not distinguish between more and less extreme forms of interpersonal harm, such as punching versus killing someone. This is in contrast to the general approach in social psychology, which categorizes less extreme harm as aggression and more extreme harm as violence. By classifying more and less extreme harm as violence, we can examine how variation in intensity affects the process of perpetration of collective violence and identification with a violent group.

Our definition also does not distinguish between legally legitimate versus illegitimate violence or morally justified versus unjustified violence. When a soldier in the US military kills an enemy combatant during battle, this action will likely be perceived by most Americans as legitimate and justified. In contrast, an unnecessarily killing of an innocent civilian by the same soldier may be seen as illegitimate and unjustified. Social psychologists refer to this latter behavior as "evil" because it is *unjustified* interpersonal harm (Berkowitz, 1999). Much of the work on collective violence in social psychology has been studied through the lens of "good vs. evil." We avoid this approach for two reasons. First, determining whether a behavior is justified versus unjustified involves subjective moral judgments. While it is tempting to think that some behaviors are simply evil, reality is often more complicated. For example, suicide bombers are seen as both terrorists and freedom fighters depending on who is making the judgment (Atran, 2003). Second, we avoid the "psychology of evil" approach because it narrows the scientific inquiry of, and therefore the ability to fully understand, the phenomenon of collective violence.

Collective violence and violent groups. Our review is concerned specifically with collective violence, a subset of violence as defined above that is carried out on behalf of one's group. Forms of political violence such as genocide, mass killings, insurgency, counterinsurgency, conventional warfare, and terrorism fall under this definition, as does violence carried out on behalf of a gang or criminal group. All of our examples of violence up to this point would be defined as collective violence. The term "collective violence" excludes instances of violence carried out on behalf of the individual self, such as school shootings, homicides, intimate partner violence, and child abuse. A violent group is a collective that uses violence to achieve its political, economic, or social goals (i.e., a group whose members engage in collective violence). Violent groups range from state-sponsored militaries to underground terrorist cells to neighborhood gangs.

Overview and Scope of the Review

The goal of this review is to understand how membership in a violent collective and the ensuing group identity motivates individuals to engage in violent behavior. One of the striking features of collective violence is that *ordinary* people, those without extreme predispositions toward violence such as sadism or psychopathy, harm others on behalf of their group. This constitutes part of the puzzle of studying collective violence. While sadists and psychopaths are motivated to engage in violence by an internal desire to harm others for personal pleasure (Taylor, 2009) or instrumental gain (Woodworth & Porter, 2002), the vast majority of people, on whom we focus in this review, are generally *resistant* to harming others and will *avoid* causing harm even at personal cost (Grossman, 1996). Individuals who are highly predisposed toward violence may be overrepresented in violent groups relative to the general population, but they are unlikely to constitute the entirety of such groups. For example, of the estimated 200,000 Hutus who participated in the Rwandan genocide (Straus, 2004), the majority would likely not have been diagnosed as sadists or psychopaths. Even suicide bombers acting on behalf of terrorist groups are generally educated, middle-class individuals who exhibit no psychopathology (Atran, 2003). Thus, how do ordinary people overcome their general aversion to violence to perpetrate violence on behalf of their group?

We also focus in our review on the *perpetration* of collective violence and its consequences, and not on the motivations for and process of choosing to join a violent group. In previous scholarship, these two acts are often conflated. Joining a violent group is not synonymous with committing violence on behalf of the group; individuals may belong to a violent group for a long time before engaging in violent behavior, and some group members may never perpetrate violence. A full accounting of motivations for joining violent groups is beyond the scope of this review, but the list includes: political and economic grievances (Gurr, 1970), greed (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004), a desire for revenge (Balcells, 2010; Fujii, 2009), protection from ongoing violence (Kalyvas & Kocher, 2007), ideology (Sanin & Wood, 2014), a quest for personal significance (Kruglanski et al., 2014), and reduction of uncertainty (Hogg & Adelman, 2013). In some cases, individuals do not choose to join violent groups and are instead forced through conscription or abduction (Cohen, 2013). Membership in a violent group is a starting place for our examination of why individuals commit violence on behalf of a group and of the consequences of perpetrating violence for their continued group membership and future violent behavior.

We begin by providing a brief overview of the literatures that address collective violence, highlighting primary contributions from the social psychological situationist, group identity and intergroup conflict, and individual extremist perspectives. While these approaches provide important insights into individual participation in collective violence, we note that research on individual perpetration of violence does not focus on the motivating role of the collective, whereas studies of violent groups and intergroup conflict stop short of studying violence perpetration. In response, we review in some detail the psychology of individual violent behavior, based on evidence from moral and social psychology, military history, and public health. Then, to understand participation in *collective* violence, we review literature from ethnographic research on violent groups and from basic research on social identity that suggests how violent groups can make violence less aversive and how social identification with the violent group increases individual motivation to engage in violent behavior among group members.

Based on this review, we propose that engaging in violent behavior increases identification with one's violent group, leading to a cycle of violence in which group identification increases willingness to engage in violent behavior and perpetrating violence increases group identification. We end with suggestions for future research that tests both directions of this cycle and that uses this hypothesis to design theoretically motivated interventions for demobilizing and reintegrating members of violent groups into less violent societies.

Previous Research on Collective Violence

The study of collective violence has been heavily influenced by social scientists' desire to understand recent instances of mass participation in collective violence. The massive scale of violence observed during the Holocaust sparked research on how features of a situation, such as the presence of authority figures and well-defined institutional expectations, can explain participation in collective violence over and above individual differences, such as predisposal to obedience or to aggression and antisocial tendencies. At the same time, social psychologists developed theories of group identity and of the roots of intergroup animus to understand the circumstances under which individuals endorse negative beliefs and discriminate against members of a different group. These group-based theories have been useful in understanding collective violence following intergroup competition for resources, such as the civil war and genocide in Rwanda and the ongoing violence between Israelis and Palestinians in the Middle East. More recently, the 9/11 terrorist attacks against the United States and the surge in the "global war on terror" increased interest in studying the process of individual radicalization and the cases in which individuals make extreme personal sacrifices in the name of violence against their group's enemy. This accumulated research helps us to understand the production of violence between groups, as well as individual participation in violence. As we will indicate, however, the literature undertheorizes some aspects of our understanding of individual motives for engaging in violent behavior on behalf of a collective and the consequences of this participation.

The Situationist Perspective

In the wake of widespread direct and indirect involvement in the Holocaust, social scientific explanations for participation in collective violence that were based on individuals' dispositions or taste for violence no longer seemed sufficient. Instead, psychologists attempted to explain mass participation in collective violence using a situationist approach, which focuses on the immediate context in which individuals engage in violence. From this perspective, which is fundamental to the project of social psychology, the immediate situation is considered a primary and powerful force for encouraging violent behavior from people who would not otherwise be considered violent or extremist.

This line of thinking about the power of the situation to induce violent behavior was first introduced by the philosopher Hannah Arendt (1963) in her controversial yet highly influential book on Adolf Eichmann, a prominent Nazi who stood trial in Israel for his role in the Holocaust. After observing some of the trial, Arendt argued that in contrast to the prevailing wisdom that inherently evil people perpetrate violence, many Nazis were ordinary people influenced to participate in violence by a desire to obey authorities and by other features of the wartime situation. Arendt coined the term "the banality of evil" to describe how ordinary social processes such as obedience to authority can produce violence. At the time of publication, Arendt's situationist perspective was widely criticized for excusing and humanizing members of the Nazi party (Miller, Gordon, & Buddie, 1999).

Yet groundbreaking studies in the new field of social psychology illustrated Arendt's point. Stanley Milgram (1974) brought ordinary American community members to his laboratory, ostensibly to participate in a learning and memory experiment. The experimenter asked participants to deliver obviously painful electric shocks to another participant (actually a confederate) when he failed at a word-learning task. Contradicting the a priori predictions obtained from various psychological and sociological experts, Milgram found that the majority of these ordinary, nonsadistic participants capitulated to the instructions of the laboratory's authority figure, sometimes to the point of shocking the confederate until he was presumably dead. Participants capitulated not only to

prestigious experimenters from Yale but also to experimenters operating out of an unmarked laboratory in a nearby city where Milgram replicated the experiment. Later, other psychologists operating in the situationist tradition showed how situations that call on individuals to act as a representative of an institution or of their country, such as prison guard, encourage violent and even sadistic behavior from ordinary individuals (Haney, Banks, & Zimbardo, 1973; Zimbardo, 2007).

While Milgram demonstrated that ordinary individuals would commit violence in a hierarchically structured situation, he also showed that individuals disliked the violence. Milgram's many iterations of the experiment all demonstrated extreme discomfort among participants as they carried out their harmful duties and also many instances of opportunistic disobedience to authority commands, such as when the experiment included peers who dissented or disagreement between two authority figures. Thus, the early situationist literature offered explanations for individual participation in violence, as well as the beginnings of a psychological portrait of individuals asked to commit violence on behalf of others, suggesting that harming others could be an aversive experience.

The Group Identity and Intergroup Conflict Perspective

In modern social psychology, one of the most well-developed areas of study is the vast literature on group identity and intergroup conflict (Hewstone, Rubin, & Willis, 2002; Kelman, 2006). Devoted to the study of ingroup loyalty and the creation of animus between groups, theories begin from the empirical observation that individuals are motivated to belong to groups to fulfill basic needs for belonging and identity (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and that their motivation to maintain a positive self-identity drives them to favor their fellow group members over others (Brewer, 1999; Hogg, Hohman, & Rivera, 2008). Identification with an ingroup, defined as a sense of belonging and an integration of the group identity into self identity (Ellemers, 2012), motivates individuals to contribute material and psychological resources to the group and creates a preference for fellow group members over others.

Intergroup conflict does not spring automatically from this "ingroup love," but rather follows from resource scarcity (Blumer, 1958; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Intergroup competition over resources is recognized as the root of intergroup conflict. From there, various theories explain how competition creates negative stereotypes of and emotional prejudice and hatred toward an outgroup (Brewer & Campbell, 1976), group narratives that justify unequal treatment of ingroup versus outgroup individuals (Hammack, 2008), and behavioral discrimination (Crosby, Bromley, & Saxe, 1980). Research demonstrates circumstances under which group members will support the idea of violent behavior against members of the outgroup (e.g., Reicher, Haslam, & Rath, 2008). Overall, however, the group identity and intergroup conflict literatures do not provide evidence demonstrating when group members will actually perpetrate violence against another group on behalf of their group identity (cf. Green, Strolovitch, & Wong, 1998).

The situationist and the group identity and intergroup conflict literatures are highly compatible, and many researchers use both perspectives. Recently, however, some psychologists who study conflict and social identity have argued that the situationists' focus on obedience to authority and the power of institutional roles downplays the critical predictive role of group identification for individuals' participation in collective violence (Reicher & Haslam, 2011). These scholars theorize that individual group members come to identify with violent groups and the authority figures who govern these groups and then willfully engage in violent behavior on behalf of these figures or groups. This theoretical perspective from social identity theory informs our present synthesis by placing identification with a violent group at the center of the cycle of individual perpetration of collective violence—identification with a violent group can be a motivator and also a result of the violence.

The Individual Extremist Perspective

Terrorist attacks, and in particular suicide bombings, are often carried out by one or two group members who inflict mass casualties on behalf of the group. Therefore, scholars motivated to understand terrorism generally focus on why some individuals go to violent extremes for their group, while others do not. Primary among these explanations are individuals' level of identification with the violent group (Hogg & Adelman, 2013; Swann, Gomez, Seyle, Morales, & Huici, 2009) and also a desire for personal significance in one's life, which has been theorized to motivate some group members to engage in violent behavior such as suicide terrorism (Kruglanski et al., 2014). While this literature helpfully exposes how ordinary individuals can become violent extremists (Atran, 2003), it focuses primarily on identifying individual differences that predict which group members go to the greatest extremes, rather than identifying more general processes of mass participation in collective violence.

Taken together, the situationist, group identity and intergroup conflict, and individual extremist approaches to the study of collective violence provide important insights into why ordinary individuals come to engage in different kinds of violent behavior. However, they do not fully account for the phenomenon. While the situationist perspective privileges the context in which an individual operates, it does not explicitly focus on the individual's relationship with a collective. The intergroup perspective highlights the importance of the collective for motivating individuals' animus and support for violence, but it does not examine the act of perpetrating collective violence and its ramifications. Without theorizing motivations for and consequences of violence per se, we may misunderstand ways in which violence is an important class of behaviors that operates differently than other forms of intergroup conflict behavior like discrimination. Finally, the extremist perspective focuses on an individual's relationship with their group but takes an individual differences approach to understanding why certain group members engage in violent behavior. Thus, the goal of the rest of this article is to review additional research that can shed light on the theoretically and empirically identified role of the collective in motivating violent behavior and the individual and collective consequences of this participation in collective violence.

Developing a Psychology of Violent Behavior

How do ordinary people view and experience participation in violent behavior? Contrary to the idea that humans are innately violent and will express and enjoy their violent tendencies when given the opportunity, military history and scientific evidence show that most people avoid physically harming others, even at personal cost (Grossman, 1996). As we review below, when people who are inexperienced with violence engage in violent behavior, they generally find the experience aversive and experience physiological and psychological distress. But despite the fact that the experience is unpleasant, participating in violence makes people *more* likely to engage in subsequent violence, which is a central puzzle of the psychology of violence.

Violence Is Aversive

Violence is often depicted in the media as exciting or cathartic. In actuality, individuals treat violence as aversive and actively seek to avoid engaging in violent behavior and harming others. Why is this the case? To varying degrees, individuals are socialized from a young age to believe that harming others is wrong and that those who do so should be punished and in some cases ostracized from society. Additionally, interpersonal violence goes against the human need to connect with others (Collins, 2009). As argued by a military psychologist, "resistance to killing one's fellow man . . . exists as a result of a powerful combination of instinctive, rational, environmental, hereditary,

cultural, and social factors. It is there, it is strong, and it gives us cause to believe that there just may be hope for mankind after all” (Grossman, 1996, p. 40).

Psychologists have started to investigate some of the many causes of aversion to violence and interpersonal harm that Grossman highlights. Laboratory-based research by moral psychologists supports the idea that individuals avoid harming others, particularly when they will bear responsibility for causing the harm. Research on the classic “trolley problem” illustrates this point (Thomson, 1985). In this hypothetical scenario, a trolley will kill five people working ahead of it on the track unless it is switched onto another track, avoiding the five workers but instead killing one person working on the other track. When presented with this scenario, around 90% of research participants say they would choose to switch the train onto the other track, thereby killing one person instead of five (Navarrete, McDonald, Mott, & Asher, 2012). However, participants will generally choose to let the five people die if instead of pulling a switch they have to physically push one person off of a footbridge in front of the train to divert it. In this scenario, most people report that it is not morally acceptable to push one person in front of the train, even though it would save five other people (Miller & Cushman, 2013). Scholars have explained the difference in moral judgments between these two scenarios in terms of an aversion to directly causing interpersonal harm. People will only choose the “utilitarian” option—that which is better for the greater good—when they do not have to cause the harm intentionally and directly. This aversion echoes Milgram’s general demonstration of research participants’ aversion to electrocuting fellow participants and particularly to the iteration in which Milgram observed the most participant disobedience—when participants were asked to physically administer the shock by taking the other participant’s hand and laying it on a shock plate.

Historical evidence from studies of soldiers in interstate wars also demonstrates that individuals find violence aversive, documenting how difficult it was for soldiers to fire their weapons directly at the enemy. Interviews with soldiers after World War II combat revealed that soldiers often didn’t fire their guns in battle, even when faced with enemy fire, or that they deliberately fired above the heads of their enemies (Grossman, 1996; Marshall, 1947). Consistent with these findings, military historians employing methods such as battle reenactments and analyses of weapons technology show that actual fatality rates in many historical wars were much lower than expected, suggesting that soldiers were not firing directly at the enemy with the intent to injure or kill (Griffith, 1989; Keegan & Holmes, 1985). Firing rates in battle did not improve until militaries developed more realistic and immersive training methods specifically aimed at reducing the aversive nature of violence among new soldiers (Grossman, 1996).

Individuals Experience Distress When They Harm Others

When ordinary people who are inexperienced with violence do engage in violent behavior, they generally experience psychological and physiological distress. Distress may arise from consideration of the negative outcomes associated with harming others, a response known as *outcome aversion* (Miller & Cushman, 2013). Negative outcomes may include the experience of violating broader societal standards to “do no harm” and the empathic experience of causing another human being pain and suffering. Distress arising from social standard violation and empathy with another’s suffering may be felt consciously, as perpetrators of violence reflect on these topics, but these considerations may also arise automatically, without conscious reflection. Beyond these social and empathic concerns, individuals can experience a learned physiological response to the violent action itself, distinguished from outcome aversion as *action aversion* (Miller, Hannikainen, & Cushman, 2014). In other words, individuals may experience distress from simply performing a harmful action, such as the physical act of punching another person, even absent any consideration of negative outcomes associated with the action. Action aversion may occur because people are socialized throughout their

lives to associate certain harmful actions with bad outcomes, and eventually the association between the action and distress becomes automatic.

In one series of studies demonstrating the physiological distress caused by action aversion (Cushman, Gray, Gaffey, & Mendes, 2012), researchers asked laboratory participants to simulate interpersonal harm, for example stabbing a confederate in the neck with a stage knife, shooting a confederate with a disabled gun, or smacking a realistic looking baby doll against a table. Participants randomly assigned to simulate interpersonal harm exhibited physiological reactions associated with negative stress responses, as compared to participants who witnessed the simulated harm or who carried out similar nonviolent actions like smacking a broom against the table. Distressing physiological reactions increased for the “simulated harm” participants as soon as they received instructions about performing the harmful actions from the experimenter and remained high as they performed the actions.

Another study by Navarrete et al. (2011) investigated individuals’ reactions to harming others using an immersive virtual reality set-up to simulate the trolley problem in three-dimensions. In one condition, participants had to flip a switch to divert the train so it would kill one person instead of five. In the other condition, the train was already moving along the track with one person instead of five, so the participant did not have to take any action. Participants who had to physically flip the switch in the virtual reality set-up to achieve the outcome of saving five people experienced more distressing physiological reactions than did participants who did not have to take any action to achieve the same outcome.

Surveys of combatants have long shown a positive correlation between combat exposure and later psychological distress, specifically mental health problems such as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression (Dohrenwend et al., 2006). More recent quasi-experimental methods comparing soldiers in US military units assigned to combat versus noncombat zones also find that soldiers sent to combat zones are more likely to develop PTSD than those sent to noncombat zones (Cesur, Sabia & Tekin, 2013). Even after controlling for combat exposure, studies with Vietnam and Iraq War veterans show that killing in war is associated with increased PTSD as well as other problems functioning such as alcohol abuse and anger (MacNair, 2002; Maguen et al., 2009; Maguen et al., 2010).

Violence Begets Violence

Research generally finds that engaging in violent behavior makes people more, not less, likely to engage in violence in the future. Given the literature reviewed above showing that violence is generally aversive and leads to distress, this is a counterintuitive empirical fact. The finding that violence begets more violence also runs counter to popular beliefs about catharsis. The catharsis hypothesis states that individuals will feel better, and less aggressive, after they “release” their aggression by acting violently (Bushman, Baumeister, & Phillips, 2001). However, research indicates that the opposite is true; aggressing following a frustrating event causes individuals to act more aggressively in future interactions, providing support to the idea that acting violently predicts more violence in the future (Bushman, 2002; Bushman, Baumeister, & Stack, 1999).

In the laboratory, social psychologists have designed simulated “killing” paradigms to test the idea that violent behavior leads to more violence (Martens, Kosloff, Greenberg, Landau, & Schmader, 2007). For example, in one series of experiments, participants were asked to kill bugs by putting them into a modified coffee grinder that appears to destroy the bugs (bugs are actually siphoned into a vessel inside of the grinder where they remain unharmed; Martens, Kosloff, & Jackson, 2010). Participants were randomly assigned to conditions in which they were asked to kill either one or five bugs in a practice task. Participants then completed a self-paced “extermination” task in which they were instructed to kill as many bugs as possible during a set time period. Researchers found that killing more bugs in the practice task predicts higher levels of killing during

the subsequent extermination task. This effect only holds when participants are made to feel that they are actually killing the bugs, as opposed to participating in a simulated task.

Research on violent video games, in which players shoot and kill enemies, also supports the idea that violence begets violence. Although there has been some controversy over the conclusions to be drawn from this body of research (Elson & Ferguson, 2013), studies generally find that playing violent video games increases aggressive thought, affect, and behavior (Anderson et al., 2010; Greitemeyer & Mugge, 2014). For example, one recent experiment randomly assigned participants to play a violent or nonviolent video game for 20 minutes a day, three days in a row. Aggressive behavior, measured by the intensity and duration of an unpleasant noise blast chosen for an opponent in a computer game, increased over the three days for the violent games players, but not for the nonviolent game players (Hasan, Begue, Scharnow, & Bushman, 2013).

What psychological processes explain the generation of more violent behavior following the first violent act? To persist in violent behavior, individuals must overcome aversion and distress in reaction to violence. Psychologists have investigated a number of processes in which individuals engage to decrease aversion or distress responses. These processes include: desensitization through repeated exposure to the act, shifting personal definitions of violence, disengaging from moral reasoning processes, and changing other attitudes or behaviors to reduce the experience of dissonance between personal standards and the act of violence.

Why Does Violence Beget Violence?

Desensitization. Desensitization is one of the most widely discussed and tested explanations for why violence leads to more violence. Desensitization explanations posit that exposure to violence even in the short term can physiologically desensitize individuals to violence, thus making future violence less aversive. Exposure to violent media, such as playing violent video games, reduces physiological reactivity to videotaped real-life scenes of violence (Carnagey, Anderson, & Bushman, 2007) and violent images (Bartholow, Bushman, & Sestir, 2006; Engelhardt, Bartholow, Kerr, & Bushman, 2011). In these latter two studies, participants who played violent video games subsequently exhibited physiological desensitization in response to violent images, as compared to those who played nonviolent games. Desensitization was measured by reduction in the amplitude of the P300 component of event-related brain potential (ERP), a brain response associated with aversion to stimuli (Engelhardt et al., 2011). Additionally, reduction in P300 amplitude predicted increased aggression in a subsequent task in both studies, suggesting that physiological desensitization is linked to increased future violence.

Changed perceptions of violence. To continue engaging in violent behavior, individuals may need to change their definitions or perceptions of the violent act itself. For example, playing violent video games changes players' perceptions of what constitutes aggression more generally, leading them to act more aggressively in everyday life (Greitemeyer, 2014). Relatedly, individuals may need to define others' actions as more aggressive in order to motivate their own violent response. Experience with violence in video games does reveal this kind of shift in expectations of hostility by others (Hasan et al., 2013).

Moral disengagement. Individuals may also need to disengage from their moral reasoning about their targets in order to persist with violent behaviors. They can do this by excluding the targets from the category of humans and other beings that deserve moral consideration (Opotow, 2005) or by disengaging from moral reasoning altogether during and after the violent act (Bandura, 1999). In another study on violent video games, Researchers found that moral disengagement significantly interacted with the effect of violent video game play on aggression, such that participants higher in moral disengagement showed a stronger effect of playing violent video games on aggressive behavior (Gabbiadini, Riva, Andrighetto, Volpato, & Bushman, 2014).

Dissonance reduction. Finally, people may attempt to reduce the distress they feel when engaging in violent behavior by changing other views, attitudes, or behaviors in a way that allows them to justify their participation in the violence, a tactic known as dissonance reduction (Festinger, 1957). In the bug-killing studies described previously, Martens and colleagues (2007) argue that killing is counternormative and therefore must be justified by the individual perpetrator to reduce discomfort associated with having performed the harmful act. Therefore, individuals are motivated to follow through with the act of killing in a subsequent task because to do otherwise would be to admit that the action was wrong the first time. They point to evidence that the effect of initial bug killing on subsequent killing is stronger among individuals who feel more similar to the target of the violence (in this case bugs) and that the effect only occurs when participants think that the killing is real (Martens et al., 2010).

Individuals can successfully engage in these psychological processes to overcome their aversion and distress when they are highly motivated to commit violence. A powerful motivation that we will now examine is the individual's identification with a violent group. Over and above the various personal motivations that brought individuals into a violent group, their identity as members of the group motivates them to perpetrate violence as they seek to become prototypical group members and to serve the group's mission. Additionally, violent groups can help to remove some of the aversion and distress of violence so that group members do not need to engage in more effortful psychological processes like dissonance reduction or moral disengagement.

We turn now to the role of the violent group by reviewing research on the motivating force of group identity and of individual identification with groups. Typically, motivations for violence and the effects of participation in violence are examined from the perspective of individual actors. Few research literatures specifically theorize the role of the collective in collective violence. Using what we know about the psychology of violence that we have just outlined, we now incorporate collective dynamics to more fully depict why individuals are motivated to perpetrate collective violence and what happens to their propensity for future violence as a result.

The Role of the Collective in Collective Violence: Identification with Violent Groups Motivates and Is Motivated by Violent Behavior

General psychological theories of identity and of group dynamics are helpful for integrating the collective into the foregoing model of individual participation in violence. So far, we have claimed that individuals face the task of overcoming aversion to violence and distress reactions to violence and that they do so by engaging in compensatory processes that distance them from the aversion and distress and help them to maintain their motivation to commit violence. In this section, we review evidence suggesting that identification with the violent group will motivate participation in collective violence, over and above other individual motivations, and that violent groups will be able to remove psychological obstacles to violence, i.e., reduce aversion and distress reactions. Finally, we review some classic and emerging research suggesting that participation in collective violence can serve to increase identification with the violent group, even when individuals are not initially identified with the group.

Identification with a Violent Group Increases Motivation to Perpetrate Violence

A key insight from social psychology is that individuals' fundamental need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) drives them to develop interpersonal bonds and to categorize themselves as members of social groups. Thus, in addition to their personal sense of self, individuals develop collective, or group, selves (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994). Individuals vary in the extent to which they identify with a particular social group, meaning

the extent to which the group is a central part of their overall self-concept. In some cases, individuals are so highly identified with the group that their group self either overtakes or becomes fully integrated with the personal self (Ellemers, 2012; Swann et al., 2009). When this occurs, people come to see themselves and act as group members rather than as unique individuals, and the group self takes priority over the individual self.

Highly identified group members are more likely to comply with group-specific norms, even when the resulting behaviors violate normative standards endorsed by one's broader society (Ellemers, 2012; Williams, 2007), are maladaptive to one's health and safety (Goldman et al., 2014, Hogg, Siegel, & Hohman, 2011), or are counter to one's private beliefs (Miller & Prentice, 1996). When an individual's sense of self becomes fully integrated with that of their group, a state of being called identity fusion occurs; fused individuals become more willing to fight or die for their group (Swann, Gomez, Huici, Morales, & Hixon, 2010; Swann et al., 2009), and more supportive of extreme behavior that will benefit the group (Gomez, Brooks, Buhrmester, Vazquez, & Jetten, 2011; Swann, Jetten, Gomez, Whitehouse, & Bastian, 2012).

These findings have clear implications for individuals' identification with violent groups. Specifically, when individuals identify with groups that that use violence to achieve their political, economic, or social goals, they will be motivated to comply with the group's violent standards, whether or not the violence is condoned by the broader society, and, to some extent, regardless of the individual's own views. Moreover, violent groups are likely to inspire stronger identification among their members (Castano, Leidner, & Slawuta, 2008). High levels of identification with any groups occur most frequently in contexts where individuals are reminded of uncertainty and mortality (Castano, Yzerbyt, Paladino, & Sacchi, 2002; Hogg et al., 2008) and when the group is particularly cohesive (Yzerbyt, Castano, Leyens, & Paladino, 2000). Violent groups often operate in uncertain and dangerous environments and, under certain circumstances, can be highly cohesive collectives with strict rules, strong leaders, and clear boundaries (e.g., Weinstein, 2007). Taken together, this literature suggests that members of violent groups are likely to be highly identified with their group and that their identification with a violent group will be a strong motivator to commit violence, above personal motivations for joining the group in the first place.

On top of the motivational force of identification with the violent group, groups can purposefully create additional motivation to engage in violence through strategies such as generating outgroup hate, increasing perceptions of threat to the survival of the group, and incentivizing violent behavior. We briefly review each of these three strategies to illustrate other ways that identification with a group can produce additional motivations to commit violence.

Generating outgroup hate. One particularly powerful strategy for motivating collective violence is generating outgroup hate. Group leaders can construct or raise the salience of an "us" versus "them" divide to strengthen the identity of the ingroup and homogenize and demonize the outgroup (Glick, 2002). Leaders may also strategically blame negative economic and social outcomes on outgroups in order to ramp up outgroup hate. For example, Nazi rhetoric during WWII blamed the Jews for the problems faced by the German people, a tactic known as scapegoating. When individuals come to see the outgroup as the enemy with whom they are competing over resources or power, they will feel more motivated to engage in violent behavior in an effort to protect their group. Highly identified group members may even come to see violent behavior perpetrated against the outgroup as virtuous (Reicher, Haslam, & Rath, 2008). Thus scapegoating, and outgroup hate more generally, can provide additional motivation for committing violence, which may no longer be seen as aversive and may not require justification when the target of one's violence is a despised other.

Increasing perceptions of threat. Group leaders can also increase motivation to engage in collective violence by playing up the threats faced by one's group. There are a number of different kinds of symbolic, material, and existential threat, for example threats to the economic, social, or literal survival of the group and its members. Reminders of death increase prejudice, stereotyping,

and support for aggression against outgroups (Greenberg & Kosloff, 2008). Several laboratory studies have connected threat to lower levels of outgroup aggression, like discrimination and exclusion. In a study using Scottish participants, Castano (2004) found that those primed with death were more likely to discriminate against targets that looked more like the outgroup than the ingroup, and conveyed more negative, stereotypical judgments on the outgroup in a trait-attribution task. Additionally, threats to the safety and image of one's ingroup predict a reduced desire to interact with outgroup members (Brambilla, Sacchi, Pagliaro, & Ellemers, 2013). Similar effects have been found using a minimal-groups paradigm (Harmon-Jones, Greenberg, Solomon, & Simon, 1996) and when testing implicit instead of explicit bias (Bradley, Kennison, Burke, & Chaney, 2012).

Various kinds of threat have also been linked to more aggressive behavior and support for violence. This work generally finds that group members respond even more aggressively to threat relative to threatened individuals (McPherson & Joireman, 2009). Using a sample of Iranian college students, Pyszczynski et al. (2006) examined the effect of the threat of death ("mortality salience") on attitudes toward another student who supported martyrdom by killing Americans. Exposure to the idea of death not only increased liking for the other student but also increased participants' likelihood of considering such activities themselves. In another study, threats to participants' national or gender identity increased aggression and support for revenge when that group identity was made salient (Fischer et al., 2010). Thus, playing up perceptions of threat to the survival of a violent group can increase individual members' motivation to engage in violent behavior against others on behalf of the group.

Providing social and material incentives. Violent groups can also motivate their members to engage in violent behavior by incentivizing violence with material and social rewards. Groups may directly offer material rewards such as cash and in-kind goods like food, clothing, better housing, drugs, weapons, and even sexual partners to members who perpetrate violence (Weinstein, 2007). Group leaders may also condone or actively encourage looting during violent episodes as a way to provide additional material rewards (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004) or withdraw material rewards as a form of punishment for failing to participate in violence.

Instead of material incentives, groups can also use social rewards or punishment to induce individual members to engage in violence. The social structure of violent groups generally incentivizes violent behavior, as violence is associated with power, status, and a sense of belonging (Goldman et al., 2014). New and peripheral members can gain recognition, respect, and status from their peers by perpetrating violence. Those who fail to engage in violent behavior may be punished for their lack of action, experiencing shame and rejection by other group members. More radical forms of social sanctions include physical punishment, threats to the safety of oneself and one's family, and threats of banishment from the group. Under the prospect of such extreme punishment, individuals may feel like they have no choice but to go along with the group's desire for them to commit violence.

When groups explicitly incentivize violence through rewards or punishment, violent behavior may still be seen as aversive by individual members. The alternative—not receiving rewards or receiving punishment—will motivate violence if it is perceived to be even more aversive than the violence itself. Based on the dissonance literature, it seems possible that some rewards might paradoxically undermine group members' motivation to perpetrate violence on behalf of the group, when the reward is so high that it implies the violence is too dangerous or is not intrinsically rewarding for group members. To our knowledge, there is no research yet suggesting this in the area of violence.

Groups Reduce Obstacles to Violent Behavior

While violent groups can motivate individual members to commit violence (pushing them toward violence), groups can also reduce psychological obstacles to participation in violence by

making violence less aversive and distressing for individual members. Examples of such strategies include making violence normative within the collective, increasing psychological distance between group members and the target of their violence, and providing access to drugs and alcohol. We discuss these strategies below.

Making violence normative. Although violent behavior may be counternormative in one's broader society, perpetrating violence is normative within violent groups. Thus, groups can decrease aversion to violent behavior by demonstrating that violence is a typical and desirable behavior within the group. Perceptions among individual members that violence is normative come from observation of and discussion about the material and social rewards and sanctions that support violent acts. For example, research by sociologists shows that gangs generally adhere to a "code of the streets," an informal but highly structured set of rules that govern violent behavior within and between gangs (Anderson, 2000). Through observation and discussion, individuals infer that in order to be a good group member, one must support and engage in violent behavior, at least when other group members are watching.

In the laboratory, research by psychologists using the bug-killing paradigm described earlier supports the idea that making violence normative within one's group reduces aversion to engaging in violent behavior. Researchers manipulated perceptions of social validation in the bug-killing paradigm through the actions of a confederate or previous participants who either agreed or refused to kill the bugs (Webber, Schimel, Martens, Hayes, & Faucher, 2013). When participants perceived their violent behavior to be normative, they experienced less self-reported distress after killing the bugs than when they perceived their actions to be socially invalidated.

Increasing psychological distance to the target of violence. Engaging in violent behavior is more aversive when the target of one's violence is less psychologically distant (Grossman, 1996). Objects or events can be psychologically distant along various dimensions, including spatial and social (Lieberman, Trope, & Stephan, 2007). Increasing spatial and social distance may be particularly effective methods of making violence less aversive for group members. Increasing spatial distance (e.g., shooting from a great distance as opposed to point blank) renders the violent behavior itself less aversive, and increasing social distance (e.g., dehumanizing the target of violence) can reduce empathy with the target of one's violence and make violent behavior seem less morally reprehensible.

Spatial distance. Different types of violent behavior can be placed along a continuum ranging from physically close to distant (Grossman, 1996). On one end of the continuum is physically close violence such as sexual violence and stabbing and on the other end is physically distant violence such as firing from drones (Grossman, 1996). Throughout military history, soldiers have shown much more resistance to engaging in forms of violence that are physically proximate, even though such forms often result in fewer casualties. Therefore, violent groups can reduce members' aversion to violent behavior by increasing spatial distance to the target of one's violence. Modern militaries in developed countries have done so by adopting weapons technologies such as drones that allow for greater physical space between the group member and the target of their violence. Even violent groups that do not have advanced technologies available to them can increase physical distance, for example through the use of guns, landmines, and grenades instead of machetes and knives.

Social distance. Increasing social distance between group members and the target of their violence is another way that groups make violence less aversive. The most commonly discussed tactic for reducing social distance is dehumanization, defined as perceiving a group or person as lacking humanness (Goff, Eberhardt, Williams, & Jackson, 2008; Haslam & Loughnan, 2014). Viewing the target of one's violence as less than human (more socially distant) makes it easier to cause them harm, even in the extreme case in which the target of one's violence was once a neighbor or community member. Groups of people can be dehumanized by figuratively likening them to animals and insects (Goff et al., 2008). For example, Jews in Nazi Germany were likened to rodents,

and Tutsis in Rwanda were referred to as cockroaches. When groups of people are perceived as dangerous or disgusting animals instead of as fellow human beings, then the moral principle of “do no harm” may no longer apply. Put bluntly, slaughtering pests is viewed as more morally acceptable than slaughtering humans.

Violent groups are particularly well-positioned to promote dehumanization of others because social connection enables dehumanization (Waytz & Epley, 2012). When people have social ties with close others, they no longer have such a strong need for social connection with people outside of their immediate circles. In four lab experiments, Waytz and Epley (2012) found that participants who were experimentally manipulated to feel socially connected were more likely to dehumanize members of other social groups, particularly distant others. They were also more likely to recommend harsh treatment for dehumanized others, such as terrorist detainees. Consistent with this last finding, Christians who dehumanize Muslims have been found to report more willingness to torture Muslim prisoners of war (Viki, Osgood, & Phillips, 2013).

Providing drugs and alcohol. Another way that groups can make violence less aversive is to provide members with easy access to drugs and alcohol. Research generally finds that alcohol is associated with increases in violent behavior. For example, using a within-subjects design among adolescent males, White, Fite, Pardini, Mun, and Loeber (2013) show that increases in alcohol consumption from an individual’s baseline are associated with increases in aggressive behavior.

Alcohol has both pharmacological and social-cognitive effects on aggression (Steele & Southwick, 1985). Begue, Bushman, Giancola, Subra, and Rosset (2010) outline three pathways through which alcohol increases aggression. First, alcohol consumption leads individuals to focus on the most salient and proximal factors of a situation, undermining self-regulation and resulting in increased aggressive behavior. Second, individuals may associate alcohol with aggression in their long-term memory, and these associations are activated in contexts with drinking, triggering aggressive thoughts and behavior. Third, individuals expect to face fewer consequences from aggressive behavior when under the influence because they can blame alcohol for their behavior. This pathway is completely separate from alcohol’s pharmacological effect on the body and may be particularly relevant for understanding the role of drugs and alcohol in reducing aversion to violent behavior (Olusanya, 2013). Blaming one’s behavior on drug or alcohol consumption may allow individuals to engage in violence without compromising their view of the self as moral and without focusing on the consequences of violence.

Now that we have reviewed how violent groups motivate violent behavior through processes of identification and also by strategically motivating and removing obstacles to violence, we now turn to the other side of the cycle: when perpetration of violence increases identification with violent groups.

Violent Behavior Increases Identification with Violent Groups

Based on classic and emerging literature on the consequences of participation in collective violence, we propose that engaging in violent behavior on behalf of one’s group can increase identification with the group. Identification with a violent group can increase following participation in collective violence for two general reasons. One, individuals seek to justify their violent behavior, and particularly the distress caused by the behavior, by inferring that their behavior is based on their strong identification with the group. For example, individuals may justify their behavior by saying that it was part of their responsibility as a good group member and that the group must be important to them if they were willing to harm others for the sake of the group.

Two, identification with a violent group can increase following participation in collective violence because perpetrators may feel distanced from their other nonviolent social identities. When individuals engage in violent behavior, part of the distress they experience comes from knowing that

they have violated broader societal norms to “do no harm.” While the other members of their violent group are supportive of their violent behavior, meaningful others outside of the violent group will likely be less understanding or supportive or may even be opposed to their behavior. Therefore, individuals may attempt to reduce their distress by distancing themselves from other social relationships and identities outside of the violent group. This could be due to a fear (real or imagined) that meaningful others outside of the violent group will reject them. Individuals may also feel like they no longer relate as much to people outside of the violent group, and in a sense, they come to reject their other social identities. As a result of this distancing process, individuals will have weakened ties with others outside of the violent group and will become more highly identified with the violent group.

Initial support for these ideas comes from classic studies in social psychology on unpleasant group initiations. In a study by Aronson and Mills (1959), participants who went through a severe (though not violent) initiation to join a group rated the group as more attractive than those who went through a mild initiation or no initiation at all. Gerard and Mathewson (1966) conducted a follow-up study to more precisely test what they labeled the “suffering leading to liking” hypothesis. They found that participants who received a severe electric shock as part of a group initiation rated other group members more highly than participants who received a mild electric shock.

Recent research supports the idea that violence, particularly when aimed at other meaningful social groups, can increase identification with one’s current group. In an article testing levels of ingroup identification after individuals switch teams in a live-action tag game and among professional basketball players, Toosi, Masicampo, and Ambady (2014) find that engaging in aggressive acts against the group to which one previously belonged is the strongest predictor of commitment to one’s new group. In the field-based political violence literature, researchers have made this argument with respect to the perpetration of sexual violence on behalf of one’s group. Using a dataset containing all 86 major civil wars between 1980 and 2009 and extensive interview and survey work with ex-combatants and civilians in postconflict Sierra Leone, Cohen (2013) finds that violent groups that recruit members through coercion are much more likely to engage in rape than groups that recruit through voluntary tactics. She argues that such groups use rape as a deliberate tactic to build cohesion among group members.

While this previous work is suggestive of a link between perpetrating violence and group identification, it relies on correlational data and very limited empirical evidence from the lab. Recent research builds on this previous work by analyzing survey data from ex-combatants in Liberia and Uganda regarding their violent behavior and their identification with the violent group to which they belonged during their respective countries’ long and brutal civil conflicts (Littman, 2014). Consistent with the present predictions regarding the cycle of violence, perpetrating violence is positively related to group identification among ex-combatants in Liberia, even when controlling for initial motivations for joining the group, length of time in the group, more general exposure to violence, and status in the group.

Ex-combatant data from Uganda provides a stricter test of this hypothesis, because nearly all members of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) were abducted from their home community and forced to join the violent group. Identification with or violence perpetrated on behalf of the LRA in this sample cannot be attributed to initial positive attitudes toward the group or a desire to fight with the group. Consistent with the hypothesis, Ugandan ex-combatants who report perpetrating more violence also report higher levels of identification with the LRA. Additionally, some individuals in the sample were forced by the LRA to commit violence against family members and friends; Littman shows that whether or not ex-combatants were forced to commit such violence was quasi-random. For these individuals, the relationship between perpetrating violence and identification with the LRA is plausibly a causal relationship. Again in support of predictions regarding a cycle of violence, former combatants forced to perpetrate violence against family members and friends report higher

levels of identification with the LRA. In sum, these findings from two different conflicts and from different tests support the hypothesis that violence can be used as a tool for increasing identification with violent groups. In this way, participation in collective violence contributes to the cohesion of violent groups and also hypothetically contributes to the longevity of the group's existence, a point to which we return when discussing policy implications of this work.

Cycle of Collective Violence: Group Identification and Perpetration of Collective Violence

We now return to the central question posed in this review: Why do ordinary people participate in collective violence, harming others on behalf of their group? While acknowledging that individuals have a number of varied motivations for *joining* violent groups, we propose that identification with one's violent group serves as a strong motivator for participation in violent behavior. Violent groups can help to counter individuals' aversion to causing interpersonal harm by providing group-level justifications and incentives for violence and by strategically removing obstacles to violence. As individuals seek to become desirable group members with a secure sense of belonging, they will be motivated to perpetrate violence on behalf of their group. Additionally, we propose that direct engagement in violent behavior against others increases identification with one's violent group.

Taken together, this account suggests a cycle of violence in which identification with one's violent group motivates participation in collective violence, and in turn, violent behavior increases identification with the group. The group, and the identity it bestows upon groups members, plays a crucial role in explaining why ordinary people engage in violent behavior. An important implication of this cycle is that individuals need not be highly predisposed toward violence when they first join a violent group. Individuals may join a violent group because they believe in the group's cause or believe that it is a good economic or social opportunity, and their desire to be a part of the collective will motivate them to perpetrate violence. Engaging in violent behavior will increase the individual's identification with the group, which in turn will increase their willingness to engage in future violence on behalf of the group. Another implication is that the cycle of violence can start with forced, as opposed to willing, participation in collective violence. Forced perpetration of violence absent initial group identification can also increase identification with violent groups as individuals seek to justify their engagement in a potentially aversive and distressing behavior.

Future Directions for Research and Application

There are many avenues for future research on the role of the collective and of group identification in understanding individual participation in collective violence. While previous research generally supports the notion that group membership can motivate individuals to engage in violence on behalf of one's group, very little empirical work has explored the consequences of engaging in violent behavior on identification with one's group. More lab and field-based evidence is needed to test the predictions of the reinforcing cycle of identification with violent groups and engagement in violent behavior. One of the challenges for empirical researchers going forward is to develop methods that accurately capture the phenomenon of violence while remaining ethical. For example, scholars have examined the relationship between group identification and self-reported support for violence, but this is only a first step as the motivations for and the effects of support for violence and actual participation in violence may be very different. Additionally, more observational survey and qualitative research that includes questions about group identification and experiences with violence is needed with members of actual violent groups, such as soldiers and gang members. Existing datasets on these populations typically include psychological questions to the extent that they wish to test clinical pathologies as a result of engagement in violence but are unable to test the social psychological hypotheses discussed in this review.

The cycle of violence outlined above also has political and policy consequences that should be tested in future research. If violent behavior increases group identification, then group members who perpetrate high levels of violence likely stay longer in their violent group. As a result, groups composed of highly identified members should be more cohesive, durable, and violent. Such groups should also be easier to internally police since highly identified group members will be motivated to follow group norms and policies set out by group leaders.

Implications for violence prevention and the reintegration of individuals who have participated in violence also follow from these observations. Central to this account of participation in collective violence is the idea that violent groups provide a sense of belonging and social rewards to group members. In particularly violent contexts, individuals may join violent groups and engage in violent behavior because it is an accessible and powerful social identity. A key to preventing individuals from joining such groups in the first place may be to strengthen alternative social groups and identities that can rival the rewards of violent group identities.

Additionally, programs aimed at demobilizing and rehabilitating former combatants often focus on individual economic and psychosocial reintegration. For example, governments and nonprofit organizations may offer cash in exchange for guns, or run skills training and microenterprise interventions aimed at giving former combatants the opportunity to start a small business. While such interventions have potential, they have generally not garnered widespread success, and in some cases former combatants have returned to conflict (Muggah, 2009). One of the problems with these types of reintegration programs is that they focus on providing goods and training to the individual, and in so doing fail to address the identity component to reintegration. Helping former violent group members to develop new, meaningful group memberships and to reconnect with former social identities may be a highly effective reintegration strategy, particularly in concert with economic or social interventions. For example, helping former combatants to set up an economic cooperative or social club alongside noncombatants from their home community may provide them with a new, meaningful group identity apart from their violent group. Insights from social psychology suggest that the belongingness component to such an intervention may be just as important as the economic or social benefits.

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