Understanding and Counteracting Genocide Denial

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Rezarta Bilali, Yeshim Iqbal, and Samuel Freel

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Understanding and Counteracting Genocide Denial

C11.P1 Genocide is the most atrocious crime against humanity, and committing genocide has negative legal and moral ramifications for the perpetrator group. The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948 has been ratified by a large number of countries. Yet no country has ever voluntarily acknowledged committing genocide (see Leach, Zeineddine, & Ĉehajić-Clancy 2013). Denial, however, is not unique to the crime of genocide. The growing social psychology literature on collective violence shows that denial is the most common response to in-group atrocities. For example, in a review of the empirical literature, Leach et al. (2013) found that across a large number of cases of mass violence and genocide (e.g., European colonization of countries in Africa and Asia, the colonization of indigenous people in Australia and Americas, genocides in Bosnia and Rwanda), members of perpetrator groups denied their group's responsibility for these actions and exhibited low levels of collective shame and guilt and low support for reparation policies.

C11.P2 Denial of collective violence is a barrier to reconciliation and justice processes. Gregory Stanton, the founder of Genocide Watch, considers denial to be the final stage of genocide, in which the perpetrators try to cover up and destroy the evidence of the crime (Stanton, 1998). Genocide denial is an indicator that more atrocities will be carried out in the future (Cohen, 2001; Stanton, 1998). Denial damages the mental health of survivors and other members of the victim group. It elicits resentment, hatred, and anger among victim group members (e.g., Kalayjian, Shahinian, Gergerian, & Saraydarian,

1996; Vollhardt, Mazur, & Lemahieu, 2014; for a more detailed account of effects of denial on victims, see Chapter 10).

C11.P3   In light of the pervasiveness of genocide denial by perpetrator groups and its negative consequences for the victim groups and for intergroup relations, in this chapter we provide a social psychological analysis of genocide denial and discuss strategies to reduce denial and increase acknowledgment among members of perpetrator groups. To accomplish this goal, we overview collective- and individual-level processes that perpetuate denial of in-group harm-doing. We build on a growing literature in social psychology which demonstrates that committing atrocities threatens the in-group's moral integrity and its social image (Leach, Bilali, & Pagliaro, 2014). Groups that commit atrocities are judged negatively, ostracized, and singled out. Members of perpetrator groups are therefore motivated to protect the in-group's positive identity and social image by denying or justifying in-group atrocities (e.g., Wohl, Branscombe, & Klar, 2006). In addition to these individual-level motivational factors, we suggest that genocide denial is especially difficult to address because it is embedded in and closely tied to the in-group's or nation's narratives, which are resistant to change.

C11.P4   To sum up, in the first part of the chapter we discuss the nature of genocide denial, as well as its societal and psychological underpinnings. We discuss how group narratives and individual-level factors can impede genocide recognition. In the second part of the chapter we examine a variety of social psychological strategies that might serve to counteract genocide denial.

The Nature of Denial

Genocide Denial in Official Narratives

C11.P5   In his seminal book *The States of Denial*, Cohen (2001) describes various forms of denial. Denial can range from outright rejection of facts (*literal denial*) to contestation of the meaning of the events or the target of blame (*interpretive* or *implicatory denial*) to acceptance of only a portion of the truth (*partial acknowledgment*). A well-known case of literal denial is the Turkish government's denial of the Armenian genocide. Turkish officials have long attributed claims that they committed genocide against Armenians in the First World War to a slander campaign on the part of the Armenian government (Dixon, 2010). Similarly, the Serbian government claimed that the

massacres in Sarajevo had been carried out by the Bosnians' own military and then blamed on the Serbs (Cohen, 2001). Literal denial, however, is not always possible. Access to information through the Internet and other media outlets makes it difficult to keep citizens in complete ignorance. Therefore, perpetrator groups may take a more pragmatic approach by admitting the basic facts but reframing their meaning (i.e., interpretive denial; Cohen, 2001). Interpretive denial is often accomplished through strategies such as euphemism, denial or minimization of responsibility, and other forms of rationalization. For instance, perpetrator groups can downplay their responsibility by blaming the victim or by assigning blame only to a few individuals in their group (i.e., focusing on a few "bad apples"; see Doris & Murphy, 2007). Focusing on the "bad apples" highlights the unique immorality of the individual perpetrators, setting them apart from the larger group and thereby exonerating the group as a whole. For instance, following World War II, a debate ensued within Germany over whether responsibility for atrocities rested with Germany as a whole or simply with the Nazi Party, which was viewed by some as a separate entity; in the early postwar years, many Germans viewed themselves as victims of the Third Reich (Levy & Sznaider, 2002). In some cases, not only are the atrocities denied, but the story is flipped to celebrate the perpetrators. In Serbia, the war criminals Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic, who ordered the massacres of thousands of people in Bosnia in 1994, were celebrated as heroes in the aftermath of the war (Ramet, 2007).

C11.P6   Another way groups undermine perpetrator responsibility is by downplaying their agency and highlighting the role of situational factors. For example, one narrative of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda emphasizes the situational forces at work, framing the genocide as a "sudden rupture which took everyone by surprise" or primarily as a consequence of elite manipulation (Buckley-Zistel, 2006, p. 6). Nazi officials used a similar argument in their defense: They were simply obeying orders and therefore not ultimately responsible for their actions (Charny, 2000). Interestingly, the narrative of passive obedient perpetrators became dominant in the social psychological study of genocide following Milgram's famous obedience studies. Recent work, however, has disputed this perspective by showing that, rather than being passively obedient, perpetrators are engaged followers of destructive ideologies or leadership (see Reicher, Haslam, & Smith, 2012).

C11.P7   Finally, in implicatory denial, the perpetrator group assigns blame to other parties, especially the victim group. For instance, in the 1965 Indonesian coup nearly 1 million communists or people accused of being communists

were put to death by the ascendant regime. The acts were justified through a narrative that highlighted the menace posed by the nation's left wing and the necessity of its destruction for the greater good (Zurbuchen, 2002). Victim blaming is especially likely in a long-running conflict characterized by cycles of violence. Each group tends to view the adversary as the aggressor and blame them for acts of violence committed by the in-group.

Genocide Denial Among Members of Perpetrator Groups

_{CII.S4}

_{CII.P8}   These denial strategies correspond closely with social psychological processes of moral disengagement—the mechanisms by which people accept and legitimize violence and inhumane conduct inflicted on others (Bandura, 1999, 2002). When confronted with reminders of an in-group's misdeeds, group members tend to legitimize the in-group's actions in various ways to protect the in-group's positive image and avoid the negative emotions that could arise (Branscombe & Doosje, 2004). They minimize the consequences of the actions such as the out-group suffering (Leidner, Castano, Zaiser, & Giner-Sorolla, 2010; Roccas, Klar, & Liviatan, 2006), deny the in-group's responsibility (Bilali, 2013; Bilali, Tropp, & Dasgupta, 2012; Iyer, Leach, & Crosby, 2003), or dehumanize the victims (Castano & Giner-Sorolla, 2006; Kofta & Slawuta, 2013). For instance, Bilali (2013) showed a high correspondence between different forms of denial in the official Turkish narrative disseminated through school textbooks and group members' narratives of the event, revealing the influence of the official state narrative on group members' construals of the events. In line with the Turkish official narrative, Turkish participants in the study minimized the in-group's responsibility for the violence, while at the same time blaming the Armenians and external factors such as the circumstances of war and third parties (see also Bilali et al., 2012). The majority of participants viewed the violence as intercommunal warfare, in line with the Turkish official narrative.

_{CII.P9}   To better exemplify Turks' individual construals of the history of violence with Armenians in the early 20th century, we revisited unpublished qualitative data from Bilali's (2013) study and conducted content analyses of Turks' descriptions of the violence against Armenians in 1915. In an open-ended question at the beginning of the study, participants were asked to report what happened in 1915 between Turks and Armenians. Sixty-two participants provided accounts of the history of that period. We used Cohen's denial

typology to examine Turkish participants' narratives. Specifically, we coded for 10 different denial strategies that are categorized into literal (one strategy), interpretive (four strategies), and implicatory (five strategies) denials (see Cohen, 2001). Each extract was coded for the presence or absence of each denial strategy. The most frequent form of denial was implicatory denial, the most frequent form of which was victim-blaming (i.e., Armenians started the violence—31 participants used this strategy), followed by the perceived necessity of the action (26 participants), advantageous comparisons (i.e., making one's behavior look good by comparing it to another crime that is perceived to be more serious—14 participants), and contextualization (11 participants). Interpretive denial was also very common, with euphemism (e.g., using *relocation* rather than *deportation* or *genocide* to describe what happened) being the most used strategy (35 participants) in this category, followed by denial of responsibility (21 participants). Fourteen participants engaged in literal denials. Seven participants reported that they had no knowledge of the history of this period. Most participants used multiple denial strategies ($M = 2.92$), although some used none at all and some used as many as eight. Only seven participants acknowledged the genocide and did not engage in denial. To sum up, denial constituted participants' construal of social reality—it is their understanding of the in-group's history. Denial is embedded in the collective narrative of the events, which is endorsed, with some variation, by group members. This has implications for our understanding of why genocide denial is persistent and resistant to change. In the following, we discuss how narratives of conflict, narratives of the nation's or group's conception of self, as well as lay theories of violence facilitate and bolster genocide denial.

Group and Conflict Narratives Facilitate Genocide Denial

C11.S5

Conflict Narratives

C11.S6

C11.P10 Genocide often occurs during war or violent intergroup conflict. In these cases, the denial of genocide is embedded in and supported by the group's narrative of the conflict, which is resistant to change (Bar-Tal, 2007). Opponent groups often perceive the intergroup conflict as a struggle between good and evil. In an attempt to portray the in-group as the righteous and moral party in the conflict, each group's conflict narrative focuses on its own suffering and

victimhood (Bar-Tal, 2000; Nadler & Saguy, 2004; Noor, Brown, & Prentice, 2008), while downplaying the harm inflicted on the out-group (Pratto & Glasford, 2008). Committing atrocities such as mass violence and genocide is highly incongruent with a narrative that portrays the in-group as the righteous victim. Therefore, accusations of committing genocide or other crimes are often perceived as baseless by the opponent to delegitimize the in-group.

In violent conflicts, the adversary is typically viewed as extremely threatening. Because of perceived threat from the out-group, groups sometimes engage in defensive violence or preemptive strikes to protect themselves (Staub, 1999). Therefore, violent actions by the in-group might be perceived as legitimate self-protection (Bandura, 1999; Staub, 1989). Wohl and Branscombe (2005) have experimentally demonstrated that making a threat to group survival salient increases justification of the in-group's violent actions. North American Jewish participants who were reminded of a historical threat to their in-group (e.g., the Holocaust) reported feeling less collective guilt about present-day harm that the Israeli government has inflicted upon Palestinians. Even if the in-group has inflicted harm, the out-group is often blamed for starting the violence. For instance, in the context of the Armenian genocide, Bilali, Tropp, and Dasgupta (2012, Study 1) found that Turkish participants attributed equal responsibility to Turks, Armenians, and third parties for the consequences of the violence in 1915. However, they attributed less responsibility to the in-group than to Armenians or third parties for instigating the atrocities (i.e., starting or provoking the conflict). Notably, Turks viewed the in-group as less responsible for instigating the conflict than for its negative consequences, but they viewed the out-group as more responsible for the instigation than for the consequences of the conflict. The same findings emerged in studies of Hutus' and Tutsis' perceptions of responsibility for the intergroup violence in Burundi (Bilali et al., 2012, Study 2). These findings suggest that conflict narratives portraying the out-group as the instigator can serve to justify the in-group's violence and reduce in-group responsibility.

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Glorifying National Narratives

Morality is considered the most important characteristic that people ascribe to the groups to which they belong (see Leach et al., 2014). Group narratives portray the in-group as highly moral by highlighting the events that preserve a positive image of the group and by forgetting or erasing negative

episodes (e.g., past atrocities) that reflect negatively on the in-group (e.g., Liu & Hilton, 2005; Liu et al., 2009; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). These narratives are produced by the elites; disseminated to all group members through the educational system, media, and museums; and reinforced in the images that citizens encounter in their everyday lives, including public monuments and street names (Liu & László, 2007). For instance, Kurtiş, Adams, and Yellowbird (2010, Study 1) examined US presidential Thanksgiving proclamations from 1993 to 2008, finding that none of the 16 proclamations mentioned the genocide of the indigenous people.

C11.P13   Group narratives serve as schemas or frames with which events in the past and present are interpreted and remembered (Hirshberg, 1993). Therefore, when group members are exposed to information that is incongruent with this self-schema, they will often reinterpret or ignore this information rather than modify their existing understanding. In a stark example of the power of narrative schemas, Trouillot (1995) showed how the Haitian revolution of 1790, the first and most important insurrection of slavery, has been omitted from Western history. Because the existing narrative depicted slaves as satisfied with their conditions, incapable of being able to organize and even incapable of imagining or desiring freedom, a slave revolution was unthinkable. Due to the discrepancy between the event and the existing narrative of colonialism and slavery, the facts were interpreted to fit the existing narrative (Trouillot, 1995). Similarly, committing genocide is inconsistent with groups' self-glorifying narratives. Having committed genocide would suggest that the in-group's narrative is false. Therefore, recognizing that the in-group has committed genocide threatens the veracity of the in-group's narrative. This is especially likely when the genocidal event is closely tied to the foundational narrative of the nation (Gocek, 2014). Gocek (2014) argues that the more threatening an event is to the foundational narrative of the nation, the more vehemently it is denied. For example, if the narrative of Armenian genocide were accepted, the whole Turkish nation's foundational narrative would begin to crumble.

C11.S8   Lay Theories and Genocide Construal

C11.P14   People tend to view actions of individuals and groups as reflections of their character and assume that others will make similar inferences (Gilbert & Jones, 1986). For example, a group that has committed genocide is likely to

be viewed as inherently violent or evil. Gausel and Leach (2011) have argued that a transgression that is perceived as reflecting stable traits rather than malleable characteristics damages the character of the in-group and its self-image beyond repair. Because repairing a defective character is not possible, the only option to cope with the identity and image threat is to deny the violence (see also Gausel, Leach, Vognoles, & Brown, 2012). This is especially likely for atrocious crimes that pose a pervasive identity threat, such as genocide. For instance, in our work (e.g., Bilali, 2013) we have observed that perceiving mass violence as evidence of the perpetrator group's evil character is one reason that many Turks deny the Armenian genocide. One Turkish participant noted, "Turks have never committed ethnic cleansing, as they are not [morally] capable of committing such deeds." In a similar vein, the Turkish leader, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has stated that there was no genocide because "it is not [morally] possible for those who belong to the Muslim faith to carry out genocide" (Freedman, 2009). These statements imply that a group which has committed mass violence is fundamentally immoral. In turn, this belief became the basis for rejecting the claim that the in-group has engaged in such acts.

C11.P15   The degree to which people ascribe to *essentialism*—the belief that certain characteristics are inherited and unchangeable—is also relevant to denial and acknowledgment of mass violence. It seems that higher essentialism might strengthen the link between present and past generations, thereby increasing perceived responsibility. In two studies, in Latvia and Germany, Zagefka, Pehrson, Mole, and Chan (2010) showed that members of perpetrator groups who hold stronger essentialist beliefs also reported feeling a greater degree of collective guilt for their in-group's transgressions.

C11.P16   Lastly, Mazur and Vollhardt (2016) have demonstrated that people tend to have well-developed beliefs about the essential features of violent episodes that allow them to be categorized as genocides. In other words, they construe genocide in prototypical ways, and they are strongly influenced by their knowledge of one genocide in particular—the Holocaust. Importantly, the extent to which descriptions of violence matched the genocide prototype (i.e., the extent to which they included central features of genocide) predicted heightened perceptions of the severity of harm and the urgency for intervention. While Mazur and Vollhardt's (2016) studies focused on bystanders' perceptions of genocide, it is likely that the genocide prototype will also influence judgments of perpetrator group members about the violence committed by their groups. It is possible that perceived differences between the

in-group's committed violence and the genocide prototype can drive geno-cide denial. For instance, several Turkish participants in Bilali's (2013) study rejected accusations of genocide on the basis that the violence inflicted on Armenians, in their view, was different from the Holocaust. Future research should examine whether perpetrator group members' construals of genocide influence denial and acknowledgment of genocidal violence committed by their groups.

C11.P17   To sum up, we argue that group and conflict narratives as well as lay beliefs about genocide facilitate its denial. Committing genocide is inconsistent with typical conflict and group narratives that portray the in-group in a posi-tive light. These narratives drive reinterpretation of genocidal violence or the silencing of any discussion of it. In addition, prototypical construals of geno-cide and the belief that genocide reflects on the evil character of the in-group pose a pervasive threat to the moral integrity of the in-group, providing a strong motivation to deny genocide. The combination of these factors, we argue, makes it extremely difficult to admit that one's group has committed genocide.

C11.S9   ## Individual-Level Factors That Facilitate Genocide Denial

C11.P18   Group-level events are more relevant to those individuals who iden-tify strongly with their groups. Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) postulates that group members who identify more strongly with the in-group should be more motivated to maintain a positive image of the in-group. A large literature in social psychology has shown that, when reminded of in-group transgressions, higher in-group identification is associated with lower levels of critical emotions such as collective guilt (e.g., Doosje, Branscombe, Spears, & Manstead, 1998; Tarrant, Branscombe, Warner, & Weston, 2012). When faced with accusations of mass violence and genocide, group members who identify strongly with their in-group are more likely to deny the accusations. For instance, Bilali et al. (2012) found that stronger in-group identification among Hutus and Tutsis in Burundi as well as among Turkish participants was associated with lower perceived in-group respon-sibility for the violence and with less harm perceived to be inflicted by the in-group.

C11.P19   The strength of in-group identification can also exacerbate the ulti-mate attribution error—the tendency to explain negative in-group events

with situational and negative out-group events with dispositional factors. Bilewicz, Witkowska, Stefaniak, and Imhoff (2017) examined Poles' descriptions of crimes and heroic acts committed in a small town in the Nazi-occupied Poland in 1944 (Study 1) as well as during the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 (Study 2). In both studies, in-group wrongdoing was explained less dispositionally than out-group crimes, especially among group members who identified strongly with their nation.

C11.P20   Beyond the degree of attachment to the in-group, the content of in-group identity is also important. Several studies (Bilali, 2012; Leidner et al., 2010; Roccas et al., 2006) have demonstrated that the degree of in-group glorification, rather than the strength of in-group identification, drives moral disengagement. Across three studies in the United States and the United Kingdom, participants read reports of mistreatment of civilians by American and British troops in the Iraq war. Higher in-group glorification predicted higher minimization of emotional suffering of the victims' families and more dehumanization of members of the victim group (Leidner et al., 2010). In a similar vein, Bilali (2013) showed that higher in-group glorification among Turkish students predicted less acknowledgment of responsibility for Turkish massacres of Armenians in 1915. Similarly, Hungarian participants rating high on in-group glorification used more exonerating cognitions, experienced fewer in-group critical emotions (e.g., guilt or shame), and showed less support for reparations to members of a victim group in the context of atrocities committed against Serbian minorities in Hungary (Szabó, Mészáros, & Csertő, 2017).

C11.P21   By contrast, when controlling for in-group glorification, in-group attachment has been shown to predict more critical reactions to in-group harm-doing (e.g., Leidner & Castano, 2012; Roccas et al., 2006). Penic, Elcheroth, and Reicher (2016) found that in-group glorification predicted fewer self-critical emotions in a Serbian and Croatian sample, whereas in-group attachment predicted more self-critical emotions only among Serbians. Penic et al. (2016) argued that collective norms might determine the degree to which critical attachment can be possible. If criticism is framed as antithetical to patriotism and a threat to the nation, realistic venues for critical attachment may not exist in that context.

AQ: Please add Leidner & Castano, 2012, to ref list.

C11.S10   ## Ideological Orientation and Personal Values

C11.P22   Individual-level differences in right-wing authoritarianism (RWA; Altemeyer, 1996) and social dominance orientation (SDO; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994) indicate, respectively, the degree to which one is motivated to achieve and maintain collective security and cohesion, or group-based dominance. In a series of studies in New Zealand, Sibley, Liu, Duckitt, and Khan (2008) demonstrated that individuals high in RWA and SDO were more likely to deny historical harm-doing (see also Sibley, Wilson, & Robertson, 2007). The denial of historical injustices committed by the Pakeha majority against the indigenous Maoris served as part of a legitimizing myth (e.g., see Sidanius & Pratto, 2008) that justified the ongoing inequalities between groups in New Zealand. Consistent with these findings, Jackson and Gaertner (2010) have shown that RWA and SDO predict all moral disengagement mechanisms. However, RWA was most strongly associated with moral justification, whereas SDO was most strongly associated with dehumanization of the victims. SDO also predicts support for torture and war and lower concern for the loss of human life in war (Larsson, Björklund, & Bäckström, 2012; McFarland, 2005). Beyond the motivational goals represented by RWA and SDO, Klar and Baram (2016) argue that there is a distinct motivation to protect and defend the in-group's narrative, which they call FENCE (firmly entrenched narrative closure). In several studies, Israeli participants rating higher on the FENCE scale were less open to considering counternarratives of past national events (Klar & Baram, 2016).

C11.P23   Political orientation is also an important predictor of denial of the in-group's past harm-doing. In a study exploring French students' reactions to French colonization in Algeria, participants high in right-wing political orientation tended to express less remorse and lower levels of collective guilt or moral outrage for the French colonization of Algeria (Bonnot, Krauth-Gruber, Drozda-Senknowska, & Lopes, 2016). In Israeli samples, Klar and Baram (2016) found that right wing political orientation was associated with lower openness to counternarratives of intergroup conflict events.

C11.P24   Militarism might also facilitate legitimization of violence and denial of genocide. Warfare occupies a central place in people's representations of history (Liu et al., 2009). Nations not only justify the wars they fight but sometimes also view them as desirable (just war theory; see Walzer, 1992). Each nation links its greatness to war—countries remember and glorify wars of independence, which citizens associate with ideas of honor and sacrifice

and judge to be central to their country's existence (Hedges, 2002). As a result, glorification of war might increase legitimization of in-group violence. Among Turkish participants, Bilali (2013) found that higher militarism (i.e., more positive attitudes toward war in general) was related to lower perceived responsibility for the mass violence committed against Armenians in 1915.

C11.P25   Overall, this research demonstrates that denial or recognition of the past is also a function of present-day political concerns and ideologies.

C11.S11   ## External Factors: Temporal Distance to Genocide

C11.P26   While many contextual factors might influence genocide denial and recognition, in this section we consider one factor that has received some attention in the social psychological literature—the duration of time since the atrocity occurred. Different generations might respond differently to negative historical events partly due to variations in information and interpretations of history at different points in time. Licata and Klein (2010) compared Belgian perceptions of Belgium's colonial history across three generations. Grandparents in the sample (who had learned in school that colonialism was a positive enterprise that benefited both colonizers and colonized) viewed colonization in a positive light and downplayed its negative aspects. The perceptions of colonialism were more critical in members of the youngest generation, who had grown up in a different ideological environment. The middle generation's attitudes fell in between those of the grandparents and the younger generation.

C11.P27   With the passage of time, it becomes increasingly easy for perpetrator group members to distance themselves from episodes of violence, thus allowing them to feel less responsibility. Gausel and Brown (2012) examined ethnic Norwegians' emotional reactions to Norway's discriminatory policies against its Romani (*Tater*) population, specifically the forced sterilization practices that lasted until 1977. Norwegian participants who were born at least 7 years after the sterilization practices were made illegal (i.e., participants under the age of 35) expressed little guilt and shame for these practices, while those over 35 expressed moderate guilt and shame (Gausel & Brown, 2012). The older participants might have been more aware about what happened with the *Taters* (Gausel & Brown, 2012), but they might also have felt more implicated in the wrongdoing.

C11.P28   Some studies have assessed more specifically the role of subjective temporal distance from the violent episode on acceptance or denial of the wrongdoing. For instance, in a German sample, Peetz, Gunn, and Wilson (2010) found that greater subjective time since the Holocaust predicted lower collective guilt about the atrocities. Among Portuguese and Dutch participants, Figueiredo, Valentim, and Doosje (2011) showed that the perceived temporal distance to in-group transgressions was negatively related to intentions to compensate the harmed group. Greater temporal distance might allow group members to dissociate themselves from the atrocities and place the responsibility on different generations or different political regimes.

C11.P29   Temporal distance is also significant because it influences perceptions of the genocide's ongoing consequences and the feasibility of reparations (see Blatz & Philpot, 2010; Starzyk & Ross, 2008). Imhoff, Wohl, and Erb (2013) experimentally examined whether the ongoing negative consequences of atrocities influence collective guilt in a sample of present-day Germans in two different contexts of genocide: the genocide against the Herero people in Namibia and Nazi crimes against Jews. In both contexts, the results showed that suggesting that genocide has no impact on contemporary victim group members undermines feelings of collective guilt. The perceived difficulty of making amends (such as through reparations) can also influence construals of past harms committed by the in-group. Similarly, Starzyk and Ross (2008) found that people were more willing to support a historical victim group if they were told the victim group is still suffering. In addition, participants showed more sympathy for the victims when making reparations seemed feasible, rather than unfeasible. Berndsen and McGarty (2010) studied Australians' reactions to the forced removal of over 500,000 white Australians (also referred to as "forgotten Australians") from their families between 1920 and 1970, for reasons such as being born to a single mother, poverty, or parental divorce. Consistent with Starzyk and Ross's (2008) findings, Berndsen and McGarty (2010) found that group-based guilt for these practices decreased when people believed that making reparations was not feasible.

Counteracting Genocide Denial

C11.S12

C11.P30   Our analysis of genocide denial has implications for strategies to reduce denial and increase acknowledgment of genocide and other forms of mass

violence. In the present section, we consider various strategies to increase perpetrator group members' acceptance of their group's role in committing atrocities. Some common strategies focus on influencing construals of and emotional reactions to the specific transgressions or influencing the ways in which group members view the specific out-group. Other strategies include nonconfrontational ways of addressing psychological barriers and defenses that protect the positive identity and reputation of the in-group (Halperin, Cohen-Chen, & Goldenberg, 2014). In this section, we discuss strategies in each category (confrontational and nonconfrontational), their potential to transform narratives, potential caveats, and directions for future research.

Confrontational Strategies

Introducing Factual Information About the Atrocity

History textbooks often systematically omit in-group atrocities, resulting in group members' lack of knowledge about in-group atrocities. For instance, in an analysis of Italian high school textbooks, Leone and Mastrovito (2010) found that the Ethiopian war was barely covered and that any information about the war was presented in a light-hearted and evasive way, brushing over many facts about the conflict. Unsurprisingly, young Italian participants in their survey study were unaware of their group's wrongdoings. Therefore, a first step to counteract denial is to simply expose group members to information about in-group atrocities. Leone and Sarrica (2012) exposed Italian participants to two versions (factual vs. evasive) of a historical text about the Italian invasion of Ethiopia. Reading the detailed factual text increased participants' emotional involvement with the narrative, which in turn increased their willingness to repair the harm done. In a similar follow-up study, Leone and Sarrica (2014) exposed participants to either an evasive text or a version of the same text that was *parrhesiastic* (which they define as expressing a detailed account of a negative historical event and taking a moral stance toward in-group responsibility). Participants who read the parrhesiastic text expressed more negative emotions accompanied by large body movements indicative of participants' efforts to regulate the negative emotions that they were experiencing while reading the text. Leone and Sarrica (2014) concluded that it is important to show group members the full-blown truth and that evasive language might further perpetuate silencing. Kurtiş et al. (2010, Study 3) also found that evasive texts that omit in-group atrocities might serve to increase in-group glorification. Specifically, a text

that was silent about the genocide of Native Americans increased national glorification for white American participants exposed to it compared to a text that highlighted the genocide.

CII.P32 　There are, however, several potential caveats to this strategy. First, because the new information is highly inconsistent with in-group and conflict narratives, the contradictory information might be discarded as untrustworthy. Second, as we have discussed earlier in the chapter, a large body of research in psychology has shown that exposure to information about in-group atrocities threatens the in-group's identity and elicits defensive reactions, such as denying or legitimizing the atrocities. When the facts are irrefutable, exposure to information about the atrocities committed by the in-group can increase perceived in-group responsibility, but it can also have unintended consequences such as increased dehumanization of the victims. For example, white Americans presented with texts describing the massacres of Native Americans (compared to milder texts) were less likely to attribute secondary emotions to the victims, suggesting that they perceived them as less than human (Castano & Giner-Sorolla, 2006). Similarly, two studies in Chile and Bosnia found that reminding group members of the in-group's responsibility for past atrocities increased perceived in-group responsibility but also increased dehumanization of the victim groups (Ĉehajić, Brown, & Gonzàlez, 2009).

CII.S15 　## Introducing Information About Moral Exemplars

CII.P33 　In a promising new line of research, Bilewicz, Ĉehajić, and colleagues are examining a new strategy that involves exposing people to moral exemplars from history with the goal of promoting reconciliation. Moral exemplars are members of groups in a conflict who acted in opposition to norms of violence by protecting members of the victim group, often while putting themselves or their families at risk. Exposure to stories of out-group moral exemplars may reduce perceived out-group heterogeneity and the belief in the immorality of the out-group as a whole (Bilewicz & Jaworska, 2013). In an intervention study in Bosnia, exposing young Serbs, Bosniaks, Croats, and Bosnians to stories of moral exemplars from all sides led to more forgiveness and more willingness to reconcile (Čehajić-Clancy & Bilewicz, 2017).

CII.P34 　Moral exemplar stories can meet the perpetrator group members' need for acceptance (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008) and reduce the perceived moral threat to the in-group as a whole, thereby promoting reconciliatory attitudes. Beneda, Bilewicz, Khachatryan, Witkowska, and Grigoryan (2017) presented Turkish

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participants with stories of in-group members who were moral exemplars during the Armenian genocide. Moral exemplars led to more positive out-group attitudes and more willingness to engage in intergroup contact with Armenians. Despite these promising findings, it is unclear whether moral exemplar stories actually reduce genocide denial. If stories of moral exemplars do not challenge the narrative that supports genocide denial, these stories might instead be incorporated into denial narratives. Future research should therefore examine the effects of the use of moral exemplars on denial of genocide and other atrocities.

C11.S16   ### Perspective-Taking and Engaging With the Out-group's Narrative

C11.P35   A large body of research has demonstrated the benefits of perspective-taking in intergroup relations, including by reducing prejudice (Dovidio et al., 2004; Galinsky & Ku, 2004; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000). Taking the perspective of the victim group and engaging with its narratives might instill doubt in perpetrator group members about their group's narratives and increase willingness to acknowledge and repair the harm done. For instance, in Australia, Berndsen and McGarty (2012) showed that taking the perspective of indigenous Australians increased non-indigenous Australians' support for reparations for historic harm-doing. In Bosnia, Ĉehajić and Brown (2010) found that Serbian adolescents' level of contact with Bosnians increased their ability to take the perspective of the victim group, which in turn increased acknowledgment of in-group atrocities during the 1992–1995 war.

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C11.P36   Yet, some research has shown that perspective-taking is not beneficial across the board and may be inhibited by factors such as high levels of conflict (e.g., Bruneau & Saxe, 2012; Paluck, 2010) or high levels of in-group identification (Zebel, Doosje, & Spears, 2009). The negative emotions experienced in connection with the adversary, competing narratives of the past, or high levels of in-group identification might reduce group members' willingness to engage with the adversary's perspective in the first place. Strong adherence to one's conflict narrative might also inhibit perspective-taking. In a study in Northern Ireland, Barton and McCully (2012) found that despite the presentation of multiple interpretations of historical events in school curricula, students' endorsement of their communities' historical perspective became stronger over time. Many students drew selectively from the curriculum to form reasoned arguments to support their community's perspectives (Barton & McCully, 2012).

C11.P37
Perspective-taking strategies are embedded in many civil society and history teaching projects in conflict and postconflict settings that aim to promote reconciliation and increase acknowledgment of past violence (Bilali & Mahmoud, 2017). These strategies introduce group members to multiple narratives of historical events. For example, a joint history textbook titled *Learning Each Other's Historical Narrative: Palestinians and Israelis* provides students the opportunity to learn and engage with the other's perspective on significant historical events in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (Adwan & Bar-On, 2000). Each page of the booklet provides both Palestinian and Israeli narratives of a historical event, as well as a space for students to write their own comments and perspectives. Bar-On and Adwan (2006) reported that exposure to dual narratives led to surprise, interest, and curiosity among students. However, there was also some resentment and anger among some students. Because students viewed their group's version of history as fact, some students questioned the credibility of the textbook as the enemy's propaganda (Bar-On & Adwan, 2006). These reactions are consistent with research suggesting that engaging with an adversary's perspective might backfire under conditions of heightened conflict (e.g., Bilali & Vollhardt, 2015).

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C11.P38
Other strategies to increase willingness to engage with the out-group perspectives and narratives should be explored. In Rwanda, Bilali and Vollhardt (2013) found that a radio drama that encouraged listeners to take the perspectives of the parties in a fictional conflict increased openness to engage with and consider the out-group's perspective in the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide. Contrary to explicit approaches that overtly contradict people's preexisting beliefs and experiences, fictional narratives such as radio dramas introduce different perspectives in subtle and nonthreatening ways and are therefore met with less resistance. As a result, they can be effective at increasing perspective-taking with different narratives of conflict.

Nonconfrontational Strategies
C11.S17

Interventions Targeting Genocide Construals
C11.S18

C11.P39
Genocidal violence is often incomprehensible to the layperson; it is viewed as coming from the devil (Staub, 1999; Staub, Pearlman, & Bilali, 2008, 2010). Such construals of genocide dehumanize the perpetrator group. By contrast, a more nuanced understanding of the origins and the factors that contribute to genocide might reduce the belief that the perpetrator group

is evil by nature (Staub, 2011). An understanding of the roots and factors that contribute to genocidal violence can equip people with the tools and analytical frameworks to understand their own conflict context in a complex way, rather than in a "good versus evil" frame (Staub, 1989, 2011). Staub, Pearlman, Gubin, and Hagengimana (2005) trained community facilitators working for local organizations in Rwanda on the roots of conflict and genocide. Rwandan community members who participated in discussion groups led by the facilitators trained by Staub and colleagues showed a more positive orientation toward members of the out-group compared to community members in groups led by other facilitators. Staub's (1989) approach was later adopted by the Dutch nongovernmental organization Radio La Benevolencija to produce a public education campaign through radio in Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo in order to raise awareness about the roots and evolution of mass violence with the aim of preventing cycles of violence and promoting intergroup reconciliation. In a study examining the impact of this educational campaign in Burundi, Bilali, Vollhardt, and Rarick (2016) found that the listeners of the radio campaign were less likely than nonlisteners to blame the out-group and more likely to admit responsibility for their in-group's violence.

Cɪɪ.P40   The goal of many civil society organizations is to raise awareness about the roots of conflict and the influences that trigger violence. For instance, programs that focus on exposing the roots and the devastating consequences of the Holocaust and other genocides aim to bring change by increasing people's understanding of the causes of prejudice and violence (Bilali & Mahmoud, 2017). However, more research is needed to examine whether these strategies are effective at tackling genocide denial. There are at least two caveats to this strategy. First, members of perpetrator groups might use information about external factors driving genocidal violence strategically to reduce their responsibility by blaming the external circumstances or third parties. Second, social psychological research on interventions such as intergroup contact interventions has shown that knowledge has only a minor influence on change outcomes (e.g., Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008).

Cɪɪ.Sɪ9   ### Lay Theory Interventions
Cɪɪ.P4ɪ   Another indirect way to counteract genocide denial is to target the social psychological barriers stemming from lay theories and biases that people hold. Increasing awareness of biases might reduce their effect and increase the likelihood of genocide recognition. One pervasive bias is naive realism,

which refers to the belief that one's views are based on rationality and objective facts, whereas others' views are biased by self-interest, ideology, and other factors. Group members' adherence to their own conflict narrative and openness to the other group's narrative is likely to be influenced by naive realism. Nasie, Bar-Tal, Pliskin, Nahhas, and Halperin (2014) showed that making people aware of the naive realism increased Israeli participants' openness to the adversary's group narrative, especially among participants who strongly adhered to the in-group's narrative.

C11.P42 Another common belief underlying intergroup conflict is that rival groups have stable characteristics that are resistant to change. Halperin and colleagues (e.g., Halperin, Russell, Trzesniewski, Gross, & Dweck, 2011) have shown that perceived malleability of groups increases support for peaceful resolution of conflicts. Perceived malleability might also influence acknowledgment of past atrocities. Because perceived in-group malleability provides an opportunity for change (e.g., an opportunity to redeem themselves by making amends), increasing group malleability beliefs might increase recognition of in-group atrocities (e.g., Bilali, Iqbal, & Erisen, in press).

C11.P43 Similarly, shifting beliefs that transgressions, and genocide in particular, reflect stable characteristics of groups as being evil might increase recognition of in-group transgressions. Instead, viewing transgressions as reflecting specific flaws rather than stable characteristics of the in-group might enhance group members' ability to cope with identity threat (Gausel & Leach, 2011), thereby increasing acknowledgment of in-group harm-doing. In three studies in the United States and Turkey, Bilali et al. (in press) showed that shifting beliefs about transgressions from reflecting global traits to reflecting specific flaws can increase acknowledgment of responsibility for specific in-group transgressions, especially among low in-group glorifiers.

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C11.S20

Affirmation Strategies

C11.P44 Committing atrocities poses a severe threat to the in-group's social image (Gausel & Leach, 2011; Gausel et al., 2012; Tavuchis, 1991). It follows that group members might be more likely to acknowledge transgressions if they are able to maintain a positive global identity. Self-affirmation theory (Sherman & Cohen, 2006) postulates that people are motivated to maintain self-integrity and a perception of self as moral and virtuous; when this perception is threatened, people are willing to distort reality to restore the

positive view of themselves. Drawing on self-affirmation theory, Ĉehajić-Clancy, Effron, Halperin, Liberman, and Ross (2011) examined whether affirming a valued aspect of identity that is irrelevant to the threatened aspect of identity might increase acknowledgment of a wrongdoing committed by the in-group. In three studies in Israel and Bosnia, Israeli and Bosnian Serb participants reacted to an in-group transgression after they completed either a self-affirmation task in which they were asked to reflect on one value important to themselves or a group-affirmation task in which they were asked to reflect on one value important to their group or nation. The results showed that self-affirmation increased acknowledgment of the harm inflicted by the in-group, whereas group affirmation was ineffective at changing the level of acknowledgment. Similarly, Ehrlich and Gramzow (2015) showed that group affirmation led to exacerbating in-group biases among political partisans (Democrats or Republicans) in the US context. Studies in other contexts, however, have shown that affirming the in-group in a domain different from the threatened domain reduces defensiveness and increases critical emotions toward an in-group transgression. For instance, Gunn and Wilson (2011) showed that group affirmation reduced Canadians' defensiveness and increased collective guilt and shame over the mistreatment of aboriginals. Similarly, Miron, Branscombe, and Biernat (2010, Study 3) indicated that group affirmation increased American participants' perceptions of the severity of harm and feelings of collective guilt for slavery.

C11.P45   It is important to examine the reasons for the inconsistent findings across studies. As Ĉehajić-Clancy et al. (2011) suggest, it is possible that group affirmation might be less effective in contexts in which the harm is highly threatening, such as in cases of recent harm-doing (compared to transgressions that are temporally distant). In addition, group affirmation might not be effective for genocide crimes, which are perceived to threaten the whole moral integrity of the group rather than a specific aspect of it (see also Bilali et al., in press). While self-affirmation seems to be an effective strategy, it is unclear whether and how this strategy can be used in large-scale interventions.

C11.S21
Conclusion

C11.P46   In this chapter we focused on the processes underlying genocide denial and strategies to counteract it. At the societal level, denial is embedded in groups'

narratives about themselves and about the intergroup conflict. Narratives are the lenses through which people understand the world around them; they tell us how group members understand their group's reality. Although we discussed denial strategies embedded in group narratives, for group members these narratives constitute their group's social reality. Therefore, strategies that instill doubt in in-group narratives might be effective at increasing group members' openness to considering alternate points of view and eventually to acknowledging the in-group's atrocities. However, the process of acknowledgment is further complicated by individual motivational factors, biases, and worldviews that protect the in-group's moral standing and positive image and reduce openness to counternarratives. Therefore, strategies to reduce denial should also tackle relevant lay beliefs and biases and address the pervasive threat that committing atrocities poses to group members' identity.

C11.P47   Most research related to in-group atrocities and harm-doing in social psychology has focused on strategies to improve intergroup attitudes and promote reconciliation in the aftermath of extreme violence, rather than on strategies to reduce denial. From the perspective of perpetrator groups, acknowledgment of in-group harm-doing and reconciliation constitute two distinct goals. Perpetrator groups might exhibit high willingness to reconcile and engage in intergroup contact, while at the same time they might not be willing to acknowledge their in-group's wrongdoing. For instance, in a study of Turkish people's perceptions of the "Armenian issue," Karasu and Goregenli (2017) found that some participants supported intergroup activities based on mutual cooperation and the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries, while at the same time rejecting criticisms of Turkey and opposing recognition of the Armenian genocide or offering of an official apology. Therefore, strategies that focus on promotion of intergroup reconciliation should also examine their effects on acknowledgment of in-group atrocities. Future research should also assess strategies that specifically target the denial of atrocities and genocide as a distinct outcome from attitudes toward reconciliation.

C11.S22

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