

Introduction to *Peace and Conflict*, Volume 20, Issue 4

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I begin this editorial by expressing deep gratitude to Susan Opatow, our journal editor in 2010–2013. Susan has been enormously generous with her time and multiple talents, guiding the Journal through the transition to American Psychological Association Press. Research and practicing peace psychologists are indebted to her. Fortunately for us, she continues her involvement with the journal and serves as an inspiring source of wisdom and advice.

The year 2014 has been challenging for supporters of peace. Violent conflicts erupted in a number of different parts of the world, including in Syria, Iraq, Ukraine, Sudan, and Palestine-Israel. The huge refugee populations resulting from these conflicts have spilled across national borders, increasing tensions in neighboring countries such as Turkey and Jordan. The threat of instability and violence cannot be contained by national borders. If we needed a reminder, the Ebola outbreak has shown that in the era of globalization no country is an island. National borders do not protect us. The massive sale of weapons by Western countries to non-Western regimes, including dictatorships, will result in some of these weapons getting into the hands of people who attack the West and Western interests. Islamic fundamentalism is fueled by the huge transfer of arms to the Near- and Middle East.

The 14 major articles, four brief reports, and two book reviews published in this issue demonstrate the vitality and depth of psychological research in support of peace. The first four major articles are on the theme of understanding the other. This includes understanding research from other disciplines. Byford (2014) explores methodological challenges faced by researchers from different disciplines in their attempts to better understand the Holocaust. Researchers studying social psychological aspects of the Holocaust, such as obedience to authority and bystander effect, have borrowed heavily from historical studies. Byford shows dangers in such borrowing, although his objective is to help strengthen rather than to limit interdisciplinary research.

Two studies in this group focus on understanding Palestinians. Dessel, Ali, and Mishkin (2014) show that among young Jews, family socialization and contact with Palestinians are powerful influences on reducing barriers to Jewish understanding of Palestinian narratives. Level and type of contact is easier to change. Dessel et al., add to the evidence that intergroup contact is a direct route to improving intergroup understanding. Kira, Alawneh, Aboumediene, Lewandowski, and Laddis (2014) explore the coping strategies of Palestinian youth, mired in difficult life conditions. This study is helpful to mental health workers who need to better understand traumatized youth. The final paper in this group also examines the consequences of trauma: Cohen and colleagues (2014) examine factors that create discomfort among Jewish Americans at the prospect of

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interacting with Germans who have varying degrees of linkages with Nazi Germany. Jews who believe there is something inherent and unchanging in "Germanness" were uncomfortable living near Germans, even those born after World War II.

The next six major articles each have valuable contributions to make toward improving intergroup relations. Kirchhoff and Čehajić-Clancy (2014) add to the growing research literature on intergroup apologies by demonstrating apologies that have content directly relevant to perceived transgression are more effective. Greater efforts need to be made in framing intergroup apologies and "positioning" groups to avoid conflict (Moghaddam, Harré, & Lee, 2008). In a study of people affected to different degrees by political violence, Chile et al. (2014) show that those most affected have developed outlooks that are in some ways more constructive. Professionals who treat these "victims" have the opportunity to build on this posttraumatic growth. The studies by Husnu and Mertan (2014) on Turkish Cypriot children's perceptions of the "enemy" and Pederson, Redmond, and Paradies (2014) on antiracist bystander actions toward Indigenous Australians, both illuminate gender differences. The promising role of women in improving intergroup relations is highlighted here. The study by Kellezi and Reicher (2014) suggests new ways of understanding the vulnerability of women in war. Thus, women are shown to be more vulnerable in wartime, but research reported in this issue also suggests the role of women in peace building should be expanded. The final paper in this group, by McKeown (2014), and dedicated to Ed Cairns, explores the constructive role of superordinate identities in the context of Northern Ireland. The implication is that peace can be strengthened by increasing the adoption of a new identity, "Northern Irish."

Two of the major articles reflect subtle aspects of cultural violence and are set in the education setting. They use qualitative methods and examine narratives. Brock, Oikonomidou, Wulfing, Pennington, and Oberchain (2014) examine bullying and suggest ways to mitigate this form of violence. McVee (2014) explores the narrative strategies used to avoid conflict. These studies involve analysis of both interpersonal and intergroup processes. The study by Aronso-Martinez, Beristain, and González-Hidalgo (2014) is the final major article in this issue, and returns the focus on more direct intergroup violence. This study illuminates the psychological experiences of the Sahrawi population, victims of tragic human rights violations by the Kingdom of Morocco forces in the Western Sahara.

The four brief reports examine aspects of Muslim radicalization and Western reactions. Studies by Putra (2014a) and Khan (2014) underline the importance of group perceptions in intergroup relations. Perceived prejudice seems to be playing a role in shaping the identity of Muslims in both Western and non-Western contexts. However, Putra (2014b) shows that fundamentalist Muslims support nonviolence in some conditions. A reaction to Islamic terrorism has been support among some Westerners for the use of torture against terrorists. Houck, Conway, and Repke (2014) demonstrate that people are more likely to believe that torture works when a loved one is in imminent danger of being kidnapped or suffer a bomb attack.

Conflict is dynamic. The factors that shape intergroup relations can change over the course of conflict. A regional conflict that begins as a fight over land and water can change to become about identities and collective shame, and change again to become shaped by international powers protecting their regional interests. Power's (2014) review of *Attracted to Conflict: Dynamic Foundations of Destructive Social Relations* highlights new multidisciplinary efforts to capture the fluid, complex nature of conflict. This is an ambitious book that deserves

attention from both researchers and practitioners. This issue ends with Kashtan's (2014) review essay, discussing three new volumes on nonviolence. We can take an optimistic message from these new volumes: nonviolence is not only ethically superior it is also more effective than violent movements. But this still leaves us with an enormous challenge—how to mobilize mass participation in nonviolent movements.

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