

Cultures under Siege

Collective Violence and Trauma

edited by

Antonius C. G. M. Robben

Utrecht University

Marcelo M. Suárez-Orozco

Harvard University

 **CAMBRIDGE**
UNIVERSITY PRESS

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK www.cup.cam.ac.uk
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA www.cup.org
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia
Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain

© Cambridge University Press 2000

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without
the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2000

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

Typeface Plantin 10/12 pt *System* 3b2 [CE]

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Cultures under siege: collective violence and trauma / edited by
Antonius C. G. M. Robben, Marcelo M. Suárez-Orozco.

p. cm. – (Publications of the Society for Psychological Anthropology)
ISBN 0 521 78026 8 (hb) – ISBN 0 521 78435 2 (pb)

1. Violence – Cross-cultural studies.
2. Collective behavior – Cross-cultural studies.
3. Violence – Psychological aspects. 4. Ethnopsychology.
5. Political violence. 6. Genocide.

I. Robben, Antonius C. G. M., 1953–

II. Suárez-Orozco, Marcelo M., 1956– III. Series.

HM886.C85 2000

303.6–dc21 99–049062 CIP

ISBN 0 521 78026 8 hardback

ISBN 0 521 78435 2 paperback

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	<i>page xi</i>
<i>List of contributors</i>	<i>xiii</i>
1 Interdisciplinary perspectives on violence and trauma MARCELO M. SUÁREZ-OROZCO AND ANTONIUS C. G. M. ROBBEN	1
Part I The management of collective trauma	43
2 Reflections on the prevalence of the uncanny in social violence YOLANDA GAMPEL	48
3 The assault on basic trust: disappearance, protest, and reburial in Argentina ANTONIUS C. G. M. ROBBEN	70
4 Mitigating discontents with children in war: an ongoing psychoanalytic inquiry ROBERTA J. APFEL AND BENNETT SIMON	102
5 Child psychotherapy as an instrument in cultural research: treating war-traumatized children in the former Yugoslavia DAVID DE LEVITA	131
Part II Cultural responses to collective trauma	155
6 The traumatized social self: the Parsi predicament in modern Bombay T. M. LUHRMANN	158
7 Identities under siege: immigration stress and social mirroring among the children of immigrants CAROLA SUÁREZ-OROZCO	194

x	Contents	
8	Modern Greek and Turkish identities and the psychodynamics of Greek–Turkish relations VAMIK D. VOLKAN AND NORMAN ITZKOWITZ	227
9	The violence of non-recognition: becoming a ‘conscious’ Muslim woman in Turkey KATHERINE PRATT EWING	248
10	Epilogue ROBERT A. LEVINE	272
	<i>Index</i>	276

1 Interdisciplinary perspectives on violence and trauma¹

*Marcelo M. Suárez-Orozco and
Antonius C. G. M. Robben*

The purpose of this volume is to broaden the dialogue between psychoanalysis and anthropology. We do so by focusing on a set of empirical and theoretical issues around the study of violence and trauma in comparative perspective. Can psychoanalysis and anthropology develop and sustain a mutually intelligible and fruitful conversation around the enduring problem of collective violence and massive trauma? How can this conversation negotiate the fact that psychoanalysts apply their craft to the intra-psychic level of analysis while anthropologists focus on the socio-cultural level? What are the necessary parameters for such conversation?

This book is based on the claim that for a variety of empirical and theoretical reasons an interdisciplinary dialogue on large-scale violence and trauma can indeed lead to the mutual enrichment of both anthropology and psychoanalysis. First, large-scale violence takes place in complex and over-determined socio-cultural contexts which intertwine psychic, social, political, economic, and cultural dimensions. Secondly, collective violence cannot be reduced to a single level of analysis because it targets the body, the psyche, as well as the socio-cultural order. Thirdly, the understanding of trauma cannot be restricted to the intra-psychic processes of the individual sufferer because it involves highly relevant social and cultural processes. Fourthly, the consequences of massive trauma afflict not only individuals but also social groups and cultural formations.

The twentieth century brought us some of the most barbaric episodes of large-scale violence and trauma. The Holocaust, the Cambodian killing fields, the unprecedented state terror generated by the Latin American counter-insurgency campaigns, the organized ethnic cleansings and sexual assaults in the former Yugoslavia, and the carefully

¹ We thank Carola Suárez-Orozco for her insightful comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.

orchestrated inter-ethnic bloodbaths in Rwanda and Burundi are recent examples. They suggest a unique and enduring human capacity for highly elaborate *collective forms of violence and destructiveness* which cannot be reduced simplistically to either 'natural' or 'cultural' causes.

This book does not engage the old-fashioned binary 'nature–nurture' polemic. The tired old claim that it is the nature of our genetic blueprint to be efficient killers is as irrelevant to the present effort as the counter-claim that to unlock the secrets of our darkness we must keep our gaze on social institutions and cultural formations – such as on genocidal 'cultural models' of eliminationist racism (Goldhagen 1996).² The reductionism of the first variety collapses under the weight of ideology, religion, ethnicity, gender, and class – cultural formations that chisel the human capacity for destruction into seemingly endless designs. The 'culturalists' in the nature–nurture coin often face the trap of circular reasoning as well as the formidable task of having to account for the overwhelmingly diverse sets of cultures and levels of social organization managing stunningly destructive feats (see Ingham 1996:196–221; Edgerton 1992). The space worth cultivating, we claim, is somewhere between those two analytical dead-ends.

Although aggression is hardly the monopoly of the human species, humans alone have developed the higher-order neocortical capacities – the very capacities that separate us from other species in the animal kingdom – for efficient, systematized, and over-determined acts of collective violence. In the eternal words of Freud, 'Man is a wolf to man. Who in the face of all his experience of life and of history will have the courage to dispute this assertion' (Freud 1930:111). In the more technical words of psychological anthropologist John Ingham:

Organized violence has occurred, and continues to occur, at every level of social complexity. Murder and feuding were frequent among hunter-gatherers, peoples sometimes thought to be relatively peaceful. Headhunting and murderous retribution against suspected sorcerers were common among horticultural societies. Many tribal societies were warlike. Most preindustrial states were militaristic, and some even ritualized their hegemony with human sacrifice. And wars between states and, increasingly, terrorism and ethnic violence are commonplaces in the modern world (Ingham 1996:196).

This volume examines a variety of manifestations of organized violence and massive trauma reflecting a commitment to interdisciplinary dialogue. How are cultural identities implicated in and reshaped by

² Goldhagen, for example, in his best selling book reduces the Holocaust to German culture. He writes 'many Germans willingly brutalized and killed Jews and did so because they grew up in a culture where a virulent form of anti-Semitism was commonplace' (1996:38).

large-scale violence? How are collective violence and mourning encoded into cultural narratives and how are such narratives psychologically implicated in the transgenerational workings of trauma? How do second-generation survivors cope with the inherent 'radioactivity' of massive trauma? How are cultural formations, including symbols, folk models, and rituals mobilized to inscribe, resist, and heal trauma? What psychocultural processes are involved in children's responses to violence? How are gender differences played out in the sequelae of violence?

There is of course a history to the relationship between psychoanalysis and anthropology – a history that is too complex to summarize here (see Suárez-Orozco 1994). Many leading psychoanalysts since Freud have had enduring interests in cultural formations and the comparative record. Freud himself, for better or worse, read with great gusto the leading social theorists – including the proto-anthropologists of his day – and articulated various theoretical constructs on a variety of ethnographic matters – including totemism, magic, and ritual.

While previous interdisciplinary conversations between anthropology and psychoanalysis proved uneven – with dismal failures (remember the 'swaddling hypothesis?') as well as exciting developments (such as the Linton–Kardiner seminar at Columbia) – the dialogue has been rather focused on a handful of themes. Ubiquitous among them have been (1) the debate over the Oedipus complex; (2) the relationships between the cultural patterning of childrearing, personality, and social institutions; and (3) culture and mental illness. While a number of prominent psychological anthropologists have worked on issues of aggression (see, *inter alia*, Hallowell 1940; Kluckhohn 1962; Spiro 1978; and Edgerton 1997 and 1992) our objective is to expand the dialogue systematically to include issues of large-scale violence and trauma.

Why be interdisciplinary? Interdisciplinary efforts interrupt the taken-for-granted practices that can bureaucratize disciplinary work. Interdisciplinary work imposes certain mutual calibrations of theoretical models, methodological strategies, and analytic perspectives. By definition interdisciplinary work subverts the reductionistic impulses common to many disciplinary enterprises. Furthermore, the different professional practices of anthropologists and psychoanalysts have direct effects on the interdisciplinary study of violence and trauma, which should be mined for the enrichment of both disciplines.

As in other fields of inquiry in the human sciences, some observers – among them victims of massive trauma – have questioned the validity of *any* outsider's analytical perspectives – let alone interdisciplinary efforts. These observers have argued that only 'first-hand' experience can lead

to authentic knowledge. While from the vantage point of the late twentieth century most social scientists are well aware of the problem of positionality in scholarship of this sort, we make a plea for the complementary significance that is a *sine qua non* of interdisciplinary work. We therefore reject mono-causal explanations and advocate the use of processual, multi-levelled approaches grounded in solid understandings of the inner psychic processes as well as the social and cultural contexts of large-scale violence and trauma (Mays *et al.* 1998; see also De Vos and Suárez-Orozco 1990).

In the next section, we examine the ways in which trauma and violence have been conceptual meeting grounds for earlier generations of anthropologists and psychoanalysts. This is not intended to be an exhaustive review of interdisciplinary approaches to large-scale violence and massive trauma. Rather, it serves to place the chapters in this book in a genealogical conceptual history.

The historical development of the concept of massive trauma from 'shell shock' to 'post-traumatic stress disorder' reveals remarkable periods of cross-fertilization between the disciplines of anthropology and psychoanalysis. There have also been moments of considerable distancing, mutual neglect, and basic distrust.

We hope to demonstrate how several path-breaking concepts such as those emerging from studies of the Holocaust can be applied to the interpretation of large-scale violence and massive trauma in other societies. The work on second-generation Holocaust survivors is particularly important for a theoretical understanding of one of the fundamental problems in the study of trauma: its transgenerational transmission from parents to children to grandchildren. We highlight the social practices and cultural models that are relevant to the understanding of such transgenerational processes.

After examining some of the critical contributions to the study of trauma, we turn to the study of large-scale violence. Our point of departure is Freud's complex, multi-faceted, and often contradictory explanations of human aggression and violence. The Freud of *Civilization and Its Discontents* presents a somewhat different hypothesis on human aggression and violence than the Freud of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Much of his work of course has been superseded by more sophisticated psychoanalytic interpretations and falsified by superior ethnographic knowledge. Nevertheless, Freud's ideas deserve attention because they have inspired many students of violence and trauma. We then proceed with a critical appraisal of various disparate psychoanalytic interpretations of aggression and violence – from Melanie Klein's innate theories of aggression to Erich Fromm's interdisciplinary approach to

human destructiveness. We critique these works on empirical and theoretical grounds. Next, we discuss some more recent psychoanalytic ideas about the 'reactive' nature of human aggression. These ideas require still further theoretical development in the area of violence and trauma, but are promising new avenues of inquiry which find an implicit resonance in anthropological studies.

The chapters in this volume are organized into two parts. Part I addresses *the management of collective trauma*. Part II discusses *cultural responses to collective trauma*. The chapters in this book suggest that social violence continues to pursue its victims long after the slaughter ends and the peace treaties are signed. The work of Robben, Gampel, Apfel and Simon, Luhrmann, de Levita, and Volkan and Itzkowitz examine the various ways violence continues to shape the inner, interpersonal, and socio-cultural worlds of victims and their children. And because social violence always aims at a multiplicity of fields it, in turn, generates multiple sequelae. On the physical and psychic level, the work of healing most often includes some effort to restore some semblance of basic trust. The data in this book suggest that this work is quite complex, open-ended, and far from always successful. While the work of de Levita and Apfel and Simon suggest that massively traumatized children may, under certain conditions, make significant progress, the transgenerational data (see Gampel) suggest a cautious interpretation of long-term outcomes.

Luhrmann, Ewing, and C. Suárez-Orozco suggest that, on the socio-cultural level, the work of healing also involves the issue of 'basic trust' – this time reconstructing trust in the social institutions and cultural practices that structure experience and give meaning to human lives. Large-scale violence and massive trauma disintegrate trust in the social structures that make human life possible. Institutional acknowledgment – in the form of 'truth' commissions and reparations (monetary and symbolic) – and justice – in the form of trials of perpetrators – can begin partially to restore the symbolic order that is another casualty of the work of violence.

This volume does not draw a firm line between what might be called 'hard' violence (physical) and 'soft' violence (symbolic or psychological). Like the lines in many maps, such division would be artificial, arbitrary, and even dangerous. Physical violence may be easier to identify, name, and quantify than psychic or symbolic violence. We can always do a body count, discern patterns in the amputation of limbs, or explore a torturer's agenda by the marks he leaves in his victim's body. On the other hand, the workings of psychic and symbolic violence are often more elusive but may be equally devastating in the long run.

Towards an interdisciplinary dialogue on violence and trauma

Why have entire nations collapsed and consumed themselves with hatred and destructiveness? How are we, at the start of the twenty-first century, to think about the recurrence of rape camps, torture camps, and ethnic camps? Just what *is* the answer to Einstein's famous question: 'Is there a way to liberate mankind from the doom of war?' (Einstein 1978:1)? In the last decades of the twentieth century we have witnessed the resurgence of systematized torture, forced disappearances, group rapes, and ethnic massacres and 'cleansings' as organized practices for dealing with historical and cultural *chagrins*, political dissent, ideological orthodoxy, and ethnic and gender difference.³ Interdisciplinary explora-

³ Systems of organized violence are anchored in various ideological structures. We use the term 'ideology' to refer to the 'doctrines, opinions, or ways of thinking of an individual or class' (Webster 1983:902). Ideologies of hatred and terror may include pseudoscientific notions of biological inferiority and fear of pollution (Nazism).

Some recent ideologies of hatred have developed intertwining pseudo-sociological notions of 'cultural inferiority' (the new anti-immigration and racist movements in Europe and the US), or ethnic incompatibility and hatred (such as in the former Yugoslavia and in the Hutu-Tutsi case). Neo-nazi anti-immigrant groups in Europe share a cultural narcissism: there is a fear that somehow the foreigners will pollute and injure Europe's 'culture' (language, mores, way of life). The logic of pollution remains but no longer based on pseudo-biological arguments. Ideologies of hatred leading to massive social violence have fixated on historical fictions of lost privilege, or cultural narcissistic injuries (Germany after Versailles; the Greek-Turkish disputes explored by Volkan and Itzkowitz; the suicide bombers described by Apfel and Simon). A great deal of ideological hatred has been grounded on deadly political obsessions over orthodoxy (Stalinism, Pol Pot, and various recent anti-Communist regimes in Latin America). Religious scripts have fed ideologies of hatred (the Jews as Christ-killers). If rage in loss, endangerment, and mourning offers the psychological framework to systematized violence, ideology offers it an intellectual and moral framework.

Organized systems of terror always are guided by an intellectual framework. The Nazis operated with European fantasies of biological superiority by claiming a link to the Aryans, the upper caste conquerors of the Indic subcontinent. They updated and refined ancient European hatred of the Jews ('the Christ-killers': Fromm 1973:305) with pseudo-scientific claims of superiority. Biological purity had to be guarded by eliminating biologically inferior groups.

In the recent Argentine 'dirty war' (see Robben, in this volume), the so-called 'Doctrine of National Security' gave the Generals an intellectual framework for their actions. The anti-communist ideology of the Cold War offered the theoretical framework that led to the creation of a state-operated Dantesque machinery of illegal kidnappings and torture, and the deaths of thousands of innocent non-combatants.

Ideological frameworks may be laced with messianic fantasies and harsh moralistic dictates: the end of our way of life is near, everything must be done to prevent this. Sagan's (1988) notion of the 'corrupt superego' is particularly relevant here: in a terrorist system it is the corrupt superego that dictates that a group must be eliminated in the name of a grand cause.

During the Cold War, communism and anti-communism served as powerful ideologies for the organization of hatred and for structuring violence. Paradoxically, the terror of a nuclear holocaust served as an effective force to keep in check hatreds based

tions of psychological, social, and cultural frameworks can generate important answers to such unsettling questions.

How can we do analytical justice to collective violence and trauma, without unduly distorting the shattering experiences of the victims? Is Elie Wiesel right when he argues: 'The truth of Auschwitz remains hidden in its ashes. Only those who lived it in their flesh and in their minds can possibly transform their experience into knowledge. Others, despite their best intentions, can never do so' (Wiesel 1990:166)? Are we condemned to succumb to the executioner's victory over truth, understanding, and imagination? Is, paraphrasing Adorno's famous words, to write social science after Auschwitz barbaric? How can we create a space where the urgency for action and the necessity to inscribe and understand do not overwhelm each other?

While Adorno's warning does not preclude the scientific analysis of genocide, mass extermination, and large-scale violence, it does highlight the unbridgeable gap between the theoretical models at our disposal and the unfathomable depths of human suffering. On the other hand, Raul Hilberg, in his monumental three-volume *The Destruction of the European Jews*, has argued that, although the suffering is unique to each individual, the testimonies of many survivors are indeed remarkably similar. Hilberg's claim – a claim we share – is that the professional duty of the social scientist is to analyze those patterns and attempt to (re)construct the past, without pretending to have grasped the horror in its myriad manifestations (Hilberg 1988). Furthermore, victims, perpetrators, eyewitnesses, writers, and scientists alike are all condemned to the restrictions of representation. Understanding surely depends on which events are remembered, how these memories are given form, and through which perspective they are analyzed (Young 1988:1–3).

Perhaps the most serious paradox we face is an awareness that massive trauma is in important ways inherently incomprehensible. Cathy Caruth (1995, 1996) has wisely argued that traumatic events are by definition incomprehensible because partial forgetting is a defining characteristic of trauma. This inability of the traumatized to recover fully the traumatic event, and the failure to integrate the 'uncanny' experiences into consciousness (see also Gampel, in this volume), may be logically extended into literature and science. The refusal to force the inexplicable into interpretational schemata and, instead, to bear witness, to listen, and to allow testimony to unfold itself with all its contra-

on religious and ethnic differences. With the demise of the Soviet Union as a viable political project, and with the collapse of the Soviet Union as a broker in the balance of nuclear terror, ideologies of hatred are once again thriving along cultural, religious, and ethnic lines.

dictions and enigmas, is an alternative way of communicating massive trauma to the world.⁴

The essays included in this volume share a vision that the complexities of large-scale violence and trauma – their origins, structures, and consequences – are best approached from interdisciplinary and multi-layered perspectives. Although psychodynamic variables, such as narcissistic injury and pathological mourning, may be critical for understanding violence, it is unwise to underestimate the role of social, economic, and institutional factors in organizing the human capacity for destructiveness into powerful cultural forms.⁵ Reducing organized violence to the ‘death instinct’, or to group frustration leading to

⁴ See Felman and Laub (1992) on the affective and epistemological difficulties of bearing witness to testimonies of massive trauma.

⁵ We must keep in mind the economic foundations of violence. Economic forces may be a powerful instigator of social violence. Certainly, terror often yields significant wealth. The lavish lifestyle of the Nazis and the shady dealings of Swiss World War Two bankers come to mind.

A number of scholars have been interested in outlining the economic motives behind systems of violence. Chomsky, for example, has pointed out the extraordinary gains often associated with social violence and domination. Chomsky has claimed that a principal mission of US diplomacy has been to guarantee a steady flow of natural resources and a favourable business and investment climate in the Third World. Preferably, these goals are achieved in a democratic climate. However, if state terror and dictatorial rule are needed to secure US interests, then so be it (1993:30). Chomsky argues that: ‘In the post-World War II era, the US has been the global enforcer, guaranteeing the interests of privilege. It has, therefore, compiled an impressive record of aggression, international terrorism, slaughter, torture, chemical and bacteriological warfare, [and] human rights abuses of every imaginable variety’ (Chomsky 1993:31). For Chomsky economic greed is a most powerful force for human destructiveness.

Taussig (1987) has likewise highlighted some of the economic foundations of violence. Taussig explored the terror which flourished in the Anglo-Peruvian rubber plantations in the Putumayo districts of southwestern Colombia at the turn of the century. Taussig relates terror to the political economy of the colonial ‘encounter’ (crush might be a more appropriate word) between ‘capitalism’ and what Taussig calls (others reject his claims) ‘pre-capitalist’ forms of production. Terror, Taussig argues, was employed to ‘recruit’ the Indians through debt, into an economic system of commodity fetishism which they resisted as foreign to their hearts. According to Taussig, the capitalist process of ever expanding commodification is so destructive and inhuman that a ‘culture of terror’ emerged where torture and other obscene rituals of depreciation became the idiom mediating the clash of two worlds in the colonial enterprise. The violence in the Putumayo was, according to Taussig, only a local version of a global movement. Terror is inevitable in the ‘global stage of development of the commodity fetish; think also of the Congo with its rubber and ivory, of the enslavement of the Yaquis for the sisal plantations of the Yucatan in Mexico, of the genocidal bloodletting in tragic Patagonia – all around the same time’ (Taussig 1987:129).

There are, of course, some limitations to an economic approach to social violence. Reducing organized violence to economic motive tends to ignore the vastly irrational and counter-productive (from a cost–benefit perspective) aspects of terror. It has been noted, for example, that the energy and resources the Germans devoted to the Holocaust may have indeed fatally weakened their war effort against the allies.

aggression, simply neglects the axiomatic fact that *it is only in the context of over-determined socio-cultural climates* that violence becomes organized and evolves into death camps, rape camps, and torture camps.⁶

The questions we ask in our conversations avoid 'silver bullets', single origins, and mechanistic causation. None of the authors involved in this volume believes in a single explanation or a single origin of human

⁶ As Apfel and Simon explore in their chapter, social institutions provide the tools, the know-how, and the psychological support for the conduction of systematic atrocities. There is a 'bureaucracy of terror' required to build and operate concentration camps, rape camps, and torture camps. Such institutions might be special units like the SS, death squads such as in El Salvador and South Africa, military schools such as the ESMA in Argentina (see Robben, in this volume; CONADEP 1984; Timerman 1981), and so forth. The Nazis counted on the efficient participation of talented German engineers to construct their monstrous death apparatus. These were men who were 'concerned with improving the performance of the equipment they modified for the purpose demanded by their Government: rapid and efficient cremation of human beings killed in gas chambers' (Fleming 1993:19).

Professional torturers, camp guards, and suicide bombers are not born but made (see Apfel and Simon, in this volume; see also Waller 1993:34–7). Social psychologists have made significant contributions to the psychology of the implementation of terror. Studies by Milgram (1974) on 'obedience to authority', by Zimbardo (1972) on imprisonment, and by Staub (1989) on 'learned disinhibition', reveal how under certain conditions of institutional authority and rigid hierarchy it seems frightfully easy to order individuals to commit atrocious acts.

Torturers, death squad members, and suicide bombers typically work in teams. They go to instruction camps where they learn who the enemy is and how to destroy it. Many US observers were shocked that 'almost three quarters of the Salvadorean officers accused in seven other massacres [in addition to the massacre of the six Jesuit priests at the Central American University] were trained by the Fort Benning school' (Waller 1993:34). Also known as the 'School for Dictators', the School of the Americas at Fort Benning in Georgia has 'trained more than 56,000 Latin soldiers in combat and counterinsurgency skills' (Waller 1993:34). Some of the School's most notorious graduates include Manuel Noriega (class of '65 and '67), the Panamanian general-turned-drug-trafficker; Leopoldo Galtieri (class of '46), an Argentine 'dirty warrior', and architect of the disastrous invasion of the Malvinas/Falklands Islands; and Roberto D'Aubuisson, the reported intellectual father of the Salvadorean death squads (Waller 1993:34).

Institutions of terror provide not only the technical support but also the *psychological support* required to conduct organized terror. Members of such institutions must develop a sense of righteousness about their cause. There is a sense of brotherhood sealed by the blood spilled together. New members may be sent for special assignments (tortures, massacres, etc.) to gain entry into the group. These groups may be sealed off from other groups with less brutal tasks. There is a sense of common purpose and destiny. Non-group members may be seen as inferior, weak, or lacking the courage required to accomplish the momentous crusade.

According to some scholars, institutions of terror play an essential role in generating forms of power (see Scarry 1985; Taussig 1992). Elaine Scarry (1985) in her book on torture and war has argued that the terror manufactured in state-operated torture rooms is critical to creating forms of state power. The electricity discharged through cattle-prods in the torture chambers 'generates' much of the power in highly unstable regimes. The Salvadorean death squads and torture chambers working under the control of the armed forces (see Waller 1993) seemed to be busiest when the regime was being critically challenged by the insurgency.

violence. Nor do we believe that collective violence can be explained in a mechanistic paradigm. No hydraulic models are offered in this volume (Lorenz 1966).

Our specific questions are grounded on experience-near ‘thick descriptions’ of violence and trauma in a variety of social settings. We ask: How do cultural formations mediate violence and the work of mourning (Robben)? How do institutional contexts affect the psychocultural mechanisms children deploy when facing terror and violence (Apfel and Simon; and de Levita)? How is gender implicated in the experience of violence and trauma (de Levita; and Ewing)? How are identities, specifically ethnic and cultural identities, involved in the incubation of hostility and conflict leading to violence and trauma (Volkan and Itzkowitz)? How are cultural identities shaped and reshaped by the experience of trauma (C. Suárez-Orozco; and Luhrmann)? How does ‘memory’ – personal, historical, and cultural – relate to the intergenerational forces that perpetuate trauma (Gampel)?

The papers rely on a variety of data sets, including interview materials, the psychoanalytic encounter, the ethnographic encounter, and historical, archival, and media sources. The materials have been gathered, in all cases first hand, in a variety of settings, including Slovenia, Cyprus, Greece, Israel, Turkey, the United States, India, and Argentina.

All papers engage issues of violence and trauma on a scale that involves large social groups. While a number of psychoanalysts have examined the individual and familial dynamics in violence and trauma (see for example Klein and Riviere 1964; Kohut 1972; Kernberg 1992; and Mitchell 1993), only a few have explored violence and trauma as large-scale socio-cultural formations involving groups of peoples – communities, ethnicities, or nations. Large-scale violence engenders dynamics that are unique and in some ways incommensurable with individual violence.⁷

Large-scale violence targets social bonds and cultural practices as much as it targets the body and the psyche. It is often carefully scripted to destroy elemental culturally constituted expectations and functions.

⁷ Psychoanalysts have had much more to say about *some* forms of violence – including family violence – than about other forms of violence. An important theoretical issue in our conversation is whether the tools of the psychoanalytic project, best deployed to approach conscious and unconscious processes on an individual and small-group level, serve us as well to explore larger formations such as in ethnic, national, or post-national violence. And, if they do apply, and all of the authors involved in this project seem to agree that they do, what are the special problems of moving the psychoanalytic scalpel away from the consulting room to the refugee camp? The essays by Gampel, and Apfel and Simon in this volume explore these and other questions.

The mass and public rapings organized in the recent violence in the Balkans (Serbian soldiers raping Bosnian women) and Rwanda (Hutu soldiers raping Tutsi women) highlight the *socio-cultural* uses of violence. It was aimed, *inter alia*, at destroying fundamental cultural norms and kinship ties. In both Bosnia and Rwanda, fathers and mothers were made to witness the repeated brutal sexual assault of their daughters – destroying the most basic culturally constituted parental function: protect the children. In the words of human rights expert Ken Franzblau, such public rapings had:

devastating effects on communities, particularly in traditional communities or very religious communities where virginity and the fidelity of women can be central to the make up of that society. Rape is a psychological grenade thrown into the middle of daily life to provoke maximum terror. That is why you see a fair number of these rapes committed in front of family members of the girls or women involved. (quoted in Crossette 1998:6)

Although the essays included in this book share a number of basic tenets, it is important to keep in mind that anthropologists and psychoanalysts belong to quite different intellectual traditions and professional cultures. They therefore approach violence and trauma from very different vantage points. That makes this conversation more difficult but ultimately, we think, more rewarding.

Psychoanalysts are trained to pay attention to the intrapsychic mechanisms mediating violence and trauma. What defence mechanisms are mobilized by extreme violence (Apfel and Simon; and de Levita)? How does the work of mourning relate to healing or, conversely, to new cycles of violence (Volkan and Itzkowitz)? What are the unconscious processes which come to dominate the treatment of victims of extreme violence and terror (Gampel)?

Anthropologists and cultural psychologists, on the other hand, work on interpersonal and socio-cultural formations around violence and terror. How are social institutions and structures involved in the reproduction of violence (Ewing)? How are deep social attachments (ab)used as weapons in the construction of a culture of terror (Robben)? How is trauma implicated in the forming of cultural identities (C. Suárez-Orozco; and Luhrmann)?

Beyond differences in theoretical and empirical style, anthropologists and psychoanalysts have quite different entry points into the problem of large-scale violence. All of the psychoanalysts involved in this volume became enwrapped in problems of large-scale violence in their 'therapeutic role'. For them, the therapeutic role became a causeway into complex theoretical and empirical questions.

The anthropologist's role is, under the best of circumstances,

impossibly ambiguous.⁸ This is perhaps why anthropologists (with precious few exceptions) have altogether avoided problems of large-scale violence and trauma – and when they found themselves in such contexts, for the most part, they chose not to work with the materials.⁹ Unlike psychoanalysts, most anthropologists are not trained to offer therapeutic assistance to victims of massive violence. What, then, should be their role? Should the role of the anthropologist be limited to political activism and moral condemnation of violence? If anthropologists choose

⁸ There may be another reason why anthropologists have tended to neglect the study of large-scale violence. There is now an unsettling convergence of fashionable postmodern thought and the manipulation of memory in the service of hatred. The postmodern notion that ethnographic representations are to be treated as arbitrary ‘texts’ or ‘fictions’ simply privileging certain capricious positions has a certain rhetorical appeal, particularly when treating quaint folkloristic phenomena like the cockfight or folk poetry. It opens up possibilities for playing certain linguistic games that were not possible before the postmodern moment. Issues of authorship, authority, and the construction of ethnographies can be playfully entertained.

When turning to death camps, rape camps, and torture camps, the idea of treating events – and their representations – as ‘fictions’ becomes instantly repulsive. Fictions, be they literary, historical, or ethnographic, are, by definition, unreal fantasies, ‘stories’. As cultural anthropology continues its affair with ‘subjectivity’ (see Suárez-Orozco 1994:8–59) and righteously renounces any ‘scientific’ pretensions, it is becoming a storyteller’s craft.

According to this new wave, an ethnographic ‘story’ is just one ‘story’, no better and perhaps no worse than countless other ‘stories’ in a sea of infinite capricious, arbitrary, and egoistic fictions. What, then, does a storyteller’s anthropology have to offer the troubling *fin de siècle*? How can such an anthropology be of use to our understanding – and dismantling – of ethnic cleansings, rape camps, concentration camps, and torture camps (see Lipstadt 1993)?

Psychoanalysis has taught us that one of the most important first steps in treating victims of systems of massive trauma is to acknowledge unequivocally the *reality* of the events they endured. As Grubrich-Simitis (1984) and Robben (1996) have noted, victims see in the analyst’s emotional response to their harrowing accounts a confirmation of the reality of those traumatic experiences.

Those who have known a world organized to terrorize and destroy them need, first and foremost, empathy and *acknowledgment* (Weschler 1990). The survivor needs confirmation of the reality of the unreal world that attempted systematically to destroy the ego and, with it, the ‘reality principle’. They need acknowledgment of a world nobody is ready to believe could possibly exist (Suárez-Orozco 1992).

Those advocating a storyteller’s anthropology, surely unwittingly, are lending scholarly authority to the sinister attempts to deny the Holocaust, the Latin American ‘dirty wars’, and other recent episodes of organized destructiveness. Through a postmodern lens, they become just ‘stories’ or ‘fictions’. This is repulsive in intellectual and in moral terms. In intellectual terms, it does violence to a historical period in which the cultivation of organized hatred took new and unparalleled dimensions. In moral terms, it does violence, albeit in another idiom, to the unspeakable suffering of millions. It subverts the mourning process – ‘healthy’ mourning requires acknowledging the trauma and loss.

⁹ Incredibly there is no index entry under ‘aggression’ or ‘violence’ in Marvin Harris’ (1968) well regarded book *The Rise of Anthropological Theory*. Likewise, Clifford Geertz, someone whose anthropological perspective is quite different from Harris’, has until very recently (Geertz 1995:5–11) remained silent on the Balinese massacres.

to take this role, how is their work different from the work of human rights organizations such as Amnesty International? The anthropologists involved in this volume, implicitly or explicitly, share a conviction that their task is to deploy the tools of their craft to document, inscribe, and help understand the socio-cultural processes and sequelae of violence and trauma.

Interdisciplinary explorations of massive trauma

Massive trauma inflicted deliberately on large groups of people by other human beings became a major psychiatric concern only during the First World War. Traumatic neuroses, the so-called fright neuroses (*Schreckneurosen*), had been studied at the beginning of the twentieth century but they concerned only small numbers of survivors of mining accidents, and natural disasters such as earthquakes and volcanic eruptions (Kolb 1993:294). The First World War brought millions of dead as well as millions of psychological casualties. The symptoms of combat trauma – crying fits, anxiety attacks, tremors, exhaustion, irritability, jumpiness, loss of appetite, apathy, depression – were at first diagnosed as a physical affliction of the nervous system caused by the concussive effects of exploding shells. However, battle fatigue or shell shock was also found among soldiers without any physical injuries. The symptoms were re-evaluated as a psychological trauma, and now were attributed to prolonged combat duty and the exposure to violent death. Puzzled by this unusual psychopathology, psychiatrists began to develop explanations that were reminiscent of late-nineteenth-century theories about female hysteria, the very hysteria which had drawn Freud to the French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot at Salpêtrière hospital. Men suffering from shell shock were regarded as cowards and, very much as hysterical women, morally corrupt. The experience of war was believed to build a strong character and make men eager to sacrifice themselves for the fatherland (see Mosse 1990). This myth had to be sustained to replenish the ranks with enthusiastic volunteers who were willing to die in the rat-infested trenches – in search of honour and glory. Men with combat neurosis were court-martialled and discharged. Medical treatment – not to say torture – ranged from electric shocks to psychological intimidation.¹⁰

¹⁰ For instance, the British neurologist Lewis Yealland applied hour-long electric shocks to the throat of a mute patient strapped to a chair. He also recommended the use of threats and inducing shame among traumatized patients.

Interdisciplinary beginnings: Rivers and Kardiner

The physician, psychologist, and anthropologist William H. R. Rivers contributed to a dramatic turn in the treatment of combat neurosis. Rivers had been a member of the famous Haddon expedition to the Torres Straits, and had a great interest in psychoanalysis. Like his fellow Melanesianist Bronislaw Malinowski, he was not convinced of the universality of the Oedipus complex or the sex drive, but he drew freely on psychoanalytic techniques when he became a captain in the Royal Army Medical Corps in 1916. Rivers was soon joined by Charles Seligman, another anthropologist from the Haddon expedition who had an interest in psychoanalysis (Stocking 1986:31).

The medical corps favoured two therapeutic regimes for the treatment of combat trauma. The 'disciplinary method' was based on animal training and tried to force patients into abandoning their symptoms by the infliction of pain. On the other hand, the 'analytic method' was based on the assumption that not repression of the symptoms but remembering the traumatic experiences was beneficial (Young 1995:67–71). Rivers did not use punishment and humiliation to cow the servicemen into combat readiness: rather he openly empathized with his patients, and favoured the 'talking cure' and dream analysis pioneered by Breuer and Freud. In particular, his successful treatment of the war hero and poet Siegfried Sassoon at Craiglockhart Hospital in Edinburgh drew much public interest at the time.¹¹

Sassoon had returned with shell shock to Great Britain and had become an anti-war advocate. Rivers took Sassoon under his care and, after treatment, the young officer recanted his pacifist statements and departed again for the front in France. Rivers had demonstrated that even the brave could be paralyzed by fear, and that this fear could be surmounted, not by patriotism, but by the emotional attachment to the fighting comrades. Not moral character, but the severe stresses and group processes to which servicemen were exposed influenced the likelihood of combat trauma. Rivers' approach became the preferred treatment of combat neurosis and was adopted as standard practice by British and American psychiatrists until the Second World War (Herman 1992:22; Langham 1981:52–3; Slobodin 1978:59–65).¹²

Abram Kardiner, who had been influenced by Columbia anthropologist Franz Boas and the psychoanalyst Horace Frink, gave a new

¹¹ This work has recently been given new attention by Pat Barker's acclaimed novel *Regeneration* (1992).

¹² Young (1995:81–4) writes that the figure of Rivers has been misrepresented by Herman (1992), and disputes that Rivers was greatly influenced by Freud.

impetus to the study and treatment of combat trauma. In 1922, shortly after returning from his analysis with Freud in Vienna, Kardiner began to work in the New York Veterans Hospital. He was profoundly moved by the incurable distress of the First World War veterans, and tried to formulate a psychoanalytic theory of war trauma (Manson 1986:76). Unsuccessful, he returned to his private practice, and developed an interest in anthropology. His collaboration with Ralph Linton, a First World War veteran from the Rainbow Division, resulted in *The Individual and His Society* (1939). According to Judith Lewis Herman (1992:24): 'It was only then, after writing this book, that he was able to return to the subject of war trauma, this time having in anthropology a conceptual framework that recognized the impact of social reality and enabled him to understand psychological trauma.' For Kardiner, combat trauma did not arise from the stimulation of infantile conflicts but from the extreme duress of the violent environment.

Kardiner published in 1941 *The Traumatic Neuroses of War*, which was entirely based on his clinical work with First World War veterans. The revised edition of 1947 was co-authored by Herbert Spiegel who contributed his battlefield experiences from the Second World War. Kardiner's clinical description and treatment of combat trauma have remained important to this day, and represent his most enduring scientific contribution. Kardiner emphasized that camaraderie, morale, and strength of the officer-soldier tie were crucial in overcoming fear and preventing an emotional collapse. If the soldier suffered from combat trauma, then he had to relive his traumatic experiences through hypnosis, debriefing (a crash talking cure), or the use of drugs that provoked a catharsis, and then returned to his unit as soon as possible. Kardiner warned that these vehement catharses had to be consolidated into conscious awareness to prevent a relapse. However, the expediency of the war machine was more important than the lasting mental welfare of individual soldiers. The astonishing recovery rate of combat trauma patients (80 per cent were again on duty within one week, including 30 per cent who returned to combat missions) made military psychiatrists neglect their long-term care (Herman 1992:23-6; Kardiner and Spiegel 1947:360-5).

Human-made massive trauma was seen as an exclusive military affair until the Second World War because most casualties had always been inflicted on military personnel. The number of civilian casualties went from 5 per cent in the First World War, and 50 per cent in the Second World War to over 80 per cent in the Vietnam War (Summerfield 1995:17). Civilians were never, of course, immune to the deleterious effects of warfare. They were driven from their homes, suffered the loss

of their sons, brothers, and husbands at distant fronts, and carried the economic burden of all-consuming wars. Still, their suffering was regarded as an unfortunate vicissitude of war, but not recognized as a traumatic experience in need of psychiatric care.

Disciplinary divergence: civilian trauma and the Second World War

The interwar years brought about massive trauma. Yet there was little professional attention to the survivors of the massacre of over 1 million Armenians in Turkey, the traumatized victims of the Russian and German pogroms, the civil war in Spain, the state-organized famines in the Ukraine, or the tens of millions of political prisoners rotting in Stalin's Gulag.

The Second World War would eventually bring about the treatment of massive trauma among large civilian populations. The unfathomable traumas inflicted in Japanese and Nazi Germany concentration camps demanded urgent professional attention. However, governments, health professionals, and also the survivors themselves were initially more ready to forget than recall the traumatic memories of the past. Many victims of violence seemed to recover rather well upon liberation, and seemed eager to get on with their lives. Psychic and psychosomatic disorders were dismissed as temporary problems of adjustment, and were thus described as refugee or repatriation neuroses. It was only years, and sometimes even decades, later that psychopathologies appeared.

The term 'concentration camp syndrome' was first coined in 1954, and would influence the direction of scientific investigation as much as the term 'post-traumatic stress disorder' would become a standard concept in the 1980s. Psychoanalysis stood at the forefront of understanding and treating patients suffering from the concentration camp syndrome. A number of European survivors were practising psychiatrists, physicians, or psychoanalysts when they were deported to the camps, while others drew upon their personal experiences when they became analytically trained after the war.

The terror and torture inflicted on political prisoners in German concentration camps became first known in an official report by the British government in 1939. The first psychoanalytic study appeared in 1943. It was written by Bruno Bettelheim who had been incarcerated for one year (1938–9) in Dachau and Buchenwald. Bettelheim (1980) documents the deliberate psychological shocks inflicted on new arrivals, the different responses and adjustments of various social groups, and the nightmares, regressions, and defences of the inmates. In his analyses of

human behaviour in Dachau and Buchenwald, Bettelheim developed his notions of 'survivor's guilt' and 'identification with the aggressor', arguing that 'practically all prisoners who had spent a long time in the camp took over the attitude of the SS toward the so-called unfit prisoners' (Bettelheim 1980:78). Bettelheim has been criticized for making generalizations on the basis of camp experiences that are not representative of the extermination camps that were typical of the Holocaust. More important is the criticism that it was not the mimesis of the camp guards that increased the chances of survival, as Bettelheim seems to suggest, but passive subordination, self-respect, the cultivation of friendships, and sometimes even denial of the grim reality (Eitinger 1994:474–6; Wind 1995:32). Notwithstanding this justified criticism of Bettelheim's work, its wider importance lies in his focus on the complex social dynamics between perpetrators and victims of violence, instead of restricting explanations of psychopathologies to intra-psychic processes.¹³

The diagnosis of collective trauma became of acute significance during the post-Second World War decade when increasing numbers of concentration camp survivors, resistance fighters, veterans, and sailors of the merchant marine, and their children began to suffer from the aftereffects of their war experiences. The poor understanding of the stressors that cause trauma, and the failure to distinguish between acute trauma and its post-traumatic effects, not only resulted in inadequate psychiatric care, but was also played out with calculating callousness to withhold the payment of reparative damages.

Psychoanalytic etiology was abused by psychiatrists who had to assess whether or not the restitution claims against the German government made by concentration camp survivors living in the United States were justified. Several of the specialists contracted by the German consulate in New York contended that the physical and psychic damages were not caused by the continued degradation, malnutrition, mistreatment, and assassination of spouse, children, and parents during the years spent in the camps, but were due to pre-internment ailments and dispositions (Eissler 1963, 1967).¹⁴ These psychiatrists supported their prejudiced

¹³ Paul Friedman was the first analyst who drew attention to persistent psychic problems among concentration camp survivors. He diagnosed Jewish survivors in Cyprus en route to Palestine in 1946, and described their serious mental and physical health problems. Anna Freud was also among the first to work with camp survivors. In 1945 she treated six orphaned children from Theresienstadt at the Hamstead clinic (Grubrich-Simitis 1981:417–18).

¹⁴ Eissler attributes the denial of the concentration camp syndrome by these psychiatrists to an emotional rejection (if not outright prejudice), guilt feelings, and even a repressed contempt for the victims of Nazi persecution. Eissler explains how the anxiety of listening to such traumatic accounts may have resulted in the withdrawal of empathy.

diagnoses with a traditional psychoanalytic explanation of symptom formation, namely that adult neuroses were preceded and determined by early-childhood conflicts.¹⁵

First, the realization that not only physical but also psychic damage can be inflicted on people is terrifying. The awareness that we may be robbed of our identity, that our personality and self may be damaged irreparably, is one of our greatest fears because our self is the last abode to which we can retreat in moments of threat. The violation of its integrity is a paralyzing thought. Secondly, a survivor represents for psychiatrists and physicians the frightening possibility of their own fate. They could have also been victims of persecution. This thought may lead to the guilt feeling that the survivor's torment somehow saved them from such fate; as if he or she had stood in their place (Eissler 1963:283, 291). The third reason for the insensitivity and even hostility by psychiatrists towards concentration camp survivors is a deep-seated and repressed contempt for victims of persecution. The hatred towards the survivor has to do with incredulity that he or she withstood so much humiliation, and the unconscious awareness that they themselves would have broken under such suffering (Eissler 1967:572-4).

¹⁵ This general model had been first formulated by Otto Fenichel. Fenichel (1945) argued that frustrations during adulthood can provoke regressions which trigger defences that are manifested as psychopathological disorders. For instance, in the case of traumatized victims from Nazi concentration camps, not the mistreatment but the early-childhood neuroses were responsible for the psychic and psychosomatic symptoms.

Two other principal explanations of symptoms have arisen in the history of psychoanalytic thought, both of which were formulated by Freud. Freud's stimulus-barrier hypothesis states that a trauma occurs when the ego's protective barrier, which screens incoming stimuli, is assaulted by uncontrollable stress factors. This hypothesis implies that the weaker the defence barrier, the greater the chance of traumatic disruption. Freud's experience with First World War veterans who suffered from recurrent nightmares made him formulate the repetition compulsion principle. This third explanation of trauma implies that the barrage of incoming stimuli revives an early-childhood defence which recreates and incessantly repeats the disturbing event in order to be able to handle it. The repetition shores up the ego's defences and allows the sufferer to re-experience the event with greater mastery (Brett 1993:62).

The clinical experiences with traumatized concentration camp survivors revealed the shortcomings of these three traditional formulations of symptom formation. The singular emphases on early-childhood conflicts and on individual psychic processes both became untenable when large numbers of people displayed symptoms of traumas that had obviously been suffered during adulthood and had been inflicted in group situations. Furthermore, the two psychoanalytic explanations of the delayed appearance of the symptoms of massive trauma, namely Fenichel's regression model and Freud's repetition-compulsion model, focused again only on the individual instead of the social, cultural and historical circumstances (Brett 1993:64-5). The understanding of massive trauma asked for a new explanation. Combat trauma proved an unlikely source for inspiration.

Kardiner and Spiegel had already demonstrated the importance of environmental stresses as opposed to early-childhood conflicts, and Bettelheim had shown the relevance of group processes. Henry Krystal's work (1968a, 1978) with traumatized concentration camp survivors made him conclude that the meaning of the event determines whether or not its experience becomes traumatic. The exposure to the event is the primary cause of trauma, while the individual interpretation and reaction constitute the dependent factor. Krystal also distinguished infantile trauma from adult trauma, and differentiated catastrophic trauma from other forms. The term 'catastrophic trauma' refers only to those situations in which there is a surrender to helplessness because of extreme external stress (Brett 1993:63-4). The existential work

Unfortunately, the paths of anthropology and psychoanalysis did not meet in the study of massive civilian trauma as they had in Rivers' and Kardiner's work on combat trauma. This is somewhat surprising because many anthropologists and psychoanalysts cooperated during the Second World War in the field of 'culture and personality' studies. Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson made a psychological profile of Adolf Hitler, and tried in 1939 to convince the Roosevelts of an anthropologically informed appeasement strategy to prevent the German dictator from going to war. They also worked in the Committee for National Morale to boost public support for the war effort with insights from anthropology and psychology. The anthropologists Eliot Chapple and Theodore Lockhart, the psychologists Gordon Allport, Gardner Murphy, and Robert Yerkes, and the psychiatrists Ernest Kris and Lawrence Frank were other notable committee members.

In 1940, Mead and Bateson began to develop 'the study of culture at a distance' by examining national documents and interviewing many expatriates of countries that could not be studied through direct observation because of the Second War World. Geoffrey Gorer and Clyde Kluckhohn wrote studies about Japanese 'national character'. In 1946, Ruth Benedict published her classic study of Japanese culture-at-a-distance, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*. A few years later, Gorer and Rickman (1950) developed the controversial 'swaddling hypothesis' to explain the national character of the Russian people. All of these studies faced severe criticism on empirical and theoretical grounds (Suárez-Orozco 1994:10–59).

Erich Fromm (1941) contributed a study about the authoritarian national character of the Germans, while Walter Langer (1973) and Erik Erikson (1951:284–315) wrote psychoanalytic reports on Hitler's personality (Bock 1988:80–5; Yans-McLaughlin 1986:194–7). After the national character studies of the two principal enemies, Japan and Germany, psychological assessments were made of over half a dozen occupied countries. Their national characters were compared with respects to 'attitudes toward victory and defeat, relative strength and weakness, standards of truth and falsehood, dominance and submission,

of Viktor Frankl (1959) which prioritizes the human need for meaning over survival is of related interest.

Kardiner's and Krystal's emphasis on the traumatic event as the pathogenic force and the contributing importance of the individual's personal history and subjective interpretation give a heightened relevance to anthropology's concern for the socio-cultural context of massive trauma. As Summerfield (1995:20) points out, the social, political, and cultural context generates the meanings which are the building blocks for the victim's reaction to violence. Massive trauma and the sequelae should therefore be understood within the wider socio-cultural context.

success and failure, under- and over-statement, expectations of death or survival in battle, etc.’ (Mead 1979:149).¹⁶

Neither the United States government nor the anthropological community showed any interest in employing anthropological skills to the Korean War, while the persecutory investigations of the McCarthy era placed a further brake on any professional involvement. The Vietnam War also failed to enlist many anthropologists, as only few were willing to perform the counter-intelligence tasks asked for by the Department of Defense (Mead 1979:147).

It seems that the lessons learned by military psychiatrists during and after the Second World War had been forgotten by the time the US became involved in the Vietnam War. In Vietnam combat units were deployed for over-extended times, and combat soldiers and officers who suffered mental breakdowns were returned to the front lines as soon as possible, supposedly to speed up their recovery (Kolb 1993:296). The emotional hardships suffered in Vietnam, the unelaborated mourning over dead comrades, the military defeat, the humiliating reception at home in a society torn by the war, and the overall indifference from the military establishment resulted in more than 35 per cent of the Vietnam veterans being diagnosed as suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Shay 1995:168). Shay (1995:169–80) argues that the official criteria used to diagnose PTSD fail to address the profound personality changes caused by severe trauma. Combat trauma shatters the meaningfulness of the self and the world, and makes its sufferers put their bodies and minds on constant alert for any possible attack. They become distrustful of others, their own memories, and visual perceptions.

‘Post-traumatic stress disorder’ became a term adopted in 1980 by the American Psychiatric Association in its diagnostic manual (Young 1995:107–14). The PTSD construct has resulted in important clinical advances. It has also medicalized trauma into a unilinear and decontextualized disorder. PTSD has become a blanket term for a wide array of conditions. Current uses of PTSD generally fail to take into account key aspects such as the context of the traumatic experience, whether the trauma was inflicted on an individual or a group, through natural

¹⁶ Once the war had ended, these scholars did not pursue their interdisciplinary studies into the populations they had studied at a distance. They also failed to become involved in government programmes dedicated to rebuilding the societies ravaged by the war. Their faith in humanity had been profoundly shaken by the atomic attack on Japan, and many were troubled about their use of psychology and anthropology to defeat the people they had studied. Disillusioned and remorseful about this violation of trust, ‘The social scientists took their marbles and went home’ (Mead cited in Yans-McLaughlin 1986:214).