

## Educations in Ethnic Violence

In *Educations in Ethnic Violence*, Matthew Lange explores the effects education has on ethnic violence. Lange contradicts the widely held belief that education promotes peace and tolerance. Rather, Lange finds that education commonly contributes to aggression, especially in environments with ethnic divisions, limited resources, and ineffective political institutions. He describes four ways in which organized learning spurs ethnic conflicts. Socialization in school shapes students' identities and the norms governing intercommunal relations. Education can also increase students' frustration and aggression when their expectations are not met. Sometimes, the competitive atmosphere gives students an incentive to participate in violence. Finally, education provides students with superior abilities to mobilize violent ethnic movements. Lange employs a cross-national statistical analysis with case studies of Sri Lanka, Cyprus, the Palestinian territories, India, sub-Saharan Africa, Canada, and Germany.

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# Educations in Ethnic Violence

## *Identity, Educational Bubbles, and Resource Mobilization*

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## Acknowledgments

This project began as a study of the impact of colonialism on ethnic violence. During the course of my research, I began to accumulate diverse evidence suggesting that colonial education contributed to ethnic violence in different ways in different places. Because colonialism is popularly viewed as something that negatively affects diverse types of social relations, such findings were hardly unexpected. As I looked into the issue further, however, I found evidence that this educational effect is not limited to the colonial situation, a finding that is a bit more surprising.

In the end, I chose to drop my focus on colonialism and explore how education affects ethnic violence, and *Educations in Ethnic Violence* is the outcome of this switch. Two main factors pushed me to make the change. First, there is already a large literature on how colonialism affected ethnic relations, and my analysis was not uncovering anything exciting and new. Second, I believe that the social world is extremely complex and that this complexity makes Manichean categories of good and evil irrelevant. Yet, the literature on development commonly depicts education as universally beneficial and desirable. According to the World Bank (2011), for example:

Investment in education benefits the individual, society, and the world as a whole. Broad-based education of good quality is among the most powerful instruments known to reduce poverty and inequality. With proven benefits for personal health, it also strengthens nations' economic health by laying the foundation for sustained economic growth. For individuals and nations, it is key to creating, applying, and spreading knowledge – and thus to the development of dynamic, globally competitive economies. And it is fundamental for the construction of democratic societies.

Given my background as a sociologist and the much more critical view of education in the sociology of education, such claims appeared to me exaggerated and one-sided. I therefore wanted to investigate whether there was another darker side to the educational coin.

During the long process of researching and writing *Educations in Ethnic Violence*, several individuals and organizations assisted me in diverse ways. Monetarily, the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada generously funded the project. My research was also assisted by the International Centre for Ethnic Studies at both Colombo and Kandy in Sri Lanka, the Centre for Development Studies in Kerala, the Public Records Office and British Library in the UK, the OKD Institute of Social Change and Development in Assam, the Archives of the Society of Missionaries of Africa in Rome, and the PRIO Cyprus Centre. Several individuals in these organizations offered considerable support, guidance, and friendship, most notably K.M. de Silva, Indranee Dutta, Sunil Mani, Thambirajah Ponnudurai, and Bhupen Sarmah. Outside of these organizations, Rena Choparou, Gopa Gopa Kumar, Yiannis Papadakis, Alexis Rappas, Michael Tharakan, Jandhyala Tilak, and Michalinos Zembylas, generously assisted with my fieldwork and offered wonderful advice; they also treated me to coffee, invited me to their homes to dine with their families, and performed several other extremely kind and generous acts. Closer to home, I am grateful for the assistance I received from friends, colleagues, and students. Among these, John A. Hall, Maurice Pinard, Eran Shor, and Matthias vom Hau offered invaluable comments at different stages of the research project, and T.V. Paul helped me establish contacts in Kerala. Most notably, I must recognize the valuable contributions made by several excellent research assistants at McGill University, including Samantha Berger, Andrew Dawson, Jason Settels, and Kalyani Thurairajah. Two former advisors who keep on advising – Patrick Heller and Dietrich Rueschemeyer – also offered valuable and generous assistance. Finally, I thank my wife for her patience and support throughout the research project, my son for his love and inspiration, and my parents for their love and guidance throughout my life. While all of these organizations and people have helped me enormously and improved the book in a variety of ways, the final product is hardly perfect. I am solely responsible for its faults.

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