RETHINKING VIOLENCE

Toward Understanding and Applying a More Practical Response to the Epidemic of Violence

WHITE PAPER

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Abstract — Violence degrades the quality of our lives; it consumes resources, time, and energy that could be applied to solving the world's problems and increasing the quality of human life. A punitive approach to the problem of violence is a common response to violence and is perhaps the most widespread. This approach has its roots going back more than 10,000 years. However, new developments in understanding human behavior suggest that alternative methods may be more effective in reducing the morbidity and mortality associated with violence. One alternative, The Violence Integrative Prevention and Restoration (PAR) Model, provides an effective, successfully demonstrated, evidence-based, and compassionate approach to violence response and prevention built upon a public health foundation. It is a significant departure from the traditional "punitive" model for dealing with violence. We explore the impact of the PAR Model and compare it to the traditional punitive approach in this paper.

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Violence and the Need for Change

"The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion."

— Abraham Lincoln
1809 — 1865
16th President of the United States
from his annual message to Congress, December 01, 1862

Impact

No nation, community, or individual escapes the touch of violence. It fills the news, entertains us, consumes our wealth, drags down the quality of our lives, and plagues us with sorrow and suffering. More than 1.6 million people lose their lives to violence each year.[2] *Figure 01* illustrates worldwide death from injury and the proportion attributed to violence.

"No nation, community, or individual escapes violence."

Figure 01
Worldwide Death from Injury, 2023[3]
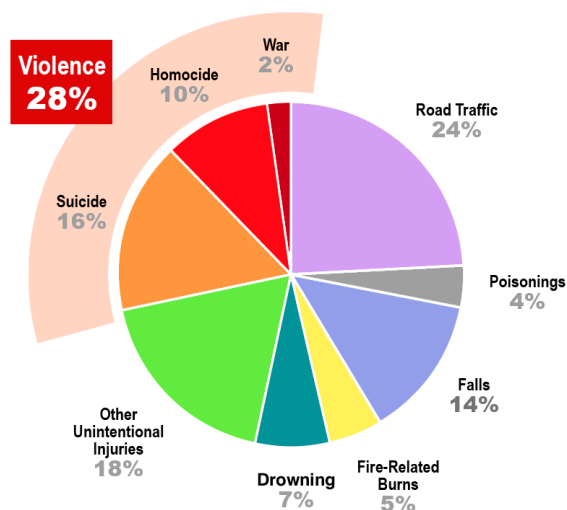
*NOTE: "Other" includes smothering, asphyxiation, choking, animal and venomous bites, hypothermia, and hyperthermia, as well as natural disasters.

The Centers for Disease Control reports that: [4]
1. 2.5 million were hospitalized due to violent injuries in 2014.
2. For every person who dies because of violence, 135 are treated in an emergency room.
3. In the last year, one in 7 (14.3%) children in the United States experienced abuse or neglect.

Violence degrades the quality of our lives; it consumes resources, time, and energy that could be applied to solving the world's problems and increasing the quality of human life.

"Violence degrades the quality of our lives; consumes resources, time, and energy that could be applied to solving the world's problems and increasing the quality of human life."

Cost

We can view the cost of violence in various ways, including in terms of the emotional, mental, economic, environmental, and quality of life frameworks. Because some costs are difficult to render in absolute terms, one should be cautious not to discount or dismiss them. For example, the emotional impact of violence takes a terrible toll, but the direct effects on the emotions of a population are difficult to measure.

Internationally

The World Health Organization reports that interpersonal violence disproportionately impacts low- and middle-income countries.[5] The economic effects are also likely to be more devastating in poorer countries. However, the absence of economic data related to violence in low- and middle-income countries makes an accurate assessment difficult. Comparisons with high-income countries are complicated because economic losses related to productivity tend to be undervalued in low-income countries since these losses are typically based on lower wages and income. For example, a single homicide costs, on average, $15,319 in South Africa, $602,000 in Australia, and $2,600,000 in the United States.[6]

Oxfam International reported that the cost of conflict upon African development was $284 billion between 1990 and 2005.[7] The research calculates the overall effects of conflict on African Nations' Gross Domestic Product (GDP. It shows that, on average, a war, civil war, or insurgency reduces an African economy by 15%. As a result, the continent loses an average of $18 billion annually — money better used to meet the populations' challenging health, education, and economic needs.

Many wars currently being fought throughout the world have continued for years. These include wars in Somalia (27 years), Libya (7 years), the Democratic Republic of Congo (off and on for 21 years, with approximately 5 million killed in the period from 1997 to 2003), and Syria (8 years, with 600 civilians killed in Ghouta over several weeks in early 2018).[8] In Mexico, the Philippines, South Africa, and Brazil (which ordered the military into Rio de Janeiro in response to the recurring waves of violent behavior — a move that critics believe did little to solve the problem), there are efforts to stamp out violence associated with criminality.[9]

Figure 02 illustrates the overall cost of violence in the United States.

Figure 02
Annual Direct Cost of Violence in the United States

Department of Defense	$752.9 billion
Department of Veterans Affairs	261.3 billion
Department of Homeland Security	52.2 billion
Sub-Total, international violence	1,066.7 billion
Violent crime, interpersonal violence	759.0 billion
TOTAL, 2022	**$1,825.7 billion**

Sources – US Department of Defense (2022)
US Department of Veterans Affairs (2022)
US Department of Homeland Security (2022)
US National Institutes of Health (2021 – formula: 3.3% of US GDP)

"The emotional cost of violence can carry forward through generations."

These figures do not include medical and work loss costs due to violence.

The Legacy of Violence

The emotional cost of violence can carry forward through generations. The mental price includes negative beliefs about self and others, reduced ability to learn, and negative impact on choices. The cost to regain emotional and mental health for those injured by violence can be significant.

Environmentally, we find the cost of violence in its physical, emotional, mental, and situational consequences. For example, 75 years after the end of World War I, France's Department du Deminage estimated 12 million unexploded shells remaining from battles in the Verdun area. The United Nations estimates more than 105 million land mines are deployed in 62 countries — a legacy that continues to kill and maim innocents.[10] Clearing these explosives continues to this day.

Nelson Mandela, Nobel Peace Prize recipient and former President of South Africa, noted that the legacy of day-to-day individual suffering includes "... the pain of children who are abused by people who should protect them, women injured or humiliated by violent partners, elderly persons maltreated by their caregivers, youths who are bullied by other youths, and people of all ages who inflict violence on themselves."

This suffering — and there are many more examples extant — is a legacy that reproduces itself as new generations learn from the violence of generations past, as victims learn from victimizers, and as the social conditions that nurture violence are allowed to continue. No country, no city, no community is immune. But neither are we powerless against it."[11]

Violence and Human Development

What is past is prologue.

— William Shakespeare
1564 – 1616
English dramatist and poet

Homo Sapiens (modern human beings) emerged about 200,000 years ago during a period of extraordinary climate change.[12] Our first job was to survive in a world with other beings also driven to:
1. Secure resources;
2. Assure the safety of ourselves, our families, and our tribes; and
3. Develop social structures.

Professor Paul Gilbert at the University of Darby, an evolutionary psychologist, founder of the Compassionate Mind Foundation and International Center for Compassionate Organizations Fellow notes:

> Generally speaking, our human biosocial goals and strategies represent past solutions to problems posed by selective pressure. These focus on challenges such as:
> 1. Care of offspring, together with the capability to shape the experience of offspring such that they can acquire the knowledge base necessary to live as a viable representative of that species.
> 2. Selecting, attracting, and maintaining mates, including successful conception.
> 3. Selecting, attracting, and maintaining alliances, including discrimination between ingroup or outgroup, an ally or non-ally.
> 4. Successfully negotiating social hierarchies and social place.[13]

"These goals, along with environmental conditions, shaped our development."

These goals, along with environmental conditions, shaped our development. How we organized ourselves, developed skills (such as hunting, foraging, making tools and clothing, building shelters), dealt with threats (from animals and other human beings, weather, shortages of resources, etc.), confronted our mortality, and focused our creativity were activities in the service of survival — physically, emotionally, mentally, situationally, and transpersonally.

Along the way, we developed physiological characteristics that are with us today, including some that are either not as useful as they once were (e.g., toenails) or ones we can survive without (e.g., the appendix). The human brain is among the most unique and fascinating physical aspects we possess.

The Human Brain

The human brain is the starting place for understanding how we perceive and respond to threats (including applying violence as a strategy). It is the most complex organ in the body. The brain has become a "set of mixed social

strategies and modular, evaluative systems that evolved to solve certain problems" rather than a unitary system.[14]

A key to understanding violence and its roots begins with grasping the human brain's complexity, nature, and operation. This understanding is essential to creating effective responses for managing and preventing violence. Learning — the process of developing and reinforcing neurological patterning — continues throughout life. Because of the plasticity of the brain (an important survival attribute), we learn from experience what does and does not work.

The development of human societies and the response to challenges such as food shortages, disease, and environmental threats (e.g., storms, floods, extreme variations in temperature) were mitigated by the powerful ability of the human brain to process new information, connect disparate but profitable pieces of complex puzzles, and organize knowledge to solve a broad range of problems. The result is that food shortages, death by lightning strikes, onset and death by many diseases, communication beyond a very short distance, and limits to the widespread transmission of knowledge have been minimized or overcome.

"The notion of the primacy of the will — a belief that our conscious will is all that is needed to overcome human dilemmas — is a common misconception."

Humans and their brains have changed the quality and nature of human life.

Yet, the brain presents challenges, including dealing with confusing messages from dysfunctional aspects of the unconscious, the tendency to stereotype, perceptual challenges arising from generalizations in which old patterns override senses, and the tricks memory can play on us (thus conflicting reports on shared events). Professor Paul Gilbert at the Compassionate Mind Foundation refers to these incongruencies when he discusses the "tricky brain."[15]

In many respects, the traditional punitive approach for responding to violence has worked over thousands of years. The same processes that led to improvements in other aspects of human life can be applied to preventing and responding to violence. Approaches such as the Violence Integrative Prevention and Restoration (PAR) Model result from processes similar to those applied to other challenges to human existence.

While we continue to increase our knowledge about the brain and how it functions, many misconceptions remain. Among them is the notion of the primacy of the will — a belief that our conscious will is all that is needed to overcome human dilemmas. Examples include "just say 'no' to drugs" (when applied to those already addicted), beliefs that the key to weight loss for everyone is just a matter of eating less and a failure to do so is a failure of character, and dealing with phobias (e.g., fear of heights, social anxiety, fear of spiders) by deciding that they will no longer be bothersome.

The notion of the primacy of the will is debunked with a simple exercise. Humans can go without oxygen for three minutes without injury or losing

consciousness. Yet, most people cannot hold their breath for three minutes. The brain has a survival pattern designed to compel breathing when breathing stops for a prolonged period. It is not a failure of will.

The Origins of Violence

The recognition of the hidden power of the brain is essential to understanding violence. The brain's design helps us survive threats, and it combines the threat response strategies we are born with those we were taught. Among the techniques we learned was organizing ourselves into groups for mutual protection and the distribution of tasks. The result was tribalism — an influential social construct that served humans for many millennia.

Confronted by threats from predatory animals or other tribes competing for scant resources, individual and collective violence provided useful tools. For thousands of years, this has been a productive strategy. However, this structure became problematic once our social systems grew beyond tribal organization — to cities, economic exchange regions, states, and worldwide interconnectedness.

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As we have continued to develop over the centuries, we faced dealing with the challenges of worldwide relationships, instant communication, changes in diet and physical demands, weapons that are wildly more destructive than the clubs and stones we started with, and the social structures and ways of thinking that allow us to manage our new situation.

Yet, the process of change for human beings is accelerating rapidly — our situation is very different from conditions some 10,000 years ago.[16] During the 200,000-year history of our species,[17] the changes since the first cities were established 9,500 years ago were far more extensive than in the previous 190,500 years (the first 95% of human history).

Human physiology, including the structure and function of the brain, changes very slowly. Many of the strategies built into the human brain that had more than 190,000 years to develop are still with us today.

Basic Questions

There are fundamental questions, the answers to which support understanding what it is to be human. Understanding who and what we are and how we function provides a foundation for understanding violence. These questions include:

- Are human beings "things" or "processes" or both?
- Is there such a thing as "now," and if so, what is its duration?
- How much of reality are we conscious of, and how much do we miss?
- What is the nature of "experience," and how (and by whom) is it created?
- What role does language play in creating one's experience and concept of reality?

- What are the fundamental (ontological) questions of existence human beings face, and why do the answers to these questions often change over time?
- What role does power play in sculpting human experience?
- What kinds of power do human beings traffic in, and which are healthy, unhealthy, or benign?
- What is violence?[18]
- What causes violence; under what conditions does violence appear?
- What is the relationship between power and violence?
- What is the process which leads to violent acts?
- What causes peace; under what conditions does peace manifest?
- Why are some people violent and others not?
- Is how we describe violence and structure our responses to it outdated and in need of rethinking?

Our approach to preventing and responding to violence emerged from the above questions, resulting in observations, some of which are listed below:

"Human beings must have an experience of power to survive."

1. Human beings do not have a conscious experience of "absolute reality." Any reality that one mentally constructs consists of concepts and events which have passed. Our experience of reality is the experience of transactions and relationships. Recognizing this provides a foundation for restructuring "reality" — including the experience of violence — with enormous creative flexibility.
2. Human beings must have an experience of power to survive. Healthy forms include the power inherent in love, belonging, survival, freedom, choice, creativity, realization, and transcendence.
3. Violence is any human behavior resulting from an intention to do harm or any act to gain inappropriate or unjustified self-serving power and control which results in harm.
4. The traditional "punitive" model for dealing with violence — an approach that is more than 10,000 years old[19] — may be outdated, inefficient, and ineffective.
5. We use language to describe reality to ourselves and others: change the language, and the reality changes. Language has a role in describing violence as a concept and a process.
6. Violence is an unhealthy strategy to gain power by those who experience the absence or loss of power. These people experience power deficiency. Unless they have a pathological condition incorporating violence, those experiencing sufficient power are not violent.
7. Fear can drive power deficiency or deprivation. Perhaps the greatest fear human beings face is death.[20] Those who are fearless (meaning fear of deprivation or loss of any kind) and who have healthy brain function tend not to be violent.
8. Taking power away from violent people can aggravate their experience of power deprivation.
9. In one sense, ordinary people do not commit acts of violence against others — they commit these acts against objects.[21] Central to the human ability to commit acts of violence is an "objectification-action" process

in which the recipient of violence must be converted conceptually from a human being to an object.

10. Violence can be seen as a strategy — a thought form that presents in malignant, addictive, infectious, and self-mutating forms.

11. Violence, like any disease, has its antecedents, risk factors, and vectors of transmission. Many of these have been identified through research and experimental verification.[22]

12. Once a functional language for describing the malignancy and responses created from that language is applied, individual and collective violence can be reduced or stopped through public health protocols.

13. Ineffective models and approaches, myths, beliefs, and assumptions inhibit progress in reducing and eliminating violence.

Fundamental Questions

There are three basic (ontological) questions relating to human existence:

- Who am I?
- What is the nature of the world?
- What is my place in it?

These questions, asked in various ways throughout life, provide a basis for defining how we will be in the world. A central focus of childhood is to encounter and revisit these three critical questions. The answers change as a child develops into adulthood. Conclusions often become crystallized and difficult to change.

"Young humans encounter the answers to life's questions through experience and via the alchemy of the brain, brain structure, and the environment."

As their senses take in the landscape of their lives, young humans — extraordinarily intelligent beings but overly trusting, naïve, and inexperienced — draw conclusions about who they are, how the world works, and how they fit in that world. Their job is to grow into their place in human society. Like sponges, they soak up information at an astonishing rate. Not only do they acquire language and abstract concepts (such as the notion of time), they learn to identify the expectations put upon them. They often do this with little overt, formal instruction.

Fully committing themselves to growing and learning, they search to find their place so that they can fit in and, thus, survive. When children sing "ring around the rosy," they do not repeat this rhyme because they are naturally predisposed to rings, rosies, posies, or ashes — they do it because they are taught it, and it's fun. Its roots do not even have to have relevance to their lives: "Ring Around the Rosy" is a rhyme about the black plague. Few children even know what the black plague is. This example demonstrates how information — rituals, values, and beliefs — are transmitted through generations using examples and repetition. They learn the rhyme. It doesn't even need to make sense.

Young humans encounter the answers to life's questions through experience and via the alchemy of the brain, brain structure, and the environment, all of which interact in a continuing dance of development. If the child's brain is healthy and their beginnings are marked by love, safety, warmth, caring touch, and reverence; if they are physically healthy; if the community is nourishing and safe; and if the

culture is supportive, that child can grow true and strong. If a child's beginnings are filled with violence and its precursors — terror, exploitation, humiliation, injustice, and neglect — they can be crippled and filled with rage. Such children risk transmitting the savagery brought upon them to those around them. The experience of violence is a defining element in shaping a child into an adult.

In one form or another, everyone must answer the question: "I'm alive because…" If there is no answer, or if the answer is tragic, or if life makes no sense, then continuing with life can become difficult. Those who cannot establish meaning in their lives or have lost it may conclude that living is intolerable. Self-directed violence — suicide — is a continuing problem. The US Centers for Disease Control reports that: "From 1999 through 2014, the age-adjusted suicide rate in the United States increased 24%, from 10.5 to 13.0 per 100,000 population, with the pace of increase greater after 2006."[23]

"In one form or another, everyone must answer the question: 'I'm alive because…'"

The Human Experience of "Reality"

Living in the Construct

In their normal state of consciousness, human beings are not consciously aware of every piece of information coming from the reality they are in moment-to-moment. This reality is called the "universal field." We construct our experience of reality from this field. By reframing the violence construct through a cognitive approach, violence is seen in a new way — one that differs significantly from the "punitive" way we've seen violence historically and one in which we can more effectively deal with and prevent violence.

Figure 03
The Universal Field, Discriminator, and Construct
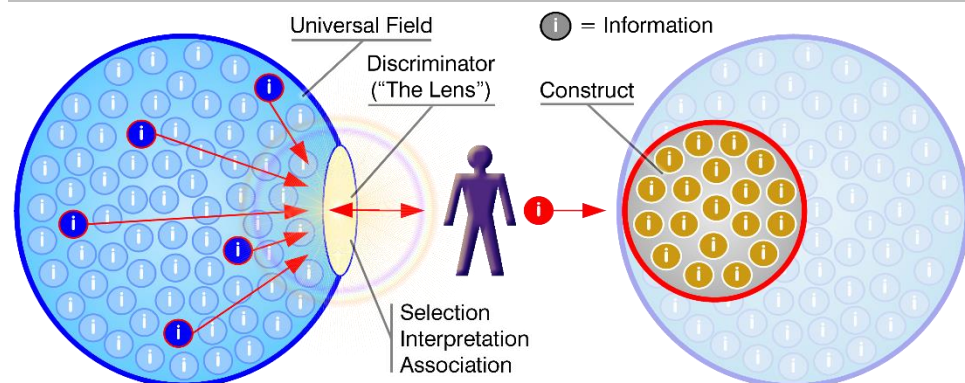
The construct is the experience of reality one creates by selecting information (almost always unconsciously) from the "universal field" (the totality of reality), filtering it through the "discriminator" (also called the "the lens ") and projecting the interpreted and associated information selection as "reality." This construct is commonly mistaken for absolute reality when, in fact, it is a partial representation of total reality (the universal field).

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"Our 'construction' of reality is informed and influenced by other social constructs."

How we view, prevent, and respond to violence is based upon the way in which we describe "the reality" of violence (e.g., a construct). The test for the validity of any construct is the congruency of that construct with the outcomes we want — most often peace, reduced crime, fewer injuries, and so forth.

One's construct is overlaid with influences such as social tradition, religion, the level of one's education (as well as the quality of that education), the economic environment (including the availability of secure individual and economic conditions), the nature and impact of media (news, entertainment, social, etc.), one's family (including family values and traditions), and the relationship to those with whom we are most commonly associated.

Figure 04
Construct Overlays
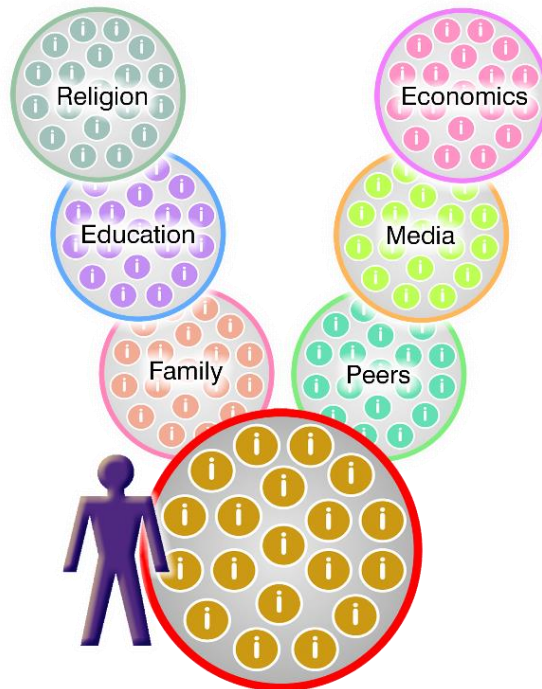
The notion that violence is an unhealthy strategy to get power and control is generally accepted. While the strategy is often effective over the short term, it is rarely sustainable (ask anyone incarcerated for a violent crime how it worked for them). Since acts of violence have the desire for power and control as an antecedent, there is value in achieving the power goal, but in a healthy, long-term way. This requires interrupting that part of the construct of a person with violence so that the power sought in the violent act is nullified and a healthy alternative is substituted (referred to in the PAR Model as a "power swap").

✴ APPLICATION

Recognizing how others view reality supports a more informed and compassionate understanding. When another person's construct is dysfunctional (as evidenced by bigotry, political polarization, and

isolation from others), understanding their construct offers an effective and threat-reducing interaction conducive to positive change. This approach is a healthy counterpoint to the demonizing and emotionally-charged attacks on those who operate within differing constructs.

Disrupting the Process

Disruption is achieved by introducing "disrupter memes" into the construct. The PAR Model draws upon many of the principles of memetic theory (originally described by Richard Dawkins in 1976 in *The Selfish Gene*). The model assumes that existence must "make sense," i.e., be congruent. Without congruency, one has the experience of insanity. Thus, all constructs have a congruent structure. This is true of constructs incorporating violence as normative behavior. The disrupter meme is a widely accepted and comprehendible concept. It causes the unhealthy part of the construct to lose its congruency — that is, the malignant part of the construct collapses.

☀ APPLICATION

An example of this process involves disrupting a hostile encounter in which violence is threatened. By invalidating the threat with a disrupter meme (e.g., "Take my head off? Dude, I'm old — a four-year-old girl could take my head off."), the power of the threat is disrupted and invalidated. The introduction and a healthy power frame (for example, via a "hero" meme) are then immediately introduced (the "power swap" discussed in the "Living in the Construct" section of this paper). The "hero" meme is the disrupter and initiates a new — and nonviolent — alternative.

The Illusion of "Time"

What we call "now" or "the present" has no duration: it refers to an immediate point along the time continuum. This fact runs counter to our experience. Yet, with minimal thought, one can easily see that any present we perceive can always be reduced, *ad infinitum*. The concept of "present" we take as fact. However, it is a continuous transaction along the thread of time, like a continuous spark moving down a wire (refer to *Figure 05*). Any real "now" we experience is in what we call the past by the time we become aware of it. The further that point retreats into the past, the less "real" it becomes.

While this is abstract (and admittedly esoteric), it does have important implications with respect to how we deal with individual and collective constructs and human experience of reality in the world — particularly as it relates to threat, powerlessness, and violence. The past is held in memory within the human body — most commonly in the brain. This realization reveals enormous possibilities for understanding, preventing, and responding to violence.

Figure 05
Constructed Reality and the Illusion of Time
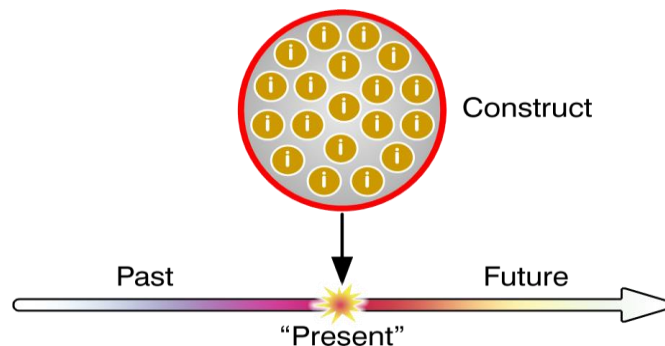
This raises significant questions. What is our experience of that memory? How accurate is it? What parts of the experience are retained? What is the impact on the brain? What is the brain's impact on the memory/experience? What are the opportunities for improving health and well-being — particularly as it relates to violence — by understanding how we "construct" reality and how the brain both responds to and influences memory.

☀ APPLICATION

> By understanding that memory is incorporated into individual or collective construct and that the retained information is powerfully influenced by elements of the construct (fears, judgments, experience, values, etc.), we can help disarm those interpretations of memory that have been supportive of violence. This can be accomplished through various strategies, including listening (acknowledging the memory and interpretation, often resulting in a release of anger and resentment), reframing, and setting a more realistic context.

Violence Revisited

"It's about ending the 10,000 year-old-way we see and deal with violence."

The position taken in this paper is that successfully ending violence is not about hatred, getting even, what anyone deserves, settling scores, making an example, punishing some and comforting others, making anyone pay, exclusion or wiping anyone out. It's about restoration: healing; making everyone whole; wiping out the malignancy, not those afflicted with it; restoring those lost to their place in the world. It's about ending the 10,000 year-old-way we see and deal with violence.

Violence mimics disease in that it relies on having its true nature hidden — one cannot manage what one cannot see. In the absence of sight, we often retreat into superstition and moralizing. Those afflicted with violence are commonly seen as either poor, helpless, innocent victims; savage, terrifying, and repulsive perpetrators; or heroic, courageous, and attractive rescuers. We must ask ourselves, "How did things get this way?"

Walk through any hospital nursery. Look into the faces of the newborn children. Where are the serial killers, murderers, and abusers? Where are the bigots, liars, creeps, scoundrels, deviants, and perpetrators? Where are the swaggering, power-hungry, macho, obnoxious, and exploitive brutes? They are not there because they have not yet been created.[24] They are grown from the physical, emotional,

mental, situational, and transpersonal soil of fields tended by their caretakers and society at large; fields for which we are responsible. Why are we surprised that, when we neglect or poison these fields, we reap a harvest of sorrow?

Applying the PAR Model puts violence under a new type of light, allowing it to be revealed for what it is, clearly and completely, free of the often-associated fear, hatred, and despair.

The Problem with "Business as Usual"

Despite humanity's best efforts, violence continues as a troubling, pervasive, and seemingly insurmountable problem. The way in which violence is traditionally characterized and the most commonplace strategies to reduce it are largely ineffective. Violence has been described as a failure of character, a "natural" component of human existence, evidence of human evil, and/or an insurmountable human attribute.

"In short, conventional approaches are largely ineffective. Perhaps we should try something different."

The nature of human violence has commonly been viewed in the same way over centuries. The application of remedies — most based on punitive responses, none of which has resulted in a significant and lasting reduction. The results are, at best mixed. Despite our best efforts, violence remains, and we pay dearly for it in terms of the quality of our lives; harm to ourselves, our families, and others; loss of our financial treasure; and doubts about our ability to remedy this age-old nightmare.

In short, conventional approaches are largely ineffective. Perhaps we should try something different.

The Punitive Approach and the PAR Model

Failure of the Punitive Approach

The punitive approach to dealing with violence is at least 13,000 years old.[25] As hunter/gatherer populations began the metamorphosis into agricultural societies, social structures became more complex, governance expanded, and social order became more critical. The punitive approach emerged from this seismic change in human development.

In the punitive approach:
4. The responsibility for violence is solely the perpetrator's.
5. Violence creates social positioning, with the rescuer and victim holding the high ground. The persecutor is ostracized, condemned, and punished.
6. "Acceptable" (sacred) violence is often used as a method to respond to "unacceptable" (profane) violence.[26]
7. The focus is protection, not solution.

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The punitive approach is characterized by:

1. Establishing superior power.
2. Diminishing power for the "offender."
3. Punishment.
4. Moralizing.
5. Righteousness, scapegoating, revenge, and more violence.
6. Compartmentalizing events (treating the violent episode as a single instance rather than as part of a continuum).

> *"Since violence is about power and control, a new approach must counter the cycle of disempowerment (even well-intended) found in the punitive approach."*

Since violence is about power and control, a new approach must counter the cycle of disempowerment (even well-intended) found in the punitive approach. The punitive approach is so ingrained into our life experience that it is nearly completely transparent. For many people, it is a given — a "no-brainer." It permeates our moral, legal, and political thinking.

The punitive approach is built on the Karpman drama triangle.[27] The drama triangle (*Figure 06*) is a psychological and social model describing human interaction. It is a crucial concept in transactional analysis. The three "positions" on the triangle are 1) the victim, 2) the persecutor, and 3) the rescuer.

Figure 06
The Karpman Drama Triangle
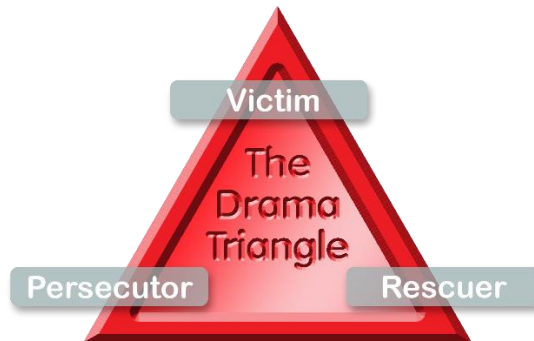
These positions or "stances" are used to secure power — almost always at the expense of the other players on the triangle. The punitive approach identifies "victims" (innocent and exploited good people) as those on the receiving end of violence, the "persecutors" (criminal, predatory, and evil people) as those perpetuating the violence, and rescuers (heroic and noble people) who save the victim (when possible) and bring the persecutor to justice.

The drama triangle is a "game" in which the players benefit by continuing to play. The unhealthy power that emerges from this game is seductive and addictive. It drives much mainstream news and the "righteous" positions people often take. It preempts listening, understanding, exploring shared interests, compassion, and workable solutions.

Comparing Approaches

A comparison of the punitive approach to violence and the PAR Model (*Figure 07*) illustrates the differences regarding critical concepts and components of violence and how two different strategies for describing and responding to violence deal with each of these elements.

Figure 07
Comparison of the
Traditional Punitive Approach and the PAR Model

Concept/Component	Punitive Approach	PAR Model
Historic application	Common forms of the model used for thousands of years	In use for more than a decade
Foundation	Fear-based (removal of perpetrator's power and control)	Power-based (reestablishing healthy power and control for all stakeholders)
Nature of violence	A moral and legal issue.	A motivational issue modeled in health terms
Definition of violence	Vague, varied	Precise — differentiated from injurious (which may not be violent). Established criteria for qualifying as violence
Orientation/focus	Protection-oriented	Solution-oriented
Response objective	Punishment	Prevention and restoration
Moral valuation	Violence is seen as "bad."	Violence is seen as unhealthy.
Acts of violence are…	Single events	The extreme manifestation of a continuum of events
Responsibility for violent acts	Perpetrator only	Perpetrator, contributors, supportive systems, and environmental conditions
Perpetrator seen as…	The villain	A key stakeholder in diagnosis, treatment, and restoration process
Violence occurs in…	Physical body, occasionally the emotional body	Physical, emotional, mental, situational, and transpersonal bodies
Preventive approach	Fear, aversion-based (threat of sanctions — economic to incarceration to death). May require temporary or permanent time in prison	Identification and reduction of risk factors, preemptive intervention, and redirection of power and control. May require temporary or permanent quarantine
Response approach	Punitive — characterized by punishment, righteousness, scapegoating, revenge, retribution	Public health approach — characterized by restoration (making whole) of all involved in the violence continuum

Concept/Component	Punitive Approach	PAR Model
Intervention methods	Interpersonal — identification, apprehension, adjudication, incarceration. International — economic sanctions, war	Diagnosis and application of response protocols (interpersonal and international)
Language used	Personal negative descriptors — derogatory, demeaning, humiliating, condemning, depreciatory, critical, etc.	Behavior descriptors — vectors of transmission, infection rates, toxicity, trauma, addictive qualities, risk factors, etc.
Structural approach	"Drama triangle" — victim (to protect), persecutor (to apprehend), rescuer (to suppress and punish persecutor)	Public health approach — assessment, treatment protocol design, application of protocols, evaluation. Focus on accountability, restoration
Acceptance of violence	Depends upon context — criminal violence not accepted, sanctioned violence approved	All acts of violence require a response and treatment
The role sanctioned violence plays	Considered a legitimate strategy for preventing and responding to violence	Not considered a legitimate response — sanctioned violence most commonly aggravates the condition and can drive the growth and continuation of the malignancy
Application areas	Law enforcement, corrections, international relations	Education, healthcare, mental health, law enforcement, corrections, international relations
Effect upon resiliency	Erodes resiliency	Builds resiliency
Impact on management	Reduces management to punitive action	Makes violence understandable; provides a context and structure for increasing effectiveness in preventing and responding to violence

Comparing Results

Figure 08 illustrates and ranks how the traditional "punitive" model and the PAR Model" compare.

Figure 08
Comparison of Results
Traditional Punitive Approach and the PAR Model

Positive attributes are marked with a ▲

Precursor/Outcome		Punitive Model		PAR Model
Fear		Increases	▲	Decreases
Hatred		Increases	▲	Decreases
Rage		Is more likely	▲	Is less likely
Resentment		Increases	▲	Decreases
Scapegoating		Increases	▲	Decreases
Retaliation		Is more likely	▲	Is less likely
Demonization		Increases	▲	Decreases
Polarization		Increases	▲	Decreases
Confusion		Increases	▲	Decreases
Creative solutions		Are thwarted	▲	Are encouraged
Power-sharing		Decreases	▲	Increases
Compassion		Decreases	▲	Increases
Reconciliation		Is less likely	▲	Is more likely
Openness		Decreases	▲	Increases
Offender accountability	▲	Increases	▲	Increases
Adjunct participant accountability		Is not considered	▲	Increases
Societal accountability		Is not considered	▲	Increases
Victims	▲	Are empowered	▲	Are empowered
Offenders		Are disempowered	▲	Are empowered
Society	▲	Is empowered	▲	Is empowered
Hope		Decreases	▲	Increases
Effective management		Decreases	▲	Increases
Short-term safety	▲	Increases	▲	Increases
Long-term safety		Decreases	▲	Increases
Results are…		"I win, 'they' lose."	▲	"We heal."
RANKING	**4**	out of 25	**25**	out of 25
		Punitive Model		PAR Model

Effectiveness of Punitive Model Alternatives

The following are examples of alternatives to the punitive approach that were successfully applied.

The Marshall Plan

German refugees, 1945

The Marshall Plan provided relief to the European countries devastated by World War II.[28] Cities, industrial capacity, and transportation infrastructure in Belgium, England, France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Poland, and elsewhere in Europe lay in ruins.

The lessons learned from adopting the Treaty of Versailles after World War I were not lost on George C. Marshall, the architect of the Allied victory in World War II and was the US Secretary of State beginning in January 1947. The Treaty of Versailles was designed to humiliate and punish the Germans. As a result, Germany lost territory and was saddled with burdensome reparations. Marshall recognized that the resentment of the German people regarding the punitive treatment by World War I's victors made a significant contribution to the rise of the NAZI party and the need to reclaim power by declaring German racial superiority.

The compassion, reduction of threats (from starvation, a looming bleak future, etc.), the shift from objectification to a recognition of the basic humanity of all the peoples of Europe, the development of resiliency, and a reshaping of the collective European construct from desperation to hope, are elements of the PAR Model. The recovery of Europe and the absence of war evidenced the power of this nonpunitive approach.

Clallam Bay Corrections Center

The Clallam Bay Corrections Center (CBCC) is a Level 5 (maximum security) facility. It is part of the Washington State Department of Corrections and is considered a "lab" for evaluating the efficacy of programs for offenders and staff. The CBCC houses Washington State's most violent offenders.

In 2005, the CBCC demonstrated the Violence Integrative Prevention and Restoration (PAR) Model. CBCC staff earlier received rudimentary training in the model that did not include PAR Model in-depth components, including a practicum, risk-resiliency mapping, sustainability elements or other diagnostic tools, and advanced PAR Model components.

"CBCC has concluded that the [PAR Model] program offers a significant opportunity to contribute to our continuing efforts to increase public safety and reduce the financial burden of the citizens of Washington State."
— Karen Brunson Superintendent The Clallam Bay Corrections Center

At the time of the demonstration, there were 900 adult males incarcerated at the CBCC, 63.6% of whom were convicted of violent crimes. The institution logged 200 violent incidents (e.g., forcible rapes and severe assaults) per month. In addition, the institution experienced increases in fights and assaults, increased staff injuries due to use-of-force procedures (such as removing violent prisoners from their cells), an increase in assaults on staff, and an escalation in threat group (gang) activities.[29]

Under the direction of Associate Superintendent John J. Aldana, Sr., the CBCC initiated the "Violence Education Moratorium Initiative" —a program demonstrating the PAR Model. Aldana and his colleagues set an unprecedented objective of creating a "Week Without Violence" in December 2005.

Correctional officers, staff, and 300 inmates received basic PAR Model training. The results for the week following the training were:
1. A 100% reduction in violent incidents for the target week plus nearly two additional weeks free of violent incidents.
2. A 100% reduction in infractions/logged confrontations for the target week plus two additional weeks.
3. A 100% reduction in segregation (Intensive Management Units, also referred to as isolation) placements for the week plus nearly two additional weeks.

The following statements were made in March 2008 as plans were being developed for a full roll-out of the PAR Model at the Washington State Department of Corrections.

Clallam Bay Corrections Center Superintendent Karen Brunson wrote:
"After a detailed review of [the] "Offender Violence Prevention and Intervention (OVPI) [an implementation program for the PAR Model], CBCC has concluded that the program offers a significant opportunity to contribute to our continuing efforts to increase public safety and reduce the financial burden of the citizens of Washington State."

Following the demonstration at the CBCC, Washington State Senator Rodney Tom wrote:
"I want to express my support for bringing your programs into our correctional system and schools in the State of Washington. I was particularly pleased to learn of the outstanding results of the demonstration of [the] program at the Clallam Bay Corrections Facility."

Washington State Representative Roger Goodman wrote:
"I heartily support and endorse your continuing efforts to improve the safety and well-being of the people of the State of Washington."

The program was stopped by the 2008 economic crisis, which necessitated the elimination of funding for the Washington State Department of Corrections program.

Scotland

In an article from the Economic World Forum,[30] author Samira Shackle observed that "when it comes to violence, the discussion is often underpinned by an assumption that this is an innate and immutable behaviour and that people engaging in it are beyond redemption. More often than not, solutions have been sought in the criminal justice system – through tougher sentencing or increasing stop-and-search (despite substantial evidence that it is ineffective in reducing crime). Is enforcement the wrong tactic altogether?"

In 2005, the United Nations published a report declaring Scotland the most violent country in the developed world. Shackle explains how — in the Scottish city of Glasgow — Karyn McCluskey, the principal analyst for Strathclyde Police, found that the drivers of violence were "poverty, inequality, things like toxic masculinity, [and] alcohol use." Effectively addressing these drivers lead to a 60% reduction in the Glasgow murder rate.

"McCluskey is challenging, as we do with the PAR Model, that the assumptions about violence — rooted in the centuries-old notion that violence is a moral failure — are misguided, cruel, and ineffective."

McCluskey is challenging, as we do with the PAR Model, that the assumptions about violence — rooted in the centuries-old notion that violence is a moral failure — are misguided, cruel, and ineffective. The PAR Model incorporates recent developments in neuroscience, evolutionary psychology, and social science to create an approach using the "virus" metaphor — akin to how technology has used the same analogy to describe malicious codes known as computer viruses. As antivirus company Norton explains, "A computer virus, much like a flu virus, is designed to spread from host to host and has the ability to replicate itself. Similarly, in the same way that flu viruses cannot reproduce without a host cell, computer viruses cannot reproduce and spread without programming such as a file or document."[31]

Norwegian Correctional Service

Many of the principles used in the PAR Model are employed in the Norwegian correctional system. These include adopting less punitive approaches, restorative justice, and cultivating positive power dynamics.

As Bastøy Prison governor Arne Wilson, who is also a clinical psychologist, commented:[32]

"Do you want people who are angry — or people who are rehabilitated?" — Are Hoidel Director Halden Prison Norway

> "In the law, being sent to prison is nothing to do with putting you in a terrible prison to make you suffer. The punishment is that you lose your freedom. If we treat people like animals when they are in prison, they are likely to behave like animals. Here we pay attention to you as human beings."

Are Hoidel, director of the maximum-security Halden Prison, notes:

> "Every inmate in Norwegian prison [sic] are going back to the society. Do you want people who are angry — or people who are rehabilitated?"

Norway's incarceration rate is 77 per 100,000 compared to the US incarceration rate of 707 per 100,000. Additionally, Norway's recidivism rate is 20%

compared to 76.6% for the United States. [33] Refer to *Figure 09* for a broader comparison.

Figure 09
Select International Incarceration Rates

Number Incarcerated per 100,000 Population
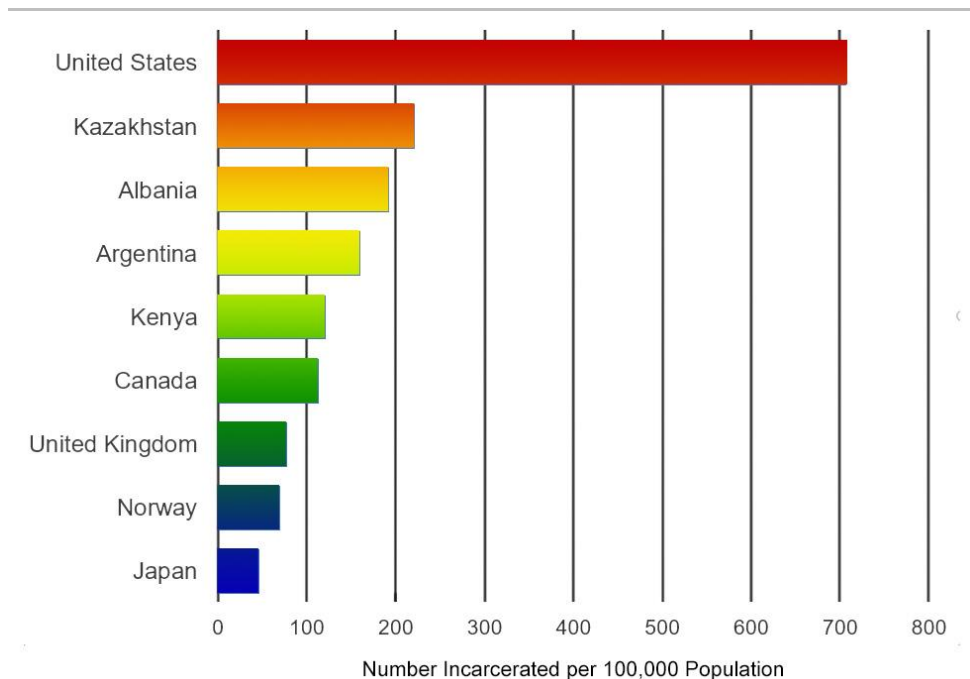
Dutch Criminal Justice System

The criminal justice system in the Netherlands has closed 19 prisons in the last few years.[34] The key has been to apply principles found in the PAR Model — respect, threat reduction, and resiliency development. The focus is on treatment and rehabilitation rather than punishment.

Additional Information

The International Center for Compassionate Organizations has resources that provide additional information on the PAR Model, including White Papers, In Brief (single-page) materials, and reference materials. For more information, please contact the International Center at:

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About the Author

Ari Cowan is the Director-General of the International Center for Compassionate Organizations. For his work to end violence, he received the 1998 National Public Health Award from the United States affiliate of the international

physician organization awarded the 1985 Nobel Peace Prize. More information about Mr. Cowan can be found online.

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Notes

1   The narrative and illustrations for this paper are from the theoretical work, writings, and graphic conceptualizations of Ari Cowan. They are Copyright © 2019 by the author and are reproduced with permission.

2   "WHO | Injuries and Violence: The Facts." International Health. WHO. Accessed March 30, 2023. https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/149798/9789241508018_eng.pdf.

3   *Ibid.*

4   "Key Data and Statistics|WISQARS|Injury Center CDC." Public Health. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, September 19, 2016. https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/overview/key_data.html.

5   *WHO | The Economic Dimensions of Interpersonal Violence.* World Health Organization, 2004. http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/publications/violence/economic_dimensions/en/.

6   The disparity in international figures are due to broad range of methodological differences and extensive gaps in the existing literature on the economics of violence

7   *Africa's Missing Billions: International arms flows and the cost of conflict*. The Hague, The Netherlands: Oxfam International, 2007. The research was conducted by Oxfam International, IANSA, and Saferworld. Oxfam International is a confederation of 13 organization focused on solutions to poverty and injustice.

8   Burke, Jason. "Why Is the World at War?" *the Guardian*, March 4, 2018. http://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/04/why-is-world-at-war-syria-democratic-republic-congo-yemen-afghanistan-ukraine.

9   Woody, Christopher. "Violence in Rio de Janeiro Has Gotten so Bad a Newspaper Is Covering It in the 'war' Section." *Business Insider*. Accessed March 4, 2018. http://www.businessinsider.com/violence-in-rio-de-janeiro-military-police-deployed-2017-8.

10 United States Congress, Office of Technology Assessment (1995): *Improving the Prospects for Future Peace Operations — Workshop Proceedings*. Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, page 108. France's Department du Deminage searches for, uncovers, removes, and stores (and in some cases destroys) unexploded artillery and mortar shells.

11 Krug, Etienne G., Linda L. Dahlberg, James A. Mercy, Anthony B. Zwi and Rafael Lozano (editors) (2002): *World Report on Violence and Health*. Geneva: World Health Organization, Foreword.

12 "Homo Sapiens | The Smithsonian Institution's Human Origins Program." Science. Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, June 29, 2017. http://humanorigins.si.edu/evidence/human-fossils/species/homo-sapiens.

13 Gilbert, Paul. "Male Violence: Towards an Integration." Original article manuscript for *Male Violence* (Routlege). Pg. 2

14 Gilbert, Paul. "Male Violence: Towards and Integration." Original article manuscript for *Male Violence* (Routlege). Pg. 1

15 For an excellent discussion about the challenges presented to us by our "tricky brains," see Gilbert, Paul. *Living Like Crazy*. York, UK: Annwyn House, 2018.

16 Wenar, Leif. "Is Humanity Getting Better?" Opinionator Section. *New York Times*, February 15, 2016. http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/02/15/is-humanity-getting-better/.

17 "Homo Sapiens | The Smithsonian Institution's Human Origins Program." Science. Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, June 29, 2017. http://humanorigins.si.edu/evidence/human-fossils/species/homo-sapiens.

18 "Violence" is something of a muddy term — one that confuses many people (based upon the head-scratching in my classes and lectures). There is a remarkable absence of discussion about what the term really means. It's frequently confused with "injurious" and related terms.

19   The growth of agricultural societies, beginning approximately 13,000 years ago, provides a starting point from which violence, according to the definition used in the PAR Model, is clearly evident. For example, the Indo-European tribes living on the steppes are believed to have routinely descended upon and devastated their neighbors in surrounding regions.

20   Refer to the work of Ernest Becker, PhD and his Pulitzer Prize-winning book *Denial of Death*, and other works, including *The Birth and Death of Meaning* and *Escape from Evil.* Becker discusses immortality schemes such as religion, heroism, and notoriety.

21   This conclusion does not apply to those individuals who are physiological basis for violence (such as those suffering from Huntington's disease), severe mental disorders, or psycho/sociopathology.

22   For example, the experimental work of Sheldon Solomon, PhD (Skidmore College, New York), Jeff Greenberg, PhD (University of Arizona), and Tom Pyszczynski (Colorado University at Colorado Springs).

23   "Products - Data Briefs - Number 241 - April 2016." Public Health. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, April 2016. https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db241.htm.

24   Exceptions include the small number of those who will suffer from brain injury, brain processing difficulties, and psychopathology

25   Diamond, Jared. in *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies.* New York: W.W. Norton. 2005.Diamond's fascinating and revolutionary examination of the evolution of societies provides a rich foundation for understanding power dynamics.

26   The concept of "sacred" and "profane" violence comes from René Girard, the French historian, literary critic, and philosopher of social science who retired from Stanford University in 1995.

27   A widely accepted concept developed by Stephen Karpman, MD. The drama triangle is a key notion in transactional analysis.

28   "The Marshall Plan - George C. Marshall." The George C. Marshall Foundation (blog). Accessed March 5, 2018. http://marshallfoundation.org/marshall/the-marshall-plan/.

29   Aldana, John. "After Action Report." Olympia, Washington: The Washington State Department of Corrections, 2006.

30   Shackle, Samira. 2018. "Could Treating Violent Crime like a Disease Stop It from Spreading?" Economics. *World Economic Forum*. July 25, 2018. https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/07/violent-crime-is-like-infectious-disease-and-we-know-how-to-stop-it-spreading/.

31   "What Is A Computer Virus?" n.d. Technology. Norton. Accessed December 5, 2018. https://us.norton.com/internetsecurity-malware-what-is-a-computer-virus.html.

32   Sterbenz, Christina. "Why Norway's Prison System Is so Successful." News. *Business Insider*, December 11, 2014. http://www.businessinsider.com/why-norways-prison-system-is-so-successful-2014-12.

33   *Ibid.*

34   Ash, Lucy. "The Dutch Prison Crisis: A Shortage of Prisoners." *BBC News*, November 10, 2016, sec. Magazine. http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-37904263.