Chapter 9
Collective Memory After Violent Conflict:
A New Framework for Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This chapter develops a framework for the analysis of collective memory in post-conflict settings. It is argued that so far collective memory is not sufficiently theorized within peace and conflict studies, even though in the aftermath of violent conflicts competing memories easily become subject to salient struggles that may even result in yet another outburst of violence. It is these competing representations of the past that researchers should more thoroughly concern themselves with and that they lack an appropriate heuristic device for. Focusing on processual and multidimensional concepts from the fashionable field of memory studies, the author proposes a new framework for analysis that offers categories and ideal-types for practice-oriented research. Based on poststructuralist discourse analysis, the framework allows to link discursive structures and patterns of identity, on the one hand, to actual agency on the other hand, thus facilitating effective interventions.

INTRODUCTION

When practitioners and academics from the field of Peace and Conflict Studies (PCS) seek to manage, resolve, or transform the violent appearances of social conflict, sooner or later "dealing with the past" is seen as a necessary task. So, why another contribution to what can be called a commonplace in PCS? Because there is a gap between PCS' need for dealing with the past on the one hand, and meaningful theoretical debates in the field of Memory Studies (MS) on the other. For PCS, this gap leaves an oft-cited notion undertheorized: collective memory.

Part one of this chapter illustrates how the concept of collective memory is discussed in MS. Taking Olick's call for a processual and multidimensional understanding seriously, it argues that Assmann's theorizing along distinguishable interrelated memory dimensions comes close to what is needed as an

answer to this call, but would benefit from explicit discourse theoretical clarifications. A closer look at how PCS make use of these theoretical advancements reveals that a new framework for analysis is needed in order to make collective memory a useful heuristic device, especially when it comes to sustainable peacebuilding interventions. Part two introduces Hansen's poststructuralist discourse analysis as an appropriate ontological and epistemological clarification of Assmann's theorizing, which provides the framework with a heuristic capable of depicting the struggles over memories as one form of discourse. This emphasis on the ontological significance of language also impacts on how memory discourses should be studied. Adopting a "mind-world monist" (Jackson, 2011) position, the author reasons that the framework for analysis should use ideal-types, that is deliberately oversimplified categories. Part three synthesizes the framework by developing Assmann's memory dimensions into such ideal-typical categories. It furthermore theorizes about their interplay and adds "impulses" as intervening factors. Listing potential key actors and presumably important discursive traces for each category, ideal-typical expectations regarding the behavior and characteristics of these actors and factors are discussed. A distinction is made between short- and long-term constellations of collective memory in post-conflict settings, before it is finally demonstrated how the framework's ideal-types and ideal-typical expectations may be used practically. For the latter purpose, indicators and techniques to assess the internal consistency and external hegemony of memory discourses are sketched out.

BACKGROUND

Memory Studies

Some insight into the wide and interdisciplinary field of MS and its key controversies will allow for a better understanding of what exactly are the shortcomings of PCS when dealing with collective memory. This discussion will also define the requirements a framework for analysis has to fulfil in order to be a useful innovation. Feindt et al. (2014: 34) identify as one of the challenges for MS the dissolution of the "classical frame of memory", that is the (nation) state. Calling for a "third wave" of MS they, unfortunately, only hint at the German debate on collective memory mainly driven by Jan and Aleida Assmann. In the author's reading it is particularly Aleida Assmann's work that mitigates most of the limitations of the so-called "second wave" and constitutes a comprehensive, multidimensional approach. Her work is heavily influenced by Maurice Halbwachs who argued that individual experiences are fundamentally linked to those of other individuals (Halbwachs, 1992: 40).

Jeffrey K. Olick identifies an "unresolved tension between individualist and collectivist strains" in Halbwachs' work: Individualists, on the one hand, depict "collected memories", that is "aggregated individual memories of members of a group" (Olick, 2007: 23). In their accounts, "social frameworks shape what individuals remember, but ultimately it is only individuals who do the remembering" (Olick, 2007: 23-24). Collectivists, on the other hand, emphasize society's role in enabling the individual to remember. The past is remade in the present for present purposes. Some arguments go further, entering ontological realms by attributing to "symbols and their system of relations [..] a degree of autonomy from the subjective perceptions of individuals" (Olick, 2007: 24). In such accounts, "it is fairly common to assert that collectivities have memories, just like they have identities, and that ideas, styles, genres, and discourses, among other things, are more than the aggregation of individual subjectivities" (Olick, 2007: 24). For Olick, these two approaches are not necessarily exclusive, but can be combined. He sees

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