

Traumatization and protection of those working with victims of massive atrocities

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We live in an orderly world

We story our life and describe our world as operating in an orderly fashion, and expect that our experiences confirm this view.



We expect (and even take for granted) from **people close to us** (relatives, friends, neighbors) and **those in a position of authority** (police, government, priests, leaders):

- ☐ **Support**
- ☐ **Kindness**
- ☐ **Truth**
- ☐ **temperance (vs. abuse of power)**



Acts of violence (political as well as private), even more when massive, even more if unexpected, shatters our assumptions about reality, disjoins our description of the world.

And, as a first reaction: “Freezing”, confusion, disorganization, disintegration.



An immediate reaction when victims: *Hunger for clarity*

That is, victims seek descriptions (sometimes ANY description) that allows them to make sense, recover order, reestablishing stability in their assumptions of the world ... an pray to perpetrators' negative descriptions of them..



**In sum, after acts of severe violence,
victims and even witnesses tend to
be either**

- ***in a state of confusion/disorganization***
- ***or already in the process of
consolidating a story in which they
themselves are SOMEHOW
perpetrators of the own pain***
- ***or oscillating between both
(except when the violence is prescribed by the culture
—cultures of violence/honor/revenge)***



Witnessing egregious violence and massive atrocities

Through social empathy, a core component of living in society, we experience sometimes the same emotions as the victims, which generates

- Impulse toward reparation of wrong (by proxi)... not always viable
- Impulse toward advocacy toward redressing (by proxi)... no always feasible



VICTIMIZATION BY PROXI:

*secondary victimization via exposure to evidences,
testimonies of witnesses, etc.*

Takes place when empathy is high but:

- Deviation from norm of acts is extreme (e.g., egregious, massive atrocities)
- Probability of redressing/reparation is low or distant
- Possibility of redressing/revenge is low or distant
- Experience of guilt (sometimes for reawakening memories of suffering, sometimes just for being alive!) is high
- Refuge (“home”)/soothing social network is insufficient
- Possibility of time-out (to work thing through) and/or supportive dialogue is scarce



EFFECTS OF THE INABILITY TO REPAIR, ENACT, TAKE REFUGE, OR DENY:

- Depression + difficulty in working
- Confusion + inability to think clearly
- Somatization (pains, aches, malaise)
- Vocational crisis (questioning fit w/job)
- Anger-irritability against those around
 - Enactments: Resentment/rage against...whomever is handy: family, co-workers, the institution, the world!
 - Enactments: “Killing the messenger” (anger against those who bring the news that e.g., redressing is not viable)
- Symptoms of the PTSD series = flooding of emotions, flashbacks, inability to sleep (generally subsides in less than 30 days!)



BUFFERS AGAINST DISTRESS/ TRAUMATIZATION

- Forethought/training: A solid preparation for the impact
- Action: Viability to reparation of victim's damage
- Action: Viability of punishment against perpetrator
- Refuge: Access to a supportive network, a cozy "home"
- Resilience ("inner resources," personality style)
- Capacity (and not fear) to share distress
- In some cases, capacity to deny (while the distress is worked through) (it works only sometimes, and it may "leak out," though)



THE ICC


AS SUPPORTIVE BUFFER OF
TRAUMA... AND AS
UNAVOIDABLE SOURCE OF
EXPOSURE TO TRAUMA

(evaluating, investigating “crimes
against humanity” requires exploring
them!)



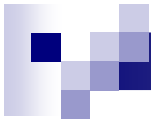
Uniqueness of the ICC as an institution... and as a “home”

1. *A new, unprecedented mandate: 1st “prosecutors of the world.”*
2. *A comprehensive process: Needs to integrate but redraw expertise from different disciplines*
3. *Has to produce results but within the constraints of its foundational Statute*
4. *Has to expose its personnel to massive atrocities, but also protect it from its impact*




Uniqueness of the ICC (a) *A new mandate:*
1st "prosecutors of the world"

- Uncharted territory -- new experience for the world → by having being created ICC challenges existing procedures...but is criticized for that by the established powers/processes (staff should know that!)
- New roles → it challenges existing prior roles of its own personnel (staff should be aware of that!)




Uniqueness of the ICC (b) *A comprehensive mandate: Need to integrate and (but) reconfigure expertise from different disciplines*

- Interdisciplinary boundaries, expectations, & methodologies will be challenged → professional identities will be stretched, flexibility must be expected (personnel will have to learn to tolerate re-tooling, and even enjoy learning from others)



Uniqueness of the ICC (c) *Has to produce results (but) within the constraints of its foundational Statute*

- Is both process and outcome-oriented in uncharted territory and w/multiple constraints → Requires expert staff ready to endure trial and error search for appropriate cases, and tolerance the multiple frustrations and predictable criticisms, even when successful



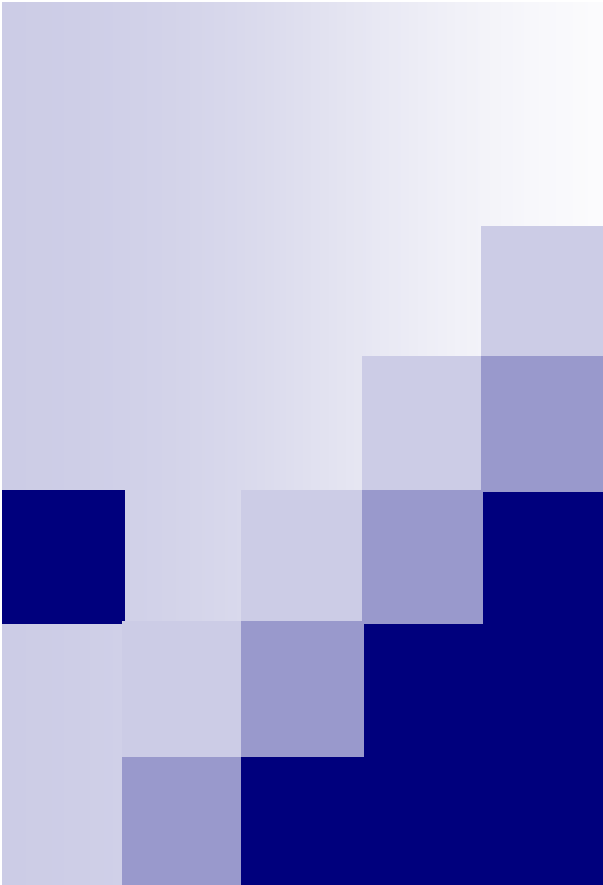
Uniqueness of the ICC (d) Has to expose its personnel to massive atrocities, and also protect it from its impact

- Its mission is analyzing, investigating, obtaining evidence, prosecuting “crimes against humanity” → its personnel has to zero in on atrocities in as much detail as possible... while protecting its personnel so that those exposure don’t become too toxic



Personnel protection

- Shared mission/vision mystique
- (Preventive) multi-layered training
- Legitimization of difficulties/pain of tasks
- Fluid intra-organization communication
- Team-orientedness
- Availability of counseling



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