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Speaking Out and Breaking the Silence

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Departing from the approach of all preceding chapters, the present chapter focuses on the phenomenon of *revealing* (rather than self-censoring) information that has societal implications, in spite of potential sanctions to the revealer. Such exposure breaks the silence that often surrounds information that has the potential to shed negative light on the society, a group, an organization, a leader(s), or other individuals. Revealing this type of information may be a rare behavior, because individuals want to avoid the sanctions they would likely face, as well as the damage to the target group or person's reputation. Nonetheless, we know that even in the extreme context of intractable conflict individuals sometimes—albeit rarely—risk sanctions and other negative outcomes to reveal information, as demonstrated in the following example.

In 2004, a then new non-governmental organization in Israel, 'Breaking the Silence,' published a booklet containing first-hand accounts by Israeli soldiers of their experiences in the occupied Palestinian territories (Breaking the Silence, 2004). This booklet was one of the clearest demonstrations of overcoming self-censorship, and the organization's testimonies continue to make waves in the military socio-psychological space in Israel. Although in this case no formal impediments were in place to prevent the soldiers from speaking out, the booklet was considered groundbreaking by many and traitorous by others because of the rarity and norm-breaking nature of the accounts

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contained within it. This organization has published additional collections of testimonies since, most notably after Israel's wars in Gaza (Breaking the Silence, 2009, 2014). A minority of Jews in Israel and many audiences abroad have praised the soldiers who gave testimony to the organization, albeit anonymously, about the immoral acts carried out by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) in routine operations as part of Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories (Goldberg, 2012; Haaretz, 2015). Nonetheless, a great many others in Israel have regarded the soldiers' testimonies as unpatriotic, traitorous, aiding Israel's enemies, and a knife in the nation's back, with the testimonies being rejected as unsubstantiated, biased, and untruthful (see Matar, 2015). Furthermore, the Israeli government has gone to great lengths to limit the organization's activity by trying to block its foreign donations and delegitimizing its work within Israel (Keinon, 2015; Ravid, 2015; Times of Israel, 2016). Most recently, the negative campaign turned violent, with one of the key figures within Breaking the Silence, Avner Gvaryahu, facing personal attacks and threats (Heler, 2015) after ultranationalist organization Im Tirzu published a video accusing him and his organization of being foreign agents assisting Palestinian terrorists (Wootliff, 2015). This violence further demonstrates the great cost of speaking out about immoral and unlawful actions by the ingroup (Israelis) and encouraging others to do the same.

The afore-described case raises an important question: how is it that people do not always practice self-censorship, disseminating information even at the risk of paying a high price for such exposure? Throughout this volume researchers have presented the antecedents, features, and consequences of self-censorship, that is, the act of intentionally and voluntarily withholding information from others even when formal impediments to its dissemination are absent. The preceding chapters described at length this very important and wide-spread phenomenon in different contexts and illuminated its severe consequences, while focusing on the causes of its emergence. With many factors considered behind the emergence of self-censorship, the other side of the coin has thus far received less attention: When do people choose not to self-censor, despite the potential cost of speaking out? In the present chapter, we examine the decision *not* to self-censor under circumstances in which self-censorship may be expected, in the unique context of intractable intergroup conflict, but also beyond this reality.

To this end, in the next section we describe this unique context, the growing scientific literature on overcoming psychological barriers to conflict resolution, and, with this framework in mind, the role of self-censorship as a self-imposed barrier to conflict resolution. From there we turn to examine how this barrier may be overcome, leading us to our central question: Under what circumstances/conditions do people decide not to self-censor, and instead speak out when they have information that they believe may have negative implications for the group? A review of the relevant literature is followed by a discussion of the different motivations for or against breaking self-censorship, followed by an examination of the process we believe is involved in the decision not to self-censor, and potential interpersonal differences in the likelihood of breaking the silence. Throughout the chapter we provide examples for our claims, drawing from the experience of Israeli Jews in the

context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, with a focus on the afore-described case of the Israeli organization Breaking the Silence.

Self-Censorship as a Barrier to Conflict Resolution

As articulated in the chapter by Hameiri, Bar-Tal, and Halperin in the present volume, self-censorship serves as a barrier to the resolution of intractable conflicts. This barrier forms because intractable conflicts have far-reaching and grave implications for the individuals and societies involved in them, and also for the international community (Azar, 1990; Coleman, 2003; Kriesberg, 1998; Nowak et al., 2010), and are extremely difficult to resolve (Bar-Tal, 2013; Kriesberg, 1993). The difficulties in resolving these conflicts peacefully do not stem solely from the nature of the disagreements at their core. Instead, researchers posit that the disagreements themselves could potentially be resolved if not for the powerful socio-psychological barriers that fuel and maintain the conflicts (Arrow, Mnookin, Ross, Tversky, & Wilson, 1995; Bar-Siman-Tov, 1995; Bar-Tal, 2013; Bar-Tal & Halperin, 2011; Ross & Ward, 1995). Bar-Tal and Halperin (2011) have conceptualized these barriers, collectively, as the integrated operation of cognitive, emotional, and motivational processes, combined with a preexisting repertoire of rigid conflict-supporting beliefs, worldviews, and emotions. The result is selective and biased information processing that serves to inhibit the penetration of new information that could lead to conflict de-escalation or resolution (Bar-Tal & Halperin, 2011).

As we have previously argued (Bar-Tal, Halperin, & Pliskin, 2015; Hameiri, Bar-Tal, & Halperin, 2017), self-censorship is another socio-psychological phenomenon that prevents the free flow of information that may shed new light on the conflict and even refute the conflict-supporting narrative (Bar-Tal, 2013). When applying the general definition of the concept to intractable conflicts, self-censorship takes place when society members, as individuals, intentionally withhold information that they know sheds light on the conflict, but at the same time believe that it may have negative effects on the ingroup. Importantly, such barriers may emerge among both society members at large and gatekeepers. The latter group holds the greatest potential to generate positive societal change by revealing information about the conflict, the rival, and the ingroup. Such information, however, may harm the group's positive image or goals, or it may provide an alternative view of the conflict, incongruent with the dominant conflict-supporting narrative. Thus, as described previously in this volume, a central motivation to practice self-censorship is the wish to avoid harming the society or its central beliefs. A person may also be motivated to self-censor from fear of negative sanctions that may be imposed on him or her for exposing the information. This socio-psychological mechanism is likely to be widely practiced by society members involved in intractable conflict, especially among those who participated, observed, or heard about immoral acts committed by the ingroup.

Overcoming the Barrier: Breaking Self-Censorship

When one comes to possess reliable information that sheds light on the reality of conflict, silence does not have to be the only option. Indeed, the inclusion of the words "intentionally and voluntarily" in the definition of self-censorship in itself points to the possibility of intentionally and voluntarily making the opposite decision: revealing the information at hand. As Bar-Tal states in his conceptualization of self-censorship in the present volume, the individuals who obtained the information must at the same time subjectively believe that the information is valid and important for society members and that it has negative implications, fundamentally resulting in a dilemma, acknowledged as one of the central elements of self-censorship. The dilemma is clear: An individual is aware of possessing information that is relevant to society and should be revealed, but at the same time is aware that revealing the information violates another principle, norm, dogma, ideology, or value, and may cause harm. Nonetheless, clearly present within this conceptualization is the potential for an outcome other than self-censorship. As Bar-Tal explains, an individual's decision is dependent on an evaluation of costs and benefits for his or herself, the ingroup, the outgroup, and the conflict: Only when the perceived costs outweigh the benefits of revealing the information, the dilemma is resolved by choosing to self-censor (Afifi & Steuber, 2009; Omarzu, 2000; Bar-Tal, this volume).

The upside of this dilemma, then, would be a situation in which the benefits are seen as outweighing the costs—which may happen only rarely in the context of intractable conflict. Consequently, we define the choice not to self-censor as *a decision to reveal and/or disseminate information of relevance to society despite the fear of negative personal or societal repercussions*. This definition pertains to two types of behavior: (1) exposure of information within a short time after its initial acquisition; and (2) revealing information some time after its acquisition and following a period of self-censorship, thus breaking the silence and overcoming the barrier of self-censorship. We believe that many if not most of the relevant cases in the societal-political domain are of the second type. Importantly, much of our knowledge on self-censorship is obtained from individuals who decided not to or no longer to practice this behavior. A very well known and prototypical example is the hundreds of U.S. citizens at different levels who must have known that consecutive governments' assessments throughout the 1960s were that the Vietnam War could not be won, yet avoided telling the general public about this. The reason this information is now common knowledge and the reason we know of the hundreds who practiced self-censorship, however, is that one person privy to this information, Daniel Ellsberg, decided in 1971 that the importance of sharing the information outweighed the potential personal and national cost of doing so. In other words, despite his awareness that he is breaking a law and may pay a very heavy price for his exposure of the Pentagon Papers, Ellsberg decided it was his duty to inform the public of their contents (Ellsberg, 2002).

Although the phenomenon of breaking the silence has not received much attention in political science, other fields—including management, business, and organizational psychology—have been fascinated with this practice because of its great relevance to organizational behavior. These fields term such behavior whistleblowing: when a person acquires information about the organization or its personnel that sets the organization in a negative light and decides to reveal it. Although this literature does not directly address intractable conflict, its findings may nonetheless be informative for the present discussion. Commonly defined as "the disclosure by an organization's member of illegal, immoral or illegitimate practices under the control of their employers to persons or organizations that might be able to affect action" (Miceli & Near, 1992, p. 15). The goals of this action, broadly defined, are to change an organization's policies or practices (Henik, 2015; Hirschman, 1970). The process of whistleblowing, from catalyst to outcome, has been broken down in the literature into five central stages. A trigger event (1) leads an individual to recognize it as problematic (2) and to report it to a higher authority within the organization (3). The organization responds (4), leading the individual to assess his or her next moves (see review in Henik, 2015).

This process model treats whistleblowing as a cold and rational process, giving little attention to the psychological challenges that may be involved in each of its stages. Nonetheless, the literature has also attempted to identify individual-level psychological predictors of whistleblowing behaviors. Although both cognitive (i.e. positive attitudes toward whistleblowing, see Near & Miceli, 1996) and affective (i.e. job satisfaction, see LePine & Dyne, 1998; Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003; Withey & Cooper, 1989) variables have been found to consistently predict the tendency to blow the whistle against one's organization, most of the variables that would theoretically be the immediate suspects in predicting this behavior do not. More specifically, assertiveness, authoritarianism, self-esteem, moral reasoning, internal locus of control, self-monitoring, Machiavellianism, religiosity, and self-righteousness all *do not* consistently predict whistle-blowing behaviors (Barnett, Bass, & Brown, 1996; Brabeck, 1984; Brewer & Selden, 1998; Chiu, 2003; Jos, Tompkins, and Hays, 1989; Miceli, Dozier, & Near, 1991; Miceli & Near, 1992; Miceli, Roach, & Near, 1988; Near & Miceli, 1996, and see Henik, 2015 for a review). The near lack of consistent predictors indicates that a more complex set of contextual factors may be involved, interacting with individual differences to affect this behavior.

The approach taken in these reports to whistleblowing has several limitations. First, its focus on the act of speaking out often ignores the more prevalent solution to the dilemma an individual faces when exposed to meaningful but potentially injurious information: self-censorship. Because breaking self-censorship is most often preceded by a period of self-censorship, it is important to understand how the two possible outcomes relate to one another. Second, the focus on corporate settings limits the ability to generalize conclusions to other settings, and to potentially more psychologically-taxing settings such as intergroup conflict. Finally, the organizational literature, even when addressing psychological factors, does not delve into the *psychological process* of the decision not to self-censor that exists beyond

individual-level differences, and how group norms or values may affect this process.

It is important to note that, as we see it, the decision not to self-censor may be applied even to cases that do not fall squarely within the definition presented here for self-censorship. Although we limit our definition of self-censorship to cases in which no formal obstacles are in place to revealing the information, we do not apply the same limitation to the act of *breaking* self-censorship. The reason is that formal obstacles are related to the costs of revealing information, and the underlying assumption of excluding cases with formal obstacles from the definition of self-censorship is that the cost–benefit analyses in such situations are inherently lopsided in favor of costs. When individuals choose not to self-censor despite such costs, they do so against very unlikely odds—but the dilemma is not fundamentally different. The choice to reveal information, in both cases, stems from a belief that the benefits of revealing the information outweigh all the costs—even if the costs include the loss of employment or even imprisonment, as in cases in which formal obstacles are in place. A recent example is the decision by former U.S. government contractor Edward Snowden to leak classified information from the National Security Agency on controversial global and domestic surveillance programs (Greenwald, McAskill, & Poitras, 2013), programs that have since been officially labeled illegal (Roberts & Ackerman, 2015). Snowden articulated the dilemma he faced well, saying: "I understand that I will be made to suffer for my actions," but "I will be satisfied if the federation of secret law, unequal pardon and irresistible executive powers that rule the world that I love are revealed even for an instant" (Greenwald et al., 2013). In other words, Snowden chose to reveal information that he deemed relevant to the public, in the U.S. and outside it, despite his awareness of the very high price he would personally pay for doing so. Indeed, Snowden has been in exile since the leak and would be charged under the U.S. Espionage Act were he to return to his home country, meaning he could face decades in prison (Peterson, 2015).

To understand how such revelations come about, we attempt to identify the process through which the dilemma one faces when holding meaningful information that may be costly to reveal is resolved by *choosing not to self-censor* (or to no longer self-censor). We also examine the elements involved in breaking self-censorship, as well as the consequences this decision may have for individuals and societies.

Why and How Individuals Reveal Information and Break Self-Censorship

To further understand the ways in which individuals come to reveal information that has implications for society at large but may shed negative light on it, it is necessary to investigate both *why* people are willing to break self-censorship and *how* the

process of breaking self-censorship occurs. In the following sections, we address both these questions, starting with the motivations that may drive people to break self-censorship and going on to describe the psychological stages required for such a process to eventually lead to the dissemination of information. Our goal here is not to capture all types of psychological processes that may lead to breaking self-censorship, but rather to provide a conceptual map which will allow more detailed examinations of such processes in future work.

In support of the theory proposed in the following sections, we provide insights from interviews conducted with 20 IDF soldiers. Ten of these soldiers were recruited because they agreed to break self-censorship and provide public testimonies to Breaking the Silence (BTS), the organization cited in the introduction (Sasson-Levy, Levy, & Lomsky-Feder, 2011). Each of these 10 participants was matched with another member of their military unit who shared similar experiences but refused to provide such testimony. While it is not our goal in the current chapter to provide an exhaustive analysis of these interviews, some elements of the statements made by those who agreed to break self-censorship help illustrate the theoretical account contained below. We therefore integrate quotes from the interviews in making our theoretical arguments.

Motivations for Breaking Self-Censorship

Throughout this volume we have tried to map the different motivations that lead individuals to self-censor. Here, we embark on a slightly different task, and attempt to map the motivations that lead people to *break* self-censorship. In many cases, a lack of motivation for self-censorship can lead people to break self-censorship. For example, having no fear of social rejection, either because one has a strong support network or because one already feels rejected by their social group, would likely make it easier to break self-censorship or not consider self-censorship to begin with. However, aside for the lack of motivation for self-censorship, as in the foregoing example, there are also specific motivations for breaking self-censorship. In this section we focus on the explicit motivations that could lead individuals to break self-censorship, even when these individuals acknowledge the variety of risks and costs they may incur for doing so.

In mapping the motivations facilitating a decision to break self-censorship, we wish to distinguish between two types of motivations: hedonic and instrumental (Tamir, 2009, 2015). Hedonic motivations are defined as self-serving goals aimed at eliciting pleasurable experiences. In contrast, instrumental motivations are defined as mediating goals that serve as means or agents to achieve other desired goals. Pursuing instrumental goals may therefore involve a willingness to endure unpleasant experiences in the service of potential long-term rewards. For example, one may suffer through the immediate consequences—such as social exclusion—of breaking self-censorship, because doing so serves another, long-term goal—such as promoting desired societal change. However, in some cases, pursuing long-term goals may

be hedonically pleasing in the short term as well. The distinction between hedonic and instrumental motivations provides a useful framework for mapping the motivations under which people break self-censorship.

Hedonic Motivations for Breaking Self-Censorship

One of the most powerful motivations that guide human behavior is the desire to be similar to one's group (Asch, 1956; Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Behaving similarly to one's group helps the individual receive important information on the appropriate course of action in various situations (Fischer, Manstead, & Zaalberg, 2003; Schachter, 1959) and provides a sense of belongingness and support (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Porat, Halperin, Mannheim, & Tamir, 2016). Conforming to others is a highly rewarding process that is known to activate reward systems in the brain (Campbell-Meiklejohn et al., 2012; Klucharev, Hytönen, Rijpkema, Smidts, & Fernández, 2009; Zaki, 2014; Zhao & Hu, 2016). It is therefore not surprising that most people find it hard and unrewarding to turn against their own group, and specifically to break self-censorship on issues of major societal significance that are nonetheless disputed or unpopular. However, people do not categorize themselves as members of a single group, but rather of multiple different groups at the same time (Crisp & Hewstone, 2007). Therefore, going through the unrewarding experience of deviating from one's group by breaking self-censorship may in fact lead to increased conformity to another (perhaps more extreme) subgroup (Blanton & Christie, 2003; Morrison & Miller, 2008). We expect that belonging to such a subgroup, which may provide support and encouragement, increases the chance that an individual will view breaking self-censorship as a potentially rewarding option.

Statements by Ami (male, age 29) provide support for this line of reasoning. Ami took a gap year of community service before starting his army service. Four members of Ami's community service group—or his "commune" as he termed it—enlisted with him in the same unit. This group's members diverged in their political views from the other unit members and therefore served as a more dovish political subgroup within the larger unit. Ami describes the influence his subgroup had on his perceptions of the larger unit. "We were a group of four to five friends from the commune, and we found ourselves raising doubts about everything the unit did. We became closer to one another while growing more distant from the larger group." As Ami's testimony suggests, the reactionary sentiments to the larger group were accompanied by conformity to the smaller, ideologically-converging group.

Hedonically pleasing experiences can be generated not only by increasing positive affect (by conforming), but also by decreasing negative affect. One personal mechanism that may trigger hedonic motivations was suggested by consistency theories (Aronson, 1968). Individuals may experience distress if there is inconsistency among their different behaviors and cognitions. In our case, these inconsistencies occur between the behavior of being silent and the belief that the information one possesses is important for society and should be revealed. The experienced

distress arouses a motivation to reach consistency. Aronson (1968) specifically proposed that the discomfort is especially intense when individuals' behavior makes them feel incompetent or immoral. People may achieve consistency in different ways, with one being to reveal the information so as to to maintain a self-image of being moral.

The notion of inconsistency between one's values and his or her actions emerged repeatedly in the interviews with those who overcame self-censorship. For example, David (male, age 31) describes the feeling of entering Palestinian homes. "I was disturbed by all the arrests we carried out and all of the houses we entered. You go into someone's home and you look at a person and see that he is just a person. I would think to myself, how would my girlfriend react if a bunch of men entered her home in the middle of the night, pointed a gun to her head and started breaking things?" Ami reported a similar experience:

> "We would enter people's houses and take them outside in the middle of the night just to add their names to the quota. This is a very violent act in its essence. You knock on someone's door in the middle of the night or wake them up with a stun grenade at 1 AM, and drag them out of their house at gunpoint. I realized that while doing these things we cannot be human. They used to talk to us about an 'enlightened occupation,' and I would asked myself, 'What is an enlightened occupation?' How can these words can be connected to each other? Thinking about an enlightened occupation is like talking about humane theft or rape. I could not understand the meaning of the request to be humane."

Later in the interview, Ami talks about his testimony to Breaking the Silence as something that alleviated some of the burden that was caused during his military service: "Testifying made me feel good because I think that it is the right thing to do. I'm not saying that it cleared my conscience, maybe the opposite, but it gave me a way to confront my actions."

Higgins's (1987) Self Discrepancy Theory (SDT) proposes a mechanism that is somewhat similar to consistency theory. According to SDT, individuals hold perceptions of themselves as they are, namely *actual selves*, as well as perceptions of themselves as they would like to be, namely *self-guides*. Similar to consistency theory, SDT maintains that discrepancies between the actual self and the ideal or ought self induce negative experiences. But in contrast to cognitive consistency theories, SDT specifies the emotional consequences of different types of discrepancies, such as guilt: the outcome of a negative discrepancy between the actual self and the self-guide.

According to Weiner, guilt is elicited when the individual acknowledges an immoral act as well as his or her responsibility for that act (Weiner, 1995). This responsibility may stem not only from individual behavior but also from the behavior of other members of one's group (Branscombe & Doosje, 2004; Wohl, Branscombe, & Klar, 2006), with the latter often termed group-based guilt (or collective guilt, see Branscombe & Miron, 2004; Doosje, Branscombe, Spears, & Manstead, 1998; Goldenberg, Saguy, & Halperin, 2014). The highly unpleasant experience of strong guilt may lead to a wish to reduce this emotion, even by carrying out another potentially aversive action (Wohl & Branscombe, 2008). For example, recent work indicates that participants who were made to feel guilty were

willing to hold their hands in ice water longer compared to a control condition (Bastian, Jetten, & Fasoli, 2011), as a means for atonement through self-punishment. Alleviating the negative effects of individual or group-based guilt can be an important reason for deciding to reveal information or break self-censorship. A similar argument can be made regarding the experience of shame, be it individual (Lewis, 1971) or group based (Brown, González, Zagefka, Manzi, & Čehajić, 2008), and the motivation to alleviate it.

Themes of guilt and shame are repeated throughout the interviews. For example, Yael (female, age 31) describes the first time that she threw a stun grenade during her army service, while in a Palestinian city in the West Bank:

> "The separation wall next to Qalqilya was very tall, but due to the hilly road we could see the other side. We climbed on to the roof of our Hummer so we could see beyond the wall. Then our commander told us, 'take this stun grenade and throw it over the wall. Usually, in order to use ammunition you have to get approval over the radio. You cannot just throw it for fun. He took the radio and told the operation officer, 'A few kids are throwing stones here, and I request your permission to throw a stun grenade.' It took them a few minute to approve it. My friend and I each took a grenade, pulled out the safety and threw it over to the other side of the fence. A stun grenade does not cause damage but it is very noisy, especially if you throw a pair at the same time. I remember watching a Palestinian who worked in the field. He suddenly heard the grenade and got really scared. A woman came out of a house and opened the door. In that moment I became excited about what I had just done. I came down from the roof of the Hummer and told myself that I would keep the safety as a souvenir. But suddenly, from this great feeling of pride, I started feeling a lot of shame. I threw the safety on the ground and told myself that I would never do that again."

Instrumental Motivations for Breaking Self-Censorship

Although in some cases breaking self-censorship may be driven by hedonic motivations, in most cases it is a highly unrewarding act, and therefore not hedonically pleasing. We thus propose that, in most cases, people opt to break self-censorship to achieve long-term goals that have instrumental values. As self-censorship often occurs in group-related situations, in most cases the instrumental goals leading to breaking self-censorship stem from the individual's social identity.

As suggested by the Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), the desire to perceive one's group in a positive light is one of the most powerful motivations driving group-related behavior (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner & Oakes, 1986; Turner & Reynolds, 2001). As a consequence of this motivation, perceiving one's group in an unflattering way may drive the individual to attempt to reduce the discrepancy between what she *comes to know* and her views on *how things should be* (see further elaboration in the following section). In most cases, an individual attempts to mitigate this discrepancy by reappraising the situation or rationalizing the group's behavior so as to paint it in a positive light (Bar-Tal, 2013; Bar-Tal et al., 2015; Ross & Stittinger, 1991). In some cases, however, the contradiction between the individual's values and the group's behavior is impossible to rationalize, thus leading group

members to reduce the discrepancy by actively opposing the group's actions. For example, in cases in which one holds information that has the potential to influence group behavior for the better if exposed, breaking self-censorship could be perceived as a viable course of action. In other words, a group member may come to the conclusion that revealing certain information may either prevent a disaster or significantly improve the group's behavior, setting it on a better course.

Another type of instrumental motivation may stem from the perception that silence violates certain universal or societal laws and norms, thereby harming the functioning of institutions, organizations, or authorities in society. In fact, in many societies citizens are encouraged to report misdeeds (see earlier discussion of whistleblowing). In these cases one's instrumental motivation to break his or her silence is based on the perception of how the entity in question should function, alongside his or her personal responsibility to that entity. We should note, however, that in many cases whistleblowers are eventually met with hostility and sanctions, as has been discussed.

All our interviewees describe giving testimony to *Breaking the Silence* as something that they did to influence the political reality in Israel and/or as an action compatible with democratic values. Dan (male, age 25) demonstrates this motivation by acknowledging the importance of disseminating first-hand accounts:

> "I knew I wanted to give testimony to *Breaking the Silence* right when I started my military service. I told myself that I would be a fighter and that I would be exposed to immoral behavior and that I would use *Breaking the Silence* in order to fix it. One testimony cannot change everything, but a corpus of testimonies can make a difference."

Others were similarly driven by the notion of changing reality in Israel, but focused on the idea of using their testimonies to let people understand the reality in the occupied territories. Ben (male, age 25), for example, believed that his testimony could influence other soldiers by changing their emotions toward the state's immoral acts:

> "My testimony led people to identify with the soldier. If a soldier says 'I saw my officer beat up a Palestinian, and I could not stop him,' people are able to empathize with his experiences and therefore change their mind about what's going on. I really believe in these testimonies' ability to influence reality."

Similar thoughts were expressed by Dana (female, age 31):

> "The motivation for my testimony is political; the need for people to know. The only chance that something will change is if people understand the situation better. Today, people talk about the occupation from afar. Only the personal stories will make them understand, only they will shake them."

Breaking self-censorship may help change group behavior in several other ways. For example, exposing information may encourage fellow group members who also hold information to share their experiences. This snowball approach can be seen as the opposite process to the Spiral of Silence phenomenon, according to which unpopular views become even less popular over time because they are more rarely voiced (Noelle-Neumann, 1974). As Ben explained in his account, "I hope that my testimony will convince others to share their experiences. I call my army friends and

nag them to give testimony all the time. The fact that I gave my own testimony shows them that it is possible."

Breaking self-censorship can also force authorities to investigate the incidents reported. Dan, for example, says his testimony was used in a Supreme Court case concerning army violence toward prisoners. This influence on the authorities can also be exerted indirectly, by leading outside organizations to pressure the group to change the current situation or to exonerate innocent victims of the system. A prominent example is a 1984 incident, known as the Bus 300 Affair (Weitz, 2013), in which the Israeli Security Agency (Shin Bet) scapegoated an IDF officer for the execution of two Palestinian terrorists who hijacked a civilian bus, even though they had been captured alive and neutralized. In reality, the head of the Shin Bet had ordered the execution and a senior officer of the Agency carried it out. Eventually, three of the Shin Bet's top brass decided to break the silence and reveal the information about the conspiracy to then prime minister Shimon Peres, from a motivation to save the army officer from prosecution.

Despite the fact that breaking self-censorship has the potential to contribute to changing a certain reality, in many cases the individual knows that breaking self-censorship will have very little or no effect on his or her group's behavior. This caveat is especially true in cases of intractable conflicts, in which the system has very little tolerance for forces that may weaken the collective, conflict-supporting ethos (Bar-Tal, Raviv, Raviv, & Dgani-Hirsh, 2008). Why are people nonetheless willing to break self-censorship, despite knowing that their actions will most likely come at a great personal cost, while at the same time recognizing that the chances their actions will contribute to changing their group's behavior are low? In these cases, one may be motivated by nonnegotiable moral mandates. When the group violates values that are sacred to the individual, the perceived practical utility of breaking self-censorship may be seen as irrelevant. Sacred values are moral imperatives that delineate which actions and policies are right versus wrong (Ginges, Atran, Sachdeva, & Medin, 2011; Halevy, Kreps, Weisel, & Goldenberg, 2015). Sacred values are held with greater dogmatism than other moral values, and individuals usually respond with moral outrage to any suggestion that they compromise on them (Ginges & Atran, 2011; Ginges et al., 2011). In cases in which people's sacred values are violated by other members of the group, practicing self-censorship may become much harder.

Indeed, some of the interviewees describe the testimony they gave to Breaking the Silence as something that may not promote political change, but is nonetheless the *right* thing to do. For example, Yael (female, age 31) says that while she knows her testimony will make little difference, she could not remain silent:

> "I cannot influence the system. I have friends who think that they can influence the system from within. I say to them 'ok, sure, you cannot influence the system, it is all rotten inside.' Soldiers are the victims of brainwashing just as much as the Palestinians. You take an 18-year-old kid and tell him, 'do this' and he does it, no questions asked. I gave my testimony because it's the right thing to do."

In sum, the motivations that may drive individuals to break self-censorship are numerous and may include both short-term hedonic considerations and long-term instrumental considerations. We believe that in many cases it is not one motivation that leads individuals to break self-censorship, but rather a combination of motivations that collectively lead individuals to act (Granovetter, 1978). Below, we describe the process through which such accumulation of motivations may tip the scales and lead one to break self-censorship.

The Process of Breaking Self-Censorship

We view the process leading an individual to (successfully) disseminate information despite the personal or group-level costs of doing so as consisting of three steps: (1) experiencing a dissonance between what a person *comes to know* and his views on *how things should be*; (2) the emergence of a dilemma between competing beliefs, needs, values, and motivations regarding the best course of action; and (3) solving the dilemma by attempting to reveal and disseminate the information. We detail each of these steps next and provide illustrations of their workings from intractable conflicts.

The first step toward making the decision to either self-censor or disseminate information is *the experience of a cognitive dissonance* between two competing attitudes regarding new information in one's possession, in line with consistency theories (Aronson, 1968) described above. More specifically, cognitive dissonance (1962) refers to the feeling of psychological discomfort that arises when an individual comes to hold an opinion or behave in a manner that is inconsistent with previous and existing attitudes and behavior and cannot easily explain or rationalize this inconsistency. The experience of dissonance has been demonstrated to lead individuals to try to reduce their distress and achieve consonance (Festinger, 1962). This process is highly relevant to the present discussion, as inconsistency is not a necessary outcome of coming to possess new information, even when that information is classified or confidential. Consequently, the mere acquisition of such information is not always the first step in a process potentially leading to a decision whether or not to reveal the information to a larger audience than is currently privy to it. For dissonance to occur, the new information must in some way present an inconsistency to the person—either because the information pertains to an action or actions that she believes to be wrong or unjust, because she believes that the information is being withheld from a wider audience unjustly, or because she believes that exposing this information would have important positive implications for something in which she believes. In other words, the newly learned facts, or the secrecy around them, contradict the person's values, attitudes, beliefs and/or goals, detailed in the previous section.

An example of this dissonance in the context of intractable conflict can be found in the accounts of several young men who served in the Israeli army during the 1967 War and published soon after it ended (Avraham, 1968; Loushy, 2015). In interviews

with fellow soldiers who decided to document such experiences, many of these men disclosed feelings of guilt and other negative emotions after witnessing or even partaking in immoral actions during the war, such as harm to civilians. More importantly, many voiced the psychological distress these experiences evoked in them because the acts directly contradicted both the explicit moral values of the army and those held by the soldiers themselves. The psychological distress was at odds with the euphoria experienced by Israeli-Jews who triumphantly celebrated the unprecedented victory against Israel's enemies. In fact, the reason the interviewers set out to document the soldiers' experiences was the difficult psychological state within Israeli Kibbutzim after the war, "driven by a sense that amid the triumphalism, more ambivalent emotions were not being expressed" (Weitz, 2015). These inconsistencies fit well with the theory of cognitive dissonance, making these experiences (or information about them) relevant catalysts for the process creating conflicting concurrent motivations for disclosure and silence, ultimately leading to either self-censorship or the decision not to self-censor.

In both of these cases, societal norms may shape one's experience or perception of new information, dictating whether or not dissonance will emerge at all. If an event witnessed or experienced is fully in line with a society's accepted norms, the chances of dissonance with one's own beliefs are diminished. This explains why, for some information, speaking out may be more rare in intractable conflicts, where societal norms have developed to permit the use of even extreme forms of violence, so long as these can be justified as self-defense or as well deserved by the outgroup, in accord with its delegitimized character. For this reason, it may be difficult and misleading to compare the tendency to experience dissonance between contexts in which differing societal norms are in place.

The experience of dissonance leads to the second step, *a dilemma between competing motivations to reveal the information or remain silent*, only if a possible mode of resolving the dissonance is revealing the information or speaking out about one's own experience. These two options are embodied well in the foregoing example, with the soldiers in question managing their dissonance by sharing their experiences, but others in their position—most soldiers at the time—remaining silent. Leading up to the choice between the two options is a cost–benefit analysis. On one hand, as the information or its concealment is inconsistent with the individual's existing beliefs or goals, a motivation exists to disclose it, thereby acting in accordance with those beliefs and regaining consonance. More importantly, as the information is seen as having public significance, there is benefit to the public to be gained from releasing it. On the other hand, various costs may be associated with the information's disclosure. First, the individual may pay a price for revealing such information, even when no formal obstacles exist, merely for breaking norms, making his or her group or society look bad, or displeasing people of higher status or influence. Possible sanctions for revealing the seemingly damaging information range from mere criticism through social exclusion to loss of livelihood. When formal obstacles are in place, sanctions may be even costlier, with even an individual's freedom or life being on the line, depending on the context. Here too, however, the personal costs are not the only costs taken into account. Especially in the context of

intractable conflict, when subversive information in one's possession is of relevance to the conflict, the ingroup's image, standing, or official line of state information may be jeopardized.

This characterization of a dilemma and accompanying cost–benefit analysis corresponds to a recent socio-psychological examination of the whistleblowing phenomenon described earlier. Waytz and his colleagues (Waytz, Dungan, & Young, 2013) demonstrated in a series of studies that whistleblowing can be conceptualized as a tradeoff between two competing values: acting *fairly* (i.e., doing the right thing in terms of justice concerns) or acting *loyally* (i.e., doing the right thing in terms of group-binding concerns). Their findings indicate that each possible decision—self-censorship or whistleblowing—has both benefits, in that it serves an important value, and costs, in that it goes against an important value (Waytz et al., 2013).

The competing benefits and costs—and the dilemma of having to choose between them—are at the heart of both self-censorship and the decision not to self-censor. The soldiers who spoke out right after the 1967 War, as described here, were a minority—not only in their time, but also throughout Israeli history. A long-lasting violent conflict, by definition, generates endless experiences of ingroup-perpetrated violence, and it is unlikely that all can be objectively justified. Therefore, the motivation to speak out will be present for many who take part in or witness the violence. On the other hand, by virtue of the socio-psychological infrastructure characterizing this political reality, speaking out inherently violates deeply-held societal beliefs about unity, blind patriotism, and the ingroup's positive character (Bar-Tal, 2013). In other words, norms may shape this stage as well, and the norms of societies in intractable conflict clearly increase the perceived cost of speaking out. Furthermore, speaking out about the group's misdeeds may give fuel to the state's opponents—the enemy that those soldiers were sent to fight—potentially harming the ingroup and potentially seen as treason by the soldier and his or her surroundings. In fact, even the editors of the booklet *Siach Lochamim* (Shapira 1968), who initiated the interviews referenced here, chose to omit from their publication the most damaging information: accounts of expulsions, looting, forced occupation, retaliatory killings, and more (Ynet, 2010), likely because they were worried about the national cost of documenting these events.[1]

The 1967 War was not an exceptional event in this regard. Accounts of Israeli misdeeds in 1948 began emerging only 30 years after the war, with the revelations of the so-called New Historians (Morris, 1988). The soldiers who took part in the events, for the most part, must have seen the national and/or personal costs of speaking out as too great, guided by very clear norms of maintaining the ingroup's positive image. They may have been correct in their assessments, as evidenced by the personal attacks on soldiers who have testified to *Breaking the Silence* about Israel's most recent wars (Heler, 2015; Wootliff, 2015). Furthermore, most of those testifying to Breaking the Silence do so anonymously, because they could otherwise

[1] Many additional parts of the interviews were released only later, delayed by almost 50 years (Loushy, 2015), after the war had already gone down in Israeli consciousness as an un-besmirched national triumph.

face prosecution for their involvement in the actions to which they testify. On the national level, Israeli "hasbara," or state-sanctioned international propaganda, also suffers whenever such accounts are made public—lending credence to the fear of national costs (although many argue that such information could benefit the State of Israel in the long run, prompting it to accept responsibility and change its political course).

Evidence of the personal cost of revealing information also emerges from the interviews with soldiers who gave testimony to Breaking the Silence. Josh (male, 30), for example, feels like he paid a high social price for his disclosures: "Many people are angry and don't want to talk to me. There was never direct conflict, but there was a break—we have not seen each other, and they turned their backs on me." Nonetheless, these costs did not outweigh the benefits of speaking out for Josh, who expressed sorrow for not consulting with his fellow soldiers about his dilemma before speaking, but not guilt for his ultimate decision: "As for speaking out about what happened—my conscience is clear." Dana also paid a price for her testimony, which garnered media attention:

> "I felt like the target of an angry mob, including people who don't know me. Someone posted one of my testimonies in my unit's Facebook page and people wrote horrible things in the comments, and some of them were personal. Even soldiers I commanded—which was the hardest for me—who wrote that they're ashamed of me… It's heartbreaking."

If the dilemma described here is resolved in favor of speaking out or breaking self-censorship at a later date, two of three steps have been completed on the path to disclosing and disseminating the information at one's possession. The third step may also be a crucial one, however, as individuals are likely to also face psychological hardships associated with their attempts to disseminate the information effectively. Thus, the third and final stage in the process involved in choosing not to self-censor is *attempting to disseminate* the information, with the initial *decision* to disseminate information only the beginning of this process. When an individual makes a decision that goes against the norm, he or she may not have the power to ensure the information actually reaches its intended audience. Possible obstacles may include disbelief by agents of dissemination, refusal to publish, state censorship, limited circulation, lack of public openness to the information, effective misdirection by authorities from the information itself (often shifting the focus from the wrongdoing reported to the wrongdoing of the whistleblower in reporting it), and even more (Bar-Tal, Oren, & Nets-Zehngut, 2014). This step of the processes may be easier for gatekeepers, as the modes of dissemination are by definition available to them, but they too face obstacles nonetheless. Any obstacles along the way may discourage the individual, prolonging the dilemma already described and potentially leading to an ultimate decision to self-censor after all. Thus, even though this step reflects structural processes, it also speaks to social and psychological processes acting as barriers to the dissemination of alternative information.

In Israel, for example, the Military Censor may prevent publication of any report deemed to be dangerous for the state's security. In fact, a recent investigation has found that the Censor has redacted, in full or in part, 20% of all reports it has

reviewed for publication, thereby preventing the publication of reports that journalists had deemed of public interest (Matar, 2016). In fact, the Censor only allowed 30% of the interviews conducted with soldiers after the 1967 War to see light when the booklet of interviews, *Siach Lochamim (Fighters' Discourse)* (Shapira 1968), was published (Gold, 2015). Other, less formal, obstacles may present themselves because the journalists wish to maintain positive relationships with their contacts in the government or military, a limited ability by the media to defend its sources' anonymity, newspaper and literary editors' concern with monetary considerations of circulation, and outright public rejection of the verity of the information released.

Even when information succeeds in passing the barrier of self-censorship and reaches the public stage, it may not have its intended affect. For example, even though the information on IDF war crimes released by whistleblower Anat Kamm passed the filter of state censorship and saw light on the pages of the Israeli daily newspaper, *Haaretz* (Blau, 2008), misdirection by authorities quickly shifted the public debate to Kamm's actions, presented as treason and espionage and referred to as possibly endangering Israeli soldiers (Lovitch, 2010). Kamm herself was consequently tried and jailed, but the top IDF brass whose crimes had been revealed (Blau, 2008) were never investigated or charged, and the legitimacy of their actions was never seriously debated by the public.

Individual Differences in Breaking Self-Censorship

In the previous sections, we outlined the motivations and processes involved in breaking self-censorship. In the following section we hope to further elaborate on the individual personality differences that may be associated with breaking self-censorship.

Very little work has been done on the personal characteristics associated with breaking self-censorship. One potential source of information is the literature that examines individual differences in cases of whistleblowing (Hersh, 2002; Near & Miceli, 1996). The whistleblowing literature, briefly addressed, has focused on the possibility of breaking self-censorship in the context of work-related issues. Most of the empirical work on whistleblowing is correlational in nature and is based on charting the relationship between employees' tendency to support whistleblowing with their personality attributes. The limitation of this approach is that supporting whistleblowing seems qualitatively different from actual whistleblowing. Nonetheless, and because of the relative scarcity of research on breaking self-censorship, the whistleblowing literature can provide useful insights.

In addition to using the literature on whistleblowing, we attempt to identify the personality characteristics that are most conducive to activating the motivations listed above for breaking-self censorship. Through both of these channels (the whistleblowing literature and motivations for breaking self-censorship), we assembled

below a short list of personality traits that may be associated with a greater propensity for breaking self-censorship.

Individual Differences Predicting Hedonic Motivations

One of the most important motivations driving people to self-censor is the desire to avoid the consequences of being cast out from the group. Therefore, people with a high tendency to break self-censorship are more likely to have a lower sensitivity to group norms and values. This lower sensitively may stem from several factors. First, it is possible that people with a less-developed group identity may find it less challenging to oppose their group (van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). Second, it may be possible that people with decreased sensitivity to group norms will find it easier to go against such norms (Abrams & Hogg, 1990). Third, using the big five factor model (John & Srivastava, 1999), lower levels of agreeableness with one's social environment may lead to reduced influence by one's environment, thereby increasing the chances of choosing to break self-censorship with regard to information of significance to society. Finally, a high sense of self-efficacy, meaning the belief that one possesses power to enact change, may also allow individuals to ignore social norms when they observe immoral behavior that requires breaking self-censorship, believing that their own actions may be meaningful even if they are outside the norm (Miceli & Near, 1992). These four factors can all be associated with a low tendency to be influenced by other people's norms, values, or behavior.

In addition to these group-related aspects, breaking self-censorship is often a result of guilt, either personal or group based. Therefore, people who are more susceptible to the experience of guilt may have a greater tendency to break self-censorship. As previously mentioned, two appraisals are associated with the experience of guilt: recognizing the existence of immoral behavior, and taking responsibility for that behavior. People who are susceptible to either one of these appraisals are more likely to break self-censorship. Group members who have a higher sensitivity to immoral behavior are more likely to experience discomfort as a result of such behavior and to want to act to reduce it. Additionally, people who tend to feel a stronger sense of responsibility over their surroundings may also be more susceptible to breaking self-censorship. This idea is supported by Elliston, Keenan, Lockhard, and van Schaick (1985), who describe a sense of responsibility as an important personal characteristic predicting whistleblowing.

Individual Differences Predicting Instrumental Motivations

Breaking self-censorship occurs as a result of a discrepancy between a certain current state and an individual's belief regarding he nature of the desired state. As previously discussed, in most cases, this discrepancy leads to a cognitive dissonance

that causes people to rationalize or reappraise the situation to avoid action. Certain situations, however, are harder to rationalize than others (see, for example, Batson, 1975). In these cases, we should expect changes in behavior. The question, then, is what personality traits are associated with a decreased tendency or ability to rationalize the behavior creating cognitive dissonance, and in which situations.

Rationalization may be especially challenging in situations in which individuals have a very clear sense of the appropriate behavior. Thinking about such situations in personality terms, people who tend to perceive moral issues as black or white, universal and objective (Skitka, 2010; Skitka, Bauman, & Sargis, 2005) are less likely to rationalize immoral behavior. We therefore expect that people who tend to be more attracted to rigid and unquestionable moral values would be more likely to break self-censorship when these values are violated.

As mentioned previously, one specific case in which individuals may find it especially hard to rationalize group behavior is when this behavior violates sacred values (Ginges & Atran, 2011). Groups with certain sacred values are bound by firm ideological boundaries (Graham & Haidt, 2010). Violations of these boundaries are extremely difficult to rationalize and therefore increase the chance that self-censorship will be broken. From a personality perspective, people who tend to adopt certain sacred values are more likely to break self-censorship (see also Miethe, 1999). Based on thoughts by Sheikh, Ginges, Coman, and Atran (2012), the tendency to adopt sacred values seems to be associated with a sense of threat and instability, because having a clear sense of morality may alleviate some of the negative feelings associated with threat. Therefore, we expect that people who experience higher levels of threat and instability will have a greater tendency to adopt sacred values, and in turn will find it harder to self-censor when these values are violated.

Conclusion

The present chapter differs from the others in this book in that it attempts to demonstrate the existence of an opposite alternative to the practice of self-censorship: breaking the silence. The question of breaking the silence may in fact be even more interesting and challenging than the question of self-censorship, especially in the context of intractable conflict. At the collective level, societies are reluctant to reveal information that may harm their positive self-image. Indeed, maintaining a positive self-image and identity are highly basic human motivations on both the personal and collective levels. Individuals, as groups, tend to block the flow of information that casts them in a negative light. Rare are those who are ready to face information or insights about their own immoral behavior. Instead, individuals are known to employ various defense mechanisms to block or refute such information. Societies employ similar mechanisms. The barriers are often promoted and bolstered by the authorities of a given society, but society members themselves are also motivated to defend the societal image, because they draw their personal self-worth from their

social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). What other groups think about one's ingroup thus profoundly impacts group members' self-perceptions.

For this reason, it is not surprising that Japanese authority figures still try to suppress information on the Nanking Massacre (Askew, 2004) or the enslavement of dozens of women as "comfort women" for their soldiers during War World II (Yoneyama, 2002). Similarly, the Turkish government does all in its power to limit the flow of information on the Armenian Genocide more than 100 years ago (Arango, 2015). Even where atrocities have been acknowledged to a limited extent, many societies struggle to confront such information or give it light, as is the case with many European countries' histories with colonialism (e.g., Belgium's history in the Congo; see Riding, 2002).

This situation is much more salient in the midst of an intractable conflict, as is the case for Israeli society. Intractable conflict by its nature not only involves violent confrontations but also a struggle between the opposing narratives of the parties to the conflict (see Bar-Tal, 2013). Each group not only tries to maintain its own narrative that delegitimizes the rival and glorifies the ingroup, but also tries to convince the international community of its truthfulness. This constant struggle to protect and bolster the narrative may even determine the conflict's outcomes, as international players offer moral, political, and material support to the society that is judged to have justice and morality on its side and is seen as less violent.

Consequently, societies not only often formally prevent the free flow of information, as in Japan or Turkey, but also encourage society members to practice self-censorship and punish those who do not. Importantly, however, practicing self-censorship does not stem only from extrinsic motivations, but also has a strong intrinsic basis. Society members are often intrinsically motivated to withhold information that casts their group in a negative light to maintain a positive view of their group and protect its goals.

In these cases, breaking the silence requires the combined operation of deeply held values, courage, persistence, determination, and a readiness to incur heavy costs. Examples of these necessary characteristics are embodied in notable cases such as Emile Zola, who revealed the unjust act of accusing Alfred Dreyfus for espionage (Zola, 1998), and Anna Politkovskaya, who revealed the Russian atrocities in the Chechen war (Politkovskaya, 2003). These acts are not only rare, but also costly—with the latter paying for her revelations with her life. They thus require special attention. Because of these features, although practicing self-censorship is largely a societal phenomenon with personal features, breaking the silence is strictly an individual-level phenomenon.

In this chapter we aimed to provide a conceptual framework to describe this phenomenon: its nature, its underlying motivations, and the process leading up to it. This is an attempt to motivate psychologists and other social scientists to tackle this subject matter head on. In our view, breaking the silence holds the potential of serving society and democracy well. By setting free important pieces of information on wrongdoings, those who break the silence facilitate an analysis of measures to prevent similar events in the future, a discussion of corrective measures and compensation, public discussions about the event, and accountability for the individuals

responsible, among other desirable outcomes. The costs of silence for society very often exceed the costs of breaking it. The costs for the individual, however, may be higher in the case of breaking self-censorship, partially because of governmental authorities' efforts to block the penetration and dissemination of information that could negatively impact the government, the state, or the nation. In times of intractable conflict, such control of information constitutes a national goal that enjoys wide societal support. It is thus not surprising—as in the case of the Israeli group 'Breaking the Silence' that opens this chapter a provides support for its content—that the act of breaking self-censorship is often met with great resistance. It is our hope that the present chapter opens a new avenue for research in political psychology, not only to enrich knowledge in our field, but also to contribute to societal discourse and practice.

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