Nonviolence and Peace Psychology

Intrapersonal, Interpersonal, Societal, and World Peace
Foreword

The UNESCO constitution, written in 1945, states, “Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed.” This is an appeal for peace psychology. It is a call to understand the values, philosophies, and competencies needed to build and maintain intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, and international peace. Peace psychology involves the information, attitudes, values, and behavioral competencies needed to resolve conflicts without violence and to build and maintain mutually beneficial, harmonious relationships. The ultimate goal of peace psychology is for individuals to be able to maintain peace among aspects of themselves (intrapersonal peace), individuals (interpersonal peace), groups (intergroup peace), and countries, societies, and cultures (international peace).

For centuries, peace was primarily discussed in the teachings of religious leaders such as Lao Tse, Jesus Christ, Buddha, the Dali Lama, and Bahá’u’lláh, who taught that people were supposed to promote peace in their lives and in the world as a whole. Compassion, empathy, and nonviolence were presented as some of the ways in which to do so. In the middle ages, the discussion of peace expanded beyond religion into education (the Czech educator Comenius believed that peace depended on universally shared knowledge) and philosophy (Immanuel Kant believed that peace was achieved through legal and judicial systems). Late in the nineteenth century, William James wrote an article opposing imperialism and the “war fever” with which it was associated. In the twentieth century, Maria Montessori advocated teaching children to be independent decision makers, who would not automatically follow authoritarian rulers urging them to war. Perhaps the most famous advocate of nonviolence in the twentieth century was Mahatma Gandhi, who used it as a means for ending oppression. The first academic peace studies program was established in 1948 at Manchester College in Indiana. Peace psychology gained momentum during the Cold War, when activists worked to prevent nuclear war in organizations such as the Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE), which was founded in 1957. In the 1950s, Martin Luther King advocated nonviolence in the United States Civil Rights Movement as the only moral and practical method for oppressed people to gain their freedom. Modern peace psychology has its roots in the concern about the possibility of nuclear war and the use of nonviolence to end the oppression. Since the 1970s, peace programs have been initiated at every level.
of education. Over 300 colleges and universities now have peace studies programs and in many countries elementary and secondary schools have programs that could be described as peace education.

It is not easy to define peace. In English, “pax,” is the Latin root word for peace, which means a settlement or common understanding that ends or averts hostilities. In Hebrew and Arabic the root word for peace (i.e., shalom, salaam) is shalev, which means whole or undivided. In Chinese, peace is written with two characters, one meaning harmony and the other equality or balance; thus, peace is harmony in balance. In Japanese, peace is represented by two characters meaning harmony, simplicity, and quietness. Hindu and Sanskrit have several words for peace (i.e., avirodha, shanty, chaina) which mean the absence of war, spiritual or inner peace, and mental peace or calmness. From these root words it may be concluded that peace is more than the absence of war, just as health is more than the absence of disease. Besides the absence of war or violence, peace involves mutually beneficial, cooperative, harmonious relationships among relevant parties. For peace to be achieved, violence and oppression must be ended in a way that creates a relationship characterized by cooperative efforts, positive feelings, mutual benefit, and justice.

Nonviolence, as advocated by Gandhi and King, promotes peace by seeking the high power party’s friendship, understanding, and cooperation (rather than defeat and humiliation). Nonviolence is a means for awakening a sense of injustice and moral shame in the high-power parties. It defeats injustice by showing high-power parties they have more to gain by ending injustice and oppression than by maintaining them. It is aimed at creating redemption, reconciliation, and a community characterized by equal justice and mutual benefit. Advocates of nonviolence recommend it as making the means of achieving peace and the nature of the peace achieved indivisible.

For nonviolence to succeed as a method for social change, there are certain conditions that must be met. The first is the creation of a cooperative relationship among relevant parties. As long as parties compete, they will be motivated to seek to dominate other parties and ensure that no other party can dominate them. Nonviolence is most effective when it highlights the positive interdependence existing among the parties and the need for joint efforts to achieve mutual benefits. Its success depends on a basic shift from negative interdependence among goals (i.e., competition) to positive interdependence among goals (i.e., cooperation). It is only within a cooperative context that nonviolence can achieve a lasting peace. The second is the initiation of integrative (as opposed to distributive) negotiations. Integrative agreements maximize mutual benefits. Just because peace has been established does not mean that different parties will have identical interests. Ongoing integrative negotiations are necessary to keep the focus on cooperative efforts to maximize joint benefits. A third condition is the use of a procedure of decision making that creates a synthesis or integration of the different preferences of the involved parties. Decisions must be made in a way that takes everyone’s perspectives and conclusions into account. Constructive controversy is an example of such a decision making procedure.
What has been lacking in the literature on nonviolence is a scholarly review of the social science theories and research underlying its effective use. Nonviolence has been examined from religious, philosophical, historical, and political perspectives. But until this book, there have been few attempts to examine the theory and research underlying the use of nonviolence. This book provides a clear and concise conceptualization of the nature of nonviolence, reviews the major theories of nonviolence, and nonviolence at the intrapersonal, interpersonal, societal, and world levels, and proposes new directions for the research on nonviolence. Dan Mayton brings together into one place some of the more thoughtful theories and discussions of nonviolence. He has written an admirable and much needed book that advances the scholarship in the field. It is thus a landmark publication and a valuable resource for all social scientists and students interested in nonviolence, peace, and constructive conflict resolution.

Minneapolis, MN

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Preface

The twentieth century has been called the bloodiest century in human history, marked by the loss of more than 100 million lives in war. Besides its bloody legacy, a story that is less often told about the twentieth century is the success of nonviolent people power movements. The twentieth was the first century in human history in which many large-scale nonviolent movements successfully toppled oppressive regimes, often in the face of overwhelming military power. Even as we have transitioned into the twenty-first century, violent human encounters in Afghanistan, Iraq, Darfur, Congo, and other places capture our attention and eclipse the many and varied nonviolent social movements that are taking place around the world. One purpose of this book is to heighten awareness of nonviolent movements that continue to take place as the twenty-first century unfolds.

Most people are familiar with nonviolence through the lives of Mohandas K. Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. The nonviolent activism of these two individuals has helped shape our understanding of nonviolence as both a philosophy of life and as a political strategy. Despite the success of the nonviolent social change movements of Gandhi and King, individuals are often reluctant to participate or even consider a nonviolent action as a means of pursuing goals. Part of this reticence is based on a view that sees active nonviolence as ineffective in transforming social conditions. People often lament that “Gandhi was great but that was a long time ago and he was dealing with the British. My situation is different.” Or “I can’t do what they did because I am dealing with violent people.” These types of comments are not only misinformed but, unfortunately, by default, they support violent approaches to problems. The second purpose of this book is to demonstrate the effectiveness of nonviolent action in a broad number of contexts and in the past two decades.

By writing this book, I not only hope to increase awareness of the prevalence of nonviolent action and its successful use in diverse settings, but equally important is to make it clear how nonviolence is based on a range of theories and sound social science principles. This book is interdisciplinary, as I discuss theories and perspectives of nonviolence drawn from the fields of anthropology, political science, psychology, religious studies, and sociology. Individuals in each of these disciplines will see major work within their own field plus they will realize interconnections to related fields.
While multidisciplinary discussions will appear throughout the book, this book will be written from the point of view of a psychologist. Ever since the beginning of modern psychology, psychologists have been concerned about the problem of war. William James, one of the founders of modern psychology, wrote an important article at the beginning of the twentieth century entitled “The Moral Equivalent of War.” James (1995/1910) argued that war instilled in people some positive qualities including patriotism and discipline. What was needed, he suggested, was a suitable substitute for war that would instill these same qualities. For James, that substitute was mandatory service and hard labor for the country. In a sense, this book takes James’ challenge seriously, and highlights ways in which contemporary nonviolent social movements around the world are providing a “moral equivalent of war.” As I will point out, participation in these movements requires great courage, solidarity, and discipline as participants face well organized, heavily financed, and often armed resistance to change.

In addition, my psychological approach to nonviolence is distinguished from others because it emphasizes beliefs, motives, values, and other mainstream social psychological concepts in a manner that is intended to be informative to psychologists and understandable to nonpsychologists. Realizing the dynamics of human psychology are always embedded in sociohistorical and cultural contexts, I situate the analyses of nonviolence within cross-cultural contexts. Above all, I want to provide a comprehensive conceptualization of nonviolent behavior that can be used in a variety of contexts by adherents of many disciplines.

The final focus of the book is to review selected methodological issues that are important to social scientists interested in conducting research or utilizing the results on nonviolence and nonviolent action. Important measurement issues, micro and macrolevel concerns, mediating variables in nonviolent behaviors, and directions for further research will be presented to achieve this purpose.

I want to thank many people for their support, feedback and critiques during different aspects of the writing process. First, I want to thank David Johnson and Roger Johnson for writing the Forward to this book. Their comments nicely situate nonviolence into the larger field of peace psychology. Additionally, I want to thank Dan Christie, editor of the peace psychology series of Springer Publishing, for his encouragement to write this book and his insight and input throughout the process of making this book a reality. I also appreciated the comments and recommendations of anonymous reviewers of the book prospectus that have pushed my writings in directions that were beneficial to the final product. In addition, I want to thank Anna Tobias and the staff at Springer for their help in bringing this book to press.

Second, I am indebted to critical comments, guidance, and support for my research on nonviolence from many peace psychologists over the years. This group includes Linden Nelson, Dan Christie, Dick Wagner, Mike Wessells, Deborah DuNann Winter, Milt Schwebel, Marc Pilisuk, Kathleen Kostelny, Paul Kimmel, Judy Van Hoorn, Steve Fabick, Eduardo Diaz, Diane Perlman, Anne Anderson, Todd Sloan, Amal Winter, Tony Marsella, Tina Montiel, Judy Kuriansky, Klaus Boehnke, Linda Wolff, V. K. Kool, Abelardo Brenes and many, many more. The support of this peace psychology community was unbelievably helpful to me.
Preface

Third, I want to thank my colleagues at Lewis-Clark State College for granting me a sabbatical in the initial stages of writing and in supporting me throughout the writing process. I am grateful for the assistance and critiques provided by Rhett Diessner on the section of the book dealing with the Bahá’í faith. I am also appreciative of the assistance the Lewis-Clark State College library provided in locating much of the material cited in this book. I especially want to thank Becky Grinolds and Samantha Thompson-Franklin for the hours they logged for me for interlibrary loans and collection development. I also want to express thanks to the students in my Peace, Conflict and Violence class and my Advanced Research Seminar who read early drafts of sections of this manuscript and provided some good suggestions for modification and improvement of the book. I particularly want to acknowledge the excellent, constructive feedback from Becca Solom and Christina Browne. I also want to thank Linda Scott, a good friend and artist, who worked on early versions of the cover design.

Last and definitely not least, I want to thank my family for their understanding and tolerance that allowed me the time away from my usual family activities to complete the writing of this book. My wife and best friend, Andrea, started me on the direction of peace and nonviolence research years ago when she admonished me to do something of consequence with my professional life and focus on peace. During the writing, she took on an increased burden at home that was truly appreciated. My sons, Michael and Joey, and my daughters, Caitlin and ZJ, spent the last year and a half without as much interaction from their father as they should have experienced yet were patient and encouraging in my writing. Michael’s intense conversations about many aspects of nonviolence and the book were helpful in organizing material in my mind. Joey read early drafts and with the help of his friend, Manar, gave excellent feedback about the section on Islam. Caitlin provided very useful input with the content related to women’s issues. ZJ gave me great moral support by just putting a hand on my shoulder from time to time and saying, “How’s the book coming Dad?”

As you move through the pages of this book, I ask you to keep in mind the words of Martin Luther King Jr. when he said, “Nonviolence is the answer to the crucial political and moral questions of our time; the need for man to overcome oppression and violence without resorting to oppression and violence. Mankind must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression, and retaliation (cited in Groves, 2008, p. 159).” Each of us can play some role in making that happen.

Lewiston, ID

Daniel M. Mayton II
# Contents

1 **Meaning of Nonviolence and Pacifism** .......................................................... 1  
   Prominence of Aggression and Violence Research in Social Sciences ......... 1  
   Aggression ........................................................................................................ 2  
   Violence .......................................................................................................... 3  
   Pacifism .......................................................................................................... 4  
   Nonviolence ................................................................................................... 6  
      Nonviolence as a Philosophy ................................................................. 6  
      Nonviolence as a Behavior ................................................................. 7  
   Situating Nonviolence Among Related Concepts ...................................... 7  
   An Integrated View of Nonviolence .......................................................... 8  
   Recommended Readings ............................................................................ 9  

2 **Recent History of Nonviolent Responses to Conflict** ................................. 11  
   Nonviolent Action in the First Half of the Twentieth Century ................. 12  
   Nonviolent Action in the Last Half of the Twentieth Century ............... 16  
   Nonviolent Action in the Twenty-First Century ....................................... 27  
   Recommended Readings ........................................................................... 29  
   Recommended Films and Videos .............................................................. 30  

3 **Theories of Nonviolence** ............................................................................ 31  
   Philosophical Views of Nonviolence ...................................................... 32  
      Holmes’ Theory of Nonviolence .......................................................... 32  
   Anthropological Views of Nonviolence ................................................. 34  
      Patfoort’s Conceptual Framework of Nonviolence ............................ 34  
   Sociological Views of Nonviolence .......................................................... 35  
      Ritter’s Two-Dimensional Theory of Nonviolence ............................ 36  
   Psychological Views of Nonviolence ......................................................... 39  
      Blumberg’s Utility Model of Nonviolent Mass Demonstrations ......... 39  
      Hare’s Social-Psychological Perspective on Nonviolent Action ....... 40  
      Kool’s Theory of Nonviolence ............................................................. 41  
      Teixeira’s Theory of Nonviolence ......................................................... 42  
      Brenes’ Model of Peaceful Selfhood ..................................................... 45  

xiii
Political Views of Nonviolence .................................................................... 46
  Gandhi’s Political Theory of Nonviolence ............................................... 46
  Sharp’s Political Theory of Nonviolence .................................................. 48
  Ackerman and Kruegler’s Political Theory of Nonviolence .................... 49
Multidisciplinary Views of Nonviolence ...................................................... 52
  Sharp’s Civilian-Based Defense .............................................................. 53
  Burrowes’ Strategic Theory of Nonviolent Defense ............................... 54
Locating Nonviolence Within Peace Psychology ........................................ 58
Recommended Readings .............................................................................. 58

4 Intrapersonal Perspectives of Nonviolence ............................................... 61
  Intrapersonal Nonviolence from an Individualistic Perspective ............... 62
    The Independent Self and Nonviolence ............................................... 62
    Personality Characteristics of a “Peaceful Person” .............................. 63
    Values of a “Peaceful Person” ............................................................ 68
  Intrapersonal Nonviolence from a Collectivistic Perspective .................... 74
    The Interdependent Self and Nonviolence .......................................... 74
    Nonviolence from Eastern Religious Perspectives .............................. 75
Summations of Intrapersonal Nonviolence ................................................. 83
Recommended Readings .............................................................................. 84

5 Interpersonal Perspectives of Nonviolence .............................................. 87
  Nature of Conflict ..................................................................................... 87
  Personality and Behavioral Tendencies of Peaceful Persons 
    and Conflict Resolution ....................................................................... 89
    Agreeableness ....................................................................................... 89
    Forgiveness ........................................................................................ 90
    Cooperativeness .................................................................................. 92
    Trust .................................................................................................... 93
  Nonviolent Communication Approaches ................................................. 94
  Nonviolent Methods of Dealing with Conflict: 
    Specific Conflict Resolution Approaches ............................................. 97
    Negotiation ......................................................................................... 97
    Mediation .......................................................................................... 103
    Conciliation ....................................................................................... 105
    Arbitration ....................................................................................... 105
    Adjudication ..................................................................................... 106
  Nonviolent Methods of Dealing with Conflict: 
    Preventative Approaches ..................................................................... 106
    Conflict Resolution Education .......................................................... 107
    Violence Prevention Programs .......................................................... 111
    Nonviolence Education ...................................................................... 112
    Peace Education Programs ............................................................... 113
6 Cultural and Societal Perspectives of Nonviolence

Peaceful Societies
Nonviolent Activities and Norms in Less Peaceful Cultures
Cultures of Peace
Assessing Cultures of Peace
Major Components of Cultures of Peace:
Implications for Theory and Research
Social Justice
Gender Equality and Empowerment
Human Rights
Nonviolence
Inclusiveness
Civil Society
Education and Peace Education
Sustainability
Conclusion
Recommended Readings
Recommended Web Sites

7 Nonviolent Perspectives Within the Abrahamic Religions

Judaism
Jewish Beliefs and Rituals
Jewish Views of Nonviolence
Notable Jewish Advocates of Nonviolence
Christianity
Christian Beliefs and Rituals
Christian Views of Nonviolence
Notable Christian Advocates of Nonviolence
Martin Luther King Jr
Dorothy Day
Islam
Islamic Beliefs and Rituals
Islamic Views of Nonviolence
Notable Muslim Advocates of Nonviolence
Bahá’í
Beliefs and Rituals of Bahá’í
Bahá’í Views of Nonviolence
Notable Bahá’í Advocates of Nonviolence
Implications of the Abrahamic Religions for Nonviolence and Peace ................................................................. 200
Recommended Readings ......................................................................................................................... 201
Recommended Web Sites ..................................................................................................................... 203

8 Situational Influences on Nonviolent Action ...................................................................................... 205
Situational Dimension of Nonviolent Political Action ........................................................................... 206
Channel Factors ...................................................................................................................................... 206
Terror Management Theory .................................................................................................................. 207
Situational Contexts That Foster Nonviolence ....................................................................................... 210
Construal Dimension of Nonviolent Political Action ............................................................................. 211
Tension System Dimension of Nonviolent Political Action .................................................................... 213
Military–Economic–Governmental–News Complex .................................................................................. 215
Conclusion .................................................................................................................................................. 217
Recommended Readings ......................................................................................................................... 218

9 Measurement Tools for Research on Nonviolence and Related Concepts ............................................. 219
The Teenage Nonviolence Test .............................................................................................................. 220
Reliability of the TNT ............................................................................................................................ 221
Concurrent Validity of the TNT ............................................................................................................... 222
Known Groups Validity .......................................................................................................................... 224
Psychometrics of TNT with College Students ....................................................................................... 225
Overall Assessment of the TNT ............................................................................................................. 226
Other Measures of Nonviolence .............................................................................................................. 226
Pacifism Scales .......................................................................................................................................... 227
Nonviolence Test ...................................................................................................................................... 227
Gandhian Personality Scale .................................................................................................................... 228
Multidimensional Scales of Nonviolence .................................................................................................. 228
The Nonviolent Relationship Questionnaire .......................................................................................... 228
“Self-Assessments” of Nonviolence ........................................................................................................ 229
Selected Measures for Assessing the Peaceful Person ............................................................................. 230
Selected Measures for Assessing Cultures of Peace ............................................................................ 231
Concluding Comment ............................................................................................................................... 232
Appendix .................................................................................................................................................... 232
Social and Personal Opinion Survey ...................................................................................................... 232
Teenage Nonviolence Test (TNT): Scoring Key ..................................................................................... 236

10 New Directions for Research on Nonviolence ..................................................................................... 239
Nonviolence and Nonviolent Action into the Twenty-First Century ...................................................... 239
Some Research Questions on Nonviolence and Nonviolent Action ................................................................ 242
Validating Theories of Nonviolence .......................................................................................................... 242
Research on the Peaceful Person Across Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Levels ....................................... 244
Contents

Research on Nonviolence and Cultures of Peace ................................................................ 245
Religion, Worldviews, and Nonviolence Research ........................................................ 246
Interdisciplinary Research Approaches to Nonviolence ............................................. 247
Nonviolence for the Twenty-First Century ................................................................. 248
Recommended Readings ............................................................................................ 249
Recommended Web Sites ......................................................................................... 250

References .................................................................................................................. 253

Name Index ................................................................................................................ 281

Subject Index ............................................................................................................. 289